

NATIONAL CULTURE PERCEPTION FROM THE DESTINATION COUNTRY SEEN FROM THE IMMIGRANTS' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The national culture within a community in the destination country brings together the moral values, principles and education of the worldwide employees; giving a certain authenticity to the diaspora in which the immigrants activate. Thus may be defined as the totality of beliefs, values, behavior rules and norms shared by all organization members.

In this article we proposed ourselves to analyze if there is a relationship between the ethnic and cultural immigrant's behavior and its responsibility, as well as the influence he/she brings from his/her country of origin and also the modality of integration within their host or destination country.

In order to establish the research objectives, a quality focus-type research has been conducted, on a number of 22 Romanian immigrants, domiciled in Focsani (Vrancea County) with several years of experience regards migration in Italy.

Keywords: inter-culturalism, acculturation, immigrants, labor force, national culture.

JEL Classification: F66, J6, J7.

Introduction

The national culture term achieved, as time passed by, different valences and approaches in the specific literature.

The national culture brought by each and every foreign employee within the destination country community has a significant contribution to the differences in attitude and behavior among employees, this differences being given by the age, education, gender, profession but also of the immigrants religion.

The society's progress evolution is a main result of the changes and cultural differences between different world nations from different continents. The concept of national culture originates from the „cultural exchange or loan” of the labor force migration.

Nowadays, the idea of communities „personality” is desired to be depicted, communities in which immigrants from different countries activate, the accent being stressed on their different cultures exchange, respectively European, American or Asian.

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1. The national culture in the acceptance of labor force migration

In the destination country, the immigrants benefit from an improvement of their financial situation and living standards, of a social and economic stability. For the host or destination country migration implies ethnic, social, moral, religious, cultural, economic and often political changes.

The national culture has its genesis in the historical evolution of the „culture” term from a linguistic, genetic, psychological, sociological, religious and political perspective.

In the author's opinion (Hofstede, 1996), the individual programming starts within the family and it is continued in school, in certain social groups, collectivities, entourage, working place, social life and one's own family.¹

It may be said that both concepts, namely communication and national culture are collected in the literature, as two methods of representation of human interactions. The term "culture" falls on the organization's structure, while the "communication" falls on the entire process that contributes to the efficiency of the economic activity.

The final task of the communities in the country of destination is to understand their own national culture, to work, to live, to assimilate and other cultures; the ultimate goal being to optimize the economic activity growth. The globalization of the last decades of the twentieth century led to the expansion of the phenomenon of immigration, favoring cultural exchanges, to the development of the business environment, as well as to the expansion of multinational companies.

Therefore, people from different nations were forced to immigrate and work in other countries than those of origin.

The migrations speeding up has been determined in particular by the economic factor, this being a result of the economic and financial development of the countries of destination preferred by worldwide immigrants.

The less economical developed countries, that are „cheap labor force providers” have a strong disadvantage in regards of the gaps that occur at the regional level, compared to other countries (if we had to take the example of the European Union); gaps which stand out in particular in the labor market in various areas of the country.²

Many immigrants choose to live in other countries for better jobs, better paid ones, professional and significantly financial opportunities, and a higher lifestyle than the one from their own country. Migration is often linked to the economic, social, political, religious and ethnic situation from the country of origin of the immigrant.

The author (Popescu, M, 2012) considers that all individuals once they arrive in a new country, go through a period of euphoria at making contact with the new culture (emotional, full of significance), only afterwards suffering a cultural shock.³

It is important to make clear that in the national and worldwide literature there is not a standalone theory to explain the immigrations human behavior and to give a

¹ Hofstede G., *Managementul structurilor multiculturale*, Editura Economica, Bucuresti, 1996, p. 21.

² Cristian, Elena, Raluca; Moise, Elena; Dârzan, Mihaela, *A Contemporary Approach On Migration*, Romanian Economic and Business Review (REBE) , Editura Pro Universitaria, 2013, Vol. 8, Special Issue 3.1, pp. 9-17, <http://www.rebe.rau.ro>

³ Popescu, Manoela, *Comunicare și cultura organizațională. O abordare de business*, Editura Pro Universitaria, Bucuresti, 2012, p. 183.

plausible explanation of the causes leading to the general spreading of the immigration phenomenon from around the world.

The cultural exchanges that occur between immigrants and the country of destination are essential for the understanding of cultures and in order to optimize the communication within the communities in which they live.

The communication that takes place within the Organization, both on the inside and on the outside requires a series of adaptations and cultural transformations from the persons involved in the process. In this situation it is very difficult to establish a relationship between the main causes which determine or influence the phenomenon of immigration and cultural ethical behavior of the immigrant being in the country of destination.

