INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT – A CHALLENGE OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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Abstract: Intercultural management has entered the specialized literature in response to the new configuration of the contemporary world. The terminological explosion multi-, pluri-, inter-, trans-culturality reflects the evolution of cultural phenomena in the context of globalization, which is in tight connection with the new ways of organizing the economic activity. Cultural globalization, perceived as an attack toward individual and group identity, has spread within the social field as diverse forms of social pathology aiming at the very human condition. The consistence of intercultural management and its purpose are given by the intercultural education, as a formative measure, as a new perspective on education or as an attitude and as a mood.

Keywords: multiculturality, interculturality, cultural pluralism.

1. FROM MULTICULTURALISM TO INTERCULTURALITY

Multicultural, pluricultural, transcultural, intercultural – are terms whose common root is 'culture', a concept that has come to public attention since the latter half of the eighteenth century, on the background of an autonomization of the cultural field that gradually makes its identity clear. Later on, throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, we witness the stage of cultural codification; thus, culture had become both a national and ethnical symbol. During the twentieth century the process continues through the institutionalization of culture that has turned into a defining element for shaping individual and group identity. Moreover, culture progressively changes into a factor of economic development and instrument of globalization. The order of the above mentioned terms (multi-, pluri- and inter-culturality) is not randomly selected, it reflects, in fact, the evolution of historic and social realities in the world.

Multiculturality is intrinsic for history and humankind's evolution, given the fact that, in time, human communities have developed conceptions, traditions, own rituals and beliefs, according to their particular life experiences. Therefore, it is natural for the term to be associated with collectivities' and groups' characteristics, it reflecting a mosaic of cultures that cannot be reducible ones to the others, despite their common features – cultures that coexisted in the same space and time without necessarily knowing about one another. These cultural entities live their moments by usually avoiding contaminations (Rey, 1999).

Following the same pattern, **pluriculturalism** sustains the specificity of each culture that develops its own perspective of the world and holds its own value system. *Multicultural* (multi = many) and *pluricultural* (pluri = many more) are terms that accomplish a static description of societies that, in effect, are pluri- and multi-cultural because they reunite individuals and groups belonging to different cultures. Consequently, their common trait is their static dimension,

their replicating the atom-like character of cultural diversities. Through a multi-cultural approach, interactions are not excluded; yet, they are implicit to the concept (Rey, 1999).

Apart from any theory, a society functions as a net of reciprocal conditionings that cannot be ignored. Fathali M. Moghaddamm (1993, *apud* Chelcea, 2002:191) makes distinction between the collective multiculturalism and the individual multiculturalism. Should collective multiculturalism stand for *"equal treatment of cultural traditions of the group"*, then, the individual multiculturalism reflects the *"right of each person to be respected as an independent cultural unity within the group"*.

This distinction highlights the social reality's complexity and the weaknesses of the multicultural approach, which, considering cultures' juxtapositioning as being sufficient, it can become a source for segregation and discrimination (see apartheid).

The concept that manages to reveal, in an adequate manner, the contemporary world's realities is that of interculturality, which, by the very prefix *inter-* suggests interaction, the exchange and the ultra-dynamic character of the society we live in. through its interactionist, dynamic connotation, the concept let us think of exchanges, reciprocity and dialogue, demands and realities that are omnipresent in the present world.

Nevertheless, the use of the English term 'multicultural' is better known than the word 'intercultural'. In the twentieth century, the Anglo-Saxon world developed a "multicultural" movement under the pressure of socio-economic changes, although the risk for this movement to bring about marginalization forms could be foreseen. On the other side, the use of the term 'intercultural' does not always imply its interactionist dimension, even though the prefix *inter-* explicitly underlines the 'interdependences' and evokes the cultural diversity and the necessity of dialogue. The terminological evolution presented above highlights the mandatory and operational character of the intercultural approach and the necessity of abandonment of mono-cultural, egocentric or ethnocentric processes.

The interest in achieving knowledge and psycho-sociological research has moved from mono- and intra-cultural studies toward pluri- and multi-cultural ones, reaching its highest peak through the study of interculturality focused on "studying norms' differentiation in relation with cultural specificities of the areas they belong to" and their correlation with cultural phenomena generated by social changes and the connection of local cultural entities with universal cultural unities (Zaiț, 2002:80).

