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# THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL CULTURE DIMENSIONS ON INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE MANAGERS

Original  
Research

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## Keywords

*Intercultural competence;  
Cultural dimension;  
Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner model*

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## JEL Classification

*M14, Z13*

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## Abstract

*The process of training intercultural competences of future managers is closely associated to the national culture of the country they come from. This is why studying cultural dimensions is very important in this context. Possible intercultural differences can be ameliorated through the getting of intercultural competences, and the intercultural formation considers the cultural positioning of the countries, according to different models. Main methodological approach of this paper represents the comparative research. Part of the information in the article includes the works of foreign and local researchers in the field of managerial theory and practice and scientific studies carried out in the Republic of Moldova and Romania. We used as the basis of our study the model of national culture differences of Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. In the article the authors analyzed the cultural dimensions of the business students from Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The results of the study allow highlighting certain important particularities, which must be taken into account when developing intercultural competence of future managers. This is explained by the fact that the culture and the way they see the world will dictate their attitudes and behaviors in their personal and professional lives. How they perceive different cultures and how they react to them should make them think about problems and then find the best solutions for maintaining intercultural consensus.*

## INTRODUCTION

The need to increase the collaboration of Romanian business structures and those from the Republic of Moldova requires the development of effective management systems of production and commercial processes, modern methods and technologies for making managerial decisions. The new reality has raised the issue of intercultural education and competences. As a result, the problem of the profile of the future manager from Romania and Republic of Moldova is transformed into the issue of an intercultural comparative analysis.

**The main purpose** of the paper is to make a comparative analysis of the variation of cultural dimensions in Romania and the Republic of Moldova according to the model of Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner, 1997).

**The research questions are:** 1. Are the variables of cultural dimensions different in these countries? 2. Is the intercultural competence necessary for future managers from Romania and the Republic of Moldova in their bilateral business relations?

In order to provide an answer to these questions, we used a set of tests containing 7 dilemmas with 4 variants of answer. It has been applied to 150 of Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova in Chisinau (Pîrlog, 2017). We have compared the received results to the survey, conducted at the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest, Romania and was applied to 191 students (Bălan, Vreja, 2013).

In this way, we tried to find out which are the value orientation of young people at the initial stage of education in business. The results demonstrate their attitudes, those derived directly from the fundamental cultural attitudes of people in Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

The carried out research aims, on the one hand, to make an intercultural diagnosis of societies in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, on the other hand, to offer managers a support point through the recommendations according to the cultural specificity, for the exploitation its intelligence and obtaining positive effects in the management of organizations. A differentiated approach, based on valuing cultural differences, can lead to positive situations due to the fact that the manager has a complex of competences that he can use according to the work situations.

### NEW REALITY FOR ROMANIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

There are many ways to examine cultural differences and their impact on international management. Culture can affect managerial

attitudes, business ideology and even government relations. Moreover, culture primarily influences human thinking and behavior. A good example is the case of West Germany and East Germany. As it is known, at the end of World War II Germany was divided into two parts and separated by what was called the Iron Curtain. West Germany remained under the influence of the West, East Germany under the influence of the Soviet Union. Although they still spoke the same language and had the same religion, when the Berlin wall was demolished, the German people discovered that the two German cultures, Eastern and Western, are very different.

A similar example is the case of Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Intercultural relations between these countries were troubled by the time gap in the soviet period that built stereotypes toward cultural legacy and national traditions. After 1989, after the collapse of the Soviet regime the possibilities and geographic space of mobility of citizens from Romania and the Republic of Moldova have increased.

The enterprises in Romania and Republic of Moldova during recent period of time have passed through positive and negative moments. The economy in transition in both countries was characterized by the decrease in efficiency (Goncharuk, 2014), but the transition environment offered challenges for the start-ups: advantages and business opportunities for some of them, risks and threats for others (Chaşovschi, Bordeianu, Clipa, 2014).

According to the generally positive trends, the potential of economic relations between these two countries is not fully explored. Until the current moment there are still felt differences between positive practices and relevant experience of the Romania, member country of the European Union, and Republic of Moldova. Romania remains a country with a strategic importance for the Republic of Moldova, not only economically but also historically, culturally, geographically.

