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Immigrant worker's induction training in Finland – Case Petmo
project

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Abstract

The organizations' shareholder value maximization is one of the oldest beliefs in the business economics. The era of corporate responsibility is not the only comprehension, but an organization is seen as a compromise of various goals and targets set by stakeholders include workforce. Induction training for newcomers forming a comprehensive selection of training and development functions in organisations and that were seen of having a role changing and socialization function. In other words it is an opportunities for the newcomers to create unofficial networks inside the work community.

This study aims to investigate the induction training practices in use of organizations with an ethnic minority workforce and development of induction training of diverse workplaces and development method. The study uses findings of investigations regarding ethnic minority group members' induction training practices in Finland as a part of PETMO-project. The paper uses that material as it captures successfully the typical situation in Finnish organisations at the moment.

The study found that **a)** internationalising and diversity are clearly a benefit for the company/community, but they also require emphasis and investments both in recruitment, induction training and work familiarisation as well as in comprehensive HR development.

b) The great challenge seems to be the lack of resources and time during the induction – more valuation, information (feedback and assessment systems), innovations and training for the induction trainers (communications). **c)** induction training system should be the same for everyone, but in different tasks the flexibility may be present in e.g. the order the issues are presented – for one the concrete work and its feeling, knowing the working community and developing the skills are better foundations for general level issues and commitment, the other may approach issues more natural through the theoretical framework

Keywords: Induction training; Corporate responsibility; Workforce ethnic diversity; Human resource management

Introduction and Background

The dual concerns, which have gained a great deal of attention over the last decade in the business world, include corporate responsibility and diversity management of organizations. Academic discussion on diversity emerged in the early 1990's in North America and the United Kingdom both in organizations and management discussions. Specifically, workforce diversity, due to increasing labour mobility, a predicted labour shortage along with public policy encouragement has furthered interest in the subject.

The contemporary corporate responsibility (CR) is often discussed at many levels within the society, but there are a variety of interpretations as to what it means. CR proponents have argued both academic and business worlds that the legitimate concerns of corporations should include such broader objectives as: stakeholder engagements, equitable employment practices, sustainable growth, and long-term social and environmental well-being (see Blair, 1998; Donaldson and Preston, 1995).

CR is not a new concept in Finnish society and entrepreneurship (Thome 2005, Niskala 2004, Mäkinen & al 2003, Heikinheimo 2003, Papanaan & al 2001). Social responsibility emerged in the "old good times" during the industrialization, when the mill owner took care of their employees' healthcare and education, or in the early development stages of the welfare society (Vauhkonen, 2007).

The definitions of corporate social responsibility are numerous as well as diverse. There seems to be disagreement about what the term actually implies. CR is the mechanism/approach by which individual organizations can meet the challenges of sustainable development (Vauhkonen, Päivi; Jutila, Marjatta & Mohamed, Abdirizak H. 2007). Thus, it covers all three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social issues. In companies, the dimensions of responsibility interrelate tightly with each other. In this research, the CR definition will be used on the basis of the sustainable development definition adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and Agenda 21. The Rio Summit identified the three pillars of sustainable development as the following (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992): social progress, economic growth and environmental protection.

This study approaches diversity in an organizational context as a construction of 'differences' and how managing diversity may enhance corporate responsibility management. Managing diversity can be seen as a strategic response by organizations to changes that emerge in the labour markets and focuses on the utilization of the entire workforce. This

diversity management might refer to particular dimensions of organizational change such as organizational structure and culture, or to the interactions between dimensions of whole organization; it might arise from the interactions between technology and environment, or between organizational design and management style.

Not surprisingly, some management boards of organizations are increasing their attention to the objectives encapsulated by CR as their responsibilities extend to include a variety of interests represented by diverse stakeholder groups. Diversity management (DM) is one of the most important issues in the discussion of the social dimension of corporate responsibility. On the other hand, improved environmental performance also requires a fundamental shift in the organizational culture and human resources and the organisational capabilities required to manage them.

