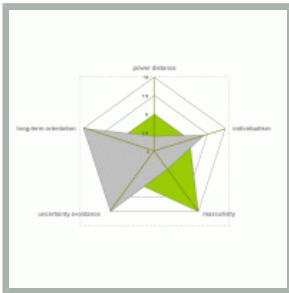


five dimensions of culture



characteristics

author:	Hofstede, Geert
country:	Netherlands
period:	1980
type:	model
role:	change agent, coach, manager and trainer
activity:	analyse and reflect
topic:	leadership & management and culture & internationalisation
abstr. level:	environment
perspective:	sociopolitical
status:	final
module:	classics I
comments:	6

related models

fourteen principles of management
gods of management

description:

In the mid 1970's, the Dutch academic, Geert Hofstede, based his five dimensions of culture on an extensive survey at IBM in which he investigated the influence of national culture. His methodology was both unique in size as well in structure. He defined organisational culture as an idea system that is largely shared between organisational members. By filtering out IBM's dominant corporate culture from his data on IBM's national subsidiaries, Hofstede was able to statistically distinguish cultural differences between countries.

Hofstede classified a country's cultural attitudes as five dimensions:

1. POWER DISTANCE

The extent to which power is distributed equally within a society and the degree that society accepts this distribution. A high power distance culture prefers hierarchical bureaucracies, strong leaders and a high regard for authority. A low power distance culture tends to favour personal responsibility and autonomy.

2. UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

The degree to which individuals require set boundaries and clear structures: a high uncertainty culture allows individuals to cope better with risk and innovation; a low uncertainty culture emphasises a higher level of standardisation and greater job security.

3. INDIVIDUALISM versus COLLECTIVISM

The degree to which individuals base their actions on self-interest versus the interests of the group. In an individual culture, free will is highly valued. In a collective culture, personal needs are less important than the group's needs. This dimension influences the role government is expected to play in markets.



4. MASCULINITY versus FEMININITY

A measure of a society's goal orientation: a masculine culture emphasises status derived from wages and position; a feminine culture emphasises human relations and quality of life.

5. TIME ORIENTATION

The degree to which a society does or does not value long-term commitments and respect for tradition. Long-term traditions and commitments hamper institutional change.

assets:

-  five dimensions of culture
ProvenModels • editor PM • version 0.1 • 87 KB
-  flexibility potential of culture
ProvenModels • editor PM • version 0.1 • 103 KB

pros:

- Hofstede provided a definition of culture and how culture can be measured. His research showed that cultural differences matter. Managers in international organisations operate according to their country's values, rather than to the organisation's culture.
- Employees from related national cultures work in similar fashions, thereby reducing the chance of conflicts. Hofstede's model provides managers of cross-cultural relations a tool to help them understand differences in value sets and behaviour.
- The model negates that one set of principles is universally applicable by confirming that there are multiple ways of structuring organisations and institutions. An organisation's wider social and cultural environment plus its technology determines the level of bureaucracy and centralisation (Scott, Hofstede).

cons:

- When Hofstede's first results were criticised by Asian scholars, he added time orientation as a fifth dimension thereby raising doubts about whether the typology itself was exhaustive.
- Culture is a far too complex and multifaceted to be used as a straightforward organisational change control. "You do not control culture, at best you shape it" (Green).

references:

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