

EDAMBA SUMMER ACADEMY
SORÈZE, FRANCE

**THE POSSIBILITIES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS
IN THE SEA OF UNIVERSALIST CULTURAL COMPARISON
MODELS**

Where ends the horse and where begins the donkey?

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2009.07.23.

The cultural differences play an important role in business life. This role becomes more and more stronger. But we cannot find a methodology which is precise and exhausted in all ways. Because of the mixture of the national and corporate cultures, it is hard to examine the influence of the culture in business interactions. That's why, it is very important to understand the difference cultural comparison models and corporate culture models. So thus, we can identify the origin of the behaviour in various business situations, and draw conclusions in order to ease the responds in these situations. We can distinguish the universalist models and the dynamic cultural models. The latter one seems to can handle more precisely the duality of culture (its variability and permanency). It can help in examining the culture, which is the mixture of the national and corporate cultures (the culture is like a mule).If we identify the origins of our behaviour in different business situations, we can draw a conclusion easier, and we can predict the partners behaviour in the future. So the question is: Where ends the horse, and where begins the donkey? Keywords: cross-cultural management, cultural comparison models, organizational culture, universalist cultural comparison, dynamic cultural comparison, kulturstandard

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18th EDAMBA Summer Academy

Sorèze, France

July 2009

1 INTRODUCTION

Managers often question the effect of the national and corporate culture. The examination of cultural differences and similarities has a stronger role in business, as the impacts of globalization, multinational companies are increasingly gaining increasing number of conflict come from the cultural misunderstanding, which not only negatively affect the working environment, but also on the performance of the company affected. This wide-ranging examination of cultural differences is developed in literature.

Very hard to find a culture model, which are found acceptable in all respects, and in the national and corporate culture are also able to and wants to take into account.

The culture is a mixture of national culture and organizational culture. We can call them as heart and brain. The heart is the national culture which hails from emotional actions and much more stable than the other. The brain is the organizational culture which is a "made-culture" because it was created by the founder of organization. So, we can maybe understand easier than the national culture. And the brain is more flexible than the heart; we just think about change of workplace, when we have to learn a new culture. A person change workplace many times during his/her life and accommodate to the new organization's culture, but the national culture and its values are very stable during the life and unchanged. Thus, we can experience the duality of culture: its permanence and variability.

2 CULTURAL COMPARISON MODELS

2.1 Types of organizational cultures

A number of factors influence the culture of organizations, from the environmental conditions and industry characteristics to the national cultures. The main difference for the consumers between the producer company and service provider company is the product which they offer. The tangible product of corporate activity is clearly recognizable in case of the producer company. In contrast, the service organizations' products are often difficult to recognize, identify for the consumer (this is certainly not general, for example, just think of the McDonald's fast food network). It is therefore often found that the service companies try to develop a corporate culture which is based on many interactions with consumers. As a consequence, however, that is the "Moment of Truth" experiences which multiply and the

employees in the front office should be able to handle conflicts.¹ The most well-known organizational culture typologies are the follows: Handy's culture typology, Cameron/Quinn's types of culture and Schein's profession cultures.

It is difficult to find a culture typology, which is able to clearly categorize the companies taking into account their activities. Slevin and Clovin's mechanical and organic method of discrimination can not give a clear answer to this question. If we examine the characteristics of the two types of culture, it is the organic culture which we can feel closer to the provider organizations, but it is important to note that these categories are not necessarily suitable for distinguish the production and service companies, because the environment and the business characteristics have great influence during evolving the organization's culture. We can find examples of the organic and the mechanical culture in case of service companies.^{2,3}

The best and most useful type of models used in the organizational cultures is the Handy's culture typology. His four categories (power, role, task, person) is well understood for the business leaders, even if some parts of the company has different cultures.

It is not only the organizational culture, which affect the leading style, but the national culture significantly shades it too, because culture developed within the company, even if it has elements of industry-specific features, it is able to feel the influence of the national culture in the behaviour of the leader. It is therefore important to consider the impact of national cultures in management styles as well. The works of Schein, Trick, and Beyer show that the leader has a determinant role in forming culture. The leader lays down the foundations of the company's culture, and the successful cultures will be the basis of the legends and beliefs of company. However, this process is not independent from the national culture or subcultures.

2.2 Universalist cultural comparison models

The cultural comparison model makers are usually classified into two camps: the first contain the universalist models (Trompenaars, Hofstede, GLOBE) and the other is the group of dynamic models. According to the used way of research, we can distinguish these models: quantitative or qualitative methods. The quantitative study focused on the quantitative relationships (statistical procedures, numerical relationships), in contrast to the qualitative test. The model-makers often use the quantitative analytical methods, because it is generally easier to interpret and analyze.

