GENDER WARS – ANACHRONISTIC CONFLICT BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND NATIONAL CULTURE?

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Abstract

The cultural differences play an important role in business life. This role became more and more stronger. But we cannot find a methodology which is precise and exhausted in all ways. Because of the mixture of the national and corporate cultures, it is hard to examine the influence of the culture in business interactions. That’s why, it is very important to understand the difference between cultural comparison models and corporate culture models. So thus, we can identify the origin of the behaviour in various business situations, and draw conclusions in order to ease the responds in these situations. We can distinguish the universalistic models and the dynamic cultural models. The latter one seems to can handle more precisely the duality of culture (its variability and permanency). It can help in examining the culture, which is the mixture of the national and corporate cultures (the culture is like a mule). If we identify the origins of our behaviour in different business situations, we can draw a conclusion easier, and we can predict the partners behaviour in the future. I am using cultural metaphor in order to describe this phenomenon. So the question is: Where the horse ends, and where the donkey begins? Or in other words: What is the secret of a successful marriage?

Keywords: cross-cultural management, cultural comparison models, organizational culture, universalistic cultural comparison, dynamic cultural comparison, cultural metaphor

1. INTRODUCTION

Managers often question the effect of the national and corporate culture. The examination of cultural differences and similarities has a stronger role in business, as the impacts of globalization, multinational companies are increasingly gaining increasing number of conflict come from the cultural misunderstanding, which not only negatively affect the working environment, but also the performance of the company affected. This wide-ranging examination of cultural differences is developed in literature.

The culture is a mixture of national culture and organizational culture. We can call them as heart and brain. The heart is the national culture which hails from emotional actions and much more stable than the other. The brain is the organizational culture which is a “made-culture” because it was created by the founder of organization. So, we can maybe understand it easier than the national culture. And the brain is more flexible than the heart; we just think about change of workplace, when we have to learn a new culture. A person change workplace many times during his/her life and accommodate to the new organization’s culture, but the national culture and its values are very stable during the life and unchanged. Thus, we can experience the duality of culture: its permanence and variability.

2. WHAT IS CULTURE? – OUR ORIGINS

Culture has been defined in several different ways. Some of the commonly used definitions of culture are presented in this section. Hoecklin (1993) defines culture as a set of values that an individual grows up with. She adds that it is a combination of the personal values and morals as well as the society's influence on the individual in his/her growing years. Hence, it is the shared way groups of people understand and interpret the world. She concludes that culture influences the ways in which a person perceives and reacts to certain situations.
The anthropological term designates those aspects of the total human environment, tangible and intangible, which have been created by men. A “culture” refers to the distinctive way of life of a group of people, their complete “design for a living”. Culture seems to be the master concept of American anthropologists.

Most anthropologists would basically agree with Herskovits’s propositions on the theory of culture:

1. Culture is learned.
2. Culture is derived from the biological, environmental, psychological, and historical components of human existence.
3. Culture is structured.
4. Culture is divided into aspects.
5. Culture is dynamic.
6. Culture is variable.
7. Culture exhibits regularities that permit its analysis by the method of science.
8. Culture is the instrument whereby the individual adjust to his total setting, and gains the means for the creative expression. [8]

Kroeber and Kluckhohn suggested another definition:

“Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditioning elements in a future action.” [12]

Hofstede’s definition is:

“The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.”

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of culture among social scientists. Social scientists generally use the term to refer to a set of parameters of collectivities that differentiate the collectivities from each other in meaningful ways. The focus is on the "sharedness" of cultural indicators among members of the collectivity. The specific criteria used to differentiate cultures usually depend on the preferences of the investigator and the issues under investigation, and tend to reflect the discipline of the investigator. It was also decided to develop a GLOBE definition of culture.

“Culture is often manifested in two distinct ways. The first is as values, beliefs, schemas, and implicit theories commonly held among members of a collectivity (society or organization), and these are variously called the attributes of culture. Culture is also commonly observed and reported as practices of entities such as families, schools, work organizations, economic and legal systems, political institutions, and the like.”[2]

So, if we want to briefly define the culture, we should mention the following attributions:

- something that is shared by all or almost all members of some social group,
- something that the older members of the group try to pass on to the younger members, and
- something that shapes behaviour, or … structures one’s perception of the world.[1]

After these definitions, I would like to emphasize the duality of culture. It is its permanence and variability. Because of these two attributions, it is very hard to create an exhaustive (comparison) model.

