

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT – ADAPTATION TO CULTURAL SPECIFICITY

MANAGEMENT EDUCAȚIONAL – ADAPTAREA LA SPECIFICITATEA CULTURALĂ

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Abstract. *We live in constant transition, both economically and socially. In management we are guided by criteria more or less universalist, often copied/borrowed without any effort to cultural appropriateness. This also happens in the educational plan because the programs and methodologies, but also the effective work with human resource, ignore the fact that people from certain cultures have a specific potential, that must be valorised. Some ideas related to this national or regional specificity were raised in a research developed in order to analyse the regional cultural differences, on equivalent samples of students. They may help the integration in class, taking into account the cultural values, in order to increase performance in both sides: teacher and student.*

Key words: educational management, adaptation, cultural specificity, equivalent samples, intercultural management

Rezumat. *Trăim într-o permanentă tranziție, atât în plan economic, cât și social. În management ne ghidăm după criterii mai mult sau mai puțin universaliste, de multe ori copiate/împrumutate fără efortul de adecvare culturală. Acest lucru se întâmplă și în plan educațional, deoarece programele și metodologiile, dar și lucrul efectiv cu resursa umană ignoră faptul că oamenii dintr-o anumită cultură au un potențial specific, care trebuie valorizat. Câteva idei prin care se poate ține cont de această specificitate națională sau regională decurg dintr-o cercetare efectuată în scopul analizei diferențelor culturale regionale, pe eşantioane echivalente de studenți. Ele pot servi efortului de adaptare la clasă, ținând cont de valori culturale, pentru creșterea performanțelor de ambele părți: profesor și student.*

Cuvinte cheie: management educațional, adaptare, specificitate culturală, management intercultural, eşantioane echivalente

INTRODUCTION

Elaborated and developed in the field of social sciences such as anthropology, ethnology, sociology or social psychology, cultural studies take an increasing scale, finding their application in the area of economics, particularly management and marketing. New areas of research are emerging, such as the intercultural management, that aim, among other things, identification, analysis, management and valorisation of cultural differences.

The possibilities of valorisation of cultural specificity elements and / or cultural differences in management have a wide field of expression, but in this article, we limited the area of analysis to the educational management, referring directly to the classroom management of pupils / students. This is because we want to draw a

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warning about the practice of copying and imitation, which are increasing because the European Union requires a common framework, through regulations which refer to specific educational content and methodology. Adherence to regulations on education does not also refer to copying the style of application. Here is the flexible area, where national and / or regional cultural specificity elements find a proper consideration and appreciation.

Culture, understood as "mental programming" affects individuals. Numerous studies have revealed dimensions of cultural specificity with which the national / regional cultural potential level is decoded (Hofstede, 2001; Hall, 1992, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2004; Schwartz, 1999). Knowledge attitudes, behaviors, attitudes, positions towards action and solutions of the individuals from a particular cultural area can be exploited positively in areas such as management, marketing, communication. Recommendations in this respect are offered by various authors (Prime and Usunier, 2004; Hofstede, 2001; Schneider and Barsoux, 2003; Jandt, 2007). With respect to management, we believe that valorisation of cultural specificity elements finds its application also in the field of educational management, for which, in this paper, we proposed to develop this topic.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The article is based on an extensive research, which had among its objectives the search and identification of regional cultural specificity.

Table 1

The Structure of Equivalent Samples

FUNCTIONAL VARIABLES	VARIANTS	CLUJ		CRAIOVA		IAȘI	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Specialization	Marketing	19	24.36	36	24.66	43	24.71
	Management	28	35.90	52	35.62	62	35.63
	ECTS	31	39.74	58	39.73	69	39.66
Years of education	14 years	74	94.87	139	95.21	166	95.40
	15 years	3	3.85	5	3.42	6	3.45
	18 years	1	1.28	2	1.37	2	1.15
Age	20-24	76	97.44	143	97.95	170	97.70
	25-29	2	2.56	3	2.05	4	2.30
Location	Rural	13	16.67	23	15.75	28	16.09
	Urban	65	83.33	123	84.25	146	83.91
Gender	Feminine	58	74.36	109	74.66	130	74.71
	Masculine	20	25.64	37	25.34	44	25.29
Job	Yes	18	23.08	34	23.29	40	22.99
	No	60	76.92	112	76.71	134	77.01
TOTAL SAMPLE		78	100.00	146	100.00	174	100.00
TOTAL SAMPLE		398					