Blain Flowers and Frank Richardson (1996) underline the necessity to study the behaviors of people on all continents, the obligation of respecting diversity and that of elimination social discrimination. The aim of all these interests is to obtain a favorable combination of elements characteristic to each culture, and their finality should be the accomplishment of this evolution through cultural adjustment. This is what Jürgen Bolten (2011:25-38) calls the "synergistic meaning of the interculturality's influence".

Another derived term and very frequently used by the specialized literature is **transculturality**, which observes relations among various national cultures. In relation with it, interculturality keeps going on analyzing feed-backs and the cultural synergy phenomenon.

This is why, intercultural diagnosis involves more than identifying different cultures' specificity; it aims at making use of it for the purpose of reaching specific common goals.

2. INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT – EXIGENCES AND SOLUTIONS

In the era of globalization and informational culture, cultural diversity and the intensification of contacts and intercultural exchanges represents a reality that we can ignore and which necessitates an adequate approach. Intercultural management as a field discipline of general management came to life in order to satisfy these needs. It represents the science and art of managing issues that cause cultural differences and changes (family,

school, church etc.) so as to turn them into adjustment factors to the challenges of the current world. The contact actions, those of engagement and participation are indispensable for the contemporary human condition.

If economic globalization has already created numerous functioning mechanisms, cultural globalization, which goes along with it, induces a multitude of attitudes and behaviors, different manners of acceptance or rejection that need to be managed very wisely. The internationalization of economic life, the new forms of organization of production activities bring about the creation of specific transcultural spaces, within which intercultural learning becomes indispensable. This is how we explain the expansion of the economic management science over the interculturality process.

Alain Touraine (1996, *apud* Cuco & Cozma, 2001:25) appreciates that interculturalism has been imposed within the current social sciences due to the fact that the "political republican model of the West faces a decline" and it is now in dissolution. The dissolution of old universal reference points makes room for the installation of the economic domination and for the creation of consumerism. As a result, the "development of technology, of markets and of the new type of consumption has destroyed the capacity of political mediation between the natural order and the cultures' diversity.

The contemporary civilization comes to life at the junction of rationalization and production globalization, of the new forms of exchanges and of cultural diversity. In this context, economic competition remains dependent on the manner in which the social actors understand how to relate to one another, to dialogue or to communicate in an authentic way.

Another challenge for the intercultural management is the topic of identity. Paradoxically, at first sight, we witness a break of the cultural spaces, under the globalization impact. These spaces turn into "community fortresses", able to defend and preserve their identity more easily. The peril of

uniformization and of losing identity, as a hidden and perverse effect of globalization, determines that the evolution toward globalization (world's informational culture) to be joined by a "cultural heterochrony" (Demorgon, *apud* Zaiţ, 2002:82). This phenomenon consists of forming some cultural micro-environments, real forts built for the purpose of saving identity.

Access to universality presupposes preservation of identity. On the background of authentic communities' disintegration, of fluidization of identities, which become fluctuating, on the background of augmentation of the feeling of insecurity, the topic of ego-alter, or, we-they relations, liberty-security, unity-diversity becomes very sensitive and difficult to accomplish. Analyses and pluri- and interdisciplinary studies that have been achieved so far reveal the complexity of these issues and the impossibility of finding unique and definite solutions. It is sure thing that the epoch of utopias has been forgotten and the dream of radically annihilating human poverty and suffering has been abandoned. Their place has been taken by social justice and the equal distribution of chances under the motto of respecting and admitting the human rights.

Nonetheless, beyond their seduction force, such desiderates often lead to excesses and sideslips that are hard to ignore. In this respect, Cornelius Castoriadis (1997, *apud* Bauman, 2001:60-61) equally rejects the universal fundamentalism, generator of cultural crusades and oppressive homogenization, and the "multicultural" policies, lying at the basis of the arrogant indifference and of disengagement.