In terms of investments in social capital in the Republic of Moldova, Romania is takes already the first place and in terms of volume of investments it is on the second place. Currently, there are over 1650 companies with Romanian capital in the Republic of Moldova while in Romania there are almost 5000 companies with capital from the Republic of Moldova (Nuțiu, 2019).

Some studies highlight similar problems in the management of companies in the Republic of Moldova, as well as in the economic entities from Romania. Prevailing categories are of aggressive/defensive styles and passive/defensive styles, which compared to those constructive, have a negative influence over the organizational performance. Emphasis is placed more on the control of employees within the organization

through conformism or negative attitude and less on promoting attitudes oriented toward overcoming barriers, cooperation with others and maximizing their own and the team potential. However, it should be noted that both studies have determined a high level of constructive self-development. It denotes a high degree of orientation towards the future, towards the better performance and high quality work (Covaş and Pîrlog, 2017).

### **IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MODERN BUSINESS**

We consider that intercultural competence is a key attribute of economist's professional competence which reflects the ability of individuals or groups to interact effectively with those of different cultural backgrounds and orientations, or in a situation where cultural diversity exists. So it is vital to instruct future specialists of international economics, business and management acquire intercultural competence (Glinkowska and Chebotarov, 2018). Kealey and Ruben define the main characteristics of a successful person as: "an individual who is truly open to and interested in other people and their ideas, capable of building relationships of trust among people. He or she is sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of another, expresses respect and positive regard for others, and is nonjudgmental. Finally, he or she tends to be self-confident, is able to take initiative, is calm in situations of frustration or ambiguity, and is not rigid" (Kealey and Ruben, 1983).

Intercultural competence can be defined as the ability to operate efficaciously across different cultures, to behave and think appropriately, and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds at home or abroad (Leung, Ang, Tan, 2014). According to Bennett intercultural knowledge is "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett, 2008).

Deardorff explained intercultural competence as an ability "to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions" (Deardorff, 2006).

The document published by the Council of Europe called "Intercultural Competence for All Preparation for living in a heterogeneous world" describes not only intercultural competences, but also their indicators, which are divided in two main - personal and institutional categories. There are four categories of personal indicators: personal values and skills, formation of interpersonal relations, intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, knowledge of global issues. Also there are

institutional indicators: country, school, curricula development, and teacher's teaching/education levels (Council of Europe document, 2012).

Intercultural competences are described as key competences for Lifelong Learning, European Reference Framework, published by Council of Europe defined as a set of social and civic competencies, which "include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behavior that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary" (Council of Europe document, 2007).

Intercultural competence comprises most valuable leadership skills: providing a sense of safety and belonging, openness, encouraging learning and individual growth, empowering others, and maintaining high ethical standards (Giles, 2016). A person's cultural awareness can lead to more successful performance in his/her managerial activity. Intercultural capacities and skills allow firms to work successfully with multiple types of clients and partners in a variety of locations (Trompenaars, Woolliams, 2003).

Intercultural competence builds the capacity of individuals and groups to consistently, effectively, and authentically adapt, including the ability to shift perspectives and behaviors in order to drive toward shared goals (The Guides for Equitable Practice, 2018).

In contrast to organizational culture in which norms, attitudes and symbols play a crucial role since they were created in it and according to which an organization functions, national culture is a little different. Given that national culture lies deep into its members' sub consciousness, assumptions and values have greater importance while norms, attitudes and symbols are of less importance (Nikčević, 2014).

Students' intercultural competence is influenced by their cultural identity sources (school, family, social environment, media, content, and practice of informal education).

### **FONS TROMPENAARS AND CHARLES HAMPDEN-TURNER'S MODEL**

Because it is necessary to take into consideration cultural dimensions of the region people come from we have tried to establish the variation of cultural dimensions in Romania and the Republic of Moldova according Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner's theoretical model (Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner, 1997).

**Universalism versus particularism** is about the rules versus relationships. This dimension is about

the difference between the cultures in which it is considered that the ideas and techniques can be applied in any conditions without modification and those in which it is considered that the circumstances dictate the way in which ideas and techniques must be applied.

The results for each dimension are the following (Figure 1):

1. is a full universalist answer;
2. is a full particularist answer;
3. is a particularist answer doubled by an universal orientation;
4. is a universalist answer but recognizing the importance of particular relationships.

The conclusions that must be derived from these data are that young people from Romania tested proved to be rather universalist but also with particularistic tendencies while Moldovan students have shown more particularism with universalist direction.

