

## MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF CULTURE SECTOR HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE CONTEXT OF GENERATIONS

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**Abstract.** The culture sector is an important component of the economy of Latvia, yet the sector as well as its human resources have been relatively little researched. The Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality employs individuals of various generations, with different life experience and value systems, and, consequently, the employer has been able to understand the differences in order to ensure productive mutual cooperation among the employees. Accordingly, the present research aims to examine motivational factors in the work environment for the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality. The authors conducted a survey of the employees of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality (the sample comprised 133 employees). The research found that the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality were represented by four generations. The most employees belonged to the Baby Boomer (54 employees or 41% of the total) and Generation X (52 or 39%); therefore, there is a risk of failure to replace the human resources in the next few years. The survey found that, overall, there were no significant differences in motivational factors in the work environment among the generations. However, a number of issues revealed statistically significant differences among generational groups in terms of motivational factors in the work environment, such as importance of education, prioritization of one's own desires and needs, the need for career growth, working from home, flexible working hours and employer-paid communication services.

**Keywords:** generations, human resources, culture sector.

**JEL code:** O15, J21, J82

### Introduction

The culture sector is an important component of the economy of Latvia, yet the sector as well as its development and human resources have been relatively little researched or the scope of the research has been narrow. In the research studies, the research object usually focused on economic and social returns on a cultural event, leading to a lack of a broader vision of the culture sector as a whole. Some research studies focused on the effects of cultural consumption and participation, the role of song and dance festivals in a changing economic environment, the development of cultural education, the effectiveness of museums, the incorporation of culture into the economy etc. Overall, it could be concluded that the culture sector and the human resources are under-researched and, compared with other sectors of the economy of Latvia, only indirect attention is paid to it. However, research on the culture sector is important because it is not only a consuming sector, as is often considered (Kilis R., 2007), but it has an economic effect on the economy of Latvia.

During the economic crisis, salaries were lowered for those working in the culture sector. Although the national economy experiences economic growth, the salaries of people working in the culture sector are not competitive, with the average salary in the culture sector in Latvia being EUR 780 before taxes (Bormane A., 2019), while in Jelgava municipality it is EUR 662 before taxes. The low salaries facilitate the outflow of professional specialists and a high turnover of human resources in organizations throughout Latvia. An analysis of human resources in the culture sector has to focus not only on their salaries but also on cooperation among the generations. Employers need to understand and be able to adapt to the differences in order to ensure productive mutual cooperation among their employees, effectively design strategies and make decisions (Baldonado M. A., 2013). Besides, understanding generational differences allows employers to effectively attract, motivate and

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retain human resources of various generations and avoid misunderstandings and conflicts (Gursoy D. et al., 2008). Each generation is characterized by its own behaviour, attitudes and motivation for working. Age is one of the most common predictors of differences in attitudes, values and behaviours. Age or generational classification gives researchers a tool to analyse changes in attitudes and behaviours over time (Bochert R. et al., 2017).

A lot and various research studies on generations and their characteristics have been done in the world (Bochert R. et al., 2017; James R. O., 2017; Kane S., 2019; Heyns P. E. et al., 2019), yet unlike in Western Europe or America, in Latvia the formation of generations has been affected by other factors. In Latvia, generations are researched by researchers such as professor Z. Rubene (2018), R. Baltusite and B. Briede (2018), L. Licite and L. Janmere (2017; 2018). Nevertheless, there is a lack of research studies on human resources in the culture sector in the intergenerational context. The human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality have been chosen as the research object because the particular organization employs individuals of various generations, with different experience and value systems. The authors used a classification of generations that is available in the scientific literature (Erickson T., 2012) and classifies the generations by birth year range: Traditionalists – born before 1945, Baby boomers – born between 1946 and 1964, Generation X – born between 1965 and 1981, Generation Y – born between 1982 and 2000.

The following **hypothesis** is put forward – motivational factors in the work environment for the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality are related to their generational differences.

The research **aim** is to examine motivational factors in the work environment for the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality. To achieve the aim, the following specific research **tasks** are set: 1) to describe the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality in the generational context; 2) to examine the motivational factors of human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality.

