

VALORISING REGIONAL CULTURAL SPECIFICITY ELEMENTS

VALORIZAREA ELEMENTELOR DE SPECIFICITATE CULTURALĂ REGIONALĂ

ONEA Angelica-Nicoleta

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania

Abstract. *Human resources can be a source of competitive advantage for the organization. They have a potential to be valued as a whole - intellectual potential, skills, creative, professional, etc. - but we are interested in this article in the cultural one. It can it be exploited at regional level, through appropriate manager's actions (communication, decision making, organization, motivation, management style, etc.) and at interregional level through cultural synergy, appropriate distribution of tasks / based on needs motivation and even organizational learning. Concrete valorisation recommendations on several areas that have been studied (Oltenia, Moldavia and Transylvania) bring in specific regional cultural values, providing to managers, in a concrete manner, possible courses of action.*

Key words: culture, regional differences, management, valorisation

Rezumat. *Resursele umane pot constitui o sursă de avantaj concurențial pentru organizație. Ele dispun de un anumit potențial, care trebuie valorizat în ansamblul său - potențial intelectual, aptitudinal, creator, profesional etc - însă, noi suntem interesați, în acest articol, de cel cultural. Acesta poate fi exploatat, la nivel regional, prin adecvarea acțiunilor managerului (de comunicare, luare a deciziilor, organizare, motivare, stil de management etc.), iar la nivel interregional prin sinergie culturală, distribuire adecvată a sarcinilor/motivare în funcție de nevoi și chiar învățare organizațională. Recomandări concrete de valorizare pe câteva regiuni care au făcut obiectul unei cercetări (Oltenia, Moldavia și Ardeal) pun în valoare specificul cultural regional, oferind managerilor, într-o manieră concretă, posibile căi de acțiune.*

Cuvinte cheie: cultură, diferențe regionale, management, valorizare

INTRODUCTION

Most of the intercultural studies emphasise conflicts incidence possibility due to cultural differences. The present paper retakes another argument, more profitable for the organization, the one of considering regional cultural differences as sources of potential advantage, which may be exploited through valorisation (we firstly take into account the manager's possibility to integrate aptitudes, abilities and different competences while a team is build up and tasks are appropriate distributed). All these individuals' characteristics depend on their education and grounding, but they refer to the cultural “inheritance” as well. It is important that the manager appreciate correctly the characteristics he needs of, and have the capacity to understand correctly the potential team members' profile.

Success supposes sensibility, trust and will for integration from the part of the manager, but first of all, acceptance of the fact that these regional cultural differences exist, even if they are not always evidently. Therefore, the team will gain because, using its advantage these differences, it will develop richer interaction models, it will be more creative, it will identify more solutions, having the opportunity to choose the most favourable one. Valorising cultural differences takes also into account any other collaboration form among the individuals from different regions.

The valuing accents described by the regional cultural dimensions influence the management processes at the level of communication, decision taking and implementing, motivating, management (leadership) and organization (Hofstede, 1996; Prime, Usunier, 2004; Johns, 1998; Thery, 2002; Nica, Iftimescu, 2004; Ionescu, Toma, 2001; Sagiv, Schwartz, 2007). These are just some “areas” where the manager may act intelligently, using methods that do not neglect the influence of culture upon individuals.

Taking into account the above presented argument, we develop a research whose aim was to analyse the regional cultural differences in order to provide recommendations for their valorisation in the management of the Romanian companies.

The *objectives* were the following:

- inventorying and describing the variation sources, the cultural determinants;
- analyzing the regional cultural differences;
- developing a regional intercultural diagnostic on the basis of the regional cultural differences analysis;
- providing valorisation recommendations of the regional cultural differences in the management of the Romanian companies.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This article was based on the results obtained following a questionnaire whose sample included respondents from three Romanian geographic areas: Oltenia, Ardeal and Moldavia, interviewed in the period of 4-16 May 2009. The sampling respected the equivalence principle, recommended by specialists in intercultural researches with pragmatic scope. The variables that ensured the functional equivalence were: faculty, specialization, study year, age, gender, environment (rural/urban), number of education years and employment/unemployment status. There was also ensured the equivalence of inquiry administration, data processing etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the scores obtained as a result of data processing, half of the maximal differences, at the level of cultural dimensions, are noticed between Oltenia and Ardeal (figure 1): more solidarity, tolerance regarding roles interchangeability and long term orientation are more emphasised in Ardeal, and a more constraint and uncertainty avoidance are noticed in Oltenia. Other differences are noted between Moldavia and Ardeal (a more

pronounced individualism and more flexibility in Moldavia, and a lower power distance in Ardeal) and between Moldavia and Oltenia (the feminine values are more privileged in Oltenia and the action orientation is more emphasised in Moldavia).

