

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT MODELS OF WORK TEAMS IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

Daniela HAȘ

West University of Timișoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Timișoara, România
daniela.has@feaa.uvt.ro

Abstract

The changes within the organizations, the mutations of the employment market have determined the manifestation of a modern organizational phenomenon, namely the intercultural work teams (IWT). The statement that work teams are a microcosm of organization's high performance, as a whole, induces the idea that the organizations performance, in the present business world context, consists also of the managers capacity to improve the work teams performances. This represents a challenge for the IWT managers, these being the manifestation of the interaction between people with different values and behaviors. In my opinion if the elements of the cultural (national) dimensions are ignored, by not implementing an intercultural management, this could be an obstacle against obtaining the IWT performance. Ensuing from bibliographical research, I have identified up to now various performance and intercultural management models applied to the working teams. Now I will follow how these models could be applied, improved or combined, in the context of intercultural component of working teams.

Keywords: Management, intercultural, team

JEL Codes: M16, M51, M50, M0, M14

1. PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES

This article is part of an ample, ongoing study with the purpose to clarify whether and why the intercultural work teams (IWT) are led differently than monocultural ones and what this difference consists in.

The positive impact of using IWT is insufficiently exploited in Romanian

companies, perhaps also because of the inexact knowledge of the techniques utilized by well-known managers which they apply in IWT environments. These practices are available for anyone, being found in the dynamic process of teams' management which obtain remarkable results and have stood the test of time.

Intercultural management increases the chances of an IWT to become performant with respect to the management of a monocultural team.

IWT has more chances of becoming performant if managers use intercultural management. Without management the chances are low. With management specific to the monocultural team, the chances increase, however probably not significantly.

2. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is performed in companies of Romania (Alcatel, Continental, Delamode Romania and others). The research methodology applied until now materializes in the following:

- studying the Romanian and foreign literature regarding efficient team management;
- studying journals, academic publications, reports, articles, thesis, sites which provide information on this field;
- semi-structured interviews addressed to managers and the other members of the teams.

3. THE CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH

Why the opening of companies towards promoting cultural diversity in the team structure? The answer would be because IWT, namely the one whose members belong to several national cultures, more than two, is the most important organizational form existing in the present, which ensures the most efficient use of technological resources, of knowledge, competences and creativity of people from different cultures. [1]. Thus, IWT contributes to obtaining performance, being capable to make better decisions and yield remarkable results.

In the second phase of the research, the first one referring to what performant management of IWT means, we have identified several models of intercultural management of the work team, as follows in the presentation below.

3.1 Intercultural competence (CI)

Although nowadays the degree of homogeneity of nations is not the same as that of the primitive tribes studied by anthropologists, they originate in the powerful mental programming of their members. The cultural “reflex” is, to a great extent, unconscious, and can be overcome only with great difficulty. Nevertheless, it is possible to acquire a system of norms of another culture, which determines a corresponding behavior in a different cultural context. This capacity “to understand intercultural situation and to adapt” is called “intercultural competence”.

According to the assertions of Bartel-Radic Anne [2], it has two dimensions: that of knowing several cultures, values, behaviors considered appropriate, as well as the capacity to adapt to the “ways of doing”, supported by each culture, that is “cultural competence”, and the second, the capacity to understand cultural differences, including a sensibility to diversity, adopting a non-ethnocentric vision and a behavior based on tolerance to difference, and empathy, respectively “multicultural competence” (fig. 1).

Intercultural competence (IC) often seems to be possessed only by a few members of the organization. Theoreticians in organizational learning say that the organization can learn this competence as a whole, by acquiring, processing, storing

information. However, the way in which the tacit and procedural knowledge, such as IC, is distributed within an organization is not very developed. Even if a series of companies are aware of the importance of intercultural competence, its integration in the general strategy is rare. Only in one of 10 investigated companies, corporate culture seems very favorable to interculturality. Intercultural learning is a slow and difficult process. This must lead to the development of intercultural competences which transcend classic social and relational abilities.

IC can be defined [3] as being “the capacity of an individual to be able to analyze and understand the situations of contact between individuals (and between groups) from different cultures, to manage and develop them, to valorize them, in accordance with the company’s objectives”.

It is not only about acquisition of technology and knowledge, but also about a personal competence, based on experiences and analyses in intercultural contexts. This qualification is acquired by continuous learning, which is the place where any intercultural encounter resides. [4].

CI involves not only knowledge of culture and language, but also affective and behavioral abilities, such as empathy, human warmth, charisma, as well as the capacity to manage worry and uncertainty. Managers with international experience in carrying out tasks and leading teams will be better situated [5] on the workforce market, as they have this intercultural competence.