### 3. ORIGINS OF PARENTS

If we would like to examine the organizational culture and the national culture and their influence in a given business situation or their effect on each other, we are in a similar situation as when we want to understand how can work a long-life marriage and how grow up the children.

According the above mentioned example, we can categorize the man and the woman in the marital relationship. What is their role? The man is more rational than the woman, it is hard to influence him with emotional things. But the woman is a really emotional individual. Thus, we can
call the man as the representative of organizational culture and the woman as the representative of national culture in the "family-company". And here, we can recognize again the duality of the culture.

Let see the types of both, men and women.

3.1. Types of Men – Comparison Models of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is defined as ‘the system of shared values and beliefs that develops within an organization and guides the behaviour of its members.’ Just as a person’s individual personality is unique, so no two organizational cultures are identical. Most significantly, management scholars and consultants increasingly believe that cultural differences can have a major impact on the performance of organizations and the quality of work-life experienced by their members. However it is necessary to separate out layers or levels of organizational culture. A recognition of the multilayered nature of culture can go a long way towards bringing the topic into focus as it highlights the fact that while some manifestations of culture can be easily observed, others, specifically the deepest aspects of common assumptions, may be difficult to uncover, not least because they are ‘taken for granted’ by members of that culture.

A number of factors influence the culture of organizations, from the environmental conditions and industry characteristics to the national cultures. The main difference for the consumers between the producer company and service provider company is the product which they offer. The tangible product of corporate activity is clearly recognizable in case of the producer company. In contrast, the service organizations' products are often difficult to recognize, identify for the consumer (this is certainly not general, for example, just think of the McDonald's fast food network). It is therefore often found that the service companies try to develop a corporate culture which is based on many interactions with consumers. As a consequence, however, that is the "Moment of Truth" experiences which multiply and the employees in the front office should be able to handle conflicts. [6] The most well-known organizational culture typologies are the follows: Handy's culture typology, Cameron/Quinn's types of culture and Schein's profession cultures.

It is difficult to find a culture typology, which is able to clearly categorize the companies taking into account their activities. Slevin and Clovin's mechanical and organic method of discrimination can not give a clear answer to this question. If we examine the characteristics of the two types of culture, it is the organic culture which we can feel closer to the provider organizations, but it is important to note that these categories are not necessarily suitable for distinguish the production and service companies, because the environment and the business characteristics have great influence during evolving the organization's culture. We can find examples of the organic and the mechanical culture in case of service companies. [6, 7]

The best and most useful type of models used in the organizational cultures is the Handy's culture typology. His four categories (power, role, task, person) is well understood for the business leaders, even if some parts of the company has different cultures.

It is not only the organizational culture, which affect the leading style, but the national culture significantly shades it too, because culture developed within the company, even if it has elements of industry-specific features, it is able to feel the influence of the national culture in the behaviour of the leader. It is therefore important to consider the impact of national cultures in management styles as well. The works of Schein, Trick, and Beyer show that the leader has a determinant role in forming culture. The leader lays down the foundations of the company's culture, and the successful cultures will be the basis of the legends and beliefs of company. However, this process is not independent from the national culture or subcultures.

3.2. Types of Women – Comparison Models of National Culture

The cultural comparison model makers are usually classified into two camps: the first contain the universalistic models (Trompenaars, Hofstede, GLOBE) and the other is the group of dynamic models. According to the used way of research, we can distinguish these models: quantitative or
qualitative methods. The quantitative study focused on the quantitative relationships (statistical procedures, numerical relationships), in contrast to the qualitative test. The model-makers often use the quantitative analytical methods, because it is generally easier to interpret and analyze. When comparing cultures, we examine "soft" factors and it is very complicated to give a full description of their effect with quantitative methods.

The categories, established by universalistic scientists, allow to compare the different national cultures. These models are well-known in the corporate sector. It has been found that these models often use quantitative research methods. (Table 1) Hofstede's model is the most widely used model in corporate life. Therefore, this model is the most criticism.