2. Context of the appearance of the immigrations phenomenon

In order to be able to create an impression on the consequences of the exodus of immigration in recent decades, we must go back in history and try to analyze briefly the genesis of the migration theory. Angela Rogojanu (2009) believes that since the Middle Ages has circulated the theory of a population dominated by religious morality, centered on a key pillar of balance and social hygiene- the family.⁴ Adjusting the number of population was strictly of moral nature, being thus a populistic universal theory. The same author, believes that Adam Smith was among the first authors who launched a theory of population, namely that "mankind is multiplied in relation to the means of subsistence, even among civilized societies. The lack of means of subsistence clearly affects the bottom layer of the population, while limiting the population growth implied practices incompatible with the morals and ethics of the times".⁵

Adam Smith considered that workers and employers have opposing interests: "workers will obtain as much, and patrons to give as little as possible. The former are willing to unite in order to increase the salary, and the latter in order to decrease it".⁶

Hereby we may consider that the misunderstandings between the employer and the employee do not agree with the ethics or moral values from the time of Adam Smith. Later, the reasons which have led Thomas Robert Malthus investigate a problem quite sensible for those periods were those reasons to conduct a research on the progress of the society in which he lived.⁷

Thus, Thomas Robert Malthus comes to the conclusion that there is a relationship between freedom and lack of accountability of the human species to give a new life: "wherever there is freedom, the multiplication of the species acts, and the exceeding result it is then removed due to lack of space and food". Malthus's man lives with the fear of an impossible and unnecessary choice "between reason and sensibility", "between virtue and vice", "driven by the ethics and moral conduct" of those times in which he lived.⁸

⁴ Rogojanu, Angela (2009), *Stăpânii ideilor economice. Epoca modernă din secolul al XVIII-lea până la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea*, Volumul II, Editura Economică, București; p. 68

⁵ Rogojanu, Angela (2009), *Stăpânii ideilor economice. Epoca modernă din secolul al XVIII-lea până la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea*, Volumul II, Editura Economică, București; pp. 152-159.

⁶ Smith, Adam (1962), *Avuția națiunilor. Cercetare asupra naturii și cauzelor ei*, vol. I, Editura Academiei RPR, București, p. 87

⁷ Malthus, Thomas, Robert (1992), *Eseu asupra principiului populației*, Editura Științifică, București, p. 17.

⁸ *Idem*, p. 25.

Years later, the one who solved the final theory of Thomas Robert Malthus, by giving a simple answer for the purpose of understanding the freedom of the individual, was Charles Gide "nature has placed in man an instinct that, if left at ease, destines it to hunger, death and vice. And this fact-suffering without knowing the cause-gives the key to societies history and their miseries. "⁹

Organizational culture is lived in labor practices, in social relations, in the free time usage, in developing the systems of representation and its values, in aspirations, projects and action. It is envisioned as a mediator by whose means people seek to exceed their condition and create a new world, and the organizations to developing at a sustained pace¹⁰.

Another author interested in labor implications on the development of the society was Pierre-Guillaume-Frédéric Le Play, who represented the conservative tendency of social Catholicism, close in some of ideas with the economic liberalism, but opposed to the socialism. According to the latter, the work is "the main auxiliary of moral order" because in order to work, people either controlled their natural inclinations, or exceeded "this inclination, natural in a way, that made them avoid any unpleasant effort".

According to the author Rogoianu Angela (2009), people had to become aware of a fundamental truth: welfare without the support of the moral value was not sufficient for them. People needed both moral and welfare, otherwise risking to be overwhelmed by the corruption and being as prey for the decline.¹¹

Studies conducted on the international immigration demonstrate that there is a direct correlation, positive and strong in relation to the education received by the immigrant within his/her family and the medium and long-term economic growth in their country of destination; this is due to the fact that „highly qualified and educated immigrants " are a long-term gain for the host country.

The authors Connell and Buchan (2011), believe that, till present times far, there is no officially general definition of the notion of ethics of international labor recruitment or also other international agreements or immigrants recruiting practices.¹²

Cehan Irina (2013) considers that the phenomenon of international immigration becomes a matter of morals which are not associated only with recruiting, but with the general state of a country that presents some inadequacies and suffering, the responsibility for the decision in this context adapting from the individual to the social reality around him, and nation responsibility.¹³

Unfortunately for the nations concerned, the phenomenon of immigration presents not only benefits for the countries of origin and destination. Migration causes competition on the labor market, causing social conflicts between streams of immigrants and the local population of the host country; often in violation of the rules of conduct, ethics and morals.

