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GLOBALIZATION AND NATIONAL CULTURE: MANAGERIAL APPROACHES AT A WORKPLACE

Many writers describe Globalization as a very rapidly spread of technologies and communications over the world. The term "globalization" is also used by some to refer to the efforts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and others to create a global free market for goods and services [3]. If globalization is about economic relations between countries and nations, it has been developing for centuries and has influenced on societies' cultures, too, and presents positive and negative sides of this.

Recent financial turmoil has shown that some changes will happen in economic relations and hence these changes would reflect the relations between management and local staff of many multinational corporations. Just few years ago globalization was presented as the only one possible way to prosperity and all processes that supported this were considered beneficial for societies. Some economists even proposed the "formula"

Privatization + Deregulation + Globalization = Turbo-capitalism = Prosperity ,

where tried to express the idea that for a society to reach prosperity to be deregulated is the best position [5].

This paper considers some aspects of globalization at workplace and some changes in cultural dimensions that have happened for the last decade. The paper tries to discover if any differences in relationships within multinational companies appear considering the environment of the end of the twentieth century and the current situation.

How can people define the culture? As Ina C. Brown, professor of anthropology describes it, the "...culture is our routine of sleeping, bathing, dressing, eating, and getting to work. It is our household chores and actions we perform on the job, the way we buy goods and services...It is the way we greet friends or address a stranger...and even to a large extent what we consider right or wrong" [7].

Kazakhstan is a large country with its geography, traditions, people, and culture. The prominent Kazakh scientist Alkey Margulan has described that the very first notion about the Kazakhs' every day life appeared in the works of Fazallah Ruzbikhhan from Buhara in XV-XVI centuries. It was the first description of material life of the Kazakhs: peculiar dwellings, weapons, and house utensils. In the opinion of Alkey Margulan there were the art of nomadic tribes – Sakis, Usuns, Kanglys, and Kipchacks who inhabited the vast territory of the ancient Kazakhstan [2, 7].

The steppe with its unique geographical environment, flora and fauna exerted an influence not only on anthropology, but also on the whole mode of life, culture, religion, cosmology, attitude of the steppe inhabitants. The nomadship as the most favorable form of economy in the existent conditions was the basis of a steppe culture. The phenomenon of nomadship should be understood like the system of interaction, balance, and harmonious co-existence between the nature and the individual. In ancient times an individual animated the world and every thing. A traditional world outlook is not an attitude of the concrete person but outlook of the community, the human collective. We can study any cultural outflows only from studying the society and interrelations within it.

While scientists have paid a lot of attention to the material culture of Kazakh nation we have a little about people relationships with each other, especially while doing any business. The culture of interrelationships between people and the nature as well as with other people and nations is defined by the life style of the whole nation. Earlier Kazakhstan was described as a young state, emerging with the Soviet era. All previous foundations and socio-cultural interrelationships were viewed

through negative outlook. As the nation should defend itself from hostile tribes in medieval ages this also reflected on the structure of the society where the 'sultan' stood at the head and was treated as the defender. The rest obeyed him. There was the natural hierarchy in the Kazakh society. A long time it reflects on the overall life in the Kazakh society and exists in relationships between parents and children, employer and employees, superiors and subordinates. We are still trying to view the Kazakh nation through the values and traditions of ancient tribes lived here many ages ago. But it is also necessary to consider new traits brought by contemporary development. Thus, the idea of a single defender substitutes with the one of self-responsibility of an independent individual and a society as well.

In 1990s fundamental changes in the environment caused deep influence on the society, and created reaction, which could be named a "cultural shock". That time, Kazakhstan was going through transition period and was suffering from this "cultural shock", that caused the radical changes in the ideology, political regime, forms of property and so on. Certainly, there won't be any return to ancient culture as the process of globalization not only in markets but in people minds has come to Kazakhstan with many large multinationals. Some intellectual standards were brought by foreigners, and the common are the same as in the rest of the world. But there were some peculiarities in the domestic culture such as: do not argue with senior manager, show high respect to authority, still rely (or hope to rely) on some guarantees from government, respect traditions, be sensible to changes, extend readiness to help.

With new standards foreign companies brought globalization to the country. Due to globalization more and more companies have been entered the international arena and have been colliding with cultural differences. Sometimes the culture in a host country may significantly differ from the culture at home. How much from national culture do we have now and how it influences relations between people? Can globalization successfully enter any society without paying attention to national culture? These questions are vital for any society.

Different cultures have different values, beliefs, and attitudes. Because of these differences the behaviour of two cultures may be interpreted differently. For example for one culture bribery is unacceptable and illegal, whereas for another it is usual mean of doing business. Such variations in ethical norms create difficulties in doing global business. But all ethical standards reflect the cultural values of the society.

Surely, globalization can bring many advanced technologies to any country. It also brings changes in relations between people not only of different cultures but also within one society, because of certain changes happened in it, at least, in forms of ownership. It is valuable to know if these characteristics of globalization will not destroy cultural values of the nation.

