

Bożena Gajdzik

Gender Diversity in a Metallurgical Company

Striving towards efficient management is resulting in the devoting of increasing attention to employees. Researchers stress that contemporary organizations are made by people who are characterized by significant diversity (Chatman, 2010, p. 448). Acceptance by companies of the Diversity Charter* is both an inspiration and motive for diversity management. A basic quality differentiating employees is gender. The labor market model developed in the past and based on male dominance, especially in traditional industries such as metallurgy and mining, is slowly undergoing transformation subject to market economic conditions. Organizations deemed to be typically “male” are evolving towards applying greater importance to questions of employing women and respecting their rights (The Labor Code, 1998). This paper presents a theoretical look at questions of gender diversity, with special stress on work–life programs. It also investigates practical solutions of women employed by the ArcelorMittal Poland metallurgical company.

Key words: gender diversity, work–life programs, metallurgical company.

Introduction

An organization is a place where many people work. Employees perform the tasks (responsibilities) they were entrusted with and whose outcome has an impact on the development of the organization. Individual workers differ by many factors. The diversity (*diversus* – opposite) of workers is reflected in individual qualities or in sets of qualities (Chatman, 2010, p. 448). Diversity is a consequence of the

* The Diversity Charter is an international initiative promoted by the European Commission. It is a written obligation on the part of businesses to introduce a policy of equal treatment of employees who differ amongst each other by one or more qualities.

existence of a relation such that “the entity only differs with respect to another entity” (Austin, 1997, p. 347). Innate qualities are considered basic differentiating qualities. They determine the whole life of the individual. Among such basic factors is sex (Bukowska, 2014, 165, as cited in Seymen, 2006, p. 297). For their part, other authors rank sex among the visible (noticeable) factors in the context of analyzing the diversity of staff resources in the organization (Bukowska, 2014, p. 165, as cited in Clair et. al., 2005, p. 78; Roberson, 2004, p. 6). In a statistical perspective, a worker’s sex is considered a demographic variable. Taking into account sex, employees are classified as men or women.

Sex is one of the key characteristics for classifying workers on the labor market. The past two decades have seen a shift in not only the approach of employers to hiring women, but a new awareness of the importance of their role on the labor market has also coalesced (Wiśniewska–Szalek, 2007; Fuszara, 2002). Transformation of the economic system started many changes in various social and economic areas. With the strengthening of the market economy, the stereotype describing a woman as someone not working and concerned with the upbringing of children and care over the household have gradually weakened. However, according to some researchers these changes are too slow (Gontarczyk, 1995, p. 103). The bulk of Polish society continues to speak out in favor of the traditional subdivision of roles and spheres of activity into male and female (Siemieńska, 2000). However, in analyzing statistical data covering the past two decades, the share of women in the number of people employed has risen. In the initial years of the transformation it was at a level of less than 40%. Following transformation the highest level of this indicator (48%) was noted in 2000 (GUS, 2014). Women work as employees, are self-employed, and are themselves employers. However, the share of women who are self-employed and employers is lower than among men (GUS, 2014). Managerial positions are occupied by women at a level of 36.3% (as cited in Kupczyk, 2009, p. 19). Poland was in 53rd place in the Gender Gap Index 2012 ranking—its lowest position was in 2007 when it was 60th, while its highest was in 2010 when it was 42nd (<http://kartaroznorodnosci.pl>).

Subject to conditions of ever-present “diversity,” support programs targeting women take on special significance. These programs are often defined as “work–life” programs (Cascio 2001, p. 180). Actions they contain make it possible to combine professional work and household duties. The architecture of these programs makes reference to the Diversity Charter. Their addressees are all groups of employees regardless of whether or not they have children or are childless, but who must face personal problems that may have an impact on work results. Although work–life programs do not restrict the number of addressees, research (1996, the Allied Signal

study; Cascio, 2001, p. 189) demonstrates that the family has a significant impact on the decisions of women to stay with the company. The choice between raising children and performing one's job as well as possible, in spite of promotion of a partner-like family style (the right of men to paternal leave), continues to primarily pertain to women.

On the basis of topical literature and case studies, the author proves the existence of the phenomenon of the integration of work-life programs with personnel strategy from the perspective of the expectations of women. This integration provides opportunities for building the basis for a partnership of the sexes in manufacturing companies that have been dominated by men to date. Moreover, work-life programs are fully compatible with the promotion of diversity management in traditional industries, which include metalworking. It is for this reason that the Arce-lorMittal Poland metalworking company has served as a case study. The following hypothesis has been assumed:

Modern metalworking companies promote gender equality in key areas of human resource management. The employer considers meeting the expectations of women a priority so they can reconcile professional life with their private lives.