⁹ Gide, Charles (1926), *Istoria doctrinelor economice de la fiziocrați până astăzi*, Editura Casei Școalelor, București, p. 175

¹⁰ Pettinger R., *Organizational behavior*, Macmillan Press LTD, London, 2000, pp. 186-196.

¹¹ Rogoianu, Angela (2009), *Stăpânii ideilor economice. Epoca modernă din secolul al XVIII-lea până la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea*, Volumul II, Editura Economică, București; pp. 158.

¹² Connell, John; Buchan, James (2011), "The impossible dream? Codes of practice and the international migration of skilled health workers", *World Medical and Health Policy*, volume 3, Issue 3, pp. 4-16.

¹³ Cehan, Irina, *Migrația medicilor romani și etica recrutării internaționale*, "Revista română de sociologie", Serie Nouă, Anul XXIV, Nr. 3-4, București, 2013, p. 333.

3. Case study- Romanian immigrants from Italy

In order to observe the integration degree of the immigrants and their correspondent responsibility, as well as the influence that they bring from their countries of origin, a focus-type group quantitative research has been conducted between July and August of 2018 in Focsani (Vrancea County).

The research has been conducted on a number of 22 people, Romanian immigrants aged between 24-52 years, domiciled in Focsani (Vrancea County); all having high school and university studies. All interviewed persons work in Italy, having several years of experience in migration.

In total there are 10 questions (Q1-Q10) that strictly refer to the immigrant's social-cultural degree of integration, as well as their relationship with the local community from Italy.

The group of 22 persons was divided in two smaller groups, function of their destination country, respectively a number of 14 people with high school education and a group of 8 people with university studies who work in Italy.

The participants selected for the quantitative research fulfill a series of common characteristics: they are Romanian citizens established in Italy, have a working place considered to be relatively stable on the country of destination labor market, have a qualification on the labor market, education (high school and university studies) and possess several years of experience in migration. On the whole interview duration there were no judgments issued or influence on the group's answers. During the whole interview period, the Romanian immigrants were given the opportunity to share their own experience from Italy.

The questions addressed to the group of 22 persons, with the scope of observing the Romanian immigrants degree of integration abroad, as well as the influence that they „leave as national culture” in the host country were the following:

- Q1.** What are the things that you like or liked since you established yourself abroad?
- Q2.** What are the things that you do not like or are bothered by presently in the host country?
- Q3.** How well do you know the language, culture, traditions from the host country?
- Q4.** How are your relationships with the diaspora or Romanian community in the area?
- Q5.** How do you appreciate the foreign employer's behavior towards the Romanian employees?
- Q6.** Have you ever felt discriminated on your working place, on the street or within a collectivity?
- Q7.** Do you consider that you integrated yourself well abroad (I hereby refer to the working relationship with your colleagues, with the locals or other foreign communities)?
- Q8.** In your opinion, what do you consider to be the main reason function of which the Romanians choose their immigration country?
- Q9.** Do you think that for the past years the foreign citizens' attitude towards the Romanian citizens has changed?

Q10. Do you consider that for all your time period in Italy you managed to influence from an ethnic, cultural, religious (manner) the local (foreign) community from there?

The interviews were focused on the scope and reasons of the decisions to immigrate and work abroad, the mode and degree of integrating of the immigrants in the destination country, their relationships with the communities and Romanian diaspora, the intention to come back to the country as well as the perception that the local community has in which activates on the activity performed by them.

3.1. Results of the focus group research on the Romanian immigrants from Italy

The results and interview answers of the focus-type group research for the 22 persons (immigrants) established in Italy were cumulated and can be found in the table below.

The 22 Romanian persons (immigrants) established in Italy answered to the 10 questions (Q1-Q10) regarding their degree of integrating from a socio-cultural point of view.

