



From diversity policy to practice

A case study on the relationship between diversity policies and practices

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Master Thesis for the Master Track – ‘Management of Cultural Diversity’

At Tilburg University, School of Humanities

August 19, 2016

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Title of the Master Thesis Circle:

Investigating language policy of commercial organization

Title of the Thesis: From diversity policy to practice-

A case study on the relationship between diversity policies and practices

Acknowledgements

I intended to finish my Master studies in a different manner than my Bachelor studies. Nevertheless, the end of my study career became even more challenging. After almost six years of studying, I am about to receive a Master Degree which will become the end of this journey. This year was like a roller coaster ride with exciting, unexpected and frightening moments all along the way. But, in the end I have made it through, and I could not be more than grateful. Normally, I act as someone who can do it on her own, though I would not have been able to accomplish this goal without the support and help of others. I would like to express my gratefulness to you all. First of all, I would like to thank, Kutlay Yağmur, my primary supervisor, for his support and especially, his belief in me. I think at one stage, both of us almost lost the confidence that I would find an organization to conduct my research, still he assured me that I would find an organization, which I did. Secondly, I want to thank Massimiliano Spotti, my second reader, for broadening my scope and providing different angles which I bore in mind throughout my research. Thank you both for your critical reflections, interesting discussions and motivational talks. Furthermore, my gratitude goes to Alessandra, my classmate, we started this thesis together and even though, we might have brought our theses to different ends, we were able to support each other, provide each other with different insights and valuable feedback. Then, I would like to express my gratitude to the organization. I would like to thank Joaquin for the opportunity to conduct my research within the organization, and Robert for the guidance. Next to that, I want to show my gratefulness to the respondents. I want to thank you all for your openness and especially, your inspiring stories. I have learned a lot from your experiences and reflections on the concept of diversity. Finally, I want to thank the people, my family and friends, who have been there for me through all these years. I am happy that I am surrounded by people who encourage me to get the best out of me, but also keep me with my feet on the ground.

I wish you an inspiring and pleasant reading.

Juliette van Kraaij

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Abstract

This case study explores the relationship between diversity policies and practices within a Dutch mail- and packages organization. The effects of globalization and business across borders created a situation in which diversity cannot be neglected. Previous studies indicate that there is a limited number of diversity management research that are conducted within the European context. Furthermore, scholars rarely incorporate the vision of the employees. Diversity management is often a top-down intervention. The focus of this research is to examine the diversity management in a profit oriented organization through a multilevel analysis. This framework is constructed among the organizational-, management- and individual level. These levels allow to gather ideologies from multiple stakeholders across the organization. This study incorporates on the one hand, the organizational diversity and inclusion policies and on the other, the diversity practices within the work environment. A reflection is made previously regarding the diversity within commercial organizations, in order to gain understanding of relevant topics which need to be explored in the field. A critical assessment is offered about the previous investigations as the majority of these researches collected data through quantitative methods. Due to the novelty of this research, valuable insights will be provided for the diversity management field.

Keywords: diversity, diversity management, critical assessment, multilevel analysis, bottom-up approach, European context

1.Introduction

This case study is conducted in order to explore the relationships between diversity policies and practices within a mail- and packages organization established in the Netherlands. I start with a brief description of the organization. The organization under study maintains a leading position on the Dutch market for numerous decades. Furthermore, it is active on other European markets, and established an international network that connects three continents. The organization aims to be the “essential link” for its customers. Currently, there are about 50.000 employees working for the company who are spread over multiple countries, and operate in different business segments (Internal document, 2015).

This study concentrates on the Dutch context in relation to European perspectives towards diversity and diversity management. An examination of previous diversity studies identified several discrepancies within the field of diversity management. Various authors pointed out that researchers and organizations tend to adopt an universalist approach towards diversity management, in which important factors such as context and power are disregarded. Some authors indicate that overall diversity management studies miss a comprehensive framework. This results in overlooking important actors. A final issue is perceived to be, the lack of studies conducted within the European context (Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, & Pullen, 2014; Al Ariss, Koall, Özbilgin, & Suutari, 2012; Al Ariss, Vassilopoulou, Özbilgin, & Game, 2013; Calás, Holgersson, & Smircich, 2009; Jonsen, Maznevski, & Schneider, 2011; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Ostendorp & Steyeart, 2009; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Sinclair, 2000; Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Al Ariss, & Özbilgin, 2012). Generally, more attention and awareness is devoted to the incorporation of various actors, and various researchers see the need to relate diversity to a broader context (Ahonen et al., 2014; Al Ariss et al., 2012, 2013; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Siebers, 2009; Tatli, 2011; Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2010). The majority of these studies tried to critically reflect the field of diversity management, especially due to the effects of globalization. These increase the pertinence of diversity management in the global workplace (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Nataatmadia & Dyson, 2005). Therefore, critical authors request attention for qualitative studies that incorporate both the scope of the organization, and the individual perspectives of the employees.

This research is designed to contribute to the work of previous scholars who examined diversity management within business settings. This case study aims to overcome the limitations of the previous literature on diversity management. The body of the conceptual

framework is organized among a multilevel analysis, which allows to grasp on the one hand, perceptions and behavior towards diversity in the workplace, and on the other hand, diversity ideologies from management levels within the organizations (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Spolsky, 2007; Sherman & Strubell, 2013; Tatli, 2011). More specifically, this multilevel analysis embodies: practices, beliefs and management (See Appendix, I). In order to investigate these core elements, research questions are derived from Sherman and Strubell (2013) after intensive reflection on the relevant literature. Even though, this study concentrated on linguistic diversity, the authors presented valuable research questions, which are adapted in lines with the purpose of this study. This resulted in the following research question:

How are diversity management policies within the organization related to practices of diversity within the workplace?

To be able to answer the central question, further sub-questions are presented for both the meso- and micro level:

Meso level:

- What type of image does the organization portray in regard to diversity?
- What is the organization's attitude towards diversity management
- What is the organization's perception of diversity management?
- What type of management approach is developed to address diversity?

Micro level:

- How do employees reflect on the top-down policies?
- How are management interventions perceived?
- How is diversity perceived by employees within the organization?
- What type of differences can be detected from the work floor?
- How does the intended diversity management approach relate to diversity in practice?
- Which gaps can be identified between policies and practice within the company?

The nature of this study relies on qualitative data in order to explore the relation between diversity management policies and practices. A case study design allows to gain understanding of certain phenomena in a specific context. Next to that, it provides room to

incorporate various perspectives from different stakeholders. These visions are defined through desk research, and qualitative research methods. This amount of data was analyzed by means of the grounded theory approach, which assisted to create better understanding of diversity ideologies visible within the workplace. This approach contains three stages of systematic coding that bring forward the most accurate concepts to be found in the data. In this regard, this study makes the presentation of new insights possible within the field of diversity management.

This Thesis consists of six chapters. After introducing the research in this first chapter, the theoretical background including a detailed literature review concerning the concept of diversity and diversity management is provided in the second chapter. This chapter is followed by the methodological framework which extensively elaborates on the research approach and suitable methods for data collection. The chapter 4 covers the organizational context illustrating the organizational policy and the development of diversity management. Afterwards, the results of the field research are presented in chapter 5. This chapter is followed by the conclusions and discussion of this research, in which all the findings from both desk and field research are reviewed, and additionally, linked to the theory. Finally, the limitations of this research are indicated which are followed by the recommendations for further research.

2.Theoretical Background

This chapter presents the conceptual framework of this study. As indicated previously, a multilevel perspective is presented to which relevant topics are connected in order to explore the field of diversity management. In order to gain deeper insights into diversity management and practices within the organization under study, the analysis needs to take the broader context into consideration. This chapter is divided into three sections. In part 2.1, a macro level perspective on the broader context of diversity and diversity management is presented. Additionally, section 2.2, the meso level, provides a literature review on diversity management. Finally, part 2.3, the micro level, presents the review of literature on the need to investigate the perspective of employees.

2.1 Macro level

In line with the multilevel analysis, the macro level is a framework that serves to gain understanding about the concept of diversity. Firstly, understanding is given to the concept of diversity. Secondly, there are critical and alternative approaches provided, in order to get an impression of the studies conducted within the diversity management field. Thirdly, deeper insight is given into the concept of diversity and diversity management from the perspective of the European Union. Finally, there is a section on how diversity is perceived within the Netherlands.

2.1.1 The concept of diversity

Due to the influences of globalization, the concept of diversity became more striking (Nataatmadia & Dyson, 2005). The way in which diversity is defined varies within studies. According to Kandola, Fullerton, and Ahmed (1995), diversity means “virtually all ways in which people differ” (p. 2). Litvin (1997) found that diversity is basically divided into six primary dimensions: age, ethnicity, gender, physical attributes or abilities, race and sexual orientation. These dimensions are embedded within eight secondary categories: educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs and work experience. She concludes that the latter helps to distinguish one from another, but are less fixed in comparison to the first. Mor-Barak (2005) defines these primary and secondary dimensions in a ‘broad concept of diversity’. In addition, he illustrates the ‘narrowed concept of diversity’ in which diversity becomes categorized, for example: cultural diversity focuses on the demonstration of significant cultural differences among individuals (Cox, 1994). In the study presented by Jonsen et al. (2011) there are two

dimensions identified within the diversity literature. The first dimension relates to surface-level characteristics, and the second dimension contains deep-level characteristics (e.g. Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). In other words, there are visible or demographic characteristics such as gender and race. Next to that, there are invisible diversity characteristics, which can be divided into two categories. On the one hand, there are informational characteristics such as educational background. On the other hand, there are value characteristics such as work experience, personalities and attitudes (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998).

2.1.2 Critical approaches to Diversity Management

Several scholars have been reflecting on diversity and diversity management studies, which provided some critical views in relation to the diversity field. These studies indicated gaps from researchers and organizations in relation to the conceptualization and adoption of diversity (Ahonen et al., 2014; Al Ariss et al., 2012, 2013; Jonsen et al., 2011; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Tatli et al., 2012). The majority of these authors expressed that the average diversity literature adopts an universalist approach towards the concept of diversity (Ahonen et al., 2014; Calás et al., 2009; Jonsen et al., 2011). This involves standardized and prescribed understandings on what diversity is about, how it can be investigated, and how it should be put into practice, which leads to copy-pasted implementation of diversity approaches (Jonsen et al., 2011; Ostendorp & Steyeart, 2009; Sinclair, 2000).

This notion can be related to the diversity management approaches within the European context as these derived from studies conducted in the United States. The values, assumptions and approaches from the United States are not applicable to European business settings (Ahonen et al., 2014; Jonsen et al., 2011; Tatli et al., 2012). The contextual factors in the European setting are overlooked, as the universalist approach is insensitive to power and context (Al Ariss et al., 2012, 2013; Özbilgin, & Tatli, 2011). Over the past few decades, European countries have experienced an increase in diversity (Jonsen et al., 2011). Next to that, the concept of diversity management and its implications have different meanings and variations from country to country. Therefore, it is important to understand the context, and to indicate the contextual and relational influences in relation to diversity. The incorporation of EU and national policy documents helps to gain understanding of meanings that are connected to diversity in the national context (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Jonsen et al., 2011; Özbilgin & Tatli 2011; Tatli et al., 2012).

According to Tatli et al. (2012), the concept of diversity needs to be localized for any country across the globe. The authors address that within the overall field of diversity studies, a coherent theoretical framework is missing. Previous studies generally focus on the team and individual behavior, without relating these ideologies to the organizational ideology (Jonsen et al., 2011; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013). There is the need for the identification of different perspectives among the different stakeholders from multiple levels, as this shapes the ideology towards diversity (Ahonen et al., 2014; Al Ariss et al., 2013; Jonsen et al., 2011; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Tatli et al., 2012).

2.1.3 European perspective on diversity

With regard to the understanding of diversity in the European context, the European Union (EU) aims to promote an environment without social exclusion and discrimination in which cultural and linguistic diversity is maintained (European Commission, 2007). The European Union draws up on democratic principles and the rule of law. In this regard, the individual takes in a central position for the EU, for which it tries to create an environment with freedom, security and justice. All above is supported in Article 22 from the *Charter on Fundamental Rights of the European Union*: “The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity”. Next to that article 21 declares that:

“Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.” (Article 21, Nondiscrimination, European Commission, 2012).

Therefore, the EU is encouraging and promoting diversity and antidiscrimination across Europe. This year, the EU requests more attention towards discrimination within society, national and regional institutions, and in the workplace. In relation to business settings, the EU encourages the business case for diversity management across Europe (European Commission, 2016a; European Commission, 2016b). As laws prohibit discrimination, attention needs to be paid to how organizations can tackle discrimination on the work floor. The protection of employees is one thing, additionally attention is requested for the implementation of diversity in order to create additional value and outcomes. The EU visualizes that the understanding of individuals’ varieties and the inclusion of diverse people, pointing to accepting and appreciating differences, can lead to positive outcomes for the individual, the organization and the society as a whole. Moreover, the sensitivity to diversity

is driven by social and economic influences. Within the European landscape, certain demographic patterns are visible which have an effect on the workforce, such as the increase of multiculturalism, more gender equality, development in acceptance of sexual orientation, acknowledgement of disabled citizens, and a decrease of younger people. Organizations have to interact on these changes and think of ways on how to make advantage of the implementation of diversity in the workforce. Next to that, employees and external stakeholders expect organizations to look at diversity. The EU foresees that diversity adds to business. Diversity management allows organizations to extend opportunities, improve business relationships, cope with effects of globalization, encourage innovation and creativity, create a positive image and finally, address attention to minority groups (European Commission, 2005). Various studies point out that the accuracy of diversity increases, which is fueled by the changing context of European countries (Mar-Molinero & Stevenson, 2006; Point & Singh, 2003; Singh & Point, 2004). According to Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2006), it is especially difficult for the EU to guarantee that member states address diversity, due to the fact that national institutions have the ability to decide how and to what extent these policies of European bodies are adopted. Even though, diversity is encouraged on the European level, the authors indicate that there is a gap between policy and practices within Europe. In order to address diversity effectively, they emphasize the importance to reflect on European countries.

2.1.4 Dutch perspective on diversity

According to the first article of the Dutch constitution, every single Dutch citizen shall be treated equally under similar circumstances. Discrimination of religion, political convictions, race, and gender on any ground is prohibited (Parlement, n.d.). The Dutch government supports European initiatives for anti-discrimination and diversity management within society and organizations (See *Diversiteit in bedrijf*, 2016a; Rijksoverheid, n.d). Nevertheless, there are less specifications to the regulation of diversity in the Dutch society. In general, policies and practices are directed to the incorporation of ethnic minority groups in society and education (e.g. Extra, Aarts, Van der Avoird, Broeder, & Yağmur, 2002; Kroon, 1990, 2000). The Netherlands became strikingly culturally diverse after the Second World War. There was a flow of immigrants from former colonies, guest workers and later on, mainly migration of refugees. This flow of various groups of immigrants kept growing, similar to other European countries (Schaafsma, 2008; Vasta, 2007). For many years the Netherlands had adopted an inclusive approach towards minority groups, this changed

whenever policies did not meet the expectations. Then, the ideology of the Dutch government changed. Since then, people from migrant backgrounds needed to integrate in the Netherlands (Vasta, 2007). In the article of Schaafsma (2008), it was pointed out that the Dutch government failed, as the effort to make the immigrants inclusive members of society lacked. Several authors indicate that this affected the ethnic minority groups in a negative way, generally in their social and cultural capital. This resulted in a negative illustration within society, which eventually has been the foundation for discrimination and social disadvantage as these groups were perceived to consist of problematic and low-skilled citizens. Eventually, this affected ethnic minority groups their position on the labor market (e.g. Koopmans, 2003; Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, & Passy, 2005). Further studies also focused on cultural diversity in the Dutch workforce. Special attention is devoted to the presence of ethnic boundaries interrelated with the identity of the individual (e.g. De Vries & Pettigrew, 1998; Schaafsma, 2008; Siebers, 2009; Siebers and Van Gastel, 2015).

