The Diversity Manager In Sport: A Cultural Figure To Guarantee Social Development Without Barriers

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to prove that, through diversity management in sport by a professional who has the requirements and skills that characterize the role of the Diversity Manager, there can be both social and economic benefits in this field. If managed inefficiently and ineffectively, diversity represents a barrier to the sustainable development in any context, especially in sport, which is full of sporting, social and economic relationships between subjects considered different from each other. In this regard, also in sports, it is assumed that diversity management should be entrusted to a Diversity Manager able to value it as a valuable resource to achieve a socio-economic benefit.

Keywords: *Sport, Multi-Cultural Development, Diversity Manager, Social Aspects, Cultural Role.*

Introduction
Over the past few decades the participation of women, minorities, older people and people of different nationalities in the sports world, as well as in business in general, has increased (Bollinger & Hofstede, 1989; Cesareo, 2000). Moreover, a different composition of the workforce is gradually taking shape up to the highest managerial levels, which, in turn, must deal with a number of different preferences of consumers, different from each other for racial, ethnic, religious and economic reasons. This results in the need to implement a Diversity Management policy that can enhance diversity both in the purely entrepreneurial context and, above all, in a context such as that of sport which has more than one sphere of interests: that athletic, socio-educational and economic. This work stresses the importance of relying, for this management mode, on a professional who has a series of features that go beyond the mere basics notions of enterprise: the Diversity Manager. In this regard, the benefits that this Manager would be able to generate in the sports sector are determined, both through improved economic performances of the company and through a social and cultural development of reality.

1. A management model that enhances the Culture of Diversity
The understanding of diversity has been evolving since the Seventies, when the term was used mainly in reference to minorities and women in the labor market. It has long been clear for the managers that talking about workforce diversity meant increasing the participation of women and members of national and ethnic minorities, thus hiring more workers belonging to "identity" groups. According to a constitutional amendment of 1974- 1975, the U.S. Government pushed companies to hire more women and members of minorities, and give them more opportunities of professional growth (Brazzel, 2003). Diversity experts have begun to question the effectiveness of the so-called affirmative actions. They have noticed that they were often isolated interventions in the field of human resources, which could not move out into the whole company and the working environment. In the beginning, creative recruiting and hiring methods were developed to change the human mosaic in the company. However, staff turnover rate was often high and women and members of minorities were not

progressing up in the internal hierarchies as had been hoped. The beneficiaries of the actions ended up being stigmatized as unqualified. The dominant culture of white AngloSaxon men perceived equal opportunity as a covert form of reverse discrimination. As a result, equal opportunity programs in companies were often dismantled or neglected without bringing the expected benefits (Brazzel, 2003; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998). The need to move beyond the human resources department (and at the same time include it) is clear in the principles of the management model of Diversity Management, which acts as an active and inclusive policy for diversity in the company context and, as a direct consequence, for the community. Diversity Management is, in fact, something more than just understanding and accepting diversity as such. The main question is analyzing how a company can actively and strategically deal with diversity. So it is about identifying what activities need to be placed into motion, in order to implement effectively a company strategy which integrates diversity as an asset into its identity (Mathews, 2010). First of all, in this regard, a company needs to know whether and why it needs a strategy for diversity; secondly, it must carry out a self-analysis in terms of accommodation since, in order to accommodate certain differences, the company has to acknowledge and respect them. Thirdly, the integration process could be accompanied by tensions which should be accepted and resolved in a positive way (change management) Fourthly (and finally), probably the whole enterprise will have to change somehow, otherwise there would not be the cultural change needed for valuing diversity and the company itself (Bombelli, 2003; Castellucci et al, 2009). In fact, once the focus of a company is on recognizing relevant differences and similarities within the company and in its environment, the next question is how to manage it all; the sensitivity to differences is necessary but not sufficient to make positive processes happen. As a result, Diversity Management is about integrating the ideas and practice of diversity into the managerial and learning processes within a company and its environment. Business decisions need to be taken in an atmosphere of trust, acceptance and appreciation. Thomas & Ely (1996) sum up this point very clearly: "Yet this new model for managing diversity lets the organization internalize differences among employees so that it learns and grows because of them. We are all on the same team with our differences—not despite them. "Managers aim at getting results. They are normally not interested in the apparently pleasing grand theories. In order to achieve their objectives and gain advantage over their competitors, managers need to understand the external environment, the market, the company's mission, its vision, strategy and culture. So their main purpose is to be able to identify which is the mix of diversity with the potential to create for the company a strategic advantage and increase the ability to achieve the goals. Having said all that, Diversity Management can be considered a process which creates added value for the company through an active and conscious development of a futureoriented, strategic and communication management process of accepting and using certain differences and similarities as a potential in an organization (Buemi, Conte & Guazzo, 2016).

