

Intergenerational Cooperation at the Workplace from the Management Perspective

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Abstract

The labor market is currently experiencing employees of four generations. Each generation has different behavior patterns, attitudes, expectations, habits, and motivational mechanisms. As generational gaps play an important role in the business process, organizations have to find ways to balance the needs and views of different age groups. To overcome the negative outcomes arising from generational differences and to use the strengths of each generation, the implementation of comprehensive and proactive model of intergenerational cooperation, presented in the paper, is becoming the necessity for each organization because of the benefits.

Keywords: employees, generation, intergenerational cooperation, intergenerational learning

Introduction

The concept of generation is based on the idea that people have developed different values and beliefs about life because of the influence that comes from a time period in which they grew up. Dencker et al. (2008) posited that generational identities emerge in the workplace based on collective memories of shared events that take place within each generation's late formative years. Knowledge about generations can help us to understand the behavior, handling, and motivation of older and younger than us. Often, in practice there are also arguments that the belonging to each generation is more a state of "spirit" of the individual rather than the actual biological age. Therefore, the identity of one's generation may vary by age, gender, race, and education and is not strictly tied to birth cohort membership.

Whatever the concerns, it is clear that, in terms of age, people have different needs, values, and attitudes as well as a variety of experience and knowledge. Depending on experience, the older generation can have a historical view of the developments in the working environment due to long years of working experience, while younger generations are more qualified in the field of new technologies and media, but they lack experience. In the same way, the younger generation is more focused on career development, while the older generations focus more on high level of employment and income security (Crumpacker &

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Crumpacker, 2007). Intergenerational cooperation and generational management at work are becoming a necessity in business, if the organizations want to maintain the knowledge and experience of older generations and at the same time obtain and retain talented and devoted young employees. The times when the older workers could be immediately replaced with younger, qualified employees will soon be over due to declining fertility rates in Europe. Therefore, the intergenerational leadership is a challenge that we all face. Besides, this replacement is not easy for professional reasons; generations are more complementary than competitive (Zupančič, 2016).

A diverse and multigenerational workforce present today a number of opportunities and challenges for managers. With some employees choosing to work into their late 60s and 70s, four generational cohorts are currently working together: veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Although this diversity presents complexities in the management of human resource policies and systems, the basic objective is to fulfil the desire and different needs generations feel in their workplace environment.

Researchers have been, therefore, interested in intergenerational management for decades, especially because the workforce has never been more diverse with regard to age, race, gender, and ethnicity, as it is today (Crumpacker & Crumpacker 2007; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). The majority of research concerning generational differences in the workplace has assumed that differences between social generations should be evident in the work domain; therefore, better understanding of the generations cohabiting at the workplace can lead to better recruitment, retention, succession management, communication, employee engagement and conflict resolution (Dencker, Joshi, & Martocchio, 2008). To date, academic research on generational differences at work has been descriptive rather than explanatory (Joshi, Dencker, & Franz, 2011). Despite the recent explosion of research concerning generational differences in the workplace, scholars and practitioners presently face a variety of contexts, with different methodological and theoretical perspectives on the nature of generations. There is an intensive discussion about whether we can really distinguish a group of people – a generation in terms of different beliefs, values, and attitudes or is this just a question of the life stage an individual belongs to (Giancola, 2006). So we set the research question: Can we for achieving the competitive advantages of organizations develop a model of intergenerational cooperation?

In order to present the challenge and problem of generations and intergenerational management, we structured our paper into several chapters. Methodology of scientific research foregoes chapters where we examine the

theoretical foundations of generational differences and generations in the workplace. First, we argue key points of generation theory that have potential to advance our understanding of generations as a workplace phenomenon of generations and their characteristics. Second, we provide an up-to-date review of intergenerational cooperation at work. Third, we present the results of the model on intergenerational cooperation. We conclude the paper with a number of directions for future research of intergenerational cooperation and generations at work.

Methodology

Based on a systematic literature search strategy, the databases dLib.si, ProQuest, and Cobbis.si were reviewed in 2016. For literature search, we used the following key words: intergenerational cooperation, generations, intergenerational learning, tacit knowledge, intergenerational gap. We broadened our search with the literature on the human resources management. Limitation: the study covered only publication since 2003; such restrictions were deliberately set because we wanted to obtain the latest and updated information on the studied issues. In the literature search, we focused on the literature in the Slovenian and English languages. There were no other restrictions.

