

## THE CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (CQ), A BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURES

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### ABSTRACT

*Due to the fact that the world's economy is an uncontested reality, the interest of studying interpersonal relations between employees coming from different cultures is constantly increasing. In this context, „the Cultural Intelligence” (Earley & Ang, 2003) enjoys an increased attention in special literature.*

*This article analysis the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) concept and highlights it's role on human behavior within an organization whose members come from different cultures.*

*This article is based on a critical analysis of the special literature, highlighting the particular features of CQ, the differences between CQ and other forms of intelligence (social and emotional) and the effects that a high level of CQ has at individual and group level. The study's findings present and propose new directions of research on cultural intelligence, the most important aspect being the biunivocal link between the Cultural Intelligence and the ability of communication, the relationship between them being direct and extremely strong, intensifying each other.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Cultural Intelligence, Human Intelligence, individual performance, organizational performance.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *O1*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of human society has led to a continuous increase in the complexity of intellectual skills. Under these circumstances, individual intelligence is a fundamental element in assessing the ability of a person to cope with the challenges they face permanently. Undoubtedly, intelligence is also a major asset in the field of management, which can play a decisive role in strategic thinking and planning, in organizational culture and in human resources management. At the same time, the development and the optimization of human software is one of the main goals of psychology, the vast creative potential of the brain being still one of the least exploited resources in many areas, including management.

Human relationships are, for a long time, a constant concern in social psychology research. The way in which an individual manifest in a particular context, and also the interactions that appear between individuals at individual or group (organizational) level are determined by human intelligence. The intelligence may be defined in multiple ways, but, in my opinion, its essence lies in the ability of a person to find rapid solutions (responses) to problems raised by the action of internal and / or external stimulus. The brain manages to make optimum connections between time-accumulated information (memory), to order them correctly and to find the viable solution to the problem a person is facing. Essentially, intelligence is a generic term designating superior forms of organizing or balancing cognitive structures. (Piaget, 2000) Intelligence facilitates performance in any field of activity but, it is directly influenced by a series of specific factors, by the particularities of each analyzed area. So, along the time, were achieved a series of conceptual constructions on intelligence, constructions that have had a major impact on management.

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Achieving the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ), defined as being the capacity of an individual who effectively manage its evolution in various cultural environments (Earley & Ang, 2003), was an important step in the field of management, covering the existing gap in studying human behavior in an intercultural context.

CQ studies have developed in two main directions. The first direction covers the area of management (Earley & Peterson, 2004, Triandis, 2006, Erez et al., 2013, Eisenberg et al., 2013), and the second one studies CQ from the perspective of social psychology (Thomas, 2006, Ang et al., 2006, Herrmann et al., 2007, Chiu et al., 2011).

## 2. THE PLACE AND ROLE OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN STUDYING HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

The main way to evaluate a person's level of intelligence was for a long time, the determination of cognitive intelligence, IQ, using the Stanford-Binet intelligence scale. But, not only a few times, a high level of IQ has been shown not to be a guarantee of success, because, the performance, in the majority of cases depends on a multitude of characteristic features (attributes) at individual level. Especially in cultures with a pronounced collectivist character this has been recognized.

In individualistic cultures, the emphasis was put on cognitive intelligence (IQ), considering that organizational performance can be achieved, almost exclusively, by the achievements of individuals with a very high IQ. Over time, it has been shown that performance is easier to achieve in organizations where members' IQs are within normal limits but who developed other types of intelligence. (Surowiecki 2005, Nambisan & Sawhney, 2009) These studies, confirms once more, Gardner's theory (1983) who demonstrated the multiplicity of intelligence, theory that opened new perspectives in field research and led to new approaches of the intelligence.