2.2 Meso level

This part of the multilevel analysis provides an overview of diversity and diversity management. In the first place, a definition is given concerning diversity management. This overview is further structured into: the business and justice case of diversity management, and management ideologies.

2.2.1 Diversity management

According to Nataatmadia and Dyson (2005), diversity, as part of the modern workplace, cannot be neglected, as the phenomenon diversity is found worldwide. Diversity seems to be a worldwide trend that manifests in the majority of countries around the world. The effects of globalization changed daily operations in organizations of any type. Organizations have to keep up with these global developments which requires sensitivity to diversity practices.

2.2.1.1 Definitions diversity management

There are various definitions towards the understanding of diversity management. From a broader perspective, diversity management has to deal with diversity in the workforce. Mor-Barak (2005), formulated a concept for workforce diversity, which could be understood worldwide. According to the author:

“workforce diversity refers to the division of the workforce into distinct categories that (a) have a perceived commonality within a given cultural or national context, and

that (b) impact potentially harmful or beneficial for employment outcomes such as job opportunities, treatment in the workplace, and promotion prospects, irrespective of job-related skills and qualifications.” (p. 132).

There are several studies that try to give definitions of diversity management for organizations. Tatli et al. (2012) describe diversity management as a new way to manage demographic diversity of employees. In addition, Özbilgin and Tatli (2011) also relate diversity management to increase organizations’ competitiveness and performance. In response, Ahonen et al. (2014) stated that diversity management is often understood as a phenomenon that can and needs to be managed in order to create organizational and team benefits. The authors indicate that there are some issues with the definition of diversity towards organizational performance only. The idea behind such definitions is to illustrate that a diverse mix of people is beneficial for organizations and adds to business outcomes (Ahonen et al., 2014), which is influenced by the neo-liberalization movement within the international trade markets (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). All above sketches a negative meaning as organizations perceive diversity as a problem in daily operations (Ahonen et al., 2014). Therefore, Jonsen et al. (2011) came up with an alternative definition. They perceive diversity management as managerial actions, which on the one hand focus on, cherishing growth of diversity and on the other hand, try to promote harmonious, proficient working relationships. It is important that diversity assists to ensure equality for individuals and contributes to anti-discrimination policies, in order to contribute to the business (Omanović, 2011).

2.2.1.2 Business versus Justice case

Within the history of diversity management, diversity is derived from liberalist movements across the globe. The initiation of diversity was aimed to create justice in society, as a response to demographic developments (Ahonen et al., 2014; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). Later on, diversity management was intended to be favorable for organizational outcomes. In the literature, diversity management has been linked to: justice, social equality and anti-discrimination (Ahmed, 2012), as well to the contribution of organizational performance (Jonsen et al., 2011), and brand building (Swan, 2010).

Overall, the business case of diversity is applied within organizations (Jonsen et al., 2011). The business case for diversity gained popularity, as this contributes to organizational performance and outcomes (Ahonen et al., 2014; Litvin, 2006; Oswick, 2010; Tatli et al., 2012). In a study conducted by Özbilgin and Tatli (2011) organizations within the private sector argued for the business case of diversity as they are generally convinced that this

implication for diversity enhances both cost reduction and advantages of diversity in the workforce. Furthermore, it creates higher profitability of diversity as it contributes to effectivity, productivity, innovation, creativity and, customer or market demands (Ahonen et al., 2014; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). According to various authors, the business case is dependent on the market context and strategies indented to deal with competitors (Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007; Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005). It is shown that the business case for diversity does not always lead to positive results regarding performance (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Generally, the business case is applied with the ideology that outcomes are visible in short-term notice. In addition, the results may be less effective than expected (Noon, 2007). Furthermore, there is the doubt whether the business case is appealing to countries (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013). Even though, countries become more dependent on ethnic minorities, they are still often viewed as lower-educated as they seem to lack qualifications. Therefore, minorities are almost forced to fill in lower-level jobs (European commission, 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). Al Ariss et al. (2012 ,2013) indicated that highly skilled ethnic minority workers face difficulties on the labor market. The authors argued that especially for advanced and high potential economies such ethnic minorities are required, due to several changes which lead to a shortage in knowledge and skills within such economies (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010; Özbilgin et al., 2011).

Next to the business case, there is the notion for the justice case of diversity. This case is based on creating equal opportunities and treatment within the workforce. Organizations seem to understand that social justice needs to be applied in businesses. The 'best practice employer' and 'doing the right thing' are appealing to organizations. Organizations seem to be aware that insensitivity can result in: missing out on potential employees; enlarging the number of employees leaving the company; and creating a negative image for the public. The ethical case of diversity assists in: embracing cohesion and collaboration; satisfaction and commitment among the employees; enhances improvement of customer relationships and service delivery; creating a positive name and image (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011).

2.2.2 Management ideology

The concept and understanding of diversity is always interrelated with ideologies from various stakeholders among various levels. This involves actors with both conflicting and aligning interests in the diversity and equality field (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). Both the justice and business case for diversity have a meaning and do create value for an organization. However, how these cases are defined is regulated by the power relations presented within the

context. Both factors influence the conceptualization and understanding of diversity management. Diversity is defined by power relations embedded within the context of the organization. Thus, diversity is managed by a certain ideology (Ahonen, et al., 2014). In relation to this thought, Orlic and Sieben (2013) used the concept of ethnic and cultural diversity as critical resources within their studies. The authors explained, according to the theory from Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), that the individual perceptions and behaviors of managers influence the organization's strategy, instead of the employees' skills and capacities. This indicates that subjectivity is adopted over objectivity (Orlic & Sieben, 2013; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) explained that the concept 'diversity management' or 'managing diversity', creates a certain distance between 'those who manage' and 'those who are managed'. There is a distinction between two groups within an organization, it allows those who manage, to identify and control those who are perceived to be different. This does indicate a stigmatization of certain diverse populations within the organization.

Next to that, these power relations and contextual factors generate fixed categories. Differences are understood as "age, sex, background, race, disability, personality and workstyle" (Ahonen et al., 2014; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). There is change in defining the specific differences such as age, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, into a more individual approach towards diversity in which each individual is approached to be different (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). Even though, this may be less specific the emphasis is on the individual to be different. Such an approach emphasizes differences of individuals over group based differences. There still tends to be insensitiveness towards the creation of 'inter-group' or 'group-basedcollectivistic' inequalities (Ahonen et al., 2014; Kirby & Harter, 2003; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Özbilin & Tatli, 2011; Woodhams & Danieli, 2000).

Litvin (1997) indicated that diversity management should not incorporate categories such as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Also, Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) argued that especially making differences among individuals that should be managed, result in opposite effects. Diversity management discourses maintain the view of 'minority groups' instead of combatting against discrimination and opt for actual equality. There tends to be an idea of victimizing diverse others (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). Diversity managers should avoid standardized categorization and taxonomy of differences. Instead, organizations need to address how differences are valued. They need to create approaches that add to change judgements about minority groups among which women, ethnic groups, disabled workers and sexual orientation which are maintained in society (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). Diversity

management still is directed from an essentialist view (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). According to Nataatmadia and Dyson (2005) management needs to gain understanding of the diverse workplace, in regard to all levels of the organization. There is the need for recognition of unique values and skills that an individual brings to the organization (Karpin, 1995; Daft, 1997). As the organization and management are in power, it is important that they contribute to break down stereotypes with genuine interest and personal conviction that diversity works. There needs to be a mindset, which shares interest in one's individual characteristics and needs (Jenner, 1994; Kandola et al., 1995). Thomas and Ely (1996) believe that whenever organizations want to incorporate diversity, they need to be willing to make a change by being open to what is ahead of them. In order to generate a change, the management has to encourage the gathering of perceptions and visions from different angles and needs to have the ability to face these diverse expressions, instead of neglecting them. Furthermore, the organizational culture has to embody similar characteristics. It has to be transparent and encourage development and growth among individuals. As international mobility becomes common, there is still room for improvement of incorporation in organizations and management fields (Tatli, 2011).

2.3. Micro level

The micro level is the final section presented in the multilevel analysis, which reflects the importance of the work floor perspective. Jonsen et al. (2011) indicate that there is a gap between the intended diversity movement ideologies and the visibility on the work floor. Diversity management discourses are often intended from a top-down approach, with only an assumption of diversity on the work floor. "If diversity is framed as something to be managed, then the power to manage diversity remains at higher organizational levels" (Kirby & Harter, 2003, p. 40). Therefore, it is important to involve multiple actors from various layers including the employees. The authors emphasize the need for the identification of different perspectives among the different stakeholders from multiple levels, as this shapes the ideology towards diversity. "This discursive micro-analysis is important because it sheds light on interstitial, every-day forms of resistance." (Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2010, p.7). The creation of a broad view by including actors with conflicting and aligning interests in the diversity and equality field, based on empirical evidence contributes to expand the field (Al Ariss, et al., 2013; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). According to Merrill-Sands et al. (2000), value and beliefs of individuals and of a group influence how diversity is perceived and defined by the organization. The lack of focus on beliefs and values is surprising as these

construct one's attitude which also influences one's behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to Kirby and Harter (2003), diversity management is generally intended for interest of the management and organization. However, the employees have to participate in the execution of diversity management. The issue presented is that the opinions of individuals is ignored. This explains the need for mapping perceptions on how a diverse workforce experiences diversity, instead of gathering perceptions from the (top) management layers and policy makers (Zanoni, et al., 2010).

In relation to individual ideologies, the concept of identity is presented. Within organizations it is shown that identity helps to explain attitude, beliefs and behavior of individuals to diversity in a broader context (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008; Jack & Lorbiecki; Siebers, 2009; Zanoni, et al., 2010). Diversity is perceived as a manner of organizational control of identities, which is aimed to align personal identities of the employees with some sort of corporate ideal which is desired for organizational objectives (Alvesson And Willmott, 2002). According to Jack and Lorbiecki (2007) employees carry various identities due to the different stakeholders involved in the organization. Diversity is generally built up on the corporate identity which is connected to the image and the representation of the organization in relation to achieve strategic goals. But additionally, this also incorporates employees' collective understandings of what the organization stands for. This can lead to resistance of the employees to the intended behavior, as organizational power is forced onto individuals. Resistance or objective behavior may stem from the individual's perceived differences which can be related to a broader socio-cultural context as not differences were always perceived to be equal. As presented by Alvesson and Willmott (2002), organizational and societal powers are influencing the identity of the so-called diverse employee. This identity is related to the work setting and is constructed through the individual's identity and organizational culture, management ideologies and group-based identities or majority groups (Siebers, 2009). Therefore, Alvesson et al. (2008) believe that identity is fruitful to understand various organizational settings and specifications across various micro and macro levels. Individual and collective based identities have the capability to gain insights into: motivations, behavior, leadership preferences, organizational development, corporate image, communicative approaches, interaction among employees and, discrepancies presented on the work floor.

3. Methodological framework

In order to get a deeper understanding of diversity management, the research approach must be suitable to find accurate responses to the research questions. This section presents the research strategy and methods. The chapter consists of the following sections: 3.1 presents the research design; section 3.2, outlines the sample strategy; followed by, the data collection in section 3.3; afterwards the data analysis in section 3.4 is presented; and in the final section 3.5, the research quality indicators are outlined.

3.1 Research design

This research is a case study (Yin, 2009) combined with the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A case study focuses on a particular real life setting in which certain events are explored (Yin, 2013). The qualitative nature of this research allows me to gather perspectives and visions from the work floor about the diversity dynamics. The aim in this case is to gain insights into discrepancies between the theory and practice of diversity within the organization under study. The grounded theory approach contributes to this study purpose as it is constructed to collect and analyze qualitative data. The grounded theory approach consists of inductive steps that allow the researcher to reflect on reality and create a theoretical understanding of the subject under study. On the one hand, the grounded approach offers flexibility and on the other hand, it helps in unravelling the accurate concepts that are relevant for this study. This approach is efficient as it helps to gather the implicit meanings of the participants, and aims to reconstruct individuals' realities (Charmaz, 2003).

3.2 Sample strategy

Previous to the explanation of the sample strategy, I would like to indicate that before the execution period of my research, a change took place in the office of diversity manager. The diversity manager whom I got in touch with, promoted to the position of recruitment manager. The current diversity manager, who came from business divisions, guided me through the rest of my research. Previously, this manager has been responsible for the creation and implementation of multicultural awareness within other business divisions.

In order to make a decision for the sample, an initial meeting was arranged with both the recruitment manager and the diversity manager. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange the visions and expectations of both parties. Furthermore, for me as a researcher, it served as an opportunity for exploration. In this respect, I could get familiar with the research setting, which adds to construct a suitable sample strategy (Charmaz, 2003). As I indicated

my limitation in time, due to a delay for the execution of the research, the recruitment manager suggested a starting point for constructing a sample. I could conduct interviews with the so-called presidents from the various diversity focus groups in the organization. The presidents could provide me with relevant information, and assisted to address potential interviewees for my data collection. In the first interview, one of the presidents initiated the idea to send an e-mail to every member of the focus group, who therefore could volunteer to participate in the research. This has been in line with the purposive sampling strategy, as the employees had a connection to this study topic (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) this nonprobability sample is well aligned with the purpose of qualitative research conducted through a case study. During my research period it was pointed out that the disabled group of employees, did not belong to a platform as I understood from the organizational documents. Later on, it was explained that this focus group derived from a market development and served as corporate responsibility initiative. Additionally, I must admit that I was also very distant from this group as they were situated at different locations than the headquarters. Therefore, I decided not to interview the disabled group of employees, as a substitute I arranged interviews with two people who were closely involved with this process. Furthermore, I also participated in workshop which concentrated on disabled workers, which is explained later on. As a next step, an e-mail was set-up, which included a brief description of the purpose and intention of the research, and an indication of the time it would consume. I tried to set it up in an informal manner as a way to connect with my potential informants. Furthermore, I emphasized that I was looking for people who wanted to share their opinions and give me their thoughts about the diversity policy and -management. The respondents could reply directly to me if they were interested. Overall, there was no intermediary involved, except from the women focus group, however this person only assisted me in addressing the informants and was not further involved in the research. This helped to guarantee anonymity for the participants. Eventually, the respondents formed a heterogeneous sample (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996; Robson, 2002) varying in age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, function in the organization and location. In the end, a sample of nineteen respondents was drawn, consisting of the diversity and recruitment manager, four presidents from the focus groups and additionally, fourteen participants from the various networks. One additional detail, is that the recruitment manager is also the president for cultural diversity, during his interview topics were both related to diversity in general and cultural diversity (See Appendix II). I could not manage to gather an equal number of respondents per network as it was on a voluntary basis. I have noticed that the responses for

the group sexual orientation has been the highest. The two other groups both contained three informants. In the end, one additional respondent was added to the cultural background, however the focus of this interview was slightly different from the others. This person provided information about business opportunities to hire disabled people. It brought interesting insights, which in my opinion are applicable to the diversity approach. As the control over the respondents was limited, I only interviewed highly-educated employees, with the exception of one person. There was variation in position, as several respondents belonged to higher management positions, another group to lower management positions, and there several informants who had less responsibility. The majority of the interviews took place at the headquarters, including the managers and three out of the four presidents. Nevertheless, the individuals were working at different departments and did carry knowledge concerning other divisions due to previous positions and/or collaboration with other divisions. The other part of the respondents was spread among various locations, varying from the Northern region to the Southern region of the Netherlands. Those who were not based at the headquarters were interviewed by phone or Skype, due to the time restriction of the research and the availability of the informants, it was less convenient to arrange face-to-face interviews.

