Motivational Aspects of Corporate Culture in International Management

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This paper highlights the importance of work motivation.. It is obvious that universal applicability across cultures of any motivational approach is dangerous. Effective transnational managers must look beyond the theory, personal background, biases, values, and belief systems while introducing the work and cultural environments as employees perceive and interpret it. A close examination of culture, norms, and rituals in a society should be the first step taken by a transnational manager who wants to practice management with a global mind-set.

1. Introduction

Motivation has for years been one of the key concepts for the management of any company since it is closely connected to the productivity of work, the creativity with which the employees do their job, the problem of absenteeism, the turnover of labour force, etc. The word motivation comes from the Latin word "movere", meaning " to move" [11]. Generally speaking, motivation can be described as a process by which an individual is oriented to achieving certain goals, that in turn will satisfy not only his individual goals, but the organizational goals as well [11]. Motivation involves incentive and guidance, but also the mainteneneance of the goal oriented behaviour.

Practice has it that managers generally focus upon achieving business goals and meeting organizational needs. A precondition, however, for these goals to be met is an adequate employee motivation and satisfaction. An effective motivation programme, therefore, should incite the individual to employ all his energy towads achieving organizational, and consequently individual goals.

Modern technological innovations paved new paths in the field of motivation, too. The employees are offered an opportunity to succeed both professionally and in a creative sense through accomplishing their everyday tasks. The pay has long ceased to be the only goal in work, which is proved by a large amount of empiric research. The most important motivation factor for the employees in many a culture is the attributes of labour. The findings of the research conducted by Harpaz in a number of countries around the world (Great britain, Belgium, Germany, Israel, Japan, the USA) on a sample of 8,000 employees, reveal that the major motivation factor for a majority of employees is an interesting job. The pay and good interpersonal relations are ranked second and third, respectively [12]. One of the major obstacles, however, to formulating effective motivation programmes in many multinational companies is a large number of universal assumptions imposed by the prevailing theories of motivation. They all start from a wrong hypothesis that human needs are entirely universal. On the other hand, the reality proves that there are differences among people that are culturally conditioned, which further is further reflected to both the needs themselves and the manners in which they are satisfied. Regardless of this fact, a large number of studies on motivation implicitly or explicitly neglect the cultural impact upon motivation. The reason generally comes from ethnocentric tendencies or problems related to understanding a different culture.

Ethnocentric and stereotype attitudes have caused much harm to many multinational companies. It is for this reason that in creating effective motivation programmes in international companies management usually decides in favour of additional education as well as training during which they acquire an "in-depth" knowledge on the characteristics of certain cultures.

2. Cultural impact upon motivation

Motivation is a result of interaction among people, as well as of their physical and social environment. It is important to mention that a majority of motivation theories are psychologically oriented, but that they are also based on the models created and tested in America. Hence the motivation models and theories are of great use to the managements of the American companies, however, the issue of their applicability in an international, cross-cultural environment is yet to be resolved. The American researchers started from a very simple standpoint, ignoring the impact of culture upon motivation. They neglected the fact that repre-

sentatives of every culture have their own "mental frame" from which they start in their interpretations of the world and events in their environment [7].

Culture plays a very important role in creating needs, in their relative importance and in the manner in which these needs are satisfied. Apart from the basic human biological and physiological needs, a large number of others, such as love, safety, self-actualization, are culturally conditioned. Cultural norms, as well as the process of socialization with other members of a society, make people satisfy their needs in an acceptable, culturally adequate manner.

The importance of needs for an individual, i.e., the priority order they are assigned is also under the impact of the mother culture. Americans, for example, tend to satisfy their individual needs, such as self-actualization and personal comfort, first. On the contrary, the members of the Japanese culture are ready to sacrify these needs in favour of social belonging and acceptance.

As already mentioned above, culture affects the perceptions of time, space, but also a general attitude towards work and the authority in the organization. All these exert a feedback effect on the employee motivation. The differences are evident even among the subcultures within one organization. The members of Nordic cultures have identified that the greatest effect upon the behaviour of an individual at his workplace is exerted by age, origin (rural vs. urban milieux), ethnicity and gender [2]. The research conducted in the USA highlighted the fact that junior employees are to a much greated extent motivated by money in comparison to the senior employees who prefer security at work and good interpersonal relations.

