

AN INTERCULTURAL COMPARISON OF MANAGEMENT VALUES AMONG BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

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Abstract. An international comparative study to determine the hierarchy of value judgements has been conducted. Data have been collected by questionnaires involving students of several Estonian, as well as of the US, French, Russian, Finnish and Latvian universities. The purpose of the study is to find at the differences between value judgements, to assess the situation and decide whether it is necessary or possible to do anything to change value judgements or attitudes. The data from different countries are comparable thanks to using the same methodology. The dynamics of changes of the Estonian Business School students' management values might be explained with the impact of different faculties. The survey demonstrated remarkable differences in value orientation between the post-socialist countries and established democracies.

1. Research setting

The problem examined in this study is the lack of objective information about the values representing management consciousness of the business students, as well as the regularity of its formation. The objective of the study is to examine the dynamics of management values in order to work out specific proposals for influencing the values of business students during the vocational adaptation stage at the university. Moreover, the study aims at supporting their orientation towards the European market culture.

In the research, we proceeded from the hypotheses that the integration of scientific-theoretical consciousness and self-consciousness is of conclusive importance for the development of professional management consciousness; that the formation of management consciousness depends on both objective and subjective internal and external factors; and that the frequency of management value types varies in different cultures.

The domain of this study is the formation process of management values of Estonian business students during their vocational adaptation stage at the university. The study regards the respondents' perceptions of the theoretical foundations of management consciousness. It includes measurements of management values of Estonian, Latvian, Russian, Finnish, American, and French business students. The study also develops typologies of management values of business students.

The contribution of this study is to identify and raise the problem for the first time, obtain measurement results and comparative information about Latvian, Finnish, Russian, French, American and Estonian business students.

The practical relevance of the study lies in the fact that it provides actual assessment of the development of the students' management consciousness. This is instrumental for the universities in setting goals for the training of professional managers.

2. Previous research and methods of this study

According to available scientific literature, values have been studied comparatively often. The studied values have been predominantly instrumental, as well as end-values (Rokeach 1973).

According to Rokeach's value system, comparative analyses of the values of Estonian, USA and Canadian managers have been carried out (Tasa et al. 1991). The values of Estonian, Finnish and Swedish students have also been compared by using Schwartz' research methods (Verkasalo et al. 1994). The study showed, among other things, that business students held values related to achievements, power and pleasure in higher regard than students of the humanities.

The research carried out at the Estonian Business School (EBS) into management values represented by business leaders and business students is a novel and promising course of study, to which the current work aims to offer a modest contribution. Our questionnaire includes 10 areas of evaluating management values (descriptors), each comprising nine evaluation objects (values).

These 10 groups are as follows:

- Business ideological values
- Leadership ideological values
- Social values
- Personal values
- Speciality-related values
- Professional values
- Cultural values
- Values related to the mode of life
- Organisational-legal values
- Ethical values

The evaluation objects appear on the questionnaire in random order to avoid possible speculative orientation by the respondents. The grading scale has 7 points:

- 7 indicates utmost relevance;
- 6 major relevance;
- 5 great relevance;
- 4 relevance;
- 3 some relevance;
- 2 little relevance; and
- 1 irrelevance.

Consequently, the grading scale was balanced, but non-linear. Linear correlation does not therefore produce reliable outcome on that scale.

3. Main groups of value orientation related to management consciousness

The differences between the studied persons and assessments to single values turned out to be quite remarkable. However, the average of the assessments given to the values appeared sufficiently informative. When processing the data, we used the methods of statistical analysis and cluster analysis. Based on the analysis of the total data (around 1,200 questionnaires) the computer divided all respondents into five groups based on the general evaluation level and comparison of the arithmetic means of separate value groups. We gave these groups tentative names based on characteristic features:

- optimists who held all values (including ethical) in outstandingly high regard;
- professionalists who gave more relevance to the values related to the speciality and occupation while according comparatively high scores;
- anthropocentrists who gave notable preference to the values related to the human factor (personal, social and ideological leadership) while granting comparatively high scores;
- liberals who preferred values related to business ideology, organisation and legality, and the mode of life while giving average scores;
- pessimists who gave remarkably low scores to all value groups.

