

Cultural Conditions of the Labour Force Transfer

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1. NETWORK ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES IN GLOBALISATION CONDITIONS

The main reason for development of different co-operation networks of companies is a big diversity and dispersal of competence in the field of technology, production, marketing, organisation, management etc. Possessing such competence is a source of competitive advantage for a business entity. However, it seldom happens that such competence is complete and, particularly, if its level is assessed in relation to challenges posed by the global market. In this situation more and more companies undergo a clear evolution from autarky to openness, from concentration of all functions under one management to far-reaching devolution and to operation of different task groups in network structures including partners from different parts of the world. Time of such co-operation is generally limited to accomplishment of a given undertaking and configuration of partners tends to vary. Formation of co-operation networks becomes increasingly important in companies forced to respond to changing situations in their market environment rapidly. A challenge here is to link people, capital and technical means in manufacturing processes rapidly and effectively overcoming borderlines of countries and particular organisations. This globalisation form seems to be of fundamental importance for operation of the contemporary economy. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe will not really be included in world economy system until network co-operation forms have become more popular here than existence of bureaucratised, functional structures oriented at local markets.

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These are technologies and not bureaucratic structures and procedures which become contemporary boundaries of organisations. Thus, we are dealing with a transformation process of large autarkically oriented companies concentrating all production and services processes needed for them in themselves into systems of temporary, small and maximally elastic teams entering into different co-operation systems in the global environment.

Network structures differ from traditional ones also in the object and way of undertaking specialisation. Namely, functional specialisation, which found expression in traditional structures in formation of divisions and sections such as planning, marketing, production, etc. isolating specialists grouped in these units effectively, tends to disappear. Within the network structure specialisation is focussed on an object and it is oriented at implementing a definite project. Professional specialisation of employees is, of course, needed, but specialists are required to perceive a broad context of work and possess skills of applying their specialist knowledge in accomplishing different tasks in different conditions. It implies necessity of perceiving various interrelationships and learning permanently. It is the team's task to accomplish a definite task performing such combination of activities, which are needed for this purpose. This is facilitated by diversified character of employees' knowledge and skills, as well as by their exchange between teams. Such task orientation aiming at implementing joint projects is a basic factor in integration of specialists dispersed within the network structure.

Contemporary economic processes and organisational forms of activity accompanying them lead to disappearance of many features characteristic of the industrial era. Factors determining competitive advantage till recently such as location of the company in vicinity of markets or supply sources, many production series tend to lose their significance more and more clearly in comparison with knowledge. However, unlike material resources knowledge is dispersed, changeable and it is not the company's property. The contemporary market organises business activity around information. Tapping this information means implies a continuous development of knowledge and it can be done only in condi-

tions of full openness to co-operation both in relationships between employees of the company and in inter-organisation relationships. Organisational networks gain popularity just because they are "learning" systems and also systems generating knowledge through opening multiple communication channels. Network systems are not as yet the only form of coping with challenges posed by unstable conditions, in which business activity is conducted. And this was the main motive of organisational changes in the industrial era. On the contrary, network structures generate this instability themselves.

2. BEHAVIOURS OF MEMBERS OF TEMPORARY TASK TEAMS

Work in network structures consists in constant searching by employees of their place in the system of organisational activities. This, in turn, consists in entering different task teams, which is assisted by employees' own skills and also by their ability to promote these skills. Time of remaining in such team can vary depending on time assigned for implementing a given project or on time, during which an employee can be useful in a team. One and the same employee can participate in activities of several teams simultaneously. Composition of task teams undergoes constant changes. Their members are not only employees of a given company representing a different professional specialisation but also representatives of other co-operating organisations. Thus, there is a small chance that an employee when wandering within the organisational network can meet the same group of co-workers. An employee's social environment undergoes constant changes, as they have to perform their tasks in a constantly changing configuration of co-workers differentiated not only with regard to their professional specialisation but also personality traits and preferable patterns of cultural behaviours. Alongside a skill of adaptation to new tasks, no less important is, thus, a skill of social adaptation consisting in rapid decoding of commonly accepted co-operation principles and proper incorporation of an employee's own habits and behaviour forms in the team's social structure. Such adaptation cannot boil down to an uncritical subordination to the group's dominant subcul-

ture. It is frequently underlined that the team's strength in the network structure results not from elimination but rather from consolidation of varying characteristics of its members. Each member is expected to contribute something new also in the field of social relations, which can prove valuable for an appropriate accomplishment of a project. On the other hand, it is obvious that lack of elasticity and stubborn promotion of one's system of values and social norms can eliminate opportunities of effective co-operation. Social adaptation is a difficult art of subordinating oneself to the group culture, while simultaneously making a unique, individual contribution to it.

