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Ukrainian and Polish Culture of Management and Work – Similarities and Differences

SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to present the results of the research study of management and work cultures in Poland and Ukraine that was conducted in 2016. The author analyses similarities and differences in organizational behaviours in three aspects:

1) management style – in both cultures respondents pointed out hierarchical style as dominating, but in the case of Poland in a lesser degree than in the case of Ukraine.

2) team work – in both cultures collectivistic approach in team-work is predominating, thus co-workers help each other and appreciate good atmosphere (harmony).

3) communication style – people in both cultures communicate emotionally, however Poles express their more through higher and emotional voice, whereas Ukrainians express their feelings also via body language.

Commonly Polish and Ukrainian cultures are regarded as very close as both countries have the same religious, cultural and ethnic roots. Ukrainians and Poles manifest a number of the same organizational behaviours, according to the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) study – Polish and Ukrainian cultures belong to the same cultural cluster – Eastern Europe (which constitutes one of ten distinguished clusters) and are different from other clusters, but still there are differences between both cultures which matter in inter-cultural management. Crucially, one cluster contains several countries and they differ from each other in a subtler manner.

KEYWORDS: inter-cultural management, Polish management culture, Ukrainian management culture, Polish team work, Ukrainian team work, Polish communication style, Ukrainian communication style, organizational behaviour in Ukraine, organizational behaviour in Poland, cultural differences in organizational behaviour in Poland and Ukraine, cultural similarities in organizational behaviour between Poland and Ukraine

STRESZCZENIE

Ukraińska i polska kultura zarządzania i pracy – podobieństwa i różnice

W artykule przedstawione zostały wyniki badania kultury zarządzania w Polsce i na Ukrainie przeprowadzonego przez autorkę w 2016 r. Jest to pierwsze badanie w Polsce i na Ukrainie dotyczące porównania kultur zarządzania obu państw. Wyniki badania trzech aspektów kultury organizacyjnej: 1. stylu zarządzania, 2. pracy zespołowej, 3. stylu komunikowania się wykazały istnienie różnic pomiędzy Polską i Ukrainą – szczególnie w stylu zarządzania; potwierdziły również wiele podobieństw we wzorcach zachowań i myślenia Polaków i Ukraińców. Zastosowano następującą metodologię badań – były to badania ilościowe, wybór jednokrotny odpowiedzi. W koncepcji badania odniesiono się do koncepcji kwestionariuszy badań międzykulturowych w danym wymiarze np. w wymiarze uniwersalizm do partykularyzmu do kwestionariusza badania Fonsa Trompenaarsa. Kwestionariusz badania jest w pełni autorski. Wyniki badania autorka odniosła do orientacji kulturowych takich jak: indywidualizm i kolektywizm, uniwersalizm i partykularyzm, wysoki i niski dystans władzy, stosunek do czasu oraz do kultury wycinkowej i całościowej jak również neutralnej i ekspresyjnej, dyskutując ich poziom zgodności ze światowymi badaniami. Badanie posiada dwa aspekty – teoretyczny i praktyczny. Po pierwsze stanowi wkład w badania międzykulturowe w zakresie zachowań organizacyjnych, po drugie wskazuje na podobieństwa i różnice w zachowaniach i praktykach organizacyjnych pomiędzy Polską a Ukrainą.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: kultura zarządzania, kultura zarządzania w Polsce, ukraińska kultura zarządzania,

spół sposob pracy zespołowej w Polsce, sposób pracy zespołowej na Ukrainie, styl komunikacji w Polsce, styl komunikacji na Ukrainie, podobieństwa kulturowe Polski i Ukrainy, zachowania organizacyjne w Polsce, zachowania organizacyjne na Ukrainie, różnice zachowań organizacyjnych w Polsce i na Ukrainie

The aim of this article is to present the results of the research conducted by the author in 2016 on the culture of management and work in Poland and Ukraine. In the first study of this type in Poland concerning the management culture of the two countries, three aspects were examined: 1. management style, 2. teamwork, 3. communication style. It is commonly believed that both cultures are similar (similar language, common religious roots and cultural heritage), so it is assumed that there are no significant differences in the organizational behavior of Polish and Ukrainian workers. The results show differences but also confirm similarities in the behavior patterns and thinking of Poles and Ukrainians.

What does determine a level of business cooperation of two countries?