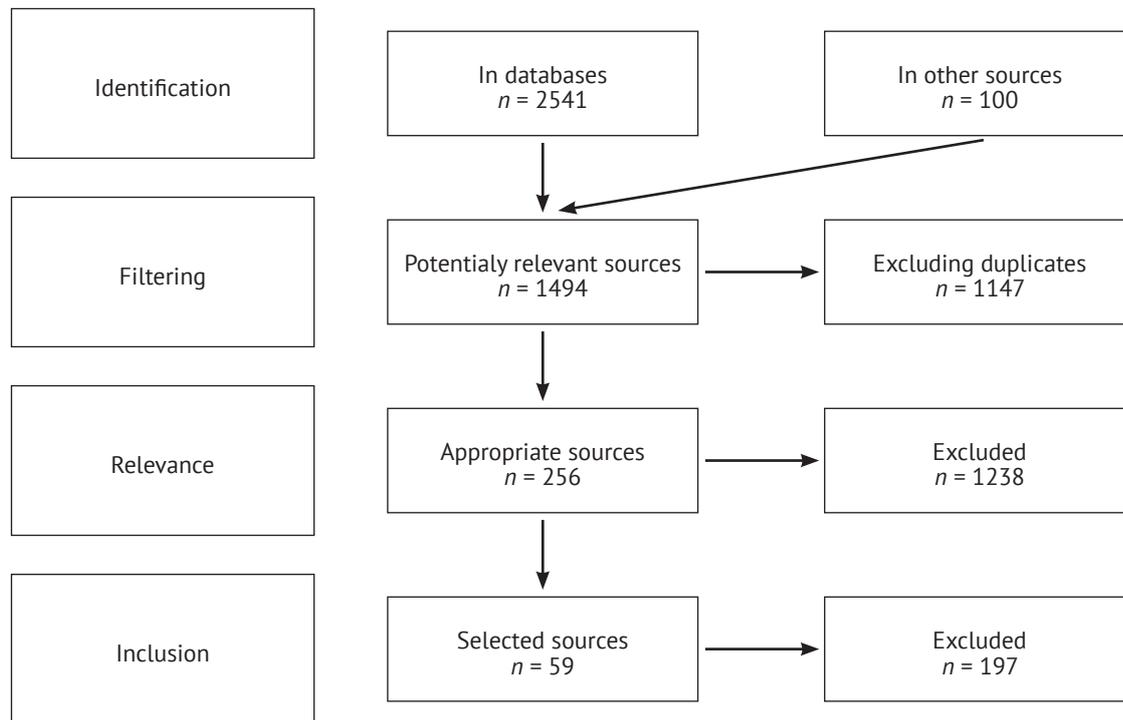
Results of the literature review

Information was searched in the databases of the University of Maribor. Qualitative research methodology included desk research. The search in the databases of the University of Maribor resulted in 2541 hits. We selected 59 sources and researched them; see Figure 1.

Quality Score review and description of the data processing

The selected sources were published between 2003 and 2016. We excluded the sources, which were double or we estimated the content has not been sufficiently connected with the subject, purpose, and objective of our research. For the analysis of the technical and scientific content, we conducted a synthesis of the results, and took into account the availability of the content and contextual relevance. We chose 59 sources that were appropriately connected with our topic and objectives and contributed with high quality to our qualitative research, which was based on qualitative research methods such as descriptive and comparative method, method of induction and deduction.

Figure 1. Research Process Flowchart



Source: (author's presentation)

Generations at Workplace

Generational differences in work values, motives, and beliefs have an impact on all aspects of human resource management: recruitment, training, and development; career development, rewards, and working arrangements and management style; they can also cause serious conflicts within the workplace (Karp & Sirias 2001; Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Important foundations for the study of generations come from Karl Mannheim. He defined generation as a group of individuals of similar ages whose members have experienced noteworthy historical and social events within a set period and therefore share similar thoughts (Mannheim, 1952, in Parry & Urwin, 2011). Mannheim (Bonnin, 2006) believes that the source of the generation gap stems from the fact that people who are born in a particular society at different times, have different key lessons; thus, different time frames govern generations' social change. According to various authors (Vincent 2005; Spitzer in Lyon & others, 2006; Biggs, 2007), a generation is a group of people who share a certain social and historical characteristic. Members of various generations have the same set of common life experiences, values, views, attitudes, and beliefs, and these life experiences are so deterministic that they allow for separation generation from each other (De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010). Although not all people from