¹ Heidrich Balázs 2001. Szervezeti kultúra és interkulturális menedzsment, Budapest, Human Telex Consulting, p 25.

² Heidrich Balázs 2006. Szolgáltatásmenedzsment, Budapest, Human Telex Consulting, p 70-71.

³ Heidrich Balázs 2001. Szervezeti kultúra és interkulturális menedzsment, Budapest, Human Telex Consulting, p 25-27.

When comparing cultures, we examine "soft" factors and it is very complicated to give a full description of their effect with quantitative methods.

The categories, established by universalist scientists, allow to compare the different national cultures. These models are well-known in the corporate sector. It has been found that these models often use quantitative research methods. (Table 1) Hofstede's model is the most widely used model in corporate life. Therefore, this model is the most criticism.

Table 1.

Researchers	Dependent variable	Independent variables	Method	Sample context
Kluckhohn/Strodtbeck (1961)	Human problem solutions	5 dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human Nature Orientation - Man Nature Orientation - Time Orientation - Activity Orientation - Relational Orientation 	Quantitative questionnaire, qualitative report	106 persons: Navaho Indians, Pueblo Indians, Spanish American village, Texan and Oklahoman farming village and Mormon village
Hall/Hall (1990)	Communication at work	4 dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fast and Slow Messages - High and Low Context - Space - Time 	Qualitative open interviews	180 employees and managers in the field of economy
Hofstede (1980)	National cultural difference within one organization	4 dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Power Distance - Individualism/Collectivism - Masculinity/Femininity - Uncertainty Avoidance 	Quantitative questionnaire	approx. 116 000 IBM employees

Trompenaars (1993)	Management relevant problem solutions	7 dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time - Universalism/Particularism - Collectivism/Individualism - Neutral/Emotional - Specific/Diffuse - Status Achievement/Status Ascription - Man Nature Relationship 	Quantitative questionnaire with scales	15 000 employees in companies
	Schwartz (1992)	Present and future in society	11 dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-Direction - Stimulation - Hedonism - Achievement - Power - Security - Conformity - Tradition - Spirituality - Benevolence - Universalism 	Quantitative questionnaire with 9 point Likert scales
GLOBE (2002)	Business leadership present and future	9 dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance Orientation - Future Orientation - Uncertainty Avoidance - Gender Egalitarianism - Assertiveness - Humane Orientation - Power Distance - Institutional Collectivism - In-group Collectivism 	Quantitative questionnaire with 7 point scales and qualitative data with content analysis	17 000 middle managers in 61 countries

Source: Fink, Kölling and Neyer, 2004

2.2.1 Criticism of universalist models

One of the biggest criticisms of the universalist models in point of view comparing and understanding between the different models in corporate life that they can not be clearly made.

These models do not give a complete answer to the questions raised, in part because it is not a common, agreed basis come from, and partly because of the typologies outlined is not exhaustive. Also, they do not give a precise description of the forms of social relations, how we form our behaviour patterns in a given situation; which preferences and interests are important for us. The various models' number of dimensions are also criticized in both directions: Hofstede's model has four dimensions which are not able to respond all question, while another 9 or 10-dimensional models becomes difficult to manage precisely. Finally, it is often mentioned the culture of the variability can not be treated its permanence duality.^{4,5,6}

2.3 Dynamic cultural comparison models

Most of these models hail from cultural anthropology. These theories are called dynamic because these models do not handle cultural characteristics as a constant, but count with their volatility. These models have been born from the transactional approach. These swap transactions, and conduct of the differences originate. The limited rationality and self-enforcement is the duality of these models. (We can mention Mary Douglas' grid/group model.)

2.3.1 Kulturstandard method

We can mention a number of reviews against both the universalist and the dynamic models. One of the most important with regard to the stability of the culture, but the variability can not fully describe the treatment, handling. The pre-established categories of the classification are not enough, as 4, 6, 9, 10, 11 dimensions, we can not cover the full spectrum of behaviour conducted in business interactions. If we limit this spectrum conceptual problems arise because of differences. The method of the model results of the specific circumstances of the corporate life to serve under the conditions set out in the research situation, the partner's understanding of the behavioural and even projections. It is up to the interviewing techniques used to fine-tune, because if you are likely to know the answer to that question will be given to the negotiations, then we can make consciously structured schedule for the negotiation. In this section learn how to use this method.

