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Social axioms, cultural dimensions and personal autonomy in Romanian educational field

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Abstract

Our research is dealing with the topic of social axioms in the educational area, examining the way in which different subscales of social axioms and cultural dimensions from Hofstede's model could be related with personal autonomy, measured through self-esteem, locus of control and self-determination. The sample is composed by 522 subjects from Timisoara (253 from lower and higher secondary school and 269 from universities). The teachers from universities have shown significantly higher scores of social cynicism, power-distance, rewards for application and religiosity than the teacher from secondary schools. The similar and contradictory trend could be indentified for the young cohorts of teachers, comparative with the older ones.
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1. Culture and personality in Romanian educational field

The key challenge for the research is to establish a local diagnostic model based on social axioms model. Conducted in the education field, analysis aimed to identify the role of cultural factors in combination with personality factors in producing in symptomatology with many communitarian pathological accents. Moreover, the examination revealed that the Romanian educational environment the "causal source" for its failures (both systemic as well as personal) "mental inertia" register uncommitted rhetorical formulas found in such "old mentality", "communist waste," "conservative land ", the" routines "that inhabit the" school "and its actors. For example, the Presidential Commission for Education report describes the residual nature of behavior and value patterns of many conservative academic world, which are responsible for the "ineffective, irrelevant, unfair and of poor quality" character of the Romanian

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education (Miclea, 2007, p. 7). When, however, is studying the "pathologies" of the system, an analysis is made predominant (inter)individual (strictly psychological) or a structural one (strictly sociological). Therefore, an approach that brings together individual register (personal), structural (societal), organizational, and, especially, cultural appears to be as necessary and urgent. Assembled, therefore, these distinct theoretical and methodological positions, by signaling the observed trends and critical analysis in terms of methodology it proposes, this study focuses on the relationship between a number of personality variables (associated with personal autonomy: self-determination, self-esteem, locus of control) and a set of cultural dimensions (social axioms, factors Hofstede model).

2. Research description

The study was conducted on a sample composed of 522 subjects: 253 professors from the high-schools and 269 teachers from universities, from the humanistic and social sciences areas, and the instruments applied were, for cultural dimensions: Social Axioms Survey (SAS) - which belongs to Michael Harris Bond and Kwok Leung, Values Survey Module 94 (VSM94) - realized by Geert Hofstede, and for personal autonomy: Self-Determination Scale (SDS) - of K. M Sheldon, R. M. Ryan and H. Rice, Locus of Control Scale (LCS) - performed by J. Rotter and Self-esteem (RSE) - of Morris Rosenberg.

The results associated with the cultural dimension of the Hofstede's model (power distance - PD, individualism-collectivism - I / C, masculinity-feminity - M / F, Uncertainty Avoidance - UA, long / short time perspectives / L / S TP) differ from other Romanian similar research, having worked with samples that have different composition (national representative sample, or regional representative samples or groups of subjects formed by managers), and are described in a comparative analysis in table. 1. Thus, there is a very high score on power distance (PD = 78), which in terms of behavioral descriptors (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010) expresses a strong mutual distrust between organizational actors that are placed on different hierarchical positions.

Table 1. Comparative results with other relevant research in Romania / Balkans - cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede - conventional test scores on VSM94

Landmark research / cultural dimensions	PD	I/C	M/F	UA	L/S TP
This study, sample formed by teachers (human and social and political sciences) - Romania	78	36	34	85	23
Gavreliuc (2011), regional representative sample, Western Region - Romania, 1058 subjects	51	50	25	69	34
Spector, Cooper, Sanchez, et al. (2001), Romania, 455 subjects, national sample	26	47	23	50	55
Luca (2005), representative national sample, 1076 subjects	29	49	39	61	42
Romania - G. Hofstede estimates	90	30	42	90	-
Bulgaria - G. Hofstede estimates	70	30	40	85	-
Balkans - Hofstede estimates	76	27	21	88	-

Specific score on this dimension have been closer to global assessments of G. Hofstede (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010), but the results obtained on Romanian samples (Spector, Cooper, Sanchez et al., 2001, Luke, 2005; Gavreliuc, 2011), the distance from power was significantly lower. If past cited research evoke *relational modernization* in the sense of taking over a organizational and interpersonal hierarchical model on a Western pattern, the trend in our study illustrates an important return on

attitudinal towards a *non-partnership patterns*, characterized by aggression, mutual mistrust, frustration and disengagement.

Also, group portrait sample resulting from the application of SAS60 shows - especially if you make comparisons with other national samples obtained from similar cultural areas - results significantly higher than those of the overwhelming majority of national samples (Leung, Bond, 2008). - See table. 2.

Table 2 Cultural dimensions of social axioms model

Dimensions of social axioms model (n = 522)	Minimum score	Maximum score	Media	Standard deviation (SD)
C.I. Social cynicism	1.76	4.65	3.2970	.43363
C.II. Reward for application	1.75	4.83	3.8064	.44364
C.III. Social complexity	2.08	4.33	3.4347	.29657
C.IV. Fate control	1.00	4.57	2.6902	.57815
C.V. Religiosity	1.29	5.00	3.2750	.64114

The score obtained on the most problematic dimension of social axioms model (social cynicism = 3.30), the Romanian sample consists of teachers is placed from the vicinity of countries like those in the Far East (China - 3.03, Hong Kong - 3.13, India - 3.04) or Islamic area (Pakistan - 3.29) (Leung, Bond, 2010). Such a result shows striking duplicitous identity strategies that beyond the rhetoric honorable interpersonal honest openness, works in an opportunistic and instrumental way (using it on the "other" as a means to achieve their own goals). Cynicism of this kind of interpersonal logic in an educational environment testifies an assimilation attitudes pattern deeply rooted in Romanian society, which rely on a lack of social capital (mainly characterized by a very low interpersonal and generalized trust) (Sandu, 2003; Gavreliuc, 2011). With regard to personal autonomy, the results are distributed as follows, stabilizing at a low level (see table no. 3).