A number of **research methods** were employed to do the research: monographic and descriptive for theoretical discussion and interpretation of the research results based on scientific findings and generational theory; analysis and synthesis for examination of problem elements and identification of regularities; induction for making assumptions based on individual elements or facts; deduction for logical systematization and interpretation of empirical data; a survey and interviews with culture sector experts for identification of motivational factors in the work environment for the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality; and a nonparametric method – a Kruskal-Wallis H-test – was used to identify statistically significant generational differences.

The present research used the following information sources: research papers of international scientific conference proceedings and journals, electronically available national and foreign periodicals focusing on generational values and motivations for employment, internal legal documents of the local government of Jelgava municipality as well as unpublished materials.

## **1. Characteristics of the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality in the generational context**

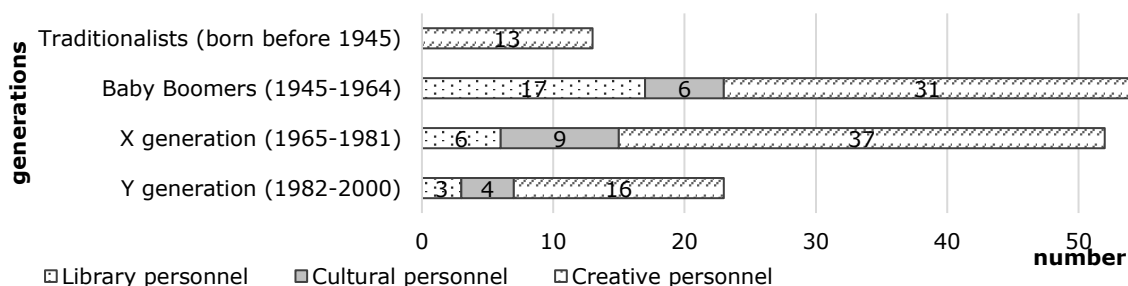
The Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality is a subordinate institution established by the local government (29 April 2015 Decision of the Council of Jelgava municipality) that aims to create, disseminate and maintain cultural values. The Board of Culture is responsible for 14 cultural centres, 22 public libraries and 98 folk art and craft or amateur groups. The Board of Culture provides totally

194 job positions, and the work of the personnel is managed, planned and organized by the head, the deputy head and two key specialists of it. On 2 September 2019, there were 180 filled positions and 14 vacancies. The 180 positions were taken by 133 individuals who were employed both full- and part-time; of the total personnel, 33 took more than one position, being employed not more than 40 hours a week as prescribed by the Labour Law. According to the Board of Culture, 30 % of their personnel were employed for 1 to 5 years, which revealed employee turnover in the period 2014-2019; 59 % of the personnel were employed for 6 and 40 years, while 11 % were employed for less than a year.

To better understand the human resources in the generational context, the research divided the personnel of the Board of Culture into three categories:

- creative personnel – managers of amateur art groups, concertmasters, choir masters and other specialists, genre leaders, sound and light operators;
- cultural personnel – administrators, cultural supervisors and event organizers;
- library personnel – library heads, librarians and local history specialists.

The human resources of the Board of Culture are also divided by generation (Fig. 1).



Source: authors' construction based on an unpublished list of personnel provided by the Personnel Department of Jelgava municipality

Fig. 1. Distribution of the personnel of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality by generation in 2019

As shown in Figure 1, Baby boomers represented by 54 (41 %) personnel made up the highest percentage. Generation X represented by 52 (39 %) personnel had the second highest percentage; it was followed by Generation Y representing 23 (17%) personnel, while Traditionalists accounted for only 3 %. The longest employment relationship was 38 years. In view of the fact that the Board of Culture are mainly represented by Baby boomers and Generation X, this situation can make a threat to the replacement of the human resources over the next years. The replacement of human resources could make the most significant impact on a particular group of library personnel, as some of the personnel are of pre-retirement or retirement age. Besides, Generation Y personnel tend to leave the Board of Culture more often than the others owing to low salaries and often owing to the specifics of the culture sector, e.g. being a cultural employee often involves working in evenings and on weekends. Consequently, when employees do not receive competitive and motivational pay, they more often decide to change jobs. There is also a lack of qualified specialists among creative personnel. Creative personnel work part-time, resulting in low and non-motivational pay. Of the total creative personnel working for the Board of Culture, 25 took several part-time positions (were managers of several amateur art groups), which could be explained by a lack of qualified specialists in the vicinity of Jelgava municipality and Jelgava city; however, in order to attract qualified specialists, a competitive salary has to be paid because long-term employment based on enthusiasm and for a low salary does not meet the expectations of any employee.