**Communitarianism versus individualism** is the dimension about the group versus the individual relationship. In individualist cultures people consider themselves independent persons, while in the collectivist people are defined as members of a group.

The answers denote the following (Figure 2):

1. is a radical individualist answer;
2. affirms competitive individualism, but reconciles it with communitarian cooperation;
3. asserts the preeminence of the group, but also allows the existence of competing individuals;
4. is a radical communitarian answer.

Specific competitive individualism with collective cooperation is specific in the both societies, as well as the group importance allowing the existence of competitive individuals.

**Neutral versus Emotional** shows the range of feelings expressed. A neutral culture is the one where people hide their feelings, while an affective culture is characterized by the fact that emotions are natural and open.

The results for each dimension are the following (Figure 3):

1. is a radical option for neutral orientation;
2. starts from the neutral point of view, but acknowledges the importance of emotions for a good future relationship;
3. represents an affective orientation, aimed at bringing under control of future affective interactions;
4. is a radical option for the affective orientation.

The individuals in Moldavian and Romanian societies have a **neutral orientation** with taking into consideration the personal relations importance for growing.

**Diffuse versus Specific** indicates

the range of involvement. Specific relationship is seen as one very impersonal based only on contracts and agreements. Diffuse refers to relationships on a human level. The diffuse culture prefers a more human relationship and values this over impersonal, logical relationships often seen in specific cultures.

The answers denote the following (Figure 4):

1. is an option for diffuse orientation;
2. is a compromise between the two, based on a diffuse point of departure;
3. is a compromise between the two, based on a specific point of departure;
4. is an option for specific orientation. Analyzing **specific versus diffuse** dimension we can see a compromise of both with the diffuse starting point.

**Achievement versus Ascription** dimension demonstrates how status is attributed. In cultures with the achievement dimension the status is gained, individuals are treated equally, so that they can be evaluated according to their merit. The cultures in which the superior levels have full decision-making authority and establish the social-professional status of individuals according to criteria like age, political affiliation, membership to a clan, etc.

In this dimensions the answers denote the following (Figure 5):

1. is a radical option for ascribed status;
2. represents the belief that socially ascribed status will lead to achievement and success;
3. represents the belief that achieved status will lead to social ascription;
4. is a radical option for achieved status.

In Moldova people are convinced that the **ascribed** status helps them in their personal and professional life, in Romania the **ascribed** option is in balance with achieved one.

**Sequential versus Synchronous time** dimension describes how the time is managed. This dimension focuses on time and how a culture relates to it. People in sequential cultures try to do a single task in a given period; they are punctual and strictly follow work plans. In synchronous cultures people tend to do more things in a given period of time, the dates of meetings may be changed at the last minute and plans are generally subordinate to interpersonal relationship.

In this dimensions the answers denote the following (Figure 6):

1. is a radical option for sequential orientation;
2. represents an option for sequential orientation, but connects it to synchronic managed processes;
3. represents an option for synchronous orientation, but connects it to high-speed sequential managed processes;
4. is a radical option for synchronous orientation.

Republic of Moldova is a **synchronous-time** country. People can have several activities in the same time while in Romania the society is more **sequential**, they are more punctual and try to do a single task in a given period.

**Inner direction versus Outer direction** shows how people relate to nature). In external-oriented cultures individuals consider that they control the environment, while internal-oriented cultures individuals believe the environment is the dominant factor.

In this dimensions the answers denote the following (Figure 7):

1. is a radical option for an outer-directed strategy/orientation;
2. represents an option for outer-directed orientation, but connects it to inner-directed strategy
3. is a radical option for an internal-directed strategy/orientation;
4. represents an option for internal-directed orientation, but connects it to an outer-directed strategy.

More **internal direction** than that **external** represent the situation for the individuals in Moldova, **external direction with** elements of **internal** is more representative for the students from Romania.

## CONCLUSIONS

After having analyzed the cultural dimensions (based on the Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner' model of national culture differences) of the business students from Romania and the Republic of Moldova we have reached to the conclusion that some dimensions have almost the same scores: Neutral versus Emotional, Diffuse versus Specific, some of them are slightly different: Universalism versus particularism, Achievement versus Ascription

Communitarianism versus Individualism, but in the Inner direction versus Outer direction and attitude Sequential versus Synchronous time have big difference in scores.