Induction training for ethnic minority members

Induction training is one important element forming a comprehensive selection of training and development functions in organisations. As mentioned before, HR practices influence on the organisational socialisation and induction training has an important role in organisational socialisation process. During the training sessions and induction period newcomer receives information of goals and values of organisation, and these occasions are also opportunities to create unofficial networks inside the work community. Training by itself has a role changing and socialising function. It affects social skills of employees and furthers the process of social integration by increasing information flows in the company. (Green 2000; Harsling & Van Ruysseveldt 2004.)

When newcomers enter the organisation, they experience both formal and informal socialisation practices. Informal socialisation includes all kinds of daily interactions between other organisation members. Informal socialisation is hard to control because people involved are not been selected or instructed by the organisation how to teach the newcomer. Formal socialisation includes things such as training and education, career planning and formal feedback regarding the functioning of employees. Induction program is probably among the first experiences of formal socialisation newcomer faces. (Ardts *et al.* 2001.)

According to Fowler (1990), induction signifies all the actions employer can take to help the employees to adjust as quickly and successfully as possible. The most essential purpose of induction training is to help the new employee to become familiar with the new job, the people and the organisation, and to settle into the new environment. Several writers

have noticed, that when new employees start working in the organisation, they face huge amount of information. Without actual induction program, lot of this information will be absorbed anyway, but more slowly and incompletely and most probably through frustration and mistakes (Stirzaker 2004). Through well-planned and executed induction program learning is faster and logical.

Induction training is a two-way process which benefits both the new employee and the organisation as a whole (Stirzaker 2004). For the newcomer training offers support and reduces stress and anxiety. Roles and expectations regarding the new job become clearer and new working methods become easier to adopt. Also both the physical and social organisational environment take form faster in newcomer's eyes (Fowler 1990). However, the employee is not the only one to benefit from induction training. Recruitment is always an investment, and retention is an important issue to organisations. The organisation has also a learning and developing opportunity during the induction. During the process the organisation must observe its ways of acting while those are communicated to the newcomer (Kjelin & Kuusisto 2003). Stirzaker (2004) states that, the newcomers should also be allowed to question the customary ways of doing things, since an organisational outsider can make valuable observations on things that old employees have gone blind to.

The basis of successful induction training is a functional induction training practice, that is linked to a human resource planning, induction training planning and programs and choosing the instructors. In her article, Stizaker (2004) stressing, that the induction training practice should be updated regularly.

Induction is necessary for all people who join the organisation, either starting a new job and entering the organisation for the first time, or taking a new job within an organisation. Induction is necessary also after breaks and when new development is introduced. There are particular groups of newcomers that have special needs regarding the induction training. Most of the times induction training is aimed to the newcomers in the organisation, but often also employees that return to work for example after parental leave, study leave or after some other longer break, and also employees that are shifting job inside the organisation, need induction training (Meighan 1991). There might be also project workers, trainees, or other temporary workers, that may not stay in the organisation for a long time, but who require induction training. Sometimes also old employees need training, when organisation goes over changes or methods of working change. (Fowler 1990.)

Some representatives of cultural or ethnic minorities may have learning styles that differ from the majority. Also the results of the learning may be different. That is why

learning should be considered by observing different cultures and by trying to find suitable and appropriate ways to deliver the information needed in the organisation. (Beardwell, Holden & Claydon 2004).

Starting to work in a new organisation is a remarkable experience, that newcomer will remember for a long time. The first atmospheres during the reception influence the image newcomer gets from the organisation. These first impressions may be hard to change later on (Stirzaker 2004). The induction training should begin with a conversation where the newcomer and instructor get to know each other and they go through the induction training program. Job description and the role in the organisation are presented to the new employee. It is important to introduce the new person to the other people in the organisation, at least to the closest colleagues. (Fowler 1990.)

