Cross culture analysis

(A) Critical review of cross-cultural models (1)IntroductionCulturehas played an important role in the evolution of humans enabling them to adapt theenvironmentto their own needs instead of depending solely on natural selection to achieve success in all walks of life. Culture typically is made of customs, ideas beliefs, customs, codes, techniques, tools, taboos, symbols, rituals and ceremonies. Every society has created its own culture which is unique to its society.

Culture is characterised mainly of three components which are explained as below: Values – Ideas which are considered important in life can be termed as values. Norms – Different people behave differently in various situations. Norms can be understood as the expectations of how people react to these situations. Artefacts - Artefacts are manufactured by men who reflect the culture's values and norms. (2) Cross- cultural Analysis In 19th century, renowned anthropologists Edward Burnett Tylor and Lewis H Morgan have performed first cross-cultural analysis.

Both Anthropology and Social Anthropology have made significant progress from the stages of Victorian England's lower savagery to civilization. The concept of culture can be understood as a response against to those Western concepts and according to the anthropologists, culture is embedded in human nature. All people irrespective of the location and regions have the ability to categorise experiences, understand them by decoding using symbols andcommunicationeffectively. Several fields such asSociology, Psychology, Communication and Anthropology have contributed to the creation of main theories of cross cultural communication.

These theories are primarily based on the value differences among several cultures that are spread all over the world. Some of the important researchers who contributed to this field include Fons Trompenaars, Edward T. Hall, Shalom Schwartz, Geert Hofstede Edward Burnett Tylor and Lewis H Morgan and Clifford Geertz. (3) Aims of cross-cultural analysis The main aim of cross cultural communication is to understand the responses of different people from varied cultural backgrounds in different situations. Some guidelines are produced to decipher these differences and help them to better communicate with one another.

According to Alvesson, M. (1993), Cultural Perspectives on Organisations, 1992, Members of a group who share a particular culture can be understood and interpreted using some functions. The group can be of different sizes. It can be a small group in a village, or as big as a continent. Though the responses of the members of these groups can be understood as a whole depending on their culture, it further depends on the individual'spersonality. The expressions of culture-resultant response can also depend on their own experience from life and the upbringing of that particular individual.

The aims of cross cultural analysis are to harness the utilitarian function of culture as a means for human adaptation and better communication. Cross-cultural management can be understood as a subset of International management focusing on cultural clashes. The conflicts and miscommunication leads to differences in the cultures and cross cultural management aims to develop tools to understand and handle them. (4) Hofstede and his 5 dimensions Hofstede conducted investigations across the world to understand and analyse work-related attitudes in different regions.

These studies have resulted in identifying five dimensions. These dimensions are masculinity-femininity, power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and long term vs. short term orientation. Social psychology between and within many cultures are being investigated actively in many respects and has acquired its own momentum over a long period of time. According to (Draguns, Lee & McCauley, 1999) comparisons with in the cross cultures can be made with the help of personality variables within that culture.

As opposed to this, dimensions can also be derived in multicultural research projects can be used to study the relevance and the proximity to their home culture. In order to elucidate the conceptual nature of the cultural dimensions, Hofstede made various efforts to elaborate the contrast between the individualists as well the collectivist cultures. As this is not the only source of difference, several other Researchers such as Draguns, Lee & McCauley, 1999 also carried out studies on individualist cultures where the individuals are not tightly connected. They found that the priority lies ith looking after themselves or any other members of the immediatefamily. These individuals have differentgoalsand aspirations that might not be in line with the values and norms of the entire group. However when there is a conflict of ideas, in individual societies they put their personal goals first by feeling autonomous. I n this type of social framework, the focus is on achieving personal goals. Such individuals are loosely attached to each other and if needed they can easily detach themselves from the rest of the group. They can also sever relations quite easily with their norms, partners and religion.

However in collectivist societies, the most important factor is the group and there is a sense among the group members for solidarity and shared activities. According to (Goodwin, 1999) these kind of groups dominates in general as the obligations and duties of the individuals are not important when compared to that of the group. On the flip side, the collectivist societies are keener to protect the interests of the members of the group. They are not very concerned and may not necessarily help those members who are outside their group. The boundaries of the group are strong and explicit and they develop group egoism.

Though it is costs, the individuals of the members contribute more especially in the personal events such as marriage and other links with the families with in the group. They do not behave like mere individuals. One of the other dimensions of Hofstede's dimensions, power distance, is also widely discussed in the cross cultural studies. It represents the members of the society that agree to the inequalities in the power distribution among various members of the group. It may be in the organisations or institutions in which the degree ofrespectgiven those people who occupy superior positions.

According to Deal T. and Kennedy, A. A. (1982), Corporate Cultures, the acceptance to power inequality depends of the high distance and los distance societies. In High distance societies, they see power as the basis need of the group where as in low distance societies, they believe that power can only be used when it is legitimate. The next dimension of Hofstede's model is Masculinity vs. Femininity. According to him, factors such as heroism, material success, assertiveness as preference for achievement are considered as masculine.

