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MULTICULTURAL TEAMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BEYOND
COMPANIES' BRANCHES IN STAVANGER

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Abstract

This Study has been conducted in two different departments of two different companies in Stavanger, with a strong international work force. The research question intended to find answers to the following: “In what way and to what extent do foreign workers feel discriminated against their fellow Norwegians?”. This working population, who has not yet been in the centre of academic research; has become an important work task force and is, therefore, critical to understand their daily working challenges and how they perceive them. This study demonstrates that in this cohort majority of the international participants do feel discriminated at work in when it comes to promotions are diminished when compared to their Norwegians colleagues. The different discrimination situations are specially related to the lack of proficiency in the native language, and to gender related issues. These workers state that in order to achieve a better job position they would have to terminate their services at the companies they are working for.

Aknowledgements

The realisation and finalisation of this Master Thesis has proved to be a challenge. The time constraints and deadlines have been challenging, however, the whole process has been a valuable learning experience. Others have surely felt the same, either due to their academic history or to simply everyday experiences. The importance of overcoming barriers, as stated previously, is clearly connected to all foreigners living in outside their countries and it is their persistence that allows them to come forward everyday. I have been inspired by them and still am. To all the participants of this study my special thank you, without you this would not be possible. But also to all other foreigners that are, not directly involved in this study, they have given me the raw material that allowed me to reflect on some relevant questions. This Thesis is an attempt to create common ground, providing the starting point of for a positive discussion and communicative progress. I could not have accomplished this important stage of my personal and academic life without the help of Norwegians as well: friends, colleagues, my mentor Sigurd Haus, who has guided me throughout this long process, and the staff of the School, in the personification of Sissel Gjøvikli with all her availability, patience and comprehension. To my family, particularly my dear parents and brother, my close friends for their belief and support. This Thesis is dedicated to my dears and cherished late grandmother Rosa and my late friend Marta. Examples of strength, resilience and kindness that encourage me daily.

*Have you ever considered, beloved other,
how invisible we are to each other?
We look at each other without seeing.
We listen to each other and hear only a voice inside out self.
The words of others are mistakes of our hearing, shipwrecks of our understanding.
How confidently we believe OUR meanings of other people's words.*

Fernando Pessoa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism and Interculturalism are fairly studied along the years and have been of undeniable importance: primarily clarified and combined perspectives of colonization and migration. The growth and expansion of this field of study allow it to be a respected and valuable tool in the development and knowledge of human interactions (Rattansi 2011).

I am an emigrant in Norway facing everyday challenges in work related situations as well as in social situations. It is the necessity to understand and be understood that primarily interested me in this subject. I consider that in order to improve comprehension one has to be aware of the surrounding noises involving communication. The awareness of the challenges within multicultural settings carries with it a multitude of unseen and unrevealed messages that we, as individuals, are not always conscious of. I intend with this Master Thesis to acquire knowledge about the dynamics in real work conditions, within the multicultural teams that participate in study. The conception and realization of this study was designed in order to gather the perspectives and experiences of these participants. This is a qualitative research, therefore it is not the purpose of this study to generalize the findings, but rather to unveil the perceptions of the participants within the boundaries of their working context.

Studies, concerning the influence of cultures in humans' interactions, have been conducted all over the world in different areas with different study groups, as in Norway (Rogstad 2011; Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012; Søholt, Tronstad and Bjørnson 2014). Most existing research has been conducted regarding working conditions, but they have had specific minority groups

as their subject of study. Little has been studied concerning these high skill workers and their real work environment. The data on which the discussion, Chapter 5, comprises the perceptions of the participants on the study, regarding their professional concerns and their daily encounters.

Norway has been, since the end of the Second World War, a country of choice for those whom have been in need of refuge, running from war and persecution for different reasons (Thorud 1998). The majority of this population did, therefore, not see Norway as the country to develop professionally, but the country where they would be safe. Within these, one would find a minority of high educated and high skill professionals. The increasing population and specially, culturally diverse population, brought with it challenges in the social system of the local community (ibid). According to the Statistisk Sentralbyrå (SSB), the social reality changed considerably, this mass movement and settlement of immigrants has exposed the country to cultures, experiences and ways of being that were not familiar.

In the following years and mainly due to the development of the Oil and Gas Industry, the need for high skilled and high-educated workers increased extremely, particularly in regions where these Industries are strongly present. The demand for technical knowledge since mid 50s, was the predominant reason for the employment of foreign skilled professionals, with multiple cultural backgrounds (Thorud 1998). Over the last few decades, the immigrant population has increased and grown to over 120% (Søholt, Tronstad and Bjørnsen 2014). The working market experienced a considerably change, in particular, in the Rogaland region reaching an increase of 20%, where, according to statistical data from the Statistisk Sentralbyrå (SSB), it became the second destination of immigrants in the country after Oslo. With the increase of the immigrant population the probability of one working with a foreign person increased strongly.

These latest immigrants have professional progression as the main reason for their relocation to Norway (Søholt, Tronstad and Bjørnson 2014), and also, the expectations they carry related to standards of living are very high and job progression. As one of the participants mentioned: “... *I had a job that I enjoyed back home, still I wanted more. The job offer I got was very good... it gave me the experience I needed to progress within the company*” (Interviewee 22). These skilled workers represent a new and more visible group of foreigners that are more open to multicultural encounters, when compared to other groups of immigrants. They are individuals considered to own both high ‘social and cultural capital’ (in the words of sociologists Bourdieu 1986 and Coleman 1988) adding high intangible value to the companies they work for. These are central and important resources that substantiate their position and future progression. This study uses and extends those concepts and is based on this diverse universe of multicultural workers that teams are established, both with foreign and Norwegian workers. These daily cultural encounters are arenas of experiences exchanges, permitting a number of times the development of knowledge of the ‘other’ (Gustafsson 2006), leaving behind misconceptions and false beliefs of established and perpetuated stereotypes, not only related to the foreign members, but also to Norwegians. Some important questions remain: how do these members feel at work? What are their biggest challenges? How do they overcome challenges? Is language in itself a hurdle to overcome, or is communication seen as a multitude of tools that combined allows understanding? One participant mentioned:

Southern Europeans tend to be so loud... It is very difficult to understand them, they speak not only with their mouth but also with their body... they tend to speak so close to your face and with eye contact... I am still getting used to it. (Interviewee 27)

While another participant affirms:

I have been working in different countries through the years, but this is a particular one...I have come to understand that Nordic people tend to be so polite that you don't

really know what they mean. You have to learn their tone rhythm to really comprehend what they mean. (Interviewee 26)

This study exposes the different perceptions felt by the multiple international workers within their multicultural teams and its implications.

1.1 Research Question and Objectives of the Study

Participants answered and remarked the several questions presented on the interviews, permitting throughout their input an insight on the dynamics of their professional challenges.

In the light of the information gathered, the main research question has become:

In what way and to what extend do these foreign workers feel discriminated at work when compared to their fellows Norwegian?

This qualitative research study was developed on two multicultural teams within two companies operating in different market branches. In total there were 8 participants: 2 multicultural teams with 4 persons respectively.

The analysis and understanding of this topic is assisted by literature associated to the field of research, were scholars such as Jon Rogstad (2001), Kristian Rose Tronstad (2009) and Ronald Craig (2013) for instance, have already developed studies and research related to discrimination at work within minorities in Norway, as well as with data collected and available from Statistisk Sentralbyrå (SSB).