3.3 Data collection

The nature of this research relies on the collection of qualitative data, which is underpinned by desk research. The initial stage was the collection of documents concerning diversity policies, planning and management approaches from previous studies, which generally have been gathered before the start of the execution of the research. The starting point for the execution of this research was a meeting, which served as introduction to both the managers for diversity and the research setting. This allowed me to get an impression of the corporate culture and gave me an indication on how people approach each other on the work floor, which was useful for the qualitative data collection. During this meeting I was informed about a quantitative research executed within the organization, which included a section of questions about inclusion and diversity. After the first meeting, the diversity manager had provided me with the policy documents and the outline of the survey questions. I reflected on these documents to adjust my initial interview guideline. Next to that, I was able to collect other useful documents during the research by the intranet and website of the organization, among the annual report, business principles and general policy documents. These data assisted to create an impression of the organization's ideology towards diversity management.

As contribution to the in-depth interviews, I aimed to make some observations within the research setting. I was able to attend a meeting in regard to the quantitative research of the organization, which gave me an indication of the actors involved and an insight into the first results of the research. Furthermore, I participated in a workshop that is part of the diversity focus groups from the organization, which was focused on (re-)integration of disabled people within organizations. This was in order to get an impression on how diversity is approached by the organization and also how other organization incorporate such topics. It also gave me an idea what type of actors are supporting diversity on a national level as this workshop was initiated by 'De Stichting van de Arbeid', which introduced the diversity charter in the Netherlands (Diversiteit in Bedrijf, 2016b). Additionally, in between interviews, observations were made, by sitting at a desk or having lunch with others, to gather impressions of the awareness and presence of diversity on the work floor. In order to gather some general opinions about the diversity initiatives, I went through reactions from news articles, available to every employee.

As explained in the theoretical framework, the purpose is to contribute to quantitative data collected from previous studies, which makes in-depth interviews valuable. The power of interviews is to reach out for information from the mindset of an individual, which cannot be captured from the surface (Patton, 1990). Interviews contribute to this aim as it gives the opportunity to capture: understandings, opinions, memories, attitudes, feelings about diversity policy and practice from the employees (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The interviews were set up in a semi-structured manner with open-ended questions (See Appendix III). The interview set-up generally served as a guideline, the questions were posed not in a set order to let the interview flow (Arksey & Knight, 1999), and to make it comparable to a natural conversation (Charmaz, 2003). Depending on the focus group and position of the informant, the questions were adapted. Nevertheless, I tried to hold on to the same manner of introduction for every interview, consisting of: an introduction of the researcher; followed by an introduction of the informant; and a question about the individual's connection to the topic, if not implied by the informant in an earlier stage. I tried to listen actively to phrase additional explorative questions, or closed questions to clarify an answer. Further attention was paid to establish rapport with the interviewees. I wanted them to feel comfortable and be at ease and therefore, I shared own experiences and thoughts responding to what the informant told (Arksey & Knight, 1999). As I encountered some sensitive topics during the interviews, I carefully approached the interviewees if they wanted to share such private information. Overall, the informants were open. Nevertheless, no further questions were posed in order to maintain

respect for the interviewee when the interviewee explained to have issues with their difference, but not indicated the specific issue. Additionally, where necessary I gave the informants room to reject the question if too personal (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The majority of the interviews could be conducted face-to-face. The conversation was held in a private room within the informant's department. Due to time pressure and spread of informants among various locations through the Netherlands, it was decided to conduct four interviews via phone. Additionally, one interview was conducted via Skype. Unfortunately, as the connection had been lost, this interview was continued via the Skype chat. Even though, the experience has been different than face-to-face interviews, the procedure has been similar to those interviews. One remark would be that the informant and I could not see each other, which also means that body language and gesture of the person could not be viewed. This resulted in some moments of confusion in which both interviewee and I started to speak at the same time. Therefore, awaiting and listening carefully became even more essential, in comparison to face-to-face interviews. Overall, the interview sessions lasted about 30 to 60 minutes depending on the availability of the informant. Furthermore, the interviews were all recorded, therefore full transcription was possible. However more difficulties occurred in capturing each and every single word as some were recorded through laptop via phone. Even though, the interviews were conducted in Dutch, the transcripts were carefully translated in English for the result section. In order to illustrate their opinions quotes are added in Dutch.

3.4 Data analysis

After various type of data were collected, the data were organized prior to analysis. The grounded approach helped to focus on the subjects of the study and to find gaps for which additional information was required. In the first place, I made a reflection of the themes that derived from the theoretical framework, in which topics were mentioned as organizational perspectives, management ideologies and individual behaviors. In the second place, the stories followed from the interviews were related to these topics. The data were carefully analyzed through a data coding process (See Appendix IV), which involved the following major steps; initial or open coding, re-coding and selective coding. The former detects which data are relevant for the analysis, the middle aims for deeper understanding, and the latter discovers patterns from codes which occur most often. In other words, as the topic has been approached from broad to specific, the most striking topics were identified. The use of multiple stages for coding allowed me as a researcher, to minimize subjectivity and to prevent bias (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I decided to start with the analysis of the management to give

myself an impression which categories stand out. These data were related to the other interviews, in order to address if these topics were also indicated by the informants. Eventually, the reflection on the theoretical framework in comparison to the results of the data analysis did reveal essential concepts, which allowed to make links between categories (Arksey & Knight, 1999) and therefore, could provide a deeper understanding of the diversity policy and management (Charmaz, 2003).

3.5 Research quality indicators

A reflection on the various quality indicators add to the credibility of this research. In this study there are four indicators identified: (1) construct validity, (2) internal validity, (3) external validity and, (4) transferability. In the first place, construct validity was established by the use of correct data collection methods and a critical assessment of the data which generated results that fit within the theoretical framework that was constructed beforehand. In the second place, multiple methods were used for data collection, involving different perspectives from various stakeholders to explore the same topics which were encountered in the research. This combination of various resources, among which an extensive literature review, quantitative data, observations, and semi-structured interviews known as data triangulation, assured internal validity (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). In addition, based on a strict coding of the data, the methods related to the grounded approach minimizes subjectivity and prevents bias for both the collection of the data and its analysis (Charmaz, 2003). The third indicator differs from quantitative research. In line with transferability principle in qualitative research, by using the grounded approach it is aimed to transfer the research design to similar case studies, which focus on diversity management within organizational settings. The use of semi-structured interviews gave me the ability to remain my focus and to gather data from various respondents about similar topics. As a researcher, I intended to be consistent in processing the data, which has been supported by the application of semi-structured interviews and by the systematic manner of coding. Furthermore, transferability for qualitative research implies to illustrate what the informants explained and indicated as precisely. There are several factors which might influence the quality of the data such as my presence as a researcher, and the notion that respondents might not answer honestly to questions (Arksey & Knight, 1999). By ensuring the informants that they would stay anonymous and indicate that this research was solely for academic purposes, biased answers should have been minimized. However, the findings are generated from subjective data, the objectivity is optimized by constantly assessing the data as described by the grounded theory

approach. This also assisted to neutralize my own perspectives and impressions which could affect analysis of the data.

4. Contextualization of the research

This chapter gives an impression of the context in which the research was conducted. The following section, 4.1, provides an overview of the organizational structure. Afterwards, section 4.2 explains the corporate culture of the organization, which is followed by 4.3, the diversity and inclusion policy. Previous to the context there is some background information provided, which adds to a better understanding of the case. The organization is currently adapting a new strategy directed to the future. Due to worldwide developments the market is changing on high speed (Finger, Alyanak, & Mollet, 2005). There is growth of digitalization and the continuous development in information technologies, businesses gain the opportunity to expand their markets across borders. This also influences the core of the organization, which remains to serve its customers in the best manner. The customer requirements changed as result of these various factors, which eventually leads to developments within the organization (Internal document, April, 2015). On the one hand, these requirements create potential growth areas for the organization, while on the other hand this also requests reconsideration of business strategy and practices. The ability to generate growth, also requires reorganization and reestablishment of the organization and its business domains (Internal document, November, 2015).

4.1 Organizational Structure

As part of the new strategy, there is the aim to become ‘one organization’, which has an effect on the current structure of the organization. There is a two-tier board ¹, from which the top layer consists of a supervisory board, shareholders, board of directors, consultative bodies and a decision-making body. The board of management encompasses the CEO² and the CFO³, who are supported by an Executive Committee. The organizational structure consists of various divisions: Mail Dutch Market, which consists of commerce and operations; Parcels, consisting of parcels and logistics services; and finally, International, which is containing other European markets and the international division (Internal document, May, 2016). The different divisions are established at various locations and directed by different directors. These directors have different priorities as they direct different business divisions (Personal communication with diversity manager, 5 July, 2016). As mentioned previously, the

¹ A two tier structure consists of a management board which is also known as executive board and a supervisory board which consists of non- executive members (Maassen & Van Den Bosch, 1999).

² CEO abbreviation for Chief Executive Officer (Management Scope, n.d.)

³ CFO abbreviation for Chief Financial Officer (Management Scope, n.d.)

developments within the organization's surroundings generate changes within the organization. The next couple of years the organization will have to merge some of the departments within the divisions, which results in both creating and diminishing functions. To be able to support the divisions and departments within this period of change, the organization aims to bring the various divisions together and increase collaboration. It is believed that close collaboration, both among and within the divisions, makes the organization stronger towards the future (Internal document, November, 2015).

4.2 Corporate Culture

As one of the major parts of the business strategy, the ambitioned corporate culture is presented in line with becoming 'one organization'. As illustrated previously, the business aims to intensify internal collaboration, which is important to meet the interests of all stakeholders for which is believed culture is crucial. 'One organization' encourages closer collaboration and in addition, sustainable employability. The organization created an ideology for the expected behavior of the employees. This should change people's behavior and should create a new mindset based on collaboration. The objective is to get the best out of the employees, which adds to get the best out of the organization (Internal Document, 2015). To enable this mindset, there are several central projects and activities developed for the employees, which either directly or indirectly have an influence. Furthermore, there are business culture programs for the divisions individually. The programs are supported by Human Resources, and each individual division has a culture ambassador (Internal document, 2016). As an extension to the business culture, development and engagement, the organization believes that diversity is an asset for both management and the workforce. As diversity is seen in society, the company finds it crucial to reflect it among its employees. Diversity results in a healthier and more creative work environment. The policy is "to hire qualified people who fit in our culture, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, age or sexual orientation" (Internal document, 2015, p. 21). The organization claims to present an active diversity policy embedded in their personnel policy (Internal document, 2013).

4.3 Diversity & Inclusion

As mentioned in the previous section, the organization presents an active diversity policy. The encouragement of diversity is embedded within the organization as part of the personnel policy, and in addition, as part of the organization's corporate responsibility policy.

4.3.1 Diversity & Policy

The organization broadly interprets the concept of diversity. Next to that, it is connected to the business principles. According to these principles, the organization aims to search for and maintain high-quality workers, who collaborate for better outcomes. For this matter, employees deserve equal treatment and opportunities irrespective of their age, gender, handicap, race, marital status, religion and sexual orientation. This all is incorporated within the policy for diversity and inclusion. The organization believes that “differences have to be there” (Internal document, 2015). In addition to diversity, it wants to create an inclusive work environment. The organization envisions to make its employees feel at home and to create an environment in which they can work on their personal development and growth. The organization enhances involvement and engagement of employees. Opinions and feedback are valued to improve the organization and to create a better work environment. Diversity and inclusion is not only encouraged within the organization, but is also portrayed to external stakeholders. As part of corporate responsibility, it strives to become a reflection of the Dutch society both on the work floor and in the headquarters. The organization feels responsible for the society, therefore it is expected that all involved stakeholders contribute to diversity and inclusion.

Diversity and inclusion is valued as the organization is believed to create a better business. There are various goals which should be achieved by incorporating diversity and inclusion in the organization. Firstly, diversity and inclusivity results in greater knowledge of the requirements from customers, partners and suppliers. This helps to create understanding of the market, which will also contribute to increasing customer satisfaction. Secondly, as it is part of the corporate responsibility policy it contributes to the position on the market, which also results in being an attractive employer. Thirdly, it will not only improve the teamwork and quality of decision-making for all levels, but it will also generate the development of a learning and innovative work environment. Additionally, this contributes to a positive experience of the work atmosphere. Finally, diversity and inclusion help to recognize, attract, develop and maintain talent (Internal document, 2015).

4.3.2. Policy development and practice

In 2015, a project manager was appointed to focus on diversity and inclusion. The manager created four focus groups that were perceived to have a minority position within the organization. These groups are defined as: employees with a culturally diverse background,

LGBT⁴, women, and PWD⁵. After the development of the policy, the first step was the generation of attention for the topic among the organization's stakeholders. Attention was requested among employees, managers, the Human Resources department, and work councils. In order to spread the message, internal media channels, meetings, workshops and generating discussions were used.

To show the commitment to diversity, the organization was the first Dutch organization to sign the diversity charter, which has been recognized in multiple European countries. In addition, it also participates in events outside the organization that approach diversity (Internal document, 2015).

Within the organization there are several communities which actively promote and support minority groups. The aim of the communities differs per focus group. One of the platforms assists the vertical mobility of women, by organizing mentorships within the organization, and establishing networks outside the organization. To show the commitment for gender diversity, the 'Talent on top' charter is signed and supported by the Dutch government. The other platform focuses on the acceptance of variety in sexual orientation, by creating awareness within the organization and by the participation in pro-acceptance events outside the organization. Additionally, the organization is committed to an international benchmark for the acceptance of LGBT in organizations (Internal document, 2015).

For 2015, a major focus of the diversity department was on vertical mobility of (potential) culturally diverse employees as this would contribute to become a reflection of society. Therefore, various initiatives were developed. There were several multicultural 'in-house days' organized to attract high potential multicultural employees. This initiative was intended for the career development program for post-graduates, which is directed at creating future managers. Furthermore, the organization is connected to non-Dutch communities. Next to that, cultural awareness trainings which were introduced in 2014, to create understanding for diversity were continued. Currently, these trainings have reached about a 1000 employees and managers, among which the recruitment team. In these sessions, the focus is on how to implement cultural aspects in daily operations (Internal document, 2015). Recently, the organization hosted a meeting and workshop in regard to sustainable and successful employability of disabled people, in which the organization aimed to set an example for other organizations. The focus of the event was to (re-) integrate people with physical or mental disabilities, or both, to the workplace. It generally served to create recognition for such

⁴ Lesbian, Gay, Bi- sexual and Trans gender (Internal document, 2015)

⁵ People with Disability (Internal document, 2015)

people's capacities and to show that these people are underestimated (Personal communication with president PWD, June 23, 2016).

Finally, as initiative to bring the various focus groups together, a link is made to the annual engagement survey and diversity. The survey is intended for all employees, on a yearly basis, to gather insights into the various divisions concerning employees' satisfaction involving the work setting, work atmosphere, management and teams. The organization uses the survey to identify implementation and growth areas. The general survey had been extended with questions about the awareness of diversity and the feeling of inclusion within the organization. The employees could participate on a voluntary basis. The questions were formulated in the following manner; in the first place, the questions were stated from a broad and general to specific and personal. In the second place, the questions were presented as dichotomous questions, contingency questions and Likert-scale questions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The final question was presented as an open question to leave room for comments (Internal Document, 2016).

