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## Intergenerational Analysis of Cultural Dimensions and Attributional Patterns in Romanian Educational Organizations

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### Abstract

The stake of our research is focused on realizing an intergenerational diagnosis concerning social axioms, Hofstede's cultural dimensions and attributional patterns in Romanian educational organizations. The sample was composed by 522 subjects: 253 teachers from high-schools and 269 teachers from universities. The main outcomes underline the most intense score of social cynicism, fate control, religiosity (from the social axioms model), externalist locus of control and power distance for younger generations among all cohorts. All of these features reveal the prevalence of retractile and fatalist patterns of social attitudes and evaluation of the social world, generally distributed in the generational strata.

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### 1. Cultural dimensions and relational patterns

We were interested in diversifying the description of Romanian educational organization realized in a previous study (Gavreliuc, Gavreliuc, 2012), through an intergenerational analysis. The diagnosis performed in organizational areas in Romania in the register of cultural dimensions indicates high scores of power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, femininity and a short term orientation (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010). At the same time, in the register of social axioms factors (Leung, Bond, 2008), the findings describe a portrait characterized by high scores of social cynicism, reward for application, religiosity and fate control, and a low score in social complexity, and also the mean score for locus of control is associated with moderate externalism (Gavreliuc, 2011). After this primary analysis, will try to determine which generational cohorts are more meaningfully described by these tendencies. We will also try to assess the thesis of relational modernization in Romanian educational organizations, in the sense of taking over an organizational and interpersonal hierarchical

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model following a Western pattern. Our research rather evokes a notable return on the attitudinal towards non-partnership patterns, characterized by aggression, mutual mistrust, frustration and disengagement.

## 2. Research description

The sample of our study is composed of 522 subjects, teachers from Timisoara, the Western part of Romania, both from high-schools (253) and universities (269). We have applied the following psychosociological instruments: Values Survey Module 94 (VSM94, generally, the potential scores are distributed between 0-100 for each factor), created by Geert Hofstede, Social Axioms Survey (SAS, scores between 1-5 on a Likert scale for each factor), realized by Kwok Leung and Michael Harris Bond and Locus of Control Scale (LCS, scores between 0 to 23) - generated by J. Rotter.

The global portrait of our sample is characterized by high scores of power distance, collectivism, feminity, uncertainty avoidance, and a pronounced short term perspective (for Hofstede model), relatively high scores of social cynicism, reward for application, social complexity, fate control and religiosity (for social axioms model, if we are comparing these scores with similar ones from another national samples) and predominant externalist attributional style (see table no.1). This obtained profile confirm the previous tendencies observed in researches conducted in Romania with the analogous instruments in the last years (Spector at al., 2001, Bond & Leung, 2010, Gavreliuc, 2009) or in Hofstede's assessment about Romania (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010).

Table no. 1 Cultural map in educational area – Hofstede's model (n=522)

Dimensions	Mean	SD
Power distance	78.06	24.018
Individualism-collectivism	36.31	20.171
Masculinity-feminity	33.72	19.739
Uncertainty avoidance	85.07	19.221
Long/short term perspective	23.89	15.784
Social cynicism	3.297	0.433
Reward for application	3.806	0.443
Social complexity	3.434	0.296
Fate control	2.690	0.578
Religiosity	3.275	0.641
Locus of control	11.952	3.276

One-way ANOVAs with cohorts as independent variable found statistically significant intergenerational differences regarding locus of control, power distance, social cynicism, social complexity, fate control and religiosity, as can be seen in table no. 2.

The first distinction is registered on locus of control ( $F=2.308$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). The significant statistical differences are observed between cohorts (age 18-29) and (age 40-49), in a counterintuitive way: younger teachers are more externalists than the older ones, illustrating an opposite trend from the occidental environments (Chak, Leung, 2004; Broos, Roe, 2006). The fact attests that after two decades of post-communism, the phenomenon of learned helplessness is extremely spread, contaminating the young cohorts (Gherasim, 2011).

In the register of cultural dimensions from G. Hofstede's model, only power distance is distributed significantly different between cohorts ( $F=8.142$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Thus, even if the global score of power distance index is high ( $M=78.06$ ,  $SD=24.01$ ), the score is higher for the young cohorts. Seen as a variable associated with interpersonal and institutional authoritarianism (Smith et al., 2005), pronounced high scores on power distance

indicate the ordinary practices form school based on symbolic force, dogmatism and obedience, as generalized symptoms. Therefore, these kinds of practices become routine strategies in hierarchical relationships in the Romanian educational environment. The difference between the youngest cohort (age 18-29) and the middle one (age 40-49) is more than 16 conventional points on the PD index, suggesting that the postcommunist period has consolidated the authoritarian patterns acquired in communism.