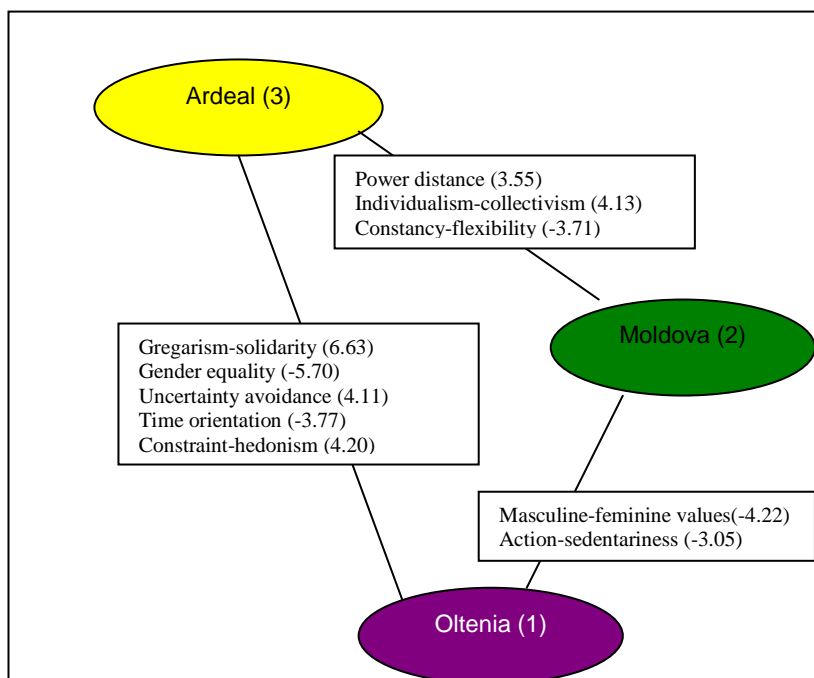


Fig. 1. Regional Differences

Note: (+) or (-) signs indicate the sense of the difference – e.g. for the gender equality, when we compare Oltenia, marked with (1), with Ardeal, marked with (3), the (-) sign indicates that Oltenia has a lower score than Ardeal.

Starting from these differences, we may provide some recommendations regarding the management of an inter-regional team:

- the gregar behaviours (with emphasis on segregation) may be considered through their positive aspect, the one of increasing the competitiveness among individuals and the need to prove what they are able to; therefore, when a manager wants, he distributes the tasks perceived with different importance to the people from Oltenia or Moldavia; this method may be used to activate a lethargic employee, moving his tasks towards another one, who becomes his “competitor”; if the manager wants to strengthen the solidarity spirit, he has to distribute the tasks equitably, therefore the employees perceive them with similar difficulty and importance level;

- the manager may grant a higher attention to task distribution in the case of Oltenians, because they accept on a lower degree than the people from Ardelia and Moldavia the role interchangeability;

- the masculine values are more privileged in Moldavia, even in Ardeal, in comparison with Oltenia; therefore, the Moldavian and Ardeal inhabitants are rather involved in tasks that suppose competition situations or based on argument-intuition mixture decision, in opposition with the people from Oltenia; the individuals from Oltenia will be more involved in tasks that privilege less competitive social contacts and when they take decision autonomously;

- differences related to hedonism-constraint dimension may be exploited especially when motivation is the issue;

- the manager should take into account that the people from Ardeal are more inclined to conformism and commitment, respecting their promises, than the Moldavians or Oltenians, so he rather distributes to them tasks that require these kinds of behaviours; the Moldavians, oriented towards reaching their own interests, but more loyal to the employer, privileging more than others the masculine values as success and power, will be involved in managerial tasks (their flexibility is an another advantage, but in some situations their duplicity may be deceptive for the manager); power is what the Oltenians want, too, especially because their need of welfare is stronger, and the intern control is more powerful – they privilege collective interest and independency, so they may undertake management tasks in situations that rather require authoritative behaviours, but which aim advantages for everyone;

- the Oltenians and the Moldavians will be involved in less risky decisions and tasks because of an important uncertainty avoidance, while higher risk tasks will be delegated to the Ardeal inhabitants;

- to the Oltenians, who grant a great importance to the past, it will be delegated tasks that valorise the above mentioned orientation; appropriate tasks for the Moldavians are those which involve more diplomacy for some relationships salving that may be compromised due to some occurred problems and to the people from Ardeal should be distributed tasks that suppose long term efforts or tasks that would benefit consequently to their economical, thrifty spirit.