The distribution of the respondents into clusters has been shown in Table 1. The most highly regarded value groups have been printed in bold.

The results of the research enabled us to map specific idiosyncrasies of the values representing management consciousness of business students, find out the main types of values (clusters), monitor the dynamics of the values during the course of studies, and the possible impact of the value orientations of the faculty on these changes, learn the peculiarities of management consciousness-related value orientation of business students representing different cultures. The latter in turn enabled us to draw conclusions on the factors shaping management values, and certain regularities in their occurrence.

Table 1

Distribution of the respondents into value groups

Value groups	Optimists	Liberals	Anthropocentrists	Professionals	Pessimists
Ethical values	6.77	4.66	4.66	3.22	2.88
Cultural values	6.77	4.33	4.44	4.88	2.77
Business ideological values	6.77	6.33	4.44	4.88	3.00
Values related to the mode of life	6.40	5.55	3.77	2.55	2.60
Organisational-legal values	6.66	5.77	4.88	3.77	2.77
Social values	6.66	4.55	6.77	4.77	2.33
Leadership ideological values	6.44	3.88	5.55	4.77	2.88
Personal values	6.50	4.30	6.10	4.70	3.00
Speciality-related values	6.50	4.66	4.00	6.22	3.00
Professional values	6.50	4.55	4.44	5.55	2.40
Average	6.59	4.86	4.90	4.53	2.76

4. The changed management consciousness of the Finns

In 1996 we studied 105 business students at the Turku Business School and simultaneously compared the results to the study of EBS students. It appeared that in comparison to Estonians the Finns showed somewhat more regard to ethical, organisational-legal, professional values, and values related to the personality of the leader, while rating values related to business ideology, speciality and organisational culture lower. Research data show that the Finns resent strong-handed methods. In comparison to Estonians, the Finns value interaction between the owners and the employees, the leader's self-improvement and delegating work to lower levels higher, while showing less regard to the leader's strictness in relations with the subordinates and mutual austerity between the employees.

In comparison to the Estonians they show higher regard to the self-leadership ability of the team, development of control into self-control and taking into consideration the individuality of the employees. They are also more tolerant with the disabled people than Estonians.

A second study (in 2000, 96 respondents) showed that the Finns have preserved the individuality of their value orientation and position in the European free cultural space during the 4-year gap (Table 2).

As we can see, relevant changes have occurred. A striking change was that in the list of ethical values, honesty had sunk fourth from the earlier third position. Consequently, a critical frontier has been crossed indicating that honesty might not be applied when making decisions. More relevance is being given to the wealth of the company, economic security and lack of risk while requirements for quality and regular economic analysis are somewhat less prominent. The relevance of advertising has been graded lower, while profit is not considered as important any more.

Table 2

Differences in value rankings between 1996 and 2000 within the Finnish contingent

Name of descriptor	1996		2000	
	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
1. Leadership ideological values	5.48	1	4.02	2
2. Social values	5.12	2	3.92	3
3. Ethical values	5.03	3	3.89	4
4. Cultural values	4.92	4	3.76	6
5. Business ideological values	4.85	5	3.85	5
6. Professional values	4.75	6	3.31	10
7. Speciality-related values	4.71	7	3.61	8
8. Personal values	4.68	8	4.13	1
9. Values related to the mode of life	4.59	9	3.64	7
10. Organisational-legal values	4.48	10	3.48	9
Grading median	4.86		3.76	

These changes are difficult to evaluate. They probably reflect the market situation characteristic of Finland. The most striking change was the remarkable growth in the number of pessimists at the expense of all other clusters, and the lack of optimists altogether (Table 3).

