

# Managing Diversity in Organizations: The Implementation of Strategies, Practices and Measurements to Enhance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Workforces

**A Qualitative Case Study of Diversity Management in  
Organizations Operating in Sweden**

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## **Abstract**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has received increasing attention among organizations and in research as the world becomes increasingly globalized and internationalized. However, there is still limited research on how diversity management is performed in organizations and a neglected focus on social sustainability linked to DEI, which underlines the need to further study implemented practices to promote DEI in organizations. Thus, the aim of this study is to broaden the knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations. The research questions are (1) What strategies and practices are implemented by diversity and HR managers to integrate DEI in organizations? and (2) How are the results of DEI strategies and practices measured in organizations?

A case study of DEI as a phenomenon was conducted to explore the strategies, practices, and measurements used in organizations to increase DEI in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees. A qualitative research method based on semi-structured interviews was used to examine DEI from the perspective of diversity and HR managers in nine organizations. The theoretical framework was based on practice theory.

The empirical findings show that organizations use various strategies and practices to integrate DEI in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees. Organizations focus mainly on gender and ethnicity in the context of DEI and the most common practices are awareness training on DEI, bias, harassment, and discrimination. Furthermore, the findings show that most organizations do not use DEI measurements or targets systematically, making it difficult to measure the progress and outcomes of DEI practices. Moreover, there is a need for specific targets covering DEI parameters besides gender and ethnicity, to include other minorities and discriminated groups. This thus requires structured efforts to create measurement tools for DEI practices to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of progress and outcomes of DEI practices.

## **Keywords**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; DEI; Human Resource Management; HRM; Diversity Management; Social Sustainability; Recruitment; Retention; Promotion; Practice Theory

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## **1. Introduction**

*The introductory chapter presents and problematizes the field of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in organizations and research. It focuses on the DEI of people from various minority groups, highlights the causes and effects of discrimination, and the need for strategic diversity management through Human Resource Management (HRM) in recruitment processes and work environments. Lastly, the aim of the study is presented, followed by the research questions and a disposition of the study.*

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### **1.1. Background**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has received increasing attention among organizations and in research as the world becomes increasingly globalized and internationalized (Shen et al. 2009; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). Diversity refers to the visible and invisible differences between individuals, such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, and religion (Shen et al. 2009; Cary et al. 2020). Equity refers to the fair treatment of individuals in terms of opportunities and participation in society, for example in work or education (Dillard-Wright & Gazaway 2021). Inclusion is defined as valuing and utilizing the different skills, perspectives, and experiences of individuals (Cary et al. 2020).

There is also an aspect of diversity that relates to workforce diversity, which can bring a mixture of understandings and perspectives, greater exchange of information, more innovative ideas, and higher quality decision-making in teams. This, in turn, provides organizational growth in terms of profitability and competitive advantage for those organizations that value diversity, as well as increased employee well-being (Shen et al. 2009; Fujimoto et al. 2014). Therefore, many organizations are interested in improving their efforts to promote a more diverse, equal, and inclusive workplace, because of the business benefits it brings (Fujimoto et al. 2014; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). Simultaneously, discrimination and inequality against individuals from various minority groups is still an existing global problem (Shen et al. 2009; Klysing et al. 2021).

Discrimination can be defined as different treatment of and negative effects on individuals because they belong to a particular group. In an organizational context, it can include workplace violence, unfair treatment, verbal abuse, or bullying of organizational members because of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or religion (Wood, Braeken & Niven 2013).

According to Fujimoto et al. (2014), there is growing work discrimination against minority groups in terms of social inequalities in pay and job opportunities. For example, LGBTQ+ individuals receive differential treatment (Lambert 2015), and experience workplace harassment, pay discrimination, and heteronormative climates (Klysing et al. 2021). Similarly, workplace discrimination against ethnic minorities and women is common as they often experience barriers to career opportunities in both recruitment and promotion (Flory et al. 2021).

Another key issue when it comes to DEI in the labor market is bias, i.e. when people show an unequal preference for others based on group affiliation, such as gender, social class, or ethnicity (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020; Flory et al. 2021). Due to bias and social group membership, minority groups experience isolation and exclusion from informal social networks and struggle to establish mentoring relationships, which negatively impacts their chances of reaching managerial positions (Shen et al. 2009; Fujimoto et al. 2014). Shen et al. (2009) therefore argue for the need for effective diversity management in which Human Resource Management (HRM) plays an important role. This requires updated practices, procedures, and strategies that focus on the appreciation and utilization of a diverse workforce.

Suggestions for strategies and practices to increase DEI in organizations include offering equal development opportunities, mentoring, opportunities for collaborative learning (Cary et al. 2020), as well as providing career planning, increasing teamwork, and adapting recruitment practices (Shen et al. 2009). Another suggestion is to create an inclusive culture and environment by teaching leaders how to manage inclusion at both the relational and individual level. This can be achieved by integrating both strategic and practical diversity measures, such as developing collective goals in diverse teams, engaging in inclusive talent management, or holding diversity awareness training for all employees (Buengeler, Leroy & De Stobbeleir 2018).

Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, and Sánchez-Gardey (2011) argue that one of the most critical challenges for organizations is to create strategies to increase diversity in the workforce. However, Lu et al. (2015) argue that the implementation of diversity management programs can give organizations a sustainable competitive advantage over their competitors. Therefore, it is essential to modify recruitment policies, motivation, and training, to foster a diverse workforce (ibid.). However, previous researchers have identified failed efforts in recruitment,

promotion, and retention of minorities, as well as structural biases in established policies within organizations (Cary et al. 2020; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). In turn, individuals from minority groups continue to face disadvantages, such as experiencing challenges in obtaining a promotion or facing microaggressions and biases. Therefore, the importance of formulating effective strategies to promote DEI is emphasized (Cary et al. 2020).

## **1.2. Problematization**

As DEI has received increased attention among organizations (Shen et al. 2009; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020), the field of research on DEI in organizations has also grown in various disciplines, from management to psychology (Farndale et al. 2015). However, there is a wide range of focus areas related to DEI, as some researchers discuss different kinds of diversity grouped together (Shen et al. 2009; Farndale et al. 2015; Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2011), while others niche their research to different types of diversity such as ethnicity (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016), gender (Klysing et al. 2021), sexual orientation (Lambert 2015), disability (Fujimoto et al. 2014), or age (Lu et al. 2015).

Similarly, the focus on DEI often has different points of departure. A common approach is to study the effects of diversity messages on applicant attraction in recruitment (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016; Klysing et al. 2021; Lambert 2015; Flory et al. 2021). According to Flory et al. (2021), several studies have shown that the description of a job or an organization can influence the applicant pool. For example, underrepresented groups are often discouraged by organizations where they perceive a low workforce diversity, as they feel a lack of representation or risk of discrimination and biases from colleagues and managers (ibid.).

Diversity messages have been argued to have a strong influence on minorities, as it can be perceived as an advantage (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016). Therefore, when diversity and gender equality statements are communicated in recruitment advertisements, organizational attractiveness has been shown to increase among underrepresented groups such as gender minorities (Klysing et al. 2021), ethnic minorities (Flory et al. 2021), and the LGBT community (Lambert 2015). However, in some cases, diversity messages have been shown to reduce the organizational attractiveness among people in majority groups (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016; Lambert 2015). Overall, the applicant attraction to organizations has been shown to increase when applicants feel a shared sense of values, personal goals, and pay (ibid.).

Another approach in DEI research is to study individuals who face discrimination because of their social affiliation to minority groups, for example, Fujimoto et al. (2014) who have studied the inclusion of people with disabilities. Suggested solutions to increase organizational inclusion and create a common organizational identity are to strengthen cross-boundary collaborations and networks by involving minorities in discussions and decision-making or to create multidimensional accessibility. Overall, frequent interactions between members of majority and minority groups are suggested to increase understanding and belonging, while reducing the prevalence of stereotypes and prejudices (ibid.). This suggestion is supported by Stephens, Rivera, and Townsend (2020), as they argue that it helps to reduce workplace biases that negatively affect minority groups.

Previous studies have also examined diversity management in HR and the creation of DEI strategies and practices (Cary et al. 2020; Shen et al. 2009). According to Buengeler, Leroy, and De Stobbeleir (2018), workforces are becoming increasingly diverse and as a result, organizations are putting more effort into creating HR practices and policies to manage diversity. Many organizations are creating diversity management strategies, as diverse workforces have shown to bring many benefits. For example, effective diversity management can result in better decision-making, while the opposite can cause outgroup discrimination and bias against minority groups (Buengeler, Leroy & De Stobbeleir 2018; Shen et al. 2009). Despite this, previous researchers have identified failed attempts to recruit, promote and retain minorities and eliminate structural biases in established policies within organizations (Cary et al. 2020; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020).

One of the proposed practices for organizational diversity and inclusion in previous research is to conduct top-down awareness training, where managers are first taught the value of diversity and how to build social cohesion, and then team-building training should be held to implement DEI at all levels of the organization (Shen et al. 2009). Other proposed HR diversity practices are to form identity-based networking groups and educate employees on diversity principles and responsibilities (ibid.). While some researchers (Yadav & Lenka 2020) argue that diversity training can be successful in increasing DEI in workplaces, others (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020) argue that it is one of the least effective strategies for changing individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Instead, strategies to increase intergroup contact or welcome diverse perspectives and ideas are encouraged (ibid.).

In addition, it has been argued that it is important to adapt the recruitment process in terms of job criteria, selection tools, and performance assessments (Shen et al. 2009). This can be done by using a wider range of channels to source talent, increasing transparency by giving all employees access to the same information needed to achieve promotions, de-biasing evaluation tools by sticking to structured interviews, and increasing accountability by developing policies and practices that hold individuals accountable for their behavior towards colleagues (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020).

As part of DEI, recruitment plays an important role in achieving and retaining a competitive advantage based on human capital. Although applicant attraction is a topic that has been widely researched, which has shown that minorities are positively influenced by diversity messages (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016; Klysing et al. 2021; Lambert 2015; Flory et al. 2021), research on diversity recruitment in organizations is limited (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016). While researchers discuss the need for systematic efforts to promote diversity and inclusion (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020), research is still scarce on how effective diversity management is performed in organizations (Janssens & Steyaert 2019).

As previous research in the related field often derives from disciplines such as HRM, philosophy, or management (Farndale et al. 2015), a defined perspective on social sustainability is lacking. However, social sustainability encompasses fair work opportunities and equal rights to representation, participation, and recognition (Boström 2012), which are highly relevant factors in organizations when it comes to DEI. Despite this, social sustainability has received little attention from policymakers because it is perceived as difficult to operationalize due to its vague definition. While social goals such as employment rates or income equality are easier to measure, goals related to social recognition and quality of life are more diffuse to evaluate (ibid.).

The lack of research on how diversity management is performed in organizations (Janssens & Steyaert 2019) and the neglected focus on social sustainability linked to DEI in organizations underlines the need to further broaden the knowledge on how diversity management is performed in organizations. Although previous research has shown that diversity messages can positively influence the recruitment process (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016; Klysing et al. 2021; Lambert 2015; Flory et al. 2021), they are not observed in practice but rather through

experimental studies. Similarly, proposed strategies and practices to increase DEI in organizations have had mixed perceptions of success, underscoring the need to study implemented strategies to promote DEI in organizations (Cary et al. 2020).

There is thus a gap in diversity research regarding how practitioners perform diversity management in organizations in terms of the organization and implementation of DEI strategies and practices (Janssens & Steyaert 2019; Cary et al. 2020). In addition, the social sustainability aspect has been overlooked as practitioners find it difficult to operationalize and measure (Boström 2012), which requires research on how DEI practices are measured to monitor the development of DEI in organizations. Moreover, as much of the existing research has been conducted quantitatively and through experimental research designs, neglecting a management perspective (Baum, Sterzing & Alaca 2016; Klysing et al. 2021; Lambert 2015; Flory et al. 2021), there is a need for qualitative research that provides in-depth insights into how practitioners implement and measure DEI strategies and practices to improve DEI for discriminated and underrepresented groups. Therefore, this study provides a further extension of the DEI research on diversity management in organizations. Through a case study of DEI as a phenomenon, the implementation and measurements of DEI strategies and practices in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees are studied from the perspective of diversity and HR managers.

### **1.3. Research aim**

The aim of this study is to broaden the knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations. Therefore, a case study of DEI as a phenomenon, from the perspective of diversity and HR managers in nine organizations, was conducted to explore the strategies, practices, and measurements used in organizations to increase DEI in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees.

### **1.4. Research questions**

- What strategies and practices are implemented by diversity and HR managers to integrate DEI in organizations?
- How are the results of DEI strategies and practices measured in organizations?

## **1.5. Disposition**

Following this introduction, previous research on social sustainability, DEI, and HRM is presented, followed by a description of practice theory in the theoretical framework. The methodological choices are then presented and justified. Next, the empirical findings are presented, followed by a discussion and analysis of the empirical findings, linked to practice theory and previous research in the related field. Finally, conclusions and suggestions for further research are presented.

## **2. Previous literature**

*This chapter presents terms and concepts associated with social sustainability, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and Human Resource Management (HRM). This is presented to provide an insight into the current field of related literature.*

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### **2.1. Social sustainability**

Social sustainability is one of the three pillars of sustainable development, along with environmental and economic sustainability. The social pillar encompasses a wide range of factors in society, as it covers principles such as social justice and equity. This includes equal rights and inclusion of people with diverse backgrounds as well as fair work opportunities (Boström 2012; Ajmal et al. 2018). Social sustainability also encompasses democratic representation and participation, cultural diversity, and a sense of community and belonging. It is therefore about improving the overall living conditions for people today and for future generations. Therefore, there are social sustainability goals regarding what needs to be done in society and how it can be achieved. These goals include creating opportunities for learning or improving the opportunities for individuals to participate in society. For example, work fulfills not only the need for income but also human inclusion and recognition (Boström 2012).

The United Nations (UN) has created 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda, covering all three pillars of sustainable development. The UN has formulated a series of goals related to social sustainability to ensure an inclusive and sustainable future (UN n.d.a.), such as the eighth goal which aims to ensure decent work and economic growth for all (UN n.d.b.), and the tenth goal which aims to reduce inequalities and promote the inclusion of individuals (UN n.d.c.). To elaborate, Goals 8.5 and 8.8 focus on achieving employment and safe working environments for all, including youth, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and women (UN n.d.b.). Similarly, Goals 10.2 to 10.4 focus on ensuring equal opportunities and social and economic inclusion, including individuals of different ages, disabilities, sexes, or ethnicity (UN n.d.c.). Therefore, Goals 8 and 10 are particularly relevant to this study as they cover inclusive and equal employment, wages, and working environments for all.

