Chapter 19
The Development of Intercultural Competences in Post-Bureaucratic Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the concept of intercultural competence is both important and complex at the same time, recalling several dimensions and being applied in several areas or fields. An effective intercultural communication allows people to interact appropriately in a variety of situations, where culture is the primary element to be considered. Talking about intercultural competence implies other dimensions such as awareness, flexibility, empathy, and respect, and takes into account cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects. Intercultural competences need to be considered both from a human and organizational perspective with special attention to training and people management practices, diversity management, strategies and methodologies to develop, share and spread such competences. The objective of this chapter is to shed light into the concept of intercultural competence in the era of post-bureaucratic organizations acting within a global/glocal scenario and facing new challenges related to cultural and intercultural issues. A qualitative survey has been conducted to analyze the role of the intercultural competences within trans-national organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The current global scenario requires a new class of international managers, being able to develop their business and manage people effectively in order "to face" intercultural challenges and contexts. Consequently, their selection, training and development, is strategic for the success of transnational organizations. The concept of intercultural competence seems to be primary in the era of post-bureaucratic organizations acting within a global/glocal scenario and facing new challenges related to cultural and

intercultural issues. Particular attention should be paid to training and people management practices, diversity management, strategies and methodologies to develop, share and spread such competences.

The key concept of this chapter is that the policies and learning architectures and methodologies for the development of intercultural competences in transnational post-bureaucratic organizations may also play the role of soft managerial systems. The iron cage (Weber, 1958) made of bureaucratic norms and procedures may be replaced by a sort of "soft cage", made up with a shared set of (internationally oriented) values and behavioral rules. The development of intercultural competences is the necessary precondition for the construction of the global cultural subset that is a key factor for an international and intercultural management.

The objective of this chapter is to shed light into the concept of intercultural competence in the era of post-bureaucratic organizations acting within a global/glocal scenario and facing new challenges related to cultural and intercultural issues. Moreover, a qualitative survey has been conducted to analyze the role of the intercultural competences within trans-national organizations, comparing theoretical premises and training practices, as well.

BACKGROUND

According to Josserand, Teo and Clegg (2006), "the post-bureaucratic organization can be considered as an organization where the network logic (Eccles and Crane, 1987; Jarillo, 1988; Bradach and Eccles, 1989; Powell, 1990) contributes significantly to cohesion" (Josserand, 2004). Communication is critical for the functioning and the cohesion of network based organizations (Oberg and Walgenbach, 2008, Bolton and Dewatripont, 1994). This is particularly true for transnational (networked) organizations (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1989, Tregaskis et al, 2010).

Moreover, Malizia (2013), assumes the relevance of the concept of culture for a better understanding of the dynamics of post-bureaucratic organizations. Cultural diversity, then, may be considered as a key factor for the success of transnational companies (Adler, 1997). Schneider and Barsoux (1999) suggest that "given the complexity of the current business environment, there is a need for organizations to match that variety internally, to have what is known as "requisite variety"." There is an idea of "fit" between an organisation and its environment:

- In order to survive in a competitive market, the external environmental complexity should match with the organisation's internal complexity (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

Lane et al. (2004) suggest that "the appropriate response to complexity is through the deliberate development of requisite variety." One of the challenges of this prerequisite could be that "in social systems such as intercultural teams, variables of variety cannot be easily identified or calculated. They can also be very difficult to recognize, evaluate and anticipate" (Bartel-Radic and Lesca, 2009). Organisations need to consider many other implications related to this requisite such as:

- Motivation;
- Communication;
- Managerial and leadership skills;
- Interaction;

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