Diversity Management in Work-Life Programs

Workers differ not only by sex, but also by age, education, race, sexual orientation, ancestry, health, family status, social status, personality, competencies, skills, professional experience, religion and irreligion, fitness, trade union membership, political party affiliation, etc. The set of qualities is open in character in spite of efforts at their classification undertaken by O. A. Seymen (2006, p. 297–298); J. A. Clair, J. E. Beatty, and T. L. Mac Lean (2005, p. 78), Q. M. Roberson (2004, p. 6), D. A. Harrison and K. J. Klein (2007, p. 120), and D. A. Thomas, and R. J. Ely (1996, p. 5). Categories of employee diversity are primary–secondary, demographic–nondemographic, and visible–invisible.

The starting point for diversity management is the answer to two basic questions:

1. Who are our employees as a whole?
2. Who is every single employee?

These questions can be considered as a base in the analysis of diversity. They are thought constructs for further consideration on qualities differentiating individual workers so as to ultimately receive an individual picture of each employee (one of a kind). Knowledge acquired about an employee allows the employer to meet the needs and interest of that employee as well as, to cite A. Wziątek–Staśko (2012; 2013), to effectively motivate workers so they work better.

Approval by the company of the concept of diversity necessitates a reaction to problems linked with reconciling professional work with personal life through work–family programs. The first such programs, referred to as “Work–Family Programs,” made their appearance in American companies (Johnson & Johnson, Tennessee Bank, NationsBank, and Sears) in the nineteen–nineties (Cascio, 2001, pp. 177–198). Their addressees were working parents. The main purpose behind these programs was to make it possible for parents to care for their children. The applied solution was flexible working time (NationsBank and Johnson & Johnson) and the introduction of seasonal care over children all the way to creating childcare centers (Cascio, 2001, pp. 177–198). With time the programs were expanded to encompass other working groups—e.g., employees caring for the elderly and even employees who could not deal with stress and professional burnout. In thematically expanding the programs their name was changed to “Work–Life Programs.” These new programs were intended to reconcile work with obligations stemming from family life with respect to all possible problems.

Work–life programs are directed at all company employees who face personal or family problems that might have an impact on their results at work. Research into the influence of home problems on work output were undertaken by J. T. Delaney, M. A. Huseid (1996), M. A. Youndt, S. A. Snell, J. W. Dean, D. P. Lepak (1996), J. P. MacDuffie (1995), and J. B. Arthur (1994), as well as by specialized organizations such as the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and Northwestern Mutual Life (Cascio, 2001, p. 191).

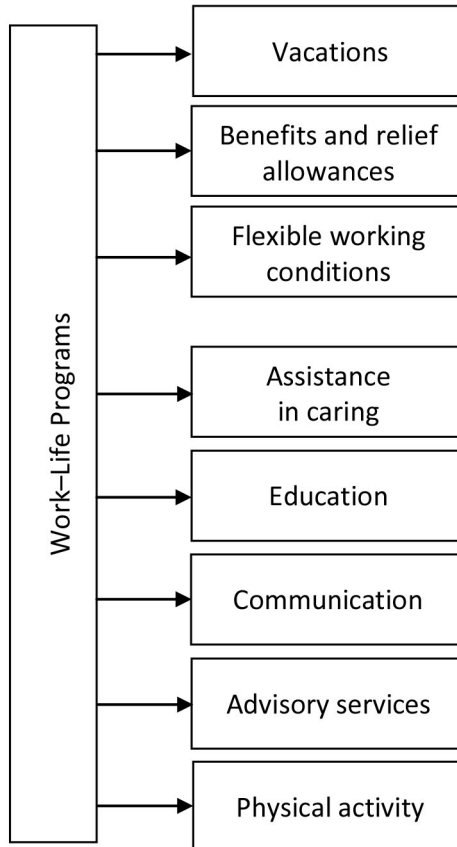
As stated by Preffer (1997, as cited by Cascio, 2001, p. 185), work–life programs are, on the one hand, “symbolic effort” because for workers they are a signal allowing them to draw conclusions regarding the company philosophy and accepted values, while on the other hand they are a “system of concrete actions aimed at individual groups of employees” (taking into account the diversity of employees). These programs have their starting point at the favorable attitude of the employer with respect to the personal problems of workers. Even the most progressive work–life programs will prove useless if they are not supported and respected by direct superiors as well as coworkers. However, the relevant organizational culture must pass into concrete action. It is assumed that every company must create its own program assumptions. There are problems linked with the copying of ready solutions. Assumptions relating to program architectures can be adapted to the concrete company. Simplified structural diagrams of work–life program actions have been proposed on the basis of topical literature and case study analyses for the needs of this publication (Figure No. 1). For its part, Table No. 1 provides more information on individual work–life program modules.