The name of Alexander Thomas is a hallmark of the kulturstandard research method, which is not a completely new method, we can talk about change of perspective. It examines a culture to another culture, from perspective of its representatives through the bilateral contacts and

⁴ McSweeney, Brendan 2002. Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith – A failure of analysis, *Human Relations*, Vol. 55., No. 1., p. 89-118.

⁵ Primecz, Henriett 1993. Hofstede – más szemmel, Budapest, *Marketing & Management*, 1999/3-4

⁶ Patel, Taran 2007. Stereotypes of Intercultural Management. A Dynamic Appreciation of Viability of French-Indian Strategic Alliances, Delft, Ebouron

cooperation. This thinking reflects the fact that an individual's interpretation of a foreign culture is always compared to their own culture, through its eyes. From this point of view, we are using the terminology of Summer: ethnocentrism.

The kulturstandard method belongs to the qualitative methods, and it is an specific research tool for collecting data through interviews with the narrative. In contrary of the quantitative, standardized interview, informal qualitative interviews are more unstructured, the respondents are in the focus. That is why the researcher has big responsibility to not distort the response (the model depends on the culture and the researcher). In other words, the kulturstandard method leaves room for the subjectivity and intuition of researcher, so there is a risk of distortion of reality.⁷

This method of analysis always compares two cultures to each other, but often depends on the researcher to use the meaning of interpretative or positivist methods. In the former case, the subject of research is the foreign culture, but it is not analyzed by the culture's representatives but by a different cultural perspective. In the latter interpretation, the relativity of cultural conceptions, explanations is emphasized and these cultural conceptions are the subject of research.

The method reveal the intercultural differences with the help of the critical events. At least two individuals with different cultural background participate in critical events, the interaction is a situation in which one party difficult to interpret, that it is surprising to the other, individual's behavior from a foreign culture. In addition, critical information is separated by a concrete experience, time can not be associated with the respondent, but the vision is significantly affected.

The great advantage of the kulturstandard method – despite the reviews – is a strong retrospective nature, and the process of narrative interviews. It is important to note that the examination of same cultures in reversed relation, the same kulturstandards can not be used, because other factors may be important to one or the other culture from the point of view. (In this case, the mirror study is useful.)

The kulturstandard method in interpretative-qualitative meaning has the following characteristics:⁸

⁷ Topcu, Katalin 2005: A kulturstandard módszer, mint az interkulturális kooperációk elemzésének egyedi eszköze, Budapest, Vezetéstudomány, Vol. 36., No. 10., p. 2-16

⁸ Topcu, Katalin 2005. A kulturstandard-kutatás elmélete és gyakorlata magyar-osztrák menedzser-interakciókban: egy magyar szempontú jellemzés, PhD dissertation, Budapest

- Relative terms
- Intercultural contexts changing concepts
- Dynamic research method, which is part of their customer interactions commonly formed during the kulturstandards
- Emic basis of the research

The method basically consists of four steps:⁹

1. The narrative interview itself and feedback loops within the interview.
2. The stage of transcription and interpretation of interviews.
3. Feedback with culture experts from home and counterpart culture.
4. Mirror studies and triangulation studies.

(An other scheme with 8 steps is also known.)

3 CONCLUSION

The better understanding of differences between cultures plays increasingly important role in the companies' life, especially in the multinational companies' life. That is why in this article, I presented the corporate culture and national culture comparison models, which the majority of them are using quantitative research methods.

So I think it is important to know the models using qualitative research methods and that the attitudes they represent are more easily understood. Most of these models analyses the behaviour with the "active involvement" of questioned persons. As a result, relevant information to be obtained. Of course, however, these methods require a high degree of caution because it is easy to make false results. However, with proper care of the results of the research or in content with other relevant research results, we can also obtain valuable information. It is not an easy task to know corporate culture or national culture, but if we know the origin of behavioural samples in the various transactions, actions, we can easily draw conclusions, or even feature the cultural roots of the situations, we will able to give "prediction" to the partner's behaviour.

This article shows that the corporate culture and national culture in different models are incomplete, but complementary, perspective illustration of certain other situations of interest to obtain information. That's why I want to use in my research both the national and organizational

⁹ Fink, G. – Kölling, M. – Neyer, A.-K. 2005. The Culture Method, Wien, EU Working Paper Nr. 62.

culture. My chosen models and methods are Hofstede's model (or GLOBE model) and the kulturstandard method, because I think using together these tools we can make more valid findings than before. We have to handle the impacts of the national and organizational culture at same time.

In essence, the culture is like a mule to know. Here we are curious to where begins and where ends the horse and the donkey? That is where it ends the corporate culture and where it begins the impact of national culture's influence in a given situation?

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