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Social representations in intercultural context: the daily life of three Brazilian subsidiaries of multinational companies

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Abstract

The acceleration and development of global business have increased the degree of cultural diversity among professionals in organizations, as well as increased concern about teamwork and multicultural teams, as shown by researchers such as Zhou and Shi (2011) and Chevrier and Viegas-Pires (2013). This article identified and analyzed the social representations built by members of multicultural teams through their intercultural interactions and how these affect the organizational daily life in three subsidiaries of multinational companies in Brazil. Qualitative approach and case study methods were used to collect data using documental research and 33 semi-structured interviews with Brazilian and foreign members of work teams. Using the Theory of Social Representations (TSR) of Moscovici (2004), we identified the main social representations in the context of these Brazilian subsidiaries. The results show commonalities of the three subsidiaries such as: the transnationalization strategies of conciliating global guidelines with local demands, building organizational culture with global elements; the incentive to transform some of the professionals in key positions in global professionals; the understanding that cultural diversity is a capital that can bring many positive results for organizations; and the development of intercultural competencies to facilitate the processes of international mobility. In contrast, there are many communication problems and a lack of concern with the process of intercultural learning and assimilation of knowledge and experience acquired. The conclusions show that despite the problems and challenges, the multicultural teams contribute, through daily interaction, with organizational learning, development and consolidation of culture and global routines in organizations. This article demonstrates that using TSR to analyze the intercultural context can provide a dynamic vision of the interaction and construction of an intercultural routine in multinational companies. In addition, this research demonstrates how common traits can be found in organizational culture of multinational companies with multicultural teams.

Keywords: Intercultural Daily Life. Social Representation. Brazilian Subsidiaries of Multinational Companies.

Representações sociais no contexto intercultural: o cotidiano de três subsidiárias brasileiras

Resumo

A aceleração e o desenvolvimento de negócios globais fizeram aumentar o grau de diversidade cultural entre profissionais nas organizações, assim como cresceu o interesse sobre o trabalho em grupo e de equipes multiculturais, como mostram pesquisas sobre a dinâmica dessas equipes (ZHOU e SHI, 2011; CHEVRIER e VIEGAS-PIRES, 2013). Este artigo tem por objetivo identificar e analisar quais são as representações sociais construídas por membros de equipes multiculturais de trabalho em suas interações interculturais e como elas afetam o cotidiano organizacional em três subsidiárias de multinacionais no Brasil. Com abordagem qualitativa e método de estudo de caso, a coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de pesquisa documental e 33 entrevistas semiestruturadas com brasileiros e estrangeiros membros de equipes de trabalho. Utilizou-se a Teoria de Representações Sociais (TRS), de Moscovici (2004), para identificar as principais representações sociais no contexto dessas subsidiárias. Como resultado, surgiram pontos comuns entre as três subsidiárias, como: as estratégias de transnacionalização para fortalecer as diretrizes globais e atender às demandas locais, com isso, observou-se a construção de culturas organizacionais com elementos globais; o incentivo à transformação de alguns profissionais em posições-chaves em profissionais globais; o entendimento de que a diversidade cultural é um capital que pode trazer muitos resultados positivos para as organizações; e o desenvolvimento de competências interculturais para facilitar os processos de mobilidade internacional. Em contrapartida, foram observados muitos problemas de comunicação, falta de preocupação com o processo de aprendizagem intercultural, formas de registro de assimilação do conhecimento e experiência adquiridos. Conclui-se que, apesar dos problemas e desafios, as equipes multiculturais contribuem, por meio da interação cotidiana, com a aprendizagem organizacional, o desenvolvimento e a consolidação da cultura e de rotinas globais nas organizações. Como contribuição, este artigo demonstra que o uso da TRS para analisar o contexto intercultural pode proporcionar uma visão mais dinâmica da interação e construção de um cotidiano intercultural em empresas multinacionais. Além disso, esta pesquisa demonstrou a possibilidade de traços comuns na cultura organizacional de empresas multinacionais que trabalham com equipes multiculturais.

Palavras-chave: Cotidiano Intercultural. Representações Sociais. Subsidiária Brasileira.

Representaciones sociales en el contexto intercultural: la vida cotidiana de tres filiales brasileñas

Resumen

La aceleración y el desarrollo de negocios globales aumentaron el grado de diversidad cultural entre los profesionales en las organizaciones, así como creció el interés en grupos de trabajo y equipos multiculturales, como muestran las investigaciones sobre la dinámica de dichos equipos (ZHOU y SHI, 2011; CHEVRIER y VARGA-PIRES, 2013). Este artículo tiene como objetivo identificar y analizar cuáles son las representaciones sociales construidas por los miembros de equipos multiculturales en sus interacciones interculturales y cómo afectan la vida cotidiana organizacional en tres filiales de multinacionales en Brasil. Con un enfoque cualitativo y el método de estudio de caso, la recolección de datos se realizó a través de investigación documental y de entrevistas semiestructuradas con 33 miembros extranjeros y brasileños de equipos de trabajo. Se utilizó la teoría de las representaciones sociales (TRS), de Moscovici (2004), para identificar las principales representaciones sociales en el contexto de esas filiales. Como resultado, hubo puntos en común entre ellas, tales como: las estrategias de transnacionalización para fortalecer las directrices mundiales y atender las demandas locales, así, se observó la construcción de culturas organizacionales con elementos globales; el fomento de la transformación de algunos profesionales globales en puestos clave; la comprensión de que la diversidad cultural es un capital que puede traer muchos resultados positivos a las organizaciones; y el desarrollo de competencias interculturales para facilitar los procesos de movilidad internacional. Por otro lado, se observaron muchos problemas de comunicación, falta de preocupación por el proceso de aprendizaje intercultural, formas de registro de asimilación del conocimiento y experiencia adquiridos. Se concluye que, a pesar de los problemas y desafíos, los equipos multiculturales contribuyen, a través de la interacción cotidiana, al aprendizaje organizacional, al desarrollo y consolidación de la cultura y de las rutinas globales en las organizaciones. Como aporte, este artículo demuestra que el uso de TRS para analizar el contexto intercultural puede proporcionar una visión más dinámica de la interacción y construcción de una vida cotidiana intercultural en empresas multinacionales. Además, esta investigación demostró la posibilidad de rasgos comunes en la cultura organizacional de empresas multinacionales que trabajan con equipos multiculturales.

Palabras clave: Vida cotidiana intercultural. Representaciones sociales. Filial brasileña.

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[Translated version] Note: All quotes in English translated by this article's translator.

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INTRODUCTION

National cultures vary in significant and distinct ways, the way of thinking, customs, behaviors, interactions, shared values are some of the elements that form the culture of a nation. The way of thinking, feeling, and behaving is neither random nor casual, but is deeply influenced by cultural heritage (ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008). Until someone leave his/her community, often does not realize the culture he/she share with other members of the community. As they encounter people from other cultures, individuals become aware of their individuality and begin to appreciate their differences. For Hall (2005, p. 47, our translation), a person's national culture "is one of the main sources of cultural identity. When we define ourselves, we sometimes say that we are English or Welsh or Indian or Jamaican". This metaphorical way of speaking expresses, in an effective way, how one thinks of culture as part of the essential nature of the individual.

The influence of a nation's history, infrastructure, and culture permeates every aspect of life in the country, including the norms, values, and behaviors of managers in national organizations. Behavioral characteristics that are influenced by the country become part of each organization's "way of being" and shape the structure and processes of its international extension. Geertz (1989) states that people live in a "universe of meanings". They codify and decode at any moment, not only words, but also expressions, postures, actions of the most varied types, always with the purpose of using meaning. A national culture is more than symbols and representations, it is a discourse, a way of constructing meanings that influences and organizes both the actions and the conception one has of oneself. By producing senses about *nation*, senses with which it is possible to identify, individuals construct their identity (HALL, 2005).