Likewise, again the most problematic social identity proved to be the younger one, because the main dimension of the social axioms model – social cynicism – is, statistically, significantly higher than the specific scores for the cohorts with consolidated experiences in communism, especially than the cohorts of ages (40-49). This outcome indicates the similar tendency as a previous research (Gavreliuc, Cimpean, Gavreliuc, 2009), in which the Romanian younger social strata are more predisposed to an un-honest generalized way of thinking and acting in their interpersonal relationships, as a functional way of solving their own tasks. Actually/In reality, the mere fact that social cynicism activates an interpersonal logic in an educational environment testifies to an assimilation of an implicit cognition pattern deeply rooted in the Romanian society, which relies on a lack of social capital, mainly represented by a deficient interpersonal and generalized trust (Sandu, 2003).

On the social complexity dimension, we found significant statistic inter-categorical differences, ( $F=6.610$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with the younger one proving more pregnantly in acquiring an opportunist attitudinal pattern, with a more pronounced behavioral flexibility than the older one (+60 years). This outcome is similar to results obtained on samples for the Islamic area, where the experience of inhibiting behavior along with the ageing process is demonstrated (Joshnloo, Afshari, Rastegar, 2010).

Table 2. Intergenerational comparison of attributional patterns and cultural dimensions (social axioms and Hofstede's dimensions) (One-Way ANOVAs)

Dimensions	Generational stratum					F-values
	G(18-29) M(SD)	G(30-39) M(SD)	G(40-49) M(DS)	G(50-59) M(SD)	G(+60) M(SD)	
LOC	12.7692 <sup>b</sup> (3.06259)	12.0884 <sup>ab</sup> (3.35752)	11.5699 <sup>a</sup> (3.30241)	11.6351 <sup>ab</sup> (3.40255)	11.9583 <sup>ab</sup> (11.9583)	2.308*
PD	89.89 <sup>b</sup> (18.211)	78.78 <sup>ab</sup> (23.819)	73.60 <sup>a</sup> (24.773)	74.19 <sup>a</sup> (24.579)	75.21 <sup>ab</sup> (23.242)	8.142**
SCnS	3.5734 <sup>c</sup> (0.38148)	3.4018 <sup>b</sup> (0.42826)	3.1414 <sup>a</sup> (0.40122)	3.1335 <sup>a</sup> (0.36422)	3.3186 <sup>abc</sup> (0.36422)	23.473**
SCx	3.5403 <sup>d</sup> (0.29010)	3.4626 <sup>abcd</sup> (0.26874)	3.3665 <sup>ab</sup> (0.30772)	3.4516 <sup>abcd</sup> (0.28835)	3.3403 <sup>a</sup> (0.28649)	6.610**
FC	2.8823 <sup>c</sup> (0.48121)	2.7833 <sup>bc</sup> (0.58266)	2.5476 <sup>a</sup> (0.58061)	2.6197 <sup>ab</sup> (0.58318)	2.7143 <sup>abc</sup> (0.58067)	6.874**
R	3.5196 <sup>b</sup> (0.54649)	3.2896 <sup>ab</sup> (0.05222)	3.1767 <sup>a</sup> (0.04712)	3.1680 <sup>a</sup> (0.07331)	3.3512 <sup>ab</sup> (0.16518)	5.187**

LOC = locus of control, PD = power distance, SCnS = social cynicism, SCx = social complexity, FC = fate control, R = religiosity.

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ . Notes:  $df = 2, 1478$ . Means with same letters do not differ significantly

Fate control as a dependent variable generates intergenerational statistical differences ( $F=6.874$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), describing a portrait characterized by the following tendency: “the younger you are, the more fatalist you are”. The most equilibrated subjects are the mature ones (age 40-49, age 50-59), that opt in favor of more autonomous axiomatically definitions of social life and its dynamics, in contradiction with other studies in which youth are

associated with trust in their own forces and optimistic visions about the future and control of their own life (Zhou, Leung, Bond, 2009).

The analysis of religiosity describes global significant statistical differences between cohorts ( $F=5.187$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), in which the younger strata are more religiously involved in interpreting their own lives, with more relevant reference points associated to supernatural factors, than mature cohorts (age 40-49, age 50-59). This outcome could be explained by the dominant socialization type acquired in communism, which was more restrictive in the area of religious practices, and, as a consequence, is more influent for mature cohorts. At the same time, the recrudescence of an implicit religious semantic in explaining social dynamics for the younger generation should also be underlined.

### 3. Conclusions

Resuming, we found a younger generation with a problematic profile (highest scores in power distance, social cynicism, fate control and religiosity) and externalist attributional style, describing a controversial social portrait, different than the most part of precedent studies in this area. All of these trends suggest the presence of a truly insightful and inertial process of contamination at the level of social cognition for the Romanian younger social strata, generated by the older cohort socialized in communism. Thus, the axiomatic definition of social dynamic and social involvement is more fatalistic and duplicitous, even if the younger are expected to be more self-determined and opened. This observation is more alarming because the tendency is proved to be active in a social environment (represented by education) that is traditionally associated with promoting social responsibility and communitarian involvement. From our research, we can observe how young people are not "what they seem" to be, and they are precariously integrated into the role of change agents, the vectors of change in mentality binding (Gavreliuc, 2011). For that reason, beyond of appearances (institutional acquisition and behavioral changes), the societal change in Romania realized through a democratic pattern become a problematic one as well, and the thesis of relational modernization in Romanian educational organizations is refuted.

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