A level and form of cooperation of entrepreneurs from the two countries depends on the perception of the easiness (or difficulty) of cooperation between them. The CAGE Model* (Figure 1.), the name of which is an acronym for the English words Cultural, Administrative, Geographical and Economic, compiles the factors that influence the extend of the psychological distance between countries. These are the following factors: 1. cultural, 2. institutional, 3. geographical and 4. economic. There is an inversely proportional relationship between the level of economic engagement of a given country towards another country – the lower the level of psychological distance between countries, the more advanced the forms of cooperation between them – for example, direct investments.

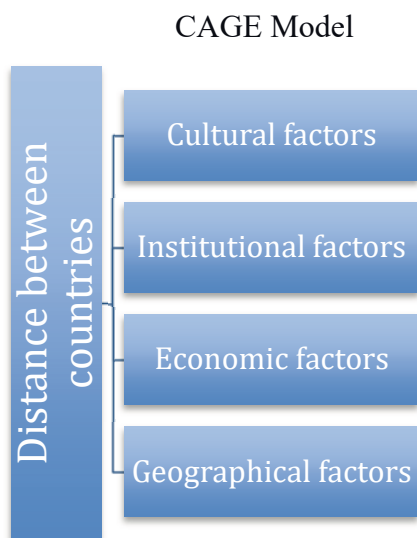


Figure 1. Factors determining the level of psychological distance between countries
 Source: P. Ghemawat, *Distance still matters, The hard reality of global expansions*, Harvard Business Review 2001, vol. 79 (8), 137-147, in: *Zarządzanie Międzynarodowe*, Ed. K. Obłój, A. Wąsowska, Warszawa 2014, s. 105.

To determine a level of distance between countries in the context of their business relationships, it is necessary to analyze factors that facilitate or hinder the building of relationships such as:

Cultural factors	organizational norms and habits, human behavior in the context of organizational culture, organizational practices, management style, beliefs about others and the world, language and religion, level of social capital
Institutional factors	method of organizing society, legal norms, economic and social institutions, social and political relations
Geographical factors	the location of a country relative to another – having a common border and terrain favorable (or not) to transport, climate differences
Economic factors	level of country’s development, economic and financial situation, common currency, affiliation to the same economic organizations, level of know how

Source: P. Ghemawat, *Distance still matters* p. 140.

Reducing the distance between two countries can occur at different levels:

- Level of the state – through the activities of state authorities supporting the building of a political, legal and economic environment facilitating the enhancement of relations between countries, such as economic agreements, transportation infrastructure, laws and regulations;
- Social level – by organizing cultural and social activities supporting the mutual learning of the societies, such as organizing days of a national culture, cultural festivals, tourist exchanges;
- Economic level – through the activities of economic chambers and other institutions supporting the building of business relations.

The goal of governmental activities is to create institutional foundation for cooperation (law and regulations) and to regulate the reciprocal relations by introducing supporting and lifting limiting policies.

Activities directed at societies are aimed to build a positive image of another country in a given society, which results, for example, in the increased exchange of tourists and the positive opinions of citizens of a given country towards the other society.¹ Activities at the economic level support the establishment of trade relations and investment cooperation between partners. In order for the latter to be effective and profitable, managers responsible for business and investment relations should have knowledge of the business culture and culture of management and work (called organizational culture) of the partner country. Lack of inter-cultural competencies may cause misunderstanding and misinterpretation of partner's business behavior, thus in turn may lead to unsuccessful negotiation and management of employees of other nationalities.

Thus, in the model of factors determining the distance between countries, the critical factor of the so-called bottleneck can be the intercultural competences of managers. It is also from four factors of the model that a business partner can positively model and change even in a short period of time through intercultural education. Other factors – geographical, institutional and economic – are constant in a given period and can be formed over a longer period of time.

In light of these considerations, knowledge about the organizational culture of Poles and Ukrainians – their way of managing people, teamwork and communication styles is a critical factor contributing to the success or failure of business relationships between entrepreneurs in both countries. When maintaining business relationships, it is important to know both the business partner (his character, behavior, ways of negotiating and work), and the national and organizational cultures of business

1 In Poland a research assessing Poles attitude to other nations (among them also Ukrainians) are conducted in regular period of time.

partner. Knowledge essential in inter-cultural business relations is presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Model of three levels of knowledge relevant in international business relationships. Source: own work.