Table 1. The universalistic cultural comparison models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample – context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hofstede (1980)</td>
<td>National cultural difference within one organization</td>
<td>4 dimensions:</td>
<td>Quantitative questionnaire</td>
<td>approx. 116 000 IBM employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trompenaars (1993)</td>
<td>Management relevant problem solutions</td>
<td>7 dimensions:</td>
<td>Quantitative questionnaire with scales</td>
<td>15 000 employees in companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwartz (1992)</td>
<td>Present and future in society</td>
<td>11 dimensions:</td>
<td>Quantitative questionnaire with 9 point Likert scales</td>
<td>approx. 200 teachers and students per country, in 20 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOBE (2002)</td>
<td>Business leadership present and future</td>
<td>9 dimensions:</td>
<td>Quantitative questionnaire with 7 point scales and analysis of qualitative data with content analysis</td>
<td>17 000 middle managers in 61 countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fink, Kölling and Neyer, 2004

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3.2.1. Criticism of universalistic models
One of the biggest criticisms of the universalistic models in point of view comparing and understanding between the different models in corporate life that they can not be clearly made. These models do not give a complete answer to the questions raised, in part because it is not a common, agreed basis come from, and partly because of the typologies outlined is not exhaustive. Also, they do not give a precise description of the forms of social relations, how we form our behaviour patterns in a given situation; which preferences and interests are important for us. The various models’ number of dimensions are also criticized in both directions: Hofstede’s model has four dimensions which are not able to respond all question, while another 9 or 10-dimensional models becomes difficult to manage precisely. Finally, it is often mentioned the culture of the variability can not be treated its permanence duality. [13, 14, 15]

3.3. Dynamic cultural comparison models
Most of these models hail from cultural anthropology. These theories are called dynamic because these models do not handle cultural characteristics as a constant, but count with their volatility. These models have been born from the transactional approach. These swap transactions, and conduct of the differences originate. The limited rationality and self-enforcement is the duality of these models. (We can mention Mary Douglas’s grid/group model.)

3.3.1. Kulturstandard method
We can mention a number of reviews against both the universalistic and the dynamic models. The pre-established categories of the classification are not enough, as 4, 6, 9, 10, 11 dimensions, we can not cover the full spectrum of behaviour conducted in business interactions. If we limit this spectrum conceptual problems arise because of differences. The method of the model results of the specific circumstances of the corporate life to serve under the conditions set out in the research situation, the partner's understanding of the behavioural and even projections. It is up to the interviewing techniques used to fine-tune, because if you are likely to know the answer to that question will be given to the negotiations, then we can make consciously structured schedule for the negotiation. In this section learn how to use this method.

The name of Alexander Thomas is a hallmark of the kulturstandard research method, which is not a completely new method, we can talk about change of perspective. It examines a culture to another culture, from perspective of its representatives through the bilateral contacts and cooperation. This thinking reflects the fact that an individual's interpretation of a foreign culture is always compared to their own culture, through its eyes. From this point of view, we are using the terminology of Summer: ethnocentrism.

The kulturstandard method belongs to the qualitative methods, and it is a specific research tool for collecting data through narrative interviews. In contrary of the quantitative, standardized interview, informal qualitative interviews are more unstructured, the respondents are in the focus. That is why the researcher has big responsibility to not distort the response (the model depends on the culture and the researcher). In other words, the kulturstandard method leaves room for the subjectivity and intuition of researcher, so there is a risk of distortion of reality.[19]

This method of analysis always compares two cultures to each other, but often depends on the researcher to use the meaning of interpretative or positivist methods. In the former case, the subject of research is the foreign culture, but it is not analyzed by the culture’s representatives but by a different cultural perspective. In the latter interpretation, the relativity of cultural conceptions, explanations is emphasized and these cultural conceptions are the subject of research.

The method reveals the intercultural differences with the help of the critical events. At least two individuals with different cultural background participate in critical events, the interaction is a situation in which one party difficult to interpret, that it is surprising to the other, individual's behaviour from a foreign culture. In addition, critical information is separated by a concrete experience, time can not be associated with the respondent, but the vision is significantly affected.
The great advantage of the kulturstandard method – despite the reviews – is a strong retrospective nature, and the process of narrative interviews. It is important to note that the examination of same cultures in reversed relation, the same kulturstandards can not be used, because other factors may be important to one or the other culture from the point of view. (In this case, the mirror study is useful.)

The kulturstandard method in interpretative-qualitative meaning has the following characteristics [18]:

- Relative terms
- Intercultural contexts changing concepts
- Dynamic research method, which is part of their customer interactions commonly formed during the kulturstandards
- Emic basis of the research

The method basically consists of four steps [4]:

1. The narrative interview itself and feedback loops within the interview.
2. The stage of transcription and interpretation of interviews.
3. Feedback with culture experts from home and counterpart culture.
4. Mirror studies and triangulation studies.

(An other scheme with 8 steps is also known.)

