
Department of Preparatory Training

Level: 1st Year

Module: Human Engineering

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Course n°6 : Culture and communication

Course outline

- 1- What is culture ?
- 2- The history of the word « culture »
- 3- Culture characteristics
- 4- Culture classification
- 5- What is communication ?
- 6- Main types of communication
- 7- Communication issues

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1- What is culture ?

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defines culture as a “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” (UNESCO, 2011).

2-The history of the word « culture »

- > The word culture is of Latin origin, it comes from the latin verb «colere» which means «to enhance» and first refers to agriculture, which means also, the transformation and exploitation of nature by man.
- > It will then refer to the action of cultivating the mind and enriching it with knowledge acquired by an individual.
- > Subsequently, the word culture will designate the set of behaviors acquired and transmitted from one generation to another, such as customs, the uses, life style of a population. With this sense, we move from individuals to societies.

3- Culture characteristics

- Culture is learned: culture, far from being innate, is the result of a long learning process.
- Culture is transmitted: it is transmitted from one generation to another through socialization « it is a social heritage ».
- Culture is shared: it is common among members of a group or society.
- Culture is structured: it is a coherent whole whose elements are interdependent.
- Culture is evolutionary: each generation participates in the process of the evolution of a culture through the addition of new cultural elements or traits.
- Culture is relative: each society has a specific culture that may be different from that of another society.

4- Culture classification

A- Scholarly culture: is the elite culture (knowledge of great classical, literary, philosophical, artistic, scientific works).

B- Popular culture: is the vernacular culture (that which is transmitted within smaller social groups: village, region; it is folklore, songs, dances, handicrafts, paintings, etc).

C- National culture: National culture is a notion that relates to a country, a state within the meaning of the United Nations organization, beliefs, habits and ways of thinking, as well as values shared by its citizens.

According to the Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede of national culture: «is a collective programming of thought that allows to distinguish the members of one group or one category of person from another».

D- Regional culture: This culture corresponds to the cultural diversity of regions of the same State.

E- Mass culture: Market culture dispensed by precise and massive diffusion techniques such as mass media.

F- Enterprise culture: is the mode of reasoning, of feeling and acting common to the members of an enterprise. This culture is a system of values shared by all members of the community. It encompasses the beliefs, attitudes and norms that are common to these members.

G- Professional culture: is an important element of an organization's culture and corresponds to the knowledge and know-how acquired in the practice of a profession, This implies a collective memory and the transmission of the skills acquired to the new members of the organization. The practice of the same profession generates shared values, habits and behaviours. (e.g., engineers, doctors, teachers, etc.).

5- What is communication?

Communication is defined as the action of exchanging, sharing information or messages to transmit them and create a relationship between individuals.

- The sender: is the one who transmits the message.
- The receiver: is the one who receives the message.
- The message: is the information transmitted during a communication.
- The referent: is the subject of the communication.
- The channel: is the means used by the sender to transmit information (face to face, telephone, mail, etc.).
- The code: common to the sender and receiver, for example language, Morse alphabet, etc.

6- Main types of communication

A-Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication connects two individuals, it is based on the exchange 1 sender-1 receiver.

B-Group Communication

Group communication puts in relation several individuals it starts from a sender addressing a well defined category of individuals, by a message (communication) targeted on their understanding and their own culture.

C-Mass Communication

Mass communication is a set of techniques that allow a sender to address a large audience. The main means of mass communication are television, radio, press, cinema, internet.

7- Communication issues

- Information issues: communication is an act of information.
- Identity positioning issues: communicating is positioning oneself in relation with other.
- Influence issues: communicating is showing “influence” on others.
- Relational issues: communicating is an act of concretization of human relationship.
- Normative issues: communicating is proposing a set of norms, values, rules that will support exchanges.