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The influence of intercultural communication on management: regional aspect

Apart from mutual benefit, understanding of positions and motives of the parties in the sphere of business relationships, considering cross-cultural differences in the system of management organization is of fundamental importance. We talk about peculiarities of intercultural communication when making contacts with partners from different countries or of different nationalities in order to cooperate and set up long-term trade, economic, industrial and other relations.

Intercultural communication in the sphere of management and trade and economic relations is a relatively new phenomenon which requires being studied and analyzed. The term “intercultural communication” was introduced by culture anthropologist Eduard T. Hall in 1954 in the framework of adaptation program for American diplomats and businessmen in other countries; which he prepared for the US State Department. He defined intercultural communication as the subject of scientific researches and presented his vision of putting anthropological and linguistic concepts into practice. Main assumptions of his approach were given in 1959 in the monograph “The Silent Language”. His work was published several times and it served as a basis for compiling programs and courses in educational institutions in Europe and the USA. Hall suggested the conception that presupposed the ability to “study” foreign cultures [Koptelzeva 2006, pp. 15–21]. In a common sense, intercultural communication is defined as adequate mutual understanding of two participants who belong to different cultures during

a communication act [Vereshchagin, Kostomarov 1996, p. 26]. So, intercultural communication includes conversations in which representatives of different cultures participate, personal contacts, indirect forms of communication (such as letters), and mass communication. Peculiarities of intercultural communication are studied on interdisciplinary level and in the framework of such sciences as psychology, linguistics, ethnology, anthropology, sociology. Each of the mentioned above sciences implements its own approach towards studying these peculiarities. It is interesting to know that in our country in the end of the 90ies the discipline known as “Foreign languages” in the “Classification of disciplines and specialties of a higher vocational education” was changed into discipline 022600 “Linguistics and intercultural communication” [Ter-Minasowa 2000].

We still don't have one generally accepted notion for intercultural communication. We call this discipline in several different ways, such as “Cross-cultural differences”, “Business culture”, “Cross-cultural management”, “Intercultural communication”, etc. Being a scientific discipline, intercultural communication is now at the stage of its formation and it has two peculiarities. Firstly, intercultural communication is of applied character, which means that it provides efficient communication between representatives of different cultures, and it decreases risks of creating conflict situations, and secondly, intercultural communication is of interdisciplinary character.

Researches made in the sphere of intercultural communication become more and more significant, which results from the globalization process and intensive migration of population. In this sense the Astrakhan region is of a special interest, as a lot of different cultures have lived here together for ages. Here such civilizations, as Khazar Kaganate, Golden Horde, Astrakhan khanate, etc, were born and then died. None of the tribes were endemic, they were alien, there was no native population on this territory. Astrakhan region was a crossroads of cultures, trade routes and religions. Astrakhan has served as a merchant town for many centuries. Here merchants of different nationalities had their own places for trading – a Persian yard, an Indian yard, an Armenian yard, etc. Each ethnos had its own settlement area. For example, on the territory that was previously inhabited by the Persians there was a Persian mosque; Persian consuls could rent houses there and the street in the centre of the former Persian settlement is called “Gilyanskaya”, the Tatar district in Astrakhan is still called “Tatar-Bazar”. Each ethnos in Astrakhan had its own industrial area, and its corresponding industrial culture. The Tatars grew vegetables; the Kalmyks bred sheep, the Kazakhs – horses, the Russians fished, the Azerbaijani and Armenians traded. Each ethnos guaranteed high quality of the goods, so when purchasing you had to ask where the specific goods were produced. Nowadays there still remains a certain kind of industrial ethnical certification. But even in our poly-ethnic region there are traditional nationalities and those that came here with the last wave of migration process. Then nationalities that are traditional for our region