In the organizational environment, even with the process of opening markets and the homogenization of management discourses and models, particularities, local differences, and the sharing of common beliefs continue to coexist (CHEVRIER, 2009). Culture is a frame of reference for individual and collective action, in that sense, management practices are culturally rooted and hierarchical relationships are interpreted in the light of the dominant culture (CHEVRIER and VIEGAS-PIRES, 2013). Thus, the recognition of the other as different is an advance to improve the coexistence of people, societies, and organizations, as it favors mutual respect, the reduction of stereotypes, misunderstandings, and difficulties of interaction. It also increases the quality of the decisions made in the work environment, as well as the tendency to create an increasingly qualified, diverse environment, but more subject to conflicts and exclusion (FREITAS, 2005; 2008).

The result of the intercultural coexistence can mean an increase of capacities to deal with diverse situations and the reduction of negative effects of certain traits. However, at first moment, the differences prevail and the potential for conflict is extremely high. The intercultural relationship demands complementation of knowledge and improvement of communicative and negotiation skills, as well as the ability to coordinate multicultural and multidisciplinary teams. It is also necessary to understand and make happen learning and innovation as continuous processes that emerge from the permanent organizational restructuring, which demands ever greater levels of flexibility and synergy (MATVEEV and NELSON, 2004; FREITAS, 2008).

As Bueno and Freitas (2015, p. 207, our translation) argue, "intercultural experience is an enriching moment for professionals and organizations, some of the expected gains are the different ways of seeing and solving problems and the capacity to generate and transmit knowledge and the expansion of worldviews". Therefore, managers and academics have sought to understand how intercultural management can help to build a more pluralistic and diverse organizational environment.

There is still demand for research, analysis and changes on international mobility and the work of multicultural teams in organizations. From issues related to the use of different definitions and nomenclatures by researchers and managers, through policies and practices developed to the evaluation of results and learning for subjects and organizations. In general, existing research has been predominantly prescriptive, with a managerial focus and little focus on the interaction and development of multicultural teams (FREITAS, 2008; BUENO and DOMINGUES, 2014). In Brazil, there are few articles about intercultural administration and its sub-themes. As in the international scenario, Brazilian research deals more with aspects of international mobility management and the expatriate adaptation process, they do not address the interaction between foreigners and local people and the construction of their new multicultural working day (BUENO and DOMINGUES, 2014).

In this context, the aim of this study was to contribute to intercultural administration by adopting a theoretical approach that prioritizes the analysis of the interaction and construction of collective knowledge, dynamically, in the intercultural context. The aim of the research was to identify and analyze the social representations built by Brazilians and foreigners, members of multicultural work teams, their intercultural interactions and how they affected the organizational daily life. The use of Theory of Social Representations (TSR) in Business Studies has been shown as an instigating and dynamic way to understand the interactions and social relations in the organizational environment (SALLES and COSTA, 2013; CAVEDON, 2014; GONZAGA, OLIVEIRA and CHAGAS, 2015). However, there are few studies with this theory in intercultural studies (MARTINS-SILVA, SILVA JÚNIOR, PERONI et al., 2016). The TSR helped to highlight the need to make familiar and give meaning to what is different, unknown, is a shared path to be traversed in the organizational environment, giving greater breadth to the analysis, and understanding that representations are collectively constructed.

INTERCULTURAL ADMINISTRATION

The potential for higher productivity of culturally diverse teams is elevated, they possess the amount of resources, insights, perspectives, and experiences that facilitate the creation of new and better ideas (MATVEEV and NELSON, 2004; ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008). However, unfortunately, the culturally diverse teams rarely reach all their potential. The process loses for the distrust, lack of communication, stress, and lack of cohesion frequently deny the potential benefits of the diversity of the team. Only if their diversity goes well managed the multicultural teams can hope to reach their full potential (ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008).

Living in another country causes a high level of uncertainty. Several authors work on this issue and mention that if, on the one hand, uncertainty causes tension, anguish, and stress, on the other hand, it moves the individual towards accepting and adapting differences because people do not like to be in an uncertain situation for a long time. And the natural reaction is to try to discover patterns in unfamiliar situations to make them known, to classify and to redefine the objects, the relations, in the end, everything that surrounds people (BLACK, GREENBERG and MENDENHALL, 1992; FREITAS, 2005; ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008).

Managing groups of people with different national cultures is a reality for an increasing number of organizations. Both for those who are considered local in scope and in the size of their market, but who can count on professionals from other countries, and (and more strongly) those who work in different countries with multicultural work teams. Intercultural contact occurs in ways other than expatriation: media such as video and teleconferencing, electronic mail, interconnected management systems, and other information technology tools allow people to talk and discuss strategies and projects, decide what actions will be carried out as well as monitoring and measuring the results of these actions in different places and by professionals from different countries. Intercultural dialogue, in these circumstances, becomes an important element of the success or failure of many global businesses (FINURAS, 2003; DASKALAKI, 2008). Therefore, issues such as leadership and communication become key elements in establishing this dialogue, either by identifying leadership styles and practices between cultures (CHEVRIER and VIEGAS-PIRES, 2013), or by defining the use of a language (LAURENCE and SELMER, 2010).

Chevrier (2000) argues that to manage people with different cultures, one must first acknowledge one's culture. And the contact with the other provides this recognition, recalling the concept of otherness. However, the formation of multicultural teams is more than recognition of the differences among its members. For Matveev and Nelson (2004), the management of cultural diversity and conflicts between cultures is the most common challenge for multicultural teams and the main challenges are: managing differences and conflicts; dealing with distances and geographical dispersion among members; dealing with coordination and control issues; maintaining the high degree of communication; developing and maintaining team cohesion. For Finuras (2003) it is also important to know how to deal with personality differences; developing a common team goal; and addressing leadership issues.

Even if taking care of the aspects involved in the formation of multicultural teams, they can present several levels of quality of performance and effectiveness in the execution of the tasks, since the teams have their own dynamics and a specific context that influence their performance (MATVEEV and NELSON, 2004; ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008; CHEVRIER and VIEGAS-PIRES, 2013). According to Adler and Gundersen (2008) and Finuras (2003), the productivity of a team will also depend on the type

of tasks and their available resources and their processes. Therefore, team objectives should guide the processes, activities, and speed of actions.

In homogenous teams, it is easier to understand what others are trying to say and to believe in others is faster. In culturally diverse teams, failures of perception, communication, and interpretation come up all the time. Because multicultural team members have different expectations, it is common to take longer to appropriate relevant information and making particular decisions can raise the level of stress. There is also an increase in ambiguity, complexity, and confusion in multicultural teams. Cohesion is “the ability of team members to act as one”, say Adler and Gundersen (2008, p. 142, our translation). This ability is related to perception, interpretation, and action in situations where it has been mutually agreed upon which is the best course. Box 1 shows how failures in interpretation, communication and stress reduce cohesion and, often, the productivity of multicultural teams.

Box 1

Diversity in multicultural teams: advantages and disadvantages

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|--|
| <p>Diversity allows the increase of creativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater range of perspectives - More and better ideas - Less group thinking <p>Diversity reinforces the concentration on understanding others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideas - Perspectives - Meanings - Arguments <p>The increase in creativity can lead to the creation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better problem definition - More alternatives - Better solutions - Better decisions <p>The teams can become:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More effective - More productive | <p>Diversity causes lack of cohesion:</p> <p>Mistrust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor interpersonal attractiveness - Incorrect stereotypes - More conversations within the culture itself <p>Communication failures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slower communication: foreigners and translation problems - Less accuracy <p>Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More counterproductive behavior - Less disagreement on content - Tension <p>Lack of cohesion causes inability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validate ideas and people - Agree when agreement is needed - Getting consensus in decisions - Act together <p>The teams can become:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less efficient - Less effective - Less productive |

Source: Adapted from Adler and Gundersen (2008, p. 143).