Other factors such as caring for the poor and downtrodden, modesty, relationships, and the quality of life are considered subdued and feminine. The differentiation is based on the sex of that individual as the relationship between the Masculinity and femininity concerns about the relative emphasis and interpersonal harmony. While feminine culture gives preference to quality of life, warm personal relationships and fluid sex roles, the masculine cultures success, a sense of performance and competition and being brave.

The fourth dimension, uncertainty avoidance, lays emphasis on the extent in which the members of a particular culture respond to the unknown situations or uncertain events. The cultures where the uncertainty avoidance is low are very curious whereas the cultures where the uncertainty avoidance is high are more dangerous. Uncertainty avoidance generally refers to the planning and the method of dealing with the unknown events in life and those with high uncertainty avoidance generally have a strong desire for mutual consensus. Any behaviour other than this is not acceptable in that group or society.

The final dimension is long vs. short term orientation. The focus is mainly on the time horizon of the society. The orientation in this dimension of the study is to determine the importance that is being given to the future when compared to the previous history of that nation or society than the present state. In this dimension issues such as persistence and others are resolved by applying the orientation framework. Hofstede's diverse studies of various cultures have provided the necessary inputs to understand the similarities or differences of cross cultures. (4. 1) Limitations of Hofstede's model:

Though Hofstede made several studies to identify the cross cultural similarities and differences, there are some limitations in this model. The primary limitation is the limited use of samples. The samples with Hofstede conducted the study is not applicable to the all the nations and therefore the results cannot be generalised to all the nations. The findings are generally based on the culture of the nation at a certain time which may be different from the result of the same nation at a different time. Another limitation to his model is the negative feedback of the participants.

Some people are happy to cooperate with the study but some people may get offended by it (Barrick, Ryan & Schmitt, 2003). Another limitation is the importance of the study to their organisation or the country they live in. Another limitation is to create changes not all people would like to agree. More often than not, majority of the people cannot accept abrupt change in a short period of time. (5) Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner model: To explain the national cultural differences in an organisation, in 1998, popular management consultants Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner developed a model named ' Seven Dimensions of Culture'.

They tried to explain the differences in a heterogeneous business environment and the challenges faced by the global managers in managing them. Their study is primarily based on the responses of several respondents on a given dilemma. The dilemmas are contrasting in nature and this method is used by them over ten long years to observe the responses of various individuals on these dilemmas which will be used to interpret the basic attitudes and values of the individuals. This method is characterised by developing seven different processes which are formulated into dilemmas.

By preferring one side of the dilemma, the individuals from one culture differentiate themselves from the rest of the others. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, these responses provided them a tool to analyse how national cultures differ from one another and how culture can be measured. They also suggested that the differences in cultures play a major role in achieving success globally and observed that reconciling these differences can lead to competitive advantage in the increasingly competitive global business environment. (5.) Limitations of this model: *Failurein recognising the impact of personal characteristics on one's behaviour. * Though this model differentiated between several cultures, it failed to suggest any recommendations on how to work with specific cultures. * The dilemmas that are developed by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner may not satisfy that it will cover all the aspects of cross cultural studies. * Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner suggested that the organisations must acknowledge the similarities and differences between the cultures that they operate in.

However, other authors such as Ohmae (Borderless world) and Levitt (Globalisation of Markets) argue that national borders are diminishing day by day and emphasised on the need to look at the world as one big global market instead of viewing it as different countries that are made up of different cultures. (B) National Management Styles: Analysis andPersonal experience. The ideas about the national management style over the past four decades have been dominated primarily by two nations.

First by the American management model then followed by the Japanese. National cultural heritage was thought to be the primary reason for a

particular management style. Having that as an underlying assumption, claims have been made that the management style is highly influenced by the cultural force of a country. Do the Japanese in general manage their organisations differently from Americans? This lead to evolution of two main standpoints which are called as culture-free and the culture-contingent position (Child/Kieser, 1997 and Osterloh, 1994).

According to the culture-free position, the management style reflects the deeper understanding of industrialism producing essentials of technological and economic nature. The management style of firms over the personnel does not depend too much on the nation's cultural values but more dependent on thetechnology, size and the industry environment of the organisation. According to Barrett, E. (1992), The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Corporate Culture Analogy, the competition among the organisations in a business environment need conditions which support the management style.

As we all know that those firms which compete on innovation use a more participative and professional management style when compared to the management style of those companies which are traditionally mass producers of plastic toys, screws or hamburgers. This can be observed across various nations all over the world. Likewise, the cultural settings do not seem to have much impact on the management offast foodchains. The contrasting viewpoint is culture-contingent position. Experts argue that societies exhibit distinct and relatively persistent cultures which include shared patterns of manners and ideas.