1.2 Structure and Contents

Besides this first chapter, this thesis continues with the follow configuration:

In Chapter 2, a literature analysis and exploration of different studies and also theories and concepts related to the problematic of this research study were described. Due to the geographical settings of this work, the studies investigated were applied in Norway. In these studies there is a considerable amount of data concerning different aspect of human

interaction: from job satisfaction to individual adaptation and also less positive experiences such as, discrimination. The facts and arguments of the past studies were the grounds that have helped me to formulate the research question behind this work: In what way and to what extent do these foreign workers feel discriminated at work when compared to their fellows Norwegian?

Chapter 3 is a description of the Methodology used in this research. A variety of information concerning decisions related to the application and development of the research is presented in this chapter, thus considered the central section of this work. Theoretical Model and Research Strategy, Research Design and Methods, Selection of Participants, Conduction of Interviews and, Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations, are sub-sections of Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is composed by the analysis of the Results. The perceptions of the members of the multicultural teams are presented in four different topics: Job Satisfaction, Work Environment and Cultural Related Issues, Social Interaction and Future.

Chapter 5 combines the argumentation of the previous topics that comprise the Discussion of the Findings. An attempt was made to answer the research question, combining the different theoretical approaches and their contribution.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion chapter. It is organized into three different sub-sections where the main empirical findings and theoretical implications are described.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature selected related to the analysed studies is particularly guided by Norwegian scholars, hence this study is grounded in different companies branches in Stavanger, which represent a closer social and geographic proximity to this study frame when compared to international studies.

2.1 Contextual Settings

Despite the numerous researches one can find connected to work conditions in an intercultural environment, they seem to focus on ethnical minorities and their job integration (Rogstad 2001; Tronstad 2008; Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012). Work environmental conditions and the dynamics, within high skilled international employees have not been a focus. This particular group has as main characteristics, the agglomeration of an elevated number of nationalities and ethnicities in a confined space, where the platforms of communication are processed in, most of the cases, a second language, rather using the mother language of the group members. This group does not experience the economic constraints as the other studied groups and seem to be well integrated and adapted. This is probably one of the reasons why their dynamics have not been in focus. Another reason might be the perception that, in such high-accomplished companies, opportunities are equal to every employee and achievement is only conditioned by her/his skills and motivation. Multinational companies have the advantage of being accepted as places where rules and directions are well-defined and impartial, but are they really? A third reason could be related to the quantitative

representation of this group in the society. The recent rise in the number of high skilled workers who have moved to Norway, already having a job contract prior to the moving, has taken place only in the last five years. The other studies focused on groups living in Norway over a longer period of time.

One of the studies analysed focused on high-skilled international workers described as ‘skilled migration’ (van Riemsdijk and Cook 2013), which at the time of the study worked and lived in Norway, having arrived in the country when seeking a job. They concluded that the majority of these workers chose Norway primarily for the opportunity to progress in their careers (van Riemsdijk and Cook 2013). The collected data shows that the satisfaction of these high skilled workers is very high and that the evidence of this is that these same workers advised other friends (who at that point were working outside the country) to apply for jobs in Norway and, in many of the cases, in the same companies in which they worked. This statement is also affirmed in another study, in which it is determined that the use of a related network is the most common tool used when seeking a job (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby 2015). The influence of the environment acts both as a motivational or a discouraging factor, nevertheless it is noted that: “The level of satisfaction in the workplace also depends on the personality of the migrant and the workplace culture” (van Riemsdijk and Cook 2013, 51). In conclusion, this work not only emphasizes the active role of the individual and his/her capacity in acquiring professional and social knowledge, but also the environmental conditions one finds at work. The question of the ‘individual agent’ (Peter Nynäs 1999) is, as other authors pointed out, a subjective theme (Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012). This subject will be further discussed and analysed in Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings.

2.2 Language

The research of van Riemsdijk and Cook (2013) also exposes the importance of how thinking about recruitment objectives evolved. According to the authors, one of the main reasons for criteria alterations in recruitment is related to the need for specific technological knowledge, not found in Norway in the wanted amounts. Aware of that, companies became more willing to employ workers from abroad, who had no connection or familiarity with the Norwegian language. This issue gives rise to other questions, and language proficiency is still an important consideration for most of the employers (Tronstad 2009). Proficiency in Norwegian is a valuable adaptation indicator, directly associated with participation in local activities and gatherings, which are important arenas for establishing social connections where integration into the Norwegian working culture grows (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby 2015). Companies' managers tend to assume that one who is keen to learn the native language is also more likely to adapt and remain loyal to the company and to its development, capitalizing a possible company investment in his/her training (van Riemsdijk and Cook 2013). The question of language takes on other dimensions for the companies' leaders. One can see that language is more than the ability of being verbally understood. Language is closely connected to values, beliefs, and ways of comprehension. "Language, let us remember, is more than simply a means of communication; it constitutes our world-view by cutting up and ordering reality into meaningful units" (McLeod 2010, 21). These different dimensions connected to language will be analyzed in Chapter 5 in order to understand its importance in communication. It is also thought that the employment of international workers might not be well accepted by either other employees or clients (van Riemsdijk and Cook 2013; Rogstad 2001). "Å passe inn i arbeidskulturen er viktig både for effektiv gjennomføring av arbeidet og for deling av taus kunnskap

¹ To fit into the working culture is important both for the effective implementation of efforts and sharing of tacit knowledge related to my work. (Own translation).

knyttet til arbeidsoppgavene” (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby 2015, 78). However there is data collected indicating that intercultural employees are perceived as a positive factor by their leaders. This positive understanding is not confined to technological knowledge, but also as a development of the companies’ labour culture (Søholt, Tronstad and Vestby 2015).

2.3 Discrimination

Prejudgments, from a negative perspective, are the preliminary phase leading to judgment and finally prejudice (Allport 1954). “Prejudgments become prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge” (Allport 1954, 9).

Discriminatory behaviors and practices may arise from prejudice and stereotyping, but prejudice need not result in differential treatment or differential effect. Similarly, whereas discriminatory behavior in many domains is unlawful, prejudiced attitudes and stereotypical beliefs are not. (Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004, 44)

Prejudgments are described by Rogstad as one of four major discrimination types (2001). According to the scholar, discrimination operates in different levels: Individuals or Institutional. Discrimination at the individual level is defined by:

‘Employers’ taste for discrimination’. The employer has an ‘ideal type’ of employee that matches the professional profile and qualifications needed for the job, still s/he is chosen instead of someone else, who might have better credentials and experience but is a member of different cultural group. This decision has a direct implication for the companies’ economy, nevertheless it is more important to have the ‘right type of worker’ than the most skilled, regardless of how costly s/he is.

Others Prejudice. The employee assumes that the other employees or customers discriminate against persons who have a minority background. Due to these beliefs and fearing a possible

economic loss (customers might cease commercial relations or employees might terminate their working contracts), the employer chooses to perpetuate the homogeneous work force.

Statistical Discrimination. Is directly related to the lack of information concerning minorities. This lack of information results in insecurity of the employer, who in a selection situation will choose the candidate that seems to be more familiar. The uncertainty of the employer towards a candidate with a different cultural background, leads to the selection of another individual who has a closer cultural background, preferably the same (nationals). This form of Discrimination tends to be more perceptible when unemployment rates are high (Rogstad 2001).