Some problems faced by multicultural teams relate to attitudinal problems, such as lack of knowledge and mistrust. They can lead to difficulty in communicating, sharing information, and delegating or sharing responsibilities. Other problems are the nature of perception, such as the creation of stereotypes. These often lack veracity and depart far more from reading skewed by the culture of the individual than from real characteristics. In intercultural relations, communication becomes the great instrument of connection between individuals that will help to diminish the ignorance of the other. As we do not know what is similar and what is different, it will be through dialogue that the bridge between individuals will be built. However,

communication of multicultural teams does not always result in understanding. It continually involves misunderstanding because of incorrect perception, interpretation, and evaluation (ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008).

According to Adler and Gundersen (2008), perception is the process by which individuals, stimulated by the external environment, select, organize, and evaluate to give meaning to their own experiences. The models of perception are not innate nor absolute, they are selective, learned, culturally determined, consistent, and inaccurate. They are selective according to our mental models; are learned through our experience; are culturally determined; are consistent, since we see something in a certain way, it will always continue to be seen this way; and are inaccurate because we see things that do not exist and we do not see things that exist. Interpretation occurs when an individual gives meaning to observations and to their relationships. Based on our experience, we create assumptions about our perceptions and do not need to rediscover meanings each time we encounter a similar situation. The process of interpretation uses categories to classify situations, people and objects and give meaning to what we perceive. According to Moscovici (2004), categorization helps us distinguish what is most important in the environment and how to act accordingly. Categories of image perception become inefficient when we put people and things into the wrong groups. The failure of intercultural categorization occurs when domestic categories are used to understand situations abroad.

According to Moscovici (2004), creating stereotypes involves a form of categorization that organizes the experience and guides the behavior before ethnic groups and national groups. Stereotypes never describe an individual behavior, but the normal behavior of members of a particular group. Like other forms of categorization, stereotypes can be both useful and harmful, depending on how they are used. An efficient stereotyping allows people to understand and act appropriately in new situations. Therefore, MacNab and Worthley (2012) demonstrate the importance of developing awareness of the creation of stereotypes as a way of improving the intercultural relationship and the management capacity of the multicultural environment.

Culture strongly influences and, in many situations, determines our perceptions and interpretations. Both the categories and the meanings we give are based on our cultural framework (FINURAS, 2003). For Adler and Gundersen (2008), rather than perception and interpretation, cultural conditions affect evaluation. This involves judging someone or something as good or bad. We use our own culture as a standard of measure, a criterion, judging our own culture as normal and good, and everything that is different as abnormal and bad. Evaluation rarely helps in the attempt to understand, communicate, or do business with people of other cultures.

Diversity can cause inefficiency when the team dominates the ethnocentric vision and the cultural domain, because they direct ideas, ignore differences and always seek answers based on consensus (FINURAS, 2003) or when there is no local support for the relations and demands of multicultural teams or the relationship between expatriates and local people (MAHAJAN and DE SILVA, 2012). The more diversity is treated as a resource, the more it can stimulate the emergence of innovative ideas. This means that divergence of ideas and opinions is positive, teams should bring about the emergence of differences at a time when diversity can be used as a resource. In order to do so, it will be necessary to establish a climate of respect, which welcomes the participants and, at the same time, prevents the dialogue from being polarized in an imbalance of forces. It is therefore important to develop leadership in multicultural teams.

In an intercultural context, it is necessary to increase the leaders' awareness of basic concerns and reflect on the meaning of their practices. Chevrier and Viegas-Pires (2013) ask: Should the leader adapt to the expectations of his subordinates or should they accept and follow the practices of their leader? As the authors point out, there is no single answer or an easy answer, but understanding cultural contexts can pave the way for negotiating the best or most appropriate practices. And one of the gains of cultural diversity is that it can bring the members of a multicultural team to learning. And not only do the individuals involved gain, but the organization can create a virtuous cycle of innovation and creativity by utilizing individual perspectives and capabilities and their multiple combinations. Ou (2009) says that organizational learning is the result of moments of intercultural interaction and is not something that can be transmitted or internalized without practical experience.

THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND THE INTERCULTURAL DAYLY LIFE

Understanding that TSR takes as "its starting point the diversity of individuals, attitudes, and phenomena, in all its strangeness and unpredictability" and it aims "to discover how individuals and groups can build a stable, predictable world from such

diversity”, according to Moscovici (2004, p. 79, our translation), it was decided to adopt this theoretical perspective to analyze the daily life of Brazilians and foreigners in the organizations researched. It also considered the arguments of Bueno and Freitas (2015, p. 208-209, our translation) about how social representations can help to form a “basis for familiarizing actions and interactions and explain, at least in part, how the process of building a common everyday life for foreign and local professionals in intercultural organizational environments is”.

For Jodelet (1989, p. 36, our translation), social representation is “a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, having a practical vision and competing for the construction of a common reality to a social set”. In Leme’s interpretation (2004, p. 47, our translation), social representations are “a set of concepts, explanations and affirmations that originate in daily life in the course of interindividual communications” and which are, for our society, what myths and belief systems went to traditional societies, in other words, it is common sense in its most contemporary version. For the author, what differs nowadays is that most of the objects, concepts and analogies that permeate our understanding are originated by scientific research and, although they are of our interest and concern for our existence, many are created by specialized groups and not from our direct experience and are therefore “second-hand” knowledge, but that guide and provide parameters for attitudes and decisions that create a new common, more accessible sense.

According to Costa and Almeida (1999, p. 251, our translation), what was new in this theory was not the recognition of the interaction between the individual and the environment, but rather the interface of this relation: “since representation is a construction of the individual, but its origin is social, and more, its destiny is also social”. In this sense, the focus is not to study aspects of the relationship between subject and social environment, “nor to realize that in this relationship, the individual is expanding his cognitive, motor, etc. capacities”. The importance is in the understanding of the dynamism of this relation: “how the social interferes in the elaboration of the social representations of the individuals and how these interfere in the elaboration of the social representations of the group to which they belong”. For Moscovici (2004), the representations can not be seen as explanatory variables, on the contrary, because it is the construction of the representations that must be debated.

Moscovici (2004) points out two different types of thinking: the consensual universes and the reified universes. In the reified universes, sciences and erudite thought are created and moved, with their objectivity and rigor both logical and methodological, with their theoretical abstraction, their divisions, their specialties, and their hierarchy. The consensual universes are those of the intellectual activities of the social interaction in the daily life. It is the space of production of social representations. Their “theories” know no specialized limits, follow another logic, called “natural” and use other verification mechanisms that are less sensitive to objectivity and more attentive to shared feelings of likelihood or plausibility (Sá, 2004).

The starting point, the raw material for the construction of these consensual realities comes from the reified universes, through their representations. Thus, in our contemporaneity, a new type of common sense arises, a new popular knowledge that is second-hand and consists of the continuous appropriation of information, images, and language that science does not stop inventing (Sá, 2004).

About consensual universes, Moscovici (2004) states that they exist because everyone wants to feel at home, free of threats or disputes. What is said and done confirms the beliefs and interpretations already acquired. According to Sá (2004), a social reality is generated only when something new or unfamiliar is incorporated into the consensual universe. From that moment on, the processes that make the stranger familiar operate; what was new loses its novelty and thus becomes known and “real”.

There is always a tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar in the consensual universe: “Before we see and hear the person, we already judge them; we have already classified them and created an image of them” (MOSCOVICI, 2004, p. 58, our translation). Thus, all our efforts to know more and get more information serve first and foremost to confirm the image we have already formed about them. Although this process takes place under the weight of “tradition, memory, the past, it does not mean that it is not creating and adding new elements to the consensual reality, that is not producing changes in the system of social thought” (MOSCOVICI, 2004, p. 58, our translation). The result of this process, as evidenced by empirical studies, as reported by Sá (2004), is very creative and innovative in the space of our daily life.

