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Open Learning ↔ Translation

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Culture

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أ. مسال الأحمر



What is Culture?

What does culture mean?

Students: traditions, customs, language, history, beliefs.

Instructor: all these elements are included in culture.

Scholars from all around the world tried to identify culture. Everyone had his/her point of view. Let's read together on page number 2:

Reflection

Look at the following definitions of culture, and consider the characteristics of culture that they each draw attention to:

'Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.'

Culture is a complex whole which includes *knowledge*. What do we mean by knowledge? Knowledge is the information we know about every field: literature, art, music, medicine, sport, cooking, etc.

What do we mean by belief? It means faith.

What is art? It is drawing, painting, dancing, music, etc.

What are morals? It means good behavior and how we behave.

What is law? It means legislations ordered by the government in order to make the society organized and peaceful.

What are customs? They are our daily actions, holy vacations, etc.

The word "capabilities" here means skills and experiences. The word "man" means human beings.

Here we are talking about all these concepts inside the whole society not in the individual.

'Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the

distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.'

This definition is more general than the previous one. Patterns are repeated actions. Explicit means clear and apparent. Implicit means hidden or embodied.

Explicit patterns: for example, we send our children to school every morning and every school term. This is a very clear pattern. This is explicit.

Implicit patterns are something you do but you are not conscious about it. For example, when your father comes into the room, you stand up. When you have an exam, you cannot look at the paper of another student without being punished. These are things that you do unconsciously.

Transmitted means transformed from one generation to another or from one society to another.

How do we transmit behavior? We do it by symbols. What do we mean by symbols? It is like when you make a symbol with your hand to mean that you did OK. When you wave to your friend across the street, you use a certain symbol as well.

“Artifacts” is a general concept which means everything that this group or this society achieved over history.

- Artifacts: **النتاج المجتمعي**

Artifacts: the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values.

Culture is what we do or what we have as conditions to do in the future. Whatever you do in the future, you have to put in your mind that I have to do this and I can do that, I can do this and I must not do that, etc.

'Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.'

This definition talks about culture as experiences: the experiences that the past generations lived and the experiences we will live in the future.

- Encodement means تشفير

المقصود هنا المعاني المقتبسة والتي تنتقل من جيل إلى آخر.

'[Culture] is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.'

Another definition:

'... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.'

Culture is different from one society to another. The culture here in Damascus is different from that in Aleppo for example.

'Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.'

- Fuzzy: vague, unclear
- Assumptions: things we are not sure about
- Orientations to life: توجهات للحياة

I behave in a specific way and I expect other people to behave with me this way. If you behave with me, I will try to interpret what you mean by your behavior, and I may like it or not.

Some Key Characteristics of Culture

1. Culture is manifested at different layers of depth

In analyzing the culture of a particular group or organization it is desirable to distinguish three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions.

تتجسد الثقافة على مستويات مختلفة.

We are talking about three levels of culture: observable artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions.

When one enters an organization one observes and feels its artifacts. This category includes everything from the physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity, and other phenomena, to the more permanent archival manifestations such as company records, products, statements of philosophy, and annual reports.

By organization they mean the society we are dealing with its culture. You can see, feel, touch, or hear the artifacts.

The dress code means what we dress like what men dress, what girls dress, what men of religion dress, etc.

By addressing each other, they mean when you call someone as miss or mister or doctor.

The word “phenomena” means (ظاهرة). Annual reports mean yearly reports.

This level [visible artifacts] of analysis is tricky because the data are easy to obtain but hard to interpret. We can describe “how” a group constructs its environment and “what” behaviour patterns are discernible among the members, but we often cannot understand the underlying logic – “why” a group behaves the way it does.

The data is easy to obtain, so we can get the data but we can't interpret it or explain it. Here they are talking about the logic and the mindset: how we think, how we interpret, how we behave, and how we expect other people to behave with us.

Why do we Syrians, for example, make a cup of coffee when we wake up? How did this habit originate?

Why do we have to drink coffee when we visit someone?

To analyze why members behave the way they do, we often look for the values that govern behaviour, which is the second level in Figure 1. But as values are hard to observe directly, it is often necessary to infer them by interviewing key members of the organization or to content analyze artifacts such as documents and charters. However, in identifying such values, we usually note that they represent accurately only the manifest or espoused values of a culture. That is they focus on what people say is the reason for their behaviour, what they ideally would like those reasons to be, and what are often their rationalizations for their behaviour. Yet, the underlying reasons for their behaviour remain concealed or unconscious.

What is the meaning of espoused values?

It means something you adopt and believe in. It means (القيم التي (نؤمن بها

Here they are talking about the fact that we do some things but we don't know why. We expect other people to do things but we don't know why.

Rational means something logical. Rationalizations mean (استنباط (المنطق

To really understand a culture and to ascertain more completely the group's values and over behaviour, it is imperative to delve into the underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel. Such assumptions are themselves learned responses that originated as espoused values. But, as a value leads to a behavior, and as that behaviour begins to solve the problem which prompted it in the first place, the value gradually is transformed into an underlying assumption about how things really are. As the assumption is increasingly taken for granted, it drops out of awareness.

To delve into: to think deeply about something

We talked about three layers of culture. The values and the assumptions are related to each other because we assume something and according to this assumption, we have our values. But we don't know why we have this value. Values and assumptions are interacting and interconnected but we don't know which one is the value and which one is the assumption behind the value.

Taken-for-granted assumptions are so powerful because they are less debatable and confrontable than espoused values. We know we are dealing with an assumption when we encounter in our informants a refusal to discuss something, or when they consider us "insane" or "ignorant" for bringing something up. For example, the notion that businesses should be profitable, that schools should educate, or that medicine should prolong life are assumptions, even though they are often considered "merely" values.

- Taken-for-granted means مسلم به مسبقاً

Assumptions are so powerful. When you ask people about these assumptions, you will be seen as insane, even though they cannot answer the question why they have such assumptions.

For example, why do schools have to educate students? Why do businesses have to be profitable? These are insane questions. These are either assumptions or values.

To put it another way, the domain of values can be divided into (1) ultimate, non-debatable, taken-for-granted values, for which the term "assumptions" is more appropriate; and (2) debatable, overt, espoused values, for which the term "values" is more applicable. In stating that basic assumptions are unconscious, I am not arguing that this is a result of repression. On the contrary, I am arguing that as certain motivational and cognitive processes are repeated and continue to work, they become unconscious. They can be brought back to awareness only through a kind of focused inquiry, similar to that used by anthropologists. What is needed are the efforts of both an insider who makes the unconscious assumptions and an outsider who helps to

uncover the assumptions by asking the right kinds of questions.

- Non-debatable: غير قابل للسؤال، مسلم به
- Unconscious: we do them without thinking

Values are divided into categories. Because the first category is not understood as to how it originated in the first place, it is more appropriate to call it assumptions. The second category is clear and understood, and we call it values.

The book says that these values are not a result of repression (اضطهاد) and it is not imposed on us.

- Inquiry: تساؤلات، تحقيقات
- Anthropologist: عالم الإنسان

We need to ask questions in order to understand why these values are here and why these assumptions are here.

Thank You

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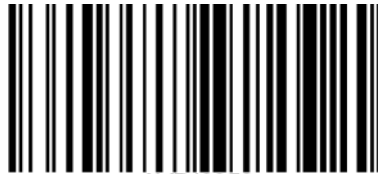
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