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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES: A STUDY OF TRAINING IN U.S. MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES ESTABLISHED IN HUNGARY

A SZERVEZETI KULTÚRA HATÁSÁNAK FELTÁRÁSA A NEMZETKÖZI ÜZLETI GYAKORLATOKRA: A MAGYARORSZÁGON LETELEPEDETT AMERIKAI MULTINACIONÁLIS VÁLLALATOK KÉPZÉSÉNEK VIZSGÁLATA

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ABSTRACT

The idea of business culture is fundamentally connected to societal business practices within a specific cultural environment (Wangchuk et al., 2020). Organizational culture can be defined as the collection of core beliefs and assumptions formulated, discovered, or developed by a group addressing external and internal challenges (Schein, 1992). A well-established connection exists between the culture within an organization and its performance outcomes, with a wealth of research supporting a positive linkage (Ouchi, 1981; Kotter and Heskett, 1992).

This study looks at how the work culture in American companies affects the way they manage their employees, especially in their offices in Hungary and how HR practices in American multinational companies adapt to and influence training and development in a Hungarian context. In today's world, understanding and working with different cultures is very important for international business (Twose, 2019). This paper explores how the typical values and ways of doing things in American culture affect the training and growth of employees in other countries.

Through qualitative interviews with HR professionals, the study identifies three pivotal training themes: Competency Development, On-the-job Training, and Innovation in Learning. These themes highlight a commitment to continuous skill enhancement, practical learning experiences, and progressive educational practices, aligning with American cultural values of individualism and innovation. The findings articulate how such cultural traits are translated into HR practices, emphasizing the interdependence between individual professional growth and broader organizational objectives. This research enriches the understanding of transnational cultural impacts on corporate training strategies, offering insights for global HR management and the successful navigation of cross-cultural business landscapes.

ABSZTRAKT

Az üzleti kultúra eszméje alapvetően a társadalmi üzleti gyakorlatokhoz kapcsolódik egy adott kulturális környezetben (Wangchuk et al., 2020). A szervezeti kultúra úgy

definiálható, mint a külső és belső kihívásokkal szembenéző csoport által megfogalmazott, felfedezett vagy kialakított alapvető hiedelmek és feltételezések összessége (Schein, 1992). A szervezeten belüli kultúra és a teljesítményeredmények között jól megalapozott kapcsolat áll fenn, és számos kutatás támasztja alá a pozitív kapcsolatot (Ouchi, 1981; Kotter és Heskett, 1992).

Ez a tanulmány azt vizsgálja, hogy az amerikai vállalatok munkakultúrája hogyan befolyásolja azt, ahogyan a munkatársaikat irányítják, különösen a magyarországi irodáikban, valamint azt, hogy az amerikai multinacionális vállalatok HR-gyakorlatai hogyan alkalmazkodnak és befolyásolják a magyarországi környezetben történő képzést és fejlesztést. A mai világban a különböző kultúrák megértése és a velük való együttműködés nagyon fontos a nemzetközi üzleti életben (Twose, 2019). Ez a tanulmány azt vizsgálja, hogy az amerikai kultúrában jellemző értékek és módszerek hogyan befolyásolják a más országokban dolgozók képzését és fejlődését.

A HR-szakemberekkel készített kvalitatív interjúkon keresztül a tanulmány három kulcsfontosságú képzési témát azonosít: kompetenciafejlesztés, munkahelyi képzés és innováció a tanulásban. Ezek a témák kiemelik a folyamatos készségfejlesztés, a gyakorlati tanulási tapasztalatok és a progresszív oktatási gyakorlatok iránti elkötelezettséget, amelyek összhangban vannak az individualizmus és az innováció amerikai kulturális értékeivel. A megállapítások kifejezik, hogy ezek a kulturális jellemzők hogyan jelennek meg a HR-gyakorlatokban, hangsúlyozva az egyéni szakmai fejlődés és a tágabb szervezeti célok közötti kölcsönös függőséget. Ez a kutatás gazdagítja a transznacionális kulturális hatások megértését a vállalati képzési stratégiákkal összefüggésben, és betekintést nyújt a globális HR-menedzsmentbe, valamint a kultúrák közötti üzleti világban való sikeres eligazodásban.

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized business landscape, daily life now involves regular communication and interaction across national, dialectical, and cultural boundaries and the influence of organizational culture on international business practices has

emerged as a pivotal area of study (Caraballo, 2016). This trend has gained momentum alongside the increasing forces of globalization, particularly in the realm of economic interconnectivity (Rosemann, 2021). This surge in global interactions parallels the growing importance of engaging with individuals from different countries and cultures, which has become a critical factor in reaching agreements and collaborating within multicultural teams (Raju, 2017). Thus, cross-cultural interaction has become one of the most critical challenges to the modern world's economy, social structure, and politics (Sharirlou, 2023).

The concept of "business culture" gained popularity through Peters and Waterman's book "*In Search of Excellence*," which defined it as the visible and practiced value system. Analyzing and contrasting business cultures can be beneficial in improving the quality of business services. When examining business cultures across different countries, it is important to consider both similarities and distinctions within a country and compared to other countries (Mayer, 2000:43-44).