This approach was done in three stages:

1. Exploratory analysis (inventory values, grouping them by size and cultural orientations);
2. Explanatory analysis (explaining the differences);
3. A questionnaire survey (data collection instrument was adapted to the cultural specificity and referred to the inventory values from the first stage; it was administered on equivalent samples of students from the public Faculties of Economics from Iasi, Cluj and Craiova, Management, Marketing and Trade Economics, Tourism and Services specializations, the second year of study (table 1). When entering data in the database (SPSS), there were eliminated the questionnaires of the students who come from another region than the one represented by the corresponding university centre.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

a) Results of research

After processing the statistical data and the qualitative analysis, there were resulted a series of particularities and regional differences which we summarized in the following lines:

a₁) Students from **Oltenia** like *hierarchy* and *independence* and they perceived the lack of solidarity, registering the highest score in favour of segregation. They give importance to *collective interests* and they appreciate gender equity on a lesser extent than in Transylvania and Moldavia, although the scores are in favour of egalitarianism. The *self-assignment of failure* trend is consistent with the need for independence and voluntarism. They perceive most acutely the need of *wealth*. They appreciate *the least of all the competition*, aspect that is positively correlated with the privileging of collective interests. Another feature is *escape from social isolation*, in harmony with profane hedonism (shopping, entertainment). They have a strong need for *structuring* and *prioritizing* and they perceive time pressure on a greater degree than the Transylvanians. *Formalism, intolerance, past emphasis*, privileging *the solution of the moment, carelessness*, and appreciation of *profane hedonism* ("expensive") are other attributes. They have the lowest score at long-term orientation. They value less the religious ceremonies, but they state that religion is very important to them. Although *proactive*, they perceive that *they put into practice their own projects in the slightest degree*, compared with Moldavians and Transylvanians. They are *intuitive, flexible* natures, who appreciate *the concrete*, and they consider themselves less utilitarian than the Transylvanians and Moldavians.

a₂) The **Moldavian** students emphasize the most the *hierarchy* and outsource the utmost the responsibility. They have a higher sense of duty, issued in moral obligations, more powerful than in the other two analyzed regions. They perceive *the lack of solidarity* and they believe in the highest measure that the unpleasant things must be said, which reflects the fact that they are not so preoccupied by harmony. They state in a greater degree than the people from Oltenia and Ardeal that they trust in people and are more *suspicious* than the Transylvanians (but not surpass the people from Oltenia). They appreciate *the egalitarianism between sexes*, they perceive the need for *wealth*, they *self-assign the*

success to an extent far greater than the people from Oltenia and Ardeal, they have the highest *tendency to externalize failure* and feel the strongest *the need for success*. They accept competition, but to a lesser extent than the Transylvanians. They perceive the need for *socialization* and *sympathy* (resonance, empathy). There is a mix between *intuition* and *reasoning*, with a slight privilege of reasoning in comparison with other regions. They feel strongly the time pressure but also the need of *instructions* and the need *to be busy*, that are uncertainty avoidance related items, features that correlate positively with *intolerance*. Concern for the “good sense” is more pronounced compared to other regions. Other values are encouraged: *flexibility*, enthusiasm to start a new business, *duplicity*, duality, *creativity*. They appreciate hedonism and they make a balance between the sacred and the profane hedonism. They consider the utmost, that *they put into practice the plans*, being more oriented towards achieving *visible results* and they are rather *pragmatic* than dreamers, aspects that correlate positively with privileging the reasoning. As well, they believe that they are *more oriented towards well done job*, but less serious, in the sense that they tell something and do differently.