Gardner (2011) demonstrates the existence of seven types of intelligence, of which two, define exactly the **personal intelligence**. The first one, the **interpersonal intelligence**, is defined as the ability to understand others, what motivates them, how they work, how to co-operate with them, is the ability to discern and respond in the most appropriate way to states, temperaments, motivations and the wishes of others. The second one, the **intrapersonal intelligence**, is a capacity correlated with the first but inwardly oriented. It is that ability to create a model full of accuracy and truthfulness of self, and to be able, personally, to use this model to work efficiently in life. The key to self-knowledge is the access to one's own feelings, the ability to discern each other and to master them in the conduct of behavior. These two forms of personal intelligence led, starting from emotional / rational dichotomy, to the definition of **emotional intelligence (EI)**, (Payne, 1985, Salovey & Mayer, 1990) also known as **emotional maturity** (Emotional Quotient) (EQ). (Keith Beasley, 1987)

**Emotional intelligence** is defined as a sum of abilities that includes the ability to identify, understand and accept the reasons that determine both your own emotions and those of others. Emotional intelligence is based on self-awareness, self-discipline (the way we control our impulses and feelings), empathy, and controlled behavior that is appropriate to the situation.

Another form of intelligence, the social intelligence (Thorndike, 1920, Goleman, 2006) was defined as a set of interpersonal skills (ability to sense, understand the thoughts, motivations, feelings and intentions of the other, based on the experience gained from social interaction), which allow pertinent knowledge of the behavioral reactions of other individuals, of acceptance/relationship to other people's behavior (the ability to establish and maintain social relations easily, but also to find solutions in maintaining interpersonal relationships) and to adapt to situations or expectations (the ability to predict and react flexibly in any social situation).

Social intelligence is defined by three basic components: the perceptual component, the cognitive-analytical and the behavioral component. In this regard we can appreciate that an individual characterized by high social intelligence is capable of denoting proper behavior in order to function

and interact in accordance with his social goals. (Björkqvist, et al., 2000) Also, **practical intelligence** has been highlighted (Sternberg & Wagner, 1986), which develops an intelligence approach based on the dichotomy of the practical / theoretical terms, an approach based on the reality of the obvious differences between the cognitive intelligence given by the level of IQ and the expertise in a given field.

At the level of managerial sciences, the influence of different types of intelligence on performance, at individual and organizational level, has been extensively studied over the past decades. So, the **emotional intelligence** has been shown to play a major role in the relations within the organization, both among its members and in the manager-employee relationship, being a defining element in achieving a positive working atmosphere in interpersonal relationships and, implicitly, in achieving performance. (Druskat et al., 2013, Schlaerth et al., 2013, Antonakis et al., 2009, Fambrough & Hart, 2008)

**Social intelligence** is related to human relationships in general, a high level of it, conducting not only to an increasing efficiency of inter-human relations within the organization but also to a high level of relations with people outside the organization. People with a high degree of social intelligence are more likely to communicate information to the expectations of the interlocutors due to their high ability to assess social requirements and, implicitly, to select behavioral responses appropriate to the requirements.

**Social intelligence** is a multidimensional construction that involves social consciousness, social understanding, and skills to develop social relationships. Social awareness refers to the ability to be aware of someone's needs, desires, requirements and problems. Social understanding is the ability to understand and act according to the needs of others. Ultimately, social interaction is related to discernment for interpersonal constructive interactions. (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000)

In an organizational context, social intelligence can be interpreted as the ability to sense and understand the needs of stakeholders, constantly and appropriately interacting with them, to the benefit of the organization. Social intelligence is a determinant of managerial performance. (Boyatzis, 2011, Rahim, 2014, Kong et al., 2012) But, the relations between management and these forms of human intelligence were studied on samples whose subjects mostly came from the same cultural area. In the last decades, as a result of the process of globalization of the world economy, the continuous increase of the labor force heterogeneity at the organizational level, led to significant mutations in the approach of the organizational management. More and more intense cultural interference in organizational space has led to the emergence of a major challenge by finding a common denominator in the relationships between people from diverse cultures and often having different skills and levels of training. In this context, the achievement of individual and organizational performance is increasingly driven by the finding of new levers that allow the assessment and improvement of organizational behavior in a multicultural environment. The new requirements for human resource quality imposed a new approach to human intelligence, transposed at the beginning of this century into the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ), concept that is a bridge from intelligence studies types that characterize interpersonal relationships between people from the same cultural environment (social intelligence, emotional intelligence) to the study of interpersonal relationships in a new free-construct culture that occurs in a multicultural environment. The cultural intelligence has one important common feature with the forms of social and emotional intelligence, in the sense that all support the idea of multidimensionality. But both types of intelligence are specific to the culture in which they have developed and are not associated with intercultural relationships. Social skills acquired in a particular culture may prove totally ineffective or even sometimes offensive in another culture that has other rules of social behavior. Regarding emotional intelligence, it is largely influenced by certain norms specific to a culture, rules that directly influence the experimentation of emotions.