Apart from the SDGs and other global frameworks that aim to validate the social aspects of sustainability, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), Boström (2012) argues that the social pillar of sustainable development receives less attention from policymakers because

it is generally more difficult to realize and operationalize. Similarly, Ajmal et al. (2018) argue that although the integration of sustainability into business operations is one of the key issues in today's organizations, the social pillar of sustainability has been overlooked. There are high expectations to address social sustainability issues related to gender, social justice, and democratic rights (Boström 2012). However, there are many obstacles to implementing social sustainability goals in projects and planning, as it is a complex area and therefore difficult to operationalize. This is partly because the definition of social sustainability is vague, making it more difficult to measure social objectives compared to the environmental pillar of sustainability, which is more defined (ibid.).

Some aspects of social sustainability are easier to measure, such as employment rates or income equality, while others, such as social recognition and quality of life, are more difficult to measure (Boström 2012). Although social sustainability can be difficult to operationalize and measure, Boström (ibid.) argues that it can be improved by giving people access to decision-making and participation, and by strengthening participation in education, networking, awareness-raising, and standard-setting processes. The issues of social sustainability are therefore discussed in this study in relation to DEI in organizations, by exploring the implementation of DEI strategies and practices and how their outcomes are measured.

## **2.2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is a term that focuses on processes for creating justice in organizations (Arsel, Crockett & Scott 2021). First, diversity in this context refers to real or perceived visible or invisible differences between individuals and how they are represented in organizations and in society. These differences include characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, and religion (Arsel, Crockett & Scott 2021; Dillard-Wright & Gazaway 2021).

Second, equity means the fair treatment of individuals in terms of the opportunities provided and their outcomes (Arsel, Crockett & Scott 2021). The aim is to ensure that all individuals are given the opportunity to participate in society, for example, in terms of opportunities for work or education. Equity is about understanding that people have different needs that vary according to their background, resources, and education, and finding ways to remove these obstacles by

giving individuals the resources and knowledge needed to achieve the desired opportunities and outcomes (Dillard-Wright & Gazaway 2021).

Finally, inclusion refers to the creation of a culture or environment in which diverse or marginalized groups are included, valued, and involved (Arsel, Crockett & Scott 2021; Dillard-Wright & Gazaway 2021). In organizations, this means creating an environment where employees with diverse characteristics thrive and feel at home (Dillard-Wright & Gazaway 2021), for example by including them in networks and decision-making processes (Ng & Rumens 2017), or by utilizing their individual differences for the benefit of both employees and the organization itself (Mousa 2020).

Workforce diversity is desirable because it has been shown to bring more innovative ideas, greater information sharing, and higher quality decisions and solutions in teams due to a mixture of values, perspectives, and understandings (Shen et al. 2009; Fujimoto et al. 2014). In addition, it has been shown to increase creativity and improve employee well-being, trust, and openness (Hofhuis, Van Der Rijt & Vlug 2016; Shen et al. 2009; Fujimoto et al. 2014). By enhancing DEI in workforces, organizations can also achieve competitive advantage and profitability, which can lead to organizational growth (Shen et al. 2009; Fujimoto et al. 2014). DEI as a phenomenon is therefore examined in this study by exploring the strategies, practices, and measurements used by HRM in organizations to increase DEI in recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees.

### **2.3. Human Resource Management**

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a system that manages human capital connected to an organization's business strategy. HRM systems include practices and strategies for job design and talent management, recruitment and selection, employee growth and training, performance appraisal, and pay (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2011; Farndale et al. 2015). Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, and Sánchez-Gardey (2011) argue that a critical challenge for today's organizations is how to increase diversity and that HRM can have a major impact on workforce diversity by creating conditions that make the most effective use of the diversity in workforces.

To manage workforce diversity, it is suggested to design and implement HRM systems linked to diversity management, which include strategies to increase diversity and equity in staffing and planning, employee development, performance appraisal, and salaries (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2012). In attracting and retaining a diverse workforce, HRM practices should be linked to the strategic needs of organizations. In turn, by creating effective HRM diversity practices for recruitment, compensation, and motivation, organizations can also achieve a sustainable competitive and equity advantage (ibid.).

One HRM practice that can help improve DEI is creating diverse work teams where employees of different genders, ethnic backgrounds, and ages work together, as it can help create greater opportunities for creativity and innovation, provide unique challenges, and increase a sense of fairness and equality due to shared group membership (Farndale et al. 2015). However, in some cases, diverse work teams can lead to conflict or misunderstanding among group members due to different perspectives or backgrounds (ibid.).

Further examples of how to increase DEI include broadening the use of channels for talent sourcing, adjusting selection and evaluation tools for potential candidates, or implementing anti-discrimination policies in the workplace (Shen et al. 2009; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). The implementation of HRM practices linked to DEI can also help organizations achieve their social sustainability goals linked to employee well-being, equality, and diversity (Podgorodnichenko et al. 2020). Therefore, this study explores DEI linked to HRM, in order to broaden the knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations through the implementation of strategies, practices, and measurements.

## **2.4. Summary**

Social sustainability has been neglected by practitioners because it is difficult to operationalize and measure. Moreover, social sustainability and DEI share the same focus on the fair treatment of individuals regardless of background and circumstances. HRM systems linked to diversity management have been proposed to increase DEI and social sustainability in organizations by providing equal opportunities for recruitment and promotion. Thus, all three concepts are relevant to consider when answering the research questions (1) What strategies and practices are implemented by diversity and HR managers to integrate DEI in organizations? and (2) How are the results of DEI strategies and practices measured in organizations?

### **3. Theoretical framework**

*This chapter presents the theoretical background of this study, which is practice theory from a strategic management perspective, in order to provide an understanding of how practices are implemented and consumed in organizations.*

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#### **3.1. Practice theory**

Practice theory is described as a collection of theoretical approaches rather than a unified theory, all of which share the idea that social reality is constituted by practices (Janssens & Steyaert 2019; Nicolini 2013; Heidenstrøm & Kvarnlöf 2018). The practice approach focuses on the organization and evolution of practices (Nash et al. 2017) and aims to understand how things are performed or accomplished by actors or practitioners through practices (Rennstam & Lundholm 2020; La Rocca, Hoholm & Mørk 2017). The approach shares the assumption that phenomena are perceived in relation to each other and constructed simultaneously (Janssens & Steyaert 2019).

Schatzki (2001) defines practice as “[...] a set of doings and sayings organized by a pool of understandings, a set of rules, and a teleoaffective structure.” The pool of understandings includes skills and knowledge, the set of rules includes principles and instructions, and the teleoaffective structure refers to actions that are goal-oriented and meaningful to people (Schau, Muñoz Jr & Arnould 2009; Heidenstrøm & Kvarnlöf 2018). Together, the three denote the idea that humans do what is meaningful to them. From a professional perspective, this implies that practitioners draw on meaning, rules, and goals when acting and creating organizational practices (Lindberg & Rantatalo 2015). Practices are understood, organized, and carried out through the discourses that portray and shape an environment, such as the discourse of workplaces (Lloyd 2010). In order to participate in practices, there must be shared understandings and competencies between individuals that reinforce social orders and create both collective identity and individuality (Schau, Muñoz Jr & Arnould 2009). Practice is thus seen as a combination of doings and sayings, involving practical activities and performances (Schatzki 1997; Schau, Muñoz Jr & Arnould 2009), which establish social order through the actions of practitioners.

Practice theory emerged from sociological and philosophical research (Wenzel & Stjerne 2021) with an interest in people’s everyday practices such as cooking, driving, or gardening (Reckwitz

2002; Nash 2017). It has since been introduced in management (Ahva 2017) and strategy research, focusing on how strategists act and perform the work of strategizing in organizations through practices (Jarzabkowski 2004; Whittington 1996). This has been referred to as “strategy-as-practice”, which sees strategy as a social practice and something that people do (Whittington 2006). Strategy in an organizational context can be understood as defining and setting measurable targets and creating action plans to achieve them. This also includes setting guidelines and documents for the development of the organization (Whittington & Nilsson 2002). The social practice approach analyses management activity in terms of how managers strategize, organize, and implement practices (Whittington 1996). The approach thus considers the structure in which practices are performed (Brandl, Mol & Petersen 2017), how practices are organized and by whom, what tools and techniques are used, and how practices are communicated and consumed (Whittington 2003; Knorr-Cetina, Schatzki & von Savigny 2000). According to Whittington (2003), implementing strategies and designing organizations are laborious, lengthy, and costly activities. Thus, the success of the practice depends on planning, strategizing, and organization. Moreover, communication and representation of practice are crucial for understanding and adoption in organizations (ibid.).

According to Janssens and Steyaert (2019), the practice approach is scarce in diversity research but can be useful for understanding the phenomenon of inequality, discrimination, diversity, or inclusion. Similarly, Rennstam and Lundholm (2020) argue that practice theory is useful when investigating why and how inequalities exist within organizations by analyzing power relationships. The practice approach enables an in-depth understanding of asymmetries in organizational contexts by examining the implementation and organization of practices. Furthermore, Janssens and Steyaert (2019) argue that practices are rarely neutral actions as they favor some interests at the expense of others, which impacts the distribution of power and privileges. Moreover, practices produce and reproduce social order in organizations through learning and routines that shape meanings and the way the world is understood (Janssens & Steyaert 2019; Echeverri & Skålén 2011). By studying the practices in organizations with a practice approach, it becomes visible how diversity-related phenomena are reproduced and interconnected in a nexus of practices (Janssens & Steyaert 2019).

Management practices related to decision-making, identity-forming, and meaning-making, as well as leadership and teamwork practices, create social orders in organizations and can therefore influence the culture and diversity within organizations (Janssens & Steyaert 2019;

Echeverri & Skålén 2011; Nicolini 2011). The assumption is that individuals are practitioners who perform, change, and redefine practices that can make a difference and influence outcomes in organizations (Whittington 2014; Heidenstrøm & Kvarnlöf 2018). In some cases, actors may produce and reproduce differences and inequalities through practices, due to power relations and interests (Nicolini 2013).

This study examines diversity management within organizations from the perspective of practitioners, which in this case is diversity and HR managers. Therefore, the strategic approach to practice theory is applied to understand how strategies and practices are implemented and measured to enhance DEI in workforces. This includes identifying what strategies and practices are used in the recruitment process to increase DEI, in day-to-day operations to retain DEI in the work environment, and how organizations work to ensure equal opportunities for promotion. In addition, the study examines how organizations measure the outcomes of their DEI practices. Thus, the practice approach is appropriate as it examines who performs the strategic work and how the strategizing is organized and implemented (Whittington 2006).

In addition, practice theory is suitable for this study as it explores how practices are implemented in organizations (Whittington 2006), unlike, for example, institutional theory, which Suddaby, Seidl, and Lê (2013) describe is based on how organizations act and respond to pressures from their environment and does not propose a satisfactory account for management practices or strategies or explain organizational diversity. Rather than an institutional perspective on why organizations do things based on legitimacy effects or isomorphism (*ibid.*), the focus of this study is primarily on how DEI practices are implemented and structured in organizations. Practice theory is therefore appropriate as it allows for the exploration of different procedures, understandings, and engagements to analyze how and by whom the practices and strategies are implemented, communicated, and instructed (Rennstam & Lundholm 2020).

Therefore, the practice theory is applied in this study to broaden the knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations and to answer the research questions (1) What strategies and practices are implemented by diversity and HR managers to integrate DEI in organizations? and (2) How are the results of DEI strategies and practices measured in organizations?

## **4. Methodology**

*This chapter presents and describes the research approach, as well as the selection and collection of data for the current study. In addition, an interview guide is presented, followed by a description of the data analysis. Finally, ethical considerations, as well as the validity and reliability of the study are presented and discussed.*

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### **4.1. Research approach**

To meet the aim of this study, which is to broaden the knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations, a qualitative research method based on semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions was conducted. A qualitative method was applied as meanings are derived from words and experiences rather than numbers, allowing for a deeper exploration of how a small number of organizations carry out their diversity management (O'Donoghue 2006).

#### ***4.1.1. Research strategy***

This study used a case study as its research strategy, as it made an in-depth inquiry of DEI as a phenomenon in the context of nine organizations. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), a case study is a detailed investigation into a phenomenon or topic in its real-life setting. The case could be a person, an organization, a change process, or other types of case subjects. Moreover, a case study sets out to understand the dynamics between the case and its setting, to identify what is happening and why (ibid.). In this case, this meant to study the case of DEI in the context of organizations from a management perspective, to capture what organizations do to enhance DEI. The case study strategy was appropriate because, according to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (ibid.), it generates understanding from thorough investigations of the case subject in its natural setting, resulting in detailed, empirical descriptions. The case study research strategy helped to identify what organizations are doing in terms of DEI, as well as the impact of current DEI strategies and practices. In addition, it helped to further broaden the knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations, thus contributing to the current field of related research.

#### ***4.1.2. Research design***

An exploratory research design was used through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions as the data collection method. The exploratory design is valuable in enabling

clarification of the understanding or knowledge of a phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019), which in this case was the phenomenon of DEI in an organizational context. A common way to conduct exploratory research is to interview people with expertise in the subject. The interviews are often semi-structured and rely on the quality of participants' input (ibid.). Therefore, open-ended questions were appropriate in this study as they enabled the discovery of what is happening in organizations and provided insights into their operations. The research questions, as well as the interview questions, were formulated in an exploratory way, starting with "How" or "What", to broaden the knowledge about diversity management in organizations.

#### ***4.1.3. Abductive theoretical approach***

An abductive approach was used to develop a richer theoretical perspective on the existing literature on diversity management in organizations. Abduction is an iterative process that moves back and forth between theory and empirical data, thus combining deduction, which moves from theory to data, and induction, which moves from data to theory (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). An initial understanding of existing theories and the related research field prior to data collection and analysis helps to frame the research appropriately and reveal important issues (Yin 2018). At the same time, empirical data helps to apply and develop theory, allowing for a flexible approach. Thus, to contribute to the related research field of DEI, data collection and analysis were developed in an iterative process by allowing meanings, themes, and concepts to emerge simultaneously from the empirical findings and theory.