Though different organisations in different organisations compete in varied conditions, they all adopt similar cultural contingencies within that country. This may be one of the reason as to why these organisations though compete against each other manage their firms with similar management structures which are appropriate to the cultural forces of the country. Culture of the country may matter for management, but it certainly is not the primary factor which influences the management style of the organisation. (6) EuropeanCultural Diversity

According to (Hofstede, 1993; Munch, 1993), despite sharing a lot of history, it is quite surprising that many of the European countries are still heterogeneous culturally. Though the integration of European countries brought about some economic forces, the culture and traditions of these countries still remain very different to that of each other. The nations that can claim to have developed distinctive cultures are American and Japanese. European countries are far from having a distinctive culture of their own. In order to overcome the present day pressures, they have developed diverse approaches of their own to cope with them.

Among the European countries the national differences between the countries are greater than that of the non-European countries when it comes to dealing with the problems of technology development, economic growth andpollutioncontrol. (7) British Model of Pragmatic Management: Though Britain had a strong industrial dominance in the nineteenth century, after Second World War it has lost its strength both economically and educationally. Over the past decade or so, the global competitiveness and the economic recovery signs have been strong for Britain.

Several factors such as political stability de-regulation of industries, and the English language advantage has attracted foreign direct investments from all across the globe which lead to the creation of entrepreneurial dynamism (ul-Haq, 2000). However according to Porter (1990), one of the important reasons for the continuous decline in the economic performance is the lack of quality in British educational system? Top-qualityeducationhas been restricted to a few groups. Important sectors like technology and engineering has been given lower priority.

This resulted in the impact on the management in general and society in particular. While there are exceptional employees who are well trained for professional work, majority of them lack in depth education and skills when compared to the other highly industrialised nations. This can explain about the difference between blue-collar and white-collar workers, especially managers, appear to reflect the social structures of the society. The relationship between the workers and the management is generally characterised by mistrust and hostility, as a result of the conflict of interest between the two classes.

Source: Martin, J. (1992), Cultures in Organisations - Three Perspectives Let us discuss various management styles and critically examine if that is the style in my own country. i. Autocratic: In this management style, the decision making lies with the managers and they enforce their decision on the employees. They do not have a two way communication with the employees because they don't trust them. This can be demotivating to employees, but this style is suitable for organisations that have to take quick decisions and manage large number of employees.

I am from India and I can say that this management style is not widely used across the country but can be seen in large organisations particularly in IT firms that have large number of employees to manage. ii. Paternalistic: Paternalistic managers listen to the concerns of the employees before taking decision with respect to their social and recreational needs. The information flow is from top to bottom as they give direction to the employees. Interesting aspect is that they also take feedback form the employees which can be very effective. But the decision making on an issue may take longer than usual.

This will help improve the morale of the employee. This management style can be observed in India though not widely. An organisation from the Marketing and Service industries andtourism industryin particular adopts this style of management. iii. Democratic: Everyone is involved in the decision process in this management style. Productivity and job satisfaction is improved as the communication flows from top to bottom in this approach. Employees'motivationwill be high as they are recognised and considered to be important to the organisation.

On the flip side, it is difficult to get consensus on any issue and therefore slows down the process significantly. Sometimes there is also a risk that the managers may not be able to implement the best decisions. This style is not usually adapted in India as the mind sets of people are quite different and it may take quite long to take a decision. However this management style when implemented effectively with a judicious mixture can result in producing desired results. Source: Adler, N. J. (1991) International

Dimensions of Organizational Behaviour. Personally, my style has always been employee empowerment.

The people I choose to have thinking people work under me, not automatons. Because of this, my task gets simpler and I can accomplish the targets in due course. I have learnt a great deal and also enriched my knowledge base as well as my skill levels. I am always aware of the fact that my task is to manage my team and they have their own tasks. I must enable them to deliver their best whether it is sales, operations or something else. Due to this, the members of the team can come up and discuss their ideas with me without any fear. To my mind, no organisation can grow if its employees do not grow. 8) Conclusion: As per my experience, persistent growth can be achieved by organisations by implementing proper management styles. They can solve organisational problems; improve employee productivity andloyaltyand satisfaction. Satisfied customers and higher returns of the investment is the key for all the organisations at the end of the day. On the flip side, adopting an incorrect management structure will lead to tensions between managers and their subordinates resulting in diminished employee morale and depleting productivity. (9) BIBLIOGRAPHY i. Alvesson, M. 1993), Cultural Perspectives on Organisations, 1992 ii. Deal T. and Kennedy, A. A. (1982), Corporate Cultures, iii. Barrett, E. (1992), The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Corporate Culture Analogy iv. Martin, J. (1992), Cultures in Orgnanizations - Three Perspectives v. Kono, T. (1990), " Corporate Culture and Long Range Planning" vi. Adler, N. J. (1991) International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior. vii. Riding the Waves of Culture (Fons Trompenaars & Charles Hampden-Turner), 1990. viii.

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