## 2. Motivational factors of human resources in the generational context

To identify and examine the factors affecting the motivation of human resources of the Board of Culture in the generational context, a survey among the personnel of the Board of Culture as well as three semi-structured interviews with culture sector experts were conducted to gain a more detailed understanding of the relevant causes.

The general population was comprised of 133 personnel of the Board of Culture. The total number of respondents who took part in the survey was 107, meaning that totally 80 % of the personnel completed their questionnaires. Before processing the questionnaire data, the sample was classified by two characteristics – the personnel's belongingness to a particular generation and their job specificity (creative, cultural and library personnel). Of the total number of the respondents, 62 personnel (58 %) represented creative personnel, 19 personnel (18 %) – cultural personnel and 26 personnel (24 %) – library personnel. Of the total number of the respondents, 47 personnel (44 %) represented the Baby Boomer Generation, 37 (35 %) – Generation X, while 22 (20 %) – Generation Y. In view of the fact that only one employee represented the Traditionalist Generation, this personnel group was not analysed, yet this employee's opinion was included in the analysis of total indicators.

To examine the motivational factors of human resources of the Board of Culture in the generational context, the questionnaire's questions were divided into four blocks: key values, job importance, the type of communication and motivation. The questionnaire was developed to include a semantic differential scale of 7 categories, each of the 52 proposed measurements was expressed as a pair of two opposite assertions. The survey measured personnel opinions by using 52 variables. Each variable consisted of a pair of assertions to be rated on a scale from 1 to 7 points, with the respondent choosing the assertion that best fits his/her values, thereby setting priorities. If the respondent agrees with the first assertion in a pair, then 1-3 points are chosen, yet if she/he more agrees with the second assertion in the pair, 5-7 points are chosen, while 4 points is a neutral answer.

An analysis of the results of the survey on personnel motivation allowed concluding that the opinions expressed by the generational groups on various matters tended to be similar and the differences found were not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). The personnel of all the generations were motivated by competitive pay, various monetary and non-monetary bonuses and involvement in decision-making, as it was important for them to have their voices heard and be appreciated in general. The employer should regularly provide feedback on the work done, as it was important for the personnel to receive objective praises, both privately and publicly, that motivated them to engage in the work more enthusiastically. The matters in which the research found statistically significant differences are summarized in Table 1.

Statistically significant differences in opinion among the generational groups were found in relation to the **need for education**. The differences in opinion among the generational groups could be explained by the fact that 41 % of the personnel of the Board of Culture represented the Baby Boomer Generation, some of them were close to retirement age or already in retirement age. For these employees, education and new skills were no longer as relevant as they were for the other generations. The deputy director of the Jelgava City Library agreed with this opinion, stating in the interview that "Just before pre-retirement and retirement age, employees often think that acquiring a new knowledge is superfluous because they know everything and it is good the way it is. But, of course, the same cannot be said about all employees of this age because it depends on each

individual's personality. Young employees, however, feel a great need for education and want to apply a new knowledge quickly in their daily work".