### 3. CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (CQ) – LANDMARKS AND CONCEPTUAL PARTICULARITIES

CQ is a specific form of intelligence focused on the capacity to adapt personal behavior to the requirements and needs of relationships that occur in situations characterized by cultural diversity. At the same time, CQ allows the development of a set of elements (principles, rules, etc.) that create the premises for the achievement of quality interpersonal relationships between people from different cultural backgrounds. A high level of CQ allows the adaptation and modeling of a person's behavior according to the circumstantial situation created by contact with people from different cultural areas.

CQ has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construction characterized by components of a mental nature (metacognition and cognition), motivational and behavioral. (Earley and Ang, 2003) The CQ concept is an attempt to analyze and evaluate psychic and intellectual capacities, highlighted by the components of metacognition, cognition and motivation, as well as their effects transposed into the person's behavior, everything in the context of multicultural relations. (Ang et al., 2007)

**Metacognitive CQ (MCQ)** refers to the promotion of self-regulated mental processes, processes through which the person (subject) carries out continuous monitoring, processing and evaluation activities, which determines the awareness of the problems that arise in a multicultural context. Based on his / her knowledge, the person has the ability to review the initial assumptions and to create new strategies that will allow him / her to deal in real time with the new emerging situations. (Van Dyne et al., 2012) Practically, the metacognitive component of cultural intelligence plays a decisive role in capitalizing on its own multicultural experience. (Van Dyne et al., 2012).

**Cognitive CQ (CCQ)** expresses the level of personal knowledge in economic, legal, sociolinguistic and interpersonal relationships regarding the norms, practices and traditions of other cultures, obtained through education and personal experiences, contributing to the understanding of the differences and similarities between their own culture and other cultures. Cognitive CQ stimulates the interest for other cultures, seeking explanations of the differences between their own culture and other cultures. (Kim et al., 2008, Brislin et al., 2006)

**Motivational CQ (MOTC)** is defined by the desire to know and understand in depth a new, unfamiliar cultural environment, and to meet the challenges posed by the impact with other cultures. Motivational CQ (MOTCQ) reflects a person's interest in understanding the specificities of other cultures, and contributes decisively to the increase of personal confidence concerning the level of intercultural relationships an individual can deal with. (Ang et al., 2007)

**Behavioral CQ (BCQ)** defines the ability to personally adapt to elements specific to verbal behaviors (words, tones) and non-verbal (gestures, facial expressions and body language) from other cultures. A high level of this type of CQ ensures a rapid response, appropriate to the multicultural context. (Kim et al., 2008)

The analysis of the CQ concept highlights a number of important contributions that this relatively new construction brings in theoretical and practical terms in a highly sensitive and amalgamated field such as intelligence. The CQ concept succeeds in a simple but very clear way, to realize in a concise form on the basis of a small number of variables (metacognition, cognition, motivation and behavior), to define the main aspects of the individual adaptability to an environment characterized by a culture different from that in which the individual lived and developed. The synthetic and coherent theoretical approach, allows, at the same time, the surprise of a wide range of defining elements of this phenomenon, realizing, at the same time, an integration into this concept of some elements (aspects) of intelligence known and analyzed separately, but which have never been analyzed as part of a unitary one. At the same time, CQ opens new study directions on the role played by other cognitive processes on the ability of the individual to adapt to elements specific to other cultures. (Gelfand et al., 2008)

The CQ concept highlights a new type of intelligence that differs from other concepts that address intercultural relationships, such as intercultural competency or global mindset. Two are the advantages of CQ. First, it replaces the concepts of intercultural competence and global thinking that, even if they are used extensively in the literature of the managerial field, there are not approached evenly, because concepts and constituents give rise to multiple interpretations. Secondly, the CQ concept is not influenced by country-specific institutional and cultural elements. This concept transcends cultural boundaries because it is based on competencies (skills) that are not specific to the culture in which they developed. Practically, CQ is not specific to any culture. (Thomas et al., 2008)

Another feature of CQ is its dynamic character, because it involves continuous learning from social interactions that occur in a multicultural environment. Increasing the level of CQ at a personal level is determined (influence) by the ability to notice (being aware of) the existing cultural differences and to find ways to reduce these differences. A major role in this context is that of the relationship skills, such as adaptability, flexibility, sociability and empathy.