one generation experienced exactly the same historical and social events, they share a common awareness and respect. Joshi et al. (2011) noted that inter-generational interaction is particularly important to the transmission of values, skills, and resources across generations. As noted previously, the majority of research concerning generational differences in the workplace proceeds from the cohort perspective and assumes that differences in the formative influences of various generations should be manifested in psychological and behavioral differences (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Although it is not possible to define a certain generation by the specified time frame, one does so in order to facilitate research and comparisons of generations of employees; in the context of a diverse workforce, the expert and scientific literature mentions various generations that make up today's workforce (Bonnin, 2006). In addition, many authors (Zemke et al., 2000; Patota et al., 2007) believe that the generational workforce diversity is an important factor in managing diverse workforce, as it affects the efficiency of managing generational diversity of the workforce.

In the literature, we can observe different concepts of generations and different time frames to which an individual generation belongs. At this point, it is worth to note that the generational characteristics are of a general nature and are not completely homogeneous, which means that those

characteristics cannot be attributed to each member of a particular generation (Patota et al., 2007). Along these lines, researchers have investigated generational differences in domains as diverse as work values (Smola & Sutton, 2002), learning orientation (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008), the use of influence tactics (Landry, 2009) and narcissism (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010b).

One setting in particular where generational differences have been widely written about is the workplace. In a work setting, such simplifications and generalized differences among groups of employees could have major implications for the way organizations recruit, hire, train, reward, promote, and terminate their employees. For example, if all Generation Xers want autonomy in their jobs, work may need to be redesigned to increase independence or if Millennials are attracted to organizations by their level of technological savvy, recruiting practices may need to be modified to include virtual recruiting fairs (Costanza et al., 2012).

Some researchers have investigated differences in work-related outcomes across the generations. For example, a study by Westerman and Yamamura (2007) looked at differences in job satisfaction between Baby Boomers and their younger counterparts of Generations X and Y, hypothesizing that Baby Boomers would have lower satisfaction than Generations X and Y. They found that there were no significant mean differences in satisfaction between generations.

Other researchers have looked at different work-related variables such as motivation (Wong et al., 2008), training (Sayers, 2007; Szamosi, 2006), work life conflict and spill-over (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008; Dilworth & Kingsbury, 2005), and leadership style (Collins et al., 2009) (in Costanza et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, we can say that the knowledge of the characteristics of generations and their intergenerational management is an important factor of organizational success and psychological well-being of employees because, more than ever in history, there is an increasing age gap between employees (Benson & Brown, 2011).

As mentioned before, today the organizations face generationally diverse workforce in their business environments. For the first time in history, four generations of employees are working together: (1) a generation born prior to the end of World War II, referred to as veterans or the "Silent Generation"; (2) those born between the end of World War II and the early- to mid-1960s, referred to consistently as Baby Boomers or the children of well-being (born 1946 – 1964); (3) those born between the early to mid-1960s and the mid- to late 1980s, commonly referred to as Generation X (1965 – 1979); and (4) those born between the late 1970s

to early 1980s and the late 1990s (1980 – 1999), referred to as Generation Y or Millennials. We have the fifth generation called Generation Z (also known as Post-Millennials, the iGeneration, Plurals, or the Homeland Generation) is the demographic cohort after the Millennials. There are no precise dates for when the Gen Z cohort starts or ends; demographers and researchers typically use starting birth years that range from the mid-1990s to early 2000s, but there is little consensus about ending birth years. In the context of generational differences, organizations have to adapt in order to meet the diverse needs of the four generations in today's workforce and marketplace (Seitel, 2005).

Each of these generations has its own attitude to work, which presents a challenge for HR professionals to coordinate the needs of different people in one organization. Baby boomers "live to work," Generation X "work to live," Generation Y "work to enjoy," and Generation Z "work to develop" (Fraone et al., 2008).

To really understand the generations, it's helpful to point out the workplace characteristics attributed to each generation that shape the way each generation behaves at the workplace.

The characteristics listed in the tables are a few that have been studied and reported by various authors (Zemke et al., 2000; Patota et al., 2007; Benson & Brown, 2011). Not every person in a generation will share all of the various characteristics shown in Table 1 with others in the same generation. However, these characteristics are indicative of general patterns in the relationships between people in the workplace. Individuals born at one end of the date range or the other may see overlapping characteristics with the preceding or succeeding generation.

