



CULTURAL AWARENESS CLUJ STUDY
TRIP 2021

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1. Chapter A, Understand cultural differences

1.1 The role of cultures

Analyzing the concept of culture, it is hard to grasp the sense of it considering the multi-meanings it offers. Thinking about the specifics of culture we will find numerous aspects to study, here analyzing the role of national and organizational culture. National cultures highlight differences between people, institutions, and organizations between countries; for example, when we met one of our colleagues from Norway, what we noticed here are individual qualities, while when we saw the whole group, they were sharing similar individual qualities but still vastly differ from most of the nation. In contrast organizational cultures oppose different organizations within the same countries. Moreover, it can help improve workflows and guide decision-making. For instance, the Romanian students can have all kind of benefits regarding free public transport, discounts for food, beverage, and all kind of activities. In Norway also there is no tuition fees in public institutes. If we talk about styles of management, it's important to mention that encompasses the way managers make decisions, how they plan and organize work, and how they exercise authority. A democratic or participative style includes effective communication and openness through all levels of the organization. For example, the international students will be chosen not only by their academic record but also based on their social skills and the ability to work in teams. The consultative style has an open-door policy, in practice being observed for instance as the open and free discussions we had between the Romanian, Norwegian and international students in our group

1.2 Student thoughts about cultural interactions

The beliefs and values we support, build in our morals until know, tend to be exposed differently according to the environment and the culture we are surrounded by. At the same time, analyzing the answers for the task 'Present [...] thoughts about beliefs and values during interactions between international students and University', we managed to find similarities between the perspective of students from Norway, Netherlands, and Romania. The perspective of Romanian students is represented through the quote 'treat others as you would like to be treated', a quality noticed in all the international students we had the opportunity to meet. Regarding the process of education, it is principle to emphasize the working skills in group, as well as individual that all the students proved to master so well, including a keen sense of discipline without which we would not be able to finish the assignment. Continuing, it is crucial to emphasize the thoughts of my fellow colleagues from Norway and the international students. The observations and values shared by the Erasmus students are strangely alike, proving the idea of a common identity of the culture we live in. Traits like implicated and hard-working were mentioned by everyone regarding Romanian and international students. The determination of the students from Norway and the perseverance of the students from the Netherlands

seemed to coincide between all the opinions we got. So, what is the difference between the cultures of all these countries? We can't talk about importance in this matter or the way we perceive money as a problem considering the fact that as different as we are, as normal this fact is.

1.3 Formulate a strategy

This strategy envisages a general way, for any representative structure of students, to be recognized by the university charter. The act of student representation or the "student movement" has always been a constant struggle, whereby students defend their rights before the university leadership, even before the ministry, in many cases. Regardless of whether the student was enrolled in a full-time program or not, or even if he was an international student, came with an Erasmus + scholarship, he had both rights and obligations to the educational institution where he studied. The official recognition by the University is one of the greatest achievements that a representative structure can have at the same time, there is also a greater desire of students to continue their efforts, being that, in such a context, there is also a greater chance of being heard when certain problems arise.

Strategy:

1. Identifying and analyzing the students' problems, to be presented to the rectory, the dean's offices.
2. Formation of a representative structure for students (student council or student organization)
3. Implementation of an information campaign for all university students, regarding university structures and how they can affect student life.
4. Organizing different communication sessions with students, to inform them about the organization's strategy, its approaches and what impact is desired, respectively, what is the purpose and target of the organization's actions.
5. Constant communication with the people in charge of universities and faculties, in order to offer support in carrying out an educational act as high as possible.
6. Organizing various extracurricular activities to help students develop their skills
7. Establishing a negotiation strategy with the university, regarding the transfer of the organization to the university charter.
8. If the negotiations do not lead to a favorable situation for students, a negotiation session will be resumed, through which the university will recognize the organization, through an agreement, approved by the university senate.

As time goes on, negotiations on charter recognition will resume.

Chapter B Implementation: Propositions

2.1 Relevance of cultural/organizational dimensions

There are eight major dimensions of organizational culture that are necessary for a healthy society that are shown in figure 2, where the relevance of some of them are explained below looking at the Romanian, Norwegian and western Europa culture.

Structure (individualism/collectivism)

This factor says something about the ego of a person and to what extend they are choosing for the group interests above their own. For example, to wipe out the corona virus you have to do actions for the greater good, like wearing a facemask which in most cases is not to protect yourself but others around you. In Romania the collectivism is higher because for example it's common to take care of your family for a long time even if you left home. In Norway the people are more focused on what's best for them self and making a good career.