While the impact of cultural differences on international business activities has been extensively documented by numerous scholars such as Hofstede, Trompenaars, and Meyer, and is exemplified through a wealth of business practices (Cook, 2012), and, despite the rich literature on cultural theory and business cases, there's room to integrate these domains further. This junction of theory and practical know-how is pivotal for mastering cross-cultural business interactions. Culture's fluidity, tied to specific times and places, molds business culture within its wider societal values (Lynn, 2007).

Research objectives

This study's primary objective is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of American organizational culture's influence on the HR practices of multinational companies operating in Hungary, particularly regarding training and development strategies. It aims to uncover how HR practices in American multinational companies adapt to the Hungarian context and how these practices, shaped by American cultural traits

as characterized by Hofstede's dimensions, impact international business. The research seeks a deeper understanding of cross-cultural dynamics and their implications for global HR management, especially in light of the transnational transfer of organizational culture. Through qualitative analysis of interviews with HR professionals, this paper aims to identify the role of innovation and technology in shaping training and development strategies and to provide insights into managing cross-cultural challenges in international business settings. By exploring the alignment or divergence of American cultural dimensions with Hungarian workplace culture, the study will examine the effectiveness of training and development initiatives and the strategies adapted in response to challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research questions

1. What role does innovation, particularly in technology, play in the development and delivery of training within these organizations? What innovative HR strategies are implemented by these companies to foster employee growth and organizational learning?

2. In what ways have innovative HR technologies and strategies been utilized by these companies to support competency development and continuous learning? and how have American companies' HR strategies adapted to the challenges posed by COVID-19, particularly in maintaining clarity in training methods and ensuring continuous improvement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Culture

Culture finds its origin in the Latin word "Colere" which means to build on, cultivate, and foster (Aswale, 2013:2). It encompasses a set of accepted behavioural patterns, values, assumptions, and shared experiences that individuals learn and adopt. Culture has a profound influence, shaping how people act and respond in various situations.

Numerous authors have extensively studied this concept, revealing its significance in our lives.

In intercultural research, understanding culture is pivotal. In accordance with Schein (2010), culture can be viewed as:

"[…] a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems". (p. 18)

Thomas (2009:22) describes culture as a "system of orientation" defined by different cultural standards, which is visible in a group's shared values, norms, and practices. This system, rich in various symbols such as language and rituals, is passed from generation to generation (Thomas, Kinast, and Schroll-Machl, 2005). Culture emerges as a collective learning process within a group, developed through their experiences in navigating challenges related to external survival and internal cohesion. This learning encompasses aspects of behavior, cognition, and emotion (Schein, 1990).

It is suggested by Schein (2010) that the analysis and understanding of culture can be separated into three levels – artifact level, belief and the level of importance of the value, as well as the fundamental assumptions.

- A culture's first level involves artifacts and visible behavior, such as the clothes worn and the rituals that are performed.

- On a second level, espoused beliefs and values are expressed, with feelings and attitudes of the way things should be done, for instance, characteristics and behaviors that shape individuals' behavior.

- Undoubtedly, at the most fundamental level, one's underlying assumptions are taken as given while reacting to the environment in a particular way. No

inquiry or discussion is initiated regarding these presumptions (Schein, 2010:29-32).

- It is possible to interpret these cultural levels in a variety of ways, for example, by viewing them in terms of what they can be considered as "the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes members of one group from those of another. Culture, in this sense, is a system of collectively held values" (Hofstede, 2001:19).

Value and norm differ between people from different countries can seriously hinder successful cooperation and intercultural interactions (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988). Different cultures are exhibited through different actions, making them easily detectable and seeable. In society, managing cultural diversity is becoming increasingly important, especially in companies with global operations and subsidiaries, which employ people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds - who are constantly confronted with differences in culture as part of their day-to-day working lives (Raju, 2017).

Defining the Concept of Organizational Culture

Numerous interpretations of organizational culture exist, with two widely recognized ones from esteemed organizational scholars, Geert Hofstede and Edgar Schein. According to Schein (2010), organizational culture can be understood as a social learning process involving the members of the organization. To provide a more tangible explanation of this abstract concept, Schein (2006) offers a frequently cited definition:

"The pattern of fundamental beliefs and assumptions that a group devises, discovers, or develops while addressing its challenges of adapting to the external environment and achieving internal coherence. This pattern becomes established within the organization, considered valid, and subsequently transmitted to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel about those challenges" (p. 356).

Schein points out that the strength of organizational culture is influenced by various factors, including the duration of the initial founding leaders' tenure within the organization, the stability of the group's membership, and the emotional intensity of shared historical experiences among group members. The founding leaders play a crucial role in shaping and solidifying the organizational culture by imposing specific expectations on employees to address organizational challenges (Schein, 2010).

Caraballo (2016) provides an insightful example on the organizational level about increasing motivation and involvement of employees in a corporate culture that highly values employees who dedicate long hours to office work gets reinforced when a new twenty-year-old employee hears the story of the founding organization's leader, who made significant sacrifices of time and energy for the improvement of the organization (Caraballo, 2016).