There is a growing sense among a group of authors, about the substantive and meaningful generational differences between individuals in today's workplaces. These differences are often summarized in terms of descriptors on sets of characteristics that define each generation and differentiate it from others. In terms of the way the generations are sometimes described, members of the Silent (Traditional or Veteran) Generation are labeled conservative and disciplined (Costanza et al., 2012), Baby Boomers are called time-stressed and materialistic (ibid.), Generation Xers are identified as skeptical and individualistic (Kupperschmidt, 2000), and Millennials believe to be socially conscious, highly cynical, and narcissistic (Twenge et al., 2008). These differences affect outcomes and have effects on work-related outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction, motivation, risk-taking, and leadership style.

It is clear that employers and managers categorize some aspects of each group's behavior, needs, and working styles

Table 1. Differences Between Generations

Workplace characteristics	Veterans	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Work Ethic	Respect authority, hard work	Workaholics, desire quality, question authority	Eliminate the task, self-reliant, skeptical	Multitasking, Tenancy, Entrepreneurial
Work is...	An obligation	An exciting adventure	A difficult challenge	A means to an end
Communication	Formal Memo	In person	Direct, immediate	e-mail, voice mail
Motivation	Being respected	Being valued and needed	Freedom and removal of values	Working with other bright people
Work/life Balance	Keep them separate	No balance "Live to work"	Balance "Work to live"	Balance
Reward	A job well done	Money, title, recognition	Freedom	Meaningful work

Source: (Zemke et al., 2000)

to promote working relationships, built on mutual understanding of generation. On the other hand, they should not oversimplify the characteristic of some generations. However, it is important to recognize that individuals within each generation may characterize themselves by age, tenure within an organization, or stage of life in a way that does not mirror these classifications.

It is worth noting that the researchers agreed about the birth years of the Baby Boomers and Generation X but not for the other generations (Benson & Brown, 2011). Yet most researchers agree that there are currently four generations in the workplace, whose values, attitudes, and motivational mechanisms affect the way of working in the organization (Tate, 2011; Olson & Brescher, 2011).

Problems and Obstacles from the Perspective of Generations

When one talks about intergenerational cooperation, one should note that the literature focuses more on the differences between generations, especially in relation to their values and attitudes, than the similarities between them. In this regard, a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (2007) found that people want to work with their counterparts. The research of Deal and co-authors (2010) added that the differences between the generations are essentially modest and that the younger and older generations have actually many similar values.

The constraints as to why still a few companies practice intergenerational cooperation reside in managers' opinion that intergenerational cooperation can favor disturbances, threatening the organization and employees, or there could be the danger of favoring only one generation (the one the

managers belong to). For sure, problems include unaware stereotypes and generalizations made by managers and employees (Giancola, 2006; Mazumder, 2014).

Thus, the biggest limit and barrier to successful intergenerational cooperation resides in stereotypes, which are a set of concepts that characterize each generation. Most of them are unsubstantiated and unverified beliefs or views on the properties belonging to a particular generation, these properties being accentuated to such an extent that they become derisory or offensive. They often attain a negative form because of the pre-assessment of justification for discriminatory behavior. The fact is that these stereotypes deepen the gap between the generations and create intergenerational conflicts, as they focus on the negative qualities of each generation; it often happens to begin with individuals, e.g., members of various generations viewed through the prism of this kind, which can close the door of cooperation between generations. Business environments carry many prejudices and stereotypes that influence the behavior of individuals performing the work and their psychological well-being; therefore, it is important to be aware of having each employee available the chance to prove himself/herself as an individual.

A way to overcome stereotypes comes from intergenerational cooperation activities: they affect the identification and elimination of stereotypes to generate greater tolerance, cooperation, and understanding between generations.

To summarize, many studies confirm that there are no significant differences between generations, mainly due to the fact that the older generations held similar values in their younger years as the younger generation of the time (De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010; Montana & Petit, 2008). This finding supports the idea that the problems associated with the "generation gap" are much smaller than many claim. The

intergenerational conflict is therefore not a major concern for businesses today (Fraone et al., 2008). With this in mind, we need to consider a new perspective of intergenerational cooperation and inter-generational management. If generations are not so different, depending on their values and attitudes, and if there is not much opportunity for conflict between them, why then do generations not socialize to learn from each other and build on mutual strengths?

We do not specifically focus on detailed features of the different generations, as it is not the subject of this paper. We will therefore devote a few words to the inter-generational cooperation and the introduction of it into the business practice of companies.

