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Cultural values and diversity management perspectives

Testing the impact of cultural values on the diversity management perspectives in Sierra Leone, Germany and Finland

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Business Administration

European Management

Thesis

6 May 2016

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| Author Title | Linda Helena Mattila Cultural values and diversity management perspectives: Testing the impact of cultural values on the diversity management perspectives in Sierra Leone, Germany and Finland |
| Number of Pages Date | 43 pages + 1 appendix 6 May 2016 |
| Degree | Bachelor of Business Administration |
| Degree Programme | International Degree Programmes |
| Specialisation option | European Management |
| Instructor | Rebecca Kihlman, Senior Lecturer |
| <p>Cultural values impact the attitudes towards diversity management perspectives. Therefore they convey critical opportunities and challenges that a country encounters, and which need to be identified for the successful implementation of diversity management initiatives.</p> <p>This thesis discusses the different diversity management perspectives and their motivations and rationales to diversify and the process in which the national culture influences the organizational culture practices. The impacts of Hofstede's cultural value-dimensions on diversity attitudes are hypothesized and theoretical assumptions about the diversity perspectives for Sierra Leone, Germany and Finland were designed. These were tested by hand of qualitative data analysis in the respective countries.</p> <p>This study contributes to the existent research by synthesizing the theories of cultural values and diversity management perspectives and finding correlations between them. Moreover the influence of each value-dimension on diversity approaches was identified. It was found that only the "<i>colour-blind</i>" and "<i>access</i>" perspective were implemented, indicating that only a business and profit oriented application of diversity was preferred. Moreover, a low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance were found to be the most supportive of a beneficial diversity climate in Europe, while high masculinity was the prevailing positive value-impact in Sierra Leone. Cultural values and the derived theoretical assumptions, without understanding of socio-historical influences, were found to be insufficient to explain the differences of diversity management approaches across countries. Nevertheless the values suggest certain difficulties a culture might encounter, regarding the implementation of diversity initiatives.</p> | |
| Keywords | Diversity management perspectives; cultural values; Hofstede, Sierra Leone; Germany; Finland |

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1 Introduction

The management of a diverse workforce is a key feature of effective people management, especially today with increasing globalization, migration and a highly competitive business-environment pressuring organizations to perform better and more efficiently. Each employee, irrespective of where, should be able to contribute to the fullest; inspired, not limited, through the environment. The "five diversity perspectives" framework (Podsiadlowski, Gröschke, Kogler, Springer & Zee 2013) reveals important motivations, challenges and consequences of the different strategic approaches to diversify, and thus promotes the effective management of a diverse workforce.

To understand diversity management across countries, cultural and institutional differences need to be examined, since they, along with socio-historical influences, shape the contextual environment that organizations face when implementing diversity initiatives. National cultural values are hypothesised to have an impact on diversity management (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015:2139; Leong & Ward 2006:803; Sperancin 2010:60) however the impact of these values on the diversity perspective is yet to be discovered.

Cultural values can be seen as enabling or constraining the implementation of diversity initiatives, thus their understanding on the workforce attitudes and its predisposition of a certain diversity perspective is necessary, in order to identify critical challenges and opportunities that could determine the success of diversity management practices.

This research intends to find out, if and how these cultural values affect the diversity perspective, if there are any correlations between cultural values and the respective perspective, how these values convey opportunities or challenges to diversify, and if these values are a reliable method to explain diversity management differences across cultures. The research thereby delivers important considerations when implementing diversity initiatives in the cultural contexts of Sierra Leone, Germany and Finland.

The aim of this research is not to measure the respective cultural value-orientation, but to reflect the findings to assumptions made from a theoretical foundation. For this

purpose it is assumed that the national culture indeed has a significant influence on the organization, and specific organizational culture influences are disregarded for the purpose of this study (see p. 14).

2 Diversity background in Sierra Leone, Germany and Finland

This thesis examines three different countries: Sierra Leone, Germany and Finland, due to their personal and professional importance to the writer. Below is a short overview diversity background in these countries.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone was a British colony that was given independence in 1961. There was strong ethnic and cultural diversity from the very beginning, since the nation's borders were inherited from colonial times and did not adhere to actual ethnic divergences. Effectively the country has about 16 ethnic groups and 23 living languages. A unique group in the country consists of the freed slaves, who returned from England and other countries to Africa in the late 18th century, the Krios. They evolved a new language and culture, strongly influenced by British values (Abraham 1978:18-20, 22). When the British took Sierra Leone over as a formal colony, a system of indirect rule was introduced, allowing traditional authorities to maintain their leadership under the supervision of the British. Furthermore a dual legal system was initiated, allowing traditional laws to be in application besides modern British laws. In the Sierra Leone of today, there is no common law; traditional laws are in particular use for family rights, heritage and ownership of land etc ("S1" 2016, pers. comm., 1 April).

Despite its 149 chiefdoms (African Health Observatory 2010), there is a strong degree of similarity in indigenous cultural patterns and values, such as *e.g.* a dominant male-orientation, which are based on traditional religious customs (Fyle 2011: 68). Today, there is a strong influence of Islam, Christianity and traditional religions and most people observe more than one religion and more than one cultural identity. They also follow different legal systems appropriately (S1" 2016, pers. comm., 1 April).

Germany

Today, Germany can be described as having a culturally and ethnically diverse population due to a continuing state of migration, which started in particular after the second World War (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2005:51; Kemper, Bader,

Froese 2015:41). Of its 81 million inhabitants, 16.4 million people have a migrant background *e.g.* Turkish, Polish, Italian, Romanian, Greek (Statistisches Bundesamt 2014) and even 9.1 million hold a foreign passport (Statistisches Bundesamt 2015).

According to a survey commissioned by the European Commission, the main focus of diversity activities in Germany lie on gender equality and disability (both 65%), racial or ethnic background (60%), sexual orientation (45%) and seniors (16%) (Wondrak 2014:12). In any case, more than half of participating Germans (Eurobarometer survey) believe that higher age, manner of presentation, ethnic origin, disability and religious belief are a disadvantage in hiring considerations (Special Eurobarometer 437, 2015).

Finland

Finland was established as a nation-state in 1917 with noticeable ethnic, cultural and religious homogeneity, with a few traditional minorities such as Swedish speakers, Sámi, Tatars with reasonably extensive rights in societal practices *e.g.* Swedish is the second official language (Saukkonen & Pyykkinen 2006:6-7). Since the late 1980's increased immigration, especially from Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Estonia and Russia, has produced greater ethnic and cultural diversity, resulting in 5.88% of the population being foreign-born (Tilastokeskus 2014).

The main focus of initiatives, in organizations concerned with diversity, is on disability (38%), young people (31%), seniors (23%) and on gender equality, religion and racial or ethnic background (15%) (Wondrak 2014:20). Even though equality and non-discrimination are important principles manifested in the Finnish Constitution (731/1999) (Finnish League for Human Rights 2008:27), 55-70% of participating Finns are of the opinion that higher age, manner of presentation, ethnic origin, disability and general appearance were a disadvantage in recruitment practices (Special Eurobarometer 437, 2015).

3 Literature Review

3.1 Diversity

Generally, diversity can be understood as: "any significant difference that distinguishes one individual from another" (Kreitz 2007:101), broadly distinguishing between four areas: personality (*e.g.* skills, traits), internal characteristics (*e.g.* ethnicity, gender, intelligence), external characteristics (*e.g.* culture, religion) and organizational characteristics (*e.g.* position, department, industry) (Kreitz 2007:101). In practice, diversity is seen as a relative phenomenon that is used to differentiate people based on their group-identity categorizations (Mazur 2010:6), emphasizing the impact of a social identity and social-group membership (Tajfel & Turner 1986, cited in Ashforth & Mael 1989:20).