Geert Hofstede, a pioneering social psychologist in the study of national and organizational culture, identified three key components: 1) collective nature, 2) programming of the mind, and 3) differentiation among different groups of people (Hofstede et al., 2010:6). According to Hofstede, culture is a cumulative human process that requires time to develop and comprehend. Individuals acquire culture through their interactions with other members within that cultural context, and these embedded members pass on what is considered acceptable or unacceptable to new members, essentially forming a "programming of the mind" (Hofstede et al., 2010:6). These principles are reflected in practices such as the U.S.'s valuation of free speech, a stark contrast to China's restrictions, influencing how organizational authority is perceived and challenged in different cultures (Caraballo, 2016; King, Pan, & Roberts, 2013).

Geert Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture Theory

Geert Hofstede significantly contributed to understanding how national culture impacts organizational culture through his pioneering work in the late 1960s and 1970s. He conducted extensive analysis on IBM employee values from over 63

countries, which led to the identification of four primary cultural dimensions: Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Power Distance, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Hofstede's innovative approach allowed him to score and place countries along these cultural continuums, offering invaluable insights into cultural dynamics in the workplace (Hofstede, 1980). This analysis revealed the U.S. as the most individualistic country globally, whereas China was identified as highly collectivistic (Hofstede et al., 2010). The following section will explore Hofstede's cultural dimensions within American contexts.

Hofstede's cultural dimension: Individualism versus Collectivism

In a culture that values individualism, which is common in the U.S., the emphasis tends to be on immediate benefits that serve to increase the returns for a select group of stakeholders. In such environments, the prevailing belief is that employees will naturally prioritize their personal goals. The organizational structure and work assignments are designed to ensure that when employees pursue their own ambitions, they simultaneously contribute to the company's objectives (Hofstede et al., 2012:119). In essence, the optimal performance of employees is achieved when there is a harmony between what they seek personally and what the organization aims to achieve.

Hofstede's cultural dimension: Long-Term Orientation

Hofstede and his team (2010) described 'long-term orientation' as a cultural dimension that assesses the extent to which a society is committed to the future, as opposed to seeking immediate results. In their comparative analysis, Minkov and Hofstede (2010) found Japan to rank exceptionally high in long-term orientation when compared globally, underscoring a cultural emphasis on perseverance and long-range planning. Conversely, the U.S. scores lower, reflecting a preference for short-term results. Recognizing these contrasts is key when comparing cultural

influences on business approaches and strategic priorities between the two countries (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Hofstede's Cultural Dimension: Power Distance

Power distance measures how much inequality in power is accepted by less powerful members within organizations. Hofstede notes that in high power distance societies, hierarchies are inflexible and top-down communication is the norm (Hofstede, 1980). In contrast, societies like the U.S. with low power distance value equality and inclusive decision-making, with managers and employees collaborating in a flatter hierarchy. This environment supports open communication and consensus-building (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Hofstede cultural dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance and innovation

In societies with high uncertainty avoidance such as the U.S., there's a marked push for pioneering innovation. In contrast, countries with less focus on avoiding uncertainty, like China, thrive on applying and expanding new innovations. Hofstede's research suggests that entrepreneurship and innovation are more prominent where there's a strong dislike for uncertainty. This scenario often leads to a culture where individuals, uncomfortable with ambiguity within their roles, are propelled toward entrepreneurship (Hofstede et al., 2010). By forging their paths and developing innovative solutions, they aim to introduce a sense of predictability and control into their environment, thus navigating away from the discomfort of uncertainty.

Table 1. Cultural Dimensions

Individualistic / Collectivistic	How personal needs and goals are prioritized vs. the needs and goals of the group/clan/organization.
Masculine / Feminine	Masculine societies have different rules for men and women, less so in feminine cultures.
Uncertainty Avoidance	How comfortable are people with changing the way they work or live (low UA) or prefer the known systems (high UA).
Power Distance	The degree people are comfortable with influencing upwards. Accept of inequality in distribution on power in society.
Time Perspective	Long-term perspective, planning for future, perseverance values vs. short time past and present oriented.
Indulgence / Restraint	Allowing gratification of basic drives related to enjoying life and having fun vs. regulating it through strict social norms.

Source: *Hofstede & Minkov, 2010*

Essential Elements, Core Values, and Aspects of American Culture

Effective communication, interactions, and comprehension are critical for achieving success in business. However, even when language barriers are minimal or non-existent, cultural differences can still pose challenges (Cook, G. 2012). This study aims to explore the reasons behind the distinct communication and behavior patterns observed among Americans. To begin, the table below presents the framework of essential American values and assumptions identified by authors Althen, Doran & Szmania (Cook, G. 2012:47).

Table 2. American Values and Assumptions

Individualism	Freedom	Competitiveness
Privacy	Equality	Informality
The Future, Change & Progress	Goodness of Humanity	Time
Achievement	Action	Hard work
Materialism	Directness	Assertiveness

Source: *Cook, 2012:47*

The principle of equality is deeply rooted in American culture, with a conviction that birth or background doesn't dictate one's worth. This belief is underpinned by two fundamental assumptions: first, the possibility for anyone to attain a high social status, and second, the universal right to respectful treatment. These foundational views manifest in the casual manner and egalitarian relationships prevalent in American society (Althen, Doran, and Szmania, 2003:15-16).