However, when it comes to a "**preference for one's own desires and needs**", a higher proportion of the respondents who represented Generation Y expressed their stronger preference for their own desires and needs. The disagreement between the generations could be explained by the fact that the respondents of the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X were ready to set aside their desires and needs and dedicate their time to others and their work, which had been greatly affected by their upbringing and societal influence when they grew up and started their careers. In contrast, younger employees thought more about themselves and achieving their own goals than about achieving common goals or helping others, as their own wishes and needs were a priority. Statistically significantly different opinions of the generational groups on both previous matters were confirmed by the results of a Kruskal-Wallis H-test ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The opinions on intergenerational matters in relation to **career growth** and working from home were different. Career growth was important to 100 % Generation Y respondents, while the opinions of Baby boomers and Generation X personnel varied. To understand the survey results in more detail, the matters pertaining to career importance was also analysed by personnel group. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H-test showed that the differences in opinion among the personnel groups were statistically significant. The different results acquired could be explained by the fact that the need for career growth of the personnel of the Board of Culture was difficult to meet. Both cultural and library personnel held the highest possible positions in their institutions, so the reality might have influenced the opinions expressed about career growth. Besides, some of the personnel held their positions for more than 15 years and did not think about changing their jobs, thereby making it impossible for them to advance their careers without changing their jobs or organisational units. The personnel of Generation Y had a broader view on the matter – careers were important to them, and it was not dependent on their current jobs. If the institution did not provide the desired job, Generation Y individuals were ready to invest their built-up experience and professional knowledge in another institution for faster career growth.

Only 49 % of the respondents surveyed appreciated an **opportunity to work from home**, the opinions expressed were not unanimous and could be characterized as dispersed, as there were no clear answers in favour of this assertion. Overall, it was a medium priority, as 32 % of the respondents chose the neutral answer, while 19 % of the respondents with different levels of agreement said they had to perform their duties only at the workplace ( $M=3.47$ ;  $SD=1.53$ ). The differences in opinion expressed across all the generations tended to be similar. The largest disagreement was observed among the Baby Boomer Generation, as 36 % of the respondents agreed that work duties could be done from home, yet at the same time 26 % of the respondents with different levels of agreement expressed an opinion that work duties should be performed at the workplace, while 38% agreed with both assertions ( $M=3.90$ ;  $SD=1.48$ ). This disagreement across all the generations might be explained by the fact that the personnel of the Board of Culture could perform their duties both inside and outside the workplace, as there was no requirement to be at the workplace at all times. However, library personnel need to work fixed hours, which involves being at the workplace and it is not possible to perform the work duties from home, as one of their main duties is to serve library visitors. The largest disagreement was observed among the respondents of the Baby Boomer Generation, which could be explained by the fact that 36 % of the baby boomers

represented library personnel. Significant differences in opinion among the generations was also evidenced by the Kruskal-Wallis H-test results ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Statistically significant differences in opinion were found among both the generational groups and the personnel groups concerning **flexible working hours** and phone bills paid by the employer, which was also evidenced by the Kruskal-Wallis H-test results. An analysis of a preference for flexible working hours allows concluding that differences in opinion among the generations and the personnel groups are affected by the specifics of the culture sector. Flexible working hours were important to 84% of the surveyed creative personnel and 95 % of the surveyed cultural personnel because their work duties were often done outside "normal" working hours, as they organized events and participated in the events in weekday evenings or on weekends; therefore, it was important that the personnel themselves might determine their own working time and duration according to the specifics of the duties they performed. The situation with library personnel was different, as they were only partly motivated by flexible working hours. The librarians worked for the benefit of the population and provided librarian services during fixed working hours. The head of the Board of Culture said that "in certain cases, the library opening hours approved may be revised in favour of the library personnel member if it relates to the availability of public transport to or from work."

There were also divergent opinions across the generational groups on **employer-paid communication bills** (mobile phone bills). The opinions tended to be similar among the respondents of the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X, as 68 % with different levels of agreement believed that paying for communication services by employers was a motivational factor. In contrast, the respondents of Generation Y gave significantly different opinions. Although 32 % of the Generation Y respondents, with different levels of agreement, considered employer-paid communication bills to be a motivational factor, 36 % believed that employer-paid communication bills were not important to them. Statistically significant differences in opinion among the generational groups on this matter were evidenced by the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H-test as well ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The differences in opinion among the generational groups regarding motivational factors in the work environment are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

**Differences in opinion among the generational groups regarding motivational factors in their work environment**

Pair of assertions	Baby boomers (M)	Generation X (M)	Generation Y (M)	Total (M)
Education is important / Education is not important	1.62	2.13	2.09	1.90
Preference for one's own wishes and needs / Preference for the wishes and needs of others	3.49	3.51	2.77	3.36
Career growth is important / Career growth is not important	2.26	2.24	1.64	2.12
Opportunity for working from home / Work duties must be performed only at the workplace	3.89	3.32	2.77	3.47
Flexible working hours / Fixed working hours	2.77	2.41	1.91	2.46
Phone bill is paid by the employer / Phone bill is not paid by the employer	2.83	2.95	4.05	3.13

Source: authors' survey results

One can conclude that those working in the culture sector represent different generational groups, which partly affects their motivational factors at the workplace, especially the motivational factors such as education, career growth, an opportunity for working from home, flexible working hours and paid communication services.

