

Review

What is Culture?

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The definition of culture is an important term to define in sociology, psychology, political sciences, anthropology, international business and cross cultural studies. It is quite difficult to find a terminology. The paper covers the definition of Culture, Cultural Challenges and Globalization and Culture. In 1952, the American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions. Apte (1994:2001), written in the ten-volume *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, summarizes the problem as follows: 'Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature.' The use of this paper is to facilitate future researchers the finding of the definition of culture.

Keywords: Cross Cultural Studies, National Culture, Globalization, Cultural Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Culture

Culture is important for all the things we do in this world. The beliefs that create religion, wars, the way of life and many challenges. The first thing we have to define is culture and why is it important in the work life. Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define.

Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts: the essential core of culture consists traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and specially their attached values (Kluckhohn, 1951).

Schein (1990) defines culture in managerial terms as "how people feel about the organization, the authority system and the degree of employee involvement and commitment"; he continues, adding that culture can be viewed as a widely held, shared set of values, beliefs and ideas.

Culture refers to society and its way of life. It is defined as a set of values and beliefs, or a cluster of learned

behaviors that we share with others in a particular society, giving us a sense of belongingness and identity. Because of this, cultural understanding is becoming even more important because of the call to interact with many individuals from other countries and other cultures (Lee, 2006). Bodley (1999) further adds three basic components of culture, namely: what people think, what they do, and the material products they produce. All forms of culture exhibit unique ways and value systems that aid and affect individuals in their perception and reaction to different life circumstances.

Culture at its most basic level can be defined as shared symbols, norms, and values in a social organization (Walsham, 2002). In addition, Hall and Hall (1990) define culture as a system for creating storing, and process information. National culture refers to deeply set of values that are shared by members of a nation (Gurung and Prater, 2006).

What forms cultures take depends on what individuals humans can think, imagine, and learn, as well as on what collective behaviors shape and sustain viable patterns of life in ecosystems. Cultures must be thinkable and learn-

able as well as livable (Keesing, 1974).

Culture is complex and operates at many levels. While country or ethnic origin is often used as a proxy for an individual team member's culturally oriented values, the two levels may actually capture different aspects of diversity. Surface-level indicators may be associated most with similarity-attraction and social identity effects, and deep-level indicators with information-processing and value incongruence effects.

There are many other documented definitions of culture. Hofstede (1991), Trompenaars (1993), and Czinkota and Ron Kanen (1993) all agreed that culture is based on languages, economy, religion, policies, social institutions, class, values, status, attitudes, manners, customs, material items, and education which subsequently influences managerial values (Kanungo, 2006). Culture is an essential element in understanding how social systems change, because culture influences both the norms and values of such systems and the behavior of groups in their interactions within and across systems. He states that the term "culture" is reserved as a whole, for nations, whereas the term "subculture" is used for the level of organization, profession, or family.

Culture is the unique characteristic of a social group; the values and norms shared by its members set it apart from other social groups and is influenced by conscious beliefs.

One culture is not right and the other wrong. They are just different, and those key differences are culturally rooted. When behavioral scientists discuss self-concept, they also consider the ethical implications of self esteem (Lu, 2006). Licht et al. (2005: 234) further state that:

A common postulate in cross-cultural psychology is that all societies confront similar basic issues or problems when they come to regulate human activity. The key dimensions of culture are derived from these issues, because the preferred ways of dealing with them are expressed in different societal value emphases. It is thus possible to characterize the culture of different societies by measuring prevailing value emphases on these key dimensions. This yields unique cultural profiles.

As a definition culture can be treated as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from other (Hofstede, 1984).

Cultural Challenges

Dissimilar languages, cultures and time zones provide added complexity to the already difficult task of managing people with different functional and backgrounds. Any team can face challenges such: team members who speak different native languages, who come from different cultural backgrounds, who live and work in

multiple countries, and who come from different companies (Barczak, McDonough, and Athanassiou, 2006). In the business literature more generally, cross-national variations in institutions and their interactions with firm strategy and the extra-institutional environment have been a core component of the research agenda (Lewin and Kim, 2004; Volverda and Lewin, 2003).

