

COSMOPOLITAN MANAGER – REALITY OR UTOPIA

MANAGERUL COSMOPOLIT – REALITATE SAU UTOPIE?

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Abstract. *Being caught between their own cultural dominants and the need to achieve competencies for the accommodation in a multicultural environment, the Romanian manager may be confused. How can they overcome their own cultural predispositions, which intercultural competencies should acquire in order to handle themselves in the new economic context which increasingly involves inter- and multi-culturality and which would be the ways to form it, are questions that we intend to answer in this article, starting from the analysis of the cosmopolitan manager model proposed by Moran and Harris and taking into account, in the same time, on the elements of cultural specificity that may constitute in imprints or barriers against change.*

Key words: cosmopolitan manager, multiculturalism, culturally specific, intercultural skills, intercultural training

Rezumat. *Aflat între propriile dominante culturale și necesitatea dobândirii competențelor pentru acomodarea într-un mediu multicultural, managerul român poate fi derutat. Cum își poate depăși propriile predispoziții culturale, care ar fi competențele interculturale pe care ar trebui să le achiziționeze pentru a se descurca în noul context economic ce implică tot mai des inter- și multiculturalitatea și care ar fi căile de formare a acestora sunt întrebări la care ne propunem să răspundem în acest articol, pornind de la analiza modelului de manager cosmopolit propus de Moran și Harris și ținând cont, în același timp, de elementele de specificitate culturală care se pot constitui în imprinturi sau bariere în calea schimbării.*

Cuvinte cheie: manager cosmopolit, multiculturalitate, specific cultural, competențe interculturale, formare interculturală

INTRODUCTION

The need to overcome the national boundaries, against internationalization and globalization, is a challenge for all organizations, institutions, professional groups, individuals and, particularly, for managers. Hence, their need of cultural adaptation. It is known that the individual is marked by their own culture (Hofstede, 1996). The same thing happens with Romanian managers, who, like any other managers from another culture, are more or less *the prisoners of their own cultural programming*. Overcoming this *mental programming* depends on the manager's capacity to involve in their own training, for being able to adapt to any new cultural environment that they deal with. This training should have as the starting point the manager's cultural "given", the identification of elements that function as accelerators or perturbants along new cultural acquisitions and, as

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reference system, it must take patterns such as the cosmopolitan manager. This theoretical model, very attractive through the idea of synergy, reveals a rather utopian than pragmatic approach because it does not propose a way of understanding the cultural differences, of analysing the culture in its depth. However, it provides an aiming point for what a manager should be, seen as a key actor of change and progress within the company, which is why we focus on them in our study, being interested in the possibility of adapting the Romanian manager to the multicultural business environment, by integrating the above mentioned precepts. Are the cultural models, the axiological structures of this manager, useful for their cosmopolitan becoming or do they constitute barriers in acquiring the necessary competencies?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The authors Ph. Harris and R. Moran, through a new approach, a humanist one that joins to the intercultural approaches, identify an area of the cosmopolitan manager's forming, able to adapt to any new cultural environment they come in contact in, as a citizen of the global company (Dupriez, Simons, 2000; Zait, 2002). This cosmopolitan manager opposes to the old world vision, according to which the manager is "the prisoner of their own boundaries" (Dupriez, Simons, 2000). They are a citizen of the world, open to various facets of the political, social, commercial and intellectual life, without national prejudices, free from any geographical attachment (ibid.). The position they fill in requires a new role, the one to participate in investigation of norms and cultural practices on a planetary scale.

The idea of cosmopolitanism, of the cosmopolitan manager model, is supported by ten precepts raised by Ph. Harris and R. Moran in their book "Managing Cultural Differences" (ibid., p. 55-57): *cosmopolitanism* (the open and creative attitude that leads the manager to adapt their behaviour to new situations without feeling their identity threatened), *intercultural communication* (aware of the sensitive interpretation differences that may occur from one culture to another, they make efforts to learn and understand the languages and codes applied in the regions where they develop their activity), *cultural sensitivity* (the capacity to integrate at behaviour level the characteristics of each new culture which they deals with), *acculturation* (the capacity to adapt to a specific culture), *cultural particularism* (the capacity to identify their own cultural predispositions and do not require them to his collaborators with different cultural references), *intercultural effectiveness* (the capacity to acknowledge the impact of cultural specificity upon the personnel management), *global overflights* (considering the effects of markets' globalization on local economies), *cultural synergy* (the capacity to build, across differences, a common project based on cooperation, embracing differences by choosing what is good in each group or in each individual), *professional culture* (the capacity to adapt the cultural norms to the specific working methods of a given location), *world culture* (considering the mutual influences between cultures and the capacity to adapt the transnational strategies to local needs).