Intergenerational Cooperation

Individual characteristics of each generation raise the question of how to ensure the participation of generations that are very different, have different values and different views of the work, to successfully work together. To give a proper answer to this question, we have to look deeper into the intergenerational cooperation.

Intergenerational cooperation is the community and the equality of different generations, where the intergenerational dialogue, mutual understanding and listening between individuals is important (Bernik et al., 2012). Intergenerational cooperation is therefore aimed at bringing together different generations in order to provide opportunities for joint work both for the older as well as for the younger generation; at the same time, it brings benefit to all involved with promotion of mutual learning, respect, and understanding (Ramovš, 2013).

Intergenerational cooperation has a decisive role in reducing the intergenerational gap and conflicts at the workplace, but it is also crucial for active aging, career planning, development of individuals, and the transfer of knowledge. The aim of intergenerational cooperation is to promote closer integration and cooperation among different generations of employees in the workplace.

The point of establishing a system of intergenerational cooperation is to (Tomšič, 2010):

- provide learning from each other;
- one generation's help to another;
- create, maintain and expand social networks; and
- gain the effective functioning of the employees of different generations at workplace.

Intergenerational cooperation is based on inter-generational learning, which provides the transfer and exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of labor and solidarity between generational assistance. On the one hand, inter-generational learning provides knowledge transfer between generations and reduces the inter-generational stereotypes. With the transfer, the younger generation obtains knowledge, experience, and easier entrance to the labor market; older employees remain active longer in the labor market (Mazumder, 2014).

In the accordance with the foregoing, we can define holistic intergenerational cooperation as a working method and system of integration of different generations aimed to ensure mutual learning, cooperation, respect and understanding between them.

Intergenerational cooperation activities are classified into three groups (Age Concern England, 2014):

- Solidarity between generations (one generation provides the support to other);
- Intergenerational cooperation in the strict sense (different generations working together on a specific project with specific objectives); and
- Intergenerational learning (one generation learns from the other and vice versa; different generations at the same time learn together).

As previously outlined, generations have different values and different approaches to their work, which will present a challenge for the employer (Fraone et al., 2008). Establishing and managing intergenerational teams will become a key skill, as in the future the intergenerational cooperation will become a key factor for business success of companies (Srinivasan, 2012).

Theory and practice in the field of intergenerational cooperation provides several concepts, which may offer an appropriate way to combine and connect members of different generations in the workplace. Methods of how an organization can implement intergenerational cooperation in the workplace include (Foundation for the Improvement Of Employment Opportunities, Prizma, 2012):

- Mentoring schemes
- Job rotation
- Job sharing
- Intergenerational management
- Talent management
- Coaching

The organization should therefore devote significant attention to addressing inter-generational differences and adapt business processes in order to gain better results of several generations in intergenerational cooperation.

Role of the Manager in the Implementation of Intergenerational Cooperation

There is little research concerned with the efficient management of a generationally diverse workforce. There are no guidelines in the area of generational diversity management at the workplace, or about the role of managers in this regard. The fact is that the most important and key factor in the successful implementation of intergenerational cooperation into practice is the commitment and support of management. Leadership that leads by example focuses on the strengths of each generation and creates an organizational climate and culture that supports intergenerational cooperation.

Areas of implementation of intergenerational cooperation are divided into two categories, either as describing the levels that generally affect the entire organization or the areas that are closely related to human resources management. Areas connected with the organization in general include organizational climate and culture, management style and communication from an intergenerational perspective; activities related to the field of human resources management on generations, e.g., adapted recruitment and talent management, training of managers and employees from an intergenerational perspective, intergenerational teams, volunteers, flexible forms of work/time, remuneration and career development tailored to specific generations.

As we are talking about management perspective, we focus on the management activities, which are aimed at better implementation of intergenerational cooperation (Figure 2).

Crucial for the successful implementation of intergenerational cooperation is the support of management, which reflects an appropriate style of management and the integration of intergenerational cooperation in policy, strategy and values of the company; all these, on the other hand, contribute to creating a favorable climate and a culture that supports intergenerational cooperation and the specificities and characteristics of individual generations in the workplace.