#### **4.2. Data selection**

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected on the basis of their characteristics and connection to the subject, to ensure their relevance to the aim of the study (Campbell et al. 2020). Therefore, in order to answer how diversity management is performed in organizations, participants were recruited based on criteria such as having a title in diversity or HR management in an organization based in the Swedish market and having the authority to influence DEI strategies and practices in their organizations. Sweden has been claimed to be a progressive country in terms of gender equality (Kokkonen & Wängnerud 2017) and has been ranked as the fifth most gender-equal country in the world in the Global Gender Gap Report

2021 (World Economic Forum 2021), making it an interesting research context to study in terms of the implementation of diversity management in organizations.

Participants were found via the LinkedIn search engine, using keywords such as “DEI Manager”, “Diversity Manager”, “Inclusion & Diversity Manager”, “HR manager” and “People & Culture Manager”. They were then contacted via the messaging function on LinkedIn, or via their personal email addresses linked in their profiles. LinkedIn was adopted as the recruitment method because, according to Stokes et al. (2019), it has proven to be a successful tool for recruiting research participants as it increases recruitment speed, offers great accessibility to potential participants, and is a cost-effective alternative. In some cases where participants’ messaging functions were locked, they were contacted via contact forms on the respective organizations’ websites instead.

In the initial contact with each potential participant, the purpose of the study was presented followed by a request to participate in an interview. Subsequently, each participant was contacted via email to arrange a date and location for the interview. If confidential information is discussed in interviews, it is important to ensure anonymity to avoid harm to participants and to protect their identity (O'Donoghue 2006). Therefore, prior to the interviews, the participants were informed that both their and each organization's identities would remain anonymous throughout the process, as confidential information about organizational practices would be shared during the interviews. As three of the participants requested that the exact number of employees or the regions in which the organizations operate in Sweden should not be published, this was applied to all participants. However, an approximate number of employees was presented in Table 1 to provide an estimate of the size of each organization.

### **4.3. Data collection method**

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten participants from nine organizations in nine different sectors in Sweden. In one interview, two participants participated at their own request, as they work closely with the organization's diversity management. In all other interviews, one participant from each organization participated. The use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allows for a natural conversation, as participants can provide detailed answers (O'Donoghue 2006; Gerring 2017), which in this case provided a better understanding of how diversity management is performed. Semi-structured

interviews allow for greater depth in data collection compared to other research methods, as they create an open and relaxed atmosphere between the researcher and the participant where a more natural conversation takes place (ibid.). The interviews were therefore conducted in a flexible manner, by adapting the order of the questions to the natural progression of each interview.

Participants were asked questions about what strategies, practices, and measurements they use to enhance DEI in their organizations in terms of recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees. The participants from each organization were interviewed to gain a deep knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations. The recruitment of participants to the study was an ongoing process and was not limited until the data set was deemed sufficient, that is, when the sample provides a wide range of data while not being too large to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data collection (Saunders & Townsend 2016). Saunders and Townsend (ibid.) describe that a range between four to twelve participants is considered sufficient when the selected population is homogenous. Therefore, nine organizations were considered an appropriate sample in this study, compared to only one or two organizations, as it helps to create a broader understanding of the use of DEI strategies, practices, and measurements in organizations, while providing in-depth insights from each organization on how diversity management is performed by practitioners. While the participants were a homogenous group in terms of having managerial positions linked to DEI, they operate in different sectors, which provides rich understanding for the analysis.

It was important that participants were homogeneous in terms of similar positions to ensure a comparable level of knowledge about DEI among each participant. In addition to this, there was also a focus on heterogeneity in the selection process in terms of demographic characteristics among the participants to provide different perspectives. This led to the final participant sample being heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. However, it was difficult to find HR and diversity managers willing to participate in the study and therefore the primary focus was to recruit participants on the basis of their professional roles and their willingness to participate in the study.

Semi-structured interviews are often conducted through face-to-face meetings between the researcher and the participants to create an understanding of their experiences through their own words (O'Donoghue 2006). Two of the interviews were conducted in person and seven

were conducted remotely through video meetings, based on the participants' preferences. The length of the interviews varied between 40 to 60 minutes, depending on the level of detail of the participants' responses. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed from the tape, as this has been argued by O'Donoghue (2006) to facilitate the transition to structuring and categorizing the data prior to data analysis.

*Table 1. Sample selection and categorization*

Organization	Respondent	Sector	Number of employees	Professional role	Language	Duration
1	1	Audit & Advisory Firm	1 000 – 2 000	DEI Project Manager	Swedish	60 min
2	2	Construction Company	10 000 – 20 000	DEI Manager	Swedish	60 min
3	3	Tech Recruitment Company	1 - 100	D&I Competence Lead	Swedish	40 min
4	4a	Radio Station	1 000 – 2 000	D&I Coordinator	Swedish	45 min
4	4b	Radio Station	1 000 – 2 000	Head of Recruitment	Swedish	45 min
5	5	Software Company	1 - 100	Talent & Diversity Manager	Swedish	50 min
6	6	Car Manufacturer	10 000 – 20 000	D&I Specialist	English	45 min
7	7	Retail Company	10 000 – 20 000	HR Generalist	Swedish	50 min
8	8	Energy Company	10 000 – 20 000	D&I Process Manager	Swedish	60 min
9	9	Development Cooperation Organization	1 - 100	HR Manager	Swedish	45 min

The table presents the order of the interviews, the sectors in which each organization operates, an estimate of the number of employees in each organization, the professional role of each participant, the language spoken in each interview and the duration of each interview.

#### **4.4. Interview guide**

Prior to the interviews, each participant was informed that the interviews would consist of two parts – the first part was a brief description and discussion of the study itself, and the second part was the actual semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. The interviews were categorized into four categories: (1) an introduction of the participant and the organization, (2) recruitment, (3) retention, and (4) promotion. However, the order of the questions within each

category was flexible to allow for a natural conversation. The participants were informed of the categories prior to the interviews to ensure that they had time to reflect on the topics, which O'Donoghue (2006) has argued generates a better quality and quantity of data than immediate responses. The interview guide (see Appendix 1.) was reviewed by students and supervisors before the interviews were conducted, to ensure that the questions were relevant and worded in an understandable way.

#### ***4.4.1. Introduction***

The first part of the interviews included questions about the professional roles of the participants, how diversity management is structured in the organizations, the motives behind the organizations' DEI focus, and their DEI focus areas. The questions were formulated to explore the organizations' attitudes and structures towards DEI.

#### ***4.4.2. Recruitment***

The second part included questions about the organizations' recruitment processes to attract DEI to their workforces. This included questions about DEI targets, recruitment tools, the design of job advertisements, and the interview process. Questions about measurement and evaluation tools regarding the outcomes of their DEI practices were also presented.

#### ***4.4.3. Retention***

The third part of the interviews contained questions about each organization's practices for retaining a diverse, equal, and inclusive workforce. This included questions about specific DEI targets, strategies, and practices, as well as measurement tools to evaluate the outcomes of their DEI initiatives.

#### ***4.4.4. Promotion***

The fourth part involved questions on the organizations' practices regarding the promotion of employees. Participants were asked about their criteria for promotion and how they work to ensure equal opportunities for career development and promotion. This included questions on the representation of minority groups at different levels and strategies on salary regulations. In addition, participants were asked about the measurement tools used to evaluate DEI in their promotion processes.

## **4.5. Data analysis**

After the collection of data, the emphasis was on analyzing the participants' contributions to determine which DEI practices are used in each organization and how, as well as how the outcomes are measured. This was done through a thematic analysis, which Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) describe as a process in which the researcher looks for themes or patterns that emerge across a data set. In addition, the data is usually coded to identify themes or patterns that are discussed further in the analysis to answer the research questions. The thematic approach is systematic, as it provides an orderly and logical approach to analyzing data, leading to in-depth descriptions, and theorizing (ibid.). This thematic analysis consisted of five steps: (1) familiarizing with collected data, (2) coding of data, (3) identifying themes and patterns, (4) refining themes, and (5) defining, naming, and structuring themes.

### ***4.5.1. Familiarizing with collected data***

In this step, transcripts of the audio-recorded interviews were made to establish familiarity with the data and to ensure accurate error checking. The interviews were transcribed into separate files and named with the number of the interview, the sector in which the participants work, and the date of the interview. For example, the filename for the first interview with the participant from the Audit and Advisory Firm was 01\_AUDITFIRM\_300322. Each participant was named according to the order in which the interviews were conducted, meaning that the first participant was named P1 for participant number one, and so on. This helps to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for both the participant and the organization throughout the research process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). To distinguish between the top headings of the four categories used in the interviews, as well as the questions and responses, the top headings were written in bold, the questions in italics, and the responses in normal font.

This step also included reading and re-reading the collected data and creating summaries of the transcripts to look for initial meanings, themes, and patterns across the data set. This is an important step in the data analysis as it engages the researcher with the data set and thus simplifies the subsequent analytical procedure (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019).

### ***4.5.2. Coding of data***

Coding was used to categorize data with similar meanings. This typically involves labeling each data unit in a transcript with a code to highlight its meaning, making the relevant data units

accessible for further analysis (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). This step also involves fragmenting the original transcripts and grouping the data units with similar meanings together to analyze them in relation to other data units that have been grouped (ibid.). A list of codes and their definitions was also created to maintain consistency in the data analysis.

#### ***4.5.3. Identifying themes and patterns***

The search for common themes and patterns began during the data collection and coding phase, but the identification of themes fully commenced once the coding of the data was complete. At this stage, it is common to review all codes and formulate a list of themes that relate to the research questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). This includes looking for key concepts in the codes, identifying recurring meanings and patterns, and discovering relationships between codes. Usually, main themes are identified, followed by related sub-themes that will also be analyzed. The themes and sub-themes for this study are presented under the sub-heading “4.5.5. Defining, naming, and structuring themes.”

#### ***4.5.4. Refining themes***

In this final stage, themes were refined, combined, separated, and in some cases discarded if they were deemed irrelevant. This is considered an important step in the analytical process, as the formulated themes should produce a well-structured analytical framework that simplifies the analysis. The refinement of themes helps to evaluate the relevance of the coded data and the relationship between grouped data units within a theme (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). This is typically an iterative process, which meant that the data collected in this study was continually re-read and re-organized to refine themes to answer the research questions.

#### ***4.5.5. Defining, naming, and structuring themes***

In the chapter “5. Empirical findings”, the organizations were presented individually to separate the empirical findings from each organization and maintain a clear structure. Under each organization four headings were established, being (1) DEI structures, focus areas, and motives, (2) Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements, (3) Retention strategies, practices, and measurements, and (4) Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements. This allowed for a structured presentation of each organization’s practices and measurements.

During the data analysis, six themes were defined from identified patterns in the collected data. The chapter “6. Discussion and analysis” was thus divided into six themes, being (1) The introduction of DEI in organizations, (2) The structure of DEI practices in organizations, (3) The role of recruitment to enforce DEI in organizations, (4) The role of DEI to ensure retention in organizations, (5) The role of promotion to enhance DEI on all organizational levels, and (6) Setting DEI targets and measuring progress. Within these themes, the empirical findings were discussed and analyzed in relation to previous research and the theoretical framework.

#### **4.6. Ethical considerations**

Consent was attained from all participants to interview, audio-record, and publish confidential but anonymous data. A digital consent form was signed by both parties prior to the interviews, clarifying the aim of the study, providing information about the data collection, and guaranteeing the anonymity of the individual and the organization. The use of consent forms ensures that consent is obtained from participants and establishes the rights and responsibilities of both participants and the researcher (O'Donoghue 2006; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). In this way, the boundaries of consent were established, informing each participant of the voluntariness of their participation, their right to withdraw their participation, and the possible withdrawal of data provided by participants. This included their right not to answer a particular question and to refuse to share requested information.

All identifiable information was treated confidentially and anonymously and was assured not to be disclosed either verbally or in the publication of this study. The data were therefore processed to make them non-attributable, using pseudonyms to conceal the identity of the participants and the organizations. In addition, integrity, truthfulness, accuracy, and transparency were given high priority to avoid deception, partiality, and misrepresentation of data and findings.

#### **4.7. Validity and reliability**

According to Saunders and Townsend (2016), qualitative interviews provide greater internal validity to a study compared to quantitative research methods, as they add richness and depth to the understanding and perception of the research area. As semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted in this study, this provided both richness and depth to the contributions of data from the participants. However, words can have multiple or unclear

meanings (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). Therefore, participants' statements were examined and clarified during and after the interviews. This was achieved by asking clarifying questions, to ensure the credibility of the data and avoid biased interpretations.

Purposive sampling of participants may, however, affect the credibility of the study if there is subjectivity in the selection of participants, which may lead to researcher bias. The selection of participants was therefore based on clear criteria that all participants should have a title in HR or diversity management and have the authority to influence the DEI strategies and practices in their organizations. There was therefore less scope for recruiting participants on the basis of biased judgement (Campbell et al. 2020; O'Donoghue 2006).

The reliability of the study was also considered, which according to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) refers to the researcher's ability to report each stage of the work in a transparent manner to produce a reliable account of the emerging research focus to make it understandable and evaluable by others. In addition, it refers to both replication and consistency, meaning that future research should be able to replicate the research design and obtain similar findings (*ibid.*). To increase consistency in the data analysis, the coding of data was operationalized by categorizing the data and interpretations into themes. While it is not realistic to guarantee that a study is fully replicable, the choices of research methods, strategies and data collection in this study were reported, which Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (*ibid.*) argue provides a greater understanding of the research conducted and the process that led to the findings and conclusions.

Reliability can be further enhanced by informing the participants about their anonymity (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019). This also helps to reduce the risks of participant bias that could potentially lead to false responses from participants who fear that their participation could be potentially harmful to them or risk their professional roles. However, participant bias cannot be completely avoided as participants choose what to disclose and discuss (*ibid.*). In this case, answers to questions about organizational DEI initiatives could also potentially be influenced by participant bias, as participants may be keen to show only the positive aspects of their work and exclude the negative aspects, either to make themselves or the organization look good, to respond to expectations from their external environment or to stand out among competitors. Therefore, participants were informed that participation was anonymous and voluntary in order to reduce the risk of participant bias and the risk of partial representation of the research context.

