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Person-Organisation Fit in the Context of Cultural Learning

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Abstract

The current trends in the international business have been giving rise to increased cultural interactions, reflected in the rapid global movements. In this dramatically changing environment, all companies are seeking the most effective way for integrating workforce into the organisational structure and for achieving the stated objectives and further expansion. Therefore “matching the right people with the right organisation” is the prerequisite for satisfactory performance of recruitment process. This is particularly true when taking the subtle nuances of culture into account. Cultures across the world have a significant effect on perceiving various elements that occur in working life. The match between this culturally developed individual value orientation and the nature of corporate culture is referred to as person-organisation fit (P-O fit). This paper presents one conceptualisation of P-O fit. Initially, it introduces the results of two surveys to support the intention to develop an effective tool for incorporating the assessment of cultural congruence into the recruitment process and later on it focuses on defining P-O fit as one of the working environment related fits and its benefits and limitations.

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1. Introduction

The idea of organisational learning has been present in management literature for decades. But since around 1990, when it started to be widely recognised, two major developments have been highly significant in the growth of the field. The first one is the conceptual fragmentation of the field caused by researchers and scholars from disparate disciplines who tend to compete for the best model of organisational learning. The second development is that many consultants and companies have caught onto the commercial significance of organisational learning and much of the

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effort of these theorists has been devoted to identifying templates, or ideal forms, which real organisations could attempt to emulate [1].

A helpful way of making sense of organisational learning is to point out two basic research approaches. The dividing line between them is the extent to which the process of organisational learning is emphasised as a technical or a social process. From Easterby-Smith's and Araujo's explanation [1], it is clear that the technical view assumes that organisational learning deals with the effective processing, interpretation of, and response to information; both inside and outside the organisation. The social perspective on organisation learning focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences at work. From this perspective, learning is something that can only arise from personal interactions, normally in the natural work setting. Those researchers, operating within the social perspective, often view organisational learning as a social construction and as a cultural artefact.

2. Cultural learning in organisations

As it was stated in the previous paragraph, the societal theory of organisational learning implies that the learning process comprises interpersonal encounters and own experience transformed into the personal development. When multinationalism and interculturalism is an inevitable consequence of the processes of globalisation, it seems the culture with its impacts and influences on every individual in organisation must be strongly taken into consideration when it comes to the questions and issues of learning. Organisations in this perspective provide the common basis for encountering the people of many various cultural backgrounds and organisational learning must build upon the complex of different cultural values and norms. These are the attributes deeply ingrained within human nature, acquired unconsciously during one's upbringing, which people are not aware of in their conscious minds. At least until they become visible as a result of a thorough interpersonal comparison. Nevertheless their impact upon human perception, behaviour and decision making in everyday life is significant. And so it is in working environment.

If a closer look is taken at the benefits of cultures for individuals on their personal level, it is the matter of fact that learning from them will help to develop a deeper understanding of worldview diversity and broaden one's personality and perspective on different value systems in general. It helps to open up the notion that there is more than just one worldview and that neither of them is only right or wrong. But the learning concept does not remain on the personal level only; the process of organisational learning is coming full circle when individuals in organisation contribute to the common knowledge improvement. Organisational learning is driven by all individuals who make up the part of it and who broaden, refine and share their own knowledge. This gives an answer to one of the greatest myths of organisational learning, and that is "who question". Prange [2], in order to answer it, contemplates if it is individuals or organisations that learn. Organisations that are committed to true learning practices will create a suitable and encouraging environment and provide the technical tools for enabling the knowledge to be collected and spread. Individuals are the main bearers of knowledge and after all, these two components of organisational learning: individuals and organisation as a whole reinforce one another.

Cultural learning can become the water on turbines of organisational improvement and competitive advantage. However cultural differences can be so stubborn and invincible that is also can add fuel to the development of mutual misunderstandings and frustrations.

3. Previous survey and its findings

Earlier survey that was carried out within the Institute of Industrial Engineering, Management and Quality, came with interesting results about multicultural awareness in Slovak business community and public sector. An extensive questionnaire was distributed amongst industrial enterprises, universities and research institutions and after the return period 123 completed questionnaires were statistically evaluated. Comprehensive survey results are the part of publication by Caganova [3] and for the purposes of this paper selected findings were retrieved, which are presented in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 thereafter.

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