These qualities are reflected in external outcomes which refer to the observable behavior and communication styles of the individuals. They are the visible evidence that the individuals are, or are learning to be, interculturally competent.

From the listed above cultural identity characteristics and its connection to intercultural competence in business, educational institutions especially universities in economics, teaching/learning approaches, teaching content, will determine the future impact on students' intercultural behavior.

Knowledge, skills and attitudes that are component parts of intercultural competence lead to internal outcomes which refer to an individual who learns to be flexible, adaptable, empathetic and adopts an ethno-relative perspective in business. Programs should be sequenced so that culture-general information precedes culture-specific information. The intercultural mindset needs to be established before the skillset can be acquired as we have done at this stage of our research. All programs need to take into account the development stage of prospective participants. Most importantly, the development of intercultural competence must be seen as complex activity that demands significant time and resources. Techniques and methods can be learned to convert these differences into synergies which will create new opportunities. The model and methods could be developed and they will need to be implemented by professionals with the appropriate expertise.

Recognizing intercultural competence as a differentiating factor for success in business will lead to organization of various initiatives, trainings and workshops within economic education centers. Knowing the cultural differences in our countries will allow us to develop intercultural skills of business students that will lead to a better comprehension of representatives of other culture and to implementation of specific managerial methods in business relations with representatives of these countries and also in management of joint Romanian-Moldavian ventures.

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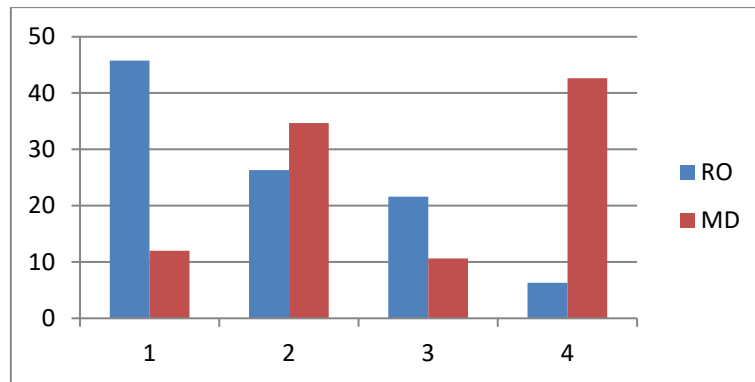