On a yearly basis, the management board will decide on the focus of the themes centered around diversity. The management at all other levels is responsible for the implementation of the themes. Furthermore, a focus group will be appointed with representatives from different business units. The idea behind this group is to share the diversity and inclusion policy among others and work together to bring it into practice. The representatives also have a role of being an ambassador to encourage the implementation of the themes at local sites (Internal document, 2015).

5. Results

This section presents an overview of the results of the case study. The sections are divided into: 5.1 organizational perspective, 5.2 management perspective, and 5.3 employee perspective. For the reader's convenience a distinction is made among three groups of respondents. The first group consisted of the diversity manager, and the recruitment manager. The second group of informants were representatives from the headquarters. The third and final group of employees were situated at different locations. The multiple perspectives are combined to be able to find aligning and differing perceptions among the various levels. These perspectives are structured in the following manner: first, the combined perspectives of the diversity and recruitment manager and second, of the responses of the employees. As a final remark, there are pseudo names used for the respondents, in order to guarantee anonymity.

5.1 Organizational perspective

The first section offers a broad perspective on the necessity for diversity, influential factors for the development of such a policy and the several focus areas of the diversity matter. It discusses the perceptions and understandings of the managers working on the diversity policy, in combination with the opinions from the respondents.

5.1.1 The necessity for diversity within the organization

There are different reasons and motivations discovered to value diversity. According to the recruitment manager, diversity is required: in the first place, for corporate responsibility; and in the second place, to create additional value for the organization. The recruitment manager described that the organization “wants to be a reflection of society”, but the initiative on itself was insufficient for the organization. In order to create additional value, market developments were taken into account. The changes within the sector gave room to address diversity, beneficial to organizational outcomes. In the first place, the recruitment manager mentioned that diversity is useful to address new communities within the Dutch society. The awareness for diversity helps to reach out for new clients, which creates a competitiveness advantage. In the second place, diversity is necessary to attract new employees, as the organization is not attractive for certain groups in society. The recruitment manager indicated that he feels that the organization misses out on a group of talented employees. The third reason is related to the organization's image. The diversity manager explained that the organization has a certain presence in society, its image can be negatively

affected whenever promises, in relation to social corporate responsibility, are not delivered. In the fourth place, the recruitment manager is convinced that diversity contributes to the employee engagement. He indicated that whenever employees feel accepted and appreciated by both the organization and colleagues, outcomes are beneficial to all parties. With regard to the future, the recruitment manager explained that he hopes that the diversity policy will become obsolete and that each employee receives equal opportunities irrespective to his or her difference.

The majority of the respondents believed that the primary reason for the organization to adopt diversity was, the desire “to be a reflection of society”. Quinn and Francis indicated that, because of the size of the organization, perceived as “een gigantisch grote werkgever”, the visibility of diversity within the workforce cannot be neglected. Francis elaborated on this answer that incorporation of diversity is a “logical development”. Several interviewees assumed that the organization pays attention to diversity as societal developments influence its core business. According to them, this is the primary reason why diversity is required. Ben expressed that diversity is a manner to show potential employees that diversity is accepted. The respondent explained that “attention to diversity in such an organization illustrates that a mix of people works”. Additionally, George expressed that if an organization wants to “be a reflection of society the organization is obliged to accept diversity. In the same line, Lisa stated: “we zijn een soort van afspiegeling van de maatschappij, want we hebben 60.000 medewerkers, dus je wil ook dat iedereen uit de maatschappij ook vertegenwoordigd is, in je eigen bedrijf”. This indicates that if an organization claims to “be a reflection of society”, it must make an effort to create a diverse workforce across all layers of the organization.

5.1.2 Influential factors for the diversity management

According to the entire group of respondents there were various factors which influenced the development of a diversity policy. There were three essential influential factors derived from the data. In the first place, the diversity manager and recruitment manager explained that the commitment of the CEO was crucial for the development of the diversity policy. The CEO’s vision and genuine interest towards the topic played a major role. Both the recruitment- and the diversity manager made a comparison with the previous CEO, who was profit-oriented, therefore diversity received less attention. The diversity manager pointed out that the previous CEO had not his mind set on diversity.

According to the employees, the CEO was incredibly important to create attention for diversity. All informants agreed that diversity would not be a topic, whenever the current

CEO did not express her interest for diversity. In line with the perceptions from the managers, several respondents put forward that the previous CEO was determined to enable organizational performance. Peter explained that the current CEO focuses on the engagement of employees. Furthermore, he expressed:

“Ik denk dat onze huidige CEO ehh.. veel meer diversity minded is en daar ehhe en ehhe , eigenlijk maximaal diversity minded is , ik ben oprecht van mening dat zij daar voor staat en geloofd dat we daar een beter bedrijf ehh.. ik sluit me volledig aan bij haar gedachte..” (Peter)

He believed that because of the CEO's personal conviction and belief in diversity, more room is created for the development of this matter. Lisa stated that the CEO took care of the commitment to diversity from the Executive Committee. In this regard, the top management layer expressed to value diversity. Furthermore, it was stated that the current CEO is diversity minded which resulted in more attention to the acceptance of variety in sexual orientation. Catherin believed that the commitment from the highest organizational levels is required to spread the message among other organizational layers. George mentioned” het feit dat we al een directeur hebben, die eh of een CEO die vrouw is, is natuurlijk als, ik zou bijna zeggen trendsetting”, with which he indicated that a female CEO sets an example for the organization. The CEO was connected to a role model, Lisa and James believed that a role model encourages diversity matters. It was assumed that potential employees would feel more attracted to the organization when there is someone who they can relate to.

In the second place, a part of the respondent group described that image matters when it comes down to the diversity topic. The image helps to create awareness among the employees, and to show people within society that diversity is an item. Some of the respondents felt that the image in relation to diversity is present. Others expressed that the organization is still not attractive for certain groups of people, such as for people with a different sexual orientation⁶ and with a different cultural background⁷. Lisa explained that the organization is possibly seen as “typically Dutch”, which can be a reason that diverse employees are not attracted to the company. In line with this answer, Peter said: “nou, het zou misschien het type werkzaamheden kunnen zijn of het imago wat het bedrijf heeft”. He said that next to image, it can be the organization's “core business”, which may influence the attraction of particular diverse groups. Ben imagined that the emphasis on diversity, may have

⁶ Understood by the organization as other sexual orientation than heterosexuality.

⁷ Understood by the organization as other ethnic or cultural background than Dutch-only.

opposite effects than intended. He said:

“Hè dus ten minste van dat risico loop je van ja jij zit op die plek omdat we een vrouw nodig hadden en jij zit op die plek omdat we nog iemand met een hoofddoek nodig hadden,.. dus dat nogmaals hè ik denk dat we dat echt wel op een goede manier doen, alleen die indruk kun je heel makkelijk wekken..., maar dat is voor mezelf, van mij mag het iets minder...” (Ben)

In other words, people may perceive that they are hired for their differences, instead of their qualities. Next to that, several respondents put forward that the use of diversity is commonly a popular, trending item for corporate responsibility. They expressed that image only is insufficient, and emphasized that diversity needs to fit the organization.

Finally, the majority of the respondents indicated that an influential factor for the attention to diversity is “the corporate culture”, underpinned by “the business atmosphere”. Miranda believed that: “ja je moet wel als cultuur klaar zijn deze mensen op te nemen en niet dat ze na een half jaar weer buiten staan”. She expressed that the business culture needs to be in balance, to include new, perhaps diverse, personnel. Moreover, she stated that the atmosphere has become better in comparison to previous years, though there is still the notion of “ingewikkelde netwerken”, “politieke lijntjes”, and “een informele structuur, wie moet je waarvoor hebben”. Miranda said that it takes time for new personnel to integrate as employees need to get familiar with the “decision-making hierarchy” and need to establish certain “informal relationships” that help to fit in. Nevertheless, she was convinced that people are not willing to work for an organization, whenever the ambiance is negative. Various informants expressed that the current CEO managed to create an open and transparent corporate culture, which was required to make room for diversity. Francis felt that the work setting could be compared to a “family atmosphere” in which employees can feel at home. Evan expressed to work for another organization with a very different atmosphere.

“Mensen voor mijn gevoel zijn de mensen eerlijker, recht voor zijn raap niet achter de rug om en uhm ja dat dat gemoedelijke dat uh dat beter accepteren dat uh jah ik denk dat dat toch gerelateerd staat aan het beleid , aan de de bedrijfscultuur het is vooral sfeer uhm , ik het straks allemaal heb gehad over uh iedereen wordt aangenomen ongeacht je achtergrond en uh en allochtoon of niet of dat je zeg maar uhm man of vrouw...” (Evan)

Overall, the employees perceived that they were accepted for who they are. Evan additionally indicated that the atmosphere adds to equal treatment between individuals. He felt that each employee was treated in the same manner by the organization, management and other employees.

5.1.3 Focus areas of diversity management

This part describes the various diversity focus areas. This section is structured in the following manner: firstly, a description is given from the recruitment- and diversity manager who shortly explained the reasoning behind these focus groups. Secondly, the main focus of this section is an illustration of the employees' feelings and opinions towards these focus groups.

According to the diversity- and recruitment manager diversity is intended to support minority groups. There are groups of employees that need some extra support to be able to grow within the organization. On the one hand, these groups were found to be underrepresented in the organization, and on the other hand, these groups were, to a certain extent, less accepted. The recruitment manager explained that these focus groups are a reflection of similar groups visible in the Dutch society. Nonetheless, the attention for these groups in society is absent. The recruitment manager explained that the effort to create awareness for these people within the organization, might help to create awareness for them to a greater extent. Furthermore, he indicated that he noticed that the acceptance of variety in sexual orientation becomes more accurate, as there is still a lot of sensitivity towards this topic. Next to that, age diversity may become an issue, as the gap between different generations keeps growing. Last year, the major focus was devoted to gender and cultural diversity, but that might change over the next couple of years.

The following focus groups were most accurate according to the employees. They mentioned the group for cultural diversity, diversity in sexual orientation, and gender diversity. The perceptions of the respondents about the focus groups are discussed in the section below.

5.1.3.1 Cultural diversity

The respondents, who come from a different cultural background, indicated that overall, they appreciated the attention for cultural diversity. During the interviews it became clear that there is no actual network for culturally diverse employees as seen for women and LGBT. Igor mentioned that there was the initiative to set up a network for bi- or multicultural

employees, however, he explained that people are too occupied with their work. Consequently, culturally diverse employees were not interested to participate in next-to-work activities, which was also applicable to the informant itself. During an informal conversation with a bicultural employee this was also put forward. The person explained that people have a load of work to finish which has priority over an informal network.

In addition, James and Kate respondents, also with a bi-cultural background, indicated that for them there is no need for a multicultural network. They do not want an emphasis on their background. Both informants explained that they never had the feeling that they were treated differently, because of their background. Neither at work, nor in society. The two informants were convinced that the individual's personality and attitude will always be the most important for a job position. Igor had a different perception. He indicated that a bicultural background is not always an advantage. He explained that his parents were guest workers, which had a certain impact on the Dutch society. To put it in his words:

“Mijn ouders kwamen hier vroeger als arbeider met idee ik ga weg, maar die zijn nooit weg gegaan, maar ik ben nu gewoon Nederlander, ga naar je eigen land ja ja dat is common, dat is echt compleet no nonsens uh dat is iets wat nog niet leeft bij een aantal landgenoten.... twee culturen is een gift maar ook een vloek, het geeft mij heel veel voordeel in het bekijken van een aantal zaken te relativiseren ,maar aan de andere kant is het jah word ik hier weer eerlijk behandeld of uh word ik zo behandeld omdat ik Igor heet of word ik zo behandeld omdat ik een Nederlander ben of moet ik weer zeggen dat ik een Nederlandse Marokkaanse of Marokkaanse Nederlander of een nieuwe Nederlander ben wat is het nou..”
(Igor)

Niles expressed a similar opinion, he indicated that the second and third generation immigrants have a different attitude in comparison to people with a non-Dutch background who came to the Netherlands for different reasons, for example as refugees. Igor, additionally emphasized that the most influential factor that creates feelings of discrimination, is the media which intends to highlight negative associations with immigrants.

5.1.3.2 Diversity in sexual orientation

In comparison to the culturally diverse respondents, a similar perception was found among respondents with a different sexual orientation. All respondents appreciated the effort to create acceptance for their sexual orientation and they think it is necessary to request attention to the topic, but various informants also indicated that the emphasis on their difference may lead to opposite effects. The interviewees generally referred to societal factors

which influence the acceptance of homosexuality, lesbians, bisexuality and trans genders at work. In particular the respondents emphasized that the stigmatization of sexual orientation in society plays a major part. This makes individuals less willing to share their sexual preference at work. George explained that people always remember the person who is homosexual. There is some sensitivity towards this topic, and therefore, this informant is always careful to share personal sexual orientation. Furthermore, Francis said that especially media has a significant influence. According to her:

“Dat er alleen maar met een boot wordt gevaren is niet voldoende en ik denk dat je daar een heel vertekend beeld van krijgt, dus daar ben ik geen voorstander van. Wat mensen dan zien is een mannen in strakke leren broekjes op een boot, omdat het zo in de media wordt afgebeeld en dat is niet de werkelijkheid.” (Francis)

She explained that media fuels categorization and stigmatization of variety in sexual orientation. The media creates stereotypes as it portrays unrealistic images of homosexuality, this results in misjudgments and wrong impressions within society. Peter expressed that the attitude towards sexual orientation within society, is also reflected within the organization. In the same line, George assumed that the acceptance of LGBT within the organizations moves along with the acceptance of LGBT in society.

Therefore some of the respondents expressed slightly negative feelings towards the organization's effort to create acceptance. Several respondents indicated that due to participation in pro-acceptance events, their differences will be emphasized. Others, included the voices of other employees, explained that the organization needs to save costs, on the one hand, but on the other hand, decides to spend money on the promotion of LGBT. According to three informants, this is not understood by all employees. Miranda elaborated on these reactions, and said:

“Ze zeggen niet wat een flauwe kul want ik vind homo's stom, maar ik vond het eigenlijk wel lekker praktisch. Ik denk ja het kost ook alleen maar geld. Wat hebben wij te bewijzen aan de samenleving. Misschien hebben we wel nog wat te bewijzen, ik weet het niet. Ik vond het ook wel weer een praktische.. Ik denk ja eigenlijk kost het ook wel gewoon geld.” (Miranda)

She pointed out that these employees approach such interventions in a more practical manner, and emphasized that there were no reactions that indicated to be against homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals, or trans genders.

5.1.3.3 Gender diversity

There were several respondents who indicated that more attention is devoted to gender diversity and equality, in comparison the other diversity focus groups. Overall, respondents have the idea that women are well-represented in higher positions, especially in comparison to the representation of cultural diversity. The female respondents indicated that they have a well-established network, consisting of work-related and social activities that contribute to women's position in the organization. There are various factors indicated that may explain this assumption. Firstly, Olivia gave an example that there is societal movement had an influence on the vertical mobility of women within organizations. She said:

“Bijvoorbeeld hoe combineer je kinderen met eh eh ambities, eh eh voor een carriers, die dilemma's spelen tegenwoordig ook meer bij mannen hè, vroeger was het echt alleen de vrouw die zich daar druk om maakte, dat is nu al wel wat aan het veranderen.” (Olivia)

Issues which were generally solved by women, become more relevant to men. She perceived that there are more equal division in tasks, such as taking care for the children. Moreover, Olivia had the impression that the new way of working creates flexibility which allows women to plan their work in their own manner. There are societal movements created more room for career development. In the second place, several respondents explained that the top management layers are committed to support career development of women. This support is especially visible within the mentorship program. This program is developed to stimulate vertical mobility for women in which managers from the highest level volunteer to mentor women with ambition.