3.4. **Relationship between Men and Women** [5, 6]

The concept of organizational culture is as important to the management of an organization as are strategy and structure. As the system of shared beliefs and values that guide and direct the behaviour of members links to macro-level national culture, this level of culture can have a strong influence on day-to-day organizational behaviour and performance. There are connections between organizational culture and national culture but each organizational culture is unique despite being embedded in a national culture.

There is very considerable scope for macro-social factors to affect organizational culture. In this respect national culture is itself a major influence on any organization operating within its boundaries. Societal-level culture can impact on workplaces in the following ways:

- Attitudes towards such things as individual responsibility, group harmony, ambiguity, displaying emotion openly and status will be embodied in workplace by organizational actors, including those in positions of influence. These attitudes are culturally derived so that an organization will have its organizational culture influenced by wider society through its members’ values.
- Institutional factors, for example the relative importance of trade unions in a particular society – itself deriving from a country’s economic/political context, will set limits on how an organization operates in important ways, including aspects of its culture. For example a litigious cultures that stress the protection of individual rights and formalized health and safety policies.

The links between national and organizational culture are made more complex when you consider the multicultural makeup of workforces within any one society. We are here looking at issues of imported cultures and cultural diversity.

Every large organization imports potentially important subcultural groupings when it recruits employees from the larger society. There is a range of strategies for dealing with this phenomenon. At one extreme, senior managers can merely accept these divisions and work within the confines of the larger culture – in other words informing staff that they will have to fit in to the overriding national culture and do things ‘our way’. However, there are three primary difficulties with this approach. First, subordinated groups, such as members of a specific religion or ethnic group, may find it difficult to wholly assimilate in the new culture with a number of potentially deleterious consequences. Academics studying national culture note that individual’s core values are formed at an early age, that
is within their ‘home’ culture and will therefore be deeply rooted and potentially difficult to change. Second, the organization may lose valuable knowhow if it discourages diversity amongst its workforce. Third, organizations that accept and build on cultural diversity may find it easier to develop sound international operations. Conversely, for example, many Japanese organizations have had substantial difficulty adjusting to equal treatment of women in their US and European operations. Or just thinking about the phenomenon of nearshoring which was caused by not only the different time zones but by the cultural differences too. After the outsourcing we can identify this phenomenon in some sectors (especially in service sector).

We have to understand that people from different ethnic and gender groups filter and process information about organizational culture differently. This means that they may interpret the same cultural messages differently. Thus, attempts by management to manipulate cultural elements may need to take account of the fact that they will not always be universally and consistently understood. Management efforts to homogenize culture will almost inevitably result in subunit variations in interpretation and this is likely to contribute to the development of subcultures. So, managers have to be able to deal with these subcultures; and one of the most known methods to examine these is kulturstandard method (see above).

In Europe we can find multicultural populations and handling its difficulty is a major question. Nowadays, we can’t talk about “cultural crucible” only in relation of America but in relation of Europe too. In 2004 statistics showed that over 10 % of the populations of Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden were foreign born. The figure was highest in Switzerland with 23.5 % of its population originating from outside that country. But in some researches, we can also recognize that approx. 40 % of the population in France has foreign origins. The clear indication is that cultural change within these societies has occurred within a short period of time even if we know that some of these countries had colonial empire in recent centuries. Therefore, it has become important for organizations to manage multiculturalism effectively. Robin Ely and David Thomas [3] discuss three paradigms for assessing an organization’s level of openness to multiculturalism. First, the ‘discrimination and fairness’ paradigm looks at multiculturalism with respect to equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment, and compliance with legislation by ensuring certain numbers of staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds are employed. Second, the ‘access and legitimacy’ paradigm for an organization’s level of openness to multiculturalism emphasizes gaining access to new and diverse markets by using cultural diversity within the organization. Third, the ‘learning and effectiveness’ paradigm for an organization’s level of openness to multiculturalism incorporates elements of the other two paradigms. Additionally, this paradigm firmly connects diverse ethnicity to diverse approaches to work. According to Ely and Thomas, by creating openness, organizations will find that individuals from different national cultures do not feel devalued by assimilation into the existing organizational culture, nor will subcultures along ethnic lines be created.

3.5. Phases of marriage life

Now, let me show the lifecycle of a marriage in 7 steps comparing with the relationship of organizational culture and national culture. It means that we follow the stages of making “family-company”. In order to illustrate this, I am using cultural metaphor.

A cultural metaphor is any activity, phenomenon or institution with members of a given culture emotionally and/or cognitively identify. As such, the metaphor represents the underlying values expressive of the culture itself. Frequently, outsiders have a difficult time relating to and/or understanding the underlying values of a culture. With this tool, we can interpret easier the relationship between organizational and national culture. It is a simplification too, but it is necessary for introducing and understanding the complexity of its nature.