Americans place a strong emphasis on punctuality, valuing timeliness in both personal and professional aspects of life. They actively strive to save time, utilizing various time-saving devices to enhance efficiency (Cook, G. 2012:46-8). Efficiency is greatly valued, evident in the pragmatic and results-oriented approach to business and personal interactions. Americans have a forward-looking perspective, focusing on the future rather than dwelling on the past.

In the professional domain, there is a notable inclination towards conducting major business negotiations in private settings, away from distractions and disruptions. Matters related to personnel evaluations are considered highly confidential and should only be discussed in private (Cook, 2012). When providing constructive or critical feedback to an employee, managers usually do so privately, avoiding any public exposure. Another perspective on dominant American values is provided by authors Lanier and Davis (2005); details are shown in the following table. There is some overlap between the two frameworks as can also be seen by some examples provided later within the third framework derived by intercultural research guru, Professor Geert Hofstede.

Table 3. Dominant US American Values

Egalitarianism	Directness
Silence	Public and Private Services
Social Distance and Touching	Americans in Motion
Controlling Nature	Personal Progress and Changing Jobs
Materialism	Parochialism

Source: *Cook, 2012:48*

Americans are known for their active and dynamic lifestyle, often being on the move. This constant motion is evident in the busy and fast-paced routines they follow, both in their personal and professional lives. Multitasking is a common practice across both spheres, allowing them to juggle various responsibilities simultaneously (Cook, G. 2012:48-50).

In the labour market, Americans embrace the idea of professional development and growth, leading to a common and widely accepted practice of changing jobs every few years. Different industries may have varying norms for how frequently such changes occur. Often, these job transitions may also involve relocating to different cities or states, even within the same organization. Many companies encourage or even mandate employees to undertake rotations in various geographical locations as part of their professional development process. This willingness to embrace change and seek new opportunities is a key characteristic of American work culture (Cook, 2012).

The United States is home to well-informed individuals with a broad international perspective. According to Professor Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the United States scores 40 on the Power Distance Index (PDI). This score indicates that hierarchical and power differences exist to some extent, but there is also a significant acceptance of these differences (Figure 2).

The American value of "liberty and justice for all" influences their Power Distance Index (PDI), underscoring the country's commitment to equality in society and governance. Hierarchies in U.S. organizations are more practical than rigid, with superiors being approachable. Expertise is decentralized; both management and staff are integral to the decision-making process, promoting a norm of open, frequent communication. The communication style within American organizations is characterized by informality, directness, and active participation, encouraging an environment of collaboration and mutual exchange of ideas (Hofstede, "US Country Profile" www.geert-hofstede.com).

The United States is ranked among the nations with the highest individualistic scores in the world (91) according to the Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV) dimension. This dimension gauges the significance of social relationships within each culture. In highly individualistic societies, like the US, greater emphasis is placed on individual responsibility and focus, whereas group membership is less emphasized compared to cultures with lower IDV scores.

Individualism is a key cultural value for Americans, permeating various aspects of life in the USA. From an early age, independence is actively promoted, and the notion of being free and capable of making independent decisions is idealized. Americans view themselves as unique individuals, responsible for shaping their own destinies (Althen et al., 2003).

In both personal and professional contexts, self-reliance and initiative are highly prized. Hiring and promotion decisions are typically merit-based, appreciating employees for their demonstrated capabilities and accomplishments. This cultural emphasis on individualism influences the way Americans perceive themselves and others, shaping their attitudes and behaviours in both personal and work-related situations (Althen et al., 2003).
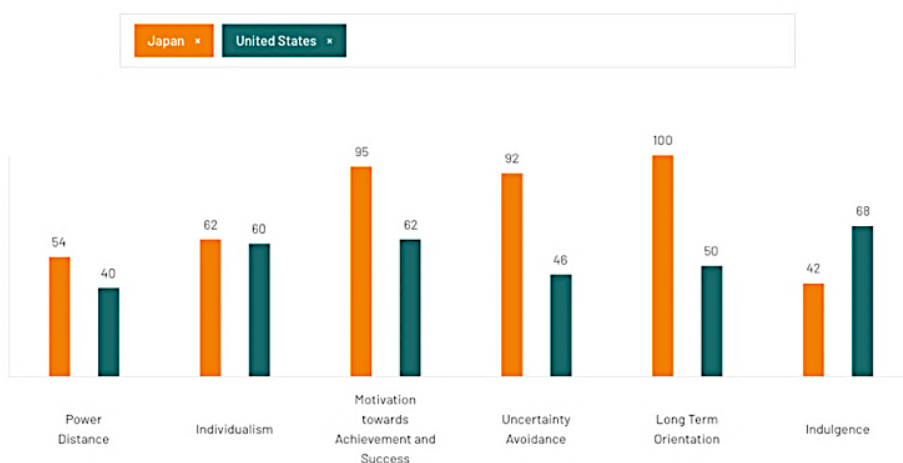

Figure 1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions – USA & Japan
Source: *https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool/*

The Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS) index assesses a society's inclination towards assertive and performance-oriented behaviour, along with the pursuit of material rewards ('masculine'), or a focus on cooperation, quality of life, and moderation ('feminine'). The USA has a MAS score of 62, indicating a more masculine society. This reflects the values of competition, achievement, and success, where individuals are encouraged to strive to be the best they can be, and a "winner takes all" mentality prevails (Hofstede, "US Country Profile" www.geert-hofstede.com).

