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THE USE OF BRAINWASHING IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF THE GERMAN AND JAPANESE WORKERS

Abstract

German and Japanese companies are recognized as one of the most successful and profitable worldwide. Their planetary success greatly results from the characteristics of the cultures they share. Both have strong cultures which in one hand can be a source of competitive advantage, but on the other can be an obstacle for future growth and development. Changes are permanent and inevitable, so at some point of time both of these cultures would have to change. The changes' success depends on the ability to persuade groups and individuals to change the way they work, think, act and so on.

The purpose of this research is to identify the opportunity for using brainwashing in the process of changing the organizational culture of the German and Japanese workers. To fulfill the purpose of the research, several goals must be completed: to explain the organizational culture of German and Japanese workers, to explain the method of brainwashing and its use in organizational context. The research is based on qualitative approach, and uses the methods of analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction.

The findings show that brainwashing is a method that has the potential to cause long-term changes. Brainwashing may not be the only one or the best, but scientists must consider seriously the possibility of applying this method, sole or in combination with other methods.

Keywords: brainwashing, organizational culture, change, Japanese worker, German worker
JEL classification: M14, M54, O57

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1. Organizational culture of the German worker

From its foundation until today, Federal Republic of Germany has one of the most successful economies in the world. Today German economy is the fifth largest economy in the world by GDP by purchasing power parity[1], the fourth largest economy in the world by nominal GDP[2], first national economy in Europe[3] and the third largest exporter in the world.[4] In 2012, the labor force is 44.01 million workers, while the unemployment rate is low at 6.5%. 15.5% of the population is below the poverty line.[5]

It is among the largest and most powerful political forces in the European continent and a technological leader in many fields with a high level of innovation.[6] Highly skilled workforce, extensive capital and low levels of corruption[7] are attributes that further describe the German economy.

1.1. Human resources management

German companies achieved their planetary success through hard and efficient work, which undoubtedly has roots deep in the character traits of the human resources. Qualities that are important and expected from German managers are the ability for self-promotion, willingness for hard working, ability to guide, analytical thinking and having knowledge of the business environment. The leadership's main characteristic is

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[1] Country Comparation: GDP (purchasing power parity), CIA Factbook 2013, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html;
[2] Field Listing: GDP (official exchange rate), CIA Factbook 2013 ,https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2195.html ;
[3] GDP at current market prices, 2001, 2010 and 2011, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:GDP_at_curre nt_market_prices,_2001,_2010_and_2011.png&filetimestamp=20121204113534 ;
[4] Country Comparison: Exports, CIA Factbook 2013, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2078rank.html ;
[5] German Economy, CIA Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html;
[6] Andrew. J.P, DeRocco, S. E., Taylor, A., The innovation imperative in manufacturing: How the United States can restore its edge?, The Boston Consulting Group,
[7] Corruption Perceptions Index 2012, Transparency International, http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/results/#myAnchor1 ;

practicing strong and decisive guidance.[8] Managers usually obtain their position using their skills, knowledge and diligence, and their authority derives from their expertise and competence. Most of the top managers, or 84%, have college degrees.[9] They usually begin their careers as specialists in a particular area, and later prove their ability by providing quality solutions for specific problems, often using their own power of persuasion. This kind of characteristics in fact have sociological background and largely derive from the educational system.

German workers have low index on Power Distance meaning they expect and accept democratic relationships.[10] Moreover, the German culture has high scores on Individualism and Masculinity. In other words, Germans tend to behave as individuals, not as members of groups, they are confident with a competitive spirit and highlight success in the workplace much more than "quality of life" and good personal relations.[11]

1.2. Authority

The authority of German managers derives from their position in the organizational hierarchy, which they usually get through proven competence, technical or commercial. Having respect for authority is a German value and therefore authority is automatically acquired. Authority means and comes automatically which in turn influences the way decisions are made. Open discussions are acceptable on the meetings. Anyone can participate and give their opinion, but only in relation to the topics being discussed. The managers evaluate the arguments, make decisions and delegate tasks. They don't doubt the execution of tasks, no matter whether the person selected to perform

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[8]   ,   .   ,   ,
                            –   , 1999, 215;

[9] Academics in management – Germany's hidden advantage, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, 2012,
http://www.rolandberger.com/media/pdf/Roland_Berger_Akademiker_im_Chefsessel_20120618.pdf ;

[10] Ardichvili, A., &Kuchinke, K. P., Leadership styles and cultural values among managers and subordinates: a comparative study of four countries of the former Soviet Union, Germany, and the US. Human Resource Development International, V (1), 2002, 99-117;

[11] Ibid, 99-117;

them agrees with them. Only top managers are in position to review the capabilities and decisions of other managers.