Studies on cultural intelligence, both theoretical and practical, comprise a wide area of interest, being multi-directional. So, CQ is analyzed from the perspective of personality traits (Ang et al., 2006, Peltokorpi et al., 2012, Zuffianò et al., 2013, Şahin et al., 2014), of intercultural adaptation (Templer, 2006, Lin et al., 2012), and last but not least, of CQ measurement methods and scales and multicultural competence in general. (Van Dyne et al., 2012, Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, Ang & Van Dyne, 2015)

#### **4. THE CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (CQ) - INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION, RELATIONSHIP**

One of the major issues faced by organizations at the moment in the pursuit of performance, is how to create as many links as possible between organizational behavior, culture, structure and leadership, between their formal and informal components. This issue is amplified in the context of organizations whose members come from different cultural backgrounds. The affiliation to a multicultural organization determines, at individual level, major challenges linked firstly to the increase of the personal communication capacity level, which is much easier to achieve with people who have a high level of cultural intelligence. Because of the fact that the formal component of the organization offers limited means and conditions of the manifestation of emotions, feelings and mutual trust, all of these are transferred to informal organizations, which leads to the realization of another social reality, a reality influenced directly by the ability to communicate in a multicultural environment.

The issue of cultural intelligence, needs to be addressed both in terms of manager-employee relationships and in relation to employee relations. Intercultural relationships within organizations, characterized by a high degree of complexity and ambiguity, must be approached with the utmost skill by the manager. A manager with a high level of CQ needs to be well informed about the culture of the country where he / she is going to work, he / she must be aware of sensitive fundamental issues and he / she must be able to correctly interpret contextual hints, and not least, he may possess the necessary skills to enable him/her to react correctly in an intercultural relationship. (Inkson, 2004) At the same time, managers acting in a multicultural environment must have a repertoire of behavioral abilities that will allow them to respond appropriately to different intercultural situations. To the extent that their jobs require cultural intelligence, it is important for managers to evaluate the ways in which the cultural intelligence of employees can be valued (through careful selection) or it can be developed (through an appropriate training). (Earley, Ang & Tan 2006)

For cultural intelligence to prove its effectiveness, a higher quality of communication is needed.

Creating a competitive advantage that can become a determining factor in the competitive battle depends, in many cases, not only on the quality of the human resource but also on the ability of the

manager to apply those policies and practices in the field of human resources that ensure in the organization, interpersonal and group relationships of high quality. In this context, the level of cultural intelligence held by the manager becomes decisive in understanding and evaluating the existing cultural differences at the organizational level, having direct influence on the quality of interpersonal communication between manager and employees, both at formal and informal level.

The cultural intelligence is an important element in intercultural interactions, having in communication the key of the processes that contribute to the raising of the level of understanding between people from different cultures. The overcoming of our own cultural boundaries is basically the exit from the "psychological comfort zone" in which we have the predictability, protection and safety given by the cultural area in which we have developed and lived, up to that moment. The effectiveness of communication contributes directly to the possibility of achieving a high level of CQ, contributing directly to the effectiveness of intercultural communication. (Bücker et al., 2014, Bücker et al., 2015)

Analyzing the relationship between CQ and communication, it must be emphasized that mental (metacognition and cognition) and motivational elements are extremely important for holding a high CQ, but, are not enough for a person to cope with the challenges of a multi-cultural encounter. The behavioral component that contributes decisively to the realization of performance in a multicultural environment, is communication.

Communication plays a decisive role in intercultural relationships because its lack can lead to misunderstanding of the message conveyed by the interlocutor and implicitly to the emergence of major barriers to cooperation. The occurrence of a gap between interlocutors is due to the differences between the transmitted and received messages, between the real meaning of the transmitted idea and the way the message is decoded, thus appearing a significant alteration in the quality of communication. The reciprocal is equally valid. The existence of a real, higher quality communication can have beneficial effects on intercultural relations.