and those that are new differ in terms of their languages, culture, and period of living in the region. Anyway all these nationalities have been living close to each other for many centuries. During this long period of time common traditions of intercultural cooperation appeared, and the dynamic balance among all nationalities was found. During the Soviet period attempts made to create one common nation – the Russian nation – were aimed at eliminating specific national characteristics. Yet, in the end of the 20th century, during the implementation of political, social and economic reforms which took place in the modern Russian society a new interest towards national origins and ethnical self-awareness revived. This period is also characterized by institutionalization of national and cultural associations. Nowadays on the territory of the Astrakhan region there are more than 25 national and cultural associations. They are: the German autonomy “Einheit” and 6 German charitable organizations, the Dagestan national and cultural society “Barakat” (“Welfare”), the Checheno-Ingoosh society “Vainah”. There are regional and district associations of Kazakh culture and language “Zholdastyk”, the Astrakhan regional social organization “Kazakh national centre”, the Astrakhan community trust named after Kurmangazy, etc. The third, as far as the population is concerned, ethnical group in the region belongs to the Tatars. It organized several national and cultural associations, the largest of which is “Duslyk” society. There is also a female Tatar organization “Ak Kalfar”. Turkmenian national and cultural association “Vatan” was firstly formed as a section of Nogaisky society, which lately became an independent organizing committee. The constituent assembly of this society was held in 1994. The Ukrainian diaspora registered “Berkut” society. Kalmyk community organized a regional society of the Kalmyk culture “Halmg” in 1992; and in 1993 in Liman there was formed one more Kalmyk cultural society “Garel”. The Jewish community organized the “Thiya” society. There is also one more Meskhetian Turks national and cultural society “Idyn”. The society of Korean history and culture “Kore” operated only for a short period of time, though it passed registration in 1992–1993. The “Uzbekiston” society formed in 1996 satisfies national and cultural interests of the Uzbek population. In autumn 1996 a new society of Armenian national culture “Arev” appeared in Astrakhan.

In the beginning of 2002 there were two newly registered organizations: the Astrakhan regional Gypsy social organization “Romani Duma” and the Astrakhan regional social organization of the Iranian culture “Tehran”. In spring 2002 “Society for friendship and cultural ties with the peoples of Russia and India” appeared.

The Astrakhan social organization of Greek culture named after Varvakis and the national and cultural society of Nogaisky culture “Yashva” appeared recently. In 1993 the Astrakhan regional society “Slavonic unity” was registered. In Astrakhan a group of museum employees involved into local studies formed an association of the Russian history and culture. Ukrainian immigrants tried

to form their own association, but they failed; however, a group of local citizens of the Polish origin managed to organize a small association in spring 1993.

Along with traditional societies there are such national business centers as the “Tatar business center” which is responsible for national management. So a question arises concerning economic ethics presented as a combination of behavior standards of regional business representatives, requirements made by cultural society towards their style of work, type of conversation between participants, social image, and use of ethical methods of competition. Economic ethics includes business etiquette which is formed under the influence of traditions and specific historical conditions of a specific territory. Business ethics cannot appear at somebody’s subjective will. Its formation is a complicated and enduring process the main requirements of which include political and economic freedom, strong executive power, stable legal system, and legal regulation...

In the western countries managers are motivated not by common wealth, but by self-profit. Greeting each other they first say their own name, then their social status, and only then they name their company. In the East, where collectivism dominates, the order of introduction is different: the name of the company, the status of the person who is introducing himself or herself, and only then follows his or her proper name. Russia which is located somewhere between the West and East occupies an intermediate position on the individualism – collectivism scale. That’s why Russian managers behave extremely inconsequently: in the East they show traits of individualism, and with western individualists they behave like collectivists.

There are two substantially different styles of management in Russia – of public and private enterprises and this causes cross-cultural differences. Management in public enterprises is distinguished by centralization of decision taking, lack of authority delegation, profit-sharing, financial motivation, subjective personnel management and choice, etc. Management in private enterprises is characterized by certain peculiarities which become evident in the business globalization process when much attention is paid to economic ethics existing in those countries that consume goods produced by Russian business. In connection with this, practically all top-managers in biggest Russian companies are expatriates. This helps to simplify cultural adaptation of output in accordance with new requirements of cross-cultural environment of international business. As a rule, expatriates are concerned with mismatch of balance data and real situation. Quality and quantity of schemes which Russian companies practice impress with their variety: artificial capital increase, low assert disguise, profit optimization by means of the reserve accumulation, etc. This fact denies the formal balance analysis, so the first place goes to the abilities of an analyst to “clear” balance from schemes, and receive information (sometimes from informal sources) concerning functioning peculiarities of this or that enterprise or bank.

One of the Russian peculiarities is a “non-transparent” business reputation of the administration and business owners. In Russia it happens very often that those people who actually lost their business, thereby damaging economic perspectives of their partners, and leaving their clients and customers without money, start them once again and thus involve new people who can be “potentially harmed”.

Unfortunately, the new Russian business culture is more “kumovskoy” (or sponsoring). It means that it is characterized by the strong impact of personal factor, and sometimes “personal” is predominant over “professional”. It is also characterized by the importance of “acquaintances and relations” in a certain sphere. And when evaluating risks it is sometimes necessary to step back from official procedures.

Actually it is not the worst way out. Those ties that connect top-managers may sometimes guarantee that the required information, if necessary, will be obtained. In Russian business practice there are cases when contacts between top-managers helped to reduce some problems of their business partners and to agree on debt rescheduling in banks, though they were on the verge of bankruptcy.