Table No. 1. Work–Life Program Module Structure

Area of activity	Examples of actions taken
Vacations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sick leave ■ Parental leave for mothers and fathers ■ Parental leave for adoptive parents ■ Child care leave
Benefits and relief allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cash benefits (subsidies for children’s vacations and employee vacations, healthcare and rehabilitation subsidies) ■ Material benefits (school textbooks, other children’s material benefits) ■ Relief and assistance for people facing difficult life, family, and material situations or random accidents ■ Complimentary or partially complimentary services by the workplace for various forms of leisure, cultural–educational activities, and sport–recreational activities (purchases of tickets, subscription cards, books, newspapers, etc.) ■ Special events (gifts and refreshments for professional holidays and other occasions—Children’s Day, Women’s Day, Senior Day, etc.)
Flexible working conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Flexible working hours ■ Part–time work ■ Work at home ■ Job sharing ■ Job rotation
Assistance in caring for the employee’s dependents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Company nursery schools and kindergartens ■ Company day rooms for children and the elderly ■ Seasonal care over children ■ Weekend care over children ■ Special events (St. Nicholas’ Day) ■ Organized recreation for children and the elderly at company or other centers
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Educational programs relating to various aspects of life ■ Health and preventive programs
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Counseling letter box (for traditional letters as well as electronic mail) ■ Talks with superiors on family matters ■ Talks with coworkers on problems at work and personal problems
Advisory services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advice in professional and personal matters (lawyers, psychologists, educational counselors, physicians, etc. on call)
Physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support for various forms of physical activity organized by the workplace (support for sport clubs and special interest groups) or subsidies (aerobic, swimming, weight–lifting)

Source: Own study.

Work–life programs are not individual programs targeting a single group of recipients. The introduction of a single work–life program could generate negative feeling or even indignation and a sense of injustice (Cascio, 2001, p. 182). It is for this reason that companies implement program packages forming a diversity management system in the company.

Figure No. 1. Work–Life Program Architecture

Source: Own study on the basis of E. A. Bardoel et al., 1998, pp. 31–49; case study analyses (own work).

Work–Life Programs Addressed to Women

The increasingly popular partnership of the sexes justifies the need for employing women in manufacturing companies that had, to date, been dominated by typically male occupations. Traditional industrial plants are an opportunity for the professional development of women from the perspective of women’s needs (women’s expectations regarding working hours and home obligations are taken into account). Work–life programs are a way to increase flexibility in the performance of work en-

trusted to women. It is also a form of motivation, in the form of stimuli, showing that company values concentrate on matters of women and their families. These programs make it possible to increase the involvement of women and decrease fluctuation.

Sex is a situational variable in publications in the field of human behavior in the organization (Robbins, 1998, pp. 256–257). An overview of literature shows that there are similarities and differences between men and women. Among significant differences are matters of leadership, work organization, and mindset. As to leadership, S. P. Robbins (p. 257) states that women tend to prefer a democratic style of leadership while men apply a directive style. Women encourage their subordinates to take part, they share their decision-making powers as well as information. They prefer to lead by drawing coworkers. The application of teamwork by leaders–negotiators is becoming increasingly universal. In such situations, women seem to be more useful due to qualities such as flexibility, sharing information, and social skills. Women concentrate on winning, losing, and rivalry to a lesser extent than men (Robbins, p. 258). Long-term research by Roy Adler (2001) at Pepperdine University in the United States demonstrated a link between women in managerial positions and company profitability. Polish research reports also stress the importance of women in the organization. This author recommends a look at the research of T. Kupczyk (2009) on the participation of women on the management and supervisory boards of the top 500 companies in Poland (2008), A. Świdzińska, *Kobiety w strukturach zarządzania lubelskimi przedsiębiorstwami* [Women in the management structures of Lublin companies], B. Balcerzak–Paradowskiej (Editor), *Przedsiębiorczość kobiet w Polsce – raport z badań* [Women’s entrepreneurship in Poland: Research report], PARP, Warsaw, 2011, and the work of E. Lisowska (2001). The authors of the listed reports and studies stress that a very important factor worsening the position of women managing companies, as compared with men, is the burden of obligations relating to care for children, especially small children. Research also underscores that fact that women also put off the decision to have their first child until such a time as they achieve a certain financial level and professional stability. The decision to become a mother is taken after reaching the age of thirty or even forty (Konrad and Mangel, 1998). The cited studies by Polish researchers also stress that women in managerial positions are usually in a stable relationship, but do not have children (Kupczyk, 2009; Balcerzak–Paradowska, 2011).

