International and Intercultural Communication

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Hofstede’s Six Dimensions of Culture are used as the most popular framework to model the cultural differences between different countries. These dimensions comprises of individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, long-term orientation, power distance, and indulgence (Hofstede, 2009). This paper seeks to compare and contrast Germany and the United States based on these cultural dimensions.

# Comparison and Contrast

The first dimension is power distance that is the acceptance of the differences in power among the members. Both countries Germany and the United States are low on this dimension. Germany scores 35 while the US scores 40, which means that both nations emphasize participative communication and control is generally disliked. The second dimension i.e. individualism is relatively high in Germany and it scores 67 while the US has a very high score on this dimension i.e. 91. The individualistic culture focuses on individual goals and objectives. There is a strong belief in the ideal of self-actualization in both nations, but the individualistic culture is higher in the US (Zha, Walczyk, Griffith-Ross, Tobacyk, & Walczyk, 2006). It is also reflected in the family system, i.e. German families are smaller and large joint family system is highly discouraged.

The third dimension of masculinity also shows a relatively similar score. Germany scores 66 and the US scores 62, which indicates that both the nations are driven by competition, accomplishment and success. This behavior is also witnessed in the typical American system and the value system of competition that starts in the schools. The commonly shared values include, one must try to be best and success is the great motivator. The next dimension is the uncertainty avoidance, on which Germany scores high i.e. 65 as compared to the US i.e. 46. This is witnessed in the American society that shows a high degree of acceptance of innovations, new ideas and approval of something novel and different. On the other hand, Germans are not always welcoming to new ideas and opinions.

A high difference is noticed in the scores of long-term orientation and indulgence. The Germans show a very high score, 83 on this dimension while the US shows a lesser score i.e. 26. This indicates that Germans are very pragmatic and believe that certainty rest on the situation. On the other hand, Americans are very practical and have a can-do attitude. Indulgence refers to the gratification of more human drives. The US society is very indulgent as their score reflects i.e. 68 as compared to Germany that is restraint in nature and shows a score of 40 on this dimension. Such societies do not put a lot of emphasis on leisure and fun activities.

Recommendations to Business Organizations

If a German and American organization participate in business activity, an understanding of these cultural similarities and differences will be helpful for the manager in promoting effective communication. Since both nations do not vary in terms of power distance and masculinity, managers have to take care of some major differences. Since the Germans are low on the individualistic dimension, managers may need to consider their immediate families in business events and while taking decisions about relocation. Cross communication training underlining the cultural differences of both nations can be helpful (Zakaria, 2000). Since Germans avoid taking risks while Americans are high-risk takers, business scenarios involving high risk will be escaped or rejected by the Germans. In this case, communication plays a vital role to demonstrate the benefits of risk-taking. The differences in long-term orientation and indulgence should also be considered by the managers. Germans may take more time in planning and Americans demand quick outcomes and reports which must be communicated between the managers of both companies.

# References

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