3. Importance of work in cross-cultural environment

The basic criticism of motivation theories results from the fact that each of these theories reflect the values of the American culture in the fifties and the sixties of the last century. Thus it proved that some of them are less applicable in other cultures.

The MOW (The Meaning of Work) project explores the basic concepts related to motivation and the importance of work in general. The entire study was created and conducted in 1987 by an international team of experts in the field of behaviorism. They chose eight countries as sample (Great Britain, Germany, Israel, the area of the former Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, the USA, Japan) and 15,000 workers of different expertise. The

findings of the research clearly show that the representatives of different cultures perceive the importance of work in entirely different ways. England et al., [8] defined and assessed the importance of work using three key concepts: 1) priority of work, that is, its general importance as well as value assigned to work in life in general; 2) social norms related to work, that is, the normative beliefs and expectations related to specific rights and obligations in work; 3) objectives of work, that is, the goals and values preferred and stressed by individuals as most important in their work careers [8].

The issue of priority of work is realted to the importance the individual assigns to it in comparison with the other segments of life.

The research results has revealed considerable variations in the value and priority the members of different cultures assign to work. It is most important with the Japanese, whereas the British rank it rather low. Out of the total number of respondents in the 8 countries, however, as many as 86.1% said they would continue work even when there would be no longer any financial reasons for that. The study therefore shows that the members of these cultures deem work highly important and and essential part of their lives.

A similar study was conducted in Saudi Arabia [3], where as many as 94% respondents stated that they would continue to work even in a situation of overall material comfort.

Another field of research of the MOW team were the work-related social norms. The researchers defined two groups of norms and then measured the deviations in the respondents' answers across the eight countries. Legal norms "represent basic rights and responsibilities in the organization, however, on the other hand, the obligations the social community has towards them. Also, it is assumed that every member of a society has a right to an interesting and creative job, adequate training, as well as an opportunity to participate in decision-making" [18].

Obligation norms "represent the basic responsibility of every individual to the society in which they work and live. Each individual has to use their work to contribute to the society's further development and has to appreciate their work, regardless of its nature and character" [18].

Countries with a high index of obligation norms prefer the traditional work ethics. To work and to constantly contribute to the welfare of the organization and of the

society is considered to be only natural. On the other hand, the countries in which legal norms are present in a higher degree, have the "boundaries" of the traditional somewhat extended. According to the research findings, the deviation proved to be highest in the USA and the Netherlends. The Netherlands has a rather high index of legal norms and almost the lowest level of obligation norms which suggests that the members of this culture insist on individual rights at work, rather than on the idea that every individual is obliged to work. The situation in the USA is opposite – this is the culture characterised by a very high index of obligation norms and an extremely low index of legal norms. Hence the traditional work ethics is valued most in these parts.

The study has also pointed to the difference in the goals of work in the eight observed countries. None of the countries ranks these rights in the same way. Certain goals of work, however, stand out as universally adopted. The job being interesting is ranked by all the countries at the first, the second, or the third positions, that is, as a highly valued goal. Six of the countries prefer high salary as the top goal. On the other hand, good work conditions and the opportunity of promotion and futher improvement ranked rather low in all the countries.

More recent studies related to the meaning of work, conducted in the organizations in India, Malaysia and Thailand, suggested a somewhat different situation [6]. The managers from Indian and Thai organizations assigned the highest meaning to the goals of interesitng jobs, where they can learn new things, as well as of the job they love, whereas high salary proved to be one of the not so important goals. The situation was rather similar in the Malaysian organizations.

Since the employees attach different meaning to work at a cross-cultural level, from medium to very high, it is very important that managers establish what the employees realy understand by meaningful, important work. A universal assumption for all the cultures is that the employees' motivation will be considerably higher if they find that the job they do is meaningful and important.

Work satisfaction is the employees' positive or a negative perception of the activities they are engaged in on daily basis in their organizations. The trends at the cross-cultural level indicate that satisfaction ranges from a high to a medium levels [16]. Dramatic differences among the countries are evident only in case of the classification of the countries into highly developed and the developing countries.