By applying a wide gamut of actions, companies have the opportunity to decrease problems stemming from the double burden on women (professional work and family life) as well as to facilitate deciding to start a family by women. Placing the family within the company through work–family programs is one way to limit

barriers to starting a family and having a first child. The programs are designed to alleviate the tension at the woman–family tangent point so as to make possible the reconciling of professional responsibilities and private life. Such programs provide a form of security for working women.

Two basic reasons implicating work–family programs emerge from an overview of literature (Konrad and Mangel, 1998; Cascio, 2001, p. 181). The first is support in implementing the classic (basic) task areas of human resource management—recruitment, assessment, training and raising qualifications, rewarding, and employee relations (Lundy and Cowling, 2000, p. 30; Juchnowicz, 2000, p. 30). The second is the promotion of the role of women in manufacturing companies dominated by men up till now—increasing the decision–making powers of women in the company’s strategic–monitoring structures.

Women in a Steel Mill: Case Study Analysis

The metallurgical company ArcelorMittal Poland, functioning in Poland as of 2004, was chosen for the case study. This company employs over 12,000 workers. Men account for the bulk of the staff. This is due to the nature of the work performed (manual labor) and the arduous working conditions (high temperatures, noise, and dusty environment). Women account for 13.6% of the staff. Fifty–nine women were hired in 2013 and forty–three resigned. The fluctuation ratio was positive. Women are primarily employed at non–manual positions (administration–office, production services, warehouses, and laboratories). When performing manual labor they are usually employed at overhead cranes in the rolling mill. A total of 136 women fill positions involving managing teams (including male teams) and managerial positions. When looking at the form of employment, over 94% of the women are employed by way of employment contracts for unspecified periods of time. Twenty–two women acquired rights to maternity leave in 2013. In that same year thirty–nine women benefited from such leave. Twenty–five women returned to work upon concluding such leave. The retention rate amounted to 0.36 (Arcelor–Mittal Poland Report, 2013, p. 21).

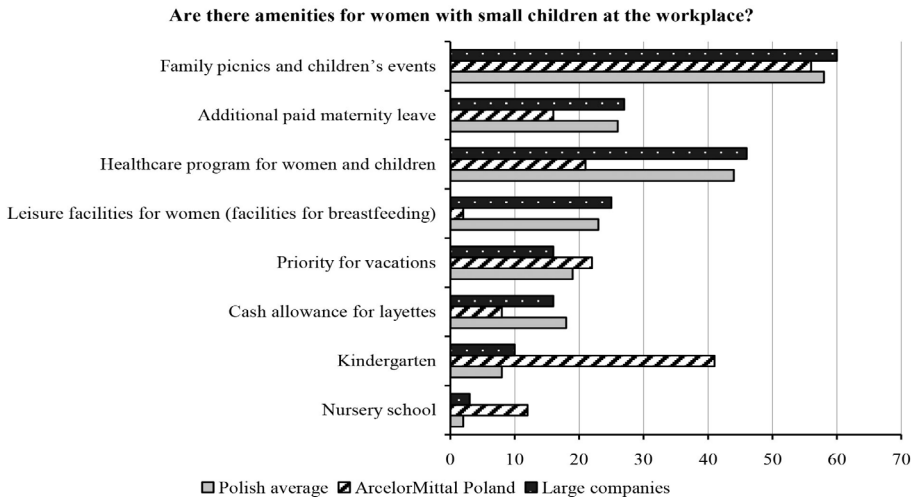
The company looked at the working conditions facing women. The study was conducted within the framework of its participation in the fourth edition of the “Working Mother” competition (a competition organized by the St. Nicolas Foundation, the Rzeczpospolita daily, and the Millward Brown SMG/KRC Research Institute). The winner was Danone Sp. z o.o. [Ltd.] that, among other things, offered:

- An additional month of paid maternity leave,
- Healthcare during pregnancy,

- Coverage for family childbirth at selected healthcare facilities,
- Free pneumococcal vaccines for children,
- Flexible working hours, and
- Additional special days off for fathers (Report, 2011/2012).