Adaptation skills become increasingly necessary in connection with the elastic employment policy more and more frequently pursued by companies. It is a policy, in accordance with which only a narrow group of key employees is hired for an indefinite time. The remaining employees are hired temporarily according to the existing situation, that is when demand for their work appears.

Terms of the employment contract contain a precisely defined task, and a hired employee is expected to accomplish this task within a precisely defined time. Hence, more and more people work casually circulating between companies using their services. Part-time jobs without an employment contract and connected with performing a specific assigned tasks are common in the United States. Owing to these forms companies can use both services provided by top-class experts, whose employment on a full-time basis would be impossible or unprofitable for the employer, as well as numerous rank and file executive workers. According to J. Castro, employers transfer "just in time" principle from production to employment. It allows them to reduce labour costs considerably and enhance the company's competitiveness.

Elastic employment known till recently only in relation to representatives of the so-called free professions begins to be applied commonly in relation to almost all employee groups. It is connected with a trend towards simplifying organisational structures in companies, which means shifting certain functions and structure elements to environment and firing people hitherto linked with the company. In the new world of free competition employees in the company

are perceived through costs and they have to compete in the labour market with a bigger and bigger number of better and better educated employees coming not only from a given locality or country but also from other countries in connection with intensifying movement of labour on international scale.

A skill of adaptation to elastic employment conditions means primarily a skill of competing, taking care of one's professional reputation, readiness to accept difficult and responsible tasks. Good employees with recognised professional achievements are in demand and they are free to pick and choose one of available employment offers. Adaptation of conditions of competition implies constant efforts at self-improvement and a concern about a proper development of one's professional career.

3. DIRECTION OF CHANGES IN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Earlier management and organisational forms were oriented at avoiding uncertainty through attempts to ensure stability of organisational power relations, stability of activity forms and stability of relationships between people creating the organisation's social environment.

A way of stabilising organisational power relations was hierarchy, which in its cultural layer bases on a conviction about necessity of maintaining continuity in the power relations system and emphasising an emotional aspect of the management authority. It paved the way for a paternalistic relationship between superiors and subordinates.

Stabilisation of activity forms was achieved through standardisation of products, work methods and instruments. Standardisation through creation of ready-made thinking and activity patterns leads to simplification of the reality. Order is identified here with repeatability and regularity of processes. Hence, a tendency to ignore untypical, exceptional and non-routine phenomena, and a negative attitude towards them. It is due to the fact that organisational culture

in conditions of standardisation consists in creating the organisation's own predictable world despite the changeable and uncertain reality.

Stabilisation of relationships between people consisted in implanting a sense of membership and group identity. Identification with a group (a company) was facilitated by: specialisation of activity, absence of social mobility and search for a reference group connected with it, as well as competition between groups leading to formation of cultural systems (values, habits, customs), which would distinguish and antagonise social groups.

Hence, cultural patterns supporting traditional organisational systems were favourable for low tolerance of uncertainty. Contemporary trends in development of civilisation observed in highly developed countries point to main characteristics of the post-industrial era. These characteristics include primarily temporariness and changeability of social and organisational relations. Traditional organisational solutions and management forms based on stability of the organisation's goals and its operation processes, and predictability of changes occurring in its environment become ineffective in these conditions.

A condition for adopting management forms adequate to the new situation is a fundamental change in organisational culture consisting in transition from an organisational culture favourable for avoidance of uncertainty to a culture facilitating a high tolerance of uncertainty in the company's social environment. To increase resistance to uncertainty inevitable in conditions of global ties and flood of information it is necessary to assimilate and accept organisational culture patterns completely different from those, which were desirable in earlier forms of organisational activity.