The article is based on the comparative analysis of data provided by the cosmopolitan manager model (Moran and Harris) with those that refer to the Romanian manager's profile, gathered through interviews with 19 managers from Iasi, Bacau and Timisoara.

The objectives of the study were the following:

- analysis of the compatibility level of a Romanian manager profile with "cosmopolitanism", as it was defined by Harris and Moran;

- outlining specific attitudes and behaviors in the Romanian management;
- analysis of professional dominants of the Romanian manager.

The sample was a random one, established following our request sent by e-mail, to the small and medium private companies. The original database, elaborated after gathering information from the National Pages, Yellow Pages, newspapers, magazines etc., included 219 addresses. Note that we specified in the sent out request that the study addresses to middle managers. The rate responses and their regional distribution were as follows:

Table 1

Calculation of the Responses Rate

Location	No. of sent out collaboration requests	No. of respondents with collaboration accept	Responses Rate	No. of respondents who really collaborate
Iasi	69	8	11.59%	8
Bacau	70	4	5.71%	4
Timisoara	80	8	10.00%	7
Total	219	20	9.13%	19

Synthetically, the research methodology can be described as follows:

- Mix approach (qualitative-quantitative)
- Methods and techniques for collecting and processing data: structured interview, qualitative analysis (comparative-interpretive), quantitative analysis (statistical analysis).

In order to outline the cultural profile of the Romanian manager through self-evaluation features we used the content analysis (grouping the features according to their semantics area and ordering them according to their occurrence frequency). We then analyzed the correlation between the skills needed to the cosmopolitan manager and the cultural predispositions of the Romanian manager.

To analyze the leadership style regarding taking decisions we used the leadership model developed by Victor Vroom and Arthur Jago (1988), built around a key variable, the participation level, which defines the following styles:

- Autocratic A1 - the manager solves the problem or take decisions alone, using information available at that time;
- Autocratic A2 - the manager obtains additional information from subordinates and takes alone the decision;
- Advisory C1 - the manager will consult individually with key members of the management; takes alone the decisions;
- Advisory C2 - the manager discusses the issue to be solved at a meeting with employees, the decision may reflect or not their influence;

Democratic D – the manager discusses the issue with the employees, identifies solving options, applies the solution presented by the group

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The Professional Profile of Respondents in the Sample

After processing the data, the following socio-professional characteristics of the respondents were noticed:

It is noted that almost three quarters of the interviewed managers have in general an economic or technical education, all have higher education, more than half are aged between 30-39 years and about 60% are male.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Respondents			
Variable		Respondents (number and percent)	
Higher education	economic	7	36.84%
	humanist	3	15.79%
	technical	7	36.84%
	medical	1	5.26%
	juridical	1	5.26%
High school studies	economic	6	31.58%
	humanist	5	26.32%
	technical	8	42.11%
age	<25	1	5.26%
	25-29	2	10.53%
	30-34	6	31.58%
	35-39	4	21.05%
	45-39	3	15.79%
	40-49	2	10.53%
	50-59	1	5.26%
sex	M	11	57.89%
	F	8	42.11%

2. Attitudes and Managerial Behaviours

- Dominates the Autocratic Leadership Style A2 (the option in which the manager takes alone the decision, but they require the necessary information from their subordinates - 36.84%) and the Advisory Style C1 (the manager consults with key members of the management; but not necessarily takes into account their suggestions - 31.58%);
- Regarding the leadership style, we notice differences depending on the different professional categories:
 - Higher preference of the technical professionals for the Autocratic Style (57.14%);
 - The Advisory Style is used by the managers with economic education in proportion of 57.14% (these responses may be influenced by their education in the field and actually it may cover the desirability scope);
 - Managers with a humanistic background have the highest percentage in favour of the Advisory Style (66.66%);
- All those interviewed agreed on the importance of high control and organization rules;
- Three quarters of those surveyed believe that planning is important and should be done rigorously;
- Over 60% of the surveyed managers agree with the beneficial role of competition;

- More than a third of managers believe that employees have a negative attitude towards work and over one third are still undecided;
- Only a third of managers believe they can have confidence in employees' ability to perform tasks, while half say that they use tasks delegation;
- Over half of respondents stated that encourages teamwork.