Part of the induction is the employment training. This includes the limits and the framework of the employment, as well as entitlements and responsibilities regarding the work. Employee is entitled to a written statement of the particulars of the employment (Pilbeam & Corbridge 2006). The fundamental purpose of the induction training is teaching the actual work and ensuring the correct and safe working methods (Fowler 1990). The goal of teaching the work should be the general view of the different parts of the work and mastery of different section of work in its entirety (Kjelin & Kuusisto 2003). Successful induction requires analysing and describing the job and training needs (Pilbeam & Corbridge 2006). The instructor needs to explain the course of the work, the working methods and the critical points of the work. Also safety issues and matters that effect the crowding of psychological burden should be taken into account. (Vartiainen *et al.* 1989.)

Ethnic minority members' work life

In defining and analysing workforce diversity, it should be acknowledged that diversity is a relational term. It is commonplace in extant research that diversity is defined by comparing differences to typical archetypes from the majority (Hiller & Day 2003). Surface-level diversity factors are defined as visible differences (such as age, gender, and race), whose effects will diminish as time goes by (Jackson *et al.* 1995; Kandola & Fullerton 1998; Kossek & Lobel 1996; Cox 1993). These also refer to traditional forms of diversity, in which employees are considered as members of different identity groups (Thomas & Ely 1999). Deep-level diversity factors, on the other hand, are defined as invisible differences (such as attitudes, beliefs, values, religion, culture, lifestyle and personality), the effects of which will

gain strength over time (Jackson *et al.*, 1995; Moore 1999; Kandola & Fullerton 1998; Kossek & Lobel 1996; Cox 1993). In this study the definition of diversity is limited to ethnicity and tangible variances, such as race and culture.

The extant research on workforce diversity can be divided into three levels of investigation: studies that emphasise workforce diversity from the perspective of 1) the organisation, 2) the group, and 3) the individual. The first field of workforce diversity research is the largest in terms of empirical studies. Group efficacy (Cox 1994; Kossek & Lobel 1996; Tayeb 1996; Thompson & Gooler 1996; Sargent & Sue-Chan 2001), problem-solving and creativity (Konrad 2003), innovativeness (Richard *et al.*, 2003), market experience and knowledge (Gomez-Mejia *et al.* 2001; Konrad 2003; Krishnan & Park 2005), obtaining new human resources (Dass & Parker 1996; Deresky 2000), and flexibility of the organisation (Deresky 2000) are all suggested to improve as the level of workforce diversity increases. There are also many studies suggesting that increasing diversity in general results as multiple problems for the working community. Typical challenges listed especially for the ethnic minorities are language skills, differing working customs, culture-related habits, differing social practices, different educational and professional capability levels (see e.g. Ansari & Jackson 1995; Kossek & Lobel 1996). To continue the benefits-challenges discussion, it should be observed that the results of the extant research are partly incoherent (Richard *et al.* 2004). For example Timmerman (2000) suggested that diversity is unrelated to team performance, and Cady and Valentine (1999) found that diversity has no effect on innovativeness. In many societies former ethnic minorities are turning to be tomorrow's majorities in changing labour markets. However, still in some countries, a growing multiethnicity amongst the workforce is only now developing to be visible and significant. In both cases there are several issues to be considered when investigating the ethnic diversity and special features of work life.

Research within the organisational perspective has also revealed that organisations may have different kinds of approaches towards workforce diversity. The approaches identified are equal opportunities, diversity management and capabilities approach. Equal opportunities paradigm begins from the need derived typically by legislation to manage diverse workforce. This paradigm assumes that the organisation has no internal need to increase diversity, but it comes externally. Organisation operating along this paradigm acts typically reactively and tries to assimilate individuals into the organisation in a way that differences cause as little troubles as possible (Kirton & Greene 2000; Colgan & Ledwith 1996). According to equal opportunities approach changes in external environment increase

the level of workforce diversity and reactions are typically assimilative (Colgan & Ledwith 1996; Kirton & Greene 2005). Diversity management paradigm is typically described to be the follower of the equal opportunities. Organisation following this paradigm sees diversity as an asset that can help the organisation to obtain its business goals. This approach understands better the differences and fosters them in order to benefit of them (Cornelius 2002; Gentile 1996; Thomas 1999; Thomas & Ely 1996). Capabilities approach adds full utilisation of the resources of workforce into the attitude of an organisation. It emphasises learning from the different individuals and is typically described to be the next level of diversity management paradigm (Cagnon & Cornelius 2000).