To reduce researcher error, such as misunderstanding the meaning of the participants' responses (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019), clarifying questions were asked when necessary. The risk of researcher bias, such as subjective recording or interpretation of participants' responses (ibid.), was also reduced by asking open-ended questions that allowed participants to speak freely about the subject. In addition, as the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, interpretations of the responses could be confirmed by the participants after the interviews, ensuring authenticity and avoiding biased or erroneous interpretations.

## **5. Empirical findings**

*This chapter presents the empirical findings of the interviews conducted in nine organizations, to highlight their attitudes towards DEI and what strategies, practices, and measurements are implemented to enhance DEI in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees.*

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### **5.1. The Audit and Advisory Firm**

The Audit and Advisory Firm offers auditing, tax, and advisory services for companies.

#### ***5.1.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives***

The Audit and Advisory Firm does not have an official professional role that solely focuses on DEI. Instead, they created a diversity and inclusion (D&I) group in 2019, where Participant 1 (P1) is the Project Manager. The D&I group consists of eight employees from different business areas and with different seniority levels. They have also appointed a partner as Head of D&I, who, like the rest of the group, works on DEI issues alongside their ordinary duties. In addition, the company has created a network of D&I ambassadors, consisting of 50 to 60 employees, who receive information from the D&I group and disseminate it within their departments.

*“It is kind of a voluntary commitment that gives us time to devote resources to pursuing D&I issues. I think it would have been good to have one person just working on these issues and pushing the group forward. That we are still people from different areas of the company and different seniorities, but that there is someone pulling it all together and having the focus and time for it.” (P1)*

The company focuses primarily on gender and ethnicity in DEI and when asked about the motives behind the DEI focus, P1 answered, *“There is research that diverse teams work better. It is profitable to be diversified and to have equal management or governance. And for all of us to feel good, of course.”*

#### ***5.1.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements***

In the recruitment process, it is often the recruitment team in the HR department that publishes job advertisements and makes the initial selection of candidates. HR participates in the interviews when the company makes a large intake of employees twice a year. Otherwise, it is the manager and team members of each team who interview the candidates, and the hiring

manager has the final say on who is hired. P1 mentioned, *“HR is on top of this DEI thing, but ultimately the hiring manager in each hiring team has the final say, so they do not have much say in who gets hired.”*

The D&I group is working with the HR department to improve DEI practices in the recruitment process. For example, they have removed the requirement for Swedish language skills in their job advertisements in order to include more applicants. They are also analyzing data from their recruitment processes to identify the pool of candidates applying to the company, the type of role they are applying for, and who the company ultimately hires. However, P1 mentioned, *“I do not think we ask candidates about their background, but it is something we are thinking about whether we can collect in a legal way, just to be able to do that kind of analysis and see where we have gaps.”*

In the analysis, they look at the statistics of people with foreign backgrounds at universities for the programs most relevant to their company, to get an idea of the demographics of the business areas where they recruit. P1 explained, *“What is the average of people with a foreign background? I think it is about 22 percent, so it might be reasonable to understand that if we are going to recruit from a pool that has an average of 22 percent, then our target cannot be 40 percent.”* The company then tries to match this by setting a target in line with the statistics. To compare, they have ordered data from Statistics Sweden (SCB) on their own company. This also helps them measure their progress regarding DEI in recruitment.

### ***5.1.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements***

To set the structure for its DEI work, the company has developed KPIs that are divided into different focus areas, including skills development, salary and conditions, culture and labor standards, parenthood, and recruitment and promotion. However, P1 did not disclose any specific examples of the organization’s KPIs. Moreover, to raise awareness of various DEI issues, they initiate inspirational talks with various guest speakers and hold annual dilemma workshops with employees, including statements such as “Women do not want to be managers”, which are then discussed within the context of the company. *“This helps us raise awareness of how things work in our company,”* P1 described. The workshops also include recruitment dilemmas, where they discuss whether they hire homogenously in terms of ethnicity or whether they are open to new backgrounds and perspectives.

The D&I group has found that the company is losing many female employees in mid-career. P1 described, *“They work for a few years and then quit in the middle when they have been working for maybe 6 years, and that often coincides with a time in life when people are starting families.”* Therefore, the D&I group has created a series of female role models, with an angled perspective toward families, to showcase women in the company who have careers but also have families, to counter the prevailing perception that it is not possible.

In 2020, the company established a global internal platform for its employees in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. P1 explained, *“All employees were able to participate live for 72 hours, to discuss and provide input on how they experience having a different skin color or a foreign background.”* Based on the employees’ discussions, the company made an action plan which they have then disseminated to the different member companies globally.

The company conducts diversity training for senior managers and leaders on DEI to raise awareness and hold leaders accountable. *“Especially if you have a managerial role or are even more senior, that you actually work with DEI issues in your team or have concrete goals that we can follow up on later,”* P1 described. The company has also created a general DEI e-learning about unconscious bias that is compulsory for all employees to attend before they start their employment with the company.

In terms of measuring the results of their efforts to retain DEI in their organizations, the D&I group has developed a maturity model, to assess their current status and identify areas for development. The maturity model measures the results of their DEI initiatives by examining the progress of their KPIs. *“It is important to have some kind of baseline so we can measure,”* P1 mentioned. They also measure through an annual employee survey that touches on DEI-specific areas such as perceived equal career opportunities regardless of gender or ethnicity. In addition, they send out an in-depth D&I survey a month after the employee survey, which asks more targeted DEI questions about culture, career, and work-life balance to get input from employees.

#### ***5.1.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements***

Within each business area, the company has a seniority ladder of positions such as associate, senior associate, manager, senior manager, director, and partner. For each step on the ladder, there are certain criteria that employees must meet in order to get promoted. The decision on

which associates are eligible for promotion is discussed in joint meetings between the manager and other senior employees in the company.

*“It is good from a diversity perspective that you do not fall because you do not get along with your boss or your boss discriminates against you. That is probably also why it is important to have the discussions about awareness-raising, because if it is a group that is quite heterogeneous, there is a risk that you promote people who are similar to yourself, and then we still have that problem even if they sit together and discuss.” (P1)*

In terms of DEI perspectives in promotion, the company focuses on increasing the number of women in senior positions. However, they do not measure this. Regarding salary development, the company has individual pay based on employees’ competencies and previous salaries, as well as participation in internal initiatives and constellations. *“We also do a salary survey about once a year, it may be even so that we have to do one,”* P1 mentioned.

## **5.2. The Construction Company**

The Construction Company is a construction and civil engineering company focusing on buildings, construction, industry, and project development.

### ***5.2.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives***

The Construction Company has appointed a person to focus exclusively on DEI issues within the company. Participant 2 (P2) has held the role of DEI manager in the company for three months. Prior to the creation of a DEI manager role, the sustainability manager was responsible for both environmental and social issues, which included DEI. Now the DEI manager role is separated and linked to the HR department.

The company focuses primarily on gender when it comes to DEI. *“Women are so scarce. Sustainability and competence-wise, we cannot have it like this. We cannot have only five percent women in our production,”* P2 stated. In some of its initiatives, the company also focuses on ethnicity and disability. Regarding DEI motives, the company is motivated by business benefits.

*“We have realized that teams with differences perform better and bring more perspectives and innovation. We are very aware that the younger generations care a lot about how future employers deal with D&I issues. So, we need to modernize a bit to keep up with that trend. Being up to date also leads to sustainability, as you must be an attractive employer to be a sustainable and robust company.”* (P2)

### **5.2.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements**

The company has a general recruitment target to increase the number of female employees. Currently, there is a fifty-fifty division between female and male employees on the service worker side, but on the production side, there are only 5 percent women. One way to attract more women to their company is to include diversity messages in their job advertisements and adapt wording and requirements to be perceived as more inclusive towards women. *“The communications department has done a solid job of trying to highlight women in images and such in ads because ‘seeing is believing’, as they say in this industry,”* P2 described.

The company has also created internships to help integrate refugees and foreign-born individuals into the labor market. Similarly, it helps the younger generations enter the labor market by creating summer jobs for them. For larger intakes of employees, such as advertising for summer jobs, the recruitment processes are managed by HR. However, some recruitment processes are handled directly by each construction site.

One of their recruitment strategies is to hire a higher percentage of women than the educational market offers, both on the construction side and the service worker side. These are targets that the company has set to ensure that they are making continuous progress and to make progress measurable. They look at statistics from relevant university programs when measuring their progress in recruiting women into the industry. The company also measures which regions are doing well in terms of recruiting women to construction jobs, and which regions are doing less well in that area.

In addition, the company is implementing a tool to track all steps in the recruitment process for the potential candidates, from the first click on an Instagram advertisement and throughout the entire process. *“We will be able to track everything so that we can really see where women are disappearing or people with foreign surnames. By the summer of 2022, we will have enough data to get an idea of what that looks like,”* P2 explained.

### ***5.2.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements***

The company conducts two DEI trainings focusing on equality and discrimination to raise awareness and attitudes on the subject. These are mandatory for all new employees, as well as for current employees to repeat regularly. In addition, DEI training is held specifically for managers and the HR department, in the form of classroom training sessions lasting three hours. The company also holds workshops at all levels of management to discuss organizational attitudes, including macho culture, how to behave towards each other and how this affects the working environment. Moreover, there are noncompulsory workshops that are booked by the managers of different teams, where a professional comes and talks about DEI. *“Managers are the culture bearers and need to drive the issue and lead the way. There is no better way than when the top managers are involved and that is a challenge in the construction industry,”* P2 described. The company also has a code of conduct that includes zero-tolerance for abuse, discrimination, and bullying.

To make their work environments more inclusive, they have adapted the construction sites by creating a more inclusive design in their construction barracks. *“In the construction projects, the staff rooms are in these barracks. So, we make sure that these barracks are universally designed so that you can access them regardless of disability,”* P2 explained. To make the construction sites more inclusive for women, they have created separate locker rooms for women, provided sanitary bags and menstrual products in the toilets, and created maternity work clothes and clothes for all body types. *“One inclusion thing we are doing is making sure that it is possible to be a woman on construction sites. But it is really on a basic level,”* P2 stated.

In terms of measuring the results of the organization’s DEI initiatives, they conduct employee surveys quarterly or twice a year. The surveys include questions about discrimination and harassment in the workplace. In addition, they have hired an external company to conduct a more detailed survey every three years.

*“In those surveys, things look a bit worse than in the internal surveys. So, people may not want to disclose everything because they feel there is a risk that they will be identified. The greyscale does not capture everything either, it is more of ‘Has someone*

*victimized you?’, and of course, we must find that out, but the subtle things like feeling left out or getting a comment like ‘That is what women are like’, is not caught.” (P2)*

#### **5.2.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements**

The company’s DEI initiatives include appointing female talents, highlighting them, and giving them better opportunities to be promoted. *“It is the ‘Head of’ who is on the management team for the whole company that is very committed to promoting women in the organization under him,”* P2 said. Therefore, they use affirmative action against women in an effort to promote them more. However, the company had no numerical targets or measurements in terms of DEI in promotion. Regarding equal pay, P2 explained, *“We do a mapping every year on salary and gender and correct what is wrong. But it is a legal requirement to do salary surveys every year, so we cannot get away with it anyway.”*

### **5.3. The Tech Recruitment Company**

The Tech Recruitment Company is a recruitment company that helps its clients find candidates for their tech departments.

#### **5.3.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives**

The Tech Recruitment Company does not have an official role dedicated solely to DEI. Instead, they have a diversity group of six people, all tech recruitment consultants, where Participant 3 (P3) has been a D&I Competence Lead for eight months. P3 explained, *“We do not have time set aside to work on internal things like D&I, it is something we get to do during the time we bill the client. It would be ideal to have more resources and more time allocated to one person.”*

Since the diversity group was set up a year ago, DEI has been included in the company’s internal competence areas. In terms of DEI focus areas, the company focuses primarily on gender. *“We are a very homogeneous group today and we want to have more diversity internally,”* P3 described. About 24 percent of the employees are men. However, all managers or owners are also men. Most of the employees are white and have a background in the human resource program, which P3 stated, *“It is also a homogeneous group studying there.”* The company’s DEI motives are based on business benefits. *“It has to do with the fact that more diverse organizations perform better and achieve better results,”* P3 explained.

### ***5.3.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements***

The Tech Recruitment Company's goal is to increase the general workforce diversity, both in terms of ethnicity and gender. Therefore, the diversity group has worked with the HR department to adjust the communication in job advertisements to make them more inclusive. *"We have gone through it and made comments like 'This kind of jargon is the opposite of inclusive and can be a bit exclusionary, make it clearer to open it up to more people.',"* P3 described.

For example, since all employees speak Swedish, they have removed the requirement for Swedish language skills in order to broaden the pool of candidates. *"However, it is difficult because all our documentation is in Swedish, so it is a big challenge,"* P3 explained. Their workforce is also homogenous in terms of educational background. Therefore, they communicate in their job advertisements that they are open to all forms of education. In some advertisements, they have removed the education requirement altogether and focused instead on the experience of the candidates. In addition, they have opened to more remote working, including candidates who are not located in the larger cities in Sweden.

Regarding measuring the outcomes of their DEI practices in recruitment, P3 stated, *"No, it is generally sensitive to keep statistics on factors other than gender. I do not think it is even legal to keep statistics on anything other than gender in Sweden."*

### ***5.3.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements***

The diversity group focuses on the issue of bias awareness and norm criticism in recruitment, the latter referring to identifying and challenging discriminatory norms to eliminate inequality in organizational structures. Moreover, the group holds a presentation about discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment every six months. *"We also have our CEO there, to make sure it comes from the management,"* P3 said. During the presentations, they make time to discuss how to act in situations where discrimination or harassment occurs and what mandates employees have if they are discriminated against by clients. In addition, they hold an internal training called Prejudice Conscious Inclusion, which raises awareness about biases. The training is held for all employees who have worked at the company for one year and are part of the general training program at the company.

In addition to the internal DEI work, the diversity group creates external content to communicate how the company is working with DEI. *“For example, I have written a blog post on the same topic as the Prejudice Conscious training, and we plan to do more of that in the future,”* P3 mentioned. Moreover, the diversity group has developed an action plan on discrimination. The action plan includes examples of situations that can arise, and tips and information on the actions employees can take if they are discriminated against within the company or at a client site. For example, it informs employees how to act in discriminatory situations and grey areas, and who to contact. The diversity group also acts as an internal support function to which employees can turn if they have been subjected to discrimination.

