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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,

sposób 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.

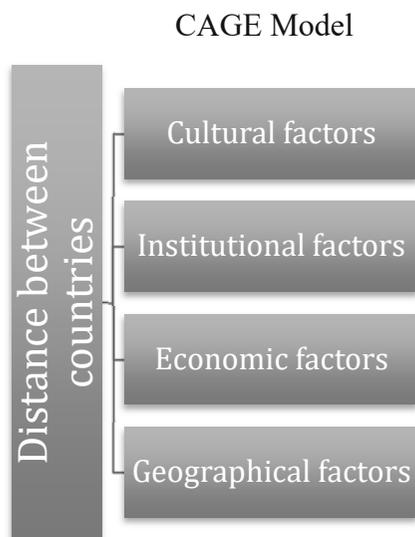


Figure 1. Factors determining the level of psychological distance between countries
 Source: P. Ghemawat, *Distance still matters, The hard reality of global expansions*, Harvard Business Review 2001, vol. 79 (8), 137-147, in: *Zarządzanie Międzynarodowe*, Ed. K. Oblój, A. Wąsowska, Warszawa 2014, s.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

towards specific situations and phenomena. One of the seven cultural dimensions is a dimension, describing two modes of behavior – universalistic and the particularistic, which determines a relation to ethical principles and the legal rules. Individualistic behavior means that a person when making a decision takes more into a consideration an interest of a given person instead of following a law or procedures (i.e. universal rules). The universalistic attitude manifests itself in the fact that, in the situation of a dilemma, whether a person is should prefer own interests or acts in accordance with the law or norms, he or she will choose the latter way of behavior.

In the “culture of management and work in Poland and Ukraine. Similarities and differences”, the manner in which managers behaves towards employee in a situation where the employee does not comply with ethical principles and organizational procedures was investigated. When asked on the way a manager behaves towards a worker who is his or her friend behaving in a manner contrary to the company’s procedures, while assessing Polish managers, 28% of the respondents pointed to the answer *It does not matter if the employee is a manager’s friend, I treat him/her like any other employee in such a situation*. In the case of Ukrainian managers, only 15% indicated such (universalist) behavior.

The respondents’ responses indicate on a low level of universalist behavior and a high level of particularistic behavior in both countries. The level of particularistic behavior in Ukraine (85% of indications) is higher than in Poland (72%), but in both countries it is high. The Trompenaars’ and Hampden-Turner’s study on universalistic and particularistic behavior pattern of different countries indicate high level of particularistic behavior in Central and Eastern Europe. Yet, the results of the author’s research are consistent with those of the two researchers.

Team work

Collective or individualistic behavior?

Analysis of the team members’ pattern of behavior in Ukraine and Poland regarding their preference of working individually or collective indicates on preference of latter in both countries. According to respondents, workers in both countries help each other in the at the same level (52% of indications), however, in Ukraine people help each other to a higher degree (27% indications versus 12% in Poland). Only 6% of respondents indicated that colleagues do not help each other either in Poland or in Ukraine. Employees in both cultures show collectivistic behavior, but in Ukraine to a higher degree.

Specific or diffuse culture

If we can recognize that in both countries employees build friendly relationships at work, those outside of work have different pattern. 40% respondents indicate that team members maintain friendship relations outside of work, in Poland respectively – 24 %. The latter behavior of Poles is typical for specific culture, which separate work from private life and the behavior of Ukrainians is typical of diffuse culture in which both spheres of life are interwoven.

Particularistic and universalistic team member behavior

An important aspect of teamwork is a way how an employee reacts upon a colleague behavior that violates work rules or procedure. The reaction of Polish workers is more universalistic than that of Ukrainian workers. Table 1. shows the behavioral pattern in both countries.

Table 1. Behavioral pattern of an employee upon a workmate that violates a rule or procedure

	Poland	Ukraine
I do nothing, s\he is my colleague and having good relation with this person are important to me	15%	33%
I would tell the person to change the behavior but in a way it does not spoil our relationship	59%	46%
I would tell the person to change the behavior even if this spoils our relationship	12%	12%
I would report this to his/her supervisor as her or his behavior has influence on a performance of a team	12%	9%

Source: Report "Ukrainian and Polish Culture of Management and Work. Similarities and Differences", Foundation of the Polish Institute of Mentoring, 2016.