The countries with most satisfied employees ("top 5 happiest workers") are Denmark, India, Norway, the USA, and Ireland, while the least satisfied employees ("bottom 5 unhappiest workers") are characteristic of Estonia, China, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Hungary [16]. It is fairly obvious that the countries in transition from entirely closed economic systems to open, competitive systems display the least work satisfaction. The loss of job, the creation of new jobs, fiercer competition, certain government regulations and protection, etc. make the situation uncertain.

Generally, the study of the meaning of work at the cross-cultural level has proved to be rather useful. Managers find it easier to learn about the importance and relative impact of motivation factors in different cultures. For example, the comparison of the results obtained in Japan with those obtained in Germany will clearly prove that work itself is a motivation enough for every Japanese worker. On the other hand, German workers do not attach so much meaning to work and spend less time at work. In designing the policy and the system of remuneration attention should be paid to the different natures of the goals of work. In many an eastern culture pay has proved to be a less important goal in comparison to the ranking of pay in Germany or in Great Britain.

4. Impact of culture upon employees' attitude to rewards

All motivation theories analyse the effects of rewards upon the behaviour of the individual in the organization. Generally, the rewarding system includes everything the employees value and desire, and what they receive from their organization in "response" to their efforts, time and high work performance. The system itself includes both financial and non-financial rewards. The former are bonuses, compensations, benefits and costs related to further education and qualification. The latter involve the freedom in decision-making, a "sensitive" management practice and politics, free time, opportunities of further training in work and the effort recognition.

The rewards actually bring the employees' expectations and the management goals "closer together". An efficient rewarding system guarantees the employees: 1) opportunities to satisfy their basic needs; 2) adequate treatment as regards the conditions in the labour market; 3) feeling that the effort and work are valued within the organization; 4) security and fair treatment, both as individuals and as members of a group.

The difference in preferentials is conditioned by cultural factors, hence management employs different policies in rewarding the employees. The western motivation models are individualistic in nature, therefore inapplicable in collectivistic cultures. The amount of the rewards and the grant of the reward in the developed western countries vary depending on the individual's position in the organization, the job type, the education and work experience.

Quite opposite, it is a custom in Japan that employees are not rewarded individually. Such a gesture would only embarass and even ashame the individual, hence it is assumed to be demotivating. The individual is a member of the group and his performance is automatically assigned to the group he belongs to. In certain collectivistic cultures the employees openly maintain that no worker should be rewarded disproportionally more compared to his colleagues. In Hong-Kong, for example, the individual who enjoys an obviously better treatment from the part of the top manager may become a victim of jealousy and condemned, given the attribute of being a "red-eye disease" [14].

High-context, collectivistic cultures are characterised by norms of behaviours expected of one in certain situations. Rewarding individual behaviour that in any way contradicts to group norms will not have a favourable impact upon further motivation. Hence group rewards are a much more efficient solution. In the case of the Russian culture members, for example, this proved to be a powerful motivation factor. In their opinion, group recognition adds to the value of team work and focuses on the welfare of the whole group [14].

The dimension of the masculine – feminine culture also suggests what the members of one culture prefer as a reward type. In typically masculine cultures, the employees will assign a high value to a pay raise, a title or any type of material, status-oriented reward. In feminine cultures, rewards such as better work conditions, bonus in the form of free time, symbolic rewards, etc. are preferred.

In certain countries, material things are perceived rather as a gift than a reward for a well done job. In China, for example, a large number of organizations distribute food to their employees for the holidays. The employees at higher positions receive higher quality foods, however, none of them makes a connection between the business performance and the received gifts.

Even within one abd the same country there is a large number of factors that impact the employees' preference of one or another type of reward. According to the research conducted in a hotel chain on the Bahamas, all the employees decided that the most powerful motivation factors were pay raise, good work conditions and an interesting job [4]. The impact of the factors such as age, gender, education and the position in the organization conditioned that the mentioned motivators be ranked differently. The male staff and the management personnel ranked pay first, opposite to the female staff and personnel that do not hold any managerial positions.