When relating to a second level of discrimination, it is mentioned as:

Institutional Discrimination, Unintentional Consequences or Systemic Discrimination (the last terminology according to Craig 2005). Rules, institutionalized procedures and practices can be a source of discrimination growing barriers to individuals with different cultural backgrounds. One can mention the demand of proficiency in a specific language, which is not imperative to the job position. This form of discrimination does not target a particular or single person; it tends to be less personal. It is possible that, at the time of the implementation of the institutional systems with its rules and procedures, that the concept of discrimination was not present or intended (Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004). Still these practices lead to discrimination and the unfair treatment of individuals.

These different forms of discrimination or *theories of discrimination* (Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004), assume an important role when analyzing the existence and impact in the individual's life.

“²Diskriminering, marginalisering og ekskludering er begreper som har til felles at de betegner prosesser og tilstander hvor enkeltpersoner eller grupper av personer systematisk befinner seg utenfor eller i randsonen av samfunnets sentrale arenaer” (Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012, 17). Discrimination can be the result of neutral policies and decisions taken without being conscious that it will lead to injustice, or the ‘benign neglect’ (Kymlicka 1995). The perception of the existence of Discrimination may not be clear to the one practicing it as it is to the one who is affected by it. Nevertheless, the lack of awareness of one’s own prejudices cannot reassure that Discrimination does not exist. It is critical to be aware that discriminatory activities might not always be defined and processed (Craig 2005). It is therefore significant to notice the existing categorization distinction between Direct and Indirect Discrimination (ibid).

Indirect Discrimination or Adverse Effect Discrimination is: “When persons in relevantly different situations are treated in a facially neutral way that does not take into account the consequences of such differences and this leads to an unjustifiable disadvantage for a protected group compared with others” (Craig 2005, 56).

Direct Discrimination is: “when a person is unjustifiably treated less favorably than another in comparable circumstances, and such treatment is done on grounds protected by antidiscrimination legislation” (Craig 2005, 43).

“A concept of discrimination that merely treats all like cases alike is therefore a concept that can indeed perpetuate inequalities because such a concept does not take into account differences that in fact occur in the real world” (Craig 2005, 54).

² Discrimination, marginalization and exclusion are all concepts which have in common that they denote processes and conditions where an individual or a group of people systematically are kept outside or on the rim of society’s central arenas. (Translation by Inger Torkelsen)

According to those definitions of discrimination, the notion of justice, fairness and comparison to others are always present: "...after all, people are most often discriminated against on the basis of observers' belief" (Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004, 36). It is not possible to have a sense of discrimination if one has not experienced justice and fairness. But what is Justice? Before a definition is assumed, one needs to understand that although it is accepted as a universal right (United Nations Conventions 1948), the concept and perception of justice is not universal. The understanding of justice is therefore dependent on different factors directly related to the individual's right to his/hers unique being with all the experiences, backgrounds (economical, social, ethnical) and beliefs: the undeniable right of being his/her self (Waage 2010).

Cultural differences are seen from a particular perspective and parochial point of view (Adler 2002), with suspicions and therefore a barrier (Kymlicka 1995; Rogstad 2001; Blasco, Maribel, and Jan Gustafsson 2004; Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012). This perspective of culture is common and shown in different studies. In one of those studies, was concluded that a job seeker with a non-Norwegian name had a 25 % less chance to be called in for a job interview, when compared to other applicants who possessed a Norwegian name. Interestingly, this number is higher when applying for a higher job positions (Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012). This fact reveals the generalized scales of discrimination and also demonstrates that are mainly those who are in superior position that are most likely to use it. Peer-to-peer discrimination, when related to high skilled workers is not mentioned by participants. Discrimination seems to be interrelated to those who are in a position of power (Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012). Is it then possible to assign this discrimination towards international skilled workers only to their leaders? The parallel is undeniable: on the one side, one finds job seekers who have a total of 25 % less chance of being called to a job interview. On the other side, high skilled workers perceive that the probability of gaining a superior job position

is significantly lower, when compared to their fellow Norwegians. Keep in mind that a leader, having a position of power, influences decision concerning job promotions.

“Knowledge of what took place in the decision-making process in cases of hiring, promotion and career development is for the most part exclusively in the hands of the employer” (Craig 2005, 189). Moreover, since most companies seem to have a specific type of worker they intend to employ and wish to perpetuate, there is accordingly a bias towards creating a homogeneous work force. This image of the ‘ideal employee’ can be related to the concept of competence held by several of these companies, leaning towards a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and willingness (Sandervang 2001). It becomes essential to bring to attention companies’ structure and organizational culture. Still, it is not intended to analyse or discuss the organizational structure of the companies participating in this study. Nevertheless, it is crucial to bring to light the importance of the companies’ culture in this subject.

Common to systemic discrimination in employment is the link to the workplace’s administrative structures or organizational culture, which produces, contributes to or permits unjustifiable differential treatment, unjustifiable disproportionate impact or a hostile or poisonous work environment. (Craig 2005, 127)

2.4 Discrimination and Law

Attitudes are understood and directly connected with stereotypes and deep-rooted prejudices of cultural behaviour. This phenomenon has a central role in the misperception of the international worker, solely because of country of origin. In the latest ³*Handlingsplan for integrering og inkludering av innvandrerbefolkningen og mål for inkludering 2000*, one finds

³ Action Plan for Integration and Social Inclusion of the Immigrant Population and Goals for Social Inclusion. (Translation by Inger Torkelsen)

“Majoritetsbefolkningen og arbeidsgivere må ikke stenge folk ute på grunn av usikkerhet knyttet til deres bakgrunn”. The Norwegian Legal system also states in the Law against discrimination dated of 2005-06-03 no 33: ⁵ Lov om forbud mot diskriminering på grunn av etnisitet, religion mv. (diskrimineringsloven): “Lovens formål er å fremme likestilling, sikre like muligheter og rettigheter og å hindre diskriminering på grunn av etnisitet, nasjonal opprinnelse, avstamning, hudfarge, språk, religion og livssyn”. The United Nations and the European Human Rights Convention also state the right to non-discrimination internationally since 1948.

2.5 Knowing the other

The necessity of knowing the ‘other’ as a single component and not as an exemplary of a culture or as the culture it self assumes extreme importance (Holliday, Hyde and Kullman 2010). The ‘other’ is seen as self-centered in his/her culture, not being willing to change and therefore passive (Gustafsson 2006). But one cannot overlook the fact that international workers might not hold the same concepts of competence, justice, fairness and even discrimination (Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012). Are they aware of the expectations that their superiors have towards them, or are they only concerned in the accomplishment of their working tasks, neglecting the so valuable and desirable professional and social integration by their leaders? Do they (international workers) take an active role in the differentiation of

⁴ The majority population and employers must not exclude people due to uncertainty about their backgrounds. (Translation by Inger Torkelsen)

⁵ Act on prohibition of discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, etc. [Anti-discrimination Act]. (Translation by Inger Torkelsen)

⁶ In this Convention, the term «racial discrimination» shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (Translation by Inger Torkelsen)

treatment towards themselves? Do they sustain an approach of communication that only has a one-way channel?

“The point of communication becomes not to promote understanding but to improve productivity and efficiency: as outline before, it becomes instrumental rather than an end or a desirable form of communication in itself” (Blasco, Maribel, and Jan Gustafsson 2004).