Temporariness and changeability of in-company relationships mean instability of the organisational power system and complication of superiority and subordination relations.

The main value becomes not power as such but adequacy of power relations to the type of performed task. It forces out a rational attitude to the management authority.

Standardisation is replaced by accepted diversity of activities consisting in individualisation of problems and creative approach to resolving them.

Untypical phenomena are treated as a source of inspiration and relativism of assessments as a principle.

Instead of the sense of membership there is pointed out the necessity of maintaining a sense of harmony in collaboration of people representing different social groups. It is dictated by a growing social mobility requiring adaptation skills, changeability of organisational activity forms forcing out openness to different ways of thinking and acting, competition rather between people than between groups as a result of transient and changeable configurations of social groups. All these factors prompt identification of personal interests without necessity of locating them in a definite reference group.

The culture of high tolerance of uncertainty implies an enhanced employee emancipation through restricting a search for external stabilisers of their work situation, and finding these points of support in their own knowledge, skills and professional experience. The employee becomes much more independent, but simultaneously uncertainty generated by the organisation's environment becomes largely their own problem to be solved. The employee deprived of support in the form of a charismatic leader, uniform standards of tasks accomplishment and a clearly defined social group, with which they can identify themselves, more and more frequently has to cope with uncertainty accompanying their professional activity by themselves.

Pondering over differences between organisational cultures typical of bureaucratic organisations and cultures desirable in contemporary – changeable and innovative forms of organisations, P. Bate comes to the conclusion that traditional cultures focussed on roles performed by people, whereas contemporary cultures lay emphasis on the quality of ties and a dialogue between people. This author makes a distinction between “community” and “network” culture. Traditional organisational cultures are community cultures, in which the main role is played by isolation from environment achieved through a strong internal integration permitting an effective resistance to environment. Ideals of the community culture are: strong hierarchy, restricted interaction and communication channels, explicitly defined place and role of each community member. Unlike this culture the network culture is much more open, spontaneous and voluntary.

Its most important characteristic is permissiveness, as it allows a much bigger freedom in thinking and behaviour.

The most important cultural patterns refer to exchange of ideas between people and to negotiation forms. Uncertainty is a permanent characteristic of social situations in network cultures.

Mobility of people in modern organisational systems deprived of distinct boundaries, in which they work in different places contacting members of different teams and organisations, and participating in accomplishment of different tasks causes that traditional functions of organisational culture have to be understood in a completely different way.

The integration function, which in the culture of low tolerance of uncertainty would satisfy an obstinate need of seeking a permanent reference group giving the sense of belonging and identity means today a skill of integrating easily with different social groups, which finds expression in the ease of entering new social groups and exiting others. Thus, integration means the ease of integrating and not the permanence of social bonds in the language of new organisational culture. Cultural patterns, owing to which it will be easier to overcome fear connected with the sense of missing membership will be helpful in popularising this characteristic.

The perception function, which in the culture of low tolerance of uncertainty meant a skill of translating observed facts, events and processes into an understandable language of own culture implies an effort of understanding their real meanings and determinants in the new culture. This approach protects against easy generalisation and induces relativism of judgements. New cultural patterns in this field mean primarily an inclination to widening and not reducing the set of information coming from environment. The most important role of these patterns should be seen in overcoming fear connected with cognitive dissonance.

Finally, the adaptation function, which in the culture of low tolerance of uncertainty meant a desire to adapt environment to requirements posed by own culture and a skill of such adaptation, means today a skill of either adapting oneself to changing situations in environment or of co-creating cultural patterns

jointly with representatives of different social groups. To achieve this goal it is necessary to develop an instrumental attitude to components of own organisational culture and search for paradoxes and contradictions, which facilitate releasing oneself from one's own thinking schemes and cultural constraints. The new way of understanding the adaptation function of culture means overcoming fear connected with responsibility for one's own actions and decisions.

