

A

Hofstede

Cultural diversity is becoming a significant management issue because of factors such as globalization and an increasing number of cross-border partnerships. Based on his experience at IBM, Geert Hofstede developed a framework for understanding **cultural differences** and managing problems that can arise because of lack of **cultural awareness**. He identified four dimensions for defining work-related values associated with national culture:

- **Power distance** – the way people perceive power differences and how a society handles inequalities and differences in status
- **Individualism/collectivism** – behaviour towards the group
- **Masculinity/femininity** – behaviour according to characteristics associated with the genders
- **Uncertainty avoidance** – the need for structure and clear rules.

The framework is used to help determine the suitability of certain management techniques for various countries. For example, in a country with a small power distance such as the USA, managers find it natural to **delegate responsibility** and employees will **accept responsibility**. This would not be the case in a country with a larger power distance, such as Mexico, but employees there might accept more discipline.

B

Cross-cultural competence

Johan, who works for a consultancy firm that specializes in cross-cultural training for multinational organizations, is introducing a workshop:

‘Training in cultural awareness is a vital element in the development of the global managers of the future. Apart from the cultural differences that we can see between countries, you need to be aware of the **cultural impact** of working in different business sectors and different functional roles. How people in an organization act towards each other, deal with customers, approach their work, even how they dress, can be very similar and fit the organization’s values, beliefs and the **norms** that are shared by all staff.

Senior managers have responsibility for setting the **corporate culture** and influencing the way members of staff behave in the workplace. As managers move from one country to another and encounter different functional areas of management, it is imperative that they get away from a restricted ‘**silo**’ mentality, from **cultural stereotypes** and from any **cultural assumptions** they have made.

During this workshop I hope we can explore some of the ways in which people from different organizational or geographical cultures can have very different norms, **unwritten rules** and codes of **behaviour**.’

C

Cross-cultural differences

Going to work in the Gulf state of Qumran for the national oil company was quite a **culture shock** after my previous career as an HR manager in the retail sector in Stockholm. The company provided a substantial briefing on the **cross-cultural competences** of an international manager as part of the induction programme as soon as I arrived in Qumran.

For the first few months I thought I had moved **out of my comfort zone**. I had to get used to

differences in **dress code**, gestures and **body language**. Attitudes to time and punctuality were very different from those I had been used to in Scandinavia. Management meetings and negotiations also followed very different rules. Socializing with colleagues and the line between family life and working life was different. And of course the **prevailing culture** in the oil company meant that I encountered very few women in senior management roles.

28.1 Find eleven collocations in A, B and C using the adjective **cultural** or the noun **culture**. Then use six of these to complete the description of the benefits of this training course.

Why attend?

The Quest Cross-Cultural Training course will provide you with:

- ▶ A better understanding of the cultural of your business and culture in countries where you operate
- ▶ The opportunity to enhance your cultural and develop cross-cultural by giving you practical tools to reduce cross-cultural misunderstanding
- ▶ The opportunity to examine your own cultural and avoid seeing others through narrow cultural

28.2 The sentences below are from the findings of a study of different countries. Add the countries to the appropriate categories in this table.

Small power distance	Large power distance
More individualist	More collectivist
Strong uncertainty avoidance	Weak uncertainty avoidance
More masculine values	More feminine values

- a In the UK the prevailing culture expects people to develop and display their individual personalities, whereas in China people are defined and act mostly as part of a long-term group, such as an age group or profession.
- b In New Zealand employees generally relate to one another as equals and managers delegate responsibility, unlike Malaysia, where subordinates tend to acknowledge hierarchical positions and do not expect to accept responsibility.
- c In the USA assertiveness and competitiveness are considered valuable qualities, whereas in the Netherlands warm relationships and quality of life are given priority.
- d UK workers are comfortable to take risks and change jobs frequently, whereas Japanese workers like to work in a structured situation and remain with the same company.

28.3 Match the dictionary definition to the correct term/s from the box.

codes of behaviour/norm/unwritten rules comfort zone 'silo' mentality values

- 1: people's ideas about what is right, wrong or important
- 2: a set of rules understood by people in a group about suitable behaviour in a particular situation, for example how to dress appropriately (dress code)
- 3: a situation or position in which a person feels secure or in control
- 4: an attitude that occurs when groups fail to share information with other members of the same company, reducing efficiency of a corporate culture

Over to you



What are the main points you would include in a presentation about cross-cultural issues for people coming from abroad to work in your country?