Because the quality of communication directly influences the level of understanding the emotions, thoughts and ideas that a person is trying to convey, its role is amplified when we talk about business meetings or organizational efficiency in a multi-cultural environment, communication becoming, in this context, a critical element, a Gordian knot of success. So, in the case of business meetings between people from different cultures, the ability to understand language (verbal and non-verbal) and the mentality (way of thinking) of the interlocutor, plays a determinant role. In such a situation, the role of CQ increases significantly, with moral, social and financial implications reaching extremely high rates compared to an ordinary business meeting, such that, it is possible to avoid the potential conflicts generated by the partner's misunderstanding due to a defective communication, which may have adverse repercussions on the performance of the organization. (Sarkar, 2010, Gammelgaard et al., 2013) At the same time, communication plays a decisive role in understanding the position of the interlocutor in the event of organizational conflicts between persons from different cultures, which can facilitate their flattening and significantly reduce the frequency of their occurrence. (Imai & Gelfand, 2010)

Communication efficiency can make a significant contribution to optimizing relationships with bureaucratic structures, an extremely sensitive issue, which can be accomplished through in-depth knowledge of specific cultures. This is more important, the more you can face ethical issues, because a behavior that can be considered fair in a country (culture) is not necessarily viewed identically in another country. In this context, there appear a number of positive effects manifested by the significant reduction of stress inherent to interaction in a new cultural environment, as well as the developing and the maintaining positive relationships with people from other cultures, elements whose synergic effect significantly increases the likelihood of achieving objectives related to service tasks and / or to their own interest in the case of working in a multicultural environment.

In my opinion, the relationship between cultural intelligence and communication capacity is a bizarre, direct and extremely powerful relationship, and they are mutually reinforcing each other.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS - NEW APPROACHES TO INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE**

The interest for intercultural management is a priority for large groups of Romanian researchers. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the works that have appeared in the last 20 years in magazines dedicated to this phenomenon, like Cross-Cultural Management Journal and Management Intercultural, which covers a wide range of topics on identifying and analyzing issues that arise in organizational management, especially in the conditions of organizational multiculturalism. What is to be noticed in this context is the low attention, at national level, to the concept of cultural intelligence, a concept that defines individual ability to integrate into a multicultural environment. Starting from this observation, we will continue to try to present some possible less research directions, less approached, but which, in our opinion, is of interest in widening the area of knowledge and implicitly improving practical applications in the relation CQ – individual/organisational performance – intercultural management, at national level. In these conditions, there is a need to highlight the main directions of action that need to be taken to highlight the importance and the impact of the cultural intelligence concept (CQ) in the field of intercultural management. In our opinion, they are, as follows:

- The analysis of the evolution of the CQ level according to the individual characteristics of the members of the organization (personality, gender, age, level of knowledge, religion) and the cultural environment they come from.
- Highlighting the specific features of Romanian culture that influence CQ and, implicitly, performance in a multicultural environment.
- The evolution of CQ according to the specific features of the organization - size, turnover, field of activity.
- Analyzing the links between the CQ level of the organization and its adaptability to the evolution of external factors.
- Relating the influence of the individual CQ level on the performance of the organizations (enterprises), including virtual ones, given the specific differences between classical and virtual organizations.
- Using CQ as an additional criterion in selecting staff and, implicitly, analyzing the role played by CQ within HRM.
- Highlighting from a psycho-social perspective the relationship between CQ and performance.
- Determining of CQ linkages and influence at managerial level. The analysis of manager-employee relationships through CQ prism.

We hope that the analysis carried out in this study and the proposed action lines will open new perspectives to study the CQ concept as a whole at national level. The new research directions highlighted at the end of the paper may provide for many researchers real possibilities to deepen knowledge in the field under consideration. Expanding analyzes by taking into account other factors (variables) is one of the priorities of our future studies in which we will look at the link between CQ and the defining elements of organizational performance.

We therefore consider a priority for every organization, to reconsider their attitude towards the human resource they work with. This must be seen from the perspective of the global economy, of companies using labor force from different cultural backgrounds.

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