In American culture, there is a strong emphasis on personal and professional achievement, and hard work is highly valued. Americans are often competitive and take pride in their accomplishments. They expect others to be proud of their achievements as well. The prevailing cultural norms encourage individuals to push themselves to excel and be recognized for their efforts and successes (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) index examines the level of comfort a culture has with ambiguity and uncertainty, including its acceptance of risk and approach towards the unknown. High UAI scores indicate a higher level of discomfort with uncertainty. However, in the case of the United States, the UAI score is 46, indicating that many Americans tend to be relatively comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty (Hofstede et al., 2010:187–234).

Americans are generally open-minded and receptive to novel and diverse ideas. Change is considered a normal and healthy aspect of life. This willingness to embrace uncertainty is also evident in the innovative nature of American businesses and entrepreneurship (Cook, 2012:48-50).

The Long-Term Orientation (LTO) dimension evaluates a society's perspective on time and tradition. A higher LTO score indicates a focus on long-term planning, savings, and investment, while lower scores suggest a greater emphasis on short-term goals and less regard for traditions. With an LTO score of 29, the USA tends to prioritize short-term planning. As a result, US organizations have the flexibility to

respond quickly to new opportunities without being tied down by long-term commitments (Hofstede et al., 2010:187–234).

Americans and US businesses are results-oriented, and time is valued as a precious commodity that must be used efficiently and effectively. The "bottom line" is of utmost importance. In the professional sphere, performance measurement is routine and highly regarded, which is often reflected in human resource policies. The emphasis on results and efficiency is a significant aspect of American work culture (Caraballo, 2016).

The cultural dimension of Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR), added in 2010, contrasts free gratification of human desires (Indulgence) with controlled gratification regulated by social norms (Restraint) (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010:281). The U.S. scores high at 68 on this dimension, suggesting a society allowing leisure and personal enjoyment within limits, while countries scoring low on IVR have stricter social regulations.

The following Table presents detailed information on the six cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede, including data for the United States and eight Central European countries.

Table 4. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions – USA & CEE Countries

Nation	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	IVR*
USA	40	91	62	46	29	68
Austria	11	55	79	70	31	63
Czech Rep.	57	58	57	74	13	29
Germany	35	67	66	65	31	40
Hungary	46	80	88	82	50	31
Poland	68	60	64	93	32	29
Slovakia	104	52	110	51	38	28
Slovenia	71	27	19	88	N/A	48
Switzerland	34	68	70	58	40	66

American Cultural Framework– Key Concepts and Values

Adamczyk (2017) emphasizes that the United States has been the subject of many academic studies due to its considerable global economic impact. U.S. companies conduct business with almost every nation and have a substantial footprint in international markets. American culture is often described as transaction-oriented and monochronic, with a range of expressiveness and a tendency towards informality in its business dealings (Adamczyk, 2017).

According to Jarczyński (2010:125), American greetings typically involve a firm and vigorous handshake, accompanied by direct eye contact to convey sincerity. Discussing negative feelings is generally avoided to prevent any social missteps. Additionally, Americans often prefer addressing their counterparts by their first names. In business meetings, Americans prioritize swift negotiations, adhering to the principle of "time is money." They demonstrate a strong sense of authority, efficiency, and consistency during negotiations, often involving lawyers to ensure proper agreements. Punctuality and adherence to schedules and deadlines receive considerable attention (Adamczyk, 2017:163).

International business involves engaging with various global external factors, including economic, political, and legal environments. Essential business operations often involve securing permits, acquiring credit, investor protection, tax obligations, contract enforcement, and international trade (Sonwalkar et al., 2014). In this segment the study delves into the intricacies of conducting business in the American market, with a particular focus on the practices within human resource management.

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[*] Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR*) data result from a study performed by Michael Minkov in 2010. This dimension is referenced in "Cultures & Organizations, Software of the Mind", written by Geert Hofstede, Geert Jan Hofstede & Michael Minkov. Data are ranked on a 100-point scale.

Cultural and Historical Foundations of the United States

The United States is renowned as the world's third-largest country in terms of both size and population, and it continues to progress rapidly and successfully, embracing its unique cultural diversity. Over the years, the US has experienced successive waves of immigration from every corner of the globe, which has contributed to shaping the country into its current form. Since its declaration of independence in 1776, the United States has faced and overcome significant challenges, including civil war, the Great Depression, and participation in two World Wars, solidifying its position as the richest and most powerful nation state globally (Irwin& Sylla, 2010).