Rijamampinina & Carmichael (2005, cited in Mazur 2010:7) differentiate individuals along three-level dimensions influencing one's identity (as portrayed in Figure 1). These being the visible and fundamental differences of the *primary dimension*, including influences such as gender, age and ethnicity, the more variable influences of the *secondary dimension*, such as educational background, religion, language and sexual orientation and the *third dimension*, the invisible and often core identity, including beliefs, values, attitudes and feelings. These dimensions are dynamic, interact with each other and can be displayed differently according to the context or environment. For example in a social-setting, gender might be more dominant than education (*e.g.* in Sierra Leone), but in a work-setting, education is more relevant than gender (Mazur 2010:7).

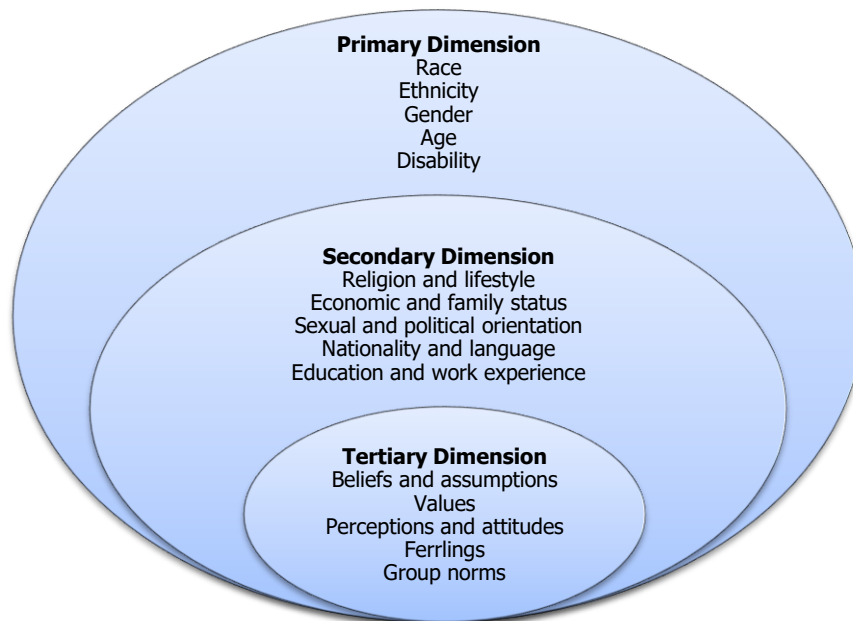


Figure 1. Dimensions of diversity, adapted from Rijamampinina & Carmichael (2005, cited in Mazur 2010:7)

Diversity at the workplace can be seen as a “double-edged sword” (Cox 1991), having the potential to be a value-added resource and boost decision-making, problem-solving, creativity, innovation and customer reachability, by bringing new knowledge, perspectives and access to resources to the workforce, but it can also become a performance barrier and carry potential costs such as a higher turnover, interpersonal conflict and communication breakdowns (Cox 1991:34; Podsiadlowski et al. 2013:160). A company’s diversity policy is therefore designed to capitalize on the benefits of diversity, while minimizing its costs, and is often represented as a feasible long-term strategy that mobilizes people’s differences and similarities for the benefit and development of the business (Hajjar & Hugonet 2015:7; Svyantek & Bott 2004:296). Different views on diversity, and its benefit and implementation, lead to different approaches of managing diversity.

3.2 Diversity Management Paradigm

The *diversity management* paradigm was originally created by Thomas & Ely (1996), covering the *discrimination-and-fairness*, *access-and-legitimization*, and *learning-and-effectiveness* paradigms. The *resistance* paradigm was added by Dass &

Parker (1999). The *diversity management* paradigm lays the foundation, rationale and key points of the different approaches to diversify.

The *resistance* paradigm aims at reinforcing the organization's homogeneity, because the organizational belief is that individuals that differ from the majority-group would not fit into the organizational culture and would therefore create tensions, disturb the established majorities and increase organizational costs. As exclaimed by Dass & Parker: "pressures for diversity are likely to be perceived as threats" (1999:69) and will be countered with reactive strategies, characterized by denial, avoidance, manipulation or defiance. In some cases affirmative action policies are forced by legislative or social pressures, to which organizations react by either paying the penalty of not adhering to these regulations, or by introducing members of minority-groups into the organization in a superficial and crisis-oriented manner (Taylor-Carter, Doverspike & Cook 1995:130). When pressures for a certain type of diversity are low, a reactive strategy might be appropriate. This can be the case when social pressures for diversity incentives are minimal *e.g.* when hiring women into a men's football team, or when a nation's population is still relatively homogeneous (Dass & Parker 1999:69).

In the *discrimination-and-fairness* paradigm, an organization's focus is on complying with the law regarding equal employment opportunities. Thus, diversity initiatives concentrate on recruitment, fair treatment and on providing equal opportunities of access for disadvantaged groups. This paradigm maintains that everybody is the same and should be treated equally. In consequence, since the imperative of this perspective is that "we aspire to being all the same", important differences get neglected and might be undermined on purpose to better "fit in". Diversity is seen as a problem to be diminished, individuals are helped to better blend in, and in consequence defensive strategies such as balancing, negotiating and pacifying interest groups are implemented. As Thomas & Ely say: "The staff (...) gets diversified, but the work does not" (1996:81) (Dass & Parker 1999:70; Thomas & Ely 1996:82).

Moreover, the assumption that similar outcomes are achieved by solely providing equal access to equally competent people, regardless of social group membership, fails to take into account important social and power structure aspects (Lorbiecki 2001:351). As Syed & Özbilgin claim: "shared values are often dominated by the preferences of

the powerful elite, so workplace perspectives and experiences of marginalised groups and individuals remain ignored" (2009:2443). Other complications are integration, retention and participation issues, such as a backlash, resentment and hostility from the majority group members (*i.e.* the threatened power holders). Furthermore, increased segregation is more likely to occur, while social pressures, negative stigmatization and the promotion of a "victim mentality" leads to the decreased morale and a higher turnover of minority group members (Syed & Kramar 2009:642; Taylor-Carter et al. 1995:144).

In the *access-and-legitimacy* paradigm diversity is seen as a method to gain access, reach out to and gain legitimacy of increasingly multicultural market-segments. The organization aims to match its workforce-composition with those of critical customer groups and to acquire language skills and cultural expertise to better cater to its customers' needs and expectations (Lorbiecki 2001:352; Thomas & Ely 1996:83). This rationale promotes a business-oriented perspective, where: "a varied workforce can contribute to a better use of knowledge and skills, since each employee can be put to work where he or she functions best" (Janssens & Steyaert 2003:10). This orientation can be understood on the basis of human capital theory, where workforces are seen as assets that can bring added value to the company. This "value added of diversity", is the knowledge an employee can bring of his or her own cultural identity group. However, this use can turn into a short-term solution, when the necessary expertise and skills are not transferred across segregated operational-groups, or integrated into the mainstream work, which in turn fosters dependency and the potential loss of knowledge when specialized employees leave (Dass & Parker 1991:71; Thomas & Ely 1996:83).

If the French team all resigned tomorrow, what would we do? I'm not sure what we *could* do! We've never attempted to learn what these differences and cultural competencies really are and how they change the process of doing business (Thomas & Ely 1996:84).

The *learning-and-effectiveness* paradigm acknowledges and recognizes cultural differences and their impact on work processes and strategic decisions. Organizations attempt to incorporate employees' perspectives into their core activities and to improve operations, by questioning normative assumptions, and by rethinking tasks, markets,

practices, products, missions and strategies. Similarities and differences are seen as dual aspects of workforce diversity and these are identified and managed in the interest of long-term learning. Different perspectives are synthesized to create a common sense of beliefs and visions (Dass & Parker 1999:72). This paradigm aims to develop an inclusive organizational culture where individuals can perform to their full potential (Syed & Özbilgin 2009:2442; Thomas & Ely 1996:85).