ArcelorMittal entered in the “Large Company” category. The study encompassed 593 women, which accounted for 40% of all employed women. In examining amenities for mothers with small children the company achieved better results in the nursery school and kindergarten categories. The company guaranteed organized assistance for mothers with children. Two company children’s centers (kindergartens) operate on the sites of the two main production divisions—Cracow and Dąbrowa Górnicza. Research results are presented in Graph No. 1.

Graph No. 1. Amenities for Mothers with Small Children at the Workplace



Source: Woźniak, 20112, p. 8.

The steps that the company undertook in order to implement its “mother friendly” program consisted of:

- The company is a signatory to the Diversity Charter (October 1, 2013);
- All women working at the mill have their representatives in contacts with the management—Women’s Council (the Council has been operating as of 2012);
- Workshops for women occupying managerial positions—the “Women Emerging in Leadership” and “Women in Leadership” programs;

- The guaranteeing of social benefits—subsidies for sport programs, children’s summer camp, and rehabilitation camps and groups;
- Systematic workshops for parents conducted by a psychologist with significant experience;
- The maintenance of company kindergartens—the Loved Ones Academy in Cracow and the Groovy Preschoolers in Dąbrowa Górnicza (each center guaranteeing 100 places for children);
- The organizing of Health Week (a preventive health initiative encompassing free vaccines and specialist tests);
- Implementation of the “You Are Not Alone” program (assistance in solving personal problems);
- Training for women (the average number of hours of training for women over the course of the year amounts to 29.95).

The set of actions was described in the SR Report for 2013 (poland.arcelormittal.com). It is within the framework of social responsibility that the company is implementing a gender diversity policy striving to guarantee better working conditions for women. Although the steel industry is decidedly a place of work for men, women do account for a four-digit figure. Out of over 12,000 employees, 1,500 are women. The expectations of women with respect to the employer are an object of study. It is on the basis of received results that the company is improving its working conditions and undertaking efforts making it possible for women to reconcile professional work with personal responsibilities.

Summary

The objective of this paper was a presentation of the range of actions aimed at women employed in manufacturing companies. The face of the modern business world is changing. Thus, it is worth looking at companies in terms of diversity and even to break stereotypes, including with respect to typically male occupations. The ability to meet such requirements and to find a new reality shall, to a great extent, depend on the company’s flexibility and openness to problems facing various employee groups. One such group is workingwomen. In order for them to be able to reconcile professional responsibilities with family ones, employers must create conditions for them to be able to be both workers and mothers. In spite of the increased interest in programs for women, there are still companies that are not aware of actions fostering women. Nevertheless, this publication might just provide an opportunity for those companies to benefit from existing solutions in diversity management.

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Różnorodność płciowa w przedsiębiorstwie hutniczym

Streszczenie

Dążenie do efektywnego zarządzania skutkuje poświęcaniem coraz większej uwagi pracownikom. Badacze zwracają uwagę, że współczesne organizacje tworzą ludzi, których cechuje duża różnorodność (Chatman, 2010, s. 448). Przyjęcie przez przedsiębiorstwa Karty Różnorodności stanowi inspirację i motyw do zarządzania różnorodnością. Jedną z cech różniących zatrudnionych jest płeć. Wykreowany w przeszłości model rynku pracy, oparty na dominacji mężczyzn, zwłaszcza w branżach przemysłu tradycyjnego (hutnictwo, górnictwo), uległ stopniowemu przeobrażeniu w warunkach gospodarki rynkowej. Organizacje uznane za typowo „męskie” ewoluują w kierunku nadawania większej rangi problematyce zatrudniania kobiet i poszanowania ich praw (Kodeks pracy, 1998). W publikacji przedstawiono ujęcie teoretyczne problematyki różnorodności płci, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem programów: praca – życie, a także przytoczono praktyczne rozwiązania dla kobiet zatrudnionych w przedsiębiorstwie hutniczym ArcelorMittal Poland.

B o Ź e n a G a j d z i k – Doctor of Economic Sciences in Economics, Engineer, Adjunct Professor with the Chair of Production Engineering of the Silesian University of Technology. Involved in questions of managing metallurgical companies and following the scope of changes introduced after the economic transformation of Poland. The author of several monographs on the restructuring of metallurgy and textbooks on management. scientific achievements include over 300 publications in domestic and foreign journals as well as in conference materials.