In German companies can be expected: large number of organizational levels, direct control, many formal rules, sufficiently specific job expectations, centralized decision-making and authority that derives from the position in the organizational hierarchy.[12] In other words, in accordance to the great power and influence of those who have higher positions in German organizational culture there is more control, a number of regulations and centralized decision making.

1.3. Decision making process

The decision making process in Germany is mainly based on facts and logic. Objective facts are considered as essential and crucial when decisions are made. To make good decisions in business negotiations the preferred approach is based on logic and information analysis, rather than intuitive approach based on a well-developed network of personal relationships.[13]

Germans are very honest and task-oriented, and interpersonal relations have less significance. They are reserved and make a clear separation between private life and work. Developing personal relationships with Germans, especially when doing a business, requires a longer time. Much attention is paid to the objectives that have to be achieved, and this can be seen in the precision of the activities schedule, meeting plans and achievement of deadlines.

1.4. Communication style

Germans are very direct and that's why the rest of the world sometimes perceives their behavior as rude and confrontational. Open criticism often demonstrated during business meetings should not be considered as a personal rejection, but as criticism of different aspects of the problem or project. German society is individualistic, but when it comes to making business decisions, although there is a tendency for everyone to look out for their own self-interest, still they are very careful

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[12] Peterson, R. B., & Garrison, J. S., Culture As An Intervening Variable In the Technology Organization Structure Relationship, *The Academy of Management Journal, XIV* (1),1971, 139-142;
[13] Ibid;

to make decisions that are good for everyone's interest and by achieving consensus. Business relationships are usually based on mutual benefit, and the desire to achieve own goals and success is coupled with a deep sense of responsibility for what's good for the society. In most cases when decisions are made, besides the financial benefits for the company, it is also considered as important the benefit for the workers.[14]

2. Organizational culture of the Japanese worker

Japanese organizational culture and its management philosophy are considered to be ones of the most researched and studied, partly due to the phenomenon known as "Japanese post-war miracle". Namely, it is a period of spectacular economic growth during the sixties, seventies and eighties years of the last century, when the average GDP growth was 7.5% and 3.2% in the eighties and early nineties years of the last century.[15]

In the nineties, this growth has largely slowed during the so-called "Lost decade", largely because of the effects of so-called "Japanese price bubble"[16] and domestic policies for extrusion of speculative excesses from the stock and real estate markets. After 2000, the next years are years of modest economic growth, accompanied by several recessions. The sharp decline in business investments and in global demand for Japanese products at the end of 2008 resulted with recession. Government demand stimulus helped the economy to recover in late 2009 and early 2010, but the disaster in 2011 again pulls down the Japanese economy. Two years after the disaster, the economy again largely recovers and in 2012 it has the fourth largest GDP by purchasing power parity.[17]

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[14] Ibid;

[15] Ryan, L., "The "Asian economic miracle" unmasked: The political economy of the reality". *International Journal of Social Economics***27** (7–10): 802–815.1 January 2000, http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=847636&show=abstract ;

[16] Watkins , T., Valley, S., Alley, T., The Bubble Economy of Japan, San José State University Department of Economics, http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/bubble.htm ;

[17] Japan Economy, CIA Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html;

2.1. Japanese management philosophy

Japanese management philosophy is a direct reflection of its culture and there is a high degree of consistency between the Japanese culture and the way Japanese corporations operate. The core of this philosophy can be seen through some basic principles in which Japanese believe: trust the workers, build employee loyalty, invest in training, treat employees as you treat the resources, give awards to employees for their achievements, decentralize the decision making process and always reach consensus.[18]

Groups of well-trained employees for decision making, often make decisions about specific areas of responsibility. While German experts individually spend a lot of time in solving technical problems, Japanese workers collaboratively seek solutions to improve results.[19]

Japanese managers are reserved, quite, always hear the speaker, have a sense of understanding, discipline, introspectiveness and orientation towards others.[20]

2.2. Loyalty and family orientation

Japanese culture is collectivist, meaning it emphasizes membership in groups or communities, and group welfare is above individual. Individual victims are not only necessary, but they're common and part of Japanese life. Japanese employees have strong feelings of loyalty and commitment to the organization.[21] Moreover,