4. FINDINGS OF SURVEYS FOCUSSED ON ACCEPTANCE OF NEW CULTURAL PATTERNS AMONG POLISH EMPLOYEES

Introduction of a market economy system in Poland along with its political and social implications, and the opening of Polish economy to global processes require a fundamental cultural change. Direction of this change should correspond to social and cultural transformations dominant in the contemporary world. Thus, it should produce a higher degree of uncertainty tolerance. Hence, a question about readiness to accept patterns of the organisational culture characterised by a high tolerance of uncertainty and assimilation of the new system of values by Polish employees is quite significant from the viewpoint of the country's adaptation to requirements posed by the contemporary world. That is why, the surveys carried out in 1997 aimed at assessment of inclination of people employed in different organisations to accept values and social standards of the organisational culture desirable in conditions of uncertainty of activities.

When selecting the object of surveys, it was decided that the sample would be chosen purposefully, which meant that groups of respondents, from whom a bigger acceptance of patterns characteristic for the organisational culture of high tolerance of uncertainty in comparison with other employee groups could be expected, would be determined purposefully. Namely, the surveys were conducted among persons, who because of their age, educational activity or conditions of performing professional work could be especially susceptible to assimilating cultural patterns desirable in contemporary organisations.

The surveys encompassed 600 respondents including: managers representing top and middle management levels, participants of different post-diploma courses and economically active students attending extra-mural courses.

The average score of the studied acceptance level of the culture of high uncertainty tolerance among respondents was 3.46 on the scale: from 1 (very low acceptance) to 5 (very high acceptance). This result points to an inclination to a moderate acceptance of patterns of the culture of high uncertainty tolerance by respondents. It was a group of persons, in which – taking into consideration characteristics of respondents – there should be expected a positive attitude to directions of the civilisation development generating uncertainty. The obtained result, which does not depart much from a neutral state, suggests that acceptance of traditional patterns of the culture of low uncertainty tolerance should be rather expected in other social environments.

The surveys in question can provide information about certain more general trends. Namely, their findings indicate that a typical respondent is more inclined to accept authoritarian forms of wielding power in their company than in the State. Democracy in the State – rather ‘yes,’ democracy in the company – already ‘not necessarily.’ Such stance results obviously from the traditional perception of the organisation as a hierarchical system, which is cushioned by work humanisation postulates. A similar finding concerned the relationship between the individual and the social group. A typical respondent is more attached to individualistic norms in the general culture than in the organisation. The respondent’s preferences regarding standardisation look different. An average employee expects a higher standardisation level in social life, whereas in the place of work they perceive the necessity of greater freedom of behaviours and innovations. It is probably, on one hand, a reaction to commonly criticised weaknesses and loopholes in the legal system during the transformation period and, on the other hand, it can be due to disparities between requirements posed by the market and bureaucratic ponderousness of some organisations, which are increasingly frequently felt.

The surveys confirmed hypotheses about a relationship between an inclination to accept patterns of high uncertainty tolerance and such personality traits

as the sense of internal control and proactive attitude. There were discovered significant relationships between these variables at the level $p < 0.000$.

Moreover, the surveys confirmed a hypothesis about the role of education in shaping the attitude to uncertainty. It appeared, however, that the biggest acceptance of patterns of the culture of high uncertainty tolerance was displayed by respondents still studying than by university graduates.

A significant relationship was discovered between the age of respondents and their inclination to accept patterns of high uncertainty tolerance. The younger the respondents were the bigger inclination in this field they displayed.

Work for a foreign company frequently demanding adaptation to international standards as regards the way of performing a job is a factor enhancing the ease of accepting patterns of the culture of high uncertainty tolerance. The surveys showed that a group of respondents employed in foreign firms differed most in this respect from employees of institutions belonging to the so-called budgetary sphere and non-business organisations.

The survey findings show that attachment of employees to patterns of the culture of low uncertainty tolerance in many organisations can be a factor retarding adaptation of these organisations to contemporary world standards.

Due to an intensifying frequency of technical and organisational changes it is also a typical source of stress restricting an effective use of capabilities of employees. Dissemination of awareness that a cultural change is needed can be much more helpful in these conditions than maintaining a conviction about the necessity of resistance for the sake of being loyal to tradition.

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