Table 3. Personal autonomy of teachers

Scale (n=522)	Media	Standard deviation
E1. Self-awareness	11.5920	4.96283
E2. Perceived choice	12.0613	4.32065
E3. Self-determination	23.6533	6.71524
B. Self-esteem	21.0824	4.30628
D. Locus of control	11.9521	3.27610

And other specific scores were similar to previous studies, although samples were composed of all classes of people (not just teachers) (Gavreliuc, 2011). The entire period of recent years - especially after 2008 after the deepening of economic crisis - was accompanied by a continuous deterioration of working conditions, salary level and stability of teachers, and the fact that inference interfered with "the control

over their own lives" and the set of emotions that accompany them (anxiety, restlessness, insecurity, disappointment, etc.), a trend confirmed by cross-cultural studies (Verschuur, Maric, Spinhoven, 2010).

A similar analysis performed on identity portrait of teachers according to their belonging to pre-university or universitary environment completes the "status quo" picture in school, contouring the assumed social identities especially in the register of cultural dimensions. No fewer than six dimensions produce significantly different scores depending on the insertion of subjects in pre-university, or in university education (locus of control - LC, power distance - DP, individualism-collectivism - I / C, social cynicism - SC, reward for application - RA, religiosity - R), which are statistically significant, and one is at the limit of significance (fate control - FC). Of the 7 dimensions, at least 5 produce unexpected differences (PD, SC, AR, FC, R) according to whether subjects in an environment that requires the purchase of a symbolic capital (prestige, educational capital, capital and opportunities and last but not least of all material capital) specific, richer in university than in pre-universitary field. Thus, in the Hofstede model, is established that those working in the pre-university field are more partnership and cooperative in hierarchical relations than those working in the university, with a statistically significantly lower score on distance towards power (t (520) =- 4.583, p <0.001). And this result suggests an assimilation attitude pattern with a touch of local educational environment the more authoritarian and non-partnership they are the more the subjects "climb" the stairs social prestige. The features depicted above is strengthened by the statistically significantly higher scores in social cynicism for academic teachers, than to those of pre-university environment (t (520) =- 2.213, p = 0.027), with an average very high anyway for both samples, significantly higher than the national cultures of most large-scale cross-cultural research studied coordinated by Kwok Leung and Michael Harris Bond (2010).

A theme with stake of our analysis is concerned with examining the intergenerational determinants in producing evoked symptoms, especially since recent studies indicate - on a representative sample of Romania - how young people are not "what they seem" to be, not integrated into the role of change agents, the vectors of change in mentality binding (Gavreliuc, 2011). Social strata of our samples were divided into five age categories, with intervals of at least 10 years between generational areas (18-29 years, 30-39 years. 40-49 years, 50-59 years, over 60 years). Inter-categorical difference occurs mainly among specific generational groups (18-29 years) and (40-49 years) in the counterintuitive sense, namely the very young teachers are statistically significantly higher on externalism than those in mature age. Such findings show how learned helplessness phenomenon associated externalism is expanding even in socialization practices of post-communism (own cohorts 18-29 years), not being a privilege of those who lived the burden communist socialization experiences (which currently have over 40 years). The fact that more than two decades after removing the - formal - of communism, young teachers are so externalists, indicating a very consistent presence of learned helplessness (Gherasim, 2011), even among those who are called to produce "great change" the system. In the register of cultural dimensions, a first analysis of variance examining the dependent variable of distance towards power in relation to membership of certain age groups tend earlier emphasizes, indicating the presence of statistically significant inter-categorial differences (F = 8.142, p <0.001). Thus, although the overall sample average is very high (PD index = 78.06, SD = 24.01), it is higher in younger generational layers, and most "balanced" in relative terms, are the elderly.

In the central dimension of social axioms model, social cynicism, is found as, overall, it records statistically significant differences between the various generational layers that compose the sample of teachers (F = 23.473, p <0.001). Also, again those with most problematic social identity proved to be the youngest, with the most pronounced social cynicism score statistically significantly higher than mature generational cohorts (the maximum difference between the average - of 0.44 - the social cynicism just recorded between age group (18-29) and (49-59), meaning between the youngest and those who have a consolidated experience in the system. Following the same line of development as in a previous study

(Gavreliuc, Gavreliuc, Cimpean, 2009), our research shows how, despite appearances (which tells the young people are more engaged, open and autonomous in interpersonal relationship), regarding their generalized beliefs and default qualifications about their social world the young ones are the least honest in relationship.

3. Conclusions

Despite the assumed limitations of the undertaken study, particularly related to the homogeneous nature of the sample (professors from the social sciences and humanistic specialization) and regional sizing constrain (the investigation took place in Timisoara), the results described above suggest *a trend of the Romanian school in general and of the university in special, to shape those from the "system" in a rather focused on relational and institutional dependency and duplicity.*

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