In addition to the females' own position, the respondents expressed that their network can assist to create more attention for diversity in general within the organization. The respondents were convinced that not only women contribute to organizational success, but instead that diversity in general contributes to organizational success. The members of the female network added that other organizations also become more interested to approach diversity as a broad concept. Olivia and Lisa put forward to understand a shift from gender diversity explicitly to diversity in general. Lisa expressed the following:

“Ik vind gewoon dat je, ja dat denk ik wel, want ik denk eigenlijk dat je vrouwen en de balans daarin dat je eigenlijk het hele onderwerp gewoon of sowieso breder zou moeten trekken, dus diversiteit in zijn algemeen en dat we bij het netwerk ook ons meer naar de

diversiteitskant toe moeten bewegen, want we hebben bij netwerk natuurlijk, hebben we al veel gedaan en je zou bijvoorbeeld de activiteiten bijvoorbeeld zoals ik net vertelde die netwerken niet alleen voor vrouwen gericht maar je zou ook een keer een thema kunnen doen met verschillende culturele achtergronden, zodat je dat weer stimuleert dat je veel verschillende mensen naartoe komen, dat kan ook, dus nou zo zijn er echt tal van dingen om dat te organiseren om dat in het DNA te krijgen...” (Lisa)

Miranda stated that the concentration on a particular group does lead to the exclusion of others. A similar mindset was indicated for Hannah, who felt that overemphasizing differences can result in opposing outcomes. She said:

“ Ik denk wel dat er soms eyeopeners nodig zijn dus, eh, of je nou, ik heb aan mezelf gemerkt toen er een target kwam op de, op het aantal vrouwen naar de top dat het mij intrinsiek minder motiveerde maar ik kan, en dat het zelfs een beetje druk gaf, dat ik dacht hé ik was hier een leuk programma aan het draaien met een goede doelstelling, maar nu moet ik ook nog aan quatum voldoen, zo ben ik gewoon niet. Ik doe het omdat ik het belangrijk vind, eh, maar ik realiseer mij wel dat een doel stellen heel zinvol is, dus de kans dat je het haalt met een strakke doelstelling is 30 procent hoger, als je dus een concrete doelstelling daar aan vast koppelt is de kans dat je het bereikt 30 procent hoger...” (Hannah)

Nevertheless, she could understand that some employees need additional help to improve their position within the organization, and therefore objectives and targets are usefully. Finally, Olivia hoped that there may become a point in time in which diversity policies will become needless.

5.2 Management perspective

The data presented below, are based on the management across departments. In other words, how is the management involved to incorporate diversity within the organization, and how does the management perceive diversity, these are questions that will be answered in this part. The section is divided into two topics: firstly, the awareness and attention to diversity among the management across departments; secondly, the management interventions to create awareness among their employees and to incorporate diversity in practice, by the organization and management. Again, the results derived from the interview with the recruitment and diversity manager are presented first, followed by those from the respondents. Additionally, for section, 5.2.1, a further distinction is made between the employees from the headquarters

and the employees from various other locations to indicate the differences among the headquarters and other locations.

5.2.1 Management's attention and awareness to diversity

The diversity manager pointed out that after the development and approval of the policy, diversity is brought to the attention of managers and employees. Various channels were used to show the staff that diversity matters, among which newsfeeds on the website, and publishing articles within the organization's magazine. Furthermore the recruitment manager explained that he organized discussions with the work council, which has a certain responsibility to pay attention to diversity. This council agreed to assist in creating awareness within the organization. Next to that, the recruitment manager indicated that he would like to make a connection between Human Resources and diversity. He put forward that:

“Overall HR beleid, dus de kapstok hè, de paraplu is het HR beleid , wat ik mee vorm geef en daar binnen heb je een aantal netwerken die iets meer gefocust, met specifieke minderheidsgroepen bezig zijn.. , maar je moet wel overleg houden en kijken waar je elkaar kan versterken..” (Recruitment manager)

He suggested that the HRM department can serve as an overall body that embraces diversity within the workforce.

In regard to the other business divisions, the diversity policy was communicated to directors. From there, the directors had to take their own responsibility to create awareness among the employees and to develop management interventions. The diversity manager believed that there are no customized plans yet for the various divisions, at least not presented to him on paper. He expressed his intention to develop a format which is applicable to the different divisions. He said:

“Dat mogen eh de eh locatiemanagers zelf doen, maar dan moet je ook wel een format aanbieden dat makkelijk... dus het platslaan in de boodschap, ik weet dat daar nadelen aanzitten maar voor een ondernemer met 50.000 mensen is dat wel iets wat je moet gaan doen dus ik moet het vereenvoudigen, versimpelen, ik moet de boodschap helder maken die erachter zit..” (Diversity manager)

In order to implement diversity, he indicated that the context of each division should be taken into consideration. In addition, the recruitment manager assumed that at this point it is crucial to let the managers understand how diversity creates additional value for their division. The

various divisions have to deal with other organizational changes, therefore, the directors have different priorities than diversity. Furthermore, the diversity manager experienced that managers often have a limited scope. He explained:

“Mensen en vooral bij managers, die vergeten vaak om zich heen te kijken wat er daadwerkelijk gaande is, want vaak wordt er meten geroepen dat de anderen zich aan moeten passen, maar kijken mensen niet eerst naar hoe zij handelen en de situaties daar omheen.” (Diversity manager)

They force others to adapt to their manners, instead of the other way around. He had the opinion that managers often forget to listen to their employees. He also perceived that the highly-educated employees, especially from the headquarters, do not have an impression of the diversity in reality, visible at the production level.

The majority of the respondents found that the management can play a major role for the incorporation of diversity. However, added to this that they cannot specifically indicate whether the management within their department receives support and stimulation from the organization to create awareness for diversity. Both the respondents from the headquarters and other locations, indicated that the management does not seem to be aware of the diversity policy.

5.2.1.1 Various locations

These respondents indicated that their management is supportive in regard to diversity and inclusion within the team, or the department. Though, they explained that this is because of the fact that their team leader or manager is genuinely interested in the employees. They could not confirm if their management was aware of any diversity policy. The interviewees believed that other colleagues would share the same opinion about their management and the management's genuine interest in the personnel. The employees expressed that their management is open minded and treats every individual in the same manner. Lisa said that:

“Ook meer via HR , eh op het moment dat we nieuwe mensen aantrekken dat je veel meer kijkt naar hoe ziet mijn team eruit, dus wat voor een persoon of wat voor een iemand zou ik willen hebben en dat je dan ook een soort van selectie maakt op diversiteit, dat je een selectie criterium hebt op diversiteit, dus daar zou bijv. HR volgens mij ook best wel een rol in kunnen spelen dan moet je wel eerst HR adviseurs opleiden om te zeggen nou dat is heel belangrijk ga nou met jouw business partners

kijken wat die nodig hebben en maak dan diversiteit onderdeel van het programma, of als item, op die manier denk ik wel...” (Lisa)

She suggested that diversity can be interwoven into the Human Resources department, to support diversity within the workforce. She herself, tried to assist the organization by creating awareness among the management within the division. She indicated to help her manager to see how different mindsets can add to the outcomes of the team.

5.2.1.2 Headquarters

Several respondents from the headquarters emphasized the need to create awareness among the management across all layers of the organization. The informants expressed the feeling that the management can influence individual’s behavior on the work floor. Some of the respondents indicated to understand that it is not always possible for the management to create a diverse team. They pointed out that the management does not always have the ability to create a diverse team. Other respondents shared the opinion that the management is not sensitive to the topic. According to Niles and Quinn, it is important to let managers understand why diversity is necessary, and to show how diversity adds to the business. Niles expressed the following:

“daarom eh daarom goed eh die voegt waarde toe aan je proces en niet omdat eh het zo zielig is zo aaibaar is, daar ben ik preminent op tegen dat werkt averechts en dat is ook met eh diversiteit, dat is ook met andere nationaliteiten als je per se iemand aanneemt om zijn uiterlijk of afkomst dan gaat het niet werken, je moet iemand aannemen met toegevoegde waarde voor je bedrijf en dan kan je het ook uitleggen, en niet om de reden het is een allochtoon om het allochtoon zijn want dan denk ik joh het werkt niet goed...” (Niles)

In addition, they put forward that the resistance of the management causes trouble for implementation of diversity on the work floor, which they have seen from their own experience. Next to that, the same respondents underlined the crucial role of the organization, to assist management across all organizational levels, to create awareness and to develop implications for diversity. Hannah indicated that if the topic has a priority, then the HRM department can assist to bring diversity into practice. She expressed that:

“wat ik merk op mijn afdeling is dat wij, eh, het belangrijk vinden dat het bedrijf prioriteert en als wij vandaag, eh, een opdracht krijgen om diversiteit hoog in het vaandel te zetten en een dag daarna een vraag krijgen om vitaliteit belangrijk te maken

en een dag daarna cultuur en een dag daarna de besparingsdoelstelling dan kan je voorstellen met 20 HR onderwerpen op je bord, dat, dat de vraag komt, ook van management wat wil je nou...” (Hannah)

In this statement, she also revealed that currently, HRM is too occupied with various affairs as none of these tend to have priority. Olivia expressed the feeling that the organization should concentrate on making concrete plans for all management layers. There are no pragmatic approaches created for the management. According to the same informant, there are no specific tools or guidelines for management to deal with, or attract diversity. Another interviewee suggested to develop an operational and functional plan which brings management and employees together. James shared a similar opinion, he feels the need for a personal touch. He said”

“...En we roepen hier met ze allen wel, we willen daar pushen, we willen ervoor zorgen dat er meer eh allochtonen op hoger niveau komen. Alleen ja, ik zie nog niet echt een plan hoe ze dat voor elkaar krijgen. En ik ben niet, ik ben geen voorstander van eh mensen op plekken zetten alleen maar om te laten zien kijk ons eens, een allochtoon daar hebben....” (James)

According to him, for now there is minimal interaction from the organization, and the management to create awareness among the employees.

5.2.2 Management interventions

The policy has been developed about a year ago, as indicated the initial step after the development, the recruitment manager had the intention to measure whether “the awareness for diversity was landed” and therefore he made his best effort to add a section of questions concerning diversity to the annual engagement survey. The answers to these questions should assist the organization, and management involved with diversity, to gain insight into the awareness and representation of diversity within the organization. The diversity-and recruitment manager explained that the survey serves as a tool to zoom in on specific employee groups, and business units to review the development of the diversity policy and management implications.

Last year, the recruitment manager concentrated on the development of cultural diversity. He explained what he did last year:

“niet met de traditionele studieverenigingen werken, maar heel erg gebruik maken van netwerken, interne netwerken met name, waar ook echt gewoon gemeenschappen

zijn, en die gemeenschappen ook binnenhalen. Dus elke maand heb ik ook bijvoorbeeld een in-huis dag georganiseerd specifiek voor bi-culturelen, die ik via netwerken binnenhaalden, zeg maar.. en zeker bij allochtonen werkt het vaak zo, en ik ben zelf een allochtoon, dus ik kan het zeggen, dat je weet bij welke werkgevers je wel en niet welkom bent”. (Recruitment manager)

He pointed out that there were multicultural ‘In-house days’ organized to reach out for potential employees with a culturally diverse background. Furthermore, he focused on the establishment of connections with culturally diverse communities outside the organization. It was intended to create a positive image towards society in order to attract culturally diverse employees. Moreover, attention was dedicated to cultural awareness trainings, which is a specialty of the diversity manager. He assisted with cultural awareness trainings in other divisions from the organization. About 1100 staff members, consisting of managers and employees, received this training. The recruitment manager explained that also within the recruitment team this training was executed. He wanted to create understanding and awareness within his team as it is responsible for the employment of new personnel. The recruitment manager wants his team to select on diversity. However, he assured that the potential employees are selected on their qualities and not on their differences. He stated explicitly that positive discrimination is not accepted. He said that if a situation occurs in which both potential employees have equal capacities and qualities, the candidate who adds more diversity to the team will be selected. Though, if the candidate does not fit the profile, the person is not hired.

The recruitment manager further indicated that in his new position he also has the ability to reflect on the number of diverse employees among the new staff. Next to that, he expressed his intention to create new management tools for recruitment, in order to attract new (diverse) personnel. The diversity manager stated that he perceived issues with the manner of hiring new staff members. He specified that currently the criteria are too focused on attracting Dutch employees.

There were contradictory feelings expressed towards the engagement survey. There were several respondents who appreciated the initiative as it shows other colleagues that diversity matters. Some of the respondents expressed to have their doubts about this management tool. They put forward whether diversity can be indicated in a quantitative manner. Francis said that the section of questions included in the survey, “wat ik zeg heel slachtofferrolig”, it creates some sort of negative image for people who are perceived to be

diverse. Both Ben and Quinn stated that they do not believe in bringing diversity to numbers. They shared the opinion that this forces employees into categories.

Kate was present at a multicultural ‘In-house day’, but did not feel connected to this event. From the respondent’s perspective “a different cultural background” was too much highlighted. However, the person perceived that the attendants appreciated the effort. She said that people prized the organization for the attention to bi- and multicultural backgrounds. Furthermore, Kate explained that there are regular ‘In-house days’, next to the culturally diverse days. Therefore, potential employee can decide on their own, which day is most appealing to them. She also indicated that the organization also arranges lunches for employees with a bi- or multicultural background. In relation to the multicultural ‘In-house days’, this was perceived in the same way. The respondent explained that again the cultural background is overemphasized. An intervention which was appreciated by the informant, was the cultural diversity workshop. This was part of the post-graduate program, for career development. She indicated:

“...het echt wel een mooi onderwerp en vond het altijd leuk om hun verhalen te horen ik wist er al best wel veel van, maar denk dat mijn collega’s die er eigenlijk niet zo mee bezig waren dat die wel echt veel hebben geleerd...” (Kate)

Kate felt that this workshop would help to create awareness among employees. A similar question was raised about creating awareness for diversity within the professional career development program⁸. Nevertheless, James could not indicate if attention is paid to diversity within that program.

Several respondents came up with suggestions for management interventions and tools. There were three respondents who thought that the generation of discussions about diversity topics can be beneficial for both the management and employees. This would also create more interaction between management and employees. Miranda stressed the importance of the employees’ perspective. She believed that employees can assist the management to address diversity. Other respondents addressed the role of the recruitment department, to incorporate diversity. Several informants stated that it might be interesting “to select blindly”, which assures to select on capacities and skills. Lisa saw the advantage of the cultural awareness trainings, which have been executed within the recruitment team. This

⁸ The organization has a division in career development programs. On the one hand there is a program for post-graduates in which post- graduates receive the opportunity to explore various positions over three years. On the other hand there is a program for professionals who want to grow into a vertical or horizontal direction (Internal document, 2016).

person indicated that this helps to create an open mind. In addition, Quinn expressed that the recruitment manager can play a relevant role as he can diversity into practice. He questioned “jij wordt nu manager van recruitment in het kader van diversiteit kun je dan ook echt het verschil maken?” As the recruitment manager was the previous diversity manager, he can concentrate on recruiting diverse personnel.