Assessing the meaning of every factor of the CAGE model is the basis for decision of cooperation and an important aspect when developing a strategy for this cooperation.

A company that is interested in business cooperation with a foreign company (or joint venture) may not influence the institutional, geographic and economic factors determining the level of distance between the two potential partner countries (cannot temporarily reduce their distance between them in the mentioned areas). What the company can do is to reduce a psychological distance when learning the relevant cultural factors of the partner country for better mutual understanding.

Management style and work in Ukraine and Poland

In the study “Culture of management and work in Poland and Ukraine. Similarities and differences” carried out in 2016,² in Poland, three aspects

2 The research was conducted by the author in the framework of the activities of the Foundation Polish Mentoring Institute.

of organizational culture were explored: management style, teamwork and communication style in Ukraine and Poland.

Management style Organizational structure of companies and people management

There are many factors influencing the style of managing business and people. The history of the development of society, its values and beliefs have shaped the way in which people work and manage in a given national culture. Of course, each manager has his or her individual management style, which is based on his or her personality, but the basic principles of managerial behavior are learned by observing and imitating others (this is called social learning), and therefore represents the behavior typical of the culture.

In intercultural psychology that explores the “similarities and differences in the individual functioning of people belonging to different cultural and ethnic-cultural groups,”³ different classifications of cultural dimensions are applied. The Dutch intercultural researcher Geert Hofstede proposed a model of six cultural dimensions, including the dimension of “distance to power”, which was used to interpret the results of the study presented in this article.⁴ The cultural dimension of “distance to power” in the context of organizational culture determines the hierarchical level of organizational structures and the type of management style used.

In societies that are characterized by a great distance to power, managers adopt a directive style of management and relationships between superiors and employees are both official and formal. In the case of a low distance to power, managers manage democratically, partnering with employees.⁵ This is reflected in managerial practices such as delegation of tasks, giving corrective feedback in a positive manner, and the way employees are addressed.

The results of the study show that in both dominate hierarchical organizational structures: 70% of Poland’s indications and 83% of indications for Ukraine. However, in both countries, the intensity of hierarchical

3 J.W. Berry, Y.H. Poortinga, M.H. Segall, P.R. Dasen, *Cross-cultural psychology. Research and applications*, Cambridge 2002.

4 G. Hofstede, *Kultury i Organizacje*, Warszawa 2007.

5 *Ibidem*.

structures is differently spreading, as 41% of the respondents considered the organizational structure in Ukraine as *very hierarchical* as only 8% of respondents defined the organizational structures of companies in Poland. Respondents assessed that in Poland the structure was *quite hierarchical* (62% of indications). In Ukraine, it was respectively 42%. Regarding flat *organizational structures*, 29% of respondents indicated their existence in Poland, and only 16% in Ukraine.

The style of human management and hierarchicality of the organizational structures are interrelated, mutually conditioned and shaped. The results of this study confirm this relation. In both countries dominates hierarchical style of management, in Ukraine is more common. In Poland, partnership management style is used more frequently (43% of responses). Only 12% of respondents indicated such a management style in Ukraine.

The results show that Polish managers, even in hierarchical structures, operate in a democratic and partnership-oriented way. The results of the study on organizational practices: how to delegate tasks, how to express corrective feedback and how to provide employee bonuses, confirmed that Polish managers, compared to Ukrainian ones, manage employees in a much more egalitarian way.

What is common to managers' behavior in both countries is the fact that they create a friendly working atmosphere. In Poland, managers additionally support the development of employees and their empowerment. In Ukraine, managers accept flexibility in the proceeding of work, defined by the respondents as lack of the need to follow procedures.

The authors' research results of Polish and Ukrainian managerial styles confirm Hofstede's results in the aspect. According to his study, Ukrainian culture is characterized by a very high level of distance to power⁶ (92 points on a scale of 100 points, the more points, the more hierarchical the culture). Polish culture is rather hierarchical (68 points), but in comparison with Ukrainian culture it is considered to be considerably less hierarchical.

Particularistic or universalistic treatment of employees by managers

Researchers of national and organizational cultures, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner⁷ have distinguished seven dimensions of culture. Each of these dimension represents a specific way of behaving and attitudes

6 <https://www.geert-hofstede.com/ukraine.html>, (Accessed: 10.12.2016).

7 A. Trompenaars, Ch. Hampden-Turner, *Siedem kultur kapitalizmu*, Warszawa 2012.

