

## Cross – Cultural Management. A transnational approach

In the era of globalization, where changes are growing permanent and international boundaries' crossing becomes every day simpler thanks to air travels and to information technologies, we assist to an increasing internationalization of business.

In the Western industrialized countries, as pointed out by Taran Patel, the author of *Cross – Cultural Management. A transnational approach*, “*inter-organizational alliances, international markets and multinational corporate structures are very common*”. This explains the increasing interest on the issue of culture and on the reason why management studies are keener on investigating the impact of culture on business.

Culture influences many different aspects of organizational life and of international business; however, the past literature on culture, especially the one from business studies, “*has had the effect of treating culture as a proxy for nationality, with the assumption that culture within a nation, a society or a company is homogenous*”.

Analyzing the impact of culture on micro- and macro- organizational aspects, as well as on various aspects of international business ventures, the author finds out that most of the scholars focus on national cultural differences, rather than on cultural similarities. For example, as for the relation between culture and feedback, we find that: “*Japanese employees seem to have a stronger emotional reaction to negative feedbacks than to positive ones (Kurman et al. 2003), and that they are more responsive than their American counterparts (Broker and Chen 1996)*”.

Just consider another example, regarding the influence of culture on various aspects of negotiation; some authors revealed that: “*while maximizing economic gains satisfies U.S. negotiators, East Asian negotiators are on the contrary satisfied when they use integrative tactics and when they achieve equalization of outcomes*”.

These assumptions however are not yet effective in the dynamic contest where businesses are nowadays carried out. The greater opportunity to get in touch with different cultures, the acquisition of different perspectives and the increasing request of flexibility are the distinctive characteristic of a multicultural and more complex corporate organization, which needs an alternative way to look at cultural preferences and resulting behaviours.

The book starts with an overview of culture, of its various definitions and of its influences on the different aspects of organizational life and international business. Taran Patel offers a complete critical review of the existing crossover between national, societal and corporate levels in the business context focusing on cultural theoretical frameworks from the past literature (Hofstede, Hall, Schwartz and others). By explaining the limitations of conventional models and going beyond the static vision of culture which is behind them, the author moves from business literature to anthropological literature on culture.

Taking into account the steps forward taken by anthropology over the last fifty years Taran Patel proposes, indeed, a more dynamic framework of culture, assuming, as a starting point of reflection, a transnational approach, whose main scholar is Fredrik Barth. The following review of transnational culture literature, which shows both its strengths and weaknesses, leads to the elaboration of a new interpretative

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model based on the application of the cultural framework developed by Mary Douglas to the study of business management. An interesting perspective that gives readers and students the tools to face the complexity of international corporate organization.

## **Cross-Cultural Management. A transnational approach**

Taran Patel

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