5. Cultural impact upon work and personality motivation concepts

Organizational performance is a function of the employees' contribution to the set organizational goals. On the other hand, the effort the employees will make in doing the job depends on the motivation level. It is perfectly logical that a motivateD employee is much more productive.

Two central concepts of key importance for understanding motivation are the *work concept* and the *personality concept*. These concepts do not by any means have a universal meaning in the motivation study on a cross-cultural level. The members of different cultures largely differ in their perceptions of both work and personality, i.e., personal effort.

Throughout the history of the western civilization work has been treated in different manners as an effort and an imminent evil, obligation, the manner of "salvation". According to Max Weber, the factor that contributed to the development of modern capitalism is the very value and importance that the Protestant religion attached to work and wealth accumulation. According to Copeland, "it is because of the Puritan work ethics and beliefs into the cause-consequence relation that the members of the western culture do their jobs with dignity... The job gives them dignity, so they often define themselves by the everyday activity they are engaged in..." [4]. Thus personal presentation of e.g. the member of the American culture differs from that of the member of the Japanese culture. The former will always talk of his job and its contents, insisting exclusively on a personal, individual level. The latter will identify himself with the firm he works with, i.e., the reference given to him by his employer.

The members of the North-American culture expect the employee to do his best to complete the job most successfully, with a motto "we must be willing to get our hands dirty". No consideration is given to whether

the job is physical or intellectual. Such a positive attitude towards work is generally not culturally universal. In some cultures, work is assigned many more negative connotations. Thus in south America doing physical jobs is considered to be degrading. Jobs are ranked according to status; educated employees with a university diploma will under no conditions do the "lower status" jobs [10].

People work for different reasons. First, there is the instrumentality of work – the motive comes from the desire to live a comfortable life and acquire necessary and even luxurious goods. When only this factor is taken into consideration in creating motivation programmes, management usually resort to techniques such as pay raise, bonuses, special privileges, etc.

Work, however, has other connotations, too. In addition to its material aspect, it can be interesting and inspirative whereby the individual can achieve a high level of self-actualization. Through work the individuals also interact with other people and actualize themselves in a social context. A large number of employees continue work even after they have provided themselves with a maximum of material wealth necessary for further living. In their lives, work has a central position. The study conducted in these eight countries, however, shows that work is not attached equal importance and meaning in all these cultures. Generally, the cultures whose members give work a central position are Japan, the USA, Germany, and Belgium [18].

The cultural differences in the meaning assigned to work hold a high practical importance for international managers. The set priorities are a perfect guideline to devise adequate motivation programmes.

Regardless of cultural differences, however, some aspects of work are attached equal importance in almost all cultures – good pay and an interesting job [12].

The personality concept has its different aspects. Western cultures understand personality as an entity that is absolutely independent and individually oriented. Every individual has a unique configuration of traits (capabilities, motives and values) that form his/her basis in the society. The main personality aspects are psychological-ecological [19], intrapersonal and public [17]. The first aspect refers to the fact that every individual understands and explains themselves as physically separated from other members of a society, thus also developing their own "self". The intrapersonal aspect means that every individual has his/her own internal world (stream of thoughts, dreams,

hopes) that is exclusively private and cannot be shared with others. Certain intrapersonal aspects are universal; the majority is however culturally determined. The public aspect of the personality is expressed and devloped through social contacts with other members of the society.

The members of different cultures understand the public aspect of the personality as separate and independent from other people, whereas others believe this aspect is inseparable from the social group and the society one lives in. Thus a large number of the western culture members believe in an absolute autonomy of a person. The norms demand that the individual become independent in time, revealing and expressing their unique qualities. Self-actualization, self-respect, potential realization and "devotion to oneself" reflect the key concept on which the autonomous personality is established.

The members of the eastern culture believe that the individual depends on his/her social group and the environment in general. As regards a fundamantal connectedness between people, every individual will create their behaviour, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, etc., under the influence of the existing social relations and connections [2]. Hence in these cultures there is a permanent motivation to fit into the social context.