In the present day, the US stands as a symbol of economic strength and technological prowess, boasting the most robust and advanced economy in the world. For those aspiring to conduct business in the United States, gaining a professional understanding of its distinctive cultural fabric is essential for achieving success (Irwin& Sylla, 2010).

American Business Culture: Key Insights for Foreign Businesspeople

The business culture in the United States possesses distinctive characteristics that set it apart in various aspects. Although the following list is not exhaustive, it highlights some of the most significant areas that foreign businesspeople often inquire about.

- Americans prioritize a "business-first" approach, where personal relationships hold lesser significance compared to other cultures. Common expressions like "business is business" emphasize that personal considerations should not influence business decisions. Similarly, "it's just business, it's not personal" conveys that negative consequences from business decisions are not intended to be personally hurtful or insulting. In America, business decisions are often based on the highest value for the lowest price, rather than relying on personal relationships (Sonwalkar et al., 2014:22).

- Politeness and professionalism are essential in all business interactions. Yelling or shouting, even during disagreements, is considered extremely rude. Interrupting someone, regardless of their position, and making personal comments are also discouraged. Americans value a positive outlook, expecting individuals to confidently express themselves, their products, and their capabilities. Being self-effacing or downplaying product qualities can be perceived as indicative of poor quality (Sonwalkar et al., 2014:23).

- Americans encourage asking questions when something is unclear. Inquisitiveness is not viewed as embarrassing but rather a positive trait. If you do not ask questions, Americans may assume you understand the subject being discussed (Sonwalkar et al., 2014:23).

Learning in the U.S. Workplace

Workplace learning systems serve as a primary safeguard against shifts in the economy and technology. The prompt and effective response of employers and employees to these changes plays a significant role in determining the nation's flexibility and competitive edge (Marquardt, Nissley, Ozag, & Taylor, 2000).

Employers view employee education and training from a practical standpoint, focusing on the immediate application of new knowledge and skills to job duties. While acknowledging the value of a general academic background as the groundwork for skill development and enhancement that benefits the business, employers also recognize the necessity for swift learning and its quick integration to maintain competitiveness. As a result, the design and execution of training programs that align with the company's culture and strategic objectives are prioritized over more general educational offerings that do not directly relate to the company's primary mission (Carnevale, Gainer, & Villet, 1990).

Studies and practical experiences in adult education have demonstrated that connecting learning directly to an employee's job role benefits the employees too. They tend to remember information better when it's related to their daily tasks, using the new skills immediately and frequently. It's enhanced by the relevance of the skills being taught and the understanding that these skills will be put to immediate use in the workplace. Moreover, learning at work is driven by a strong incentive: the knowledge that acquiring job-specific skills can lead to direct benefits like improved performance, recognition, and potentially higher earnings (Carnevale, Gainer, & Villet, 1990).

Consequently, both employers and employees share a vested interest in making workplace learning effective. There's a growing trend towards adopting applied learning techniques with the aim of achieving this success, illustrating a shared commitment to leveraging on-the-job learning for mutual benefit (Marquardt et al., 2000).

Innovation and Learning in Organizations: Adaptability in the Global Economy

The contemporary global business environment necessitates that enterprises are nimble and capable of adapting to an ever-evolving landscape, a sentiment echoed by scholars such as Fey and Denison (2003) and Roldán and Bray (2009). The concept of Adaptability, as characterized by Denison and Mishra (1995), lies in the keen observation of and swift response to shifting market conditions without losing sight of strategic objectives. Denison et al. (2012) have pointed out that the essence of Organizational Learning is in fostering an environment where prudent risk-taking, informed by insights from both triumphs and missteps, is encouraged, transforming every action into a potential learning event.

Research has shown that organizational learning is related to innovation, new products, improved technology, increased patents, and improved human capital (Rhodes & Lok, 2008). Organizational learning lends itself to the individualism and

innovation that is currently taking place in the U.S. Additionally, U.S. employees are genuinely free to receive additional sources of information and increase their capacity for innovation (Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Kai-cheng, 1997). Based on research predominantly influenced by Western norms, it is observed that American entities tend to outperform in areas of cultural Adaptability and Organizational Learning (Denison et al., 2012).

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION'S METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection

In pursuing the objectives and addressing the research questions, this study utilizes a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is recognized as an ensemble of interpretive techniques that transform the world through various forms of engagement such as interviews, recordings, and dialogues. These engagements are subsequently analyzed by researchers to discern and interpret the meanings ascribed by individuals to their experiences and social phenomena (Ritchie et al., 2014). The qualitative paradigm offers a rich and varied perspective on inquiry processes (Creswell, 2014).

The research is respecting the ethical consideration of the scientific work and dispose over the Ethical permission of ELTE University (Ethical Board admission number: 2021/484).

For data gathering, this inquiry employed semi-structured interviews, focusing on six core topics. These areas included the internal education and training systems, strategies for developing human resources, practical skills enhancement, and the HR sector's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants in this study were primarily HR managers and professionals involved in training and learning programs within American firms operating in Hungary.