Table. 1.1. The cumulated opinion of the Romanian immigrants that left for work in Spain and Italy function of their answers

- a lot of young people declare themselves discontent with the salary conditions in Romania. <i>„In the country I was not able to live a decent life with my nurse salary... Everything is very expensive and the Romanian medical system is down...”</i>
- one of the main reasons was reuniting the family <i>„because I wanted to be with my parents, they are established in Italy since 12 years ago and also, part of my relatives are here”</i>
- they were supported (advised) to go to Italy for work and helped to find a position or a place to live <i>„if it wasn't for my uncles and cousins I probably never had the courage to go and find a working place... It meant a lot to me that I was not here by myself, a stranger among strangers”</i>
- they adapt easily to any working place (accepting also less paid jobs) or finding a new place to live <i>“not even here are you able to find a job, I work in agriculture in gathering oranges and I make no more than 30-35 de Euros/day, there were times when I made 50 Euros/day...In Sicily, the salaries are not so big but unlike Romania, you can't even compare...”</i>
- they are enthusiastic and declare themselves optimistic about the new country and do not intent to come back to their country soon <i>“I like life here, in Italy all is well organized from the bureaucratic point of view, the salaries are function of the efforts made. Here you feel that you live in a civilized country, kids have access to education and healthcare. Romania remains my country of origin, but Italy is my second country...”</i>
- they do not consider themselves discriminated abroad and integrated themselves very well in the „new adoption country” <i>“I never felt discriminated, the important thing is to make yourself respected and to gain their trust. If you work and you are honest, they accept and respect you...”</i>

-	they avoid as much as possible to enlarge their Romanian friends circle “ <i>Romanians do not help one another (except if they know each other or have obligations. I prefer having Italian friends. The Romanian community from here it is now that united, as elsewhere, you can easily recognize Romanians by the time spent in bars and loud “manele music”. Many times, due to the fact that there are many fights within the Romanian community, I prefer to speak Italian and pretend I do not know them ...</i> ”
-	declare themselves profoundly disappointed of the living standards in Romania “ <i>every time I come home I spend a lot, have no idea on what.”...“have the impression that everybody tries to steal from you...I don’t know how you guys can manage in the country...nothing changed in these past years in Romania...when I come back for my vacation, during the summer, I feel like crying when I see some poor people...what are the authorities doing for you?!”</i>
-	in time, they integrated very well in the community; making friends within the Italian community “ <i>I did not feel discriminated by the Italians. I have Romanian and other nationality friends...The boss (Italian) respects my work and family, my wife works with me at the hotel, my younger daughter is attending high school classes in Rome and the older one is studying tourism at the university. We are in Rome since 15 years ago and feel at home... ”</i>
-	on their turn, Romanian immigrants help the ones left at home stressing the idea of “worn path” “ <i>I cannot help all, part asked me for loaning money...we work daylight for every penny earned. Here life is not as easy as the ones in the country think, most of them I helped in time to come here....we were also supported...”</i>
-	some declared that the attitude of the foreign citizens changed dramatically in the behavior towards the Romanian citizens. “ <i>When they first hire you they are suspicious, but if you are fair and mind your business you have no problems...they understand people are different, depends on your luck....anyway everyday on the news you hear something about the Romanians that somebody stole, killed, committed an accident, etc.... ”</i>
-	regarding integration from the cultural and linguistically point of view they declared that they integrated well and relatively fast “ <i>the language is easy to learn, they are like us (Latin)... I am orthodox, but on Sunday I go to the Catholic Church, for me is nothing different, we have the same holidays, and Christmas and Easter...in 10 years I got accustomed to their traditions. The first year was very hard, but as years pass by you feel like one of them...”</i>
-	regarding the influence degree that the Romanian community has over the population from the host country, Italy “ <i>the Italian is not interested to speak your language, I tell them stories about our history, on the culture, I show them Internet pictures of my country. There are many nationalities that live in their country and as long as you do your job and respect them you have no problems. They’re curious, just that..... ”</i>
-	regarding the influence degree that the Romanian community has over the population from the host country, Italy “ <i>every time I cook “sarmale” or something else in our kitchen, I serve my Italian neighbors. They like Romanian food. On Christmas, last year, when I was not in Romania, I celebrated it in Bergamo and invited them to eat together. They like a lot when I tell them about our traditions and they’re curious...my sister is married to an Italian citizen....my brother-in-law as well as his parents went to Romania several times, we integrated well and they got used to us...”</i>

Source: Own data processing

The Romanians from Italy, together with the Albanians, are forming one of the largest communities of immigrants from Italy, constituting a labor force in agriculture and construction fields. The Romanians from Italy are not always positive, regarded as a collective group in major cities, such as Rome, Naples or Milan; but analyzed individually are quite responsible and hard working.

As a result of the interviews we may observe that generally, part of the Romanians from Italy try to distance themselves from the “Romanian of abroad” image that very often, in the immigrant’s vision is “selfish, envious and secretive, and even thief under certain circumstances”.

The Italians, who are quite nationalists, perceive most of the Romanians, as some quite sociable people, who quickly befriend with the Italian community and who have a relatively rich culture.