The key differences between a dependent and an independent personality have implications upon creating motivational programmes within the organization too. The motives that drive these two categories of people largely differ. The concept of the independent personality is present in the individualistic cultures, whereas in collectivistic cultures the community concept is reflected upon the individual too.

6. Organizational policy and rewarding practice

The management of a large number of organizations equal the reward to the employee motivation. In grave economic conditions, when companies are forced to implement a downsizing programme and reduce costs, maintaining loyalty and motivation becomes a rather sensitive "field". It is in these situations that the management has to determine what employees perceive to be their most adequate reward.

During the crisis that swept through the Asian computer companies in the nineties, management believed that the best way of rewarding is distributing shares to the employees. As the value of the shares began to fall, however, they ceased to be a sufficiently motivat-

ing factor. According to the Asia Computer Weekly's report, the best accepted bonuses since 2002 proved to be the opportunity of further education, training and health care. The employees in this field still appreciated money bonuses most, however, the opening of fitness centres, cafeterias, opportunity to spend a holiday in the "holiday home" etc., were also well received among the employees [20].

The policy of rewarding in Europe is more flexible – companies let their employees choose among a number of alteratives, i.e., what satisfies their needs best at a given moment. For example, one choice can be a short holiday as a compensation to a higher pension plan. In the Pricewaterhouse Coopers accounting firm, the rewards to those with an above-average performance make an important aspect of corporate culture. Those who contributed to the improvement of organizational performance are awarded the "ABCD" ("Above and Beyond the Call of Duty") award that includes the Eurostar train tickets and the visits to wellness centres [1].

The importance of rewards in north America attracted special attention due to a wide diversification of the labour force. Very popular have become special cards with dicsounts that enhance shopping both in the shops and via the catalogue sales [13]. Comanies often adopt the practice of awards linked in a unique way to the business they are in. The FedEx company, for example, names a new plane after the name of an employee's child, and the family travels free to the company's headquarters in Memphis on the plaine's maiden flight. This ritual signifies the "plane's baptism" [15].

In Russia, which by the way promptly transforms into a capitalist country, financial rewards and provision of consumer goods are considered as the rewards highly favoured among the employees [14].

7. Conclusion

Everyday rapid changes are one of the basic characteristics of the modern times. A fast development of technology and communications, as well as numerous political changes and restructurings created new opportunities, but also potential problems. The turbulence and speed of the changes hinder any attempt of making predictions with certainty. The human resource management and motivation experts highlight two trends as crucial when talking about creating motivation programmes on a cross-cultural level.

The issue that attracts most attention is whether the collapse of the Soviet system will result into the inte-

gration of socialist cultures and hence stress the issue of social needs in the western companies. Some experts in this field believe that the said trend will result in a higher insistance on good interpersonal relations in the organizations on the western market, whereas in the former socialist countries (the former Eastern block) more attention will be paid to the development and improvement of production and the process of work itself. In practice, however, this thesis has not proved to be really valid. The American companies have long started the downsizing programmes and the strategy of creating the so-called "flat" organizational pyramids. Such a policy has left a large number of population jobless. On the other hand, in the former socialist countries, a large number of restrictions and government regulations have been abolished, which resulted into an evident rise and development of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as into the privatization process in the field of industries that used to be under the strict thumb of the state. After long years, these countries witness the rise of a real entrepreneurship spirit. The transformation from the closed to the open market economies has also resulted into the rise of new problems that are yet to be resolved.

The expansion of global business, as well as an exemptionally fast dvelopment of telecommunications have led numerous analysts to conclude that cultures worldwide tend to become uniform. The popularity of the American culture, but also the desire of the members of this culture to learn more about the cultures of foreign countries only confirms the trend. Of course, there are always counterarguments to these. The study conducted by Craig, Douglas and Grein on a sample of 18 developed industrial countries (as early as the 1960-1988 period) indicates that the cultural convergence is still a more realistic condition. Global economic problems and hence the existing protectionist measures and attitudes of various countries make an obstacle to the developemnt of a global culture [9].