According to Thomas & Ely, workforce diversity should be understood as: "the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring" (1996:80). Diverse groups can bring important and competitively relevant information and differences about work habits *i.e.* process designing, task framing, team creation, goal reaching, leading and the communication of ideas. The value and change that diverse groups bring, is by challenging and morphing the basic assumptions about an organization's operations, practices, functions and strategies, allowing the organizational organism to grow and become more adaptable to changing circumstances (Thomas & Ely 1996:80).

3.3 Five Diversity Perspectives

The conceptual framework of Five Diversity Perspectives is a relatively new model (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013), which incorporates and develops the existing *diversity management* paradigm (Dass & Parker 1999; Thomas & Ely 1996), by dividing the *fairness-and-discrimination* paradigm into the perspectives "*colour-blind*" and "*fairness*". As in the *diversity management* paradigm, this framework aims to explain the essential motivations and consequences of an organizations approach to diversify. These motivations reach from defensive (not doing anything or even strictly resisting diversity), to reactive (adhering to legal requirements, addressing immediate diversity conflicts) to proactive (promoting the various benefits of diversity and encouraging this as a learning opportunity for all) (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013:160). This model was selected, because these perspectives seem more applicable, precise and relevant, especially the division of the *fairness-and-discrimination* paradigm, for this research, than the original *diversity management* paradigm.

The "*reinforcing homogeneity*" perspective rejects cultural diversity in favour of a relatively homogenous workforce. Its foundation lies in the perceived similarity of its members and the necessity of this for harmonious intergroup relations. The organization assumes that goals are best achieved in an environment of shared values, a common goal and a unified front. Members who share the dominant culture and values are preferred (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013:167). By implementing Schneider's (1987) "attraction-selection-attrition hypothesis" the organization attracts, hires and retains similar types of people and thereby reinforces its organizational culture and behaviour. People are attracted to careers that reflect their own interests and personality and are furthermore drawn to organizations, which they perceive to have a similar value profile as them. This leads to workforces with similar kinds of people. The homogeneity is subsequently fostered by only selecting and promoting the candidates that match the majority-group members, with criteria such as local knowledge and experience, specific educational background, access to networks etc. People, who do not fit in, will tend to leave, as demonstrated by the attrition hypothesis (Schneider 1987:442), making the workforce even more homogeneous. The perception of similar social groups and compatible members is imperative, and initiatives to diversify are seen as threatening the established social harmony (Schneider 1987:441-442; Podsiadlowski et al. 2013:160).

The "*colour-blind*" perspective declares that people should be treated equally, irrespective of their background. This perspective concentrates on the importance of equal treatment and the avoidance of discriminatory practices, yet taking into account only direct performance measures *e.g.* in promotion alternatives. Diversity is not actively pursued, but if the best candidate is from a different cultural background he or she is welcome. Possible differences, due to cultural backgrounds, are not acknowledged. This can be seen as concentrating only on functional expertise with a disregard to positive or negative organizational consequences emerging from cultural differences. Everyone is welcome, as long as they are qualified for the job and meet the necessary requirements (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013:160).

In the "*fairness*" perspective, equal treatment and the avoidance of discriminatory practices are fostered, by actively addressing the workforce composition and declaring the need to support certain minority groups in order to reduce social inequalities.

Affirmative action policies and adherence to legal requirements are common. The company desires to become more diverse, because it considers all people to be equal and justified to receive equal chances, which it thus provides. To ensure the success and advancement of minorities, support measures and training opportunities are provided. However, this perspective, just like the *discrimination-and-fairness* paradigm, fails to enact follow-through actions and take into account integration and participation issues, majority-group backlash etc. (see p. 8). This can be seen as a "shallow" employment of diversity, as a means to "window dress" in order to enhance organizational image and increase legitimacy with stakeholders, clients, partners, customers and the social environment (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013:167).

In the "*access*" perspective, diversity is seen as a business strategy that can provide access to new markets, customers, markets and opportunities, by internally reflecting the external environment of an organization. People with different cultural backgrounds are particularly adept in certain functions when dealing with customers/clients from their own identity group. Their valuable inside-knowledge helps the organization drive business goals. A diverse workforce-composition, one that matches the external environment, is desired to better cater to the needs of all groups of customers, and thus increase market efficiency (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013:167).

In the "*integration and learning*" perspective a diverse work environment is seen as beneficial to everybody (employees, stakeholders and the organization), by creating a dynamic learning environment. Equal and fair treatment of everybody, not just particular minority groups, is addressed and fended for. This happens because the organization does not distinguish between different groups of people, but acknowledges each individual for his or her unique and specific expertise and the valuable contribution of this, in the spirit of: "tapping fully the human resource potential of every member of the workforce" (Thomas 1991, cited in Janssens & Steyaert 2003:2). The organization's motivation to become more diverse lies in the belief that the possibility to learn from different cultures and perspectives should be fostered by the organization. Essentially these enable the workforce to perform the work better, identify new goals and shape processes. Moreover it provides an environment for continuous self-development and possibilities to improve one's

(collaboration) skills and cultural competences *i.e.* empathy, adaptability, interpersonal skills (Kyeyune 2012:29; Podsiadlowski et al. 2013:167).

Organizational culture change happens through the gradual transformation of the entire workforce and its attitudes, structures and practices (Sippola & Smale 2007:1897). The emerging workplace-environment of the "*integration and learning*" perspective, can be seen as having the greatest strategic impact on the long-run, since it helps create an organizational culture that can be considered a sustainable competitive advantage, through its enhanced performance and innovativeness, resilience to a changing environment and its valuable, rare and inimitable nature (Barney 1986:663).

3.4 Influences on diversity attitudes

There are many different organizational motivations and approaches to diversify the workforce; yet the organization is strongly influenced by various macro-level characteristics on a national-level, such as socio-historical influences, demographics, cultural values, religion, laws, socio-economic factors etc. Cultural identity is a social construct and these "identities" are often related in society with predefined attitudes and various power and status positions (Ely & Thomas 2001:231).

There are certain cultural indicators *i.e.* cultural values, which have a very impactful influence on the attitude towards diversity (Leong et al. 2006:807). This view is supported by studies (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015; Kemper et al. 2015; Ng & Burke 2004), which show that the attitude towards diversity is influenced by the national culture in which one grew up, and that cultural and institutional differences are the reason why diversity management varies across countries (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015: 2135; Kemper et al. 2015:30). Even so, there are certain individual-level variations that marginally influence this view *e.g.* openness towards diversity increases with education, increased contact with minorities and even slightly with social status (since socially disadvantaged people perceive minorities as a threat for scarce resources *e.g.* jobs) (EUMC 2005:1-2).

Institutional theory hypothesises that organizational cultures become similar to their national culture through forms of institutional isomorphism as they seek legitimization and political power in the specific environment. These include processes, institutions and forces *e.g.* laws, guidelines etc. within a country which lead to an alignment of these cultures (DiMaggio & Powell 1983, cited in Lee & Kramer 2016:2). In essence this illustrates, that organizational cultures reflect, at least partly, national cultures (Oudenhoven 2001:100) and that there subsists a shared interest for diversity issues/policies in a specific context. Moreover: "effective diversity management is most likely to be realized in a context in which there is multilevel structural and institutional support for the inclusion and participation of all individuals and groups" (Syed & Özbilgin 2009: 2436), all being a construct of the national culture.