2.4 Summary

Cultural differences, when assumed as negative encounters, can lead to discrimination. The continuous misinterpretations in communication or the break of it are important moments in the escalation of this social constructed behaviour. The essentialist perspective, assumed unconsciously by most of the population, allied with the lack of knowledge in cultural matters, constitutes a susceptible factor in multicultural circumstances. Although penalized by law, discrimination is still a part of life of individuals with a minority background. Examples of this reality have been studied and proved in different international and Norwegian researches, related to the access of the working marked. Multicultural encounters tend to be positive when described by international workers, still some constrains are referred. The communication in a second language and the necessity of rapid adaptation to daily working routines are considered to be vulnerable moments. Discrimination, when perceived by international workers, is felt within the logic top-bottom, this means that those in position of power are the ones conducting it, not their peers. This statement raises questions regarding the types of discrimination these international skilled workers may face, and to which level. It also provides information concerning the role that these members assume in these environments. The multicultural encounters that, these highly skilled workers experience, provides them with an intrinsic knowledge within multicultural settings. Their intercultural competence legitimizes their opinion and perceptions within their working area, where

multicultural teams can be a positive and enriched experience, but also raises questions related to expectations and fairness especially for non-Norwegian employees.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Methodology, according to Schiefloe (2003), is the combination of principles and practice which together indicates what data needs to be collected. This in turns, leads to the research question (ibid). In the field of methodology, one finds different methods and models depending on the type of research one intends to conduct, permitting the collection of information that later will be analyzed and interpreted within a theoretical structure (Blaikie 2000; Schiefloe 2003).

3.1 Research Design and Method

All research requires both structure and control for which the researcher needs to elaborate a plan (Blaikie 2000; Schiefloe 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This structure might be flexible and open to some extent (Bryman 1999), in this way the researcher can adapt more rapidly when faced with information or situations which had not been calculated (ibid) thus allowing the discovery and development of different phenomena. Method, according to Levin (2010) is very simply ‘the way of doing things’ facilitating the interaction with the participants, permitting the collection of data. It becomes essential to select the most suitable method according to the intention of the study, in order ensure that the information collected is the best.

3.1.1 The Qualitative Method

Research in Social Sciences can be conducted by the use of two different kinds of methods: Quantitative and Qualitative. The quantitative method has objectivity, absolute results and

measures data as its objective (Blaikie 2000). The individual is categorized according to nomothetic scopes of findings, thus context is not present and time irrelevant (Bryman 1999). On the other hand, qualitative methods retain interpretation as their main purpose (ibid). The close contact between participant and researcher allows a further development of the subject and the exploration of different ways of understanding the situation within the context of each individual, which would not be possible if that proximity did not exist (Bryman 1999; Blaikie 2000). These characteristics of the qualitative method provide important insights which contribute to an enriched and better-focused description of the social realities in the study, also known as, 'thick' description.

This study was conducted using the qualitative methods, which allowed the development of a subjective interpretation and the possibility of exploring topics that were not planned in advance, enhancing the data collection.

3.1.2 The Semi-structured Interviews

The unstructured nature of interviews allows the researcher to uncover positions which she/he might not have thought about before. It can lead to new understandings and meanings (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). It also allows the researcher to build a relationship of confidence with the participants, which can become the key to the deconstruction of previous beliefs (Blaikie 2000). "This interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived experience with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale 2007, 11).

This brings in to discussion the role of the researcher. The researcher intends to find answers to the questions and therefore has to be focussed. While being flexible, applying the unstructured nature of the method there is, the need of some control, allowing the favourable evolution of the study (Bryman 1999). Interviews also allow the researcher, in this setting, to

observe the interviewee *in loco*. In this way it is possible to observe the body language at the same time as the verbal language (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This allows the researcher to understand if there are subjects that should be explored, while recognising others which, although still important, do not require a special and more careful approach (ibid). As concluded by Blank, Dabady and Citro (2004, 192); “The advantages of such interviews are that they ask individuals about their actual experiences of discrimination and often elicit information that is richly detailed”.

3.2 Theoretical Models of Research

“A clear conceptual framework is needed to guide appropriate data collection and analysis for measurement and to identify key assumptions of the underlying model” (Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004, 24). The conceptualization of the theoretical structure of research in Social Science has great importance in the understanding of the collected data (Blaikie 2000), as well as, in the validation of the obtained results (ibid). These guidelines give direction to the early stage of the study and throughout its development, providing research which is empirical and therefore, validates and makes the findings legitimate (Blaikie 2000). Within theoretical models one finds different research strategies, according to the models that they embrace. Accepting that scientific knowledge can only be obtained and validated by the compliance of data collection and empirical theoretical research (Blaikie 2000; Schiefloe 2003), two different research strategies can be applied: the Inductive and the Deductive. The Inductive Research Strategy has data collection as the starting point of the study. Theory becomes the product of the study (Blaikie 2000), being itself (the theory) the merger of patterns and generalizations. The Deductive Research Strategy has theory as its foundation and data collection may or not confirm it (ibid). The veracity of the theory will depend on the positive coupling of data collection and the hypotheses (Blaikie 2000). In order to develop

and better respond to the problem and its research question, the Inductive logic of thinking is applied.

3.2.1 The Hermeneutic Approach

The Hermeneutic Approach has its focus on the individual level, defending that during his/her lifetime the individual can look at his/her experiences and use different points of view to interpret it and acquire new knowledge and understanding (Dahl 2006), questioning and opposing the positivist way of thinking. The positivism perspective defends that social phenomena can be explained using the same methods of the natural sciences such as, biology or physics. Social phenomena are not connected to time or changes in the individual's interest (Schiefloe 2003). These points of views change due to the capacity s/he has to participate in intercultural encounters and being open to new experiences and meanings (ibid). It is the codification and the interpretation of the language that Gadamer describes as the objective of this approach, enabling what he defines as 'fusion of horizons'. Thus the investigator is an interpreter who is aware of hers/his own beliefs and prejudgments. It is due to this consciousness that s/he can put aside previous conceptions that are not owned by the participants of the study (Roy and Starosta 2001). The participants are the experts while the investigator becomes pupil, trying to learn and comprehend not only the terminology and symbols used in the language, but mainly its meaning (Blaikie 2000). The development of knowledge and the acquisition of new meanings becomes the output of the communication dynamics between the informant and the researcher. New knowledge is the result of the on going interpretation of meanings by the researcher, also known as the Hermeneutic Circle (Slagstad 2012).

In hermeneutics one strives to interpret parts in order to obtain truth about the whole. The well-known hermeneutic circle relates to processes of understanding and interpretations. Understanding is created through a process of studying the parts and the

whole: - Parts; - Whole. The parts can only be understood as parts of the whole and the whole can only be understood as composed by parts. (Dahl 2004, 2)

The application of this approach provided me the opportunity to be the interpreter of these participants' realities, acquiring new meanings and knowledge that provided the possibility to better represent and decode their experiences.

3.3 The Participants

The selection of participants is of major importance and can become time consuming. In order for to confirm the value of the data collection this cannot be compromised (Blaikie 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). When defining the ideal target group, the researcher has to consider not only who, but also how many of them (Blaikie 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

The interviews would target a multicultural team within each company, comprising 2 or 3 multicultural teams in total, which would have a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 10 elements. Immigrants but also Norwegians would constitute these teams, in order to attempt to obtain more equivalent and comparable data: decreasing the range of divergence. Ideally each team would have the same number of elements and the same nationalities, but this last requirement was revealed to be impossible to achieve within the time of this study. The teams were then to be constituted by geographical proximity. The interviews were to occur within the companies' facilities, either by telephone or video call.

Invitation letters (see attachments I) were sent to the Human Resources Department of 15 Companies in the Stavanger region, of those 5 have revealed interest in participating. 2 companies completed the process of participation.

This project had the approval of the Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste, also known as, NSD in October 2013.