Studies have highlighted the general lack of awareness among executives about the management of a generationally diverse workforce (Strack et al, 2008; Mazumder, 2014). Managers should be aware that, with an appropriate management style and their own commitment to intergenerational cooperation, they develop organizational culture and climate that favor the intergenerational cooperation (GES, 2014). In this way, they are committed to form the employer brand, which can help a company to attract young people and retain the older generation (Leterme, 2014). Management should introduce intergenerational cooperation and include age diversity strategy, vision, and culture of the organization and of course in accordance with this adopt appropriate measures (Weggen et al., 2012). The first step toward the intergenerational cooperation is the training of managers from the intergenerational perspective to enable them to better understand the benefits and challenges associated with the issue of generations. In the above-mentioned context, the managers must improve their “soft” skills (Jenkins, 2008) to be more receptive and to understand the generational differences and similarities. Often, however, the leaders also appear in the role of mediators between the generations.

Figure 2. Important Areas Affected by Management in the Implementation of Intergenerational Cooperation



Source: Authors' perspective

Finally, management also must establish clear guidelines of intergenerational cooperation and management in a plain language that everyone understands and recognizes his/her role in this process (Greengard, 2011).

Model of Proactive Intergenerational Management in an Organization

Intergenerational management is an important challenge that organizations face in an aging society. With it, organizations coordinate, control, and direct diversity of employees and successfully exploit the age diversity of their employees. Activities of intergenerational management should equally focus on all age groups and should be implemented during the entire of work life period. The activities of intergenerational management should be focused on reducing the intergenerational differences in the organization and on maintaining the diversity of generations. In this context, it is necessary to use the right approach for each of the generations in the workplace, to create an atmosphere of cooperation between different generations (Smith, 2007).

Intergenerational cooperation is a complex concept of implementation of the intergenerational cooperation activities to all areas of work. The first area, which is crucial for the successful implementation of the intergenerational cooperation, is management’s support, reflected in the appropriate style of management, and the integration of intergenerational

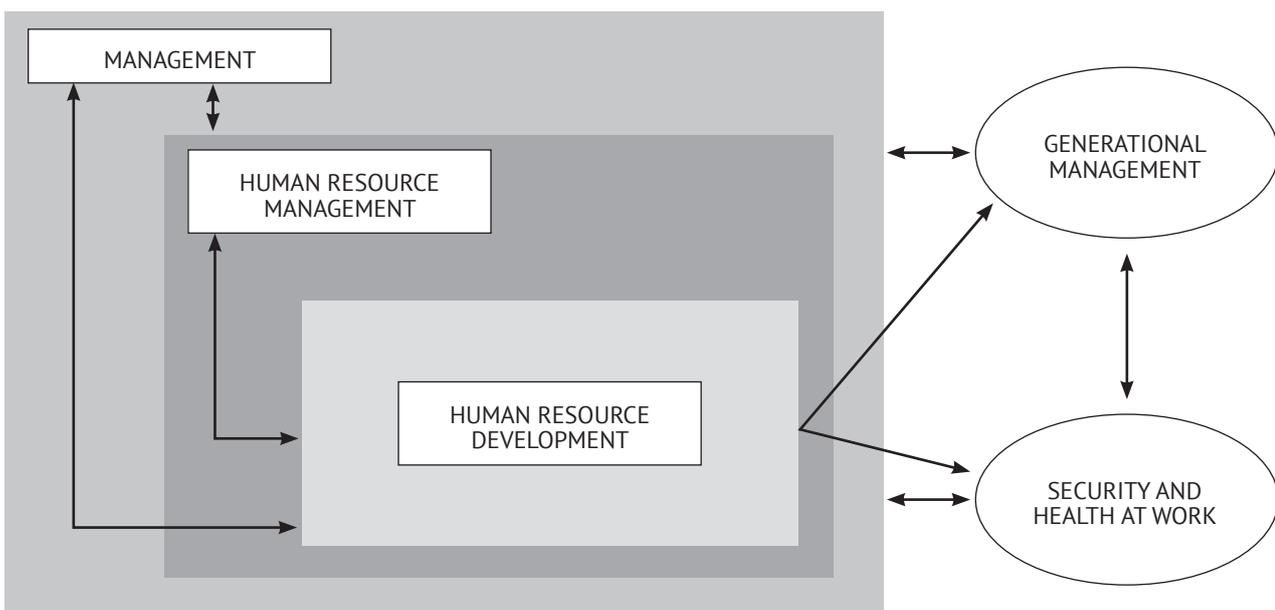
cooperation in policy, strategy, and values of the company. All this contributes to creating a favorable climate and culture that support the intergenerational cooperation and the specificities and characteristics of individual generation in the workplace.