THE NATIONAL CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

A social system of nomads is the historical prototype of a post-modern consciousness, and represents a net structure. The current process of integration, co-operation, mutual interdependence and influence of cultures are analogous to the territorial principles of the nomads, consisted of appropriation and growth roots in possession of absolute movement towards higher level of culture, life in the whole. That permanent movement and removal are not only territorial bounds but also a united structure of political power.

Being the nomad is connected to a special care treatment to the nature, besides the peculiarities of his mentality. The settled culture tried to develop and transform the nature. The nomadic culture is characterized by the meditative attitude that does not break the balance of nature [1, 32]. The national symbol of the world is the Kazakh yurta (nomad's conical hut). That is the mode of the Universe in a notion of the Kazakhs. The world outlook of the Kazakhs is displayed in rituals. The three main holidays are possessed by the nation. There are birth, wedding, and burial. Three types of dwellings conform them: cradle, yurta and grave. The all spheres of being have such compulsory influence on the nation's life [1, 47]. The aim of every business working here should be not to destroy the peculiar world-perception of the local people.

At the end of the last century when globalization expanded to Central Asia, some service and consulting companies appeared in Kazakhstan for providing their services to large MNC (mainly

from oil business) and government. Their prices are still high for majority of local firms. But they compete with local consulting firms using their rich marketing competence and famous brand names. Mainly managers of foreign companies used Global Mentality in their activities within Kazakhstan. They hardly believed that local employees should adapt to their requests and didn't take into account local conditions. It's very easy to say that MNCs conducted their inner policy (which should be common for all overseas branches) and didn't take into consideration mentality of local employees.

In order to study relationships between foreign and local specialists a mini-research was conducted at the end of the last century. The Company, one of the World leading professional services organizations that employs over thousands of people in more than hundred countries around the world was studied. The Company has been operating on the CIS markets since 1989, staffed by local and expatriate experts.

A) A corporate culture as a phenomenon.

What is corporate culture? "The basic idea of culture, including corporate culture, is that it consists of shared meanings and common understanding, and that this culture is variable from company to company... And cultures are affected by the events of the past and by the climate of the present, by the technology of the type of work, by the aims, and the kind of people that work in them"[7].

Why corporate culture is important to study? The most general answer to this question is that the idea of corporate culture helps us to describe and understand organizations better. Any firm has to do business according to two major aims: to earn money and to be successful, i.e. to survive and to perform itself in the best way. At the same time corporate culture sets the limits on what companies can and cannot do, without any change in culture, which is slow and difficult.

That is why the culture of the company is a mirror of the company's ability to respond to the challenges of the environment. Thus, any business faces two sets of demand: for external adaptation and for internal integration. In the shape of this problem we were trying to identify if there the corporate culture existed in Almaty office of a large MNC. And also the aim was, comparing the national culture and the corporate culture of that Multinational Company, to reveal the implications of both for each other.

B) Environment

The environment in which the company operates determines what it must do to be a success. From the words of its employees they feel quite comfortable living in Kazakhstan. May be the first comers suffered more from some inconveniences of the life because of absence of modern shops, imported products, etc. Now the employees attend Health Club at the Hayatt Hotel, their children go to the International school. Thus, they can feel that a little part of the western life style exist in Kazakhstan.

The company is a vertically structured organisation. It is like a pyramid with its base and top. There is a clear division between levels. Every employee exercise power and responsibility determined for his/her level. In order to reach the peak of the hierarchy, the employees have to go through all levels. Making a career it takes one and a half of a year for being taken to the next level. Superiors and subordinates have close communication that promotes good company performance.

The Company maximises its knowledge of any local culture where it operates, in order to gain the advantages of cultural diversity. All company's experts go through mandatory introductory course to the local culture. Such programmes endorse the respect of the local culture and make easier the infusion of the company to the workplace. The harmonious relations within the company provide better working conditions for the employees and the productivity of the organization.

We asked the Personnel Manager of the company if they had the activity conducted by a specific department which consisted of career development of women and minorities. She said that problems of women and minorities are the matter of a great concern for the Company only in the United States. However, in Kazakhstan, due to the local composition of the population, the Company does not apply such a policy because there were no such problems in Kazakhstan. They do not consider that people are different by the colour of their skin. They hire employees according

to their professional characteristics. The company's management does not divide as novelties as current employees according to their nationality or living level.

C) Culture

Every business and every organization has a culture. Sometimes the culture of an organization is very strong and cohesive; everyone knows the goals of the corporation, and they are working for them. Whether weak or strong, culture has a powerful influence throughout an organization; it affects practically everything - from who gets promoted and what decisions are made, to the issue how employees dress and what sports they play. Because of this impact the culture has a major effect on the success of the business.

At the same time, the company has its own culture, as well, which mostly refers to the international one. This culture can be defined as a set of universal rules and norms that spells out how people are to behave most of that. The Company has a lot of rules, written manuals for the employees because they are striving to be a leader in the market of audit services. It also reflects not only on the quality of the employees but also on the culture within the company. However, the company does not have any written prescriptions concerning the time when the employees should arrive at workplaces in mornings. The schedule is very flexible, but the management takes into account the results of the job done and the quality of it. English is an official language of the company and is obligatory to the employees. The Russian language is used as far as it necessary for business. Kazakh language is not used, because, in the words of the HR manager, there is lack of enforcement mechanisms and it is not the language of communication.