3. Self-Evaluated Cultural Characteristics

According to the study, the following main features (through content analysis of the attributes used into the characterization, in response to the question "Which are in your opinion, the main three features of the Romanian manager?") resulted:

- *Creative and flexible* (attributes: creative, innovative, ingenious, adaptable, inventive, resourceful, flexible, open to new ideas, with flair, diplomat)
- *Ambitious* (attributes: persistent, tenacious, ambitious, with a desire to succeed in career);
- *Authoritarian* (attributes: authoritarian, sense of control, is always right, firmly);
- *Hard Working* (attributes: hard working, very hard working, high capacity for work, work overtime, sometimes conveniently);
- *Low confidence in employees* (attributes: low confidence in employees' ability to solve problems by themselves, attitude according to which employees consider work as something unpleasant);
- *Lack of organization and long-term orientation* (attributes: without a clear vision of future, short-term profit oriented, not visionary, lack of organization, lack of time).

There are some aspects that reflect differences of opinion regarding the manager's characteristics: communicative / uncommunicative, resistant to stress, calm / stressed, delegating tasks / no delegation, fair, serious / unscrupulous.

Comparing the identified cultural features of the Romanian manager with what Harris and Moran indicate, even in an ideal manner, as necessary competencies to deal with new cultural environments, we emphasize that there are prerequisites and possibilities for his integration (features such as creativity, flexibility, ambition, work capacity are cultural prerequisites with positive role), but this approach does not come by itself. It takes concern in this respect, awareness and understanding of the importance of knowledge and acceptance of cultural differences but also of intercultural training, to overcome those traits (authoritarian spirit, un-confidence in others, lack of organization and long-term orientation) that may impede the acquisition of intercultural skills.

The intercultural training of the Romanian manager must meet two planes, the intellectual one, knowledge related, and the affective one.

How to form these competences? In particular, through *learning* and *cultural contact*. This is precisely what is intended by the *dilemma theory*, which supposes learning new behaviours from others, acquisition of new ways of solving problems. Hampden-Turner, the founder of this theory, indicates an approach of combining

the benefits provided by cultural differences, leading to a reconciliation of values, consisting of four phases (Hampden-Turner, Trompenaars, 2004):

1. *Identification of the involved cultural features;*
2. *Positioning the noticed attitude in relation with extreme attitudes;*
3. *Elimination of the compromise solution;*
4. *Developing a value-creating solution taking into account the positive aspects of both extremes.*

Another author, Rosinski (2009), provides in a very practical manner, examples of alternative use of different solutions, found by individuals from different cultures to the same general human problems, solutions learned under the guidance of a coach (this practice works at international level - there are already models of cultural learning, such as *the learning model* proposed by the *Center for Creative Leadership*, or *cultural orientation model* developed by *Training Management Corporation*).

CONCLUSIONS

1. Following the analysis of the cultural profile of the Romanian manager, it results that they dispose of cultural acquisitions that facilitate the acquisition of intercultural competences (adaptability, creativity, flair, diplomacy, ambition, perseverance) but, at the same time, there are features that can limit this development (authoritarian spirit, confidence in others, lack of organization and long-term vision).

2. To deal with multicultural environments, the Romanian manager needs intercultural training, at cognitive level (knowledge about their own culture and other cultures in contact, awareness of cultural relativism, knowledge of other ways to solve problems) and emotional level (overcome ethnocentrism, stereotypes, partiality, cultural shock).

3. To identify the intercultural training needs, larger studies are required, carefully developed, with direct focus on the axiological structures defined by the cultural learning models.

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