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CULTURAL DIVERSITY: A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

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Abstract

XXI century is the century of globalization, a century dominated by multinational organizations supremacy which gradually expanded to conquer the world through their products and services. In every industry working professionals need to interact with people from other ethnic and national groups, at home, job and around the world. Decisively all meant for companies and organizations, in addition to innovation and development the source of possible conflicts. Therefore what does cultural diversity mean and how it should be managed?

Motto: „I come from the Orient, you are Westerners. At first sight we are different. But the more you emphasize our differences, the more distance between us will grow” Dalai – Lama

Introduction.

The question according to which globalization is good or harmful to the world is still unsolved and very controversial. Besides all its disadvantages, it is an accepted reality that this extensive and irreversible process is expanding rapidly worldwide. Also, the issue of cultural diversity must be debated in the context of globalization to understand its size and complexity. An intensive characteristic of the XXIst Century is the relationship between globalization and coexistence of diverse cultural identities. The crises experienced by modern societies and the new historical context merely trigger numerous social actors, who acted as a combined force, producing a new configuration of the world.

A series of economical processes, such as expansion of modern societies, multi and transnational ones, trade liberalization, migration and minority issues, the explosion of cultural tourism, the continuous movement of business people, the mobility of students and teachers, the mobility of researchers, etc. have caused a widening of intercultural meetings asking citizens of the XXI century to be culturally sensitive, to identify and adapt to each other's cultural context, so that the concept of "global village" of M. McLuhan (1997) seems justified.

What is to be noted, however, is that these factors acted simultaneously, synergistically in a deep interdependent relationship and in a relatively short historical period, amplifying the issue of cultural differences and intercultural dialogue, which had consequences on the national identity globally "national identity-related crises have become a global phenomenon", an idea often expressed by the prospect of "clash of civilizations" by S. Huntington (1997).

Short reflections on globalization. Currently, globalization is attacked by everyone, most of the opponents perceiving globalization as an enigmatic and chaotic phenomenon to be held in check. The political scientist Benjamin Barber expressed this opinion to some intellectuals used to have everything under control as if it deplored the apparent lack of "reliable power, able to resist, to obey and to civilize the anarchic forces of the global economy" (Norberg, 2010, p. 13)

More and more voices have complained that the new freedom and internationalism have gone too far, creating a "hipercapitalism". This protest movement against global capitalism of more authority regimes of the Third World, monopolistic corporations, conservative intellectuals etc nothing

are not different of the old opposition to the elimination of trade barriers and open borders radically manifested, we might say, by the nationalist leaders.

According to some, the critics of globalization claiming sovereignty and national culture demolition, the explosion of poverty and unemployment in the developing countries, the environmental pollution, the destruction of industries, bankruptcy and removal from the global market of some banks, the migration of people in search of better wages, the dismantle and destabilization of the international order with the rise of new centers of power come to contradict the beneficial advantages generated by this complex process, as reducing production costs as a result of scale economy, speed of information exchange which is achieved due IT&C progress - fax, Internet etc. accelerate the performance of business operations, financial and technological expansion and quickly diversification of markets, independent of some resources or traditional areas.

According to others qualified as liberals, globalization is a guarantee of progress, provided that the introduction of rules of conduct to temper the omnipotence of the markets. For example, J. Norberg (2010), a supporter of capitalism, actually states that globalization lies in our daily actions, that this phenomenon takes place nether "even if politicians run after it with all sorts of abbreviations and acronyms - the EU, IMF UN, WTO, UNCTAD, and OECD trying to frame the process." It supports a free market, characterized "by free competition under the right to use personal property and freedom of negotiation to conclude agreements and initiate business". The threat, he says, occurs when the pursuit of profit is made in the lack of competition, when businessmen make common cause with politicians and intervene in politics and politicians tend to play the businessmen, forgetting of politics.

In his view Gunnar Myrdal says that "the world will become more integrated when all these oppressed nations, with their great mass of people with different racial features, with different skin colour, religious heritage, folklore and cultural backgrounds will be reached to have equal opportunities for development" (Stoica, 2011). The opening to others, the cooperation and assimilation of some different cultural experiences mean an additional source of innovation and development for societies, but they also might represent in some conditions the source of possible conflicts.