3.5 Culture

The concept of culture is very complex and several meanings exist, all deriving from its Latin source, *tilling of the soil*. Commonly in Western languages culture refers to "civilization" or "refinement of the mind". Deriving from a social anthropological tradition, culture refers to all one's patterns of thinking, feeling and acting, also described as a set of *shared* values, beliefs, heroes, rituals, meanings, symbols, norms and practices (Berry 2004:167, cited in Leong & Ward 2006:801; Hofstede 2005:3). Culture does not affect inherited human nature and its abilities such as fear, anger, love, joy etc., which are universal, but it does influence what we do with those feelings and expressions. Moreover, it is learned at a young age from the social environment, not inherent in oneself, affecting many young-age values, to remain unconscious and unquestionable to one's self (Hofstede 2005:4-5).

Since culture is a collective phenomenon, this "cultural inheritance" is distinct among a group or category of people. This "grouping" can happen on very many different levels, such as on the national, regional, gender, generation, social class, organizational or occupational level. Cultural variations are believed to emerge from ecological (*e.g.* environment, resources, climate) and socio-political (*e.g.* democratic freedom, religious conversion, scientific discoveries) factors. Moreover, culture is dynamic and individuals can carry different layers of culture within themselves. Cultural differences, as mentioned by Hofstede, are differences according to regional, ethnic and religious

cultures, gender and generational differences and social classes (Hofstede 2005:11, 16).

For this thesis the differentiation between national and organizational culture is relevant, since the national culture value-impacts will be examined in organizations, and not value-impacts of the organizational culture. While the national culture tends to refer to "profound values, beliefs and practices that are shared by the vast majority of people belonging to a certain nation (...) which are reinforced by national laws and policies regarding education, family life and business" (Oudenhoven 2001:90), organizational culture on the other hand tends to refer to the values, beliefs and practices shared among organizational members, and which distinguish one organization from another (Oudenhoven 2001:90). Moreover these cultures consist of widely shared assumptions and practices, which are partially shaped by the specific industry and are learned through the socialization process at the workplace, commonly in one's adulthood when values are already in place. Thus most values originate from national culture, while practices develop from organizational culture (Goelzer 2003:11).

National culture influences organizational culture, as hypothesized by institutional theory (see p. 12), whereby the cultural tightness and looseness is a moderating factor that influences the effect that national culture has on organizational culture. Tight cultures show strict social norms with low tolerance for deviance from the norms, whereas loose cultures have weak social norms with high tolerance (Gelfand 2011:1101). On the other hand, a strong organizational culture can outweigh national culture and form a sustainable competitive advantage, as hypothesized by a resource-based view (Barney 1986:663).

In research of the measurement and comparison of national cultures (*e.g.* Schwartz), shared cultural indicators such as value components are used, since they are the relatively stable element in culture (Hofstede 2005:21). In essence culture can be seen as a social phenomenon, a set of shared values, beliefs, and practices that is used as a "grouping" mechanism between different groups of people.

3.6 Cultural values

Values are a central feature of human nature and are used to explain social and personal organization and motivational bases of attitudes and behaviour in humans. They are recognized across cultures, although no agreed-upon conception of basic human values exists and different value dimensions have been created (*e.g.* Schwartz, Trompenaars, Hall, GLOBE (House 2004), cited in Ng, Lee & Soutar:174-175). These basic human values are hypothesized to be universal since they are grounded in universal requirements of the human existence *i.e.* needs of individuals, social coordination and survival and welfare of groups. Nevertheless central features of values are that they shape what is important to us and function as guiding principles in life, influencing our attitudes, beliefs, goals, motivations, actions and standards etc., while their social function is to motivate and control the behaviour of group members (Parson 1951:72; Schwartz 2011:3-4).

A societal value-orientation on egalitarianism (Schwartz 2006:30) and social justice is associated with voluntary social commitment and equal status relationships (Leong & Ward 2006:801). Traditionally, these result in a higher interest in the sharing of means to equally benefit all those involved while maintaining mutual interdependence in society. In consequence, "those who hold egalitarian views will be more likely to support affirmative action when they believe past discrimination is responsible for racial or gender inequalities" (Taylor-Carter et al. 1995:142). This view is supported by a study of attitudes towards racial policies (Federico & Sidanius 2002), which found that preference for equality and egalitarianism was positively related to support for affirmative action, and only rose with the level of political sophistication (education etc.) (Federico & Sidanius 2002:161, 164; Taylor-Carter et al. 1995:141-142).

A societal harmony value-orientation is connected with peace and unity with nature (Schwartz 2006:31) and is thus theorized to promote a broader social collective orientation, symbiotic relationships and self-transcendence. Consequently, countries with a greater harmony-orientation are less likely to see a foreign culture in clash with the dominant culture and expect cultural assimilation as a requirement for acceptance, but on the other hand even show signs of suppressing prejudice (Katz & Hass 1988, cited in Leong & Ward 2006:807). Moreover as Leong & Ward (2006) say, these

cultures: "are able to accept diversity as part of a natural order, emphasizing the symbiotic rather than the hierarchical nature of relationships" (Leong & Ward 2006:807).

Cultures with more conservative values on the other hand, such as traditionalism, security and conformity (Schwartz 11:9), are more likely to display prejudice and negative attitudes towards minority groups, because cultural changes are perceived as threatening, which is even magnified in individuals of high political sophistication, (Federico & Sidanius 2002:166; Lambert & Chasteen 1997, cited in Leong & Ward 2006:800).

Research from cross-cultural psychology (Triandis 1989, cited in Leong & Ward 2006:807) implies that collectivistic value-orientations may be associated with more negative attitudes towards outgroups, since collectivistic cultures make more distinctions between ingroups and outgroups, are likely to display more ethno-centric biases and are more prone to ethnic supremacy aspirations (Leong & Ward 2006:800). Moreover, as stated by Sahlin's social distance theory (1968): "in-group members are morally committed to each other by feelings of solidarity, prescriptive altruism, moral obligation and trust, while hostility, opportunism, mistrust and fear dominate exchange relations where social distance is at its largest" (Kragh 2016:56). This indicates that the degree of solidarity corresponds to the degree of social distance (family, relatives, colleagues, acquaintances) in collectivistic groups and that negative attitudes can be expected where social distance is at its largest.

To summarize, cultures displaying values such as harmony and egalitarianism, seem more sensitive towards diversity, while cultures displaying conservatism and collectivism might display a more negative attitude towards outgroups. Nevertheless these assumptions are not sufficiently systematic to determine the value impact on the diversity perspective in a country.

4 Theoretical framework

4.1 Hofstede's cultural dimensions and their impact on diversity

The national value systems of a country can be modelled by the Dutch social psychologist and organizational anthropologist Geert Hofstede's model of four dimensions (now six dimensions) which he originally found researching *desired* work-related attitudes of IBM employees (116,000 survey questionnaires in 72 countries) in 1970 (Oudenhoven 2001:90). The dimensions of national-culture that Hofstede found to comprise universal differences were: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity. In 1991 the dimension long-term orientation was added, found with the research-collaboration (Chinese Value Survey, CVS) of Michael Bond and later in 2009, the indulgence dimensions found by Michael Minkov's research was included (Minkov & Hofstede 2011:11-13).

Hofstede's paradigm was a pioneer in "unpackaging" culture into independent dimensions, before which culture was often seen as a single variable. The work inspired many new theories and models such as from Schalom H. Schwartz (1994, cited in Schwartz 2006), Fons Trompenaars (1998, cited in Ng et al. 2006:174) and the GLOBE research (House 2004, cited in Ng et al. 2006:175), each finding new ways of classifying the dimensions (Hofstede 2005:32).