2. Multi-Cultural Role of Diversity Manager

Once analyzed the useful management approach for valuing diversity, it needs to identify the main features of the professional who will have to implement the above-mentioned theory. In fact, it is of primary importance to detect the skills and characteristics of the personnel that has to develop, spread and put into practice this approach. In other words,it needs to ensure that the management really has the skills, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve by himself the project of creating an organizational culture able to mange diversities, avoiding that this remains only a mere rhetorical ambition. Of main importance are the questions of how to make the organizational soil fertile so that the potential of a diverse workforce can grow better, how to make sure a multicultural mentality develops starting from the leadership, and

what tools to use in order to identify any gaps in the personnel' skills and remedy it appropriately (Cox, 2001). In the literature, some key requirements that managers should possess in order to encourage, support and maintain a diverse workforce are highlighted; these are factors required to develop those skills that enable the management to transfer their professional skills from a monocultural environment to a multicultural context. They are identified in a series of attitudes, skills and knowledge which depend on the development of three dimensions: a multicultural mentality (organizational openness); multicultural skills and multicultural leadership ability (Arredondo, 1996; Cox, 2001; Cox, & Blake, 1991; Dass & Park, 1999; Lauring, 2013). More specifically, a multicultural mentality is essential in order to fully embrace the principles and values of diversity. The organizational culture must be inclined to recognize and accommodate the different ways of thinking and acting of the colleagues. People with a multicultural mentality have the following five characteristics (Trickey, 2004):

• New Thinking, namely the propensity to extend one's own knowledge in areas that are very different from their own professional one, the ability to consider the issues and the various aspects of reality according to different perspectives, the tendency to accept new ideas with enthusiasm and curiosity.

• Welcoming strangers, that is, the desire to search for people who have different experiences, perceptions and values from their own ones, the interest and the fact of knowing and building relationships with people from different backgrounds by trusting others easily.

• Acceptance, namely the tolerance and the recognition of different behaviors from their own one, by feeling at ease in multicultural environments and accepting everyone for what he is, without trying to change him or to make him behave differently from how he usually does.

• Flexible Judgment, characteristic of those who avoid jumping to hasty conclusions about new people, and are ready to change their "first impression" about them after the experience. Individuals with judgment flexibility also tend to discard any negative stereotypes that may exist on a certain identity group, in the case a person belonged to it.

• Valuing differences, aspect that characterizes those who like working with people from different backgrounds, who are prone to embrace new assumptions and beliefs about how to work together effectively, while respecting the other's values even if they are different from their own ones. In relation to the multicultural skills, Working effectively in a multicultural environment requires advanced communication skills, because it needs to interact with people with their own beliefs, principles, visions and attitudes, sometimes also contrasting. For this reason, it is essential that the resources within the organization hold these three skills:

• Perceptiveness, which ensures that all parties to which the communication is aimed fully understand the meaning of the conveyed message. People characterized by perceptiveness focus attention not only on verbal signs, but also on the non-verbal ones, which are often underestimated but that are (often dominant) part of the communication.

• Listening Orientation: this skill mainly refers to the predisposition to "active listening." Those who develop an "active listening" not only carefully listen to their various stakeholders, but also use clear and explicit modes to make their attention evident. In an organization characterized by a diverse workforce this attitude is essential, because it is very important that people perceive to be understood, considered, included and integrated into the relationships between colleagues.