Globalization, this contradictory phenomenon by its nature, and the cultural diversity have troubled the painting's colours they forshadowed some time ago, relaunching problem as: "the relation between unity and diversity, between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, tensions and conflicts between ethnic and linguistic groups

within a multicultural society, the crisis of cultural identities, individually and collectively" (Georgiu, 2010, pag. 14).

Globalization actually means removing borders, increasing cross-border trade, global products and global customers, global competition and global standards as mentioned by Cullen and Parboteeah (Voinea, 2007, p. 10).

If the past is an indication of the future and taking into account the quick evolution of globalization "will continue to have a big impact on companies and on customers", we can be sure that the future organizations will operate in an unpredictable, very competitive and complex business environment. P. Vail (1991), in the book *Managing as a Performing Art* has compared the unquietness, the danger and volatility of the current business environment that are constantly swirling waters.

We agree with the appreciation of D. Miller that the future belongs to the chameleon organization - a body so connected to its environment that it can adapt quickly, without being threatened by change (Hesselbein, Goldsmith and Beckhard, 2000).

The tenable success of these new, modern organizations is due to the emergence of a generation of global leaders, able to potentiate the activity of markets (Bari, 2005) by transnational capital infusion in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI). Their major role will be to manage effectively the diversity of views, different attitudes and behaviors and maximizing the potential of every employee in a manner entirely different from that of a rational manager, being able to create a community full of cohesion and to make possible the change ensuring that the reserve of ideas is constantly refreshed and the obtained performances will exceed the usual limits.

Cultural diversity - „a happening”. One of the distinctive features of the globalized world we live in is awareness and recognition of cultural diversity, each individual being unique and having cultural experiences throughout life. The interactions at the level of societies and cultures are an opportunity to acknowledge the differences between "Us" and "Others" under symbolic language report, thinking and behavior. According to Lackzo (1994) the world's 184 independent states contain over 600 living language groups, and 5,000 ethnic groups.

Diversity is synonymous with "being different, do different." Diversity means to accept that individuals are different and the noticeable (age, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, attitudes, behaviors, values) or less visible differences (skills, needs, work style) between people create advantages and unique characteristics helping us have distinct perspectives on life. Our uniqueness

lies in the creative potential of each of us that make any work done constitute an added value for us and for the organization of employment.

The concept of diversity is defined, among other things, as a variety of conditions and activities that creates an environment where people can achieve their full potential, no matter how much they differ from one another and the recent trend, whose mouthpiece are T. H. Cox and S. Blake (1991), states that organizations should appreciate diversity, and not just tolerate or try to make them all look like a narrow template. The two mentioned drew attention to the fact that diversity and its correct management can lead to significant competitive and strategic advantages, talking about the arguments cost, resource acquisition, marketing, creativity and the one regarding solving problems, and the one regarding system flexibility. Briefly, these advantages refer to the increased potential in solving problems and creativity when different perspectives are involved in solving a problem such as product and services quality. These also include an improved recruitment and marketing when human resources company profile fits the fund's workforce and customer database.

In contrast, the mismanagement of cultural diversity is reflected by the negative effects both at individual and team level and of course at the organization as a whole. For example, there are difficulties in communication (verbal, non-verbal) between team members, which would translate into lower interactions between them, conflicts, absences, satisfaction and low performance, before leaving the organization, especially by those members who do not identify themselves with the working group they belong. Diversity in organizations lead to the development of stereotypical perceptions about themselves and others, which would translate to prejudice, ethnocentrism, racism and discrimination, to the advent of majority and minority groups in the organization, which generates unproductive competition and alienation of organizations goals and decreased performance of the organization.

According to a study conducted in 2008 by the European Commission on the costs and benefits of diversity, it is stressed the fact that the organizations that turn their attention to the implementation of policies for promoting diversity in the workplace identify important benefits that strengthen competitiveness for a long term.