Some external managerial failures do not reside in the technical incompetence of the manager, but in ignoring intercultural experience. In literature in the field we have identified the Model of intercultural competence [6], which is based on the assumption that IC requires three components: sufficient cultural knowledge, abilities to act, and appropriate motivation of a member of an intercultural team:

- cultural knowledge: the team members must acknowledge the communication and interaction differences, management styles from different cultures, must prove flexibility in solving communication misunderstandings and feel comfortable when communicates with foreign citizens.

- abilities: this component includes critical competences, such as the capacity of a team

member to understand and communicate clearly the objectives of the team, the roles and the norms to the other team members.

- personal orientation: comprises the interest of the team members towards intercultural interaction, their emotional and psychological reactions to the foreign citizens, as well as the degree of empathy towards people from different cultures. The personality of the team members influences the manner in which they approach the cultural elements of incertitude.

The colleagues which come from various cultural environments [7] could be a useful source of information regarding the IC level of an individual.

Certainly, a part of the features enunciated above are also found in the context of bicultural competency [8], determining element of efficiency of the bicultural work teams, as biculturalism involves the ability to function in another culture without losing the connections with the original culture.

3.2 Expatriate's satisfaction

It is also said that the international transfer of knowledge and organizational learning are determining factors in the satisfaction of expatriate managers. It is a cyclical process, in the sense that "corporate learning" provides work instruments (for example, external market experience and know-how) for future expatriated managers, increases the number of positive international experiences for them, thus also automatically their degree of satisfaction by earned rewards.

Inversely, their experience as expatriate will lead to the increase of the performances of the teams led and implicitly, to the increase of the organizational performances. The model regarding the expatriate's satisfaction [9] was obtained as a result of the analysis of the results obtained from 132 expatriates from the top Fortune 500, the conclusion being that the expatriate's satisfaction is significantly tied in to the performances of the organization as a whole and in addition, that this rapport will fluctuate according to the international orientation of the organization.

3.3 Culture – intelligence interaction

Emotions are a crucial factor in intercultural interactions. Research of the Research Institute in International Competiveness [10] indicates the need to make sure that the expatriates understand not only the cultural challenges that they shall face but also the emotional challenges.

Some authors recommend as emotional behavior in organizational context: use of humor and laughter in the meetings at the work place [11], in the communication process. Will this be appreciated in any culture? The following shall infirm this.

The notion of emotional intelligence was defined [12] as a series of capacities, competencies and abilities which influence the capacity to handle the environment requirements.

There are major differences within the cultural aspects from the cognitive, emotional, motivational points of view. During his/her experience, the individualist expatriated into a collectivist host culture is to be expected to experience a high level of emotional exhaustion. The ego-concentrated emotions (for example, anger, frustration, pride) tend to be associated with the internal individual attributes, and these emotions show little consideration for others. These emotions are compatible with the individualists' need to maintain their independence. In exchange, other emotions (for example, appreciation and empathy) tend to be associated with others in a social environment. This is in concordance with the necessity of the collectivists to be maintained, to assert themselves and to consolidate the construction of self as an interdependent entity. Consequently, in case in which the host culture imposes to the expatriate to "serve" others, putting the needs and desires of the group before their own will, the expatriate individualist is likely to feel incongruence between his self and the cultural requests. For the individualist expatriate it will be difficult not to be able to express an opinion and not to be able to express his/her negative emotions. Hence, this difference is likely to cause emotional dissonance and increase of the emotional exposure:

- expatriated individualists will report a higher level of the emotional state at the office in relation to their collectivist homologues.

- the individualist expatriate will report a lower level of emotional state with respect to the collectivist expatriate after confrontation from the intercultural interactions.
- In the feminine cultures, by comparison to the masculine cultures, the individualist expatriate can express freely their feelings, the world being educated to be cooperating.

3.3.1. Theory of CCSI (Intercultural Social Intelligence)

The concept of CCSI [13], defined in this paper as very important for the IWT performance, is presented in three separate sentences.

Firstly CCSI is presented as an extension of the social intelligence, which contains the narrower concept of emotional intelligence and has been defined as the “ability to understand feelings, thoughts and behavior of the people, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act in accordance with this understanding”. The socially intelligent persons are capable to easily adapt their behavior to a variety of social situations.

Secondly, this expansion is based on the conviction that the social intelligence is culturally restricted and because the cultures are different, the social intelligence cannot adequately explain the interpersonal behavior beyond cultures.

Thirdly, the CCSI efficiency is judged as regarding two dimensions, empathy and non-ethnocentrism, derived from the social intelligence and from the intercultural literature.