In Ukraine, employees manifest distinctly more particularistic behaviors (33%) than employees in Poland (15%). The latter show a greater degree of universalist behavior (12%) than Ukrainian workers (9%). The pattern of employee behavior towards one each other is consistent with the pattern of managerial behavior toward employees, which confirms that both societies (although in varying degrees) exhibit particularistic behavior.

Communication in organization

The author examined four aspects of communication: verbal communication – the way of addressing one another (cultural dimension: large or small distance of power), nonverbal communication – expression level (cultural dimension: neutrality or emotionality), relation to time – level of punctuality (cultural dimension: monochronic and polychronic culture).

Regarding a way employees call their supervisor in Poland and Ukraine, there are different patterns of communication. They come from the specificity of the Ukrainian language. In Ukraine, employees call to their supervisors using patronymic name (75% of indications), while in Poland no one uses such form (no indication in this regard). In Poland, the most common form of addressing a supervisor is the formal Mr or ` Mrs form of address together with the surname (36%) or first name (48%). Addressing supervisors per “boss” in Poland and Ukraine was indicated respectively by 28% and 18% respondents. The percentage of usage of both forms – formal and informal when addressing a supervisor in Poland reflects the duality of applied managerial style: hierarchical to a higher degree and egalitarian to a lesser degree.

Affective or neutral culture

When comparing of non-verbal communication of Poles and Ukrainians, different patterns of expression were observed. Table 2 provides answers to the question how an employee’s express emotion when discussing a delicate or difficult situation.

Table 2. The way to show emotions in a delicate or difficult matter.

	Poland	Ukraine
A person speaks in a neutral way, an interlocutor cannot recognize her/his emotions by behavior or body language	15%	13%
Speaks with some emotion in voice but not showing emotion with body language	46%	22%
A person speaks with emotion in voice showing also emotion with body language	27%	38%
A person speaks emotionally, with different voice, showing emotions with intensive body language	12%	27%

Source: Report “Ukrainian and Polish Culture of Management and Work. Similarities and Differences”, Foundation of the Polish Institute of Mentoring, 2016.

Both Poles and Ukrainians communicate in an emotional way. Poles mostly show emotion in a voice, but they express limited body language (46% vs. 22% for Ukrainians). Ukrainians show strong emotions in the voice and through the body language (27% vs. 12% for Poles). Crying at work during a conversation about a delicate and difficult matter is considered “human behavior and fully acceptable” by 36% in Ukrainians against 24% in Poles.

Monochronic or polychronic culture

Among the seven dimensions of cultures defined by Tromenaars and Hampden-Turner there is monochronic culture, where punctuality is a paradigm and there is polychronic culture in which time is perceived more flexible. In the study of the behavior of Poles and Ukrainians regarding the perception of time, there was a significant difference between them in the punctuality of starting meetings. 52% of respondents indicated that in Poland meetings were started on time, compared to 31% in Ukraine. According to 6% of respondents Meetings generally begin with a delay in Poland and 13% in Ukraine. Similarly to the question of punctuality of completing out tasks, 11% of respondents indicated that in Poland Most of the projects are delayed against 27% in Ukraine. The results show that there is a difference between Ukrainian and Polish employees in punctuality – both regarding task and project completion and starting a meeting.

In conclusion, the results of the study of the culture of management and work in Poland and Ukraine show many similarities in behavior patterns and ways of thinking, but they vary in intensity. In the GLOBE world study⁸ on the style of leadership and organizational behavior in different cultures, ten cultural clusters were distinguished,⁹ characterized by specific patterns of organizational behavior.¹⁰ Poland and Ukraine belong to a common cluster of Eastern European countries, indicating a number of common leadership and working behaviors. Cluster of Eastern European countries includes such countries as Russia, Greece, Hungary, Albania, Slovenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan (those countries were studied) which

8 GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) study performed in 62 countries.

9 Following clusters were distinguished: Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Nordic, Latin European, Eastern European, Southeastern Asian, South American, African, Confucian and Near Eastern.

10 *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, eds. R. House, P. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. Dorfman, V. Gupta, Thousand Oaks: Sage 2004.

cultures differ from each other, but to a lesser extent than the cultures of other clusters.

The results of this study confirm the results of the world GLOBE survey, which due to many similarities included Poland and Ukraine in the same cultural cluster of Eastern Europe, but when discussing in different cultural dimensions (in this article analyzed by the dimensions proposed by Trompenaars a number of differences in cultural pattern of behavior were observed). In the light of the study results, founded out differences in managerial and employees behavior in Poland and Ukraine, a need for developing inter-cultural skills by Polish and Ukrainian managers is a must.

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