Two years ago, the HR department conducted an employee survey in which the diversity group helped formulate questions related to DEI. *“It was very valuable and something I would like to do again,”* P3 explained. However, the company does not currently measure its DEI practices from a retention perspective.

#### ***5.3.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements***

In terms of promotion from a DEI perspective, the company had no practices or measurements. *“No, we do not have much influence on it, I feel,”* P3 described.

### **5.4. The Radio Station**

The Radio Station is a mass media company that provides news, radio programs, and podcasts through various channels in different regions of Sweden.

#### ***5.4.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives***

Participant 4a (P4a) is one of two D&I Coordinators at the Radio Station, and Participant 4b (P4b) is the Head of Recruitment, who also focuses on DEI issues in the recruitment process. Their DEI work is linked to the HR department, but they also work closely with the Sustainability Officer. The company has been working with a DEI focus for a long time but has become more active in recent years.

The company has less defined focus areas in terms of DEI. *“It is really a breadth. For us, it is everything you mention, of course, ethnic background as well, country and city, so really everything you can think of. But what is missing looks very different depending on where you*

are,” P4b explained. The organization operates in many Swedish regions and industries, so the focus is on a local level rather than a central level, which means that the focus areas differ across each department and region.

Regarding DEI motives, P4a mentioned, *“It is part of our mission as a public service broadcaster that we should reflect the whole country.”* Their license from the government includes a DEI perspective in the framework of their programming activities. Moreover, P4a explained, *“It is more difficult to work in a heterogeneous group than a homogeneous one, but it also leads to increased efficiency and innovation. It is smooth sailing to work with people who think like you, but we do not want it that way.”*

#### **5.4.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements**

Regarding DEI targets in the promotion process, P4a explained, *“It is difficult to set overall recruitment targets. You have to look at ‘What does it look like for each channel?’”* However, the company has initiated a gap analysis on who they risk excluding if they advertise in the same channels, and how they can ensure that more candidates are selected at the initial stages of the recruitment process. Based on this, they have started to publish job advertisements on social media platforms and in various forums to reach a wider pool of candidates.

To improve DEI in the recruitment process, managers are informed about bias in selection situations and during interviews. They also work with competency-based interviews and tests to increase the objectivity of the recruitment process. For the different regions in which the company operates, they identify the need for different skills and backgrounds at the local level rather than at the central level.

*“We have a large technology unit and within that unit, it is harder to find women, but it may not be the case in the program unit. Demographics are also very important. If we are to reflect Sweden as it is, we have to be aware that it is not the same in Kiruna as in Helsingborg.”* (P4a)

The company has also set up a graduate program to train people with different language skills needed for the language and minority language editorial offices. In addition, P4 mentioned, *“We work a lot with secondary schools to get young people to want to become journalists and*

*apply to us in the future because it is a really big issue to get new perspectives who also want to work here in the future.”* In terms of measurements, they did not explicitly measure the outcomes of the DEI practices in recruitment. P4b explained, *“We think it is important not to make it too easy on yourself. Otherwise, it is quite easy to think ‘Okay, there was a woman with a foreign name’”*

#### **5.4.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements**

The company’s sustainability model is linked to the targets of its D&I plan. The D&I plan is based on three areas, including radio content, recruitment and skills provision, and corporate culture and inclusion. *“We have not really set targets there, but we have a culture index in our employee survey so that we can track how inclusive we are perceived over time. But it is also difficult to set a clear KPI there, so we are struggling,”* P4a explained.

In terms of DEI practices, they focus on self-leadership where all employees are expected to take responsibility for their own development and learning. *“Not everyone needs to work on the same elements of inclusion. Some have come further than others,”* P4a described. Moreover, they work on constructive journalism, which includes training employees on unconscious bias and impartiality.

*“We work with activities in each focus area, constantly trying to adapt to the needs of the organization. We cannot sit and say, ‘Here we have done a really long training that nobody attends’ or ‘Here we made a film that nobody watches.’ That is our mission, not to make material that nobody uses because it is completely useless.”* (P4a)

The company has encountered setbacks and challenges in terms of staff calls, where employees have expressed their experiences of workplace discrimination. As a result, the company also has DEI union meetings every three weeks, where they discuss organizational inclusion at different levels. P4a explained, *“It is important because the call was very much about people not feeling seen or heard and not having the courage to go to the manager or HR and even report, and there were certainly many reasons for that.”*

To measure the outcomes of DEI practices, the company uses a culture index in its annual employee survey. This allows them to track their progress over time in terms of their employees’ psychological safety and perceived organizational inclusion. Moreover, they

measure gender equality via equality surveys and collect data from SCB to measure diversity in terms of their employees' ethnic backgrounds. P4a explained, *"It is linked to what the company looks like in general and from that we can draw conclusions about what we need to work on."*

#### **5.4.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements**

The Radio Station had no specific DEI promotion targets. However, they hold leadership training at various levels, including a managerial aspirant program to train senior employees to become managers, and a preparatory managerial program for less senior employees to become supervisors. When considering potential employees for the programs, they conduct personality and ability tests on all candidates. *"We get a picture of what kind of leadership they carry both in terms of experience, but also what kind of leadership they advocate. We also consider what perspectives they bring and what perspectives they bring that they want to use,"* P4b described.

One of their issues when it comes to providing equal opportunities for senior positions is that the locations where the company operates are spread across the country. *"It is not always easy to get managers to want to move to get other managerial jobs,"* P4b described. Moreover, P4a mentioned, *"I just got a question about 'If you do not want to be a manager, what opportunities do you have for development?' and I think we still have some work to do there."* The Radio Station did not use any measurements in terms of DEI in promotion.

### **5.5. The Software Company**

The Software Company offers solutions for contract processes where customers can create, sign, and manage contracts digitally.

#### **5.5.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives**

Participant 5 (P5) has been working as a Talent & Diversity Manager in the Software Company for eight months. The role is linked to the HR department, where everyone is involved in the DEI practices. In terms of DEI focus areas, P5 described, *"Diversity is so many things really. But there is a lot of focus on gender, ethnicity, and age."* The organization's DEI motives were based on both business benefits and employee well-being.

*“It is partly so that the people who are already working in the company feel safe and can be themselves because then they feel good and perform better. It really is a win-win situation, as the company often performs better. We also need to be diverse because that is how we learn and share experiences and perspectives.” (P5)*

### **5.5.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements**

In terms of DEI targets in recruitment, the company set targets to increase the percentage of women in the product development team from 30 percent to 40 percent and the percentage of women in the sales team from 25 percent to 30 percent during 2022. Moreover, they want to reach a fifty-fifty division between men and women in teams and at the company level. *“Then we are like ‘That excludes those who do not identify as men or women.’ So, we have been thinking of a fifty-fifty division between non-males and men,”* P5 described. Furthermore, P5 stated, *“We do not have much else in terms of DEI, but it is quite difficult to set KPIs on making sure everyone feels included.”*

To reach more applicants, the job advertisements are published on LinkedIn, social media, and in specific forums such as “Women in tech” groups, if they have a tech role for which they want to recruit a woman. The company has also reviewed the way it communicates on its website and in job advertisements in terms of language and images.

*“We write in a way that is inclusive and do not use stereotypical male expressions or characteristics, because then a person in a minority group might not be able to connect to that. At the end of every ad, we also write that we welcome and include everyone, whether you belong to the LGBTQI community or have a disability. We have noticed a big difference.” (P5)*

The company works with competency-based recruitment to reduce biases in the recruitment process. In addition, they have created a playbook outlining all steps in the recruitment process and a bias awareness training for all managers and hiring managers. However, P5 explained, *“We are not robots, so it is difficult to completely eliminate bias, but we try to work a lot on awareness so that everybody knows it exists.”* Regarding the candidate selection, the company uses affirmative action to recruit women.

*“We are always aware that we want to have a mixed group of applicants. So, if we would have a non-male and a man who are equally competent and we only have men in the department today, we choose the woman or the other person.” (P5)*

The results of their DEI practices are measured quarterly and annually. *“It is measured against our targets. Then we evaluate how we did, what we did, and what more we can do to reach the next target,”* P5 explained.

### **5.5.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements**

As part of the onboarding process for new employees, the company gives presentations on DEI. *“We go through ‘This is what it looks like, this is how we work, this is important’ and so on,”* P5 explained. Moreover, the company has an initiative called “Life at”, where employees write blog posts about their story at the company or their life story.

*“We have two people in our management, one is gay and one is queer. They have written blog posts about being in management and being part of the LGBTQI community. When those posts are published, it is not like we are saying ‘Now we are talking about diversity’. It just becomes a blog post in itself.” (P5)*

The company has recently created an LGBTQI group for its employees, which will serve as a forum for employees to meet and discuss how the company can increase the inclusion of employees in the LGBTQI community. *“We are at work so many percent of our lives, so if we want people to stay, because it is the employees’ market and they can move as they please, we must do so much more to get people to stay,”* P5 described. The company also holds monthly parties for all employees, with a new theme for each month.

*“Last month we had an Iranian theme where we had Iranian sweets, food, and flag. We decorated to Iranian music, and everyone was included. We have four employees from Iran, who were included in what to buy, and someone made a playlist on Spotify. It is a small thing but still very much appreciated.” (P5)*

To measure the progress of their DEI practices in retention, the company uses annual employee surveys. The surveys include questions on perceived diversity and inclusion, as well as discrimination and harassment. The results are included in their equality plan, which all new

employees read before starting their employment. *“It is all there, even if there is something that might not look great so everyone knows what our company looks like,”* P5 explained. The company also uses a Net Promoter Score (NPS) in its surveys. One of their KPIs is to have an NPS target of 70-80 percent, which shows how well employees talk about the company and how satisfied they are with the company. *“We also see it as an inclusion measure, because if employees do not like it, they will not give it a high rating,”* P5 noted.

#### ***5.5.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements***

The company has a goal to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions from 30 percent to 40 percent during 2022. *“In management, we want to have fifty-fifty in terms of men and women. Right now, we have some women but mostly men,”* P5 described. Moreover, they have initiated female mentorship positions in the tech and sales departments, where each new employee is assigned a mentor who is a woman. P5 explained, *“The mentor becomes a support for the new employee. Simultaneously, they learn to lead because being a mentor and supporting someone else brings a lot of skills. Then they can become a potential team leader later on.”* In terms of measurements, the company compares its target to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions with its actual progress.

## **5.6. The Car Manufacturer**

The Car Manufacturer is a truck and bus manufacturer that offers services such as vehicle rental and insurance.

### ***5.6.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives***

Participant 6 (P6) is one of two D&I Specialists at the Car Manufacturer and has held the role for one year. The role is linked to the skill capture team, which is their equivalent of a DEI team, which is linked to their HR department. In addition, the company has a network of DEI ambassadors. *“Obviously two people cannot do the DEI work for that many employees, so we have a network of volunteers from each business unit who we train and provide with information. Their role is not formal, but that would be ideal,”* P6 explained.

The DEI focus areas vary across the regions in which they operate and are tailored to the needs of the local markets. *“One of our guiding principles is that business is local. It is imperative*

*that markets have ownership and influence over what they work on.*”, P6 stated. The company’s DEI motives were based primarily on business benefits but also on ethical reasons.

*“For us, it matters for business hugely. If you do not have a diverse and inclusive workforce, you are missing out on crucial perceptions and perspectives. If we all walk, talk, and think the same, we do not develop anything different. In a hugely competitive market, having a diverse workforce is crucial. And from an ethical standpoint, it is obviously the right thing to do.”* (P6)

### **5.6.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements**

When it comes to DEI in recruitment, each team sets its own targets.

*“That would go back to the individual teams, and they would need to do an analysis of what capabilities they need or what the profile of the future employee would have, and then build a strategy around that. But our industry is not exactly a very attractive industry for women to join, so that is something that needs to be sorted out.”* (P6)

In the recruitment process, they use blind recruiting where candidates only apply with their email address and the application is sent to a third party. In the screening process, they use psychometric tests that are designed according to the skills that the teams are looking for. The company also reviews job advertisements for inclusive language. *“We look at the ads and think ‘How are we tweaking the ads to attract as many people as possible?’ Some teams put out two ads to make sure we appeal to a variety of demographics,”* P6 explained. In addition, the company provides a brief introduction in the job advertisement of who is on the team, to give applicants an idea of the team members. When it comes to measuring the progress of their DEI practices in recruitment, the company does not measure at a central level because the DEI targets for each department are different.

### **5.6.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements**

The company holds DEI training for its teams, discussing organizational inclusion, psychological safety, and the value of different perspectives and ideas. It also holds quarterly trainings for its DEI ambassadors, where they discuss best practices and share information and

tips on how to implement DEI work in their departments. Moreover, the company holds quarterly work-balance meetings for each team.

*“In these conversations, it is both the verbal things people say, and the non-verbal behaviors that you can pick up on. From there you can assess how healthy the team is and ‘How is this person doing? Are we at risk of losing them? What can we do from now on?’” (P6)*

The company has also created a board game that is played in teams to explore the team dynamics in terms of DEI.

*“You roll a dice and then you pick a card. It could be ‘When I am silent in a meeting it means I agree’ and then you go around the group and discuss. During the discussion, you hear what people are saying, but then you must reach a consensus at the end to say, ‘When you attend a meeting you have a responsibility to participate. If you are unable to, do you have a buddy system? Do you work closely with your colleagues?’” (P6)*

To measure how DEI is perceived in the organization, there is a D&I index with an NPS target of 85, which is measured in the annual employee survey. The company also has surveys for new employees during their onboarding, which is followed up with a second survey after six months and then in their offboarding process. *“It is to sort of gauge how you are doing throughout and then also when you move between departments,”* P6 explained.

#### **5.6.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements**

The company has a gender equality index that looks at the number of men and women in the organization and calculates how many men and women are managers. *“Female leadership is very much involved in the work we do. The goal is that we have a one-to-one ratio,”* P6 stated. Regarding equal pay, P6 responded, *“We have got the unions involved and they make sure that all our pay is up to scratch, which is very good.”* However, the company does not measure its progress in terms of promotion against DEI.

## **5.7. The Retail Company**

The Retail Company offers affordable customer products and other services such as styling and inspiration.

### ***5.7.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives***

Participant 7 (P7) is an HR Generalist who has worked in the company's HR department for 15 years. Moreover, the company has a DEI manager who has held that role for two years and is part of the HR team. However, each manager is responsible for the DEI KPIs in their respective department. Regarding DEI focus areas, P7 responded, *"Of course, we work on all grounds of discrimination, but there are only three of them that we quantify and put a percentage on."* These three areas are gender, ethnicity, and something they call "5 generations", which means that five generations should be able to work in the company at the same time.