## Conclusions and proposals

- 1) The culture sector and its human resources have been little researched, and the scope of the research has been narrow. Compared with other sectors of the economy of Latvia, only indirect attention is paid to it. However, research on the culture sector is important because it encompasses also libraries, folk art, theatre, music, museums, the creative industry and other industries. There is a lack of research studies not only on the culture sector itself but also on the human resources in the context of generations.
- 2) The human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality were represented by four generations. The most employees belonged to the Baby Boomer Generation (54 employees or 41 % of the total) and Generation X (52 or 39 %); therefore, there is a risk of failure to replace the human resources in the next few years. Significant replacement of human resources could directly affect library personnel, as 17 employees or 63 % of the total were of pre-retirement or retirement age.
- 3) The duration of employment relationships of Generation Y personnel working for the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality was variable; 78 % of the total Generation Y personnel (18 personnel) had employment relationships of less than 5 years, which could be explained by the need to develop themselves and the desire for career growth, which was practically impossible to implement if working for the Board of Culture. The decision to change jobs is influenced by low salaries and often the specifics of the culture sector. Library personnel are the most loyal to their employer, with 54 % (13) of all the personnel having employment relationships of 16-38 years and representing the Baby Boomer Generation. Besides, there is a tendency for creative workers to change their jobs, as they are employed part time and, consequently, the remuneration is not motivational enough.
- 4) The survey of the human resources of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality revealed statistically significant differences with regard to the following motivational factors in the work environment among the generational groups:
  - education is important. The differences could be explained by the fact that 41 % of the total personnel of the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality represented the Baby Boomer Generation, of which 30 % were of pre-retirement or retirement age. For these employees, education and new skills were no longer as relevant as they were for Generations X and Y;
  - a preference for one's own wishes and needs. The personnel of Generation Y preferred their own wishes and needs, whereas the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X were ready to set aside their desires and needs and dedicate their time to others and their work. That has been greatly affected by their upbringing and societal influence when they grew up and started their careers;
  - the need for career growth. A stronger wish for fast career growth was observed among the personnel of Generation Y than among those of the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X, yet the career growth was difficult to implement at the Board of Culture of Jelgava municipality. Consequently, there was a risk of a high personnel turnover, particularly among those who had reached their career "ceiling" and wanted career progression;
  - working from home. The differences in opinion on working from home were related to both the specific nature of the work to be done and the views of the generations. Compared with the Baby Boomers generation, the personnel of Generations X and Y were much more flexible on this matter. The differences in opinion among creative, cultural and library personnel could be

explained by the specific nature of the work to be done, as the creative and cultural personnel could perform their duties outside the workplace, yet this was not possible for the library personnel;

- flexible working hours. The personnel of Generation Y agreed that flexible working hours were a strong motivational factor, while those of the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X were not unanimous;
  - employer-paid communication services. It was a strong motivational factor for the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X, but not for Generation Y. The differences in opinion on this matter among creative, cultural and library personnel could be explained by the specific nature of their work to be done.
- 5) The research found that, overall, there were no significant generational differences in motivational factors in the work environment (out of the 52 pairs of motivational assertions, statistically significant differences were identified for only six matters). This means that the hypothesis put forward in the research only partly proved to be true. This was due to the fact that although 80 % of the human resources of the Board of Culture were surveyed, the sample was relatively small in general, which did not allow drawing any broader conclusions on the generational differences in the culture sector.
- 6) The personnel of the Board of Culture as well as students of national educational institutions need to continue research on generational differences in human resources in Latvia and conduct surveys in other municipalities. If employees of the entire culture sector of Latvia were researched, it would be possible to discover significant differences in motivational factors in the work environment among the culture sector employees.

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