Figure No. 1  
**Universalism versus particularism dimension**

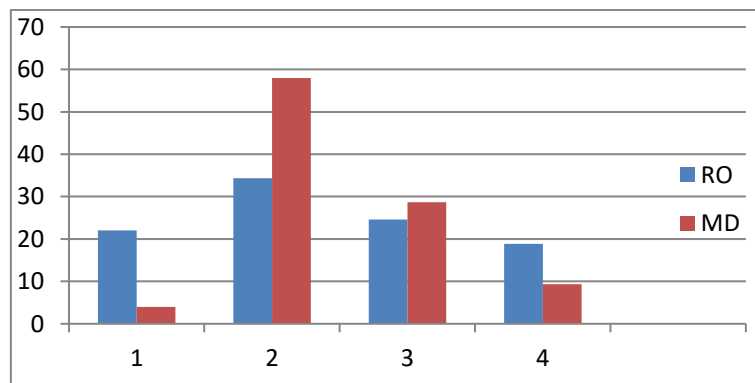


Figure No. 2  
**Communitarianism versus individualism**

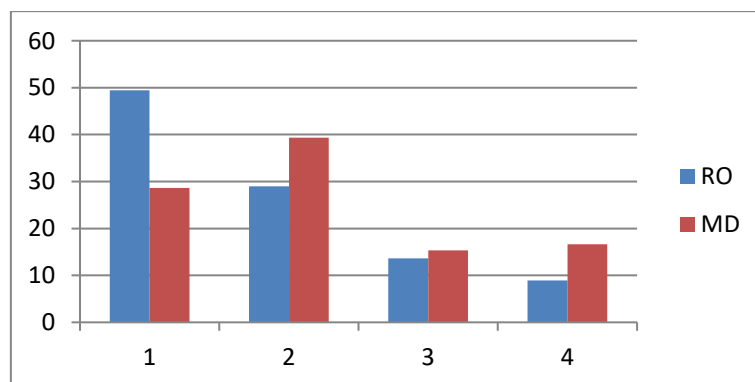


Figure No. 3  
**Neutral versus Emotional**

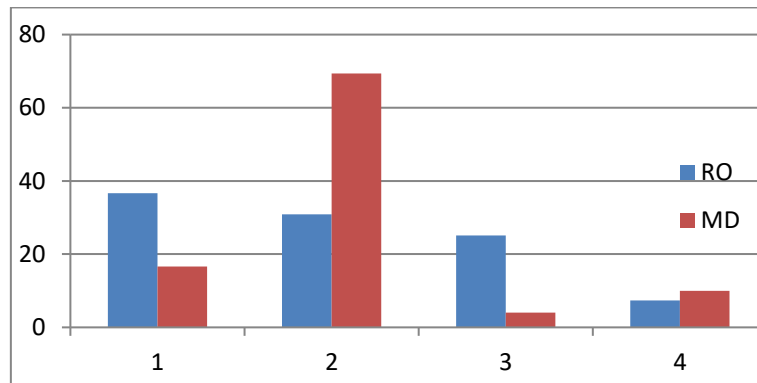


Figure No. 4  
**Diffuse versus Specific**

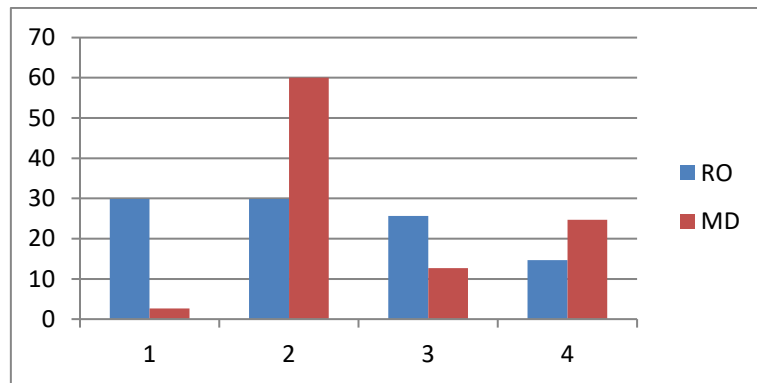


Figure No. 5  
**Achievement versus Ascription**

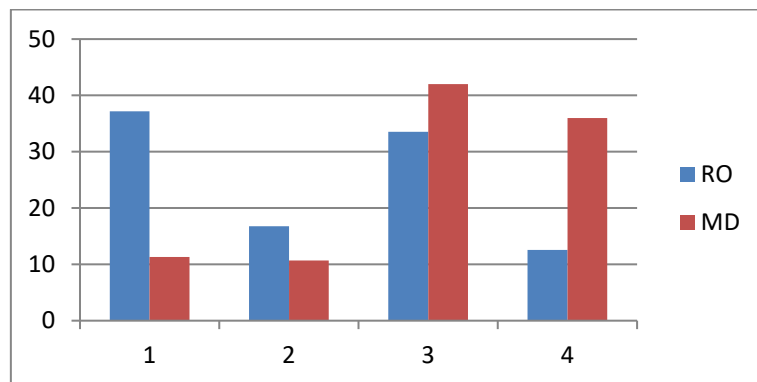


Figure No. 6  
**Sequential versus Synchronous time**



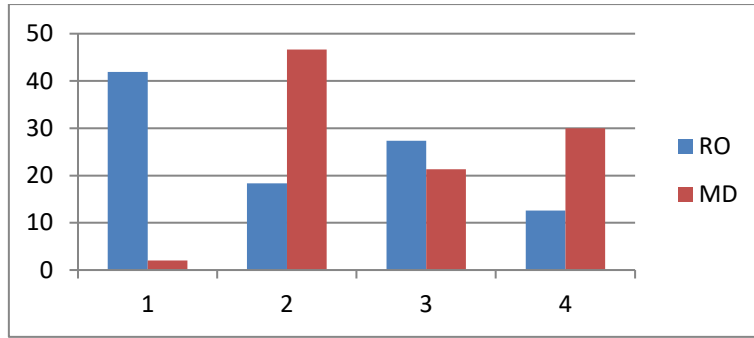


Figure No. 7  
**Inner direction versus Outer direction**