3.3.1 Participants in the Study

Company X is a company that although being in the Oil Industry market, it is also very strong in other fields, such as agriculture and chemistry. It is a multinational company present in different continents.

Company Y is a renowned multinational enterprise within the Oil Industry.

Both companies have offices in Stavanger, with numerous departments.

All the participants were invited to be a part of the study and have had access to the available information about the research. (See attachments). In total there were 8 participants. There were 2 multicultural teams with 4 elements respectively.

Table 1. Distribution of the different nationalities

	Norway	Sweden	Great Britain	France
Team X	2 elements (F/M)	2 elements	0	0
Gender		(F/M)		
Team Y	1 element (M)	0	2 elements	1 element
Gender			(F/M)	(F)

3.4 Preparation and Realization of the Interviews

The first step to bringing about the interviews was the elaboration of an interview guide (see attachments). This interview guide comprised different questions gathered from different areas, all related to the research question of the study. This research tool is a required and valued resource which provides the necessary structure (Blaikie 2000; Schiefloe 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Kvale 2007), and was the starting point of the conversations and thus the data collection. Offices were provided for the interviews. All the interviews proceeded with the physical presence of the participants, except for one interview where the telephone was used. The interviewee had the possibility, in a private environment, to answer questions posed by the interviewer and was also able to bring into the conversation her/his

own comments and meanings of importance. Interviews occurred within the facilities of each company individually. In the beginning of each and every interview, the voluntary and anonymous parameters of it were explained. Every interviewee responded to all the questions and shared important information that led to the preciseness of this work. An interview guide was printed for each interview, so that the information could be more rapidly written down.

3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

The information and data collecting at the interviews was written down in every respective interview guide with a specific code preserving the anonymity of the participants. This was a helpful tool: it allowed me to rapidly and easily write the data used in this study. The participants had a very clear and calm speech, which facilitated the process of writing. Each interview had an estimated time of 30 minutes. The following interview was scheduled in a way that allowed me to transcribe in a more organized and systematic the information I had obtained. This process proved to be a good choice, since, from the first interview and its transcription, I could glean an ‘immediate impression’ (Kvale 2007) and identify the subjects which were more delicate. I could also control the organizational aspect of the information minimizing the possibility of missing information or particular details (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Kvale 2007). The use of these transcriptions combined with a range of studies as a reference provided the guidelines for the development, not only for the data, but also undoubtedly the study as a whole. The revision of the data collected offered the possibility of finding common and diverging perceptions and experiences of the participants, initiating the processes of categorizing the information and subsequently its filtration (ibid).

3.6 Limitations

The selection of the Methodology for the conceptual framework chosen for a social research study (Blaikie 2000; Schiefloe 2003) is one of the most important decisions a researcher must take, as previously presented in this chapter. One of the most common limitations in research

is the time in which the research has to be conducted. Time can be understood, as the time the researcher has to complete all his/her work, or the time the fieldwork can take. In the case of this study, time limitation is synonymous with the time the companies had available for the research. The high 'tempo' of the requests and tight scheduling made it difficult to schedule meetings with the participants and time the interviews. It is important to state, at this moment, that the contacts established with the different companies invited to participate in this project were made at the beginning of the last, and still present, oil crisis. These economical, and later social, situations influenced the willingness of the different companies to participate. A constant dialogue and rescheduling of interviews was necessary. Many of the prearranged interviews had to be postponed and finally cancelled. This represented a considerable setback to the collection of data and a threat to the completion of this study.

Nevertheless this is a qualitative research study, and, therefore, no claim is made regarding representative findings, the number of teams in the study (although within the previous parameters defined to the study) is relatively limited. And it is, of course, not possible to guarantee that the data collection would be similar when interviewing other departments in the same company.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Research within Social Sciences is always related to Human interactions, either as single individuals or within a plural reality (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Due to its nature, the contact with individuals is essential. The researcher has to be aware that the study of social situations always implies the exposure of a particular reality with respect to an interviewee (Blaikie 2000). It becomes imperative that, from the early stages of the study, a position of transparency necessarily establishes the grounds of confidence (ibid). The use of norms and regulations, guidelines and documents become important as they assure both the respect for the participants as well as the authenticity of the study. The participants of this study were

informed about their right as voluntary participants. Once the study is concluded, it will be made available for them.

3.7.1 Informed Consent and Privacy

Participants were given documentation (see attachments I), which gave information about the study and its objectives. A scheme for the consent of participation was provided and signed by the participants, which guaranteed their privacy and anonymity.

3.7.2 Confidentiality and Data Anonymity

All the data collected was codified and no personal or identifying information about the informants was taken that could allow their identification. All the notes and transcriptions collected will be destroyed as soon as the study is concluded.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The collected data and its analysis aimed to answer the research question identified in the 1st Chapter of this study. Its prime purpose was to understand how the members of multicultural teams perceive their work interactions and its conditions. The analysis of the information gathered led me to reformulate a more concise research question: In what way and to what extent do these foreign workers feel discriminated at work when compared to their fellow Norwegians?

4.1 Background Data

All the participants in the study had been working in the Stavanger region for at least 1 year. The majority of the International participants had moved to Norway for the job position offered. 2 of the 3 Norwegian participants were Team Leaders at the time of the interviews. These two Team Leaders were men. Some of the statements of the participants were transcribed into this chapter, in order to clearly demonstrate their point of views.

The participants, Norwegian and foreigners, affirmed their satisfaction at work. They enjoyed their tasks in general, as well as, the work environment. Nevertheless, they mentioned the pressure they felt to attain goals and maintain the company's standards was. The majority of these workers perceived the international setting as a positive experience. As some of them affirmed:

I am a lucky person, I do what I like and I share it with interesting people from almost all the parts of the world. (Interviewee 22)

I learn so much every single day, both professionally and personally. You learn that one find some many answers to solve a problem as the number of international colleagues one have. You just find the best answer to that specific situation. (Interviewee 25)

The results that follow are presented according to their relevance in answering the research question.

4.2 Future

When questioned about their future, all the participants stated their desire to achieve a higher job position. They would like to increase their knowledge and obtain experience in their professional field. Nevertheless, participants declared that they would probably have to leave the company they were working for. They assumed that it was simpler to apply for better jobs positions in other companies.

Every one treats you great, it is a good place to work. But if I think about my job progression, then I need to find another company. (Interviewee 21)

You know the system of the company, after some time you start to connect the information...and then... you come to realize that you probably won't get there. (Interviewee 27)

Either because progression at work would be too demanding for their family, for instance availability to move to a different location or, due to the difficulty they perceived and experienced in the daily working life.

If I want to go further in my professional development, then I would have to accept and condone much of with which I don't really agree. But I would have then to answer according to my new responsibilities... I don't know if it's worth it. (Interviewee 23)

I have kids now, I cannot just move to whatever place... But I know that due to this constrain of mine, I am not the best candidate to aspire to a better position. (Interviewee 22)

4.3 Work Environment and Cultural Related Issues

Interviewees stated that they had a good work environment and that the intercultural settings contributed to it. All recognized the daily challenges faced at work, such as difficulty in understanding what someone says or means due to differences in perceptions, but still considered it rewarding. They affirmed that these exchanges contributed to their personal and professional development.

I enjoy very much this possibility of working with international people. We all have a special kind of tolerance that helps us to understand each other. (Interviewee 24). Some participants stated that they had felt misunderstood and that communication had led to a vulnerable moment in communication. A significantly number of the participants affirmed that they considered it easier to work with others who had the same cultural background, but not so rewarding. Several participants considered that, due to their different cultural background they had reduced probabilities of professional growth. On the other hand, a group of the participants meant that the opportunities were the same independent of the cultural or national background emphasizing that it is the personal work competences that are important in the selection process of the candidates for the position.