Table 3

Distribution of clusters among Finnish students in 1996 and 2000

Year	Optimists	Pessimists	Anthropo-centrists	Liberals	Professionalists
1996	13.1%	3%	43.4%	21.2%	19.2%
2000	0%	55.6%	22.6%	14.1%	7.5%

For pessimists, all values are of minor importance or trivial, there are no major or superior values, there are no hopes to rely on, everything is predetermined and you have to accept it. The source of such apathy and pessimism among young Finns with secondary education is yet unclear.

The number of anthropocentrists has also fallen considerably. This marks distancing from the human-centred ideals characterising the European cultural space. One might assume that there are fewer astute personalities who would be capable of seeing important and strategically relevant values and be committed to having an impact on the course of events through these. The number of liberals who believe in self-regulation through the impact of market laws, and who consider interference useless or impossible, has to some extent increased. The results of the cluster analysis indicate that the value orientation of the Finns has moved somewhat closer towards that of the Estonians, but has, nevertheless, remained unique and considerably different.

5. Business students of Lyon as representatives of their national culture

In the Lyon Technology Institute, 254 students were polled in 1999, 73 of them were freshmen, 110 sophomores, 29 in their third and 33 in their fourth year at the institute. The value group rankings were as follows (Table 4):

Table 4

Ranking of value groups in the value orientation of the business students from Lyon

Cultural	10	Social	5
Professional	9	Related to leadership ideology	4
Ethical	8	Related to the mode of life	3
Speciality-related	7	Related to business ideology	2
Organisational-legal	6	Personal	1

We compared the value orientation of the French to that of the previously studied contingents, using the root-mean-square value:

$$k = \sqrt{\sum (X_i - X'_i)^2}$$

in which X represents the ranking of a certain value group of the French; X' the same ranking of a comparable contingent and i the index of the respective group. The smaller k is, the closer are the values.

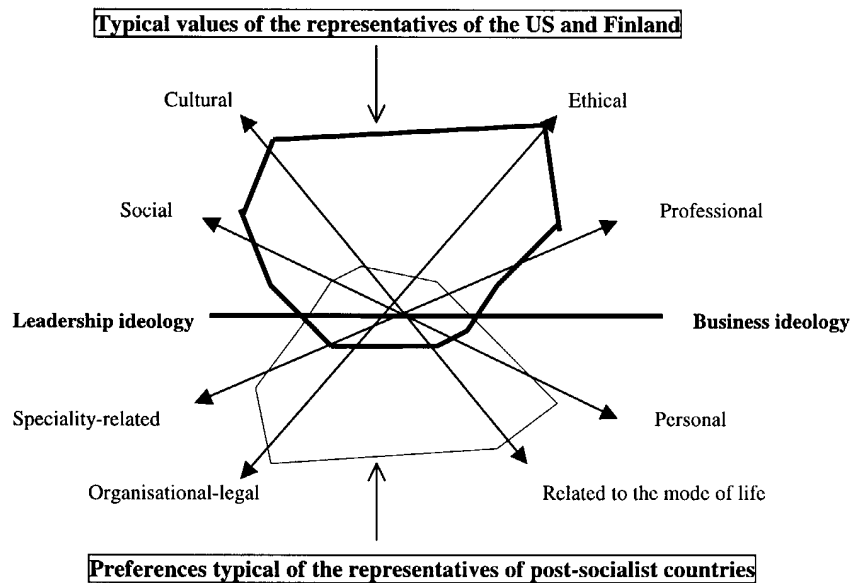
In its structure, the management value orientation of the business students of Lyon was closest to that of the students of Turku ($k = 6.24$) and Fordham ($k = 8.30$), but was very different from the values of the business students from St. Petersburg ($k = 11.61$), Estonia ($k = 10.14$) and Latvia ($k = 10.04$). Since the polled Strahlsund student group comprised foreign students, their value orientation was close to that of the students of Lyon ($k = 5.19$).

Of management values, the French attributed the highest value to relations between people, between superiors and subordinates, teamwork activities, wealth, movement towards common goals. The business students from the Lyon Technology Institute probably represent the French national culture in their management consciousness value orientation. These peculiarities are useful to know and have to be taken into consideration in bilateral business relations.

