

Master Thesis Award commendation for the master's thesis of Gabriela Feichter, MA

Topic of the thesis

The master's thesis *"The Impact of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policies on Employee Motivation and Engagement"* explores how employees in a multinational organization perceive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts and how these perceptions affect their motivation and loyalty. The study focuses on the Southeast Europe cluster of DB Schenker, a leading global logistics company.

A mixed-methods approach was applied, combining quantitative data from a standardized employee survey (n = 248) with qualitative interviews with HR managers and an analysis of the company's DEI communication. The research investigates the potential gap between formal DEI communication and employees' lived experiences, examining how perceived authenticity and structural anchoring of DEI strategies influence motivation and engagement.

Key findings

The study provides empirical evidence that employees' perceptions of DEI efforts are significantly related to their motivation and organizational commitment. Specifically, a strong positive correlation ($R^2 = .561$, $p < .001$) was found between the perceived effectiveness of DEI initiatives and employee motivation, while a smaller but significant relationship ($R^2 = .039$, $p = .002$) was identified between employees' sense of inclusion and their emotional attachment to the company.

The thesis also highlights generational, national, and departmental differences in DEI perceptions: younger employees and those with shorter tenure tend to evaluate DEI policies more positively. Moreover, the research reveals important structural challenges, such as symbolic inclusion without genuine influence, regional variations in DEI awareness, and limited feedback channels for employees.

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights, the thesis provides a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between DEI policy, organizational culture, and employee experience.

Practical relevance

The results of this master's thesis by Gabriela Feichter offer valuable implications for practitioners. The study demonstrates that DEI is not only an ethical imperative for an internationally active company, but also a strategic tool for strengthening employee motivation, identification, and retention—provided it is implemented authentically and sustainably.

The findings underscore the importance of linking DEI communication with real structural commitment and feedback mechanisms. Beyond the logistics sector, the insights contribute to broader discussions on how multinational companies can embed DEI within ESG and sustainability frameworks, making this work highly relevant for leaders in human resources, organizational development, and corporate governance.