As such CCSI is a complex of knowledge, competences and interpersonal and empathic abilities. Based on the intercultural communication and information from literature regarding social intelligence, there are two dimensions which we think are based on CCSI: ethnocentrism and empathy. The people with a high degree of CCSI would have, as such, both empathy and non-ethnocentric qualities.

Knowing such differences can help the preparation of the intercultural meetings. If one believes only in one’s own culture, usually they evaluate the situation based on the cultural norms and the procedures relying on knowing these norms. Learning how to do

this with other cultures could be a benefit by means of CCSI. Such training should lead to knowing different cultures, to the increase of the efficiency of working with people from different cultures, increase of the degree of awareness of the role of empathy and non-ethnocentrism in the multicultural meetings, improvement of communication and of the interpersonal abilities, a better collaboration in IWT and an increase in work satisfaction.

3.3.2. Model based on the expatriate competence

This model was thought to develop the competences of the expatriate. The first premise is that the potential of the expatriate has more intelligences (IQs) which must be inventoried in order to determine his/her style. Then, each candidate has “potential” to learn new competences [14] (fig. 3).

We believe there is a model which can be used in the formation process of an IWT, as persons are chosen whose types of intelligences correspond to the objectives of the team.

3.3.3. Management of stereotypes

In the research made in a foreign company which also has branches in Romania, regarding the orientation (ability to evaluate the relation of the individual with the environment) and feed-back (reverse connection, individuals’ reaction) of foreign employees (16) and Romanian employees (30), the conclusions were that the Romanians have an orientation and a feedback weaker than the foreigners, which is because of a bad management of cultural stereotypes [15].

Anthropology speaks about culture as mental programming. The individual behavior is not however totally determined by collective mental programming of a nation, it can be punctually framed, but not statistically and collectively [16].

„It is obvious the link between prejudices and stereotypes, if we regard the stereotype as a conviction of a group of people, with the role to justify the prejudices. In order to justify their prejudices and discriminatory attitudes, the people, particularly those from the dominant groups, are using the stereotypes.” [17] What interest us are the

conclusions to which we have arrived by referring to the cultural dimensions [18]:

a) The individualists will show higher interpersonal prejudices and smaller intergroup prejudices than the collectivists; the interpersonal prejudices of the individualists will negatively affect the feelings of the collectivist members of the group, the work group dynamic and behaviors.

b) The collectivists will show smaller interpersonal prejudices and higher intergroup prejudices than the individualists; the intergroup prejudices of the collectivists will negatively affect the feelings of the groups' individualist members, the dynamics of the work groups and behaviors.

4. PROPOSALS

The current stage of this field offers too few opportunities to use the existing theory in order to solve practical problems with which organizations are confronted. As I have already mentioned, most researches are concentrated on the macro level analysis, ignoring the micro level analysis. If we think about the formula "Think global, act locally" [19], we can ask the question what does "local" mean to manage an IWT?

I consider that the intercultural management of IWT must be looked at under two aspects:

1. Firstly realization of a cultural diagnosis of IWT, identification of the interculturality level of IWT.

I consider that a pertinent diagnostic and analysis of the interculturality could be carried out with the help of the statistic tests, applied to the tables with the values of the intercultural dimensions, whether we speak of Hofstede or of the Globe research.

2. The other aspect regards:
 - identification of the work behavior elements which are influenced by culture;
 - identifying the modalities in which IWT respond to or are affected by cultural differences in their activity; identifying the variables in which the intercultural management as component of performant management, can intervene with the purpose of increasing the team's performance;

- identifying and applying an intercultural management model, as a component of the performant management of IWT. The management cannot act on the culture in itself; the culture is the one which acts on the management [20] and the modality to lead people depends on the norms and the habits that they share. People come into the work team with a cultural "reflex" specific to each of them, based on this the managers must build their strategy which leads to performance.