5.3 Employee perspective

This part gives an impression about the respondents’ perceptions and attitudes towards the diversity policy and the visibility of diversity in the workplace. This section is divided into four sections. In the first section, a reflection is given on the individuals their own perception on the concept of diversity. Next to the visions of the employees, the perceptions of the diversity- and the recruitment manager are presented. The second section, 5.3.2, illustrates the awareness of the employees about the policy. Here, a distinction is made between the various locations and the headquarters, as seen previously. The third section, 5.3.3, presents reflections on individual perceptions about diversity on the work floor. Also here, a further distinction is made between the various locations and the headquarters. The final section consists of opinions about inclusion and acceptance in the organization, as this is important to the organization.

5.3.1 Individual views and attitudes towards diversity

The recruitment- and diversity managers presented comparable assumptions regarding the outcomes of diversity. One stated that diversity creates certain ‘dynamics’ within an organization, which contributes to the development of ideas, innovation and creativity. Next to that, the combination of diverse personalities within a team results in well-considered outcomes. The recruitment manager explained that he believes in diverse teams, in the following manner:

“Ik geloof heel erg in diversiteit en in samengestelde teams, daar geloof ik “...in, omdat ik uit eigen ervaring weet dat dat werkt...Je krijgt betere besluitvorming, omdat je gewoon vanuit diverse invalshoeken naar een probleem kunt kijken, dus het zijn niet altijd de geijkte oplossingen...Je kan leren van elkaar, als je er goed mee omgaat eh... creëert het ook bepaalde vorm van cohesie binnen een groep, waardoor een ieder gewoon prettiger werkt en daarmee ook vaak tot betere en betere resultaten komt...” (Recruitment manager)

In his opinion, diversity leads to effective communication, cohesion and productivity, which overall creates a pleasant atmosphere in the company. Both the recruitment- and

diversity manager agreed that diversity works, as they experienced diversity in practice. They shared the opinion that it is important to emphasize that diversity is also embedded in personalities and characteristics. The recruitment manager specified that the essence of diversity is related to “dat men interesse heeft in elkaar, daar zit het hem met name, dus niet naar elkaar kijken maar waar ik echt oprecht geïnteresseerd ben van nou wie ben jij nou en wat breng je nou mee voor dit bedrijf ”, which means having genuine interest in one another. The diversity manager expressed that diversity contains making an effort to understand other individuals and to eliminate their judgements about differences, in order to accept these differences.

The respondents perceived diversity as equal treatment and acceptance of individuals. Several informants emphasized “dat je ook gewoon kan zijn wie je bent en wat je doet” (Catherin), “ondanks die verschillen dat iedereen gelijk wordt behandeld” (Evan). In other words accept people for who they are, irrespective of physical appearance or personalities. The majority of the respondents indicated to perceive diversity as an asset for the organization, or that diversity in the workforce assists “to create additional value for the organization”. Three respondents expressed that diversity contributes to increased effectivity and productivity within an organization. Additionally, one informant put forward that diversity enlarges organization’s business opportunities, as a diverse workforce contributes to reach a larger group of customers. He explained that:

“Wij doen nu heel veel met China hé.. Ik kan me voorstellen dat het heel handig is om een aantal Chinese mensen in dienst te hebben. Op de werkvloer hebben we heel veel allochtonen in dienst, Turken en Marokkanen, ik denk dat het heel handig is om daar Turken en Marokkanen in dienst te hebben.” (James)

In regard to diversity in teams, several respondents expressed that diversity in teams: “creates different dynamics; enables generation of new ideas; and provides different angles to solve issues.” More specifically, a diverse team generates discussions which create optimal outcomes. Kate gave an example of a team with only dominant males, and highlighted that “het zou goed zijn geweest als daar een vrouw tussen had gezeten, denk ik oprecht, wat meer balans “. It helps to create balance within a team. Because of the involvement of different personalities who have different visions.

Generally, the respondents underlined the importance of different characteristics and personalities. According to them, these differences produce effectivity, additional insights and outcomes. The informants disregarded specific focus groups. The majority of the respondents

emphasized that the essence of diversity lies in “one’s personality”. It is important that “de klik is heel belangrijk, .. je presentatie vermogen en de bagage natuurlijk, wat bied je me aan” (Niles), which relates to what someone brings into the organization, indicated as what type of capacities and skills they have. It does not involve a specification of the individual’s background, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Quinn highlighted that diversity “het heeft te maken met interesse in eh in eh je medemens, dat heeft gewoon te maken met met belangstelling en open staan voor andere culturen en weten wie ze zijn”. This indicates having interest in one another, and be open minded towards others. Igor emphasized:

“mij is iedereen gelijk mijn collega zijn ook mijn collega’s wat je aantrekt hoe je eruit ziet, dat is voor mij secundair ja ik bedoel moet toch goed kunnen werken.... ik wil dus ook op die manier behandeld worden zoals ik uh zelf mensen behandel en andersom en met name gelijkwaardige behandeling”. (Igor)

He embodies to treat people in a same manner as you want to be treated yourself. Some of the respondents connected diversity to positive discrimination. They expressed the fear that diversity may also generate opposite effects. It may portray an image that diversity is created by means of positive discrimination. In order to avoid positive discrimination, various informants stressed the importance that an individual’s character should also fit the organization. Niles stated:

“Ik denk het wel, zoals ik zie het gaat om wat levert die persoon mij aan en graag wil iemand die divers is, die ons met zijn cultuur kan verrijken, maar het moet wel iemand zijn die toegevoegde waarde heeft en in het profiel past en dat is het dilemma...” (Niles)

Even though, whenever an organization wants to adopt diversity, it must carefully select the person that can relate to the corporate culture. On the one hand, the person should have complementary skills and capacities, and on the other hand, its personality must connect to other team members and the company.

5.3.2 Awareness and attitude towards diversity policy

Concerning the awareness of the diversity policy, a distinction is made between the various locations and the headquarters, to indicate the differences among the divisions.

5.3.2.1 Awareness and attitude in various locations

The respondents from various locations appreciated the initiative for diversity. Nevertheless, they were not aware of a written policy. Only Evan recently found out about the diversity policy, as this person gained more interest into the topic. Overall, the respondents shared the impression that the topic is less alive among other colleagues. Lisa put forward that the interest for diversity, is deriving from the headquarters. She said, “omdat eh diversiteitsprogramma, de diversiteitsmanager, heel erg vanuit het hoofdkantoor ook opereert , dus ja het cascaderen door het land in en ook naar de managers, dat zie ik zelf nog niet echt gebeuren”. She expressed that the attention to diversity is less within other divisions and locations. Several respondents shared this opinion, they felt that diversity is generally directed from the headquarters. They indicated that they miss interaction and involvement from the headquarters with the other locations. According to Dean, “ik ben me wel van bewust dat dat ook bestaat uh of daar, nee daar wordt ook eigenlijk helemaal niets echt actief hier in Groningen over gecommuniceerd”. Evan indicated that if the topic is more closely connected to other locations, the interest might increase. Dean pointed out that communication channels on its own are ineffective, as the interest and awareness for the topic is not shown among all employees and managers. He also perceived that the awareness of the diversity policy and management depends on the engagement of the person within the organization. The interest is probably missing if an employee does not feel engaged. Lisa expressed that “maar volgens mij is het zoiets waar aandacht aan moet worden blijven besteed, echt dat het gewoon iets is wat in je DNA moet worden gezet als bedrijf zijnde”. She stated that diversity must be intergraded into the organization’s DNA, to create the awareness and interest for the topic. Francis brought in a different perspective towards the interest of others about diversity. She said the following:

“Ja wat ik hier wel van mij weet, wat ik van mezelf kan zeggen volledig... voor collega’s ook echt geen issue ... met mijn collega’s die weten ook ik ben lesbisch en die hebben zoiets van ja lekker boeiend ... het is zoals ik zeg geen issue waardoor het heel erg geaccepteerd is”. (Lisa)

She indicated that colleagues may show less affection to diversity as they do not perceive diverse colleagues as in issue. For her situation, having a different sexual orientation than the majority, does not make any difference for the person’s colleagues. They are not bothered by the difference, and therefore the topic seems to be less of an interest. Additionally, she expressed the concern that too much attention to diversity, may have the effect that it becomes an issue.

5.3.2.2 Awareness and attitude within headquarters

Several respondents from the headquarters shared the opinion that the diversity policy is generally intended from the top layer of the organization. Additionally, they expressed that from the highest layers narrowing down to the lower layers of the organization, the awareness for diversity decreases. Various informants had the impression that there is a lack of awareness about the diversity policy among the employees within the headquarters. Even among the respondents, the awareness remained to the knowledge that the organization is proactive in incorporating diversity. The awareness of a written policy and its specifications could not be defined. Olivia and Igor pointed out that they tried to create awareness and understanding among other colleagues and their management. They indicated to “trigger het hoger management”. Other respondents shared the perception that they have their doubts about the realization of the policy. As mentioned beforehand, there are no concrete plans presented for the implementation of the diversity policy. Additionally, Igor had the perception that the highest management layers are only concerned with gender diversity, in reality they seem less occupied with overall diversity. Hannah and Miranda shared the thought that the core for implementation of diversity is to create mutual understanding within the workforce. Quinn suggested to address diversity not from the top management level, but from the perspectives of the employees. Some of the informants shared a similar opinion, they specified that “the policy intended from above feels forced” as “a formality for the outside”. James said:

“je hebt bepaalde verwachtingen en die worden niet waargemaakt. Maar ik heb er geen last van. Ik heb er geen last van. ..Eh, alleen ja, het is wel zo, als ik eh, eh, wat ik net ook zei. Als ik morgen ineens merk dat het bedrijf hiertegenover eh, twee Marokkaanse directeuren heeft, dan raak ik daar wel geïnteresseerd in. Dat zou me dan wel aantrekken. Sommige mensen die echt menen dat wij als organisatie een divers beeld hebben, je moet die mensen dan toch ergens vandaan trekken.” (James)

In line with these reactions, several respondents suggested that the policy needs to become more customized for the different locations and, for focus groups. Niles indicated to see the effort for diversity within the organization, but said that written plans need to be revised when put into practice. He stated that the organization must be aware that reality differs from paper. Additionally, it was mentioned that the organization should not underestimate the time and

effort that it takes to implement such a policy and practices. The organization has to get diversity into its DNA, in order to realize the policy.

5.3.3 Diversity in the workplace

Almost every single respondent linked the visibility of diversity to the lower-skilled workers of the organization. The informants indicated that these generally occupy positions at the divisions Packages and Mail. Additionally, the informants indicated that the higher up in the organizational ladder, the visibility of cultural diversity becomes less. James indicated that:

“Er werken heel veel allochtonen bij Post NL. Veel allochtonen zelfs bij Post NL. Maar als je kijkt waar ze werken, die werken bijna allemaal bij productie. Of ze werken bij eh, pakketten, als pakket bezorgers. Maar hoe hoger je in de boom komt, ja hoe minder Marokkanen er werken.” (James)

Various respondents indicated to see a contrast between the work floor⁹ and headquarters. Multiple respondents perceived that the organization is generally directed by white people whereas at the production level the diversity is rich. George shared the impression that “als ik hier eh het station op ga, dan eh zie ik iets meer etnische diversiteit dan als ik hier binnen zie”. He felt that outside the headquarters, people are more colorful than within the organization. Additionally, informants expressed the opinion that the highest management levels within the organization are almost fully occupied by older white males. Other respondents assumed that this does not attract diversity. It was perceived that a diverse workforce, request a diverse group of managers in order to understand each other.

5.3.3.1 Diversity in various locations

It appears that among the respondents from the different locations the presence of diversity in various locations varies. People who explained to work at locations more up in the North of the Netherlands, said that especially cultural diverse employees are less represented. Dean made an estimation that about 98 per cent of the employees within its office have a Dutch background. The informant thinks that company's location in the North, is the main reason. Evan perceived to work in a very diverse environment, in which employees vary from age, gender, cultural background and sexual orientation. He assumed that this had to do with the type of job. He worked for a call center, which is also attracting many students and

⁹ The work floor corresponds to the production level of the organization, which is by the respondents also referred to as the positions in Packages and Mail

housewives. Francis also said to work in a diverse setting. She indicated to know various employees with a different sexual orientation, and colleagues with non-Dutch background. Additionally, she added that a low-educated employee works at the cafeteria. However, she expressed that gays and culturally diverse employees are less represented in management positions. Lisa put forward that there is improvement for diversity. Generally, her team consists of women from the same age. This is not perceived as an issue, however she indicated that more diversity can be useful. Currently, only one woman is from a different cultural background. She said:

“het is mijn directe omgeving daar kan ik dus wat mee, dus dat probeer ik dan naar mijn manager te spiegelen van kijk dit is dan het gevolg van je keuze... sinds een halfjaar een dame bij, ook rond de 30 en ook zwanger, maar die komt dan, vanuit Curaçao, en die heeft dus ook een hele andere cultuur en een hele andere manier van denken, van in het begin dacht ik, wat irritant zo, maar eh later, een paar weken later dacht ik, dit helpt juist, omdat dit juist ons scherper maakt op alle dingen die we maken, dus , ja ik vind het juist heel belangrijk daardoor die diversiteit, ja” (Lisa)

Both she and her manager experienced that this created different dynamics which contributed to the outcomes of the team.

5.3.3.2 Diversity in the headquarters

Overall, the respondents from the headquarters indicated that diversity lacks in the workplace. Especially, in regard to cultural diversity. Interviewees generally responded that it varies per department. Several respondents indicated that on the one hand, there are departments that generally consisting out of white older males, and on the other hand, there are departments that have a variety in at least age, gender and cultural background. The majority of the interviewees named the dominance of white older males in relation to the top management positions of the organization. Ben indicated to see an issue with older managers, as they tend to be less flexible in their way of working. According to him, this mindset does not match with the new way of working. These managers show resistance to this new approach. Overall, females are well-presented in all layers of the organization, but still differences can be identified across departments. The respondents from Information Technology departments, explained that within their department and team, there is a lower number of females, in comparison to other departments. Kate assumed that “ bij HR heb je natuurlijk veel meer vrouwen, marketing, communicatie uh dus ja, dit is een beetje technische

IT afdeling, dus ik denk dat het ook wel daaraan ligt”. She said other departments have more females due to the type of profession. In regard to the older males, George explained that several work processes have been reorganized in its department, mainly due to automation. This resulted in maintenance of jobs, instead of hiring new personnel. Therefore, the average age increased, as management could not afford to hire new personnel. James indicated that reorganization and organizational changes can affect the attraction of new (diverse) personnel. Nevertheless, some of the respondents indicated to see an increase in young women among new staff. Lisa assumed that this might be a shift in generations. Whereas in the past men generally worked, but now more and more women start a career. This can be a reason for the contrast. Ben and George expressed their appreciation for the new insights that younger women have to offer. They perceived that these women generate different dynamics in the work setting. In regard to sexual orientation, Peter perceived that there is no equal representation of LGBT in the organization in comparison to society. He indicated not to know why this group is less represented. He believed that it is generally the unawareness of others which creates a barrier for the individual to share his or her sexual preference. He indicated that:

“Het belangrijkste voor heel veel mensen is het ook gewoon eh ..eeh onwetendheid dus bewustwording ook bij eh... bij eh de teammanagers dat mensen anders kunnen zijn op eh wat je zegt op wat voor een invloed het heeft op mensen die je aanstuurt is ook heel veel te winnen , dan moet je echt wel cultuur ehh, en als mensen op de werkvloer de ene naar de andere woorden in zijn mond neemt die echt niet kunnen dat een manager dan ook zegt nou joh die taal wil ik niet horen van je..” (James)

There is the need to create awareness among the employees within the organization as it seems to come down to unconsciousness. The opinion was shared by George, who also thinks that generally unawareness about sexual orientation among others can be an issue. He had the feeling, that this unawareness is especially present among external employees. These employees tend to make jokes about women and homosexuality, and forget about the possibility to insult others. Nevertheless, when this situation occurred his direct colleagues did not stand up for the him. Peter is convinced that if someone does not feel comfortable to share its sexual preference, this affects the individual’s performance as sexuality is a part of one’s identity.