They make you feel like you are a part of the company, but you are not Norwegian, the probability of getting that promotion is very small... it is like: you have mission and rules of the company, but with time you see that there is another side. (Interviewee 20)

Everyone has the same opportunities. It depends on what you do, as a person, to get that job position you want. Last time I checked there were more foreigners in Leader positions than Norwegians actually. (Interviewee 26)

4.3.1 Language

Language was the key factor, which the participants felt contributed most to misinterpretations. Both Multicultural Teams had English as their official working language, being the mother tongue of the minority of the participants. Participants mentioned that not all of their colleagues were so proficient in English and that this was a stressful factor.

Language is always an issue, not everyone speaks English as expected either because of the accent or even the lack of knowledge of the language. They can be the best professionals in their area of work, but when the information is not retained or shared... then a small situation can turn into a big problem. (Interviewee 20)

Language was the reason for concern for some of the participants: they felt pressed by their companies to learn Norwegian either by being present in meetings where Norwegian was the only language used, or being provided with important work documentation solely in Norwegian.

The official language of the company is English, but I understand that if in a meeting there are more Norwegians than foreigners naturally the conversations will tend to be in Norwegian. But everyone has to keep in mind that we are in a professional setting, so we, the international professionals can only participate and contribute if we are able to communicate. (Interviewee 22)

I have faced some uncomfortable situations. Having to do my work in a language that I am not proficient in... was a big challenge. I had to stand my ground and then finally got the material in English, and what wasn't provided in English I had help translating it. (Interviewee 25)

4.3.2 Gender

The gender issue was perceived differently by the participants. The male participants did not point out any difference in treatment between females and males. Still they felt more relaxed in an environment where only men were present.

To me men and women are equal. I do not treat them differently, but of course that when in presence of only guys you tend to be a bit more relaxed and some bad words and jokes can come. (Interviewee 26)

On the contrary, female participants affirmed that although they had not felt treated differently, they would assume a more reserved behavior in the presence of men, especially in the presence of Middle Eastern men. They were conscious of the attention they might pay to the clothes they wore at work, or without being aware of it realizing at the end of a conversation that they had been more serious than they intended to be.

It is a man's world. You know it, if you didn't before you become aware of it. But the important thing is that this won't affect me in a negative way, as far as it depends on me. For me is more important to respect the person and ignore the gender. (Interviewee 24)

I haven't felt any difference in treatment by my colleagues because I am a woman, nor do I treat differently male or female workers. But I do tend to be more careful and reserved when I am in the presence of Middle Eastern men. I know it's stupid, no one has ever mistreated me... But I still do it. (Interviewee 21)

I do pay attention to what I wear to work. I have work clothes and outside work clothes. I think that I have won my place in my team, not just because of my competences as a professional, but also because of the respect I earn. But it is a man's world and I really think that I haven't got a better job position because I am a woman. (Interviewee 23)

4.4 Social Interaction

Participants stated that they tended to meet some of their team colleagues outside work. Still they also affirmed that at work it was common to have lunch together with their team members. Some emphasized good experiences of some of cultural events organized by their company, such as team building activities, which allowed the development of cultural and social understanding that, in an informal setting, permitted them a closer interaction with their fellow colleagues, allowing the development of inter-personal relationships outside professional circumstances.

I have been invited by colleagues to dinner in their house. I was flattered. We have, since then, become good friends. We meet quite often. (Interviewee 21)

These events are important, because you see people in different settings and it helps you to see things... you then start to understand better that person and at work you might then change your focus from a specific personal characteristic to another. (Interviewee 25)

Team Buildings are the best. You have so much fun and really is a great time to know the people you work with outside the company building. (Interviewee 24)

4.5 Summary

The research question in this study is: In what way and to what extent do these foreign workers feel discriminated at work when compared to their fellows Norwegian? The analysis of the data collection allowed an understanding of the various factors that influence the perception of discrimination felt by foreign members of multicultural teams.

- Future: Although stating that they were satisfied with their working situation, the majority of the informants affirmed that in order to be able to progress in their working careers, they would probably have to find other places to work.
- Language: Language was perceived as an stress factor. To the majority, the official working language was not their mother tongue, which represented a barrier in multiple communication situations. Language was perceived as a factor which could exclude them from communicating effectively with their Norwegian colleagues, and also as an exclusion factor when applying for higher positions within their companies.
- Gender: Gender was perceived differently by the genders. Female participants affirmed that they felt the need to be cautious in their behavior and their clothes. They stated that they perceived their work as being in a 'men's' world'. This meant that they would adopt a more reserved role, especially in the presence of Middle Eastern

men. They acknowledge that even though they had not been subject to any mistreatment by males, they would not take any chance. Male participants stated that they perceived no gender issues at work and that all were equals and, therefore, treated equally.

These are important findings that will be subject to further development in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This study was designed and the methods were conducted in order to assemble information that would provide valuable material, which would answer the main question: In what way and to what extent do these foreign workers feel discriminated at work when compared to their fellow Norwegians? The interview settings allowed the development of information, encouraging the participants to highlight their perceptions and concerns. The rise of new and important information demanded focus regarding the core distress of the participants. Gradually the concept of discrimination becomes more present, assuming a dominant role in the participants' professional uncertainties: either due to their perception of being a victim of it, or because others claim that it is a practice one would not find within their professional sceneries. These can be understood as antagonist positions and one can tend to support one of these opinions in detriment of the other. Still it is not possible to deny the importance of bringing these concerns to light and make the effort to understand the roots of the matter.

The different theoretical perspective, mentioned in previous chapters, substantiates the scrutiny of the gathered information providing significant background knowledge used in the elaboration of the follow discussion topics.

5.2 Discrimination

The majority of the international participants stated that they felt treated differently in comparison to their Norwegian colleagues, when aspiring to specific leading positions at the companies they are working for.

“Well, my recent past in this company showed me that not being Norwegian is like a handicap” (Interviewee 20)

Still, contrary of what one might assume, that the perception of Discrimination is not related to ascriptive characteristics. Curiously, their peers do not practice the differentiated conduct, but instead by management, exposing the direct relationship between discriminatory manners and power. Discrimination assumes an organizational facet, also known as Institutional Discrimination, Unintentional Consequences (Rogstad 2001; Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004) or Systemic Discrimination (Craig 2005). This institutionalized practice is identified throughout time, where individuals are within an organization that systematically excludes them from equal opportunities. It is important to mention that this behavior might be unconscious; institutions might not be aware of the implications of these actions that might lead to the perception of discrimination (ibid). The reasons for these practices, also known as ‘facially neutral rules’ (Craig 2005) may be explained by the outdated procedures that have not been updated regarding the changes brought by globalization and the recruitment of an international task force. On the other hand, when these practices are consciously sustained and believed to promote equality amongst all, one is in the presence of the ‘benign neglect’ (Kymlicka 1995), which might be interpreted as a lack of action or will to modify standard procedures or norms. Discriminatory practices are associated with different concepts and stereotypes of equal opportunities, justice and fairness. It is important to recall that these models are social and cultural constructions (Allport 1954) therefore, a universal understanding is difficult to achieve.

“The ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific. This means that all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative” (Holliday, Hyde and Kullman 2010, 191).