It is necessary to point out the low level of discipline that is attributable to the Russian business culture. “Russian perhaps” for the recent time has been the main reason that prevented the adequate timely reaction on micro- and macro economic situation, despite the fact that there are procedures used for analyzing and controlling risks.

From our point of view, revealing those problem factors makes it possible to correct the existing Russian model of cross-cultural management and strengthen its effectiveness.

It is fair to say that Russian labor force of the middle age is characterized by high level of education, adaptation towards world requirements for doing business and herewith it is not very expensive. Existing symbiosis of the middle aged labor force, assimilating European cross-culture and the older labor force representing unique remains of the “post-soviet” mentality that combines collectivistic and individualistic characteristics of the society, high level of respect for the authorities both in public and private enterprises, tolerance of the representatives of different age categories towards certain life values and also the “in-born” ability to operate in terms of not stable economic situation, forms a special type of business cross-culture. This helps modern Russian companies to avoid “cultural shock” which makes any business more complicated when dealing with foreign partners.

One of the most important issues is the analysis of the socially oriented economic business activity as the demonstration of responsibility towards society and authorities. Russian researches still do not have one opinion concerning main

characteristics of this phenomenon. But considering the history of this issue it is necessary to point out that originally, social responsibility was understood as the reaction of business to critical social problems that arise from the differences in the income of different social groups, incapability of the government to conduct effective social and economic policy, weak structure of the civil society. So the problem concerns also charity, sponsorship and patronship. However, it did not transform the social responsibility of business into the social institute of the society that is based on the principles of rationality and effectiveness. It was necessary to adapt new forms: grant contests for public organizations, social funds, and inter-sector social partnership. One of the very important stages in the history of this issue was the speech of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, in December 2003 at the board meeting of the Russian Chamber of Industry and Commerce where the social responsibility of business is treated as the main functioning principle. It means that every conflict that involves interests of business and that of the society should be solved in favour of the society as business is its integral part. Taking such an approach, new relations between business, government and society develop. Business starts to connect itself with the local society and independently, without any initiative from the government, tries to solve socially important problems. Herewith, it is emphasized that now we are talking only about the opening phase of the implementation of this strategy as business still needs to fill the following gaps: stable development, balance of commercial and social interests, and effective social programs.

To fulfill this task in 2003 during the circuit session of the Fourth international conference “Corporate culture and reputation of the organization” Business Culture Centre and Committee on Business Ethics were opened on the basis of the Astrakhan Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Both structures organize different seminars, conferences, fairs, and courses that touch upon social responsibility of business and culture of entrepreneurship.

At the same time Astrakhan Chamber of Industry and Commerce initiated a new direction in the development of inter-sector social partnership. This topic was first considered within the framework of the seminar “Collaboration of business, government and society within the framework of charity projects realization in Astrakhan” which was organized by PR Committee of the Astrakhan Administration and Committee on Business Ethics of the Astrakhan Chamber of Industry and Commerce in cooperation with Human Rights Committee and Russian branch of the British Charity Fund (SAF). As the result the Fund of Local Community was established. Later on this idea was developed and discussed in the series of publications, meetings, and seminars, and was accepted by the RF Presidential Council on the institutional development of civil society and human rights.

The Board of Founders includes Astrakhan branch of “Opora Rossii” organization, the Astrakhan tourist association, publishing house “Privolgie”, and “Sivitas-Russia” Fund. The purpose of the Astrakhan Fund of Local Community is to support initiatives of citizens and legal entities that are aimed at solving social, cultural, educational and other socially important problems of the region, and also to improve the living standards of the population. The system of inter-sector cooperation is based on the mutual social responsibility and voluntary union of financial, administrative and social resources of the region.

At the first competition of social projects called “We are making tomorrow” that was held in August – October 2007 123 applications were sent in and in 2008 – 256 ones. In the competition there are three categories – “450 charitable acts for the city anniversary”, “The future starts today” and “Many nationalities – one region”. 18 participants became winners in 2 competitions and got grants to put their projects into implementation. Grants are given on the initiative of local entrepreneurs and representatives of the local community. As many foreign and Russian researches show such types of social investments indicate high level of the business culture development and demonstrate a substantial economic effect.

Thereby, the effective solving of the problems existing in the region largely depends on the collaboration between business, government and society. Considering the existing traditions of the inter-sector partnership, it is necessary to continue developing conceptual basis for collaboration, priorities and directions, methods and technologies that help to promote and develop local community. Simultaneously, it is necessary to point out that contacts based on mutual respect, morality and business ethics almost always enrich moral and spiritual level of their participants and lead to better mutual understanding and long-term relations between people of different cultures and nationalities.

Rererences

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