Although there are many dimensions that help to unravel and understand national culture *e.g.* high/low context communication and time dimensions (Hall 1976, cited in Ng et al. 2006:174), human nature, activity, relational (Kluckhorn and Strodtbeck 1961, cited in Ng et al. 2006:175) and the paternalism dimension (Dorfman and Howell 1988, cited in Ng et al. 2006:175), this thesis uses Hofstede's model and only the original four dimensions for its foundation. The availability of data, for all three countries under analysis, and the assumed relevancy of each of the dimensions, are compelling motivations for this. It was determined for this thesis, that scores over 50 are considered high, while below 50 are medium and low scores. The value-indices for each country are portrayed in table 1 and referred to throughout the analysis and are all derived from a public source (The Hofstede Centre 2015).

4.1.1 Power distance

The power distance dimension (PDI) can be defined as: “the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede 2005:46). PDI scores inform us about the dependence relationships in a nation. When PDI is low, as is the case in Finland (PDI 33) and Germany (PDI 35), there is a more cooperative and consultative relationship across power levels, with small emotional distance (interdependence between boss and subordinate). Inequalities among people are preferred to be minimized. In nations with high PDI, as in Sierra Leone (PDI 70), subordinates are dependent on bosses, which tend to be autocratic and paternalistic. The emotional distance is large and subordinates are afraid to disagree with authorities. Inequalities are expected and desired (Hofstede 2005:45-46). Furthermore, according to Ng, Lee & Soutar (2006) researching value congruencies across cultural value dimensions, PDI is positively related (0.45) with conservative values (see p. 15) (Ng et al. 2006:170).

It is assumed (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015:2139; Leong & Ward 2006:803; Sperancin 2010:60) that a higher PDI is associated with a more negative attitude towards diversity. This is because an unequal institutionalized social-order and hierarchical system is expected and accepted, meaning that being different according to one’s status is not considered problematic. This allows for a significant centralization of power in some groups, resulting in some identity-groups to be institutionally disadvantaged – including an access of opportunities – compared to higher status groups. Moreover, cultures with high PDI reflect a shared value of inequality, visible in policies and behaviours, more distinct and stratified social groups and outgroup prejudice (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015:2140).

4.1.2 Individualism versus collectivism

The degree of individualism (IDV) in a society explains whether: “the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group” (Hofstede 2005:74). When it is low, as in Sierra Leone (IDV 20) members learn to think of themselves as a “we” group and portray more collectivistic characteristics, such as mutual loyalty and dependence in the group, extended families, group-harmony, avoidance of direct confrontations,

shared resources and high-context communication. When it is high, as in Finland (IDV 63) and Germany (IDV 67) individual interests prevail, members learn to think of themselves as "I" and others are classified according to their individual characteristics and not their group membership. Characteristics such as individual ownership, speaking one's mind, nuclear (immediate) families and low-context communication are common. According to Bond's CVS study, people in "individualistic" countries value tolerance, harmony, trustworthiness, conservatism and an intimate friend as particularly important, whereas people in "collectivistic" countries value filial piety, chastity in women and patriotism (Hofstede 2005:74-75, 80). Similarly as for PDI, IDV correlates positively to the egalitarian dimension (0.51) and autonomy (0.53) and negatively towards conservatism (-0.56) (see p. 15) (Ng et al. 2006:170).

There are arguments that both high and low IDV support diversity. Low IDV, because: "collective values stress more the needs and equality within groups" (not neglecting the minority ones) (Sperancin 2010:60) and because there is a mutual obligation and protection of one another, established by notions of solidarity (Ng & Burke 2004:318). However, collectivistic groups also make greater distinctions between in- and out-groups, focusing on in-group loyalty and harmony, at the cost of outgroups (Triandis 1989, cited in Leong & Ward 2006:807).

Many African societies exhibit a tight social framework with strong and cohesive in-groups that are opposed to out-groups, emphasizing an in-group collectivism based on family ties, and religious or ethnic backgrounds (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015:2140).

In cultures with high IDV, these group tensions are not necessarily as apparent, or emphasized as much and greater acceptance for outgroup members is possible. People are viewed as individuals, not as members of a particular group. Thus higher IDV is associated with a more positive attitude towards diversity.

4.1.3 Masculinity versus femininity

The masculinity dimension (MAS) shows gender social roles in a society. When it is high, as in Germany (MAS 66) the society is masculine and: "gender roles are clearly

distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life" (Hofstede 2005:120). In feminine societies, such as Finland (MAS 26) these gender roles overlap, and both sexes are expected to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. Sierra Leone (MAS 40) shows moderate masculinity, with the tendency to be a more feminine society. Masculine societies attach much more importance to earnings, recognition, advancement and challenge, whereas feminine societies value cooperation, a nice living area, employment security and good relationships (Hofstede 2005:118-120).

In cultures with high MAS the perception of diverse groups being an additional source of threat and competition is fostered, since achievement and competition dictate social concerns. This can essentially be seen as promoting antagonistic intergroup relations (Leong & Ward 2006:800). In feminine societies however, there is greater emphasis on social justice, harmony, solidarity and equality *e.g.* an equal share of responsibilities at home and work between men and woman are expected. Moreover, new work-practices and policies are more easily accepted, making it easier to introduce and implement diversity practices (Ollo-Lopez et al. 2011, cited in Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015:2140). In feminine societies: "the willingness to integrate is stronger than the desire to exclude" (Speracin 2010:60), thus a low MAS is associated with a more positive attitude towards diversity (Esses, Dovodio, Jackson & Armstrong 2001:408).

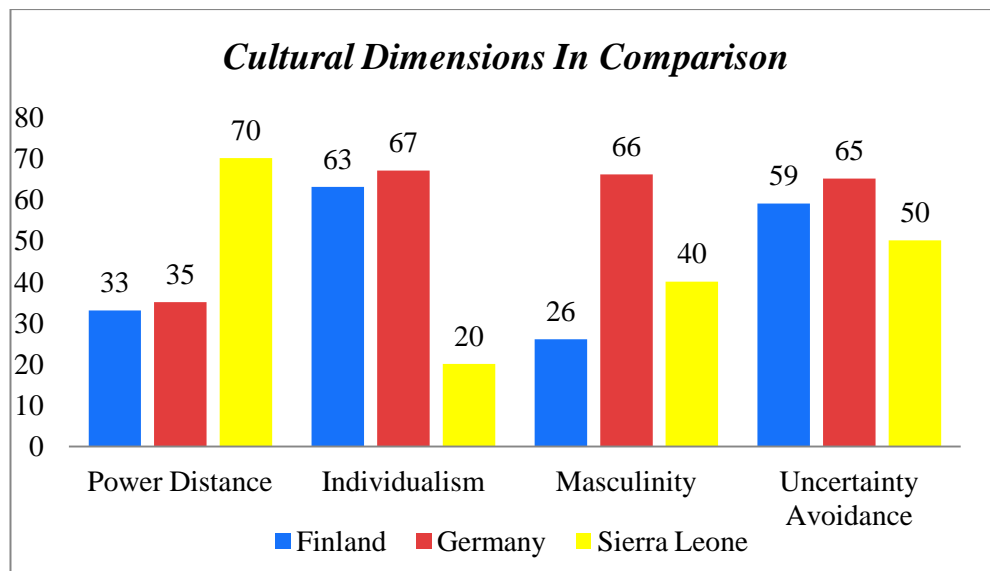
4.1.4 Uncertainty avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) displays: "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations" (Hofstede 2005:167). Cultures high in UAI, such as Finland (UAI 59), Germany (UAI 65) and Sierra Leone (UAI 50), try to reduce this with strict laws and written and unwritten rules, as well as by adopting precautions and safety measures to reduce anxiety, neuroticism and stress (which are higher than in countries with low UAI). Moreover, its people shun ambiguous situations, consider differences dangerous and look for structure in their institutions, relationships and organizations that would make events plainly predictable and interpretable. In countries low in UAI, uncertainty is a normal feature of life and differences are considered curious. Rules are more lenient, family life is more relaxed

and people are more comfortable in ambiguous situations (Hofstede 2005:167, 172, 176). UAI is also positively correlated (0.43) with the harmony dimension (see p. 15) (Ng et al. 2006:170).