There can be identified numerous critical voices related to these seducing slogan that do nothing else but to conceal the real intentions and action principles. For example, the recognition of "cultural pluralism" is perceived as a "new form of indifference toward difference" (Bauman, 2001). Russell Jacoby considers multiculturalism to be an "ideology of the ideology's end" because "the educated elites of our time have nothing to say related to the preferred form of the human

condition", therefore these elites take refuge in multiculturalism, thus concealing their inabilities and lack of courage for solving these problems (Jacoby, *apud* Bauman, 2001:92). The very right to be different has been subjected to various interpretations and lead to controversies. On the one side, we find the seekers of the best forms of humanity (selective and qualitative approach); on the other side, we observe that the multi-cultural program claims that each difference is worth being preserved for the simple fact that it is something different. It is certain that at the junction of these viewpoints there is the individual/ citizen, who is subjected to a double pressure: anti-community pressures, holding assimilationist effects, and community pressures, which annihilate the individual's right to choose (Habermas, 2000).

Under such circumstances and many others that have not been mentioned here, we can formulate a conclusion, according to which intercultural management faces some complex issues that can be solved only in a multidisciplinary manner while activating all the factors involved. Any superficial, reductionist approach will lead to harmful effects, able to amplify the contemporary society's pathologies.

3. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION – WAY FOR REDISCOVERING THE CULTURAL UNITY OF HUMANITY

Education, generally speaking, and intercultural education, especially, represents one of the important factors considered by the intercultural management. For the latter not to be just some simplistic theory, there must be some people to bring it to actuality, and these people need specific education.

Intercultural education is a formative process, imposed by the existence of the human being in a dynamic and polymorphic world, whose adjustment is conditioned by the openness toward multiple values, toward diversity. Under the circumstances of the democratic society, intercultural education is an ideological option aiming at training citizens for their orientation and adjustment to

cultural mutation and diversity. According to *Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education*, intercultural education has been approached as training for social, political and economic realities with which people of the contemporary world are confronted. These realities hold a double dimension: national and international. Intercultural education stands for an intervention aimed at helping institutions and individuals to be more aware of the human condition, of the individual cultural identity and the cultural pluralism of their society [8]. It needs to be perceived as a new attitude, a mood, an openness toward cultural pluralism having the background of an own unaltered identity.

The first actions of intercultural education appeared in 1920, in the U.S.A, as a solution to discriminatory practices manifested in relation with groups of immigrants. Barely in the mid twentieth century was the term mentioned and it started to develop in Europe. Before this, the European education used to focus on cultural assimilation. Although policies of non-discrimination were promoted, the right of preserving one's own culture was ignored. For the Eastern Europe, the term started to be used only after the fall of totalitarian regimes.

According to differences of approach, between the European and the American spaces, two concepts started to be used:

1. *Multicultural education*: this term was first mentioned within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (**OECD**), following the English model;

2. *Intercultural education*: a term used in documents belonging to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO)** and the European Council.

Although, these two terms hold similar spheres of significance, their differences consist of the very use of the prefixes *multi-* and *inter-*. Multicultural education aims at measures able to facilitate the co-existence of pluri-ethnical and pluri-cultural groups. Similarly, intercultural education focuses on cooperation and common action. The prefix *inter-* signifies "interaction, exchange,

reciprocity and objective solidarity. The terms 'pluricultural' and 'intercultural', identical in their meanings, signify situational descriptions: our societies are either pluri- or inter-cultural. Nevertheless, the option for interculturality signifies the process and the interaction" (Rey, 1999:197). The ultimate goal of intercultural education is to promote equality of chances to education, which presupposes "facilitating the meeting with the Other" (Cucoş, 2002:133).

Although initially intercultural education aimed only at solving the immigrants' problems, this approach has proved insufficient under the circumstances of globalization and creation of a unitary European space. The population's mobility, the intensification of contacts and cultural exchanges, the confrontation of cultural codes that coexist within the European space impose a reconsideration of educational policies.

Transferring our approach to the sphere of military education, we can argue that intercultural education is a must for forming future military personnel. The military organization's transformations, under the pressure of social mutations, together with the new configuration of military missions and international theaters of operations call for this formative dimension for the benefit of the future officers.

In a world devoured by conflicts, tensions and conflicts among different human groups, intercultural education, seen as education for a better understanding and solidarity among people, becomes a survival topic.

Unfortunately, the attempts that have been made so far still remain timid and formal due to insufficient knowledge related to international legislation and of the actions accomplished by the European Council, UNESCO and CSCE.

In conclusion, in order for the intercultural management not to remain a sterile concept, just like many others, it needs to be sustained by education, the only tool capable of forming characters and changing mentalities.

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