The choice to use semi-structured interviews for data collection was strategic, owing to the technique's inherent flexibility, which can lead to the accumulation of comprehensive data, especially in studies of a smaller scale like the current one (Drever, 1995). This method is characterized by a structured agenda informed by the

research questions, yet it remains open-ended and adaptable to gather in-depth insights (Alexiadou, 2001:52).

The interviews were conducted with seasoned HR professionals representing different companies, aged between 30 and 50 years old, and experience levels ranged from 5 to 20 years, reflecting a broad spectrum of insights and expertise. The gender distribution of the interviewees was balanced, with details provided in the corresponding section of the paper (See detail in Table 5).

Table 5. Research participant's characteristics (HR professionals)

No	Interviewee	Age	Gender	Work experience year
1	Interviewee 01	47	M	14
2	Interviewee 02	38	F	6
3	Interviewee 03	41	M	9
4	Interviewee 04	52	M	17
5	Interviewee 05	32	F	8
6	Interviewee 06	49	F	14
7	Interviewee 07	43	M	7

Source: *Own compilation*

Data Analysis Procedure

Upon completing the interviews, the transcriptions were methodically coded and analyzed using the ATLAS.ti software. In the process of analysis, the study embraced a grounded theory methodology to develop a coding framework organically derived from the data. A key aspect of grounded theory is the continuous interplay of comparison and contrast between emerging theory and the data throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

The ATLAS.ti software facilitated a detailed content analysis of the interviews conducted with seven HR professionals. The primary documents were thoroughly analyzed, leading to the formulation of a comprehensive code list. This list helped to systematically uncover key trends, training challenges, adaptation to new technologies, and the use of different training approaches. Ultimately, developed 37

unique codes from this process, which were organized into three code family networks within ATLAS.ti, we identified three clusters for the training in the U.S. Organizational culture.

After analyzing the interview data using ATLAS.ti, a major thematic network was constructed (See Figure 3). The focus points of the interviews were centered around the main topic of the competency development, on-the-job training approach and innovation in learning. These clusters represent the core themes emerging from the discussions with HR professionals in the U.S. multinational companies.
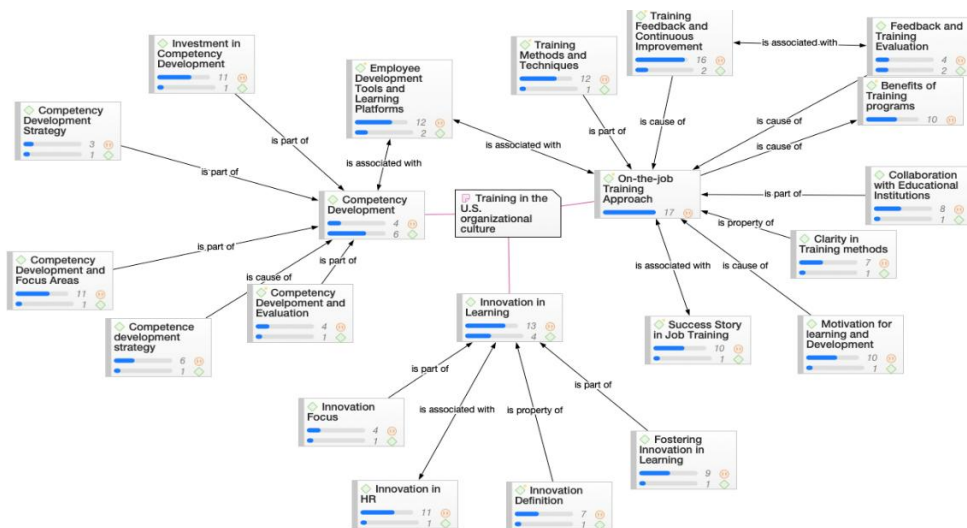

Figure 2. Thematic Networks of Training Components in The U.S. Organizational Culture
Source: *Own edition*

RESULT

The above thematic groups illuminate the strategic focuses of American multinational corporations in Hungary, showcasing how these companies intertwine the development of employee competencies, practical training methods, and innovative learning strategies to foster an adaptive and skilled workforce.

The data collected and analyzed revealed consistent themes that align closely with the theoretical frameworks of Schein (2010) and Hofstede (1980), providing a nuanced perspective on the interplay between organizational culture and training practices. According to Schein, the essence of an organization's culture is rooted in the underlying assumptions and shared values that are taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to their problems (Schein, 2006). This theoretical underpinning was evident as all interviewees underscored the benefits of aligning training methods with the broader organizational strategies of their respective American multinational companies in Hungary. These alignments ensure that training is integral to overall employee development, echoing the foundational beliefs inherent in U.S. organizational culture, which prioritize individual growth and organizational success as a symbiotic relationship.

"A well-designed training program benefits our employees by enhancing their skills, boosting job satisfaction, and increasing engagement. It benefits the company by improving performance, fostering innovation, and enhancing our ability to attract and retain top talent. Investing in employee development also reinforces our culture of continuous improvement and adaptability" (INT 05).