High UAI is associated with conservatism (see p. 15), low tolerance for ambiguity and a dislike for novelty and change (Leong & Ward 2006:803). Views and behaviour that are different from one's own are threatening and not easily accepted. Low tolerance of ambiguity is argued to be a very significant impediment in the shaping of a positive diversity climate (Hofhuis et al. 2010 & Strauss et al. 2008, cited in Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015:2139). High UAI is thus linked to a more negative attitude towards diversity.

Table 1. Cultural dimensions in comparison (The Hofstede Centre 2015).



4.2 Assumptions based on cultural values

- 1) According to Hofstede's categorization of Sierra Leone's cultural values, their theoretical impact on diversity management is as follows:
 - a. High (70) PDI leads to an unequal social-order with discrimination, due to the status group, a common societal characteristic.
 - b. Low (20) IDV means that a strong group-orientation with interpersonal harmony within a group exists. As a consequence, in-group members are protected, supported and favoured over out-group members.

- c. Medium (40) MAS means that there is a balance between the gender roles, men concentrating equally on achievement, as well as on interpersonal harmony and the quality of life. Well-being of the collective is emphasized.
- d. Moderately high (50) UAI predicts a low tolerance for ambiguity and hardships regarding change and novelty.

→ Therefore I predict a negative approach existing in Sierra Leone towards diversity management with the societal preference of the “*reinforcing homogeneity*” perspective. Society is divided into many different status groups, inside which trust, harmony and caring exist. Intrusion, change or conflict in the groups are shunned.

2) The impact of German cultural values on diversity management are the following:

- a. Low (35) PDI shows that equality in society is desired. Cooperation, consultation and relationships across power-levels are possible.
- b. High (67) IDV predicts that individual aspirations prevail over group interests. People are seen more as individuals and group-membership is fluid.
- c. High (66) MAS leads to a competitive and achievement-oriented society with clearly defined (gender) roles.
- d. High (65) UAI predicts low tolerance towards ambiguity, many rules and structures to minimize the unknown.

→ Therefore I predict an unconcerned approach towards diversity management in Germany, with the disposition of a “*colour-blind*” perspective. Everyone is equal and responsible to compete for his or her own success in society. Differences and ambiguous situations are minimized.

3) The impact of Finnish cultural values on diversity management are as follows:

- a. Low (33) PDI shows that equality in society is desired, and cooperation, consultation and relationships across power-levels are possible.

- b. High (63) IDV predicts that individual aspirations prevail over group interests. People are seen more as individuals and group-membership is fluid.
 - c. Low (26) MAS means that gender-roles overlap and all society is concerned with welfare, social harmony and solidarity.
 - d. High (59) UAI predicts low tolerance towards ambiguity, many rules and structures to minimize the unknown.
- Therefore I predict a rather positive approach towards diversity management in Finland, with the dominance of the "fairness" or "access" perspective. Equality is desired, society is expected to provide welfare for all and to support its weaker members. Nevertheless, differences are still considered "dangerous" and should therefore be structured and precautions should be taken.

5 Research method

In order to answer the research question if/how national cultural values in Sierra Leone, Germany and Finland influence the particular perspective of diversity management (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013: Five Diversity Perspectives), a qualitative study was conducted. Semi-structured interviews (survey for email participants), including open and multiple-choice questions, were organized, in order to test the theoretical assumptions against the data collected from the interviews. These give a cross-sectional ("snapshot") understanding of the subject area today. The goal of the interviews was to perceive the differences in the approach and attitude towards diversity, together categorizing this into the *diversity perspective* framework, and then to discuss the influences towards this approach with a focus on the national culture and its values.

Of the 12 contacted individuals, 10 agreed to participate in the research. The interviews lasted approx 45min – 60min and were held in person (2), Skype (3), or per email (3), depending on the suitability of circumstances *i.e.* time, location and internet connection. A balanced amount of interviewees from each country was targeted, to be able to make a cross-cultural comparison from a similar foundation. Moreover, participants from different industries and backgrounds were chosen, to attain a diverse representation of active locals. The language of each interview was in the interviewee's native-level language, to encourage more natural and insightful answers. To ensure sufficient depth was achieved from all interviews, especially those conducted via email, the research topic, goal and scope were explained in adequate detail and direction during the interview was given to promote relevant answers.

Theoretical assumptions about the impact of cultural values on the diversity approach were made. These were based on Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions and previous related research (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay 2015:2139; Ng & Burke 2004:318; Sperancin 2010:60). Against these theoretical assumptions the findings of the interviews were compared to. Notes were taken during and after the interviews, to assemble data in order to identify themes that correspond to these assumptions. Common patterns and insights were searched for and a hermeneutic nature was used to formulate answers.

6 Results

6.1 Background information about the interviewees

The sample consists of two representatives for Finland (20%), four for Germany (40%) and four for Sierra Leone (40%). They were chosen, due to their position, experience and their knowledge/interest in diversity and multicultural topics.

Table 2. Background information about the interviewees

| Name | Function/Level | Country of Analysis | Nationality | Industry |
|------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| "F1" | employee | Finland | Finnish | IT |
| "F2" | managerial/higher | Finland | Finnish | Technical |
| "G1" | employee | Germany | German | Consulting |
| "G2" | employee | Germany | French | Online start-up |
| "G3" | employee | Germany | German | Recycling |
| "G4" | managerial/higher | Germany | German | Mining |
| "S1" | managerial/higher | Sierra Leone | German | Public Service |
| "S2" | managerial/higher | Sierra Leone | Sierra Leonean | Commerce |
| "S3" | managerial/higher | Sierra Leone | Italian | Construction |
| "S4" | managerial/higher | Sierra Leone | German | Health |

6.2 Analysis of results

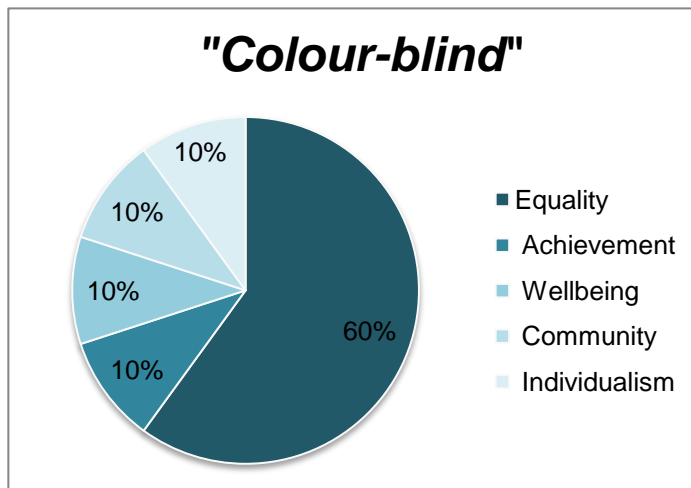
Table 3. Diversity perspectives results

| Country | Reinforcing homogeneity | Colour-blind | Fairness | Access | Learning & Integration | Total |
|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|----------|-------------|------------------------|----------|
| Germany | - | 0,625 | - | 0,375 | - | 1 |
| Finland | - | 0,75 | - | 0,25 | - | 1 |
| Sierra Leone | - | 0,25 | - | 0,75 | - | 1 |
| Average | - | 0,54 | - | 0,46 | - | 1 |

As can be seen in the table above (table 3) the "colour-blind" and "access" perspectives were the only perspectives implemented among the various participating organizations. The main rationale for "colour-blind", was hiring the most suitable candidate, irrespective of cultural differences, while "access" uses the "inside" knowledge of diverse employees for business objectives. In essence I can summarize