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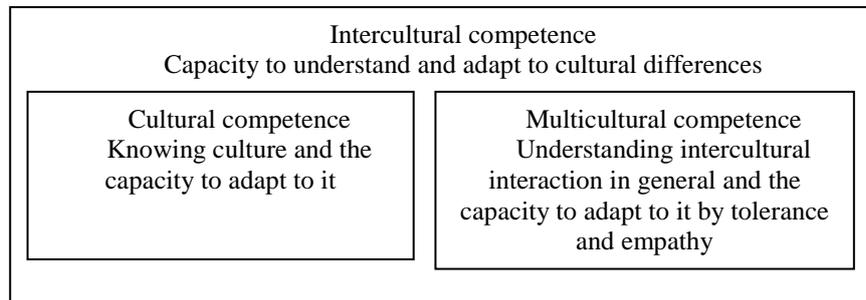
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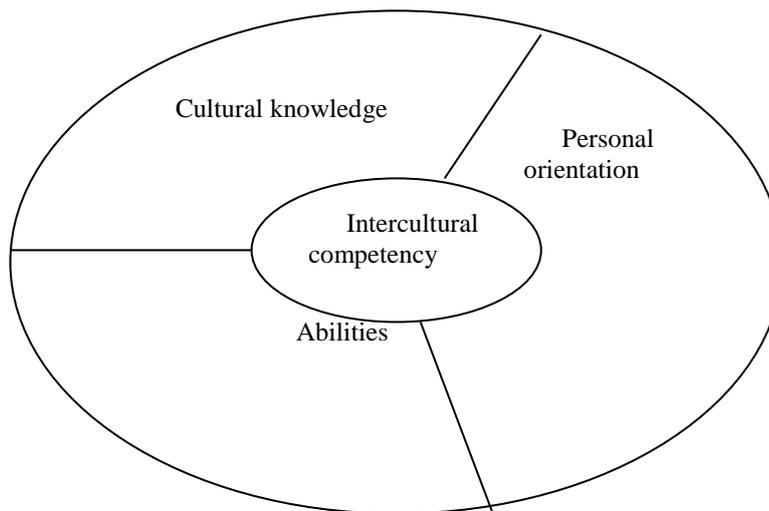
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Fig. 1. The two components of intercultural competence



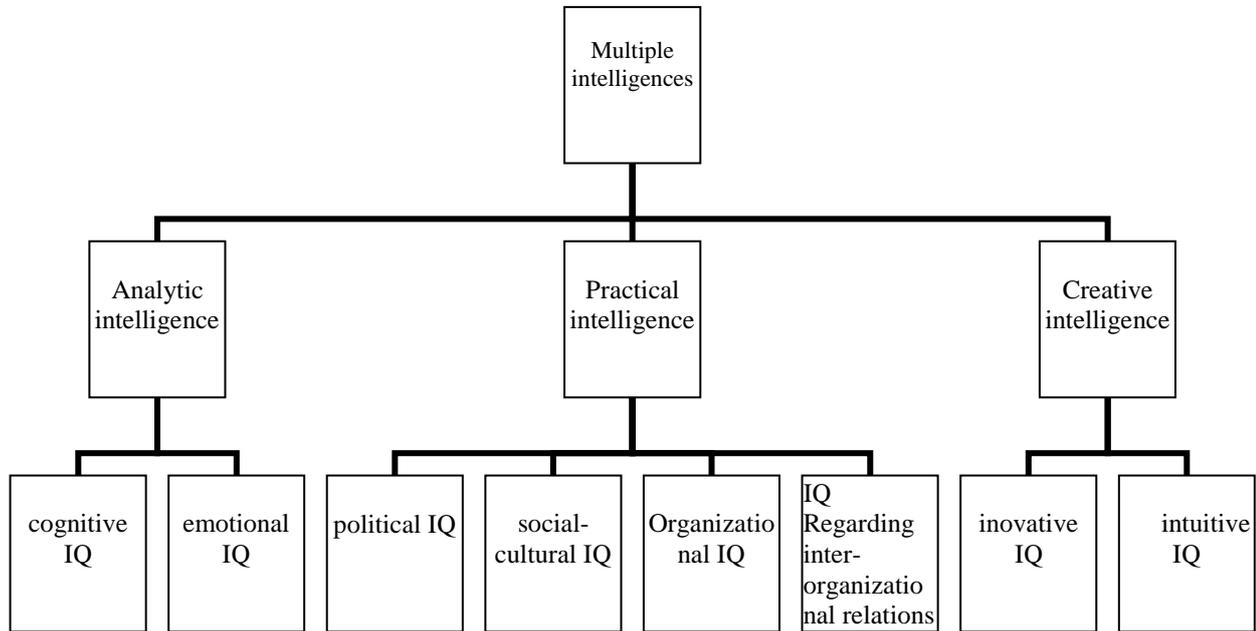
Source: Adaptation after Bartel-Radic Anne, 2002. La compétence interculturelle dans les entreprises: Un phénomène individuel, collectif ou organisationnel?, available at <http://www.strategie-aims.com/actes02/Fichiers/bartel-radic.pdf>.

Fig. 2 Adaptation after the intercultural competence Model



Source: Matveev, A.V., Milter, R.G., 2004. The value of intercultural competence for performance of multicultural teams, *Team Performance Management*, Vol. 10 Iss: 5/6, 104 – 111, available at www.emeraldinsight.com

Fig. 3 Adaptation after the Model based on the expatriate's competence



Source: Harvey, M., Novicevic, M., 2001. Selecting expatriates for increasingly complex global assignments, *Career Development International*, Vol. 6 Iss: 2, 69 – 87, available at www.emeraldinsight.com