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[18] Cole, R.E.``Learning from the Japanese: prospects and pitfalls'', Management Review, Vol. 69 No. 9, September,1980, pp. 23-42; Harper, S.C., ``Now that the dust has settled: learning from Japanese management'', Business Horizons, Vol. 31 No. 4,July/August,1988 pp. 43-51; Ouchi, W.G. (1981), Theory Z, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA;

[19] Apfelthaler, G., Muller, J.H., Rehder, R.R., Corporate global culture as competitive advantage: Learning from Germany and Japan in Alabama and Austria?, Journal of World Business, 37, 2002, 108-118;

[20]   , .,   ,   ,   ,
    , 2009,   . 177-180;

[21] Tang, L.T., Kim, K., J., O'Donald, A., D., "Perceptions of Japanese organizational culture-Employees in non-unionized Japanese-owned and unionized US-owned automobile plants", Journal of Managerial Psychology, Vol. 15 Iss: 6, 2000, 535 – 559;

relationships of lifetime interdependence exist between Japanese workers and companies in which they work.[22]

There are cases in which Japanese companies provide accommodation, food, etc. to their employees instead of cash return. This mode of operation is similar to the way one household functions, so the companies are often described as "families". The existence of harmony is the element that is emphasized the most in the Japanese organizational philosophy.

2.3. Communication and decision making

As a result of the long-term commitment to the company and established networks of friends, Japanese companies prefer teamwork and usually communicate "face to face". During the decision making process, the manager won't make the final decision until the parties included don't get enough time to elaborate their views and feel that they have been fairly heard. Also, they are willing to support the decision and its implementation, even if they personally do not agree that the decision made, is the best one. Once they accept a proposal and make the decision, it would be difficult to change. They usually stick strictly and consistently to their arguments. Consensus is required from all the members who took part in the negotiations in order to change the decision previously made.[23] Because of this condition for consensus, the decision making requires a lot of time and Japanese are often criticized for this by the outsiders involved in the negotiations. Japanese people do not pay enough attention to deadlines and limited time. They lead the negotiations on a peaceful and calm manner despite the pressures.

3. The method of brainwashing

Mind control (also known as "brainwashing," "coercive persuasion," "thought reform," and the "systematic manipulation of psychological and social influence") refers to a process in which a group or individual systematically uses unethically manipulative methods to

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[22] Abegglen, J. C., 21st-century Japanese management : new systems & lasting values, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006;

[23] Chang, L.C., A Study on Japanese Culture and Styles of Business Negotiation, Journal of Global Business Management, Vol. 5, N. 1, April, 2009;

persuade others to conform to the wishes of the manipulator(s), often to the detriment of the person being manipulated.[24] Therefore this method destroys the individual feeling for control of personal thoughts, behavior, emotions and/or decisions,

3.1. History of brainwashing

Originally administered by totalitarian regimes, this method was directed against dissidents and was designed to serve for military purposes. It was first used in the Tavistok Clinic, founded in 1921 in England to serve as the psychological warfare arm of the British monarchy.[25] Later, examples of use can be found in the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, U.S. and China.

The term "brainwashing" was first used by Edvrad Hunter in 1950 in his paper "New Leader". During the Korean War Hunter wrote a series of books and articles on Chinese brainwashing and tried to clarify why such a large percent of American prisoners during the Korean War had deserted to the side of the enemy.[26]

3.2. The use of brainwashing in organizational context

In organizatios this method can be used to reduce the negative effects of practicing hierarchy, power and authority, as well as to prevent conflicts. Today's leaders must have adequate knowledge of behavioral psychology and neurology. In the past, organizational change attempts focusing solely on structural aspects of organizations systematically failed because they were ignoring the fact that change can't occur without a simultaneous change in mindset, behavior and beliefs of individuals who are part of the organization. The level of success of the changes in large organizations depends on the ability to persuade hundreds, or thousands of groups and individuals to change the way they work and people will accept the transformation only if they can be

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[24] Langone, M.,,,Cults: Questions and Answers", International Cultic Studies Association, http://www.csj.org/studyindex/studycult/cultqa.htm

[25] Thompson, S., Steinberg, J., Tavistock mass murderers are brainwashing your children, Executive Intelligence Review, Vol. 20, N. 44, November 12, 1993, http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/1993/eirv20n44-19931112/eirv20n44-19931112_026-tavistock_mass_murderers_are_bra.pdf,

[26] Taylor,   ., Brainwashing: THE SCIENCE OF THOUGHT CONTROL, Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2004 16-17;

persuaded to think in a way different than before. In fact, managers must change mental attitudes and opinions of their workers.[27] Moreover, to make a real, long-term change individuals not only need to change the way they think about their work, but they also need to change the way they think about themselves.