Other relevant group-focused aspect into the diversity is the concept of otherness. It has been described as an identity produced for the other or self and it is often linked with the feeling of non-togetherness, unfamiliarity, and secondariness (Banks 1988). Kristeva (1993) has suggested that otherness is based on the prejudice but furthers the perception by being certain and experience-based knowledge. Otherness is typically due to take place in people's interpretation processes when a person entering in a social context is perceived to be different (Jenkins 1996), but it can also be a person's self-interpretation model, where a person in his/her own surroundings perceives to be different and stands out from the crowd, and thus otherness is relevant for the individual perspective as well. Typically the perception of otherness is explained to lead to a situation where interpreter's preconceptions affect on the real interaction (Jenkins 1996). It seems that otherness can be used to understand ethnicity and ethnic identity in many ways. Hall (1992) has suggested that otherness and out-group membership are outcomes of a process in which one's own identity group, in-group, is consolidated. The attractiveness of out-group is typically diminished in order to maintain the in-group, and thus, for the out-group members produced otherness becomes more unpleasant and negative (Hall 1992). The members of the out-group, for example minorities, may also know instinctively that something negative is linked to them.

Bearing in mind the viewpoint of socialisation and induction training, Taormina (1999) has compared the influence of eight different demographic variables and organisational socialisation on job satisfaction and commitment. According to his research, demographic variables - such as age, gender, and the level of education - are alone relatively weak predictors of job satisfaction and commitment. Instead there is a much stronger correlation between organisational socialisation - including training, employees' understanding of their jobs, and co-worker support - and both job satisfaction and commitment. Taormina and Bauer (2000) suggest that even though cultural differences should

be considered in HRM in international context, the contents of socialisation processes are applicable across different national cultures. McMillan-Capehart (2006) suggests that organisations that want to invest on workforce diversity, should implement individualised socialisation tactics, since these tactics encourage an innovative role orientation and organisation can benefit from the advantages of the strategy. Overall, human resource management and its related functions are argued to be key tools in leveraging the associated benefits of a diverse workforce (e.g. Kirton & Greene 2004; DeNisi & Griffin 2001; Kossek & Lobel 1996; Tayeb 1996; Wilson 1996).

According to Clugston, Howell and Dorfman (2000) in cross-cultural context, cultural socialisation is antecedent to organisational commitment. Employees' commitment to different levels of organisation can be partly predicted by their national culture. For example high power distance, uncertainty avoidance and collectivism are related to organisational commitment. Furthermore, McMillan-Capehart (2005) suggests that organisations with diverse workforce should implement individualised socialisation tactics within a collectivistic organisational culture. In this way organisations can benefit from the background and experiences of employee and also promote teamwork and cohesive work community. Individualised socialisation tactics – individual, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture – encourage innovative role orientation and enable making most of the diversity.

As we take a look at different human resource management subfields, research clusters incorporating diverse workforce can be identified almost in every field (see e.g. Kirton & Greene 2005; Kandola & Fullerton 2004; Cox 1993). Typical for the research is a clear adoption of the viewpoint either of the individual or of the organisation. When summarising the key issues important for the ethnic minority members' work life, it should be acknowledged that the definition of diversity is always relational to existing composition of the workforce. Organisations may have a will to increase the level of diversity as it has proved to offer certain benefits. On the other hand, empirical investigations have listed challenges typical for the working community with high levels of diversity. Organisations have also differing approaches to workforce diversity that lead to differing activities in the organisations. Furthermore, when considering important elements, otherness and ethnic identity seem to be of importance. The similarity attraction theory appears to be partly related to these. There are some investigations on the organisational socialisation, commitment and individual diversity, and generally it has been said that HRM with its responsibility areas should react and change when differing ethnic and cultural aspects meet in organisations.