Some respondents shared their thought about the absence of diversity. Igor related the diversity in the workplace to the diversity in society. He said that similar people

unconsciously connect to similar others. This is also indicated by other respondents who feel that there is generally a homogenous group present within the organization. These people tend to have similar personalities and do not represent diversity. However, the respondents perceived a slow change within the group of new staff members, the group becomes more heterogeneous. Also within the post-graduate program, Kate said to see improvement. In the previous year the majority of the group consisted of people with similar attitudes and behavior, the new group tends to have more diversity both in physical appearance and personalities. Various respondents said to miss diversity within the DNA of the organization, which was believed to influence the presence of diversity.

5.3.4 Inclusion and Acceptance

Next to diversity, inclusion is valued by the organization. Therefore, some questions were directed at inclusion and acceptance within the workplace. In this respect, both respondents from the various locations and the headquarters indicated that they feel included by their colleagues. Several respondents put forward that it also depends on the individual's attitude and behavior. If someone feels different, someone will be treated differently. Some of the respondents had the idea that those who do not accept others, are the ones who will be judged within their teams and departments.

The majority of the respondents indicated that they can imagine that among the lower-skilled workers, the acceptance and inclusion is perceived differently. Miranda assumed that:

“misschien nog wel groter. Want op de werkvloer komt gewoon alles werken. En hier zit toch veel meer eenheid in wat binnen komt. Allemaal op een bepaald opleidingsniveau en vaak ook een bepaalde achtergrond. En ze zijn ook eerlijk tegen elkaar. Wat mooi is. Dan weet je allemaal waar je aan toe bent. “ (Miranda)

Due to the variations in diversity, the work atmosphere is inclusive. Generally, respondents shared the opinion that people from the production level are not genuinely discriminating, but make comments intended as jokes that can be interpreted as discriminating. Nevertheless, several interviewees had the feeling that there are more difficulties at the production level with sexuality, which differed from their feeling about high skilled workers and the perception to sexual orientation. However, this involved the sharing of sexual orientation, it could not be indicated if there is actual discrimination present. In the end this was only based on assumptions.

Overall, the respondents perceived that there is absence of sensitivity towards diversity

in the workplace. For example, Kate shared an experience that someone from another location, as correctly understood, a manager made a remark regarding her skin-color, she expressed that she did not feel offended, but it was an obsolete unexpected statement. In addition, several respondents stated that perceived to be different, helps to understand the differences of other colleagues. Igor explained that “er is in de loop der jaren een antennetje gaan opstaan en dat en dat sprietje is er gewoon en ik vang dingen op ik hoef niet per sé op te letten het valt mij op”, which he related to his biculturalism. He said to be more sensitive for others who are perceived to be different. Evan also said to help others who tend to be less understood in the workplace. Several interviewees agreed on the importance to create understanding among other colleagues in order to create acceptance and eliminate judgments about others in the workplace.

6. Conclusion results and discussion

This study's final chapter demonstrates the conclusions from this case study, found in paragraph 6.1. These conclusions are directed to provide an answer to the research question. Furthermore, in paragraph 6.2, the findings are connected and literature from the theoretical background. That particular paragraph forms the discussion part of the study. Afterwards, in paragraph, 6.3, attention is paid to the several restrictions and limitations of this study. Finally, paragraph 6.4 demonstrates some recommendations for the organization and implications for future research.

6.1 Case Study conclusions

This case study intended to gain insights into the relationship between the diversity policy and, the presence and awareness of diversity on the work floor. In other words, this study aimed to explore how the diversity policy is related to diversity in practice.

Diversity is documented as extension of the business culture, development and engagement. It is an asset for the organization. The organization claims to have an active diversity policy. From an organizational perspective, it is believed that diversity, on the one hand, serves as corporate responsibility, and on the other hand, contributes to business performance and outcomes. The organization perceives diversity as a broad concept, which is aligned with the organization's business principles. These encourage the search for the best employee. In relation to the diversity policy, the organization's employees deserve equal opportunities and treatment, irrespective to their age, gender, handicap, race, sexual orientation, religion, and marital status. Next to that, diversity is linked to inclusion, as people also need to feel acknowledged and comfortable at their work. The employees need to feel at home, and safe at their work. The attitude of the organization in regard to the development of a diversity policy, is that certain groups of individuals need some extra support. This in order to develop, and in addition to be accepted, within the organization. It is believed that these groups can also be linked to society. Therefore, the organization finds it relevant and valuable to illustrate its external stakeholders and the Dutch society the necessity for diversity. The image which is demonstrated is to 'be a reflection of society'. For realization of the diversity policy, the message has been spread through communication channels, discussions and meetings with different divisions consisting of directors and management layers. It was intended to create awareness across all the layers of the organization. Further specifications of this plan, generally focused on four groups, which were perceived to deserve some extra attention. These were indicated as LGBT, women, different cultural background, and PWD.

The interventions, at this stage, have been directed to especially cultural- and gender diversity. Additionally, it is aimed to measure the awareness of diversity and the inclusion of the personnel on a broad scale. According to a statement in the policy, the management board decides on the directions of the diversity policy. It was perceived that there are no further specifications for plans and interventions written down for the execution of the diversity policy.

The employees have a positive attitude towards diversity. They addressed the relevance and accuracy of diversity in a similar manner as the motivations and intentions of diversity forwarded from the organization and diversity management. Both the initiative for corporate responsibility and business outcomes were indicated by the employees. Overall, the employees encourage the adoption of a diversity policy, as they do understand that certain groups need extra attention. Though, different perceptions were added to the organization's ideology of diversity. It was perceived that the employees lacked awareness of the policy. Additionally, the employees showed different perspectives towards the focus groups. The disabled group was described as network and focus group, however as indicated by employees, the motivations for the attention to this group derived from market developments. This resulted in the opportunity to solve this in a social responsible manner. Furthermore, it was perceived that the attention from the highest management is directed to gender diversity, as they are supported from the top layers. The mixed feelings towards the indication of the focus groups, generally stemmed from the employees with a different sexual orientation and those with a different cultural background. The attention on 'being different', created to feeling of being set apart from others. These attitudes were related to images that were perceived from society.

The employees believed that the role of the organization's management is crucial to adopt diversity, as employees can influence individual behavior on the work floor. Though, the employees missed the sensitivity and awareness for diversity. The employees expressed that it seems that management is not stimulated and supported by the organization to look at diversity or address diversity within teams and departments. The awareness of management and employees in regard to the topic was even less among the various locations. There was a contrast between the attention for the topic at the headquarters, and the various other locations and/or divisions.

Furthermore, the employees indicated that the visibility of diversity within the workplace, varies between locations. There were various factors pointed out, among which the geographical location, profession and reorganization. Next to that, all employees agreed

that there is a contrast between the number of culturally diverse employees at the headquarters ,and at the production level. This indicated a contradiction in diversity between highly- skilled workers, and the lower- skilled workers. In relation to the concept of inclusion, which is perceived by the organization as complementary element to diversity, the employees felt included within their team and department. However, an indication was made that employees at the production level may perceive acceptance differently. Nevertheless, these were only assumptions, they believed that these employees acted in different manners than perceived in higher positions.

It can be concluded, that the policy for diversity is intended for organizational outcomes, even as corporate responsibility there is a connection to create valuable resources that add to the business outcomes. The employees have several doubts concerning the policy. They put forward that the policy is directed from headquarters, and not among other locations, therefor the topic is less highlighted. Furthermore, there was a slight concern that too much emphasis on differences creates opposite effects.

Overall, the employees miss collaboration and interaction between management and employees from across all organizational layers. There seems to be no comprehensive framework, there is a policy and loose networks with a lack of collaboration. The awareness across all layers is not present yet. The intention to measure this awareness and presence may give directions, however employees shared that this also can lead to stigmatization. Moreover, the management is not yet encouraged or stimulated to implement diversity. Therefore, it created the perception that sensitivity and feeling to the topic is missing, among both employees and management. It was perceived that HRM and recruitment can play a part to create awareness and to incorporate diversity. The support from the highest management is present, as the CEO personally believes in the power of diversity. Her personal conviction can help to spread the message within the organization. For external stakeholders she can be perceived as role model. The employees also expressed that the corporate culture to be valuable for the incorporation and acceptance of diversity. The business culture influences the individual's behavior on the work floor. The employees indicated that the business culture is open and transparent, which, therefore, allows to incorporate diversity. The employees emphasized to find it important that a person needs to fit the team and the organization. The policy was connected to lack of presence and realization in practice. It is perceived that the organization needs to integrate diversity in its DNA, therefore time, effort and customized plans are required.

6.2 Discussion

Before the execution of this research, literature indicated that there is a gap between policies and the practices of these policies on the work floor in multinational organizations. The intention was to investigate to what extent policies from the meso level relate to what is happening on the micro level. Additionally, literature research pointed out that there was an absence in, on the one hand, studies that concentrated on European organizations in relation to the concept of diversity and diversity management, and on the other hand, the incorporation of context and power relations related to the organization. Both assumptions were incorporated within this study. Still, this case study intended to explore the ideologies from management and the organization, aligned with the ideologies of employees individually.

A brief reflection on the macro to meso level pointed out, that the organization's ideology and attitude towards diversity has a relation to the ideology of the European Union. The EU prohibited discrimination on any ground, and wants to give this some additional support to national governments and regional institutions. In order to diminish discrimination in society and on the labor market, the EU appoints the advantages and beneficial outcomes of diversity management for European organizations (European Commission, 2012). In relation to Dutch ideology towards diversity management, there is a commitment to the initiatives of the European Union. Nevertheless, policies in the Netherlands are generally directed to education and integration of minority groups in society (Extra et al., 2002; Kroon, 1990, 2000; Parlement, n.d.; Rijksoverheid, n.d). The organization missed encouragement from the Dutch government to support diversity management. The initiatives have to come from the organization, and not from the government. This has been appointed by Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2006), that is especially difficult for the EU to overlook to what extent European member states adopt diversity.

Nevertheless, the interest from the organization in diversity is not unexpected, the effects of globalization changed the composition of the workforce in the European context. The daily operations from organizations changed, and the need to follow up on global developments requires more attention from organizations to incorporate diversity (Jonsen et al., 2011; Nataatmadia & Dyson, 2005; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Point & Singh, 2003; Singh & Point, 2004). There are various definitions given to the concept of diversity and diversity management. The organization's definition for diversity is connected to the acceptance of any difference, irrespective to age, gender, handicap, race, marital status, religion, culture, ideas, convictions and sexual orientation. This definition can be related to the two-dimensional concept of diversity defined by Litvin (1997), and the definition of the 'broad concept' from

Mor-Barak (2005). Both the superficial and deeper-level characteristics of individuals are embedded within this definition (Harrison et al., 1998; Harrison et al., 2002; Jonsen et al., 2011).

According to Tatli et al. (2012), diversity is perceived as intervention to manage demographic changes of employees. Literature connects diversity to several outstanding motivations for organizations to adopt diversity: justice, social equality, and anti-discrimination (Ahmed, 2012), as well to the contribution of organizational performance (Jonsen et al., 2011), and brand building (Swan, 2010). These phenomena can be reflected on the organization. In the first place, the organization values diversity as it helps to reach out for new clients, which generates competitive advantage. This is linked to organizational performance. In the second place, it will attract new employees. It is assumed that without the attention and presence of diversity, the organization is not attractive to a particular group of potential employees. Therefore, it will miss out on talent. In the third place, it was pointed out that the organization has a certain position in society, which therefore affects its image whenever the organization neglects diversity. The organization wants to 'be a reflection of society', which is portrayed to external stakeholders. In other words, the necessity for diversity is linked to image, which is related to brand building. In the last place, it is believed that diversity adds to the engagement of employees. Here, the link is made to the importance of inclusion and acceptance of individual employees. This can be perceived as initiative for justice, social equality and antidiscrimination. The organization identified various focus groups as it is believed that there are certain groups visible in its workforce that can be detected from society, which that deserve additional support and stimulation (Mor-Barak 2005).

There is a relation identified between the individual's attitudes and the organization's attitude towards diversity. The employees' ideologies corresponded to both the business and justice case of diversity. From the employees' perspective diversity is intended to 'be a reflection of society'. It is as a logical development due to the organization's size, therefore diversity occurs naturally within the workforce. It was believed that a reflection of society, means to accept diversity and to make an effort to create a diverse workforce across all layers (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). It also demonstrates that a mix of people works (Ahonen et al., 2014). Overall, the employees perceived diversity as an asset for the organization. It was put forward that it helps to attract customers and new employees. Moreover, it creates different dynamics in teams, and discussions are generated from new angles (Ahonen et al., 2014; Jonsen et al., 2011; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011).

Both the business and justice case have meaning to the organization and the employees. The organization's ideology to create differences in order to stimulate minority groups, raised various reactions among the employees. The employees from the focus groups understood that certain individuals need some extra stimulation, therefore they appreciated the effort. But for others, the organization's reasoning to stimulate these groups was not understood. They perceived that money was spent on messages to portray an image for diversity matters. Employees had difficulties with the contradiction between saving costs and reorganization, and spending money on diversity matters. A distinction was found between 'those who manage' and 'those who are managed' among employees from a different sexual orientation and a different cultural background (Ahonen et al., 2014; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). The emphasis on the differences, was perceived as being set apart from colleagues (Ahonen et al., 2014; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). Among others, the emphasis on a part of their identity was connected with the general attitude and stereotyping of these groups in society. There was the concern to be portrayed in a wrong manner, which influences their identity in the work setting (Alvesson & Willmot, 2002; Siebers, 2009). The women had less difficulties with receiving additional help. The attitudes towards gender diversity were way different, this is related to the fact that women were actively encouraged from the highest management levels, and in addition they had no negative relationships with their identity in society (Alvesson & Willmot, 2002). There was also a different ideology towards the PWD group, which was not perceived in a similar manner than the other groups. This was a set example for the justice case, as this was initiated from market developments, which was connected to a corporate responsible initiative that led to cost reduction Özbilgin and Tatli (2011). According to the employees, the initiative derived from the workplace, and not the other way around. It has been incorporated with a different mindset than the other groups (Jenner, 1994; Kandola et al., 1995; Nataatmadia & Dyson, 2005).

The relation to 'be a reflection of society' and the visibility of diversity in the workplace, was not equally represented per location. Overall, the employees pointed out that the geographical location, profession, and organizational changes had an effect on the representation of diversity on the work floor (Alvesson et al., 2008; Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007; Zanoni et al., 2010). A striking contradiction is seen between the representation of cultural diversity in the headquarters and the production level. This illustrated a contrast between high- and low-skilled workers. This gap can be related to the perception towards cultural diversity in the Dutch society (Koopmans, 2003; Koopmans et al., 2005; Schaafsma, 2008; Siebers & Van Gastel, 2015), which is also perceived in other European countries. Even

though, organizations become more dependent on ethnic minority groups, still there is the ideology that these groups are lower- skilled, therefore these groups are forced to fill in lower-skilled positions (Al Ariss et al., 2012, 2013; Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010; European Commission, 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013; Özbilgin et al., 2011). Employees pointed out that the lack of visibility of diversity among locations, can also affect the attractiveness for certain ‘diverse’ groups.