In the perception of the Romanian immigrants the Italians got accustomed to foreigners in the past decades, although a small part of the local community considers some of them deprived of entrepreneurial spirit, and being more concerned about obtaining a safe income on a long-term basis. On the other hand, our Romanians see Italy as a beautiful country, both economically and culturally; a civilized country with a history as rich and commune on a realm full of professional opportunities.

„Our conationals make efforts to better integrate in the host country, blending into a collectivity, and thoroughly mastering the language, traditions-customs, and culture. As a result of social studies and research undertaken on certain countries receiving annually a large number of foreign immigrants, it has been shown that host populations assess immigrants depending on two dimensions: warmly (esteem, respect, compassion) and in reference to the professional competence of the immigrant, in accordance with its studies”.¹⁴

Integration of the Romanians in Italy is measured by learning the Italian language, their access to the labor market, to acquiring habits, traditions and culture of the Italian communities. Among the immigrants, an increasingly commonly used term is acculturation, through this understanding, “a group of immigrants from various countries of the world, from different cultures coming to an initial form of contact with the local population. Following this contact, both cultures are interwoven and borrow various basic elements: common expressions, gestures, preferences, tastes for different services, products, bringing visible changes in the behavior of each participant to the process”.¹⁵

Groups from different cultural backgrounds and their individual members are engaged in an acculturation process of changes involving both sides: psychological, cultural, behavioral; researches conducted in psychology show that the process of integration, assimilation and even the process of separation, marginalization adopted by immigrant populations may be seen differently depending on the host population. “At the opposite pole lie the people with higher education, who are either diplomats or consuls in those countries or that are business people, who borrow cultural elements that borrow just from a simple necessity, these having pretty well shaped their own moral and cultural values”¹⁶.

¹⁴ Cristian, Elena, Raluca, Bărăgan, Laura, Georgeta, *Identification of main economic and social causes of Romanian migration*, ECOFORUM SUCEAVA (2015), Issue 2, Volume 4, p. 157.

¹⁵ Bocancea, Cristian (2011), *Migrație, aculturație și valori politice*, Revista Sfera Politicii, pp. 4-9.

¹⁶ Comănești, Cătălina-Felicia (2011), “*Imagina imigranților români în presa internațională: mit sau realitate?*”, Revista Sfera Politicii, pp. 156-164.

“In the end, migration supposedly assumes a purely subjective choice for the immigrant involved in this process and which involves at the same time taking two major decisions, for him/her and his/hers family to immigrate for a period of time and to choose as correct as possible the country of destination or of immigration”.¹⁷

Of these personality and behavior traits which lead to a better integration of foreign immigrants in another country, we can mention the following: empathy, respect, interest in the local culture, flexibility, tolerance for the religious and ethnic background, technical skills, openness and new professional and social visions, sociability, positive self-image, all of them contributing throughout the stay in the country of destination to the creation and “polishing” of the new entrants personality¹⁸.

The research focus group provided an opportunity to understand the extent of the phenomenon of immigration through a direct contact with the Romanian immigrant and his family, but also through the problems it is being faced with in the host or destination country.

4. Conclusions:

In the actual globalization context, the attention of the world states focuses also on the labor force migration, not being solutioned for the time being nowhere else in the world by its politics.

Migration for the past decades has become a normal topic, being part of a social reality of the countries involved in the process; a topic to be addressed also from an ethical perspective of the institutions that protect human rights and support the free flow of labor force of able persons.

Many of the Western host companies nowadays require that immigrants entering into a new country with a new culture must learn and acquire new language, traditions, customs and culture.

The research conducted has been focused on the personality and behavior traits or social skills that successfully influence the adaptation to a new culture, traditions and idiom.

Recent researches in intercultural psychology of the individuals from different corners of the world have demonstrated that there are a number of acculturation strategies for the integrating into a foreign community, for assimilating of a culture, separation for introverted individuals and immigrants and marginalization for a certain group of individuals with an aggressive behavior.

All of these acculturation strategies are adopted in time by the foreign immigrants in function of the different perception of each host country's population.

¹⁷ Cristian, Elena, Raluca, Bărgan, Laura, Georgeta; *The impact of the "beaten path" model on Romanian migration*, ECOFORUM SUCEAVA (2015), Special Issue 1, Volume 4, p.258.

¹⁸ Cristian, Elena, Raluca, Bărgan, Laura, Georgeta, *Identification of main economic and social causes of Romanian migration*, ECOFORUM SUCEAVA (2015), Issue 2, Volume 4, p.168.

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