• Transparency: Conveying information in a diversified environment can be a real challenge for all individuals belonging to different identity groups, because simple messages sent with the best intentions can be misunderstood, and can even be a cause of distrust between colleagues. Finally, for what concerns the multicultural leadership skill, the importance of the top management commitment has often been underlined. Also and above all the business

management must have the requirements that make it suitable to embrace diversity policies. The two competence areas that would characterize a multicultural leadership are:
• The ability to influence: It refers to the importance of the top management authority in a multicultural environment to manage the staff in a way that makes everyone feel at ease and properly motivated.
• Skill in finding synergistic solutions: The problemsolving activity in a diversified environment can be complex, but it is also a source of opportunities; in fact, for the organizational leaders, it needs to have the ability to overcome the complexity of the diversities in order to capture the best ideas, wherever they come from.

Diversity Manager in Sport

Sport is simultaneously one of the main social and economic contexts characterized by a plurality of relationships between individuals different from each other for different reasons, and a potential tool to stimulate new processes of integration and inclusion (Besozzi, 2005; Cesareo, 2000; Di Palma & Tafuri, 2016; Di Palma, Raiola &Tafuri, 2016; Granata, 2012). This gives rise to the fundamental importance of efficiently and effectively manage diversity in this area through the Diversity Management approach. This management strategy should also be implemented by a professional with managerial and financial skills, as well as sporting skills, because nowadays sport is increasingly governed by the entrepreneurial sphere which influences the social, educational and purely agonistic one too (European Commission, 2007). If the management of diversity in sports was entrusted to a person with the requirements of the Diversity Manager, as described above, there could be new benefits in the social and business realities that characterize this field (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Light & Dixon, 2007 ; Serio, 2014), such as:
• Strengthening cultural values within the organization. Sport is rich in cultural values (Isidori & Fraile, 2008) and the Diversity Manager, through integration and respect for every single cultural characteristic of the subjects in the sports society, whether they are athletes, coaches, managers or employees, is able to limit potential conflicts and internal differences, bringing mainly a socioeducational benefit allowing a further development in terms of sporting and economic performance.
• Enhancing reputation. A sports reality, like any purely entrepreneurial reality, can definitely increase the quality of its reputation, both in the federal context and in the economic market, thanks to the presence, and especially to the active participation, of subjects that are different from each other. In fact, the Diversity Manager creates conditions which make every individual express his peculiarities, and fosters the dissemination and promotion of an environment free of exclusive barriers.
• Increased ability to attract and retain talented personnel. The Diversity Manager's abilities allow him to access to human resources without any form of prejudice, by implementing an exclusively reasoned assessment on the real skills of the athlete, the coach or any worker. This allows taking advantage of a human capital that is more skilled than that belonging to non-inclusive corporate contexts; furthermore, the integrated and multicultural environment encourages talents not to willing to move to other realities, even if there are more favorable economic conditions.
• Improving motivation and efficiency of the workforce. As a consequence of the previous benefits, the Manager's way of managing makes the workforce more motivated and this multiplies its productivity, which results in greater chances of being successful in sports and subsequent economic and financial returns.
• Improving innovation and creativity The diversity Manager, by aiming at the establishment of a diverse group and through the management and enhancement of the many diversities that make it up, can make use of a plurality of perspectives on the same situation allowing him to

stimulate the creativity of the sport society in every its area, from that athletic, perhaps using an innovative training method used in another nation, to that entrepreneurial, using for example a marketing strategy of a particular culture. Furthermore, the possibility of relying on a multi-varied set of knowledge and experiences also proposes a plurality of alternatives in the problem solving process (Moss Kanter, 1983).

It is significant to note that these benefits concern the whole sports reality and not just certain sectors, and contribute to the generation of improved conditions both from a purely sporting point of view and from a social, educational and economic one.

Conclusions

Diversity management in sport, like in other entrepreneurial contexts, has proved to be an element of fundamental importance for the achievement of an economic objective, and for the improvement of a cultural, educational and social condition. Diversity Management is the way in which the integration (and above all the enhancement) of diversity in the sporting sector, which is characterized by multiple economic and social relationships between heterogeneous physical and legal entities more than any other sector, is promoted. It was analyzed that this management model, in order to be implemented in the best way, requires a manager with specific professional and personal characteristics who can develop optimally potential benefits. So the Diversity Manager, even in the context of sports, takes on a role that is crucial to the attainment, on the one hand, of the economic objectives that now characterize the sports organizations and, on the other hand, of the social and cultural objectives that have always been the foundation of the sustainable development of the sporting activity over time.

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