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The Importance of Cross-Cultural Knowledge

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Abstract

The article focuses on the need of cross cultural knowledge for people working and living in the contemporary EU world. After joining the EU the Romanian work force underwent a profound transformation. Being aware of the cultural differences can provide better employment opportunities. The article focusses on the advantage of working in interdisciplinary field teams to promote the local products and preserve the traditions of Banat. A well designed marketing campaign can help present not only the traditional food in Banat, but also develop and create local path networks for the iconic landscapes in order to develop sustainable tourism. The authors stress the importance of university education in changing and developing mentalities, as part of a long term plan to secure a better future and a stronger rural economy.

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary society less emphasis is put on civilization and culture, and paradoxically their role is of utmost importance. To be able to preserve the traditions of Banat, in our opinion cross disciplinary research teams should be constituted at various levels: local, regional, national as part of a long term plan to secure a better future and a stronger rural economy. The university environment should not be omitted as it has the ability to change and

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develop mentalities. More than this, proper university training can help graduates find better employment opportunities.

The article presents the concept of culture and its main components, followed by the ways in which traditions of Banat reflect the multicultural ethnicity in the traditional food. The authors also suggest some ways in which the university teaching staff can help train the specialists in order to promote the traditional national values.

2. Culture and cultural specificity

When we think of culture, “a complex of tangible and intangible items comes to mind” (Wells, Burnett, Moriarty: 2003, p.92). In the first category we can rank the so called material culture, made up of music, literature, art in general. In the latter one, the classification is more difficult, as it refers to concepts, values, behaviors, mentality; all the things transmitted from generation to generation, but not genetically.

Much too often, people from diverse cultures behave differently in a given context. Culture is a prevailing mode to explain the individual or group variations, as far as behavior is concerned, or the differences between business behavior and its real significance. Culture patterns represent a framework for the understanding of the types of behavior encountered in business situations, which, at first, seem rather strange and difficult to understand. It is imperious necessary to make efforts to understand the sophisticated cultural models, especially in the current situation in which the business world becomes increasingly international and global.

Many attempts have been made along the years to define the concept of culture, in more than 160 definitions specialist tried to define it, but none of them was unanimously accepted (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952). In general, culture defines a way of life for a group of people, as each person learns a culture through a variety of experiences in his/her life. The most common mechanism, i.e.: culturalisation is an unintentional process that includes everything we learn from the environment (Herskovits, 1948). Primary socialization takes place in the family and the local community environment where we learn how to behave, first within the family frame, then with friends, later in school and in the community, and it is not something people are born with (Berger and Luckmann, 2011).

Therefore, since cultures are associated with specific geographic regions, it is to be expected that the population of a country behave differently from the population of other countries. Then, there is another type of socialization, a secondary one which is a continuous learning process, both informal and formal, which affects significantly the behavior at work. This behaviour includes the organizational motivations, reactions to the planned changes in an organization, as well as the individual’s career development plan. Cultural sociology perceives culture “a set of material and spiritual values, institutions, customs, norms, traditions, as an expression of the way of living and the life quality” (Civilizatia nevoia perspective- our translation) and analyzes it, in terms of social conditioning and its social functions, as a subsystem of sociology.

In 1959, White and Dillingham, in their essay “The Concept of Culture”, see culture function to the scientific context of interpretation. Culture is “a name given to a class of things which is dependent, irrespective if they are events or symbols, into a human or extra -human context. However, Edward B. Taylor’s definition of culture remains the starting point for further definitions. Thus, culture is broadly defined, ethnographically, as a complex ensemble which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and other skills and habits acquired by an individual as a member of a society“, to which other elements are added: political organisation, material objects made by humans, language, religion and other characteristics that differentiate human societies (Zdenek, 1969); in his view, culture is a *set of learned behaviors, socially influenced*.

Culturalisation is an unintentional process that includes everything we can learn from the environment (Herskovits, 1948). People do not behave in a certain way because they are proned by birth, but because they are taught to behave like this.

In the anthropological sense, even individuals who have no education whatsoever, or are illiterate, have a culture, i.e.: group culture which they belong to, no matter how primitive or advanced it is. By birth, a human becomes a member of a species, but it is not human until he/she assimilates the culture of the respective group; a culture synthesized and transmitted from generation to generation. Every human being is the product of a culture and it explains the differences between people which are actually differences between the cultures in which they lived. Anthropologists emphasize that we live our lives following the models and the standards transmitted by our own culture, therefore we are the product of our culture. The Romanian anthropologist Achim Mihaela perceives culture as:

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