Besides the differentiation of the reified and consensual universes, Moscovici (2004) presents a structure for representation that is formed by two faces: the figurative and the symbolic. Objectification and anchoring form this structure. The function

of giving meaning to a picture, providing an intelligible context to the object, and interpreting it, is the anchoring process. It is the cognitive integration of the object represented within a preexisting system of social thought and in the transformations involved. The represented object can designate ideas, events, people, relationships, etc. From this process stems the rooting or social anchoring of the representation and its represented object.

Anchoring is a process of classification from references or prototypes stored in individuals' memories. In this way, the object acquires characteristics of the class and is readjusted to fit it (MOSCOVICI, 2004). Even if there is some discrepancy, there is a transference of the characteristics of the class to the object to ensure the least coherence between the familiar and the unfamiliar. It is by the process of classifying what was not classified that one can imagine it, represent it, give it some meaning.

The intercultural encounter is then, a re-encounter in the logic of social representations because, for Moscovici (2004, p. 63, our translation), "we can never say that we know an individual, or that we try to understand him/her, but only that we try recognize him/her, that is, discover what kind of person he/she is, which category he/she belongs to". This is anchoring in a concrete way and means the "priority of the verdict on judgment" and the "predicate over the subject". In this categorization logic, two paths are followed: generalization or particularization. In generalization, an opinion comes quickly to the mind and it is necessary to discover the information that conforms to it, which confirms that something or someone lives up to that opinion already formed. In particularization, the individual, object, or situation is placed at a distance for analysis, as it is divergent from the prototype and it becomes necessary to find where that difference is. And so, by locating difference we can fit into some existing classification or create a new category.

The concept of denomination emerges from the anchorage. Moscovici (2004, p. 66, emphasis added by author, our translation) states that it is impossible to classify without naming; they are two distinct but related activities, and by taking something of a "disturbing anonymity to endow it with a genealogy and include it in a complex of specific words, to actually locate it in the **identity matrix** of our culture" a denomination occurs. When we name something or someone, we make an image communicable or linked to other images. This "something" or "someone" comes out of the world of confusion, uncertainty, and disarticulation, and by naming and inventing words that describe it, it is possible to represent a reality. Moscovici (2004) says that his considerations prove that naming a person or something is like precipitating it, in the same way as a chemical solution, and that the results of this process are three:

A) once named, the person or thing can be described and acquires certain characteristics, tendencies etc. B) the person, or thing, becomes distinct from other persons or objects, through these characteristics and tendencies; C) the person or thing becomes the object of a convention between those who adopt and share the same convention (MOSCOVICI, 2004, p. 67).

We need to identify individuals and things in order to fit them into an already existing social representation and so, who names and to whom the name is given are forced into an identity matrix in which they have not chosen and have no control. At this point, Moscovici (2004, p. 68, our translation) states that "this is how all normal and divergent manifestations of social existence are labeled - individuals and groups are stigmatized, be it psychologically or politically".

At this point, TSR has two consequences. First, there is no idea or thought that has no anchorage, and this leads us to say, according to Moscovici (2004, p. 70, our translation), that it is not possible to have a general system without biases but that "biases [...] do not express [...] a social or cognitive deficit or limitation, but a normal difference of perspective between heterogeneous individuals or groups within a society". Second, the main purpose of classification and naming is "to facilitate the interpretation of characteristics, the understanding of intentions and motives underlying the actions of people actually forming opinions".

The other side of the anchorage is the objectification that, according to Moscovici (2004), is when materiality is given to an abstract object, it is the process and "naturalize it". And it means "the imaginative and structuring operation" whereby a given "form" is given to the knowledge about the object, so as to make it concrete, the materialized tangible concept, is the way of transforming a concept into an image (MOSCOVICI, 2004, p. 71, our translation). According to the author, objectification is more active process than anchoring and it unites the notion of unfamiliarity with the notion of reality, thereby becoming the "true essence of reality". All the social representation makes real a certain level of reality and these levels exist for the collectivity and in it vanishes not existing by itself.

Images that have the capacity to be represented are integrated into a pattern that Moscovici (2004) called the "figurative nucleus", which is a complex of images that reproduce a complex of ideas. The words that refer to the figurative nucleus are

those most frequently used, and from this emerge the formulas and clichés that summarize the figurative nucleus that become a way of understanding others and oneself and that helps in decision making in various social situations.

Social representations are memory dependent, and the solidity of memory protects representations of abrupt changes, providing a dose of independence from current events. For Moscovici (2004, p. 78, our translation) “it is from this sum of common experiences and memories that we extract the images, language and gestures necessary to overcome the unfamiliar [...]. The experiences and memories are dynamic and immortal”. And so anchoring and objectification are ways of dealing with memory. For Moscovici (2004), the purpose of all representations is to make something unfamiliar, or even unfamiliarity. What the author means to say is that the consensual universes are places where everyone wants to feel at home, safe from any risk, friction, or conflict. Everything that is said or done there only confirms the beliefs and interpretations acquired, corroborates, rather than contradicts, tradition.

When searching for cross-cultural researches that have used the TSR in Business Studies in the Scopus and Web of Science databases, a very small number of articles have been found, all of them focused on other areas or subareas such as Marketing (ELFRIEDE, 2006; STEWART and LACASSAGNE, 2005). Other works involve broader issues, such as city organization and migration (KEMPNY, 2013). This represents an important opportunity for contribution and novelty that this article can offer.

In the same way, the research in the SPELL, a Brazilian electronic library, did not find any article with both subject: intercultural administration and the TSR. In a bibliometric study on the use of TSR in organizational studies in Brazil, from 2001 to 2014, Martins-Silva, Silva Júnior, Peroni et al. (2016) show that 23 articles have been published, in different thematic and using different cuts of the theory. The authors conclude that there is a demand for evolution and maturation of the TSR in organizational studies, both quantitatively, with an increase in the volume of published articles, and in qualitative terms, since the researches have used it superficially, without exploring its potential to the understanding of social phenomena.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research is descriptive, of a qualitative nature, because this approach enables the interpretative analysis necessary to understand the world of meanings, representations and perceptions (DENZIN and LINCOLN, 2006). In other words, its object of study refers to the world of symbols, meanings, subjectivity and intentionality. Informal initial contacts were made with people familiar with the three organizations (fellow teachers working in these organizations, as well as students and former students). This informal contact facilitated access to the human resources areas of three multinational subsidiaries that identified each multicultural team and its members. With the indication of the human resources managers, one of the members of each team was contacted; Then this member indicated another, and so on, characterizing the so-called “snowball” method for determining participants. This sought to avoid or diminish a research bias without the direction of the human resources area or the international mobility managers who could replicate the organization’s official speech. Thus, the participants, at the time of their interviews, indicated their colleagues, their leaders and their subordinates.

In this research, the search for validation and verification of the veracity of the information was an ongoing process, for that, interviews with individuals (Brazilians and foreigners) were carried out; with international mobility managers, responsible for the management of international mobility; in addition to research in the official documents made available by human resource managers.

In total, 33 people were interviewed. Most of the individuals work in the financial area of these organizations or in functions related to the financial operation or projects in this area. However, some of their colleagues from other areas who interacted with them on joint activities and projects on a daily basis also participated in the research, as did a spouse of a foreign professional. The decision to interview with the spouse of one of the multicultural team members was made because, when interviewing him, the role of informal relationships within and outside the work environment was very important between local and foreign in a multinational company specifically, which contributed to the process of adaptation of foreign professionals to the city, to the Brazilian culture and to the daily aspects of the family, which were reflected in the development and integration of

teamwork. This information was detailed and corroborated in the interview with the spouse. The professionals interviewed occupy different hierarchical positions and have different ages, being 16 women and 17 men. The nationalities were quite varied, besides the Brazilian one: Swedish, Finnish, Chilean, Peruvian, Argentine, English, Cuban / American, Portuguese and Ecuadorian. Twelve foreigners and 18 Brazilians were interviewed.

