



A Debate on The Influence Of National Culture in Organizations

Arnaldo José de Hoyos Guevara

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo

Address: Rua Monte Alegre, 984. São Paulo-SP. CEP: 05014-901

E-mail: arnoldodehoyos@yahoo.com.br

Clarice Santiago

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo

E-mail: clarice.santiago@uol.com.br

Diego de Melo Conti

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo

E-mail: diegoconti@uol.com.br

Francine Wey

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo

E-mail: francine.vey@uol.com.br

Abstract: This paper deals with the different concepts of culture and its impact in organizational management, based on the classical worldwide survey of social cultures and management by Geert Hofstede at the IBM a decade ago. Although, the paper discusses different concepts of organizational culture and social. The work concludes that more and more investments in training and development of the employees will be required, as a matter of survival for global companies. This paper represents a contribution updating the Hofstede's idea and discussing new alternatives.

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of organizations to an organic model instead of the mechanistic model places individuals as the key to business success. The people are the essence for positive results in different processes, because they have the ability to reflect, learn and interact, which means that they create, acquire, transform, and share knowledge.

We know that each individual carries a rich cultural background, from the social environment and different life experiences. Science demonstrates that culture is acquired, excluding the hypothesis of genetic inheritance (HOFSTEDE, 2003).

Cultural difference of the individual manifest in different ways. The concept of culture can be categorized into four types: symbols, heroes, rituals and values (HOFSTEDE, 2003). Just as people have different cultures also organizations and their departments have different cultures. Thus there will be so many cultures as so many organizations in our society.

For at least 30 years ago, the culture is no longer a specific theme of anthropology or sociology, became subject of business schools, economics and management (MIGUELES, 2003). Thus it is understood that “culture is complex. It is not limited to an artistic, economic or social perspective. It is the combination of all these vectors” (BRANT, 2009). In the same way, Skinner (1965, p. 15) notes that “the behavior is a difficult issue, not because it is inaccessible, but because it is extremely complex. Since it is a process, not a thing, cannot be easily immobilized for observations. It is changeable, fluid and evanescent”.

The study of culture has been a fruitful field for the understanding organizational phenomena, especially in the modern environment, with increased competition between companies and the emergence of complex processes, such as organizational change, internationalization, mergers and acquisitions and succession.

This article aims to discuss the different concepts of culture and its influence in organizations, analyzing the impact of local culture in internationalized companies, through literature review, relying on renowned authors as Hofstede (2003), Morin (2009), Migueles (2003), Santos (1998), Schein (2009), Brant (2009), among others.

THE CULTURE AND ITS ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCE

The culture has a large impact on the behavior and development of organizations. However, before discuss the concept of ‘organizational culture’, we need a better understanding of ‘culture’. Thus, emphasize the argument of Lacerda (2011) which reinforces that the “culture only makes sense in a collective and not individually”.

On this point we highlight the understanding of culture by the renowned researcher Schein (2009):

“The culture may be defined as a standard of basic shared assumptions, such that has been learned by a group as they solved its external adaptation problem and internal integration. This pattern has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the right way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.”

It is clear, then, the connection between culture and the sense of community, representing the characteristics of a particular group, a locality or a population. The writer Brant (2009) points out that “the cultural identity of a people is generally recognized for its unifying elements such as territory, language and religion”.

Therefore, it is clear that culture defines everything that is produced from human intelligence. It is present from primitive peoples in their customs, systems, laws, religion, arts, beliefs, myths, moral values, turning and changing until today, present in everything that affects the feeling, thinking and acting of people .

In this sense, the philosopher Morin (2009) provides three interdependent dimensions to the word culture: the anthropological, or “everything that is socially constructed and that individuals learn”; the social and historical, which may be understood as the “set of habits, customs, beliefs, ideas, values, myths that are perpetuated from generation to generation”; and the last related to the humanities, which “covers the arts, letters and philosophy”.

Therefore, it is clear that the ‘culture’ is derived from a mental programming. Hofstede (2003) argues that mental programs vary as much as the social environments where they are purchased. Given this, placing the focus on organizations, the said author notes that organizational culture can be defined as a “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organization from another”, or similarly, a “collective mental programming that distinguishes one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede and McCrae, 2004, p.58).

The referred author Schein (2009) supplementary characterizes the organizational culture into three levels: 1) artifacts - understood as visible organizational structures and processes, 2) values - which are the strategies, goals and philosophies; 3) assumptions - that refer beliefs, perceptions and thoughts, often unconscious.