Power (hierarchy/equality)

Like you can see in the graph Romania scores high on hierarchy because if you look for example at how the students must speak against the teacher with using his full title such as dr. or professor were in the Erasmus and Norwegian students interact in a more equal kind of way and only use the first name. The people in Romania have more respect towards the older people than in western countries in Europa and Norway and are placed higher in the hierarchy layer.

Communication (high context/low context)

Countries where people are more direct in communication (for example The Netherlands) are often more likely to be low in context because they bring the information more short/direct, while other persons hide the information more in the context. This is also to relate to the formal kind of way of communication the Romanians prefer, because you have to be polite even if you need more context to transfer the same amount of information than Norwegians or western people need to.

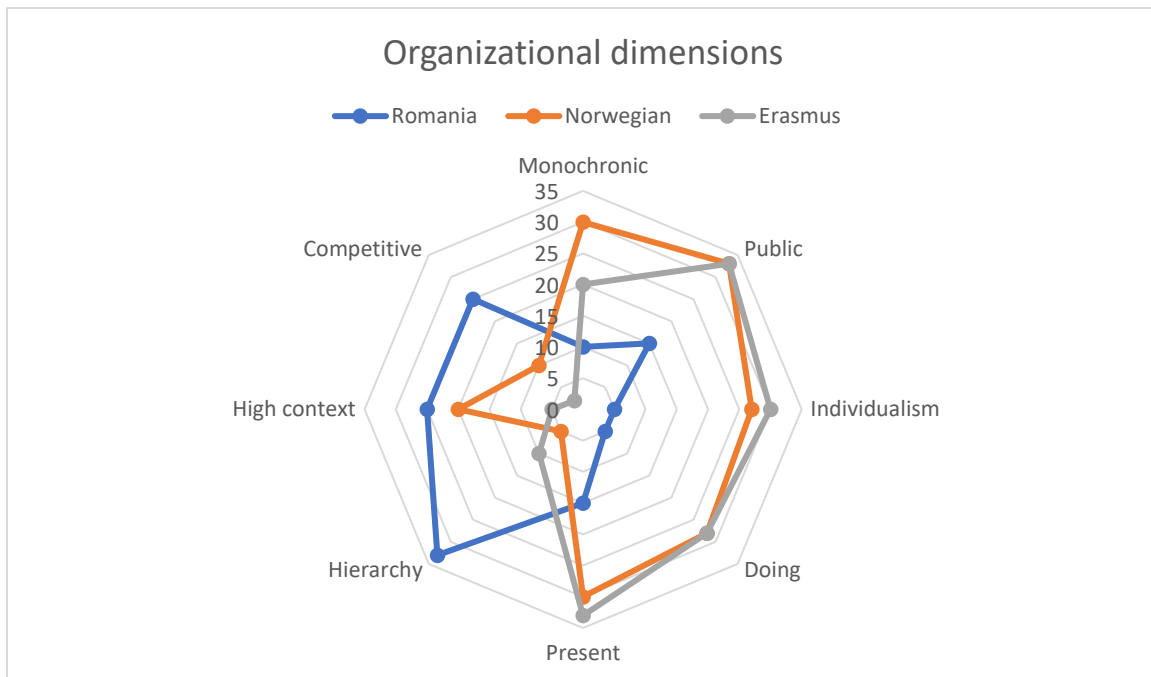


Figure 1: Organizational dimensions

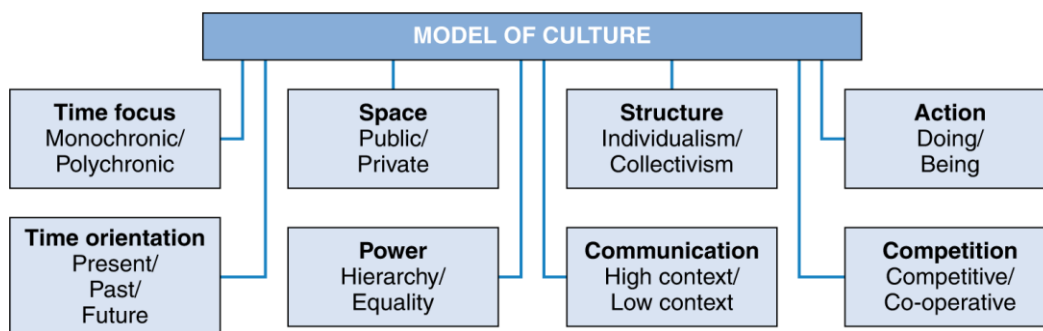


Figure 2: Model of culture

2.2 Building knowledge/ insights on cultural differences

By building knowledge and insight on cultural differences we should be taking in consideration that different cultures have different values. The first step to build knowledge is to first understand the cultural differences. This can be done by comparing the different values, attitude and behavior between Norwegians, Romanians, and the international students, in our case the Netherland students. Finding ways to make cultural differences easier to understand for everyone can be difficult, therefore finding methods and examples that are universal which the students can relate to is crucial.