Assuming the latter position, one can claim that the distinctive positions of the members of the multicultural teams concerning discriminatory practices at their work settings, can be explained by the individual cultural construction of discrimination and nevertheless hers/his cultural perception of it. “⁷Det er imidlertid uklart hva ulike informanter forstå med begrepet (diskriminering). Faren for å blande subjektive oppfatninger og objektive definisjoner er også til stede om en spør personer med synlig minoritetsbackgrunn om de diskrimineres” (Rogstad 2001, 43).

This is also a valid explanation to the fact that even though being within the same professional boundaries, and therefore, sharing multiple experiences, not all of the international members felt that they were treated differently. “⁸Hva én informant subjektivt opplever som diskriminering, kan en annen i samme situasjon se annerledes på. identiske opplevelser kan tolkes ulikt.” (Rogstad 2001, 43). People tend to perceive differently similar experiences and do have difficulty explain it in an objective way (Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004).

5.2.1 Individual Position

The previous point brings the individual component and hers/his action concerning the professional multicultural boundaries to discussion. The attitudes of individuals represent one of the most important components in order to adapt and integrate, not only, to the company’s policies but also to the surround intercultural environment beyond professional situations.

⁷ It is however unclear what the different informants understand by the concept (discrimination). The danger of mixing subjective opinions with objective definitions is also present if people who clearly has a minority background are asked if they are discriminated against. (Translation by Inger Torkelsen)

⁸ What one informant subjectively considers discrimination, might not have the same impact on another individual in the same situation; identical situations can be interpreted differently. (Translation by Inger Torkelsen)

This is a remark stated in the study of Riemsdijk and Cook (2013). Multicultural encounters can be perceived as moments of positive interaction where one has the possibility of acquiring new knowledge and overcome previous prejudices. These instants of, what can be named as bounding, are crucial for establishing and developing communication, which may lead to the 'fusion of horizons'. The individual in it self is in fact the center of all communication exchanges, of course influenced by her/his social and cultural background, still the active part of the process and the one capable of exchanging and changing meanings. It becomes imperative that members of the multicultural teams are open and aware that they also have an active role in the improvement of the environment they are a part of. Attending social events organized by their companies provides important insights to institutional aspects of interaction that they were not sensitive to and might be a starting point to a broader network connection. Foreign workers must not assume a position where they are entitled to be understood, but are not willing to understand.

As with all action, it is not only a question of what economically rational or culturally appropriate but also a question of the will of an individual. To omit the presence of the individual agent within this context would lead to a reduction of the complexities of communication. The interpersonal level is important. (Nynäs 1999, 33)

It would be desirable to create an open and trustful atmosphere where these or other workers could be active in voicing their concerns promoting a dialogue, which would decrease misunderstandings.

5.2.2 Language as Differential Factor

Language is one of the factors that shape our identity, is the communicative representation of our culture (McLeod 2010), with their signs, meaning, interpretations and perceptions. According to Saussure (important name in Linguistics), even though some different languages may share the same words, these can have different value. These values are influenced by cultural, social and economic factors. When learning a new language, one

becomes not only familiar to the new language but also to the social and cultural representations.

Language does serve as a tool for communication, but in addition it is a “system of representation” for perception and thinking. This function of language provides us with verbal categories and prototypes that guide our formation of concepts and categorization of objects: it directs how we experience reality. (Bennett 1998, 13)

As remarked by Dahl:

Roughly, it seems that each word is defined by one of the others. When we say *meaning* we usually mean both *signification* and *sense*. In Norwegian it seems to me that we do not distinguish *meaning* and *sense*, the word *mening* covers both. However, *mening* may signify *betydning* (signification), and *mening* also has the connotation of intention. (Dahl 2000, 133)

The pressure that some interviewees mention they feel in order to become proficient in Norwegian, might be explained as a motivational drive. An indication that their professional and interpersonal skills are considered valuable by Management, which might indicate that they (foreign workers) can be considered for higher positions and therefore it would be desirable to learn the language. It might not be considered as an attempt of exclusion or discrimination. The argument that the companies' official business language is in English and therefore Norwegian is not necessary, it is important to remark that part of this affirmation is true. Still, international clients may communicate in English and not in Norwegian. Nevertheless, these clients have expectations related to the companies' conduct used traditionally in their transactions. In this way, the focus is not in the language itself, but in the behaviors, communication forms and approaches which combined define the business culture of (what is understood as) a Norwegian company. Thus language is the tool that allows not only being able to speak, but also to interpret and understand meanings.

5.3 Gender as a present constrain

The majority of the female participants of this study have mentioned that despite feeling respected by their colleagues and by the institution in general, they felt that the professional setting is more favorable to men. They have affirmed that it is easier for a man to aspire to a higher job position. This insight might be related to their personal occurrences of only having contact with males in management positions. This perception could be influenced by their present job reality, as well as, by social and cultural backgrounds.

That is, the structure of organizations (including occupational structures) and society provides differential opportunities and resources to men and women, which differentially influence their aspirations, ambitions, and commitment to work, which in turn perpetuates gender differences and reinforces societal expectations of male and female behavior at work. (Cleveland, Stockdale and Murphy 2000, 26)

The positive daily encounters with male colleagues contribute to the establishment of a sense of equality between genders. Still, female members assume either a consciously reticent position associated to the various professional interactions that may occur, by their posture, or by the clothes they wear. This position tends to be more extreme according to the cultural and religious background of the males they interact with. The perpetuations of these behaviors by high skilled women cultivate a sense of protection. By not exposing themselves to dubious situations, where a sexual connotation could originate, they aspire to preserve their image of being just another colleague ideologically disassociated to their gender. “Women’s development groups typically encounter resistance initially, because women are afraid that change will make things worse” (Nussbaum 2000, 43).

5.4 Limitations of Findings

This study, as previously stated in Chapter 3, does not intend to be generalized, it can only be representative within the multicultural teams, which have participated in this work. In order to obtain a global framework concerning discrimination practices, it would be necessary to

adjust and develop more diversified methods within a longer period of time. A similar cultural background between the multicultural teams and its members, would also be desirable, in the way that, cultural questions and its influences in individual's perceptions could be determined with more certainty. The difficulty of gathering willing participants within the referred parameters revealed it self to be unviable to achieve.

5.5 Future Studies

It would be important to collect data from senior skilled international workers, which are members in Multicultural teams and are proficient in Norwegian. It would then be possible to determine if they assume the same position related to discriminatory practices.

It would also be relevant to study the internal and official documentation of the different companies related to the "ideal worker profile" and compare it to the effective task force of the companies. This would be helpful determining the existence of systemic discriminatory practices and procedures, as well as, the existence of, what it could be called, 'a hidden agenda'.

5.6 Summary of Findings

The perception of being discriminated assumes different causes related to language and gender being practiced by those in a position of power. These practices may not be perceived as such by those who exercise them. Nevertheless they seem to be systematic, *a continuing phenomenon* (Craig 2005) and are rooted within the different norms and procedures of the organizations, representing an *Institutional Discrimination, Unintentional Consequences* (Rogstad 2001; Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004) or *Systemic Discrimination* (Craig 2005) approach. However, it is crucial to observe that it is not clear what definition of discrimination each of the informant, assumes as truthful. Moreover, only one of the participants has used the terminology "discrimination" once. All the others have used terms

such as: “different opportunities”; “less opportunities”; “different treatment” to describe their distress.