The interviews followed two distinct semi-structured scripts with questions based on the theoretical foundation on international mobility, daily organizational work, and the intercultural relations of teams. The documentary-research was based on the official documents of the three subsidiaries, provided by human resources managers, on policies and practices related to the management of international mobility, such as selection, training, legal procedures, change, follow-up and repatriation, as well as adaptations and specifications of the management of this area in the Brazilian subsidiaries, as well as documents that helped to understand the values and assumptions present in the organizational culture of each company.

As a methodological reference for apprehending and analyzing social representations, Possamai and Guareschi (2007, p. 234, our translation) comment that they are considered "the individual responses as manifestations and tendencies of the group to which he belongs and participates and not as an individual in isolation". It is the analysis of the individual in the social field, and that is where it becomes possible to "study how social knowledge is produced, the Social Representations" (POSSAMAI and GUARESCHI, 2007, p. 234, our translation) and how individuals, groups and society construct these forms of common-sense knowledge. Spink (2007) says that in order to identify the process of elaborating representations in daily life through cognitive explanations, concrete practices and affective investment, it is necessary to follow the indications of content analysis and discourse. The author suggests a sequence of activities that were followed during this stage of the research:

- a) Make the transcripts of the interviews being as faithful as possible not only the words used, but the silences and the emphases given.
- b) Make a floating reading of the transcribed material, in an interspersed way with the listening of the interviews recorded to let the themes surface, with attention to the rhetoric and the identification of affective investments.
- c) Return to the research objectives and seek to define clearly what is the object of the representation.
- d) Based on the themes found, draw up the graphs that demonstrate the relationships between cognitive elements, practices, and affective investments (consisting of argumentation and value attribution).

It is important to emphasize that, despite following the methodological indications, to study the daily knowledge of a group or society is to interpret interpretation, it is to know that the historical and social moment of the researcher can also influence his/her reading of the representations of others.

With the analysis based on the floating reading of the transcriptions and interspersed by the listening of the recordings of the interviews the emergent themes were observed and, from them, idea maps and representations of the groups of subjects interviewed were created, following the orientation of Spink (2007). Then, there was a joint analysis of the three organizations surveyed, in order to identify some representations common to them. These representations were created and recreated by the interviewees about their experience and work routine in the intercultural context, through the processes of anchoring and objectification.

After the representations were identified, the interviewees were contacted to confirm the reported information and to analyze whether the representations highlighted were correct and additional clarifications were requested and received.

It is important to clarify that there is no interaction between the three subsidiaries of companies surveyed, but they have common points in relation to their international mobility guidelines and policies and the work of multicultural teams.

RESULTS

Company A is, in fact, a group of companies with activities related to the manufacturing and commercialization of different products. In Brazil, the organization has been operating since the late 1970s, with units in Curitiba (Paraná State) and Pederneiras (São Paulo State).

Company B is also a group of companies, all from the financial branch and its coming to Brazil was through the acquisition of a Brazilian company. With the use of information technology, the organization has a global network that offers a range of financial services. The group started operations in Brazil in the late 1990s and the Brazilian headquarters is in Curitiba.

In relation to Company C, it is an organization of the industrial sector, one of the international leaders of its sector of activity, within the agribusiness branch. The scope of its activities covers about 160 countries. The operation in Brazil began in the 1980s and the administrative and financial headquarters is also located in Curitiba.

The A and B companies act in a transnational way, according to the concept of Bartlett and Ghoshal (1992), of control of global business and integration, but with local operation and customization. In this sense, each headquarters provides global guidelines and policies that should guide the operation in each location, but they attend local needs, as well as headquarters and other subsidiaries adoption of innovative solutions found through some subsidiary in an integrated and dynamic management process. However, company C works to construct global policies and procedures, which is consistent with Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1992) global management concept, with few adjustments to local situations, since its product mix allows this type of strategy or products that do not need adequacy or customization in their production or commercialization.

The main common social representations identified were: the global organizational culture; the global professional; cultural diversity as value and resource; international mobility is for few people; communication as a process of shared construction; and learning and mistakes. These representations are intertwined and form an interconnected network where the professionals involved reinforce and resignify these representations all the time, creating a dynamic that sustains the relationship between Brazilians and foreigners.

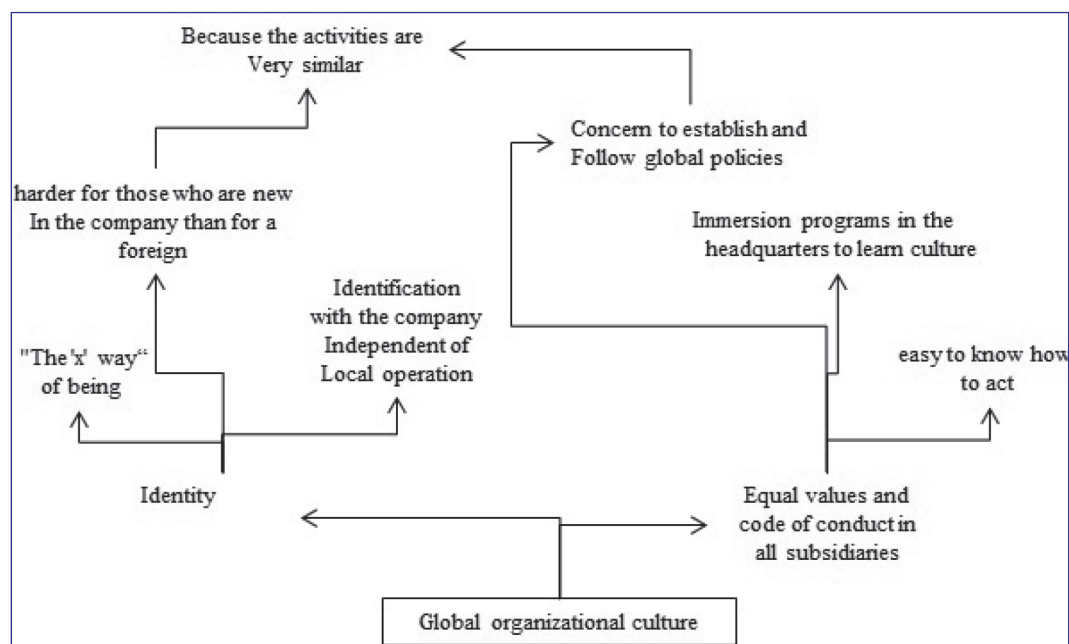
The global organizational culture represents the shared perception that the values and the directives of the organization give meaning to the daily life, letting the concept, and meaning of the culture of each organization in its global dimension. In addition to the initial history and paths traveled, the values of the three organizations are continually remembered and carry the idea of cross-border business. There are policies to reinforce and disseminate the organizational culture in these three organizations, especially a style of being of each of them that directs towards the values and expected behaviors of its members.

For managerial and board positions, immersion programs are implemented in the headquarters, integration, and projects between subsidiaries. And the subjects assimilate, over time, the values, and assumptions of the culture of their organizations and their behaviors are suffering a process of adaptation and increased commitment. The level of commitment and the type of response are different among the three organizations due to the maturity stage of each subsidiary. In the two companies that have been working for a longer time in Brazil, more deeply rooted organizational cultures, more homogeneous behaviors and a high degree of commitment were perceived.

Figure 1 consists of the graph constructed from excerpts from the reports of the interviewees of the three organizations about this representation.

Figure 1

Global organizational culture chart



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

It is observed that organizations become more important than the countries in which they operate. And it is their premises and directives, praising the diversity and plurality of ideas that permeate their official discourses and guide the actions of individuals. They experience the daily reality of trying to transform diversity into gains and, at the same time, prevent the loss of their internal consistency, highlighted by Freitas (2008) as a major challenge for global organizations.