In this scenario, it is clear that the knowledge of an organization comes from the integration of knowledge of different individuals. Therefore, it is known that one of the biggest problems companies relates to the articulated way to manage this tangle of knowledge to the company to obtain competitive advantages. In other words, “organizational knowledge by itself does not exist, because it arises from the sum of the knowledge of the individuals in the organization” (TEJERA OF RE et al., 2007, p. 2).

It should be emphasized that the organizational culture has different levels of intensity, as argued by Santos (1998):

“Cultural force is defined in this study as the extent to which the values and beliefs that permeate the organization are broad and intensely shared by its members. The model estimates that the strong culture is one which incorporates the features over all four types of cultural “

From this point, develops instruments aimed for the organizational culture and the knowledge management, so that organizations resolve bottlenecks and obtain success.

Dealing with instruments, highlights the valuable work of Quinn and Kimberly (1984), which define a cultural typology that aims to organize the different patterns of behavior, values and shared beliefs that define the culture of an organization. Using the juxtaposition of its two main dimensions, emerges four types of culture which characterize the ‘Quinn’s Culture Type’, also known as model of Competing Model Value (C.V.M). The diagnosis is translated by means of an instrument for defining the four types of organizational culture - group, innovation, rational and hierarchical. With these four types of culture can be interpreted attributes and studied the culture of an organization in comparative terms.

Below, it is described a brief explanation of each one:

- Group culture: it is based on norms and values associated with affiliation, emphasizing human resource development, valuing the participation of members in decision making and facilitating interaction through teamwork.

- Culture of innovation: characterized by assumptions of change and flexibility where the key factors for motivation consist in growth, in the stimulus, in diversification and in the creativity in the task. Leaders tend to be entrepreneurs and idealists, to assess the risk and forecast future, worrying about obtaining resources and the external image.
- Hierarchical culture: it is rooted in the values and norms related to bureaucracy, where the basic assumption is the stability and individuals accept the authority of enacted rules and regulations imposed. The motivation is derived from security and order. The leaders are conservative, cautious and targeted to the problems of a technical nature.
- Rational culture: it is permeated by assumptions of achievement, based on the belief that the rewards are related to the results. The motivating factors derived from the competition and achieving predefined results. Leaders to drive guided to goals and encouraging productivity.

Finally, it is clear that each of these variables has its blind spots, but also its benefits. Manager shall diagnose and implement the changes necessary to reach the goals and plans outlined by your organization.

A DEBATE ON SOCIAL CULTURE

Nowadays, with the evolution of globalization through the heavy flow of people and information, the regional boundaries, physical and cultural are diluted quickly. The process of globalization has established integration between countries and people around the world. Through this process of internationalization world, governments and businesses, exchange knowledge, conduct business transactions and disseminate cultural influences to all corners of the planet. Like any other social phenomenon, globalization has brought positive and negative results for the world, but of this article will be focused on the cultural theme.

One of the risks of the culture globalization is the influence and domination of the richest cultures on the poorest, implying in a possible homogenization of organizations and society. Brant (2009) points out that:

“The culture increasingly homogenized, results from a certain cultural hybridism of the global society, able to act with the same intensity and strength of command in societies as diverse as Brazil and Iraq, for example. In this global environment, the question of identity assumes other characteristics”

However, initiatives of international agencies seek to protect cultural identities, as the Convention on the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions within UNESCO, which consolidates the historic struggle against cultural homogenization promoted by a North-American oligopoly formed by business groups, which gather media conglomerates and electronic equipment manufacturers (BRANT, 2009).

On the other hand, cultural differences can facilitate or obstruct business transactions, imposing managers the need to know the differences between people and their cultures.

“The cultural differences, which were perceived in commercial situations or travel, for example, now have larger implications. These implications are amplified according to the growth of multinational companies (Brazilian or not) and are expressed in business activities that involve different cultures (in the broad sense, between countries, companies and regions, for example).

Although differences exist, the ways in which organizations can treat them, on one hand, be a factor in the creation of a competitive advantage or, on the other hand, make impracticable the international operations, the industrial operations or other organizational activities.” (Lacerda, 2011)

After the construction of this synthesis on globalization and its implications we bring to light the influence of local cultures in organizations with internationalized operations . Even with well-defined policies and guidelines pre-established at its headquarters, the question is whether or not there variation in the organizational culture in the different countries where the organization operates. In this sense, the sociologist Inazawa (2009) reports that:

“Organizational culture is a very broad and complex topic, which influenced as much the culture of the individuals who work in organizations, as the culture of the country in which organizations are. Without exhausting the subject, we tried to emphasize the issue of organizational culture itself and its relationship with the success of Knowledge Management. Regarding the organizational learning, that was presented as an alternative to flexible organizational culture and facilitates processes of knowledge management.”