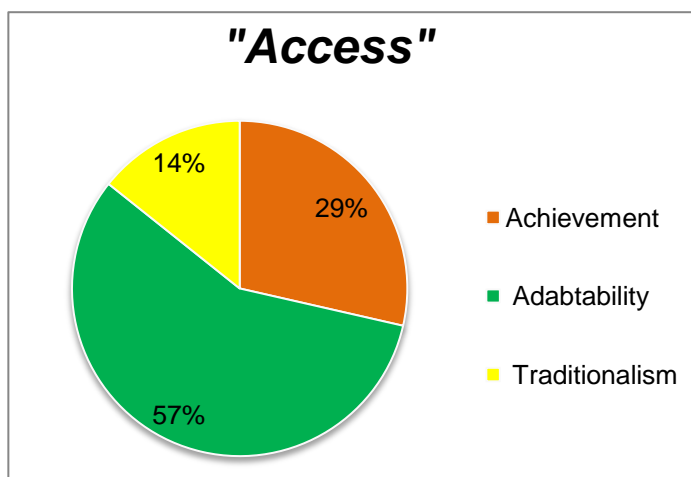
that among participants, the active pursuit of diversity was not a significant goal, only if tangible and short-term benefits were realizable. On the other hand, diversity was not seen as a problem either, so long as functional expertise was present and rules were followed.

Table 4. Results: value-impacts on the diversity perspective “*colour-blind*”



The main cultural value impacting the “*colour-blind*” perspective, as mentioned by the participants, was *equality* (60%) (see table 4). This implicates that, in a strongly equality-oriented society, the “*colour-blind*” perspective is considered to be the most equal and fair alternative, with significance only given to job requirements. Moreover achievement, individualism, community and wellbeing (10%) were said to have minor influences on this perspective.

Table 5. Results: value-impacts on the diversity perspective “*access*”



The main influence for the "access" perspective (see table 5) was *adaptability* (57%), followed by *achievement* (29%). This means that a willingness to adapt to market requirements, lead by a strong achievement-orientation; lay the value preferences supporting this perspective. *Traditionalism* (14%) is an exceptional impact, understood through the Sierra Leonean context and history (see p. 29).

6.2.1 Sierra Leone

In the research the "access" perspective was strongly preferred (75%) in a Sierra Leonean context. The second alternative was the "colour-blind" perspective (25%) (see table 3). In Sierra Leone, diversity is associated with differences in gender, age, ethnicity and experience offered, but mostly with education, which is a prerequisite in the selection process ("S3" 2016, pers. comm., 18 April) (see table).

All companies mentioned having a diverse workforce and favouring a multicultural organization, which: "has a tendency to be flexible and is able to adapt to changes. It has the advantage of attracting and retaining the best talent" ("S3" 2016, pers. comm., 18 April) and: "companies and organizations with a diverse make-up have been shown to be more effective and successful. This becomes even more important when the orientation is international, and reaches beyond a narrow focus" ("S4" 2016, pers. comm., 25 April). There is however a noticeable difference between domestic and multinational companies. While the domestic company, operating in Sierra Leone for over 100 years, aims at "hiring the best candidate available for each position regardless" ("S2" 2016, pers. comm., 4 April) and has naturally evolved a multicultural workforce, multinationals, operating in Sierra Leone, all prefer the "access" perspective. The identified benefits gained by the "access" perspective are the unique experiences and skills diverse groups bring for certain functions ("S1" 2016, pers. comm., 1 April), the prospective to reach different customer-segments, and the additional source of information regarding urgent cultural challenges ("S3" 2016, pers. comm., 18 April). Even the aim to represent the diversity of society for the sake of being better able to conform to a country and its needs, was a strong motivation for the "access" perspective.

Even though diversity is present in these workforces, there were some common aspirations that influenced the selection process: a competency model and qualifications ("S4" 2016, pers. comm., 25 April), value congruency ("S1" 2016, pers. comm., 1 April) and educational and professional background ("S2" 2016, pers. comm., 4 April). These all influence the development of a harmonious and company-wise suitable workforce composition.

In this context the cultural value assumptions gave inaccurate predictions about the attitude towards diversity. There was no perceivable correlation of the theoretically high PDI to relate to discrimination due to diversity or social status, contrary to the assumptions (see p. 22). In fact, in the domestic company ("S2" 2016, pers. comm., 4 April), *equality* was even said to be the main value influencing recruitment decisions, so long as the education and experience were satisfactory for the job. Moreover the "open-door policy" and ease of doing business were said to contribute to a harmonious business environment ("S3" 2016, pers. comm., 18 April) reflecting a smaller social distance between employees, even though a high PDI predicts otherwise.

The high UAI in Sierra Leone plays an interesting role in the attitude towards diversity. While traditionalism is still strongly preferred ("S4" 2016, pers. comm., 25 April), the need to adapt to changing circumstances and a high tolerance towards diversity is emphasized ("S3" 2016, pers. comm., 18 April). Theoretically, an adherence towards traditionalism and a low tolerance towards ambiguity does not foster a diverse environment (see p.22), which in Sierra Leone however is not provable. Therefore I assume, that in Sierra Leone diversity is not associated with the feeling of ambiguity or the UAI index, since diverse groups (ethnically, culturally etc.) have been present in the country for a long time and are an accepted part of society.

The medium MAS was mentioned to support the "access" perspective and a business- and achievement-oriented focus on diversity ("S1" 2016, pers. comm., 1 April), which leads me to consider that in an achievement-oriented environment, diversity is more likely to be tolerated in the pursuit for better results and competitively relevant knowledge, in contrast to the theoretical assumption (see p. 22). However, gender roles were mentioned to be very segregated ("S1" 2016, pers. comm., 1 April), hinting towards a higher masculinity index for Sierra Leone.

IDV was not mentioned to have any impact on the attitude towards diversity, demonstrating that the aspirations towards oneself or the group do not have any considerable weight on the diversity perspective in a Sierra Leonean context. Although, since Sierra Leone is a collectivistic society and a diverse composition has been a stable and enduring part of society, a collectivistic orientation might prevail to include members of diverse groups, thus indicating towards an integrated Sierra Leonean identity.

The assumption that a negative approach towards diversity, with preference of the *"reinforcing homogeneity"* perspective, would exist in Sierra Leone, was completely mistaken. Sierra Leone shows a very favourable environment for diversity, where the only reliable value-index (for the assumptions) seems to be the moderately high MAS, promoting achievement-oriented goals in business.

Nevertheless, the most prominent factor influencing Sierra Leone's positive attitude towards diversity is its historical background, that it was diverse from the very start ("S4" 2016, pers. comm., 25 April). Getting along with different groups is an essential for co-existence and trade relations. However, as was mentioned by "S2" (2016): "there is a high and superficial tolerance for diversity" ("S2" 2016, pers. comm., 4 April), meaning that diversity, including the acceptance of different values and laws for different communities, is tolerated, but is not used for the purpose of a "learning environment", but as a measure of mutual co-existence. The statement that: "there seems to be a lack of appreciation and understanding for non-like cultures or backgrounds" ("S2" 2016, pers. comm., 4 April) suggests a challenge of diversity in the future, while the difficulty of finding diverse candidates, who match the mandatory qualifications and competences is a challenge of more general character in an African context ("S4" 2016, pers. comm., 25 April).

6.2.2 Germany

For Germany the *"colour-blind"* perspective was preferred (62.5%), followed by the *"access"* perspective (37.5%) (see table 3). In Germany diversity is associated with ethnic and cultural diversity and emergent language, value and belief differences.

Moreover differences in gender, age and education/professional background were also considered ("G1" 2016, pers. comm., 12 April; "G4" 2016, pers. comm., 26 April).