Adler points out that every employee brings and reflects his/her ehnicity into the organization they work with [2]. International managers may find their employees' increasing insistence on their nationality and cultural heritage a specific problem. One of the well known practical examples is the experience of the Japanese company Bridgestone (producer of tyres) who bought the American company Akron for the purpose of strengthening their own position on the USA market. The cultural differences soon rose to the surface. In addition to the language barriers, there arose a plethora of things that were an obstacle to a smooth business doing: "The Japanese, who are used

to working until 9 in the evening, and even longer, were not able to persuade their American colleagues to remain at work as late. The Americans just could not understand why they are expected to work in open offices, sitting at tables so close to one another..." [21].

An adequate approach to motivating the employees is often a serious problem to even the most experienced international managers. According to certain practical experiences, the process theories proved applicable compared to the contents theories.

What the managers have to identify first in the process of developing efficient motivation systems is whether the prevailing culture is collectivistic or individualistic. The need to belong is a powerful motivator in the cultures where the value of social relations and group are insisted on. The individualism concept in these cultures, as well as the related motives cannot by any means serve as basis for motivating workers. Besides, regardless of the fact that all the individuals follow a hierarchal sequence in satisfying their needs, they will do it differently, in a culturally determined manner. It is absolutely clear that grouping countries into large clusters (e.g. developed and developing), without taking cultural attributes into consideration, does not appear to be a good solution to understanding the motivation process. The correct approach to be adopted is understanding besic needs, as well as the importance they are attributed in certain cultures. Also, for the purpose of making motivation models cross-culturally applicable, they should be analysed not only from the traditionally psychological, but also from the anthropological points of view, which will allow for a still deeper insight into understanding human behaviour.

One very good approach in motivating employees on an international level is the correct job design (in accordance with the established cultural values, of course). The management of any organization should continously address the issue of " putting the right people to appropriate jobs". In addition, those already employed in the organization should premanently be additionally educated and trained for the purpose of achieving a higher level of effectiveness.

The job should always be adapted to people, hence the programme of job redesigning has to be implemented in certain situations. The programme means that the employees will be more motivated if they value and appreciate what they do. Job redesigning, as regards the theory it is based on, may be oriented to creating opportunities to satisfy higher order needs (need hierarchy theory), increase intrapersonal job

satisfaction (expectancy theory), insist on intangible job outputs (equality theory), provide for the employees to set goals on their own (goal setting theory), etc.

The researchers and authors from the sociology field have found that the more complex the job is, the greater challenge it proves to be for the employees, hence their motivation grows. Although the differences as to the meaning of job complexity itself are culturally conditioned and omnipresent, a complex job, involving a range of activities, the responsibility for the performance achieved as well as participation in decision-making as regards the manner in which the job is to be done is found to be more encouraging for the employees compared to the less complex, simple and/or repetitive jobs. Hence another task for the cross-cultural manager is to continually enrich the job in order that it be more intriguing and more elaborated.

The basic skills the cross-cultural manager should master are the capability of understanding the situation realistically and objectively, sometimes leaving aside the theory, reasearch results, his own value system and thoughts, the misconceptions and prejudices present. The first step in studying the motivation process in other cultures should always be a detailed insight into the prevailing value system, norms and rituals.

Convergence and/or divergence, the global culture, has a powerful impact upon managing and creating cross-cultural motivation strategies and programmes. Research has shown that both tendencies are present on the international market.

The crucial factor among those that support the convergence process is a wide popularity and adoption of the American method of education in a large number of countries. Under this tendency international managers mainly base their knowledge of motivation process on the motivation theories of American origin [2]. Besides, global companies often develop consistent motivation policies and practices in their branches worldwide, as an attempt to ensure not only administrative efficiency, but an equal treatment of all the employees. Hence the prevailing motivation practices again are of American origin.

Since the abovementioned motivation theories are not applicable on a cross-cultural level, there is the need of managers, a divergence factor, to continually develop organizational systems whose flexibility supports the diversity of valuations of work and rewards provided by the employees in their branches worldwide. By adopting the adaptability approach to different

markets the organization will be in a position to simultaneously maintain the consistency of its motivation programmes on all the locations, therefore all the employees will receive an adequate treatmant in accordance with their adopted (culturally determined) values related to work.

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