Nevertheless, the employees believed that there is an inclusive climate in which diversity is accepted, and where employees are appreciated for their qualities. According to them, the corporate culture does add to the acceptance of diversity (Alvesson et al., 2008). Due to the effort of the CEO, there is an open and transparent culture created, which has had a positive effect of the organization. The ideology for diversity from the CEO increased the attention to diversity. The corporate culture shows the willingness to adopt diversity (Thomas & Ely, 1996). There was one remark made by various employees, who assumed that the understanding of inclusion is different among low-skilled workers, as their beliefs, attitudes and behavior are different.

In order to explain the beliefs, attitudes and behavior of the employees towards diversity, the concept of identity is used (Alvesson et al., 2008; Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007; Siebers, 2009; Zanoni et al., 2010). According to Alvesson and Willmot (2002), diversity can be used to align employees’ identities to the desired organizational objectives. In this notion, diversity is built up on the corporate identity of the organization, which is connected to the image and representation of the organization in relation to the business goals (Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007). To a certain extent the employees share a similar ideology towards diversity. Nevertheless, there is some resistance to the organization’s ideology. There is a gap intended between the ideologies from the work floor and the ideology of the organization (Jonsen et al., 2011). The diversity discourse is implemented from a top- down approach (Kirby & Harter, 2003). Kirby and Harter (2003) stated “that if diversity is framed as something to be managed, then the power to manage diversity remains at the higher organization levels” (Kirby & Harter, 2003, p. 40). Even though, the employees believed that the highest management level encourages the adoption of diversity, these particular layers cannot appoint what is happening on the work floor. It was perceived that they are too distant from the work floor. The dedication from the CEO and top management layers is insufficient, as the execution of the policy needs participation from the employees (Kirby & Harter, 2003). The beliefs and attitudes of the employees pointed out that there was a lack of sensitivity towards to topic from other colleagues and, among the management. There needs to be

understanding for diversity from all layers of the organization (Nataatmadia & Dyson, 2005), which is currently missing. The employees believed that a bottom-up approach with the incorporation of perceptions from the work floor would help to realize the diversity policy (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2010; Zanon et al., 2010). At this stage, diversity is appointed as interest of the organization, without the involvement of collective understandings from the employees (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). The employees do not contribute to the creation of an understanding to diversity, therefore it is necessary that the organization interacts with both management and employees. There is an alignment in the understanding of diversity, as both the management and employees addressed the importance of personalities and skills, which can make someone unique and different, irrespective to someone's physical attributes (Harrison, et al., 1998; Harrison, et al., 2002; Jonsen, et al., 2011). It was perceived that the essence of diversity lies in accepting people for who they are, this portrays how differences can be valued (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998). In order to integrate diversity, the organization should encourage perceptions and visions from different angles, in order to generate change (Thomas and Ely, 1996). According to the employees, diversity needs to be integrated in the DNA of the organization.

6.3 Limitations

There are several limitations encountered within this case study. There are two issues perceived with the time frame. It was intended to start the research in March, which has been delayed to starting the execution of the research in June. This resulted in less time to hand in the research. In the first place, I have not been able to carry out structured observations. Consequently, a general impression is created from the interactions on the work floor. The attendance in a workshop and meeting have been in the back of my mind while processing the data. Desk research is carried out to support the data gathered from the interviews. Next to that, this research is executed from the headquarters of the organization, therefore there was no presence at different divisions on other locations. As I had limited control over the respondents, there was also no informant indicated from the production level of the organization. The perceptions of the interviewees, have formed substitutes for this issue. The majority of the interviewees has worked at other locations or for other divisions, and otherwise, they were familiar with the setting as they had to collaborate with these divisions from time to time. Even though, these might have been perceptions, from the results various patterns were identified which appointed similar impressions from other locations and divisions. In addition, four interviews were conducted by phone. Although, the interviews

were recorded, this quality was less in comparison to face-to-face interviews, so not everything was precisely understood while writing down the transcripts. Furthermore, a disadvantage of the telephone interviews, was that I could not see the gestures that were made during the interview. Next to that, the establishment of rapport is more difficult with telephone interviews. I tried to resolve this restriction by talking in an encouraging and enthusiastic manner. Furthermore, I tried to listen even more carefully than within face-to-face interviews. Moreover, one interview was conducted via Skype. In regard to this interview, the connection got lost, and could not be recovered. Therefore, this interview has been proceeded through the chat. It was useful to ask more to- the-point questions. It was not inconvenient, but emotions and tone of voice could not be heard. The use of symbols and emoticon have at least created some emotions. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, as there was no intention or need to conduct the interviews in English. Nevertheless the results were presented in English. These translations may lead to slightly different meanings on paper. Even though, I have translated the interviews carefully, there is still the notion that I am not a native speaker of English. Therefore, quotes in Dutch are added, as support to capture the actual meaning. Finally, I have tried to establish rapport, nevertheless I requested for sensitive information which might led answering carefully. Furthermore, I asked informants to recall on their memories, which may deviate from how actual situation has been in the past. Even though, by constantly checking the data, this could not completely be resolved while processing the data. It is recommended for future research to carry out structured observation, as perceptions can deviate from reality. Furthermore, it would be interesting to spread the research over multiple locations, next to the headquarters. This in order to gain a comprehensive view of the different dynamics portrayed across all organizational layers. This will also add to gain better understanding of how to adapt the diversity policy.

6.4 Practical implications and directions for future research

As a final section, there are some recommendations given to the organization, and additionally some directions for future research are presented. The motivation and attitude of the organization are appreciated. The first steps are made, because of the belief and conviction from the CEO, the commitment from the EC, and the establishment of a diversity department with a diversity manager. The knowledge and experience of the diversity manager in relation to the realization of diversity in practice are an advantage. Nevertheless, it is a significant task to bring diversity into practice. Overall, it is recommended to approach diversity in a pluralist

manner. This perspective recognizes the unique skills and differences that individuals bring into an organization. This diminishes the emphasis on the specific difference. It encourages how differences are valued. As the policy is intended from above, the ideologies for diversity from the employees should be involved. For now the power is intended from above, however the power should also be spread among the employees. It was perceived that the management was too distant from the work floor in order to understand people's beliefs, attitudes and behavior towards diversity. A bottom- up approach is recommended. In order to gain deeper insights into the perceptions from the work floor, further qualitative research is recommended.

Next to the involvement of the employees, the managers of these employees play a crucial role, as they can regulate behavior from individuals. Management can play a major part, as it can help to break down these categories and stereotypes, by showing genuine interest and appreciation of the various identities on the work floor. This generally improves the relationship with the employees, as there is an effort made to incorporate their opinion and exchange perceptions about diversity on the work floor. It promotes coherence and collaboration among management and employees. This would also be in line with the ambition to become 'one organization'.

Finally, it is recommended to customize the general policy as there are no concrete plans presented. It is important to formulate different understandings towards diversity that match the expectations of different division. Therefore, it is important to indicate to what extent it is possible to adopt diversity. The individual may have different qualities and skills that seem to add to the team, but next to that, it also important to indicate team dynamics in order to see if the individual will be included in the team. This both in order to avoid conflicts and rejection. Whenever the team functions well, and there are no group- inequalities perceived, it is important not to force diversity into a team.

In regard to future research, previous studies generally focus on gender or ethnic/ cultural diversity, nevertheless the EU and organizations concentrate on the broad concept of diversity. Literature indicates that diversity becomes more important as well as business across borders. Next to that, the EU encourages member states to adopt diversity, but research in organizational settings within a broader context are still limited. Additionally, as the concept of diversity becomes more accurate, it will also help organizations to address diversity in a broad manner. Further research can give organizations directions of how diversity can be managed.

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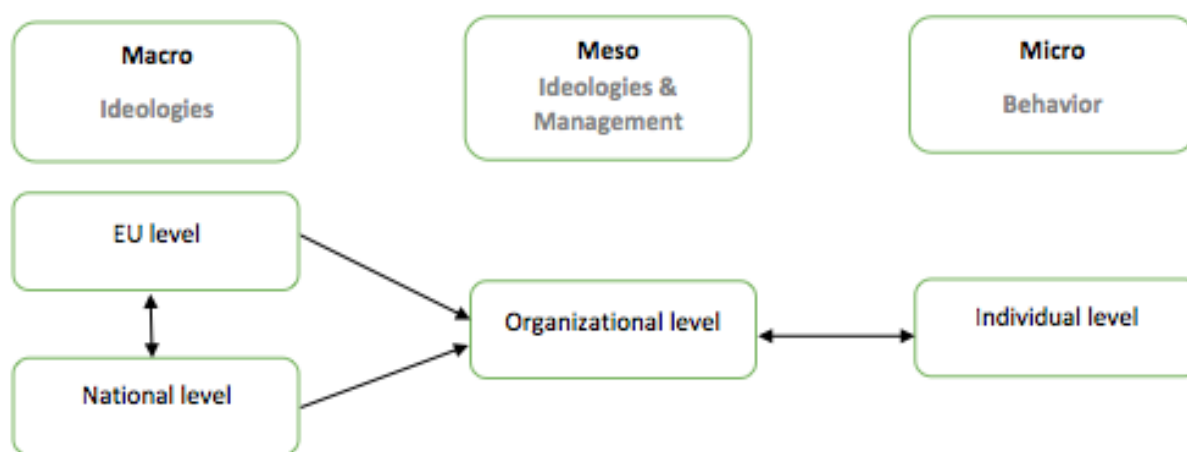
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8. Appendix

I. Conceptual Model



II. Overview Interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Relation to diversity	Function	Location
Ariana	F	23	Sexual orientation	Mail deliver	Amersfoort
Ben	M	44	Sexual orientation	Project manager IT	Headquarters
Catherin	F	40-50	Sexual orientation	Mail deliver	Zaanstreek
Dean	M	54	Sexual orientation	Process manager	Groningen
Evan	M	55	Sexual orientation	Counter assistant	Den Bosch
Francis	F	30	Sexual orientation	Account manager	Breda
George	M	50-65	Sexual orientation	Front Office HR SSC	Headquarters
Hannah	F	30-40	Gender diversity	HR manager	Headquarters
Igor	M	37	Cultural background	IT Business Technology	Headquarters
James	M	30-40	Cultural background	IT	Headquarters
Kate	F	26	Cultural background	IT Business Technology	Headquarters
Lisa	F	30-35	Gender diversity	Occupation manager	Den Bosch
Miranda	F	31	Gender diversity	Change management	Headquarters
Niles	M	30-40	Social Responsibility	Data Services	Headquarters
Oscar	F	30-40	Gender diversity	HR manager	Headquarters
Peter	M	30-40	Sexual orientation	Process overhead manager	Headquarters
Quinn	M	40-50	Social Responsibility	Manager Outsourcing	Den Bosch

III. Interview Guideline

Ten eerste, hartelijk dank voor de medewerking en de tijd. Het onderzoek is voor het afronden van mijn master in Management of Cultural Diversity, aan de Universiteit van Tilburg. Mijn naam is Juliette, 22 jaar, geboren en getogen in Waalre, Noord-Brabant en ik doe een Het uitgangspunt van mijn onderzoek is het in kaart brengen van medewerkers hun visie omtrent diversiteit binnen Post NL.

Ten eerste zou ik graag van u willen weten:

- Kun je een korte introductie over jezelf geven?
- Wat doe je voor Post NL?
- Wat heb je met het onderwerp diversiteit en inclusie?

Diversity & Inclusie

- Wat doet Post met diversiteit?
- Ben je op de hoogte van het diversiteitsbeleid bij Post NL?
 - En wat vind je ervan?
 - Zie je het beleid terug in de praktijk?
- Hoe zou je zelf diversiteit omschrijven? Met andere woorden wat houdt het voor je in?
- Hoe zou je inclusie omschrijven?
- Waarom denk je dat Post NL zich bezig houdt met diversiteit? Heb je enig idee waar het vandaan komt?

Werkvloer

- Wat voor een verschillen in mensen zie je op de werkvloer op eigen kantoor/ werkplaats?
 - Wat zijn je ervaringen met diversiteit?
 - Heb je een divers team?
 - Hoe is de acceptatie onderling op afdelingen en teams? Wat voor een geluiden hoor je als het om diversiteit gaat?
 - Is er ooit/ wel eens sprake van discriminatie of pesten? Enig idee op welk vlak?
 - Vindt je dat iedereen gelijke kansen krijgt bij Post NL? (voorbeelden)

- Voelen collega's zich gewaardeerd op de werkvloer? En jijzelf?
- Vinden er misverstanden plaats die te maken hebben met diversiteit?
- Als er problemen/ misverstanden zijn tussen collega's en dit wordt geuit, heb je het idee dat dit door de leidinggevende of Post NL serieus wordt genomen? (hoe ga je daar als leidinggevende mee om?) Eigen leidinggevende?

Afsluiting

- Heb je misschien wat ideeën voor Post NL voor diversiteit en inclusie?
- Wat zou je willen veranderen of verbeteren?

IV. Overview of the Coding Process

Sample statements & Quotes of respondents	The process from the initial code to the re-code	The process from re-coding to selective coding, which form the central themes
<p>Diversity embraces differences among people, very broadly interpreted without categorizing</p> <p>Being a reflection of society, and accept each other and contribute in sensitive manner; not forced</p> <p>Helps when someone not similar enters team and brings in new angle; works as eye opener; generates discussions; creates self-reflection</p> <p>Diversity to reach more clients, as business opportunity; values diversity in personality</p> <p>More diversity in teams helps to create a balance; is convinced that personal attitude is most important; personality over cultural background</p> <p>Experiences diversity brings in different dynamics, especially involving different characteristics</p> <p>Need variety of personalities</p> <p>Balance of male- female adds to team performance</p> <p>Diversity adds to (team) performance as brings in different angles</p>	<p>Interviewees talk about own perceptions and outcomes of diversity</p>	<p>Individual's perception and attitude towards diversity</p>

<p>Diversity differs very much among location</p> <p>Headquarters differs from packages and mail, over there much more ethnic diversity</p> <p>Dominant white head office especially older males at various departments</p> <p>Slowly increase of younger (female) workers</p> <p>Not so much diversity visible</p> <p>There is a connection between high and low workers probably different at packages and mail</p>	<p>Interviewees discuss the visibility of diversity within the organization and departments</p>	<p>Diversity within the workplace</p>
<p>CEO influence on increase diversity, there is not so much change yet, however CEO did help to increase</p> <p>CEO and EC do support diversity</p> <p>Engagement of CEO to diversity</p> <p>Dedication higher management in mentor program essential</p> <p>The CEO values diversity</p>	<p>Interviewees discuss that influence of the CEO in relation to diversity</p>	<p>Influential factors for diversity policy and management</p>
<p>It is an idea to have a neutral recruitment team</p> <p>Change of procedures of recruitment as might be misfit with people from cultural background</p> <p>Recruitment can play role in hiring diverse people</p> <p>Already executed training among recruiters to create open mindset</p> <p>Recruitment can play part in having diversity in practice, especially as current manager has been the diversity manager</p>	<p>Interviewees discuss the possible role for recruitment to create a diverse workforce</p>	<p>Suggestions for recruitment process and management approaches</p>