The company's motives for its DEI work are the benefits that diverse workforces bring. *"That is why we are working on this because we believe that you make better decisions if you have a diverse team,"* P7 stated. The company has also identified customer benefits associated with DEI. P7 explained, *"The main motive is that it is good for our business and for customer benefit in how we treat our customers and that there is an identification to our employees."*

### ***5.7.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements***

In terms of recruitment targets, P7 stated, *"We have a very clear goal that we want the composition of the staff to reflect the customers because we see that it creates a successful business."* Therefore, they have set a target for a fifty-fifty division between men and women. However, P7 explained, *"I think we should have a target of 49/49 because there are those who have not chosen to be male or female, or do not want to define themselves as male or female."* The company also has a DEI target regarding ethnicity.

*"We say that since about 40 percent of the people in our region are first- or second-generation immigrants, we want that to be the case in the company, and we are achieving that goal. However, it is a bit skewed, meaning that in the restaurant, the non-Nordic representation is very high, but in the HR department it is extremely low." (P7)*

In terms of DEI practices, the company has reviewed how it communicates in job advertisements. Regarding formulations, P7 explained, *“According to research, women like to read about values and soft things, while men want a bit more clarity. This is a very generalized thing.”* Similarly, the company considers the messages that different pictures signal. *“Who do we choose to feature in a picture in the ad? As soon as we have an image in front of us, we think about diversity,”* P7 described.

Each location and team are responsible to identify the needs in their region, whether it is diversity in terms of specific competencies or language skills, or in terms of parameters such as gender, ethnic background, or age. To reduce biases in the recruitment process, the company runs DEI training with recruiters and recruiting managers. *“Unfortunately, this haunts our recruitment because as a recruiter, you are likely to get an over-representation of people who are like you. But you need to be aware of your biases to make more impartial decisions,”* P7 explained.

The company has implemented a digital interview system due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, they have received letters and emails from candidates asking if they can submit their applications in writing rather than via video because they do not have a webcam, which the company has agreed to. The company also adapts the work to the accessibility of employees.

*“If we get an application from someone who is deaf, blind, or has another disability, we just think ‘Sure!’ We hired a guy who was in a wheelchair to work in the information desk. The work was adapted to him as he could not use his legs.”* (P7)

The company measures its DEI progress in recruitment in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age, by sending all employees’ the social security numbers to SCB. This allows them to compare their targets with the current situation when it comes to gender, ethnicity, and age.

### ***5.7.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements***

The company holds code of conduct training for managers, where they provide different scenarios to discuss.

*“For example, if a customer points out that a male employee is gay and says, ‘We do not want to shop here when you have employees like that.’ What is the right thing to*

*do? I was a manager at the time who had to solve this problem and I was very surprised to find out that the right answer is 'If it is not convenient, you can go somewhere else.' I am a minority myself as I am gay, and that can have an impact in several ways.” (P7)*

In addition, the company participates each year in International Day against Homo, Bi- and Transphobia (IDAHOT) by creating an LGBT+ inclusion plan and educating employees on LGBT+ issues. The company also informs all employees about its code of conduct, which includes information about the external whistleblower hotline for sexual harassment and discrimination. Moreover, the company conducts an annual employee survey on job satisfaction and organizational culture, measuring the responses against its targets. The surveys include questions about organizational values and inclusion in each department.

#### ***5.7.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements***

The company has the same targets for promotion as for recruitment, i.e. a fifty-fifty division between male and female employees, 40 percent first- or second-generation immigrants, and five generations of employees. *“We are failing when it comes to gender because we have a little too few men who are managers,”* P7 explained. Regarding ethnicity, P7 stated, *“At the managerial level, we are too low. We say it should be 40 percent at the overall level, and we achieve that, but at the managerial level we were at about 22 percent.”*

In terms of measurements, it is the responsibility of each manager to look at their department and compare the targets with the number of managers and evaluate the composition. When it comes to equal salary development, the company looks for differences in pay between men and women, and if they discover a difference that is not due to skills or performance, they correct it. *“These pay statistics and analyses are also subject to union scrutiny, which is very positive,”* P7 mentioned.

### **5.8. The Energy Company**

The Energy Company is a producer of electrical energy, a supplier of district heating, and an electricity grid owner.

### **5.8.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives**

Participant 8 (P8) has held the role of a D&I Process Manager for six years and the role is linked to the HR department. In addition, the company has created a D&I Officer role within the executive management team that rotates between the partners every two years. In addition to these two roles, the company has set up D&I councils, which include representatives from each business area, who are involved in DEI issues alongside their regular duties. However, P8 stated, *“There needs to be more resources, a completely different organizational structure for this, as I am not enough for the other countries.”*

Regarding DEI focus areas, the company focuses primarily on gender. P8 explained, *“The advantage of working with gender is that we know there is a spillover ambiguity on other diversity dimensions, while it is not the same in the other direction.”* In terms of DEI motives, the company is motivated by both business benefits and employee benefits.

*“It is good for employees as individuals with all the positive elements it brings - being able to be yourself at work and reducing sickness absence. It is also good for the organization; everything from increased opportunities and innovation to more diverse perspectives.”* (P8)

### **5.8.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements**

Each manager is expected to drive the DEI work and will also be monitored. P8 mentioned that one of their recruitment strategies is to *“Enforce diversity in every recruitment, expanding wider than gender diversity, meaning age, country of location, ethnicity and so on.”* Therefore, they have recruitment and selection panels and training for recruiters to create an awareness of how unconscious bias affects recruitment.

The company has had problems recruiting women and has therefore developed a guideline stating that on each recruitment shortlist, there must be one male and one female candidate. If their search firm deviates away from the guideline, they terminate the cooperation with the firm. Moreover, they use evidence-based recruitment, de-identification, and screening tools that identify the exclusionary language in their job advertisements. *“I have a bit of a problem with the boilerplate text in ads. We do not want it to say, ‘We welcome everyone regardless of blah blah blah’.* It should be so clear in the ad that we do,” P8 stated. Moreover, the company wants

to include more demographic variables in its screening system. *“We are currently working with our lawyers to see what we can get approved,”* P8 explained.

They have also appointed two researchers from Swedish universities to shadow the recruitment processes from an inclusive recruitment perspective. All materials, policies, and processes are reviewed, and the researchers shadow the recruiting managers and recruiters during interviews. This is used as a measurement tool, as they receive feedback from the researchers that helps them evaluate how inclusive their recruitment processes are and what needs to be improved.

### ***5.8.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements***

Every person hired by the company participates in an onboarding where DEI is part of the official package. This includes information about the company’s DEI targets, strategies, and practices. Moreover, the company has created an e-learning on unconscious bias for all employees, as well as a longer training led by a facilitator. They also have awareness training on workplace harassment, which every business area is expected to take and be monitored on. P8 explained, *“The business areas that have not pushed as hard on training efforts have more harassment because they have not worked proactively about it. So, I really think you have to be proactive and monitor all the time.”*

P8 stated that *“The biggest part of the D&I practices, I would say, is through the D&I officers that I worked with.”* Each D&I Officer has a DEI responsibility for two years and can choose which issues they want to focus on. For example, the first D&I Officer focused primarily on LGBTQ+ issues in terms of support, resources, and visibility within the networks. The current D&I Officer focuses on inclusion in employee surveys and how to interpret the results. In addition, the company has developed a code of conduct for its suppliers, which includes increased requirements for suppliers in terms of DEI. *“We require them to actively work on it. It is also important for retention within the organization, to actually demand it outwardly,”* P8 explained.

The company has a D&I index, which is measured in the annual employee survey. It has an NPS target of 75 percent, which is currently at 78 percent.

*“The challenge is that we know that we are a fairly homogeneous organization, that we tend to look a lot better than we are. But who are the people saying what? Our*

*organization is mostly made up of white middle-aged men, they think we do a great job on these issues. We see that employees who identify as non-binary are much less positive overall in the survey. I would like to see more demographic parameters, but a lot of this is private, and not something you should have to share with your employer.” (P8)*

The company also conducts surveys with new employees on their impressions of the company’s DEI. The first survey is followed by a second one after six months. *“Then we can see if the person who has been hired still thinks we are living as we teach in the business area in which the person has been hired,”* P8 described. Moreover, each business area has established individual DEI KPIs that are reported and measured quarterly.

#### ***5.8.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements***

The company runs talent projects such as female coaching and mentoring programs. They have also created a career-exploration tool where employees can look at other career opportunities within the company. This includes opportunities for national and international mobility and transparency about salary expectations and progression in different roles. Moreover, the company has set a KPI of appointing 35 percent women to management positions, which is evaluated within the group management on a quarterly basis. Their D&I index is also measured in terms of promotion, evaluating the managers’ commitment to DEI practices, and rewarding those who actively drive the issues within their teams.

### **5.9. The Development Cooperation Organization**

The Development Cooperation Organization is a development agency that works to help people living in poverty and hunger around the world, as well as for action on climate change, gender equality, and housing.

#### ***5.9.1. DEI structures, focus areas, and motives***

Participant 9 (P9) is an HR manager in the organization and has been working there for eight months. The organization started a DEI project two years ago which is currently being concretized by consultants through a D&I audit. No one has DEI in their role description, but P9 shares responsibility for the project with the management team. In terms of DEI focus areas, the organization focused mainly on increasing the diversity of ethnic backgrounds. The organization’s DEI motives were not yet defined.

*“We do not have it clear as an organization what the purpose or motive is, or even the level of ambition, but it is more that we are going to work with DEI. We are very much at the compliance level in terms of what you can and cannot do.” (P9)*

### **5.9.2. Recruitment strategies, practices, and measurements**

The organization has a general goal of becoming less homogenous in terms of ethnic background and to recruit more candidates with different backgrounds and experiences. *“With a few exceptions, we are a very homogeneous team. Those who apply are often urban scientists, often women in their 25s or 30s,”* P9 explained. The organization recruits globally, and the working language and all job advertisements are in English. The organization also uses a global recruitment site to reach a wider audience.

The organization has adapted the communication in its job advertisements in the form of a diversity message at the end. *“We have added a text about what kind of workplace we are. We focused a lot on D&I, that we like to see applicants with different experiences, that we are a workplace where you can be yourself and that we value that,”* P9 described. The HR department also holds training sessions for hiring managers on competency-based recruitment and bias awareness, to reduce bias in the recruitment process and ensure that candidates are hired based on the relevant competencies. However, the organization does not measure the progress of its DEI practices in the recruitment process.

### **5.9.3. Retention strategies, practices, and measurements**

The organization has a policy on sexual harassment and gender-based violence, which includes a whistleblowing function and guidelines on what to do if something happens, how to report it, and how it is handled by the organization. Moreover, the organization launched its first employee survey in January this year, which included a separate DEI section. The survey included questions on perceived inclusion and visibility, appreciation of competencies, and career development opportunities. The results from the survey are used as a baseline for developing DEI targets that they will be able to measure in the future. Based on the results, action plans will also be developed by the managers in each team.

*“We are described internally as a very inclusive and welcoming organization. However, that does not mean we are a diverse and inclusive workplace. Because if everyone is the same, everyone feels included. That is examined currently in our D&I audit.” (P9)*

#### **5.9.4. Promotion strategies, practices, and measurements**

When it comes to promotion, both in terms of practices and measurements, the organization had no focus on DEI.

## **6. Discussion and analysis**

*This chapter presents a discussion and analysis of the empirical findings in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research in the related field.*

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### **6.1. The introduction of DEI in organizations**

Organizations have become increasingly interested in improving their efforts to promote a more diverse, equal, and inclusive workforce (Fujimoto et al. 2014). By incorporating a DEI focus into organizations and enforcing workforce diversity, research has found that it provides business benefits such as increased innovation and higher quality decision-making within teams, due to a mix of understandings and perspectives (Shen et al. 2009; Fujimoto et al. 2014). Organizations that value diversity have also been shown to have increased employee well-being and organizational growth in terms of profitability and competitive advantage (ibid.). This has therefore become a priority among organizations as they have seen that it provides many business benefits from which they can benefit (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020).

The statements of previous research on DEI and business benefits were reflected in the participants' responses about the motives behind their DEI focus. Most participants responded that their focus was motivated by the benefits of DEI in terms of improved performance, efficiency, and decision-making, as well as more perspectives and increased innovation and profit. In some organizations, a motive was also to be able to reflect the population in the regions in which they operate, which was seen as both a business benefit and a customer benefit in terms of identification with the organizations.

In terms of employee well-being, some of the organizations had this as part of their motives as it leads to employees feeling safe to be themselves at work, reduces sickness absence, and is the right thing to do, which are arguments that also have been found in previous research (Hofhuis, Van Der Rijt & Vlug 2016; Shen et al. 2009; Fujimoto et al. 2014). Some of the organizations were still on a compliance level in terms of what they can and cannot do, while others saw DEI as a competitive advantage and that having a diverse workforce is crucial to stay relevant in the competitive market, to be an attractive and modern employer and a sustainable and resilient company. These statements relate to an argument by Lu et al (2015) who argue that the introduction of diversity management in organizations can provide sustainable competitive advantage among competitors.

According to Lindberg and Rantatalo's (2015) perspective on practice theory, people do what makes sense to them and from a professional perspective, this influences the actions of practitioners and the creation of organizational practices. Furthermore, Janssens and Steyaert (2019) argue that practices are rarely neutral activities as they are often based on certain interests. In this case, the business benefits behind the introduction of DEI in organizations seem to influence the actions of the participating organizations regarding the implementation of organizational DEI practices, as it is in their interest to be successful and remain relevant as an organization.

## **6.2. The structure of DEI practices in organizations**

In order to understand how diversity management is implemented in organizations, it was essential to study how practices are structured and organized, and by whom, in line with Rennstam and Lundholm (2020) and Whittington's (2006) description of practice theory. As DEI has received increased attention among organizations due to the world becoming increasingly globalized and internationalized (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020; Shen, et al. 2009), many organizations have since increased their efforts to improve DEI in their workplaces (Fujimoto et al. 2014). Most of the organizations participating in this study had been actively working on DEI for a few months to two years, with the exception of the Energy Company which has had a DEI focus for six years.