While, over the past 20 years, the Norwegian government has largely succeeded in setting policies to foster equal opportunities for its increasingly diverse population, policy is not necessarily practice. This is evident, for example, in the continued existence of ethnic discrimination in the labor market. (Eriksen 2013, 7)

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This study sought to answer the question: In what way and to what extent do foreign workers feel discriminated when compared to their fellow Norwegians? The understanding of the real work settings of the members of multicultural teams, permitted firstly to detect their challenges regarding the multicultural surroundings; secondly their concerns related to their daily multicultural encounters; thirdly to unveil the importance of cultural and social backgrounds in the perception of discrimination and, fourthly the awareness of the existence of discrimination within the working culture, even though in most of the cases unconsciously, companies norms, rules, practices and objectives may lead to discrimination or, at least, be perceived as discriminatory. The identification of the previous factors was obtained resorting to the methodology and its methods, described in Chapter 3, which through individual semi-structured interviews permitted an open and private exchange of experiences of the participants. These participants were members of two different multicultural teams of distinctive companies. Within these teams one can also find Norwegian members (see table 1, Chapter 3). The theoretical literature has had a central role in the determination of the concept of discrimination, and also in the comprehension of it as a tool of exclusion.

6.2 Empirical Findings

The empirical findings of this study have allowed to a response to the research question. Yes, the majority of international workers who participated in this study do feel discriminated

when compared to their fellow Norwegians, to the extent that achieving a higher job position at the companies they work for is harder for them as being foreigners. These difficulties are related to internal practices, which are far from promoting equality. These workers pointed out that the main factors were the need of proficiency in the national language and gender related issues as core of their disquiets. Their distress is to a degree that they assume the necessity of changing companies in order to obtain the aspired position. Although it is not intended to analyze these companies' administrative and cultural structures, it is imperative to refer that these companies, according to the testimonials of substantial number of participants, perceive internal norms and conducts as hurdles that do not permit them to have the same job opportunities as their fellow Norwegians. Discriminatory practices are related to superior management and therefore performed in a top-bottom perspective being a 'continuing phenomenon' (Craig 2005). These Systemic Discrimination practices, which might not be intended consciously, do exist and causing distress to the skilled international workers. And let us remember, the majority of these international workers have chosen these particular job offers with the belief that they would progress in their career.

6.3 Theoretical Implication

The analysis of the results and the posterior discussion of the collected data, in Chapter 5, indicate that there is a similarity between the results of this study, when compared to previous studies conducted by the scholars and researchers referred in the Chapter 2: Literature Review. The perception of discrimination is a reality, it assumes a subtle and discrete role which contributes firstly to its perpetuation and secondly contributes to the difficulty in becoming seen within the working culture (Craig 2005). Due to its relation to power (Midtbøen and Rogstad. 2012), it becomes imperative to involve the administrative sectors of the companies in the consciousness of how their practices may lead to discrimination; it is necessary to adopt an *ongoing problem-solving* approach (Craig 2005). Systemic

Discrimination in Craig (2005) words or Institutional Discrimination, Unintentional Consequences (Rogstad 2001; Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004), is perceived as a reality and in order to prevent it, it is important to recognize its existence. One requires having in mind that perceptions are social constructions (Allport 1954), thus dependent on cultural backgrounds, which influence one understanding and categorization of it. Still, it is significant to retain that the cultural factor of these perceptions shall not reduce the individual capability of acquiring and expanding knowledge, setting aside or, at least, minimizing the weight of past experiences (Dahl 2000; Nynäs 1999).

“The government and Parliament both recognize that ethnic discrimination is a problem in Norway” (Craig 2005, 397).

6.4 Contribution of the Study to the Field Knowledge

The realization of this Study demonstrates that Discrimination in work environment settings is a reality. Discrimination is primarily related to ethnical minority groups, which professionally tend to assume unskilled working positions. This Study shows that Discrimination is transversal to social classes; Discrimination at work is Systemic, persistent and associated to position of power within companies.

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Attachments

I - Invitation Letter

Request for participation in the research project

”Multicultural Teams: a comparative study in Stavanger regarding how satisfied are the members of 2 or 3 multicultural teams or groups with their work situation? What are the most influential factors that affect their satisfaction, according to their opinion?”

Background and Purpose

The social reality in Norway has changed drastically in the last decades. Thousands of immigrants have moved to this country bringing with them their knowledge and experiences, as well as their skills. Within the immigrant population, one will find a various range of educational degrees. It is in this diverse universe of multicultural workers that the multicultural teams are established, this is the context that this Master Thesis aims to be developed. It is also known that job efficiency is directly related to job satisfaction and therefore the communication assets of their workers dramatically influence companies' profits.

Some of the questions to be posed are: How satisfied are the members of multicultural teams with their work situation? Are the factors of satisfaction related to the branch they are working? What are the main factors that influence their satisfaction?

It is not intended in any way to evaluate or judge the participating companies nor their internal policies related to the multicultural teams.

Study Object

One Multicultural Team within each company. The Multicultural Team will have 3 to 10 elements each.

What does involves the participation in the study?

Personal Interview

The participants in this study will go through personal Interview within the interview session.

No Journal Data neither registry data will be used.

What happens with your information?

All the personal information is private and confidential. The researcher and the Tutor will be the ones having access to the information. The identity of the participants will be kept in a system of codes, so that the privacy of the participants is respected. These codes will be kept in the personal notes of the researcher as well as in the personal computer used in the research. Neither the participants nor the companies will be identified.

The project will have its termination in Mai 2015. In the end of the project the conclusions will be presented both to the participants as well as to the companies, still it will be an anonymous process where the identity of participants will not be revealed. The codification used for the identities will be destroyed in the end of the project.

The study is reported to the Personvernombudet for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Service.

II - Interview Guide

How satisfied are the members of 2 or 3 multicultural teams or groups with their work situation? What are the most influential factors that affect their satisfaction, according to their opinion?

Background

Age Gender

Cultural, Social and Education

Field of Work Position:

Facts

How long are you working in this company?

How would you describe your job?

What is the predominant language at work?

Could you briefly describe your colleagues? (Profession, age, sex, nationality).

Job satisfaction

How do like what you are doing?

What would be a good day at work? What would be an excellent day at work?

Considering your present position, what are you most satisfied with?

What are you less satisfied with?

What are the values and mission of your company?

When thinking about these, do those affect your job satisfaction?

How do you relate with the mission and values of the company?

Decision making

Consider a situation when a decision had to be taken. Could you describe how it was done? Is this the usual way to make decisions? What do you think about the decision making process? How involved in the decision making process would you like to be? What would you do different?

Work environment and cultural related issues

Did you ever feel misunderstood at work? Could you describe a situation? Does it often happen? What do you do when it happens?

Did you ever have a strong disagreement situation at work? How did it turn out? What was it related with?

Is there any work related activity, professional posture or way of organizing work that you are not so familiarized with and you would like to change or maybe that you don't agree with?

How do you find working in an intercultural environment? What are the challenges you face?

Do you feel that your background influences your working relationships? In what way?

Do you feel that it is easier for you to work with people that have a similar cultural background when compared with others? Why? Examples.

Do you feel that all the employees have the same opportunities of progress within the company?

Social Interaction

Do you socialize with your colleagues? How easy is for you to interact with them?

Looking back when you moved abroad, how would you describe it? Has your thinking process changed since then? Examples? Do you feel that you have changed? In what way?

How does your remuneration affect your working choices?

How easy is it for you to work with people of the opposite gender? Does your behaviour change in their presence?

Future

Do you seek other job opportunities? What would be the perfect job proposal?

What do you see yourself doing in 5 years?