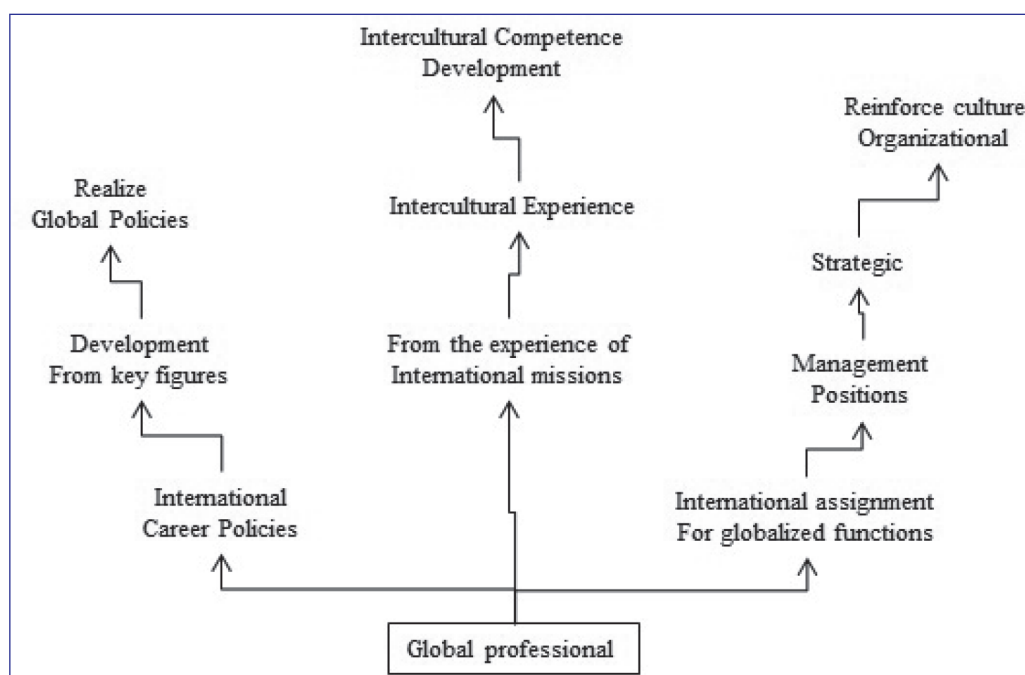
Individuals become global professionals as they experience international assignments, participate in international projects, coexist in a multicultural environment in global functions and are subject to the same global policies. They can establish a stronger identification with the organizational identity, with the way of being of each of them. And they are recognized by their local colleagues as more globalized, where little is perceived of the national culture of each one and much is seen of the culture of the organization and their personalities.

The impression is that these individuals are less susceptible to differences of understanding and behavior than those who live only with people of their own nationality or who have a more restricted contact with other countries. And, on the other hand, they are more sensitive to recognize the differences and find their own adaptation, as already pointed out by Mahajan and Silva (2012).

Figure 2 consists of the graph constructed with examples of perceptions shared by respondents.

Figure 2

Global professional chart



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The development of the global professional with intercultural competencies is a process that demands time and dedication, as already stated by Matveev and Nelson (2004) and Adler and Gundersen (2008). Resources and efforts should be provided not only by the participants of international assignments, but also by organizations, as Freitas (2005) argues, since they are the ones most interested in having professionals capable of making the best integration between the global and the local and identify innovative practices and characteristics in each operation.

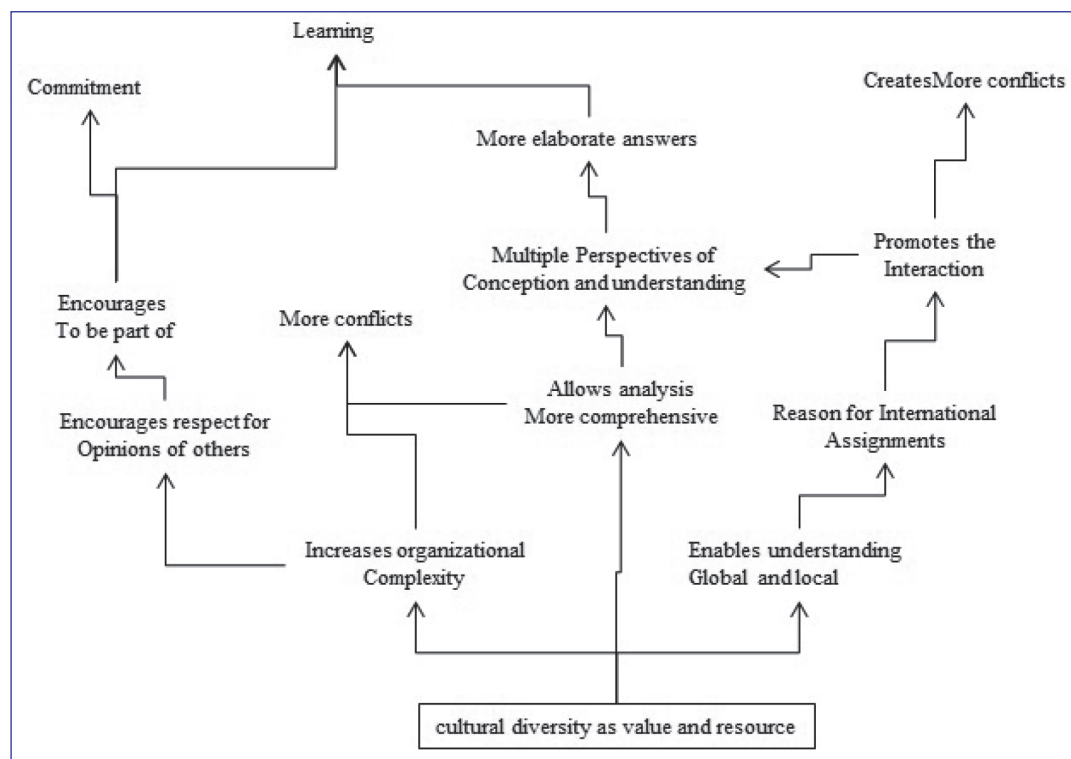
In the official speeches of the three organizations, the importance of cultural diversity as a value and as a resource for the implementation of strategies and for negotiation between global and local perspectives was identified. Respondents also commented that cultural diversity is seen as one of the pillars of sustaining organizations in markets with such different characteristics.

The search for diversity of perspectives, decisions and problem solving is not only part of the official discourses, but also shows a practice of organizational routine, especially in the execution of tasks of multicultural teams. From the moment that cultural diversity is stimulated in organizational daily life, it becomes a resource that organizations can use to solve problems in a more elaborate and complete way and think about long-term survival, as pointed out by Adler and Gundersen (2008) by highlighting the advantages of the work of multicultural teams.

Figure 3 represents the construction of the representation of diversity as a value and as a resource for organizations.

Figure 3

Graph of cultural diversity as value and resource



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Encouraging organizational learning via cultural diversity means accepting that ideas should be presented, analyzed, and discussed until one concludes what is best to be done. This demands time, patience, respect and dedication from participants and organizations. Not to mention the potential for conflicts and disagreements that arise when different opinions and expectations are highlighted, as reported by subjects of the three organizations. For this reason, Chevrier (2000) and Freitas (2005) comment that organizations often fail to take advantage of the potential of cultural diversity and much of the richness of intercultural experience is restricted to subjects who participate directly in the process.