In previous research, HRM has been mentioned as a system that is linked to organizations' human capital and business strategies. This includes practices linked to recruitment, employee growth and training, performance appraisal, and pay (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2011; Farndale et al. 2015). HRM has been argued to have a major impact on workforce diversity by providing conditions that make effective use of the diversity of the workforce (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2011). HRM practices have also been described as helpful in creating diversity policies and practices to recruit, retain, and promote a diverse workforce (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2012).

Many of the organizations in this study had linked the diversity management to their HR departments. Most organizations also had specific DEI roles linked to HR, while some worked collectively with DEI in their HR department or had DEI teams with employees from different

business areas working on DEI alongside their regular duties. In two organizations, DEI responsibilities had been assigned to employees with more senior positions, such as a Head of D&I and a D&I officer. In addition, some organizations had networks or councils of DEI ambassadors, where representatives from different business areas were involved and received information to disseminate to their respective teams.

According to Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, and Sánchez-Gardey (2011), a key challenge for today's organizations is how to increase diversity, where HRM can play an important role in creating effective conditions that utilize the diversity in workforces. The level of structure within the participating organizations varied in terms of DEI. In those organizations where only one person was responsible for DEI, respondents often wanted a DEI team or additional DEI positions, to ease the workload and to be able to do more. Simultaneously, in those organizations that had a DEI team, the DEI focus was seen as a secondary responsibility alongside their regular duties, and they, therefore, wanted an employee who had DEI as their main responsibility, to provide more structure.

Combined with the fact that most of the participating organizations have been working with DEI for a short period of time, the lack of structure in terms of DEI responsibilities could be one of the reasons why they are still struggling to implement practices and measurable targets that improve DEI in their organizations. Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, and Sánchez-Gardey (2012) suggest that organizations should design and implement HRM systems that are linked to diversity management, including strategies to increase diversity and equality in recruitment, development, and promotion. Thus, in order to achieve successful progress in their DEI agendas, DEI practices should be more structured and linked to the strategic needs of organizations. Many of the participating organizations lacked an effective structure, as they either did not have a specific role or group responsible for DEI, had a DEI team that did not work exclusively on DEI, or had designated a single employee responsible for DEI at the national or global level.

In line with Whittington's (2003) view of practice theory, the implementation of strategies and the design of organizations are laborious, lengthy, and costly activities. Therefore, the use of organizing, planning, strategizing, and communication is crucial for practice to be successful and adopted throughout the organization. Hence, there is still a need for structure in organizations' DEI practices in terms of who is responsible for the strategizing and how the

strategies and practices are communicated and consumed, in order to ensure that the outcomes are successful rather than resources being wasted.

### **6.3. The role of recruitment to enforce DEI in organizations**

The strategic approach to practice theory focuses on the tools and techniques used to create strategies and how they are communicated and integrated in organizations (Whittington 2003; Knorr-Cetina, Schatzki & von Savigny 2000). It was thus essential to study the DEI practices in recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees by practitioners in terms of the implementation of tools, techniques, and other engagements. Previous researchers have found that DEI can be increased through HRM in the form of diversity messages in job advertisements (Flory et al. 2021), broader use of channels for talent sourcing, and adjustment of selection and evaluative tools for potential candidates (Shen et al. 2009; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). When it comes to the recruitment process, all participating organizations had adjusted it in one way or another to enhance DEI.

In previous research, diversity messages in job advertisements have been shown to positively impact the applicant pool in terms of DEI (Flory et al. 2021) and increase an organization's attractiveness among underrepresented and discriminated groups (Klysing et al. 2021; Flory et al. 2021; Lambert 2015). This was found in some organizations, where they used diversity messages at the end of each job advertisement, stating that they value and include everyone in their organization. Some found that it made a noticeable difference to the applicant attraction, while others felt that diversity messages were unnecessary and that it should be clear throughout the advertisement. Many organizations had also adapted the design and communication of the advertisements to be more inclusive. For example, reviewing images and wording that may give exclusionary signals, to ensure that they attract a diverse audience. One organization also included a short introduction of the team members, to give the applicant an idea of what the team looks like.

Some of the organizations also tried to broaden their applicant pool by adapting the requirements in their job advertisements. For example, removing the requirement to speak Swedish to include candidates who do not have Swedish language skills, or communicating that all educational backgrounds are valued to make their workforces less homogenous in terms of educational background. Another technique has been to broaden the use of recruitment

platforms to reach a wider audience. For example, using global recruitment sites or posting the same advertisements via different channels, such as LinkedIn, social media platforms, and specific forums, to reach candidates they would otherwise miss.

According to Stephens, Rivera, and Townsend (2020), having a wide range of channels to source talents from is important when trying to diversify the applicant pool. However, broadening the selection of recruitment sites does not necessarily lead to a diversified workforce if the recruitment team is homogenous or has biases of which they are not aware. According to Flory et al. (2021), underrepresented groups are often discouraged by organizations where there is low workforce diversity, as they sense a lack of representation or risk of discrimination and biases from colleagues and managers. Stephens, Rivera, and Townsend (2020) note that this can be facilitated by de-biasing evaluative tools such as structured interviews, and by increasing accountability through the development of strategies and practices. This was found in some organizations where they used competency-based interviews and blind recruiting.

Another way in which the participating organizations sought to reduce unconscious biases in the recruitment process was by holding awareness training for managers on diversity and the impact of biases in selection situations and in interviews (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). From a practice theory perspective, practices such as learning and routines contribute to producing social order in organizations and shape meanings and ways of understanding the world (Janssens & Steyaert 2019; Echeverri & Skålen 2011). Thus, bias awareness training can be useful to reduce bias and create a collective understanding of how practices in the recruitment process should be implemented. This was done by most of the organizations by discussing what bias may look like and how it may lead to partial decisions or hiring that is not based on relevant competencies.

Moreover, bias has been described as a key issue in the labor market, as people tend to show unequal preference for others based on group affiliation (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020; Flory et al. 2021). This was described in some of the organizations, as biases tend to influence the recruiters and recruitment managers, which can lead to an over-representation of people with similar backgrounds. In some cases, the team members also participate in interviews to ensure that the candidate is the right fit for the team, which can also lead to a less objective recruitment process if the right fit entails personality and not skills.

To improve DEI in recruitment, it is important to implement DEI practices, such as using diversity messages, broadening the channels for finding talent and adapting selection and evaluation tools, combined with training for managers and recruiters on diversity and bias. Making adjustments to the recruitment process can, in part, help to give a broader group of candidates a chance to participate in the recruitment process. However, diversity training and bias awareness is crucial to reduce recruiters' biases in the selection and interview phases, which can otherwise have a negative impact on people's chances of getting a job if the recruiter bases their selection on biased perceptions. In addition, diversity training could also lead to recruiters becoming more involved in the implementation of new tools and methods to improve DEI in the recruitment process, as their understanding of its importance may increase as a result of the training. Thus, there is an important link between educational practices in the form of training and operational practices in the form of adaptation of recruitment methods and tools, as both can have a positive impact on DEI in recruitment.

#### **6.4. The role of DEI to ensure retention in organizations**

Discrimination and inequality against individuals from different minority groups remain a global issue (Klysing et al. 2021; Shen et al. 2009). In an organizational context, this may include workplace violence, unfair treatment, verbal abuse, or bullying of employees on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or religion (Wood, Braeken & Niven 2013). Previous researchers have argued for the need for effective diversity management linked to HRM (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). Updated practices are thus needed in organizations to enhance DEI and utilize the advantages of a diverse workforce.

Previous researchers have suggested that organizations can increase DEI by implementing various practices such as offering opportunities for collaborative learning (Cary et al. 2020), conducting diversity awareness training for employees, and teaching leaders how to manage inclusion (Buengeler, Leroy & De Stobbeleir 2018). Most organizations in this study conducted diversity awareness training for both employees and managers in the form of onboarding, presentations, e-learning, and workshops. Some organizations conducted them regularly, while others more sporadically. The training often covered bias awareness, code of conduct, organizational culture, sexual harassment, discrimination, and equality. The importance of training at the management level was sometimes motivated by their senior positions, being culture bearers, and setting an example for their teams. The implementation of top-down

awareness training has also been suggested in previous research, where managers are first taught the value of diversity and how to build social cohesion, followed by team-building training, to implement DEI at all levels (Shen et al. 2009). This connects to the assumption in practice theory, that the actions of practitioners create social order (Schau, Muñiz Jr & Arnould 2009), and that practitioners can make a difference and influence outcomes in organizations by performing, changing, and redefining practices (Whittington 2014; Heidenstrøm & Kvarnlöf 2018).

The success of DEI training has been debated by previous researchers, with some arguing that it can make a difference (Yadav & Lenka 2020), while others argue that it is one of the least effective strategies for changing attitudes and behaviors (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). Similarly, participants from the Radio Station claimed that DEI training can be a waste of time if no one attends or uses the material. Instead, they focused on creating a culture of self-leadership, where everyone takes responsibility for their development and learning. Some organizations also held noncompulsory workshops for employees who wanted to attend them. Given the findings from the Energy Company, where they found that the business areas that did not proactively work with DEI also had more cases of harassment, this would require structures and measurements to ensure that employees and managers take responsibility to educate themselves on the subject.

Other DEI practices that have been claimed to improve DEI in organizations include increasing intergroup contact and welcoming different perspectives and ideas (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020), and forming networking groups (Shen et al. 2009). This was also found in the organizations, in the form of internal employee forums, highlighting employees with different backgrounds and perspectives through blog posts and theme parties, holding union and work-balance meetings, and team board games. In addition, the creation of multidimensional accessibility has been promoted in DEI research, to increase organizational inclusion for all regardless of disability (Fujimoto et al. 2014). This was only found in two organizations, which either adapted the tasks to employee accessibility or created inclusive designs of their construction barracks to make them accessible to all. In the context of workplace adaptations, the Construction Company also implemented practices to make their construction sites more inclusive for women by creating separate locker rooms, creating maternity work clothes, and providing menstrual products in the toilets.

According to Buengeler, Leroy, and De Stobbeleir (2018), organizations are putting more effort into creating HR practices to manage diversity. Although the organizations in this study had all implemented various DEI practices to retain a diverse and inclusive organization, the level of ambition varied and many of them wanted to do even more. Some organizations lacked a clear structure in their DEI focus, as they were either just starting out or were expected to create strategies and practices alongside their ordinary responsibilities. Others lacked a clear structure as they only had one employee with DEI responsibilities at the national or global level, which they expressed as insufficient to make a difference.

Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, and Sánchez-Gardey (2011) argue that one of the most important challenges for organizations is to create strategies to increase the diversity of their workforces. At the same time, previous researchers have identified failed efforts to recruit, promote and retain minorities and to eliminate structural biases in established policies within organizations (Cary et al. 2020; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020). In turn, people from minority groups still face disadvantages, such as experiencing challenges in getting a promotion or facing microaggressions and biases. Therefore, the importance of formulating effective strategies to promote diversity and inclusion is emphasized (Cary et al. 2020). In this study, participants did not refer to their DEI practices as failed, but many wanted to do more. The DEI focus in the organizations was particularly limited from a promotion perspective, which risks continuing disadvantages for minority groups in terms of promotion and career development opportunities.

Reducing discrimination, violence in the workplace and unfair treatment of employees from minority or discriminated groups requires effective diversity management using a range of DEI strategies and practices. The combination of educational practices, such as diversity awareness training in different forms, and practices to improve intergroup contact, such as employee forums and group activities, can help to improve the overall DEI of an organization by creating awareness, a sense of community and stronger relationships and understanding between employees from different backgrounds. Therefore, management training is particularly important as managers lead by example and can influence their teams by initiating DEI training sessions and creating activities that bring the team closer together, which could create a more inclusive work environment leading to higher employee retention.

Schau, Muñiz Jr, and Arnould (2009) argue from a practice theory perspective that in order to engage in practices, there must be a shared understanding between individuals that reinforces social orders and creates a collective identity. Therefore, although the success of DEI training has been debated, it is crucial for organizations to create a shared understanding of the importance of DEI at all levels through different DEI strategies and practices. According to Janssens and Steyaert (2019), studying organizational practices with a practice approach can highlight how diversity-related phenomena are reproduced and interlocked in a nexus of practices. Given that DEI practices in the participating organizations varied in terms of locations or departments, the importance of management practices becomes visible, in line with Janssens and Steyaert's (ibid.) argument that leadership, teamwork, and meaning-making practices influence the culture and diversity in organizations. This was evident in the Energy Company where the lack of leadership and teamwork practices linked to DEI led to more cases of harassment. It is therefore important for organizations to create a holistic approach to DEI, where there are clear structures and practices in place to help create a shared understanding of the importance of DEI, which could lead to a more inclusive working environment for all employees regardless of background or circumstances.

### **6.5. The role of promotion to enhance DEI on all organizational levels**

According to Fujimoto et al. (2014), discrimination against minority groups in the workplace is increasing in terms of social inequities in pay and job opportunities. Ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQI+ individuals often experience differential treatment and barriers in terms of career opportunities (Lambert 2015; Flory et al. 2021) and chances to reach management positions (Shen et al. 2009). To increase DEI in organizations, researchers have suggested practices such as offering equal development opportunities and providing career planning (Cary et al. 2020; Shen et al. 2009).

It has been suggested that the design and implementation of HRM systems linked to diversity management can help organizations manage their workforce diversity (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2012), which includes a focus on employee growth, performance appraisal, and payment (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2011; Farndale et al. 2015). Since a critical challenge for today's organizations is how to increase diversity (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández & Sánchez-Gardey 2011), HRM practices can have a positive impact the promotion of employees. However, the promotion

aspect seems to be forgotten in many organizations' DEI work. Most of the organizations that participated had no DEI targets in terms of promotion, with the exception of three organizations that had specific targets for promoting women to management positions. In terms of diversity aspects other than gender, the Retail Company was the only organization that also had set targets for the promotion of employees of different ages and different ethnic backgrounds.

Some organizations also held general leadership training and managerial aspirant programs for employees, while others held female coaching and mentoring programs. However, when it came to career development beyond management aspirations, there were no clear practices among the organizations. Without clear targets, it will be difficult for organizations to ensure that their employees are given equal opportunities for promotion and career development, which also makes it difficult to monitor progress. As discussions on promotion often take place between employees and managers, there is still a risk that employees do not receive equal treatment.