Challenge 1: Different native languages

When team members are native speakers of different languages, communicating and understanding in the shared team language is a challenge. It is essential that any leader take steps to enable effective communication among members and ensure that language does not hinder the team or the project (Barczak, McDonough, and Athanassiou, 2006). Sharing important information also helps to keep members informed of project progress and problems and is critical for maintaining commitment and motivation. According with Hall (1981) and Faramarz (1998), high context cultures are characterized by close contact and strong ties between people and organizations, such as those of Latin America or the Middle East, differ from low context cultures like United States and Australia in the importance given to long standing relationships and content-based nuance in communications. Members of high-context cultures give much of their communication's meaning to the situation the context within which it is being made. To give meaning to a message, the recipient must understand the context within the words is use. Conversely, within a low-context, the meaning is in the words what you hear is what is meant (Barczak, McDonough, and Athanassiou, 2006).

Challenge 2: Diversity

Diversity, including cultural diversity, influences teams in three potentially opposing ways. First, according to similarity-attraction theory, people are attracted to working with and cooperating with those they find similar in terms of values, beliefs, and attitudes (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). Second, according to social identity and social categorization theory (Tajfel, 1982), people tend to categorize themselves into specific groups, and categorize others as outsiders or part of other groups. Third, according to information-processing theory, diversity brings different contributions to teams.

Sometimes people have felt confused about how to deal with diversity in any organization; that is understandable, since there are at least three possible meanings of the term, and they each call for different treatments. The three types of diversity have to do with culture, identity, and personality. Global business is already shaping common values and attitudes for its

participants. But cultural differences can still add a lot of noise to communication signals (Maccoby, 2006).

So how you deal with diversity? You should be aware of cultural differences, bring them out in the open and get agreement on behavioral and decision making processes (Maccoby, 2006). Cultures provide a source of identity for their members. In international business we most often talk about country-based cultures, but cultures also develop around professions, organizations, religions, and so on. One step in understanding individuals is to ask them what kinds of work they must like to do, how they would like to be managed and what they must like to learn (Maccoby, 2006). It seems obvious, but many managers think they don't need to ask. They think they already know what motivates people. Cultural diversity tends to increase divergent processes. Divergent processes are those that bring different values and ideas into the team and juxtapose them with each other (Canney Davison and Ekelund, 2004). Examples include brainstorming and creativity. Divergent processes can also decrease the group's performance, if the differences are seen as detracting from the team's purpose or progress. On the other hand, cultural diversity tends to decrease convergent processes. Convergent processes are those that align the team around common objectives, commitment, or conclusions. Some convergent processes contribute positively to group outcome. These positive processes include communications, or the sharing of common meaning, and social integration, or the development of group cohesion, commitment and identity.

The creative benefits of heterogeneous team composition come from the new ideas, multiple perspectives, and different problem solving styles that members bring to the team (Adler, 2002).

Managing diversity is a sensitive, potentially volatile, and sometimes uncomfortable issue. In Europe, as well as in the United States, creating a diverse workforce is increasingly considered a necessity. Jilten Patel, race equality manager with HSBC, a major UK bank, declares "For us, the ideal is true diversity, which means that we value every individual for who and what they are, and we provide them with the opportunities to meet their full potential within the organization" (Kreitner, Kinicki, and Buelens, 2002). Also, a Dutch study reveals that 37 out of 94 companies have no diversity policy at all.

The rationale for managing diversity goes well beyond Czaplewski (2002) enumerates three characteristics that a multinational enterprises or MNE's should have to break the cycle of cross-cultural conflicts. First, when a critical incident of cross cultural conflict arises, this should be directly addressed and brought to management's attention. Second, MNEs should have systems to catch the issue and mark it for further attention. In other words, Human Resource Managers should have ways to venture further into the issue and discover its root causes and other details. Such systems should be open to all

employees regardless of the kind of culture they belong. Third, the most progressive and internationally oriented MNEs would have already developed systems to avoid such conflicts from happening in the first place.