C) Survey

The survey revealed that there were some aspects that could help or hinder the cultures to co-exist. First of all the majority of our people have unshakable stereotypes about foreigners and MNCs. We have rejected several stereotypes, but have added new ones. Different groups of people (depending on age, social classes, income, etc.) have various sets of stereotypes, which are different and opposed. Older people have much more and solid stereotypes; younger people have rather generalizations than stereotypes, because of less life experience and flexible thinking. But here were some about foreigners and MNCs, which had been common for our culture:

- they are always polite and friendly
- all of them are rich
- they are here in order to become richer and make us poorer
- first of all, they always think about money
- we can't understand them, because they think different
- it is very prestigious to work in MNC as it is an opportunity for good career.

Foreigners also had stereotypes about us. They had been created by mass media and from books of western authors. Foreigners were sure, that:

- we can't understand them, because they think different
- we are lazy
- we love holidays
- we can understand only orders
- we are past-oriented people
- our knowledge is lower than one of foreign employees
- we don't know how to work.

If people want integration they should overcome their stereotypes about many things. A person can understand better if he/she overcomes some barriers. We should learn more about habits, traditions, conditions in which those traditions have been developed and many other things.

Historically we couldn't say that Kazakhstan had strong clerical culture. As nomadic nation Kazakhstani people has their own vision of human's place in the nature, society, work place. Traditional scope of the Kazakhs sees man as a whole system of integrity, unity with the whole world. As academician M. Bakhtin said "an individual accepts himself as an inseparable part of the group" [1, 3].

In the survey we used the Hofstede's study that was conducted in 1980s and revealed the following trends among Soviet people at that time: large power distance, strong uncertainty avoidance, collectivistic nature, masculine society. The mini-survey changed only one point – post-soviet people have become more individualistic society.

According to the words of the company's manager there are the positive sides of the local culture as sincere interest to each other, openness, generosity, tolerance and endurance. While the negative sides of the local culture are lack of personal responsibility and lack of initiative.

The survey within the company has shown the following results:

1 Large Power Distance existed in the company. The majority of employees agreed that superiors and subordinates were not different human beings, but they were divided by power.

2 Weak uncertainty avoidance. The employees had flexible and open minds for new ideas. However, these new ideas should not be a threat to the company's every day life, which strictly defined by written rules and regulations.

3 From the results of the survey it could be seen that employees with primary collectivistic psychology, were influenced by Western culture with clearly defined individualistic orientation.

4 The results of the survey showed that feminine dimension prevails in the company's culture. This supported our findings about dominance of the Western style in relationships in the internal culture of the MNC.

During the work we drew up some specific characteristics of the Company's corporate culture. According to our mini-survey, discussions with employees as local as foreign ones we could conclude that:

- The culture followed the tendency of globalization;
- The culture could be defined as role culture, according to Charles Handy's study where "overall task is disaggregated into discrete functions and departments". At the same time that division of functions was supported by the strict hierarchy where "roles and procedures are important, and the whole edifice is coordinated at the top" [4, 204-207]. Thanks to that type of culture the Company being a well-structured organization is successful in many markets. Their strength is "the ability to act and process rationally and uniformly; ...the weakness is a limited ability to react to change or challenge". [6, 4] The choice of such a culture was determined by the company history, size, technology, goals, and environment, and the people as well.

Unfortunately, we did not reveal at that time any significant implication of the local culture to the Company's corporate culture. Contrarily, in our opinion, there was the significant corporate culture that absorbed its employees. But it did not contradict the nature of Eastern man who used to live "being absorbed by universum" that was in that case the corporate culture of the Company. May be "to be absorbed" is not too bad for the Kazakhstani people.

Recent events show that globalization with its main features does not make the market "laissez-faire" regime stronger, but it erodes this. Now when a lot of changes happen due to the world new crisis it is very interesting if the tendency of individualistic, non-governmental approach to managing large corporations still remain. There are some signs of transferring governance from private sectors to governments in many countries as the only one possible way to withstand and overcome the crisis.

In this case MNCs should develop very careful policies as they are not "teachers" or "progress and culture providers" any more. These companies are better to build structures and establish cultures that would listen to local voices. As it is known, a more efficient structure during crises is one which is highly centralized as well as modern organization's culture should create stricter rules in order not to waste resources. It seems that, probably, this multinational company is a good example of a foreign corporation that is able to stand during that serious economic situation as it possesses the traits of a centralized organization. This company's approaches allow it to survive in this difficult time because it unwillingly has some signs of the local traditional culture that were surveyed.

Globalization can be successful only if it assumes and takes into account that there are many cultures in the world. And these cultures are to exist together not bringing any harm to each other,

but sharing the most precious aspects of their values. Even in doing business people should count cultural traits of any society. Even in economical aspects cultural interdependence can cause success or failure in economy development.

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