Management with the impact on the intergenerational cooperation in working practices affects the next area: human resource management (HRM). The objectives of HRM in the proactive model of intergenerational management are the adaptation of HRM activities to the generationally diverse workforce and the implementation of other measures in accordance with the policy of intergenerational cooperation. HRM integrates different important areas that should be adapted to generationally diverse workforce. In this area, the main activities are: (1) adaptation of recruitment process of diverse work force; (2) sponsorship for new employees to facilitate integration into the working environment and faster socialization; and of course it is necessary to (3) adapt to generational diversity in the system of performance management and remuneration policy.

In fact, the main activities in HRM cover two fields: the acquisition of employees (in such a way that the company maintains an appropriate relationship between the generations) and maintaining or retaining employees.

The third area is employee development; it includes generationally diverse development methods and activities that help in retaining and maintaining the employees. This area

Figure 3. Integrated Model of Proactive Intergenerational Management in an Organization



Integrated Model of Proactive Intergenerational Management

Source: Authors’ perspective

integrates knowledge management, mentoring schemes, talent management, succession programs, career development, and coaching. The fourth area is closely linked to the individual generations and refers to the targeted and customized adjusting of the activities for generations, such as a suitable working environment. The main activities can include the generationally adapted working time or working task (on the job rotation, conversion, or extension of the job), the creation of intergenerational teams and setting up a system to ensure the transfer of the tacit knowledge and encouraging innovation and creativity.

The area of health and safety at the workplace is often overlooked. This area is important because it is closely connected with all previously listed areas. The last area relates to occupational safety and health and refers to the activities associated with the provision of psychological well-being in the workplace, health promotion programs, and safety at work. Improving intergenerational cooperation and management of generations can influence strengthening and maintaining the health and ensuring a greater work security.

However, the successful operationalization of the system of intergenerational cooperation depends on two important support functions: (1) internal communication supported with adequate resources and channels and (2) identifying individuals, i.e., volunteers who will promote the implementation of the intergenerational cooperation in the organization.

On the base of integrated model of proactive intergenerational management in organization the intergenerational cooperation is a challenge and an opportunity for the company. The fact is that companies take poor advantage of generation potential of its people. What to do? There is a need for a profound transformation in thinking about the importance of intergenerational cooperation; on the other hand, companies must plan the implementation of a system of intergenerational cooperation, and they have to motivate employees for intergenerational cooperation by offering them concrete tools to better understand intergenerational diversity, communication and cooperation.

How can organizations introduce a system of intergenerational cooperation and make changes in their practice with (EU OSHA, 2016)?

- adapting training methods and approaches to the specific learning characteristics and motivations of different age groups (e.g., Generation Y e-training; baby boomers, reverse mentoring);
- introducing a code of intergenerational cooperation, signed by all employees;
- facilitating succession planning;
- involving employees in the planning and development of job rotation programs;

- leading by example (leaders openly support intergenerational cooperation);
- training of managers from intergenerational perspective (identifying the characteristics of each generation, working methods and the motivation of each generation);
- application of various communication channels (e-mail, personal interview, written communication adapted to each generation);
- the introduction of intergenerational volunteering, i.e., promoters (people who spread a positive climate and information on intergenerational cooperation with the company);
- intergenerational teams;
- removing age limits for in-house training opportunities;
- introduction of new working roles that facilitate generation cooperation (coach, sponsor, mentor);
- employee development from an intergenerational perspective;
- creating a base of knowledge and experience (catalog of skills and experience);
- patronage of older to younger employees.

To maintain tacit knowledge of employees in the company is one of the important ways of intergenerational cooperation knowledge transfer between generations. Therefore, the methods for retaining and managing knowledge are becoming increasingly important. Examples of knowledge transfer programs are mentoring schemes and knowledge transfer to new recruits (e.g., hiring a new employee six months prior to the retirement of an older employee) can provide building skills and passing on valuable skills and knowledge. Retiring employees can act as supervisors and advisors to people taking up new positions (EU OSHA, 2016).

Conclusion

Intergenerational cooperation is no new phenomenon, but many issues related to generations and the willingness of companies to introduce intergenerational cooperation as a strategic function remains unanswered. The fact is that, although the intergenerational generation is nothing new, most organizations do not include this important topic in the decision-making process, as it should. The reasons for this are twofold: first, the expectation that they cannot address significant changes in the company through intergenerational cooperation. In addition, the organizations are concerned that, if they do not properly manage generations, it can create tensions between generations of employees, which can result in fluctuation of young people (would lose the talent) and in the rejection of older employees (loss of tacit knowledge) may occur.