An example on how to put this in action is for the universities to arrange activities where students can visit similar companies on the same market in their home country and in a foreign country. This with the intention to look out for cultural similarities and differences with a purpose to get some more

knowledge and insights. For example, in Norway and Netherlands you refer to people in a higher position by their first name no matter which status they have, but in other countries for example in Romania you refer to people more formally by using their last name or mr, mrs, professor etcetera.

Another proposition on how to build knowledge and insights on cultural differences is to get to know each other in a more casual way by getting specific questions about the preferred ways of working with assignments. For example, on this assignment, we preferred to work differently. Some of us like to work individually and others like to work in groups. Students around the world also have different ways of planning their study time, but also different priorities. Making that clear from the start of a group assignment can make the planning and the organization of the project as well as the cooperation way more effective.

2.3 Building a common culture and identity

There are many different cultures and identities among us therefore it is important to consider trying to build a common culture that is known and understood by everyone. By doing that it is also possible to build a common identity which can lead to having some same values. By having the same values, will the studying and the students' corporations become more effortless, instructive, and fun. Further some propositions will be submitted to achieve this goal.

Identity has, among other things, roots from cultures the students are a part of. When students with different cultures come together, there can be a bit of a crash in the culture. Some countries have similar cultures and others are very different from each other. One way to build a common culture is to create a common tradition. For instance, having a day or a week in a year where all the cultures are celebrated with different food, music, articles, and discussions. In this way everyone can get familiar with the differences the cultures might have and have a more open eye on variety and different thinking.

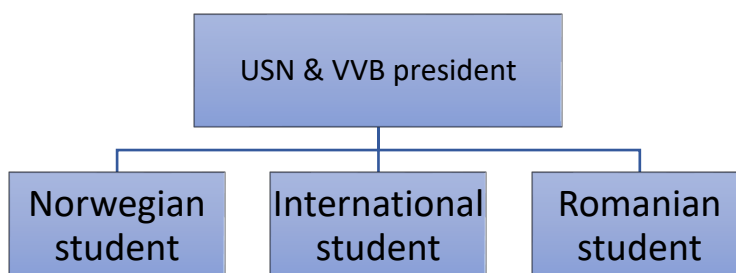
As mentioned earlier, different cultures coming together can be difficult. Some may not want to integrate into the new society and others may not have a struggle with it. By maintaining a part of each culture, everyone gets included and all students can relate to a part of the new culture and identity that has been created. For example, maintaining the Netherlands' way of student and professors' interactions in classrooms, the Norwegians way of structure and time management, and the Romanian way of maintaining the power distance. In this case will the group assignments and the everyday life of students get a lot easier, taking in consideration that feeling a part of a culture is a need that everyone has.

2.4 Student representation and committees

Every university that offers a wide range of different programs to its students should operate a student and staff board/committee. So also, the future board of the 'Cluj-Norway' exchange program. This should be established by the universities of USN and Babes-Bolyai (VBB), in cooperation with the students, based on individual needs and existing structures of these student groups. For example, separate committees could be set up for students who are still studying and students who have already graduated. In this way, they can indicate what in their view can still be improved. So, in this way, 'feedback', as it were, is given on how they experienced their time as students and, based on this, they can help to improve it for future generations of students. By this, the continuity of the quality of education regarding to the student exchange program of 'Cluj-Norway' will be guaranteed.

Furthermore, it is important to try to find the widest possible range of different students willing to join the committee. From first year to final year students, from master to bachelor, from male to female student and from local student to international student. Students from different cultures, Norwegian, Romanian, and international students will make the board as diverse as possible. In this way, the delegates of the boards/commissions can represent as wide a group of students as possible, and the 'voice' is united and the most can be achieved.

The future board can be ruled by the 2 presidents. One of these will be from USN, the other from VBB. They will both manage the connections/contacts within the different universities and thus work closely with the school management. These roles can be fulfilled by both students and graduates. In addition, a Norwegian, International and Romanian student will be added to the board. They will mainly maintain contact with the students and represent the interests of these groups.



2.5 What is the most important here and why

The most important point is the "Cultural awareness", being aware of the differences between the different cultures. This is the core of all the aspects dealt with. There is a need to be aware of cultural differences and to formulate a strategy and build a shared culture/identity based on these different cultures.