Method and setting

This study focuses on the starting situation investigations of the organisations regarding ethnic minority group members' induction training practices in Finland as a part of PETMO-project. The aim of the PETMO-project was to clarify the know-how needed for induction training programs for immigrant workers and their processes. Furthermore, the project attempted to find out the induction schemes that are used in the organizations that participated in the project and how they could be improved in order to better integrate immigrant workers and improve their competences in workplaces. At the beginning of the project in spring and summer 2005, 103 employees operating in 17 both private and public sector organisations in Helsinki area were interviewed for the knowledge gathering on the present situation before any developmental activities. Organisations operate on manufacturing, heavy industry, service sector, residential, cleaning, treatment, construction and logistics as well as medical, and food production industries. This paper uses that material as it captures successfully the typical situation in Finnish organisations at the moment.

The interviewees had varied positions in the organisations including HR-managers, foremen, shop stewards, ordinary workers, inductees and mentors. Both Finnish and immigrant workers were interviewed. To gain as wide insight into each organisation from five to nine participants were included from each organisation. The approximately length of interviews were 75-100 minutes. Interview files were carefully written open and analysed with an inductive approach on the data. When identifying central themes from the data, saturation and centrality of the statements and opinions were used. To support the validity triangulation was ensured.

Findings

In this section, some characteristics, observations on extant induction training programmes and central development requirements for each organisation are shortly introduced. In table 1 are the findings from each organisation presented. First there are few relevant organisational characteristics, and then central observations are introduced on the induction training program. At the end, the development requirements are listed. Due to word limitations, interview sections are not delivered in this paper.

Table 1. Preliminary observations on the organisations.

Org.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Induction training program / process	part of comprehensive training and education practice Common welcome-program, lasts two days Detailed induction material available both as written and in intranet	focuses on practical aspects of work, year cycle central in work	systematic, participants are recruiter, induction trainer, and supervisor Induction trainers have a specific 5 days training everyone are required a hygienic certificate feedback system does exist (summer employees fill a form, longer term employees	tailored based on tasks and position; interaction supported, continues with supported working in practice with personal trainer and virtually through intranet (lasts several months, in principle a one year cycle) Supervisor participated closely,	material exists, maps focusing on different topics, not delivered to newcomers Supervisor selects a person responsible of a similar task to act as a trainer for a new hire Lots of short-term contracts,	In cooperation with the head organisation's own recruitment courses Induction training checklist, not particular work orientation	Common, general level induction training event; lots of knowledge available through the intranet	head induction trainer selected, producing instructions, follows the reporting, manages the feedback process instructions in workplaces Supervisor: initiating and practical issues, all the central work responsibilities are introduced	basic principle comprehensive working General induction lasts two days and handles the whole organisation induction training program is being updated induction training program is available in many forms (maps, intranet, notice board), Induction program is fixed; new	Different organisation cultures are being fitted together, induction training program is being updated At the moment at shortest and with a short work period an induction card is used; responsibility lies within close supervisor	general model for the induction, In practise the induction is more informal and this approach is favoured General information and background are planned to be collected into the DVD-form, in which a newcomer may familiarise him/herself with time; tailoring considered A newcomer	The new employee has to take own responsibility on being inducted The induction structure, which lasts two days The city has its own general level induction training model, according to which common