Conflict is the expression of differences in opinion or priority because of opposing needs and demands (Tjosvold, 1986). Because of cultural differences are deep and often held subconsciously, the sources of conflict in multicultural teams may be difficult to identify, and even more difficult to resolve. Teams composed of individuals from different countries, differences in values, norms of behavior, and communication styles are a frequent source of irritation, misunderstandings, and conflict (e.g. Brett et al., 2006; Distefano and Maznevski, 2000). This seems that the effects of cross-national diversity on team outcomes are stronger than for national diversity.

Knowledge of the generally acceptable behavior of members of a culture is only a departure point for a global leader. She/he still has to get to know the individual.

Challenge 3: Ethics

Member in order to understand how their behavior way be informed by national cultural pressures even though their actual behavior may ultimately be different (Barczak, McDonough and Athanassiou, 2006).

Systematically understanding how culture influences ethical decision making will help all professionals have a better defense against potentially unethical behavior (Su, 2006).

Gender differences in ethical perception and decision making are consistent with a masculine success orientation (males are more concerned with materials and success) and a female relationship-orientation (females are most interested in relationships and assisting people) (Franke, Crown and Spake, 1997).

The literature suggests that age is a factor in determining ethical perception and decision-making Su (2006). And also, in an investigation of expatriate and local managers in Hong Kong, McDonald and Kan (1997) found older employees are less likely to express agreement to an unethical action than younger employees Su (2006).

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Challenge 4: Recruiting

Recruiting employees who understand cultural differences and their values guarantees success in the

new global paradigm (Chadwin, Rogers, Pan, 1995). There is disagreement concerning Hofstede's premise that culture influence management approaches and performance within organizations (Venezia, 2005). Kim (1999) agrees with Hofstede, while Common (1998) adopts the stance that globalization imposes convergence of social structures and ideology of affluent societies despite culture or histories (Venezia, 2006).

Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeir (2002) looked at 83 studies of Individualism and Collectivism and 170 studies on the psychological implications of individualism and collectivism to determine whether European Americans were higher individualism than other societies (Venezia, 2006). They divided the countries into eight regional blocks where the Latin/South America Block was included along with Brazil, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. The recruitment in Latin America is based on which candidates are willing to cooperate with the management in order to maintain good working conditions (Elvira and Davila, 2005). Also is founded that the "glass ceiling" in Latin America is based on social status which supports the power distance theory.

Ethnic and racial groups comparisons within the United States were based on 21 articles and research reports (Oyserman, et al., 2002). European Americans were compared with African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latin Americans on individualism. The results displayed African Americans were higher in individuality than European Americans, Latin Hispanic Americans did not differ from European Americans with the exception of Puerto Rico, that was higher individuality and Asian Americans were assessed lower (Venezia, 2006).

Culture, globalization and effective communication

Culture and globalization are two forces to influence managerial decisions. National culture is the internal mechanism that drives the behavior of a people. Nations might have overlapping dimensions but each nation with shades of differences makes unique. Communicating across the cultural dimensions demands an understanding of those cultural values inherent to that people. Globalization, and external matrix from the Western hemisphere, envelops ever nation regardless of culture. The difficulty of globalization is its complexity and numerous definitions and theories (Venezia, 2006).

Due to differences in cultural perspectives and beliefs, and the failure of many groups to meet halfway with their demands and conditions, there has been the need for constant negotiations to patch up differences and resolve conflicts. Negotiation is said to be a mutual exchange of signals between parties of different cultures. Problems arise when signals are misinterpreted and unintentionally portrayed. Since different cultures have different forms of arbitrary signals, this is likely to occur; thus arising further

problems of communication and understanding (Laroche, 1998). The very basic concepts that normally process of negotiations as proven in the literature are collectivism-individualism, power distance, communication context, and the conception of time.

The world population has diversified in three ways: in genes, in language, and in cultures. Cultural diversification operates the fastest, but it still take periods of maybe 500 to 5000 years (Hofstede, 1984). With the advent of the Internet and the increasingly economical telecommunications and airfares, we find ourselves participants in what is becoming a truly global society (Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede, G.J., 2002). Actually, many barriers are cultural for many companies or organizations. Now more than ever it is necessary to be culturally sensitive in order to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships in business, educational, and social environments (Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede, G. J., 2002).