The contingents we studied fell into two distinctive groups by their value orientation:

- representatives of the United States and Finland,
- representatives of the former socialist countries.

The representatives of the first group preferred social to personal values, cultural values to the ones related to the mode of life, ethical to organisational-legal values and professional to speciality values (Graph 1). The representatives of post-socialist countries, however, had completely different values.



Graph 1. Components of value orientation related to management consciousness.

6. The dynamics of value orientation of the Estonian Business School students

The dynamics of changes in the management values of the EBS full-time students during their studies in 1994–1998 were examined by E. Valdgraf (1998) in her diploma paper for EBS based on the methods worked out at EBS. The survey showed that different values and value group averages constantly changed. The author explained it with the educational impact of different faculties. Even though the students of EBS maintained different values in comparison to the students of other higher educational establishments during the study period of 1994–1998, there were some shifts inside certain descriptors and in their mutual relations. The descriptor of business-ideological values maintained the first ranking while values related to the speciality remained fifth, values related to the mode of life maintained the ninth ranking and the descriptor of professional values was tenth.

The following values showed an upward trend (the figure showing the change in ranking of the value group position during four years):

- the descriptor of values related to leadership ideology (6→3→4→2)
- the descriptor of ethical values (8→8→7→6).

The longitude study showed that personal values, having ranked second during junior years, had fallen to the fifth position during the last year at the university. One might assume that this occurred due to the comparatively speedier growth in the importance of the descriptors of ethical and leadership ideological values.

7. Management values of the Estonian Business School faculty

There were no representatives of the professionalist cluster among the EBS faculty questioned in the course of the research. The ratio of optimists and pessimists was 8 per cent each, 28 per cent were liberals and 56 per cent anthropocentrists. This structure is somewhat different from the normal distribution. The distribution was also different from that in all other contingents we have so far studied through cluster analyses. As for the grading level and value orientation structure, the values of EBS faculty differ from these of the representatives of Finland and the United States, as well as post-socialist countries. We did not find a single one among the typical distribution of men and women and different age groups, which would be comparable to the EBS faculty in that aspect. A more marked similarity can be detected with the corresponding distribution of the EBS full-time students. The underlying reason may lie in the closer contact between the lecturers and full-time students. Over half (52%) of the lecturers held business (5.0; IV rank) and leadership (5.22; II rank) values in high regard, preferred personal values (5.50; I rank) to social values (4.56; VI rank) and speciality values (5.11; III rank) to vocational (3.33; IX rank) values. Ethical values occupied fifth position in that group. This represents essentially a leader-centred value orientation.

As for its quantity (36%), representing maximum grading scores (5.60), the second group was a comparatively compact representation (deviation 0.89), who assessed ethical values the highest while attaching less importance to the values related to business. This group resembles the optimists. Let us call them ethical optimists.

The three smaller groups (4% of respondents each) differed from each other by the given scores (4.14; 3.39; 2.08) as well as ranking value groups. Ethical values ranked first in the first and third group, but only fifth in the second group. All three groups attached great importance to social values, but differed greatly in all other accounts. Consequently, the representation of the EBS faculty was comparatively compact with comparatively high given scores (4.65) indicating optimism. They are located between the preferences of the post-socialist and free world.

8. Summarising observations

The factors influencing value orientation are greatly variable. The speed of change in different factors is varied and as a consequence new situations emerge at any given moment of time, which also changes value orientations. Therefore, value orientation can develop as a state as well as a process. If there are factors, which the leadership subject finds within his powers to purposefully change, he will also have an opportunity to manage value orientation as a process.

During the survey we mapped the actual state of management values of the EBS students, monitored the dynamics of value changes during the studies and attempted to estimate the impact of the faculty. We compared the values of busi-

ness students from EBS and other Estonian higher educational establishments to the values of students from other cultures studying the same speciality. Such comparative data allowed us to offer some suggestions to the Estonians in their business communication with the representatives of these cultures. The survey demonstrated remarkable differences in value orientation related to management consciousness between the post-socialist countries and established democracies.

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