When hiring new employees, companies use socialization techniques, through which new employees acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to become effective organizational members and "insiders". Studies show that these techniques generate positive outcomes for new employees such as higher job satisfaction, better results, greater commitment to the organization and reduce stress and intentions to leave the organization.[28] Socialization helps or somehow forces individuals to adapt their own behaviour to match the expectations of the organization, which is a form of brainwashing. No matter how well an organization implements the processes of recruitment and selection, new employees are not fully indoctrinated into the organizational culture. Because of this it is possible to distort the already established beliefs and habits. That is why organizations want to help new employees adapt according to their culture. This adjustment in fact is a change of thinking, behavior and decision making of individuals, but unlike the method of brainwashing, it lacks the coercive element of the process. The new employees are aware of and have the right to make their own choice about whether to accept the new job position, which implies the need to adapt to the established organizational culture. Also, the method of brainwashing doesn't allow processing of different information than that imposed by the source of information, which is not the case with the process of socialization. Unlike socialization that accepts forms of behavior that are close but not identical, brainwashing means strictly controlled conditions, forms of behavior and performances, without possibility for choices and modified forms of behavior as a final result. Thus, it can be concluded that

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[27] Price, C., Lawson, E., "The psychology of change management," mckinseyquarterly.com, June 2003, http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/the_psychology_of_change_management;

[28] Ashford, S. J., Black, J. S., Proactivity during organizational entry: The role of desire for control. Journal of Applied Psychology, 81, 1996, 199–214; Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., Wanberg, C. R., Unwrapping the organizational entry process: Disentangling multiple antecedents and their pathways to adjustment. Journal of Applied Psychology, 88,2003, 779–794; Fisher, C. D., Social support and adjustment to work: A longitudinal study. Journal of Management, 11, 1985, 39–53;

brainwashing is a form of socialization, but not every process of socialization is also brainwashing.

4. Potential for applying the method of brainwashing in the process of changing the organizational culture of the German and Japanese worker

The management of changes in companies is important because: nothing is permanent and unchangeable, environmental changes threaten the survival of the company, the changes are a source of new opportunities, organizational structures reduce the flexibility of organizations. The implementation of real, vital and profound change in companies, as opposed to apparent and superficial change, is impossible without changing its organizational culture. Many authors point out that the most common reason why organizational change attempts fail to materialize as planned, is the frequent neglect of aspects relating the organizational culture.[29] Before any change occurs, it is important to understand the depth of the roots of the culture.

Changing an organizational culture means changing the beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions of organizational members and consequently changing the way they work, make decisions and behave. The stronger the culture and the greater the consistency of beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions of various organizational members, the more difficult to change it.

The German organizational culture, as well as the Japanese one, is recognized as particularly strong organizational culture, with deeply rooted and mutually accepted values. Both cultures are considered as a source of competitive advantage for these two nations. However, the success of the companies in 21 century largely depends on the ability to change. In this context, one question inevitably arises: how cultures that are characterized as strong, such as German and Japanese, can meet this challenge and can be a subject to deeper change?

Necessity comes from the fact that 21 century is a century of extreme rapid development of productive forces, technical and communication revolution and robotics, which in some way replaces people. Into this type of constitution of the economic development,

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[29] Balogun, J., Johnson, G. 'Organizational restructuring and middle manager sensemaking'. Academy of Management Journal, 47,2004, 4: 523–49;

firmly constructed production relations and rules of organizational culture will become obstacles and will cause negative effects. Therefore the acceptance of a new organizational culture, or at least of certain segments that will mean new values, principles and rules of behavior is a necessity and is closely determined by the final production effects. Analogous is the question about finding models that will contribute to successful organizational culture change. Brainwashing may not be the best or the unique perspective opportunity, but scientists from different profiles can seriously consider the possibility of applying this method in order to change the minds, sole or in combination with other methods.