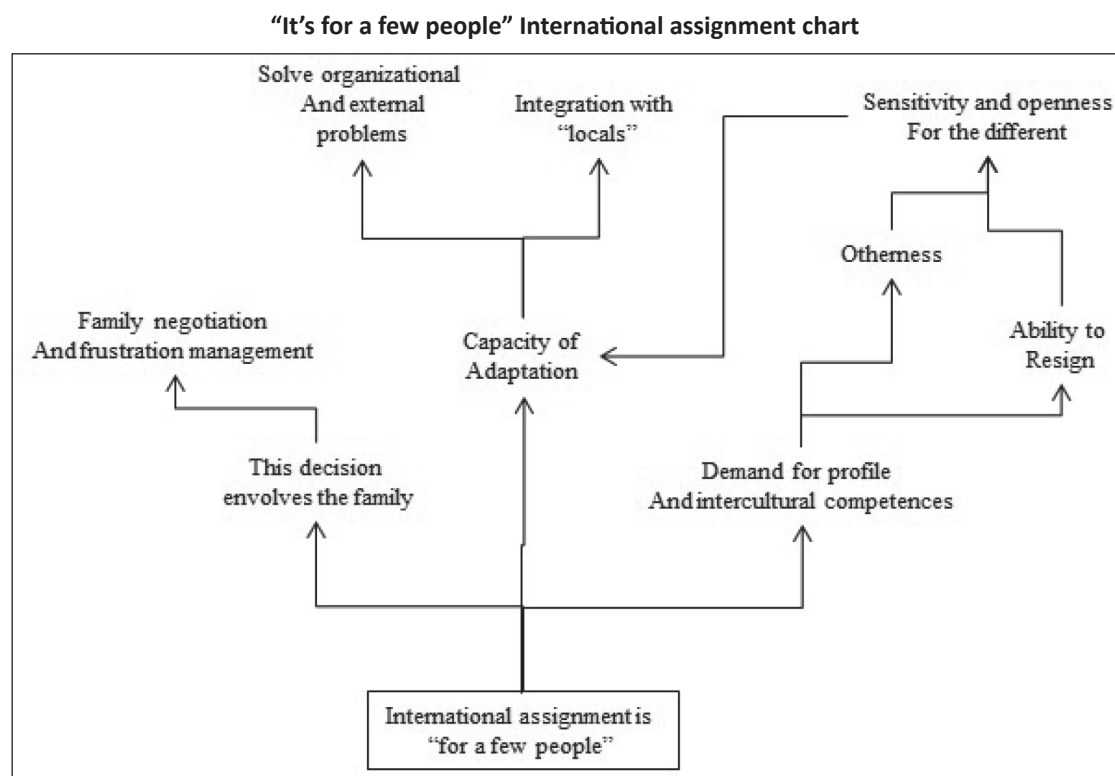
For those who have already had the experience of living in another country on an international assignment, whether for a shorter period (less than 1 year) or for several years, the perception seems to be the same: international mobility is for a few people since willingness and availability are not enough to face this type of challenge, it is necessary to have an opening to the new, to the different one that presupposes an ability to give up the comfort zone created around itself in the work environment and, mainly, in what aspects outside of work.

In addition, this is a type of choice that involves more instances of individuals' lives than just work. It is a life decision that concerns the family and their future. In many countries, the spouse can not get a work visa and must leave their career suspended until their return. Traced plans need to be modified or postponed, expectations need to be marked, and the period after the international assignment also needs to be thought out. All those interviewed who have already experienced

an international assignment have stated that they have been able to adapt, that they have succeeded and some have already participated in new assignments. However, they always remembered a case of someone who “was not so lucky.” Even those who have never gone through a work experience abroad have commented that it is noticeable when an individual is not prepared or does not have the profile for this type of situation.

Figure 4 shows how this social representation was constituted.

Figure 4



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

To like challenge and have openness to the different were cited as the main characteristics for those who want to participate in an international assignment. Some also commented on the importance of career planning and family life as key tactics used to increase the chances of success of an international assignment. Besides being curious to know different places and people, be flexible and able to live without certain products or very specific services. The support of the organization was pointed out as fundamental, both for solving domestic issues and for presentation and monitoring in the work environment. The comments approximate what authors like Cerdin (2002), Adler and Gundersen (2008) and Freitas (2005) argue are necessary for the experience to be positive.

The contact with foreigners was cited as one of the best tests for locals to assess who has the profile for an international assignment, what is missing to be prepared or even to conclude that this experience is not what one wants.

Communication as a process of shared construction stems from the fact that the fluency in the official language of organizations is still a major barrier in the communicative process in Brazilian subsidiaries. Although this is more problematic at the beginning of the coexistence, it is something that makes difficult the interaction and leads the foreigner to learn Portuguese or at least Spanish and Brazilians to make a greater effort of understanding.

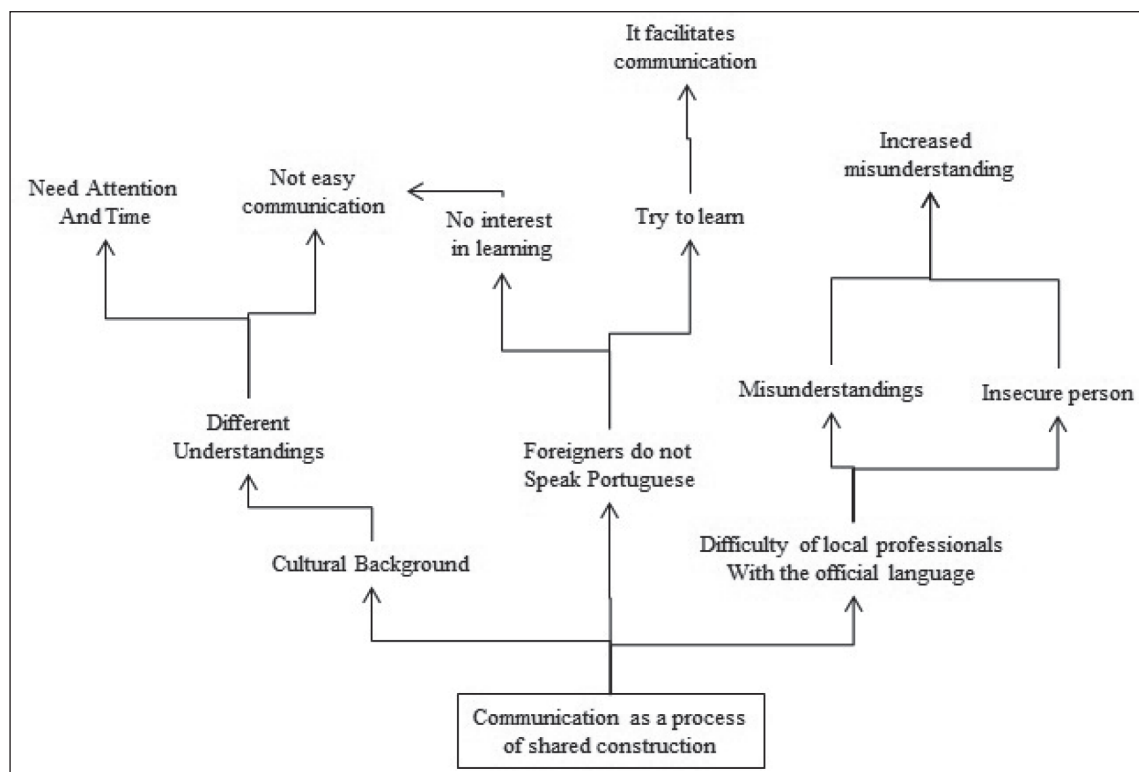
Communication failures make meetings longer and become interpersonal relationships more superficial. Tension increases when it comes to negotiating and meeting deadlines, because activities are more stretched to resolve communication difficulties. Not to mention the number of mistakes and frictions caused by lack of understanding or misunderstanding of

requests between managers, subordinates, and colleagues. In the case of foreigners, the difficulty of communication is an aggravating factor for a natural situation of tension and frustration. Not being able to understand themselves also disrupts domestic and family life, isolating them from the social life around them.

Figure 5 represents the communication chart as a shared construct.