Cultural integration is a top management responsibility, but if top managers don't know what culture is, the disasters are predictable if we fail to provide the guidance in how to react cross-cultural differences (Hoppe, 2004). Understanding the big differences in mindsets between people from different countries helps enormously in interpreting what's going on and where we can and cannot hope for progress.

Hu (1996) finds that globalization brings a borderless world dominated by stateless corporations where many different cultures, values, and practices are accepted. He further adds that cultures differ between national communities, but it's importance, particularly in international competition, is significant (Kanungo, 2006).

During the 1950's and 1960's it was believed that all nations desired to emulate the more developed nations. This notion gave birth to the one size fits all theory (Venezia, 2006). This theory is called convergence theory where; the main source of cultural clashes is the process of modernization. Senghaas (2002) is surely right to note that modernization is a confliction process. The change from a traditional society with an agricultural base to an industrializing one is bound to cause tremendous upheaval. Senghaas contends that modern societies are characterized by a certain kind of chaos, restlessness, and plurality. The main task of modernizing societies then becomes to figure out how to manage this chaos, or how to civilize the conflict that is apparently always possible in the chaos of modern societies. The response to this potential conflict, Senghaas announces, is inevitable: monopoly of force by the state, rule of law, differentiated roles for individuals, democratic participation, debates about distributive justice, and the development of a political culture of constructive conflict management (Spinner-Haley, 2003). Globalization has blurred the line between industrialized countries and developing nations by integrating politics and culture into management improvement (Venezia, 2006). Dwivedi (2001), (2003)

sees a relationship between nation's culture, tradition, and style of government. Management according to Hofstede (1999) is culturally constrained.

According to Kristof, A. L. Brown, K. G, Sims Jr., H. P., and Smith, K. A. (1995), global teams are defined as temporary, culturally diverse, geographically dispersed, communicating work groups. Coward (2003) describes important factors or drivers that influence managerial decisions in the international arena. Factors that play an important role is global managerial decisions may include:

1. Culture and Language.
2. Time differences.
3. The presence of western business practices.

Cultural differences may be reflected in differences in communications, work ethics, and approaches to problem solving among teams. Local culture may also impact the way customer service is handle. Culture is not nation specific. One country may embody several different cultures and several countries may share the same culture. What is important is that culture is distinctive and can be observed in such things as rituals, customs, and symbols (Parker, 1994). To bridge cultural gaps, companies may offer cultural training, cultural awareness initiatives and team building workshops as part of any global team structure (Gurung and Prater, 2006). Cultural differences are associated strongly with all three mechanisms through which diversity influences teams. People from same culture know that they share basic values and beliefs, and therefore feel strong similarity-attraction with each other. Finally culture is associated with such deep differences in perspectives and cognitive frameworks that people from different cultures bring very different sources and means of information processing to a team (Hofstede, 2001).

Literature has consistently highlighted the problems and conflict inherent where expatriates lack cross-cultural skills (Sargent and Matthews, 1998). Literature has highlighted the need for acculturation and adaptation, the need to make sense of, and understand other cultures (Osland and Bird, 2000; Osland, DeFranco and Osland, 1999) and the need to adapt managerial styles via intercultural adaptation.

Barkema, H. G., Bell, J. H. J., and Pennings, J. M. (1996), in their study of foreign ventures, found that performance was negatively related with the cultural distance between host and home country. Therefore, Gurung and Prater (2006) propose that cultural differences will affect any managerial process. They also believe that cultural differences due to issues such as language barriers will negatively impact the quality business relationships.

In the advent of globalization, many companies, be it corporate, public or international operates on a global scale. Mostly, international organizations operating abroad are faced with employees of foreign cultures with an entirely different perspective. Oftentimes, cross-

cultural issues arise in the management of the company's human resources (Lee, 2006). According to Lionel Laroche (1998), the rapid globalization of the world's economy has brought forth several changes. Laroche affirms that divergence in the attitudes, perspectives, and priorities of suppliers and customers with different cultural backgrounds have led to many project failures among organizations.