"Neuroleadership" is a neologism that is formulated to reflect the application of concepts and knowledge from the neurology into the organizational context and its leadership.[30] Advances in brain analysis technology enabled scientists to track the movement of thought through the brain in a way similar to the way blood can be tracked through the blood circulation system. Changes affect the prefrontal cortex and its excessive load can cause feelings of fatigue, fear and anger, because it is connected with the emotional centers in the brain. That's how you can see the impact of the application of different management tactics on employees. The traditional way of management by giving orders and doing control doesn't lead to long-term behavioral changes. Giving people orders to change and explaining how to do it affects the prefrontal cortex and the emotional centers of the brain. The more we try to convince people that we are right and they aren't, the more they resist. Normally, the brain will try to defend itself from the threats. Our brains are so complex that it is a real rareness the way we see and understand the situation to be exactly the same with the way someone else sees and understands the same situation.[31]

These findings suggest that traditional management tactics are mainly based on the principles of animals training, rather than on psychology and neurology principles. Managers promise bonuses and promotions (e.g. the carrot for the rabbit) for those willing to change their

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[30] Rock, D., Schwartz, J., The Neuroscience of Leadership, Strategy and Business Journal, 30 May, 2006, http://www.strategy-business.com/article/06207;

[31] Rock, D., Schwartz, J., The Neuroscience of Leadership, Strategy and business journal May 30, 2006, http://www.strategy-business.com/article/06207?pg=7 ; Lawson E., Price, C., The psychology of change management, McKinsey & Company, June 2003,
http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/the_psychology_of_change_management;

behavior and penalize (the stick) those who resist by delegating them less important tasks or dismissal. This type of human resources management is unsuccessful because the findings show that people's primary motivation in the workplace aren't the money, but their personal interest about the work, good working environment and good working relationships with colleagues and superiors.[32]

Therefore the potential for changing the organizational culture of Japanese and German workers can be recognized and realized by applying knowledge from neurology and psychology sciences, and the method of brainwashing is a combination of these two. This method, applied sole, or in combination with other methods and activities, such as conducting trainings and making changes into the educational systems, could contribute to long-term changes in the organizational cultures of this two nations and thereby further increase their competitiveness. Individual expert decision making of the Germans, as well as the collective one with strict prerequisite for achieving consensus of the Japanese, can be obstacles for businesses in today's competitive world. The quiet and peaceful manner of deciding of the Japanese, as well as the open criticism of Germans have their own advantages and disadvantages. Only psychological methods and knowledge from neuroscience in combination with other methods have the potential to change a collectivist culture into individual, a formalized, firm organization into flexible and adaptable one, a centralized working into decentralized, and an organization in which exists aversion to risk into organization which accepts risks. In any case, the need for change must be consistent with the market needs and demands, in order to increase the competitiveness of companies.

Conclusion

Germany and Japan are considered among the greatest and most powerful political forces in the world and technological leaders in many fields. German and Japanese companies, which are in the hearth of their economies, their success largely owe to their employees and established organizational cultures. These two cultures, although with different characteristics, are recognized as strong organizational cultures. German culture is culture of expertise, individualism, formal, centralized

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[32] Ibid;

decision-making and masculinity values. On the other hand, Japanese culture is culture of consensus and collectivism, loyalty, decentralized decision-making, harmony and tranquility.

Changes in 21 century are evident and happen everywhere, within national and international events, in the way companies are structured and operate, in political and socio-economic problems and solutions, as well as in social values and norms. Neither German nor Japanese companies are exempted from the need for change management, no matter how successful their mode of operation is. At some point the sources of competitive advantage can stop being that and in some cases may even become an obstacle and competitive disadvantage. The success of changes in organizations depends on the ability to persuade hundreds, or thousands of groups and individuals to change the way they work and people will accept this transformation only if they can be persuaded to think in a different way than before about their job. In fact, managers must change the mental attitudes and opinions of their workers - a task which can't be underestimated. However, individuals not only need to change the way they think about their work, but for real change to happen there is a need to change the way they think about themselves. Brainwashing is a method that has the potential to cause this kind of changes and it replaces the old ways of thinking, behavior and decision-making with new ones. Brainwashing may not be the only one or the best perspective opportunity, but scientists with different profiles can seriously consider the possibility of applying this method for conscious changing, sole or in combination with other methods.

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http://www.mariekedemooij.com/articles/demooij_2010_int_journal_adv.pdf (19.06.2013);

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