In paper we identified differences and dilemmas that arise in the field of intergenerational cooperation. We completed our thinking with the activities of management in the implementation of the intergenerational cooperation. It can be concluded that organizations need a system of intergenerational cooperation set as a strategic objective, which will include a new approach to the organization of work and provide the conditions for the transfer of knowledge and experience among employees.

It is important to be aware of the benefits coming from the intergenerational cooperation such as:

- identifying and eliminating stereotypes and generational gaps;
- improving lifelong learning and ensuring knowledge transfer between generations within intergenerational learning and intergenerational teams;
- gaining a greater solidarity between generations and volunteering which helps the generations strengthen their social ties and co-existence;
- improving the creative thinking and innovation and creativity of employees of all generations;
- facilitating the acceptance of organizational change and creating a friendlier working environment (favorable climate and culture);
- improving communication (from an intergenerational perspective);
- improving motivation, satisfaction and commitment of employees (motivational mechanisms tailored to each generation).

The situation, therefore, dictates that organizations must not only recognize the generational diversity, but they have to develop a working environment, which supports intergenerational cooperation of employees.

The employers are beginning to recognize what motivates each generation. They have to develop effective management styles, communication tools to minimize conflict, and use progressive HR and work-life strategies to attract and retain key talent; all this is aimed to enhance productivity of individuals and company.

Intergenerational cooperation is a challenge and an opportunity for an organization. The fact is that an organization may have exploited the generation potential of its people. What to do? On one hand we all need a profound transformation in thinking (about the importance of intergenerational cooperation); on the other hand, organizations must systematically introduce a system of intergenerational cooperation

and motivate employees for intergenerational cooperation, e.g., by offering them concrete tools to better understand intergenerational diversity, communication, and cooperation.

We found that, despite different views of researchers, one must take into account the individual characteristics of each generation, while people born in the same time, living during the same period, have parallels, as they, after all, have experienced and have been socialized in the same cultural and economic circumstances. Therefore, throughout the considerations about generations, there is still the question of how to ensure the cooperation of generations that are very different, have different values, and different views of the work. One-step toward this is certainly the intergenerational cooperation as the work system and the culture that supports the generational diversity tolerance and enhances the cooperation and intergenerational knowledge and learning transfer within organization.

Intergenerational cooperation has a decisive role in reducing the intergenerational gap and reducing conflicts in the workplace; it is essential for active aging, career planning, and the development of individuals and the transfer of knowledge. The aim of intergenerational cooperation in the organization is to promote closer integration and cooperation among different generations of employees in the workplace. Therefore, it is not a peculiarity but a necessity for organization.

Key areas that managers should take into account in the implementation of intergenerational cooperation are: (1) to treat the employees from intergenerational perspective; (2) to create a relaxed working environment that encourages employees; (3) to implement sophisticated and flexible management style; (4) to recruit the right people with the right competencies; and (5) creating good mutual relations.

Each generation brings diversity of experience, knowledge, and values at the workplace; for an organization, the recognition and observance of these differences are important and useful, as these differences determine how individuals of a certain generation perceive the organization and other aspects of life.

Implications for further research should be based on the development of the questionnaire (measurement instrument) with the aim to measure the state of intergenerational cooperation and the effects of the implementation of intergenerational management practices in organizations. Routine measurements should serve as the basis for improving the level of intergenerational cooperation in organizations.

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Medgeneracijsko sodelovanje na delovnem mestu z vidika menedžmenta

Izveček

Na trgu dela se trenutno srečujejo zaposleni štirih generacij. Vsaka generacija ima različne vedenjske vzorce, stališča, pričakovanja, navade in motivacijske mehanizme. Ker generacijske vrzeli igrajo pomembno vlogo v poslovnem procesu, morajo organizacije najti načine za uravnoteženje potreb in pogledov različnih starostnih skupin. Za premagovanje negativnih rezultatov, ki izhajajo iz generacijskih razlik in izkoriščanja moči vsake generacije, je potrebno izvajanje celovitega in proaktivnega modela medgeneracijskega sodelovanja, ki je predstavljen v članku in postaja zaradi koristi nujnost vsake organizacije.

Ključne besede: zaposleni, generacija, medgeneracijsko sodelovanje, medgeneracijsko učenje