In the same way, the author Lacerda (2011) emphasizes that:

“The distinction between the organization and the country is apparently necessary because, in the current context organizations have transnational character with different types of shareholders and employees. Thus, although physically located in a region, the organization can present distinct characteristics of that place.”

At this point we highlight the research of the renowned psychoanalyst Geert Hofstede, portrayed in the book *Culture and Organizations*. In his work, the author demonstrates that national cultures differ from one another in five dimensions , which impacts on the culture of organizations depending on the country where they operate.

The cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede originated in a survey research conducted at IBM and its subsidiaries in different countries (Hofstede, 2003). The survey covered 71 countries and was conducted between 1967 and 1973, and all 117 000 remarks (questionnaires) were obtained. Different validation stages of the research were carried out. At this point, as briefly discussed, Hofstede (2003) has shown that national cultures differ according to five dimensions:

- Power distance: is the tolerance level of the less powerful members of organizations and institutions to accept this situation, the power is distributed unequally. Thus, it is clear that power and inequality are fundamental facts of any society.
- Uncertainty Avoidance: deals with the tolerance of a society in relation to the ambiguity. Indicates the degree to which a culture feels comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are unknown, surprising and different than usual. Cultures that try to minimize the uncertainty avoid the possibility of such situations by strict laws and regulations. On the one hand, to avoid the uncertainty cultures are emotionally nerve. On the other hand, the cultures that accept the uncertainties are tolerant to different views; attempt to respond as far as possible, are generally more relativistic and enable schools of thought flow freely. The resistance to the uncertainty is related in level of cultural anxiety or neuroses.
- Individualism/Collectivism: refers to the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In individualistic societies, people dispense little attention to those who are not

directly related to your circles. Now in collectivist societies, people are since the creation to maturity, integrated into strong groups, often to extended families. In summary, measures how people turn and engage in groups, how they look after themselves first instead of the collective;

- Masculinity/Femininity: is the distribution of emotional roles between the sexes, this is a fundamental issue for any society. Masculinity is related to competition, positioning affirmative. Femininity approaches to a modest and thoughtful behavior toward others. Another factor that distinguishes cultures with features “masculine” and “feminine” is the level of difference or distance between people by sexual gender. Societies where there are underlying differences are considered as “masculine”, the reverse is considered “feminine”.

- Long-Term Orientation: is the acceptance of the legitimacy of hierarchy, the evaluation of perseverance, without emphasizing itself and based on tradition and social obligations. It is based in the teachings of Confucius and has a profound influence for most Asian countries. Confucian values are based on the persistence with slow results, in the adaptation of traditions to a modern context, in the acceptance of unequal relations, in concern with virtue. These features make Asians become different in terms of management and labor.

The Hofstede’s research is the largest case study reported so far, and through a quantitative approach interviewed over a hundred thousand people. The cultural dimensions established by him show that even organizations establishes cultural standards with strict guidelines, these will tend to dissipate, in varying degrees, depending on the different locations that will make their operations.

CONCLUSION

Culture is a crucial issue for the success of organizations in a globalized world. Managers must be prepared to deal with cultural diversity, since this can lead an organization to success or failure. We realize that investments in training and languages will be increasingly needed by companies, it is a matter of competitive strategy and market survival.

The organizational culture represents the system of behavior, norms and social values accepted and shared by all members of a particular organization and that somehow makes it unique. Thus, it is clear that there are many cultures as different individuals.

The companies, in their great majority, depend on its human capital to create, innovate and differentiate them in relation to the market, so it’s essential to investment in human resources policies, in order to qualify and motivate your employees and identify variations of climate and organizational culture. Currently there are various methods and instruments with quality validated.

The knowledge management in organizations is still a challenge, however, initiatives such as the creation of corporate universities already established in several companies. The purpose of the corporate university is to provide technical courses for the employees of a specific corporation. Therefore, it customizes the courses in exact accordance with the policies and strategies of companies, reduces training costs and gains speed in conventional training of manpower.

Finally, it is concluded that the theme of ‘social culture’ still possessed a theoretical scarce, since we used the main platforms for academic research in search of bibliographic material in this

article and modest information's was found. Thus, it is expected that this paper will contribute to the enrichment of the subject.

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