			have discussions with an induction trainer and a supervisor)	personnel has meeting once a month	complete induction training lasts even a year			and performance is tested, worker gets feedback; assessment follows	employee gets his/her own map and paper versions of the intra when entering the work	and the worker	collects a map and gets a mentor from work colleagues Induction trainers are given two day course	events are organised and material are available from the intranet
Org.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Development requirements	<i>need for more knowledge from diverse workforce, more community oriented communications and knowledge on different practices, more possibilities in practices, more English-translated material</i>	<i>developing communications (e.g. utilising translators, language challenges lead to security risks), more time and best practices (e.g. successful transfer requires overlapping)</i>	<i>: more time on induction training (ensuring the language skills is a security issue), developing the team working further, communications (introducing the new employees, tailored induction</i>	<i>there isn't particular development need in organisation; organisation employs lots of best practices for others. Naturally supervisor training and diversity knowledge can always be</i>	<i>developing the team work, industry is challenging and hard for the individual, better pay would support overall activities</i>	<i>work safety management (language skills); more time on induction training, improving the working atmosphere and delivery communication of instructions</i>	<i>more time on induction, continuous learning principle in rapidly changing environment, closer linkage between the recruitment and induction, community's</i>	<i>induction process and training do not get enough recourses, delays at different phases; more written material needed, even if ethnic grouping is not supported, in induction</i>	<i>leadership training, the need for further education, fitting different work cultures together, supervisors' responsibility to act as good examples in a working community</i>	<i>fitting together the work cultures, more tailored and individual-based induction that considers the strengts and weaknesses</i>	<i>diverse workforce, teamwork, assessment of the induction training</i>	<i>not enough time and resources on induction, induction assessment, culture sensitivity and informal community atmosphere</i>

			<i>program)</i>	<i>developed</i>			<i>diversity</i>	<i>training own language trainer could be useful</i>		<i>of a person; focus on language skills and work safety (usage of videos and pictures in issues central for work safety)</i>	
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Based on above observations, some conclusions and recommendations for the future actions can be made. Firstly, internationalising and diversity are clearly a benefit for the company/community, but they also require emphasis and investments both in recruitment, induction training and work familiarisation as well as in comprehensive HR development. Secondly, great challenge seems to be the lack of resources and time during the induction – more valuation, information (feedback and assessment systems), innovations and training for the induction trainers (communications). Thirdly, induction training system should be the same for everyone, but in different tasks the flexibility may be present in e.g. the order the issues are presented – for one the concrete work and its feeling, knowing the working community and developing the skills are better foundations for general level issues and commitment, the other may approach issues more natural through the theoretical framework.

Fourthly, many elements of induction training are, indeed, important for the company and the organisation, e.g. work- and information safety regulations, interpersonal interaction and communication, solving the problems, shop steward system, team work and the participation into the community. Fifthly, a diverse, strong working community is created only in interaction process, in which every parties are equally considered and individuals can be seen also as unique persons. And lastly, language skills have impact and sometimes the emphasis to support and develop it may be good investment, such as healthcare and education system as none of us is born a master.

Discussion

It is important to understand induction as a part of a bigger process that is development of human resources. In other words, induction includes already reciprocal interaction which has been created in the recruiting process as well as its maintenance; integration into the organisational/working environment; constant education and development possibilities; teamwork; quality control management; empowerment; and evaluation and feedback systems for the new employees.

Most of the participating organisations have a general induction period, which are arranged as a common event or as written material for the new workers. All the interviewees agreed on the importance of having an induction system (plan, form, card, or folder) at workplaces. However, they wish for more flexibility in the implementation process. In the

operational tasks, it is important that the foreman and the team are close, but in the office tasks one can be more independent in studying the new tasks that delegated.

Some of the participating organizations have complete manuals for the induction programme that are available in paper and electronic form to the newcomers. A significant innovation that has been proposed is the use of figurative material (DVD, video) in induction of the immigrant workers and for further guidance. In addition to that, all the interviewees emphasized that the same principles should guide the induction of immigrant and Finnish workers. However, securing language skills and understanding the occupational tasks is an important issue that reduces security risks and improves performance.

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