According to Rennstam and Lundholm (2020), practice theory is useful when examining why and how inequalities exist in organizations by analyzing power relations and asymmetries in organizational contexts. Since practices are rarely neutral actions and instead assist certain interests at the expense of others, it also impacts the distribution of power and privileges (Janssens and Steyaert 2019). Furthermore, the practice approach shares the assumption that practitioners can make a difference in organizations by changing and redefining practices (Whittington 2014; Heidenstrøm & Kvarnlöf 2018), which in some cases can be used in a negative way where practitioners act based on their own interests and maintain inequalities due to power relations (Nicolini 2013). This can affect employees' chances of getting a promotion or accessing information about job opportunities, for example, if their managers act in a discriminatory way or have a biased view of who is eligible for a managerial position.

Most organizations did not have a specified structure for DEI practices in relation to promotion, with the exception of the Audit and Advisory Firm, which had a seniority ladder with specified criteria for promotion, which could bring a more objective perspective. The company also held joint promotion meetings with managers and senior employees to ensure that promotion processes were not handled by one person. This could also be a good method to use from a diversity perspective, to make the promotion process less subjective and reduce the risk of biased decisions. However, if promotion meetings are made up of a homogenous group

responsible for the decisions, there may be a risk that employees that are similar to them are more likely to be promoted compared to employees who are not. This connects to findings from previous research showing that structural biases in established policies within organizations lead to continuous disadvantages for individuals from minority groups in terms of challenges in obtaining a promotion (Cary et al. 2020; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020).

In order to ensure equal opportunities for promotion and career development, a clear structure of criteria and procedures must be established. Setting targets for DEI in promotion is important to monitor progress, but it is also important to establish criteria for promotion as this helps to ensure objectivity in managers' decisions and transparency for employees in the promotion and career development process. In addition, transparency regarding vacancies and management training is important to give all employees equal opportunities to develop their careers. Similarly, the establishment of transparency and a structure of criteria for salary progression can also increase equality among employees in promotion by providing information on what is required to achieve a higher position or salary. All promotion practices should thus be linked to transparency and objectivity to ensure that career and salary development is possible for all.

Promoting employees is a way to signal that you value their competencies and efforts. This is also linked to retention in a way, as employees will feel appreciated and valued for the contributions and skills they bring to the organization and thus may be more willing to stay rather than look elsewhere. From a DEI perspective, it is important to signal that different perspectives are valued and to offer employees equal opportunities for career development, as this creates an environment where employees with different characteristics can flourish and feel at home (Dillard-Wright & Gazaway 2021). Thus, although the promotion aspect is seemingly forgotten in organizations, it is important to incorporate it into DEI practice, to ensure DEI at all levels.

## **6.6. Setting DEI targets and measuring progress**

Practice theory has been argued to be appropriate for understanding the phenomenon of inequality, discrimination, diversity, and inclusion in organizations (Janssens & Steyaert 2019; Rennstam & Lundholm 2020), which is why DEI was examined in terms of organizational practices and measurements. However, when it came to measuring recruitment, retention, and

promotion of employees linked to DEI, many of the participating organizations did not have a clear structure.

According to Boström (2012), diversity, representation, and participation are part of social sustainability in terms of improving people's living conditions. Some of the UN SDGs are linked to DEI as they aim to reduce inequalities, promote inclusion, and ensure equal employment for all (UN n.d.a.; UN n.d.b.; UN n.d.c.). However, the social aspects of sustainability have been argued to receive less attention by policymakers than the environmental aspects, as they are seen to be more difficult to operationalize and measure (Boström 2012).

The DEI focus in organizations is linked to Goals 8 and 10 of the UN SDGs, as they focus on creating DEI for individuals by providing fair opportunities and participation in terms of work opportunities (UN n.d.b.; UN n.d.c.; Arsel, Crockett & Scott 2021). The neglect of social sustainability in the creation and operationalization of DEI goals was observed in the participating organizations, as few organizations had specified targets and measurements for their DEI practices. In the recruitment process, only two organizations had specified DEI targets. In other cases, they had general targets, no targets at all, or separate targets according to the needs of each location or department.

Similarly, few organizations had specified retention or promotion targets linked to DEI. Instead, some had DEI focus plans for retention linked to corporate culture, skills development and provision, inclusion, and labor standards. Some also had NPS targets in their employee surveys related to DEI. In those organizations where they had specified promotion targets, they focused mainly on increasing the number of women in managerial positions, with the exception of the Retail Company which also focused on a diversity of ethnicities and ages. When it comes to measurements, many organizations did not measure DEI systematically. Some organizations compared the percentage of employees who were women or first- or second-generation immigrants with data collected from SCB. Others tried to match the percentage of women or individuals with foreign backgrounds graduating from programs at Swedish universities that are most relevant to their organizations.

Practice theory argues that practices are understood, organized, and carried out through the discourses that portray and shape a setting, such as the discourse of workplaces (Lloyd 2010).

For people to engage in practices, there must be shared understandings that reinforce social orders and create a collective identity, which is established through the actions of practitioners (Schatzki 1997; Schau, Muñiz Jr & Arnould 2009). Part of practice theory is also to establish a teleoaffective structure, including actions that are goal-oriented and meaningful (Schau, Muñiz Jr & Arnould 2009; Heidenstrøm & Kvarnlöf 2018). Without specified and measurable targets throughout the organization, organizations will have difficulty creating a collective understanding and shaping social orders that can positively impact the organization in terms of DEI. Measurable targets are therefore necessary, not only to monitor the progress of DEI strategies and practices, but also to create meaning and understanding among employees about working more consciously and purposefully towards a more diverse, equal and inclusive working environment at all organizational levels.

In addition to establishing a teleoaffective structure, practices should include skills, knowledge, principles, and instructions (Schau, Muñiz Jr & Arnould 2009; Heidenstrøm & Kvarnlöf 2018). However, the participants were generally unsure of what they were legally allowed to collect data on and found it difficult to measure due to the uncertainty of what they were and were not allowed to ask or collect from candidates. Some respondents also explained that it is difficult to set general targets for all departments, while others mentioned that it is difficult to set specific targets to ensure sure that everyone feels included and that there are grey areas that make it difficult to measure. These expressed difficulties relate to Boström's (2012) argument that policymakers neglect social sustainability goals and measurements because they are perceived as difficult to operationalize. This may explain why organizations do not systematically measure DEI, as they are either uninformed about what they can ask for or consider it insensitive to ask candidates or employees for personal information.

In the retention aspect, all organizations measured DEI through employee surveys to find out how employees perceive inclusion and participation in the work environment. Some organizations also used a D&I index or NPS targets of employee satisfaction in their surveys, to get an idea of where they currently are and to monitor the process. Employee surveys can be a good method to measure the perceived DEI of the employees in an organization. However, it is necessary to ensure that the questions capture employees' actual perceptions of the organization in order to get a true picture and to identify employees' perceptions of the organization's strengths as well as weaknesses that can be improved.

The problem with employee surveys is making sure that you get a truthful picture of the organization. If your workforce is homogenous, it could yield a better result, as employees will feel included when all colleagues have similar backgrounds and perspectives, while minorities may not want to share their experiences for fear of being identified. Therefore, it is necessary to consider other measurement tools in addition to employee surveys to get a more accurate picture. The Audit and Advisory Firm has developed a maturity model to assess its current status and in which areas they need to improve, in order to have a starting point from which to measure. The Car Manufacturer also conducted surveys during the onboarding, followed by a second survey after six months and in the offboarding process, in order to measure how their employees are feeling throughout their employment. These could be good tools to measure the progress of the organizations' practices as well as the employees' experiences of DEI from the beginning to the end of their employment.

In terms of promotion, few organizations measured the DEI in their employees' career development opportunities. However, they did conduct salary surveys and mapping, based on expectations from the unions and because of legal requirements in Sweden. In this sense, it seems necessary for salary surveys and mapping to be a legal requirement, to ensure that there is some evaluation of equal salary development in organizations, as most of the organizations did not focus at all on DEI in promotion and career development. Measuring DEI in salary development is important to detect whether there are pay inequalities between employees performing the same tasks and, if so, to identify why and how this is happening in the organization. This could help to reduce inequalities in pay and promotion, by monitoring the salary development process.

Without setting targets, it is difficult for organizations to measure their progress and the results of DEI practices. Targets and measurements are important to monitor the progress of strategies and practices, otherwise they will not know if they are really making a difference. In small organizations, such as the Software Company, the Development Cooperation Organization, and the Tech Recruitment Company, DEI practices and measurements may not be as established because they do not have a large workforce or are relatively new to the market. However, it is important for larger organizations with greater resources and thousands of employees to ensure that DEI is part of their organizational climate and culture, where everyone is given equal opportunities for participation, recognition, and development. Work fulfills not only the need for income but also human inclusion and recognition (Boström 2012), making it a social

sustainability issue that is highly relevant for organizations if they want to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage among competitors (Lu et al. 2015), as there are increasing expectations on organizations to address social sustainability issues in terms of gender, social justice, and democratic rights (Boström 2012)

In line with previous researchers who have identified failed efforts in recruitment, promotion, and retainment of minorities (Cary et al. 2020; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend 2020), people from minority groups will still face bias or disadvantages in their workplaces (Cary et al. 2020). Because current DEI practices in the observed organizations were mainly focused on gender and sometimes ethnicity, other minority or discriminated groups will continue to experience disadvantages in their careers. Sweden has been claimed to be a progressive country in terms of gender equality (Kokkonen & Wängnerud 2017), which could explain why there is a greater focus on gender in relation to DEI, compared to other demographic groups. Thus, in line with a statement by Cary et al. (2020), it is still necessary to formulate effective strategies to promote DEI in organizations.

As Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, and Sánchez-Gardey (2012) and Podgorodnichenko et al. (2020) have argued, the creation and implementation of effective HRM practices linked to DEI can help organizations achieve their social sustainability goals linked to employee well-being, equality, and diversity, as well as bring a sustainable competitive advantage on the market. The implementation of DEI practices therefore requires effective targets and measurement tools to monitor the progress and outcomes. This is important to ensure that people have equal rights to work and to create sustainable development in organizations for future generations.

## **7. Conclusions and future directions**

*This chapter presents the conclusions of the main findings of the study. In addition, suggestions for future directions in the related research area are presented.*

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The aim of the study was to broaden the knowledge of how diversity management is performed in organizations. The research questions were (1) What strategies and practices are implemented by diversity and HR managers to integrate DEI in organizations? and (2) How are the results of DEI strategies and practices measured in organizations?

In terms of the strategies and practices used by diversity and HR managers to enhance DEI, the most common practices in recruitment are adjusting the communication in job advertisements, advertising on multiple platforms, and holding bias awareness training for recruiting managers. In terms of retention, diversity awareness training for employees and managers is the most common. Other practices include action plans, employee forums and networks, and actions to create multidimensional accessibility. In terms of promotion, organizations focus on female coaching and mentoring programs, as well as general leadership training, but there is a lack of strategies for career development opportunities beyond managerial positions.

In terms of how the results of DEI strategies and practices are measured in organizations, the focus on measurements is generally low. Most organizations use employee surveys, sometimes with NPS targets, to measure perceived inclusion among employees. Some also compare the percentage of employees who are women or first- or second-generation immigrants with data from SCB or data on graduates from Swedish universities and try to match the statistics. However, systematic use of numerical targets is scarce in all three areas, making it difficult to monitor the progress and evaluate the outcomes of DEI practices.

The findings showed that organizations lack a clear structure for organizing their DEI practices, defining focus areas, and setting measurable targets. It seems that organizations are implementing different practices without correlation and without having any idea of how to measure the outcomes, which from a practice theory perspective may negatively affect the employees' shared understandings and adoption of DEI practices due to the lack of organization, planning, and representation.

Most organizations focus on increasing diversity in terms of gender and ethnic background, as it is considered easier to collect data on those parameters, leaving other demographic groups unaddressed. It is thus necessary to identify ways to include other demographic groups to make organizations less homogenous and more inclusive for all. Similarly, there is a need for more systematized strategies and practices to enforce the inclusion of employees from all aspects of DEI. Suggestions for organizations wishing to increase their DEI are therefore to create a clear structure for the aims of their DEI strategies and practices, including measurable targets and assessment models so that they can monitor progress. Moreover, a systematization for objective recruitment techniques is required, such as competency-based interviews and blind recruitment. Similarly, there is a need for promotion structures in the form of specified criteria that allow for a more objective evaluation of performances and achievements.

This study has made theoretical contributions by filling the, according to Cary et al. (2020), gap in the related research field on how diversity management is performed in organizations, by exploring the strategies, practices, and measurements used in organizations to increase DEI in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees. Furthermore, it has contributed to the, as stated by Janssens & Steyaert (2019), limited research on diversity management from a strategic practice approach and has given a deeper understanding of DEI as a phenomenon in the context of organizations.

As this study was limited to a Swedish context, further directions in the related research on DEI are suggested to adopt the research method of this study and explore it in a different context in terms of another country or a different selection of sectors. Moreover, since data collection was limited to one interview in each organization, another suggestion is to conduct an in-depth case study of DEI in one organization through an ethnographic research approach, to follow step by step how practitioners are strategizing and organizing practices in recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees. Finally, as this study used practice theory focusing on the organization, implementation, and measurement of DEI strategies and practices, a suggested approach is to use institutional theory to examine the link between DEI and legitimacy effects or isomorphism in organizations. This could provide a deeper focus on the motives behind organizations' DEI practices and how they are influenced by their internal and external environment.

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## **Appendix 1. Interview guide**

### **Introduction**

- How long have you had this professional role in the organization?
- What are the organization's focus areas within DEI?
- Why is DEI important to your organization?
- How does your organization structure the work around DEI in terms of specific positions or teams?

### **Recruitment**

- How has the recruitment process been altered to attract DEI?
  - What tools are used (e.g., choice of platforms, tests, blind screening)?
  - How are the job advertisements formulated (e.g., choice of images, headlines, job descriptions, requirements profile and diversity messages)?
- How you adjust your interviews to make them more inclusive?
- How you measure DEI in the recruitment process?

### **Retention**

- What are your goals for maintaining DEI within the organization?
- What strategies do you have for maintaining DEI within the organization?
  - For example, specific DEI practices in daily operations or annually?
- How you measure the results of your DEI goals and strategies?
  - For example, employee surveys or statistics?

### **Promotion**

- What are your criteria for promotion when it comes to DEI?
- How do you ensure equal opportunities for promotion within your organization (e.g., underrepresented groups in management roles, salary regulations or mapping)?
- How do you measure the promotion practices when it comes to DEI?