1st Year: The man speaks and the woman listens.

In the first period, we establish the “family-company”, so we can identify the culture-making process. It means that the man (the leader) creates organizational culture. This stage is about to be alive, so you have to implement a really rational behaviour, a rationalized culture. That’s why the organizational culture has a stronger role than the national one. Of course we can not prescind from his
national culture (we will see its reason in 4th year), but here it is the attribution of organizational culture which is emphasized.

2nd Year: The woman speaks and the man listens.

After the unstable situation, the role of national culture is increasing. It is a calmer state. As the “family” members know each other and the size and power of company are thriving, we can recognize the need of empathy, because the emotional elements begin to play greater role in leadership and control. The bigger size means that there are more employees in the organization (family), and especially in a multinational company, the leaders have to take consideration it, because these people have different origins. Thus, we have to find the way to join forces in order the success of company (family).

3rd Year: They both speak and the neighbors listen.

Here, we find an organization which has a relatively typical culture. Since McKinsey’s 7S model, we know that the organizations’ core competences lie in “soft factors”. The culture of the organization, consisting of two components:

- Organizational Culture: the dominant values and beliefs, and norms, which develop over time and become relatively enduring features of organizational life.
- Management Style: more a matter of what managers do than what they say; How do a company’s managers spend their time? What are they focusing attention on? Symbolism – the creation and maintenance (or sometimes deconstruction) of meaning is a fundamental responsibility of managers.

So, we can say that the “neighbors” (competitors) want to know our culture. The organizational culture is one of our elements which ensures our “family-company’s” competitive advantage. (The neighbors prick up their ears.)

4th Year: Both woman and man speak and their children listen

In the next stage, the company is following to enlarge and if it enters in international competition, it establishes a subsidiary. We can call it as child. It has the attribution of the father's organizational culture and the mother's national culture too. And we suppose that their child is a boy. So, he will be probably a company founder too in the future like his father. When the subsidiary expand over the parent company's frame, it can begin to build its own company group independently from its parent company. And here we can recognize that the national culture influences the organizational culture – the organizational culture depends on the national culture too, because national culture is a permanent element. That's why, we can call this situation a so-called vicious circle (Figure 1).
15th Year: Parents speak but teenage don’t listen

After years entering international market, the subsidiary becomes more and more powerful and independent from its parent company. So, the original organizational culture and national culture have less affect on it. And we can often recognize the opposition between the subsidiary’s culture and the parent company’s one.

40th Year: Both man and woman are too deaf to listen

In the future the time will might come when the former subsidiary will become stronger than its parent company. In this situation the parent company has to adapt the former subsidiary’s organizational culture, but it can be the source of grave problems. It is a great challenge for the acquired company to change its culture, especially if it was a successful company in recent past. And of course it is a big challenge for the acquiring company’s management to overcome the resistance (blindness and deafness).

50th Year: Children speak but parents are not there to listen

And finally, in extreme cases it is possible that the former parent company disappears and only the former subsidiary remains on the market, and its culture can be alive.

4. CONCLUSION

The better understanding of differences between cultures plays increasingly important role in the companies’ life, especially in the multinational companies’ life. That is why in this article, I presented the organizational culture and national culture comparison models (which the majority of them are using quantitative research methods); and the influence of national and organizational culture on each other.

So I think it is important to know the models using qualitative research methods and that the attitudes they represent are more easily understood. Most of these models analyses the behaviour with the “active involvement” of questioned persons. As a result, relevant informations are obtained. Of course, however, these methods require a high degree of caution because it is easy to make false results. However, with proper care of the results of the research or in content with other relevant research results, we can also obtain valuable information. It is not an easy task to know corporate
culture or national culture, but if we know the origin of behavioural samples in the various transactions, actions, we can easily draw conclusions, or even feature the cultural roots of the situations, we will able to give “prediction” to the partner's behaviour.

This article shows that the organizational culture and national culture in different models are incomplete, but complementary, perspective illustration of certain other situations of interest to obtain information. That is why I want to use in my research both the national and organizational culture. My chosen models and methods are Hofstede’s model (or GLOBE model) and the kulturstandard method, because I think using together these tools we can make more valid findings than before. We have to handle the impacts of the national and organizational culture at same time. The phases of marriage life help us to understand the born of the organizational culture and to examine the effects of both cultures in different stages.
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