Cultural diversity today represents a trump of modern organizations and enjoys the recognition of a large number of European companies (Adidas, British Airways, Danone, Henkel, L'Oreal etc).

Towards a world of cultural conflicts?

The global market and the multiplication of the interaction between companies and countries have led to a fierce competition with surprising

effects. As a possible interpretation the current tensions are described; we remember the so intensely discussed theory of the American political scientist S. Huntington, the "conflict of civilizations".

Huntington's thesis states that precisely globalization, which contributed to the modernization and removed insulation from whole non-Western civilizations, is what generated and fueled a complementary process, which the author calls "indigenization". It's what we said before, the enhanced interest of companies and nations to preserve cultural identities and the success of some of them on their own resources for development. In short, "culture is a force that both divides and unifies" (Huntington, 1997, p. 60)

In the author's representation, the predominant sources of conflict would be the cultural ones. The core of every civilization, from which also drift the differences that make the difference, consist of various cultural elements, to the fore being religion, worldviews, beliefs and values. Thereby the natural factors shape both the processes of cultural cohesion and convergence, as well as the disintegration and conflict in the today world.

His theses feeds adverse positions in the debates on cultural diversity and variety of existing conflicts, some theorists (Scruton, 2004) agreeing with it, while others reject them, arguing that civilizations are not in conflict, but the states with their economic interests (Malita, 1998). Meanwhile, current tensions of cultural nature and cultural industries expansion, information warfare or global markets consumption domination trends as stated by Ritzer (Georgiu, 2010).

Together with Huntington, G. Sartori (2007) advances somber prophecies about the wonderful new world, about the moral and spiritual degradation of humanity, with no way out, however. Visions about the uncertain future of mankind has also

J. Benda, a French essayist, which complements and supports the registry of unease that a society seeking for material focuses on consumption, loves entertainment and instant gratification, it will exterminate herself. He once wrote that the "history will smile at the thought of Socrates and Jesus Christ died for this species" (Benda, 2007).

Some authors believe that managing cultural differences to provide a non-conflict "cohabitation" (a term proposed by D. Wolton, 2003) between individuals, groups and companies is one of the biggest problems of the contemporary world. He promotes the idea that a pressing need for people is felt, a "return" to the roots, just to differentiate in the vague space of globalization using their cultural identity. The issue of identity is part of a broad range of globalization, there is both a concern and a worry about what will happen tomorrow.

În a global market, as any market, is a competitive one, the future is an unlimited reserve of possibilities and the phenomenon of globalization may induce unexpected direction changes. Before drawing a conclusion, future stays open and dependent of the people that make it, on the big „chessboard of the world" as Brzezinski says, there are new moves and situations, so that the game has different continuation, but the results cannot be modified.

Conclusion.

The globalization of the business world has led to "a happening" making possible the emergence of the phenomenon of cultural diversity within modern organizations. Organizations who want success must recognize and accept cultural diversity as the advantage and as an opportunity to establish a competitive advantage, not as a source of difficulty.

Cultural differences in the workforce bring to the fore the problem of the image that involved actors have of the cultural pattern of interlocutors they interact with. It is about the relation between us and the others, pleaded for "pictures in our heads" as they were called by W. Lippmann (2007), and which at organizational levels lead to prejudices and negative views about others. In this reason, organizational decision factors should consider the implementation of a program of cultural diversity actually thought to function for prevention of conflicts and stress caused by cultural differences at the team level.

An increasingly number of modern organizations adopts strategies about diversity and equality, not just to ensure the coexistence of different cultural individuals within a common framework, but also because of the business benefits they can achieve: improving the earned image and reputation, more innovative opportunities and labor force sample largeness.

Cultural diversity opens up a mix bag of questions and what we want to highlight is that in the context of globalization and geopolitical changes when world today is subject to rapid changes and the interaction between people takes on new dimensions a change of mentality is required, directed toward the knowledge of other cultures, eliminating ethnocentric attitudes and resizing our relationship with others, to protect cultural differences to avoid becoming victims of so-called phenomenon "cunning globalization" as Dobrescu (2010) has previously named.

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