All the participants highlighted the importance of 'competency development.' This refers to a focus on growing and improving the skills and abilities of employees. It is a concept that aligns well with American culture, which often values the pursuit of personal success and encourages individuals to actively improve their professional competencies. This facet of American organizational culture is deeply entrenched in the belief that personal growth and organizational success are symbiotic, echoing Hofstede's dimension of individualism.

"Competency development is central to our success. It means equipping our employees with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to excel in their roles and adapt to an ever-evolving financial landscape. We define it as a continuous journey of growth, where employees not only meet their current job requirements but also prepare for future challenges" (INT 02).

"we're quite methodical about this! Our competency management strategy is a tapestry of different threads – identifying key competencies for each role, assessing current competency levels, and then

tailoring development plans to fill the gaps. It's a blend of formal training, mentoring, and hands-on projects. We're like talent tailors, measuring and fitting each employee for the perfect growth outfit" (INT 03).

According to the majority of people interviewed, the methods of 'on-the-job training' utilized by their organizations are indicative of the practical and experiential aspects of American work culture. This culture places importance on the immediate use and implementation of skills in the workplace that values direct application of skills, aligning with the low-power distance and high masculinity scores noted in Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980).

"We believe that real learning happens through experience. Our employees have access to various opportunities, including shadowing programs, cross-departmental projects, and rotations. These experiences expose them to different facets of our business and enhance their practical knowledge" (INT 01).

"The benefits of on-the-job training program for our employees are multifaceted. First and foremost, it enhances their skills and knowledge, making them more proficient in their roles. This leads to higher job satisfaction as employees feel more confident and capable. Additionally, it contributes to lower turnover rates, as employees are more likely to stay with a company that invests in their development" (INT 07).

Moreover, the interviewees unanimously underscored the significance of fostering a culture of innovation through learning, mirroring America's long-standing tradition of embracing change and progress.

"Our learning and development initiatives are inspired by the American drive for innovation. We've rapidly integrated digital platforms into our training programs to ensure continuity and resilience, especially during the pandemic"(INT 01).

This adaptability, underpinned by the cultural dimension of low uncertainty avoidance, is evident in the swift deployment of digital training methods and platforms, ensuring uninterrupted employee development (Hofstede et al., 2010). The data illuminate how this cultural propensity for innovation translates into tangible HR practices. For instance, another HR professional highlighted, *"When faced*

with COVID-19, we quickly pivoted to virtual learning environments, reflecting our cultural agility and commitment to employee growth, even in times of crisis." This approach exemplifies the flexible and resilient nature of American organizational culture, capable of responding promptly to external disruptions while maintaining a focus on strategic goals and employee well-being (Marquardt, Nissley, Ozag, & Taylor, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Understanding the specific characteristics of a national culture, including its key values and underlying assumptions, can significantly benefit a manager when navigating international business situations. This article provides an overview of essential aspects, dimensions, and prevalent values common among Americans and US businesspeople. The study provides a comprehensive exploration of American organizational culture and its influence on HR practices within multinational companies operating in Hungary, particularly in the realms of training and development. It demonstrates how such practices are not just strategic corporate decisions but are deeply embedded in and reflective of the broader American cultural values.

In the global business arena, linguistic ability is just the starting point. While knowing foreign languages is important, it is no longer sufficient in overcoming the challenges of conducting international business. The language barrier is indeed one of the most formidable obstacles, but in addition to linguistic proficiency, one must also be well-versed in customs, body language, values, symbols, and other elements of culture to effectively navigate cross-cultural interactions (Cook, G. 2012). Such cultural competence aids in building strong partnerships and adapting to varied international needs, enhancing business success as evidenced by Sonwalkar et al. (2014).

In the context of international marketing, understanding the business culture of the country you are dealing with is paramount to achieving success at every stage, from initial communication to finalizing contracts and completing business deals. Comprehending the basic business culture of a foreign country paves the way for more effective business negotiations with potential clients. Therefore, it is crucial to

grasp and adhere to cultural aspects when engaging in international business to ensure success and positive outcomes in this complex global landscape.

Drawing on the insights from interviews with HR professionals across American multinational corporations in Hungary, this research provides a detailed exploration of the interplay between organizational culture and HR practices, particularly in the areas of training and development. The study highlights the profound influence of American cultural dimensions on corporate training strategies, reflecting an organizational ethos that is deeply ingrained in the pursuit of innovation, individual competency development, and a hands-on approach to learning.

The conclusion of this paper synthesizes these findings, affirming that American companies in Hungary successfully translate their culture into effective HR strategies that emphasize continuous learning and adaptability. By integrating on-the-job training and innovative learning platforms, these organizations not only respond to immediate challenges, such as those presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also strategically invest in the long-term development of their workforce. This investment is evident in the swift adaptation to digital training methods and the maintenance of training quality, despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

The research underscores the resilience of American organizational culture when transferred into an international context, where it continues to shape and define HR practices. The adaptability of these practices, particularly in times of crisis, showcases the flexibility and forward-thinking approach that is characteristic of American corporate values. Moreover, the collaborative efforts with educational institutions illustrate a commitment to fostering a culture of learning that extends beyond the confines of the company, contributing to the broader ecosystem of professional development.

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