a₃) **Transylvanian** students are more egalitarian and less formal than the people from Oltenia and Moldavia. They are more oriented towards *traditional values* (conformity, religious feeling, and harmony). They realize to a greater extent that the individual's merits are not recognized. Although they consider that they have less trust in people, compared with those from the other two regions, they have less suspicion. They emphasize *gender egalitarianism* and they have the tendency to externalize the failure, they largely support *the competition*, they are *more responsible*, they do not perceive strongly the need for wealth, that correlates with power. They feel the need of *socialization* and they value *benevolence* (support, help). They are characterized by the mixture between *intuition* and *reasoning*, with a slight privilege of intuition, compared to the other regions. They manifest the need for structuring (lower than in Oltenia), the need to be busy and intolerance (lower than in Moldavia). They privilege (to significant differences from people from Oltenia and Moldavia) protestant values such as *perseverance* and *tendency for savings*; they are more consistent and more coherent in statements and facts, inclusive in religious issues. They appreciate the utmost the *spiritual hedonism*, cheaper, which is correlated positively with the fact that they are the most moderate people. They believe that they discourage easily in their work and give things upside down. They see themselves less pragmatic than Moldavians, which is correlated positively with the fact that they perceive to be most insightful. They privilege concrete and utilitarianism.

b) Recommendations for an appropriate educational management

Following the analysis, the obtained data led us to the following recommendations with regard to the manner of adjusting the educational management to the specific cultural profile:

b₁) Regarding the manner of **communication** with students, because of a strong uncertainty avoidance, manifested by structuring needs, instruction, organization and prioritization needs, more pronounced in Oltenia and Moldavia,

we suggest the privileging of formal channels of communication with students from Oltenia and Moldavia and formal and informal channels in the relationships with students from Transylvania (the use of a channel or another, it must take into account the context and purpose of the communication). The content of the tasks must be emphasized by clear, precise instructions, through which they are very well structured. Setting priorities for solving them is greatly appreciated by the students from Oltenia. Specifying the working and organization methods through precise and firm statements is desired especially by the students from Oltenia and Moldavia. In terms of vocabulary, we recommend orientation toward concrete and avoiding the abstract terms.

b₂) As **the approach manner** of the group of students, we consider that the paternalistic attitude is more appropriate in Transylvania, where students are more responsible. In Moldavia and Oltenia, a sharper perception of the hierarchy, fear of mistakes, a weaker assumption of responsibility requires a more direct style, but an empathic and diplomat one.

b₃) On **the level of motivation**, we note the following preferences and value accents (table 2):

Table 2

Motivational Differentiation Recommendations of Educational Practices

Moldavia	Oltenia	Ardeal
diversity of tasks is particularly important – they manifest enthusiasm in receiving a new task	diversity of tasks is important	diversity of tasks is less important – they tolerate well both routine tasks and supplementary ones
providing an opportunity to be creative	giving voice to show creativity	feedback (they are dissatisfied if merits are not recognized)
choosing of tasks based on real competencies to avoid failures	assign tasks that involve internal control, autonomous decision making	distribution of more important tasks that require a lower control and a higher level of delegation
distribution of tasks that involve the elaboration of a work from start to finish, with a visible result (identity task)	distribution of tasks that involve the elaboration of a work from start to finish, with a visible result (identity task)	distribution of tasks that require prolonged effort (they are more tenacious)
providing a competitive environment (quite well tolerated by them), but with structures that favours teamwork	collaborative environment (escaping from social isolation is one of their features, even if they manifest gregar type behaviours)	creating conditions that lead to the creation of a competitive environment (very well tolerated)
allow liberty for emphasise their skills, because they feel the utmost the need for success	allow flexible programs and deadline, to provide them the sense of autonomy (they are proactive natures; attention, they are more uncaring!)	engaging in activities with a prominent social, charity character (values: harmony, benevolence, conformity, religiosity)
individual reward or penalization, stating clearly the performance criteria	individual reward or penalization, stating clearly the performance criteria	collective reward or penalization (traditional values: support and harmony, but also a lower need for wealth)

CONCLUSIONS

1. At regional level there are cultural specificity elements that can be expressed synthetically by the following keywords: antithesis (characteristic to the students from Oltenia, who are able to integrate / assimilate opposing values, apparently in conflict ones), flexibility (specific to the Moldavian students who are able to adapt easily to different situations), consistency (a feature of the Transylvanian students, characterized by emphasizing traditional values, including tolerance, harmony, solidarity, benevolence).

2. The approaching manner of the students must be adapted to the cultural profile.

3. We do not consider that for each region we must come up with fundamental changes, especially about the content, but, at the level of educational practices to achieve aptness (way of communication with the students, how to approach the group of students, the manner of motivation etc.), taking into account the presented regional cultural specificity elements.

4. By adapting to the axiological profile of students, the performance and the efficiency of teaching activities will improve. We consider that the recommendations provided in this article may constitute at least a starting point in this process.

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