- at the level of an inter-regional team, managers may exploit Moldavians and Oltenians' flexibility and creativity, but also the more raised constancy of the people from Ardeal, in comparison with the two above mentioned ones; the tasks will be distributed being aware of these elements;

- the management functions may be assigned to the Moldavians and Oltenians if authoritative behaviours are required, in a formal environment, and to the Ardeal inhabitants if the job tasks suppose a manager-employee cooperation and informal relationships;

- routine activities or those that require a more reflective behaviour, but which suppose a lot of work are preferable to be assigned to the people from Ardeal (to whom a feedback will be provided because they perceive that their work is not acknowledged and many time they are discouraged), those that require a lot of work, over time work and creativity to the people from

Moldavia, and those that are related to efforts on shorter periods but they involve a certain creativity, to the people from Oltenia.

We emphasise that these recommendations have a high generality degree. They can not be taken into consideration simply like that, but only in correlation with professional and contextual characteristics, but being aware upon the mixture from a certain culture, through a synthetic approach. On the other hand, we have to take into account that *“the statements regarding the culture are not statements regarding individuals [...] “the average person” from a country does not exist, there is only an average responding tendency within the members of the interviewed groups”* (Hofstede, 1996, pp.285-286). We will experience many individual variations; therefore the manager has to be preoccupied to know them. He has to be also interested in his own cultural features, for avoiding stereotypes and be somehow aware about his own cultural dominants, therefore his actions be positive ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Being familiar with the regional cultural differences may stay at the basis of the positive valorisation process within an organization. The guide marks provided by this article may help managers in:

1. valorising regional differences through cultural synergy, in other words through the valorisation of the employees' cultural potential, who, being brought in special formed situation, put in common what everyone has valuable (manners of thinking, attitudes, positions for action) for getting better organizational results;

2. assigning the right tasks to the right employee (being aware of the particularity that the regional culture brings);

3. motivation in accordance with the needs (being known that there is a close relationship between dominant cultural needs and values).

These guide marks allow the integration of the regional cultural differences and the avoidance of problems that occur due to misunderstandings and potential conflicts. Our aimed finality is to sensitize the managers regarding the possibility to develop a positive management of differences, in order to obtain better results at the level of the organization. We consider that the provided recommendations obtained on the basis of quantitative data and qualitative analysis may become operational through their actions.

REFERENCES

1. Hofstede G., 1996 - *Managementul structurilor multiculturale*. Editura Economică, București;
2. Ionescu Gh., Toma A., 2001 - *Cultura organizației și managementul tranziției*. Editura Economică, București
3. Johns G. , 1998 - *Comportament organizațional*. Editura Economică, București;

4. **Nica P., Iftimescu A., 2004** - *Management. Concepte și aplicații*. Editura SedcomLibris Iași;
5. **Prime N., Usunier J.C., 2004** - *Marketing international. Developpement des marchés et management multiculturel*. Vuibert, Paris;
6. **Sagiv L., Schwartz S.H., 2007** - *Cultural values in organisations: insights for Europe*. European J. International Management, vol. 1, nr. 3, pp.176–190, www.wu.ac.at/io/vsp/articles/articles/sagiv_schwartz, accesat la 4.10.2009;
7. **Thery B., 2002** - *Manager dans la diversité culturelle*. Paris, Editions d'Organization;
8. **Vanderlinden Blandine, 2007** - *Des faits a la these et de la these aux faits. Une demarche de recherche en management interculturel*. Management interculturel, anul VIII, nr. 16, Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, pp. 4-14;
9. **Zaiț D., 2002** - *Management interculturel*. Editura Economică, București;
10. **Zaiț D., 2007** - *Demers și metodă în cercetarea interculturală*. Management interculturel, anul VIII, nr. 16, Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, pp. 1-3;