According to Laroche (1998), communication, management style, and problem solving techniques also vary in different cultures. Their differences in body language and gestures, differences in the meanings of exactly the same words and differences in the assumptions of similar situations. Laroche suggests that in-depth understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the people one is dealing with can increase the probability of business success among investors and workers operating in foreign cultures. Cultural studies and relevant training are very important in a multinational company's operation.

According to Dean Foster (2004), the dawn of globalization has challenged the relevance of culture in the heart of business in the heart of business in the global village. Many people question that if we exist in a global village, what use will our individual cultures be? However, as many companies venture into the international arena, it was revealed that culture matters a lot. In just about every aspect of human activity, culture is practiced. And whenever one may go, whether in study, work, business or travel, going beyond one's borders requires an in-depth understanding of the ways of life of societies very different from those at home (Lee, 2006).

Doktor, Tung, and Von Glinow (1991) point out that as multinational organizations become more global in their focus and direction, cultural diversity leads to difficulties. Because management behaviors are based upon cultural assumptions, behaviors that are appropriate in one culture may not be appropriate in another.

Organizations must be able to understand and take advantage of a multicultural workforce; therefore, it is imperative that business leaders gain as much information as possible with regard to the values, attitudes, and beliefs of subcultures represented in their companies. A company's productivity and success in a highly competitive global economy require having employees who are comfortable working in an environment comprised of different races, classes, and backgrounds.

Globalization is a contributing factor. However, the cultural, political, psychological, and geographical hurdles of cross-cultural integration are enormous (Shelton, Hail, and Darling, 2003). Organizations are not longer constrained by national borders. Burger King is owned by a British firm, and McDonald's sells hamburgers in Moscow. Exxon, receives almost 75 per cent of its revenues from sales outside the United States. Toyota makes cars in Kentucky; General Motors makes cars in

Brazil; and Ford (which owns part of Mazda) transfers executives from Detroit to Japan to help Mazda manage its operations (Shelton, Hail, and Darling, 2003).

Although merger details may rather quickly be committed to paper, integrating two independent companies with divergent organizational cultures into one cohesive organization is a daunting and delicate process. Many failures in many mergers, what went wrong? How can leaders of global teams acquire intercultural behavior skills?

First, personal experience as a global team member is very important. In addition, a leader whose national culture coincides with the national origin of the multinational firm within which the team functions must be particularly sensitive to differences among members who may work in subsidiary organizations. Some leaders may be from a different country than the one in which they work, thus providing them with greater insight into cultural differences. Some leaders may have traveled extensively, thereby increasing their awareness and knowledge that not everyone is the same (Barczak, McDonough, and Athanassiou, 2006).

According to Punnet, Ford, and Robinson (2006), in their study of three Caribbean locations (Jamaica, Barbados, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) had the following findings: Like other developing countries, these results suggest that in these Caribbean countries, relationships are important, that the family is a central focus for people, and that difference to authority is important.

As the world has become smaller due to technological advances, improved travel, and communication, international and global business have become more important forcing corporations to face an environment radically different from that of even a few years ago. It is necessary for managers to recognize the extent to which individuals are culture bound so that they can go beyond their own limitations caused by culture-bound narrow perspectives. This increasing globalization of business requires managers to reexamine their methods of dealing with managers of other countries and cultures (Whitehill, 1989).

Most studies come to the conclusion that indeed management techniques and knowledge are largely determined by culture and the single economic and social system. This can be shown not only for fields like accounting, finance and human resource management which are heavily influenced by a country's legal system, but most aspects of organizational behavior (Pieper, 1991).

The theory of culture developed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) argues that the process of socially constructing reality is reciprocal between people and their surroundings. Theories of culture that focus on the construction of shared meaning (e.g., Geertz, 1973) all pay tribute to the causal significance of such mental structures in accounting for societal behavior.

CONCLUSION

Literature has reported many definitions of culture. There is no agreement between all the studies on which is the right definition. It has been determined according with the definitions a better understanding of culture can lead to better performance in many areas such managing relationships, management, operations, marketing and many others. The success of any organization is based on the company's ability to develop activities not only according with the organizational culture also with the foreign cultures itself. Many companies and countries can set themselves to succeed if they take advantage to understand the term culture.

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