Figure 5

Communication chart as a process of shared construction



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

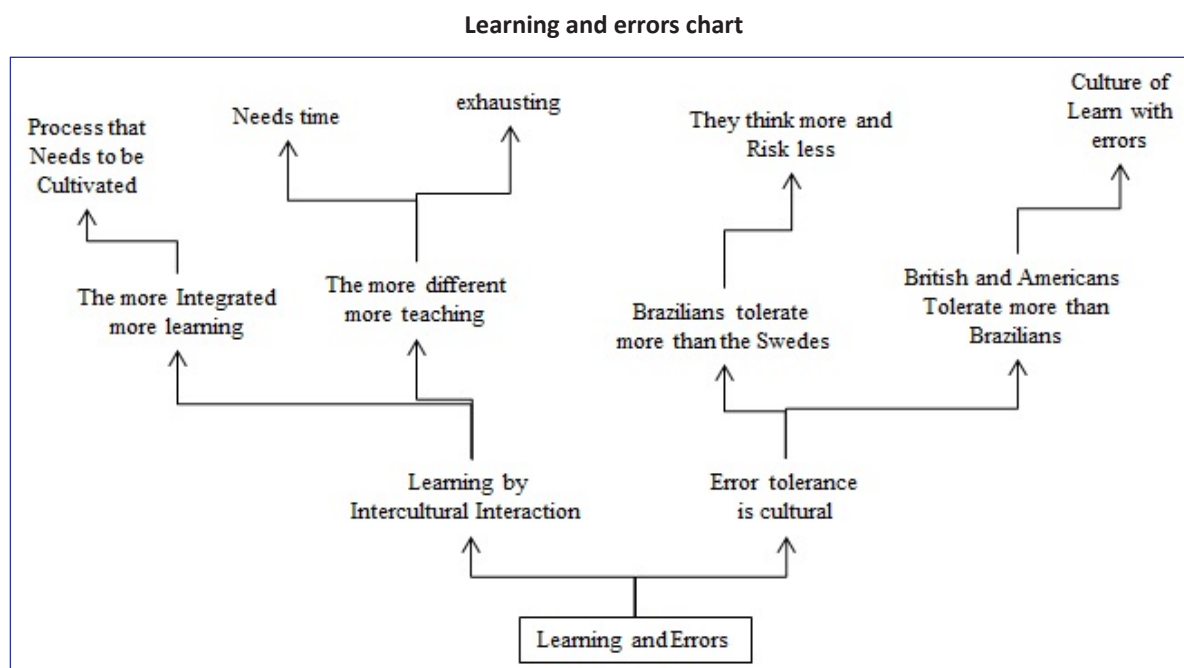
Brazilian value the foreigners' initiative to learn Portuguese. When it happens, there is unanimous impression that there is an ongoing effort by Brazilians to improve communication. Another tactic used is the playful and humorous Brazilians' way of dealing with the situation, which helps to "break the ice." Foreigners perceive this as a demonstration of effort and interest in promoting good communication and integration, and therefore also try to speak Portuguese (at least a little) and understand English spoken by Brazilians. This demonstrates the understanding on both sides that communication and cooperation need to occur in the workplace.

About social representation of organizational learning and errors, the intercultural context contributes to the learning process of the three organizations, but not always in a formal way. None of them has a defined policy of how to integrate the daily operation with the experience and the knowledge created during the intercultural interaction or the record of the activities of the multicultural teams.

What they have are general directions for international assignments, but there is no control over what is actually done and how it is done. When a foreigner comes to transfer a new technology or process, some follow-ups are done in general lines and without registration in a specific information system, such as a practice bank, for example. When the assignment is to manage an area or project, there is virtually no control over possible transfer of knowledge and learning from the sites.

Figure 6 is the chart that represents the interviewees' perception of learning and mistakes.

Figure 6



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

People who are directly involved in intercultural interactions declare constant learning process not only of technical knowledge, but of intercultural competences that are developed and they are related with the opened worldview and of business, changes the form of behaviors and relationships, which corroborates what Ou (2009) said about the learning process of multicultural teams. Intercultural interaction is very rich, but it needs to be cultivated always and it is tiring. Living with differences and with the unknown is exhausting, but it brings rewards.

The attitude towards errors is very different between cultures. In some cultures, the attempt is encouraged, even if it leads to error. This is seen as part of the learning process in the North American and British culture, for example. Brazilians are at greater risk of error if it is a mistake of the group and not just an individual. They are intimidated when in contact with American bosses who take the most daring and prefer to continue sharing mistakes and successes, even if no one stands out individually.

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS COMMON TO THE THREE MULTICULTURAL TEAMS

The richness of nationalities of interviewees guaranteed a comprehensive view of the construction of social representations about interactions and intercultural daily life in organizational context. In addition to the Brazilian professionals, professionals from Finland, England, Peru, Sweden, Ecuador, Chile, Cuba / United States, Portugal and Argentina participated in the survey, totaling 33 interviewees.

In the three organizations surveyed, common points emerged, such as transnational and global management strategies, that is, they seek to strengthen global guidelines, but also aim to meet local demands, to a lesser or greater degree, and with this, construction was perceived Organizational cultures with global elements; the incentive to transform some professionals into key positions in global professionals; the understanding that cultural diversity is a capital that can bring many positive results to the organizations and the development of intercultural competences to facilitate international mobility processes. On the

other hand, many communication problems and a lack of concern about the process of intercultural learning and the ways of recording and assimilating the knowledge and experience gained were also observed.

The role of the organizational culture of these companies is strengthened, establishing forms of conduct and values for the individuals involved. In this way, both the policies and the organizational culture function as a “background” that guides the working procedures, especially the activities of a more technical nature, and the behaviors expected in certain situations. As a result, the initial tension and discomfort - on both sides, foreign and local - is lessened and less awkward about the performance of professional activities. It became clear that the more solid the culture of an organization and the scope of its policies is, the more organizational background facilitates the insertion of a new individual into the group, since it already shares a set of values and assumptions and already knows the guidelines of the organization.

In the three organizations, all the participants of the research stated that intercultural interactions enrich the work routine and affirmed that there was individual and organizational learning, so that everyone perceived not only professional experience, but life experience, and that organizations benefit with the process. Despite the difficulties, they have managed to overcome the differences and learned to live together. However, they confess that intercultural daily life demands more and, therefore, is more exhausting. However, none of the three organizations has a defined policy for the organizational learning process that occurs in a multicultural environment and among multicultural teams. The recording and systematization of intercultural practices can serve as a basis for reviews of policies and practices of international mobility and work processes in these organizations, thus increasing their gains.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With this research, we sought to contribute to intercultural management by analyzing the interaction between members of multicultural teams. It is understood that this phase follows the selection and transfers phases inserted in the international mobility process, but depends on how they were negotiated and implemented. It is also true that the way in which members of multicultural teams interact with one another, the social representations they create to make the unfamiliar one familiar, affect the results of international mobility, and influence the work of the teams and their results.

Simmel's (1983) view of the position of the foreigner in the group and the dialectic that is created - from near and far; The familiar and the strange; of the known and unknown - was observed in the testimonies made by the participants of the research that show that the coexistence with foreigners creates a window that makes it possible to look out, to the different, to elements more distant and that were unknown. At the same time, make each one look inward through the eyes of the stranger. And so, things are perceived that were invisible, either by ignorance or by forgetfulness.

The fact that all participants in the research report the intercultural experience as positive, even with all the difficulties encountered, can be explained by the need to transform everything unknown, different, known, as Moscovici (2004) argues. And for this, representations of what is present in the intercultural context and daily life of multicultural teams are created and recreated. In conclusion, despite the problems and challenges, multicultural teams contribute, through daily interaction and created social representations, to organizational learning, development and consolidation of culture and global routines in organizations.

As a contribution, this article demonstrates that the use of TSR to analyze the intercultural context can provide a more dynamic view of the interaction and construction of a daily work of multicultural teams in an intercultural context. Mapping and analyzing shared representations help understand how meanings are constructed, how meanings are shared, and how practices transform the unfamiliar into familiar.

In addition, as a practical contribution, research shows that there may be common traits in the organizational culture of multinational companies with multicultural teams, which may help firms better understand the intercultural context and how it affects and influences their practices.

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