There was a noticeable difference, of the attitude towards diversity, between the traditional German company ("G3" 2016, pers. comm., 21 April) and the younger companies operating internationally with a more flexible structure ("G1" 2016, pers. comm., 12 April; "G2" 2016, pers. comm., 11 April). While the traditional company did not seem to focus much on diversity issues and prefers a homogeneous workforce with similar professional, language, value and competency backgrounds, young companies operating internationally thrive on a diverse workforce composition.

The "*access*" perspective was applied in organizations operating globally to understand the culture of the customer and to acquire language skills to be able to cater to an international customer base. The loss of knowledge (see p. 8), when international colleagues leave, was identified as a potential challenge ("G1" 2016, pers. comm., 12 April), whereas one company has countered this by: "adaptive learning and integration of teams" ("G4" 2016, pers. comm., 26 April). Nevertheless all German organizations implemented a "*colour-blind*" approach in hiring practices, when not taking specialised market requirements into account.

In both young companies, diversity was part of everyday life, with a very international workforce, in which Germans were even at a minority (around 40/60). While one ("G1" 2016, pers. comm., 12 April) praised the importance of the special organizational "spirit" and know-how in its recruitment considerations, the other, ("G2" 2016, pers. comm., 11 April) brought cohesion into its workforce through similar ages and professional backgrounds. On the other hand, functional and age diversity were also emphasized ("G4" 2016, pers. comm., 26 April) *i.e.* people with mixed educational backgrounds, and optimal age structures: "successor planning and an equilibrium between experienced people and newcomers" ("G4" 2016, pers. comm., 26 April).

The cultural value with the strongest positive influence towards the diversity perspective was the low PDI and the importance of equality in the workplace, supporting the theoretical assumption on page 22 and indeed confirming that a low PDI has a positive influence on diversity in Germany. This is portrayed through efforts

such as same rights and salaries for comparable jobs, and is strongly preferred due to its compliance with German law and its promising benefits such as long-term motivation, cooperation and teamwork ("G4" 2016, pers. comm., 26 April).

In Germany, the high MAS was also considered to be supporting the "access" perspective (see p. 27) and the argument that a high MAS would be in fact beneficial for diversity measures, contrary to the theoretical assumption (see p. 22). The emphasis on achievement serves as a form of interdependent goal, motivating the employees to succeed and educate themselves, and seeing diversity as an opportunity to exploit ("G1" 2016, pers. comm., 12 April).

The high IDV was seen to promote the "colour-blind" perspective ("G3" 2016, pers. comm., 21 April), taking into account individual characteristics and achievements, instead of concentrating on group interests. It therefore supports the theoretical assumptions (see p. 22) of a moderately supportive diversity environment, since everyone is responsible for their own welfare and it will thus be easier to obtain a chance, than if strong group-orientations dominate decisions.

Theoretically a high UAI fosters a negative approach towards diversity (see p. 20), although this was not demonstrated in the study. The interviewees considered open-mindedness and adaptability to be important German values encouraging diversity ("G1" 2016, pers. comm., 12 April; "G4" 2016, pers. comm., 26 April), thus indicating that a high UAI could indeed have a negative effect on the approach towards diversity, but the necessity for it to be countered with measures of adaptation etc. in order for it to be rewarding. Even though a multicultural workforce was preferred by most, forms of assimilation of the rules were promoted by all, making it a possibility, that diversity is tolerated, as long as common norms, rules and values are not jeopardized.

The assumption that a "colour-blind" approach towards diversity would prevail in Germany was indeed the case. The biggest influence was the fostering of equality (low PDI) and achievement (high MAS) across industries, emphasizing requirements such as education and experience above all. However, contrary to the assumptions (see p. 22) differences were emphasized, explored and adapted to, especially for market-access

and profit reasons. This suggests that Germany is indeed starting to use its diversity and is searching for measures to effectively manage this.

6.2.3 Finland

In Finland the “*colour-blind*” perspective was strongly preferred (75%), followed by the “*access*” perspective (25%) (see table 3). Finland was mentioned to be a relatively homogeneous country, so diversity is associated with ethnically different people. Moreover generational differences and functional diversity were addressed (“F1” 2016, pers. comm., 28 March; “F2” 2016, pers. comm., 28 March).

Among the Finnish companies, there was a tendency to prefer a homogeneous workforce, especially of education, mind-set, professional expertise and capabilities. Apart from these requirements both companies were open to diverse employees, when practical complications *e.g.* language was not an issue. The employment of foreigners is difficult when the working-language is Finnish, because it is a difficult language to learn and use. Nevertheless, if language skills and the right attitude are present “everyone can succeed in Finland” (“F2” 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). In essence “we hire the best candidate we can find for the job and have the same requirements for everybody” (“F2” 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). To benefit from age and functional diversity, mentoring pairs are a common practice, where an exchange and integration of knowledge and experiences can take place (“F2” 2016, pers. comm., 28 March).

On the other hand, when the common language is English and the organization operates internationally (F1: 98% of profits from abroad), there is invariably a much more positive attitude towards diversity, especially as the educational level rises (“F1” 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). A diverse employment-pool is seen as a way to get the best talent available with up-to-date knowledge, and access to unique expertise *i.e.* language skills and information about customer-segments and programs. Diverse teams (*i.e.* 40% foreigners) were common in the organization (“F1” 2016, pers. comm., 28 March), and unity was promoted through the professional background and a common “IT language”.

The most prominent cultural value towards the diversity-impact was the low PDI with a desire for societal equality and equal practices. Same requirements, equal wages and fairness of access, relating especially to gender equality, have great significance ("F2" 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). These practices promote the intrinsic belief of equality and the tolerance of understandable differences ("F1" 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). This corresponds with the theoretical assumption and the influence of low PDI towards diversity (see p. 22-23). Moreover, this value-orientation is in direct correlation with the preference of the "*colour-blind*" perspective, since all Finnish organizations (Fin: 100%) whose value focus was equality, selected this approach.

Femininity and well-being were also mentioned ("F2" 2016, pers. comm., 28 March), but contrary to the theory, as a detriment of the attitude towards diversity. Diverse members can be seen as a threat to the established social harmony, especially in a calm and timid Finnish group, and have difficulties in the group-socialization process, which is an important part of work-welfare ("F2" 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). Assimilation of group norms and practices is preferred ("F2" 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). This indirectly supports the argument of high MAS to be better for diversity initiatives (see page 28).

IDV was not considered in the interviews, reinforcing the argument on page 28-29 that group interests do not always have a considerable impact on the diversity perspective, also in a Finnish context.

The high UAI was seen as a slight detriment to diversity initiatives, confirming the theoretical assumption (see p. 23), which can be however countered through mutual trust and time to get to know the new employee ("F2" 2016, pers. comm., 28 March). This supports the suggestion, that in order to overcome a high UAI, balancing measures such as trust, understanding of one another and rules are crucial in ensuring positive cooperation.

Contrary to the assumptions (see p. 24), there is not a particularly positive approach towards diversity management in Finland and the "*colour-blind*" perspective was mostly preferred. Diversity is not seen as a strategy to learn from others, but as a means to recruit the best candidate and to obtain more knowledge. The biggest

positive influence towards diversity initiatives was the emphasis on equality (low PDI), while the high avoidance of ambiguity (high UAI) and strong focus on social cohesion (low MAS) can be seen as challenges. Equal chances are liked to be given, when the candidate seems trustworthy and knowledgeable and is not seen as threatening group harmony ("F2" 2016, pers. comm., 28 March).

7 Conclusions and recommendations

The first key finding is that among the participants the perspectives: "*colour-blind*" and "*access*" were exclusively preferred. This provides important insights into the motivation to diversify, these being: pursuing diversity for immediate business benefits, and ignoring cultural differences and hiring the most adept candidate (see p. 26-27). These both support the rationale of hiring diverse candidates only for their profitability, derived either through superior suitability or specialized knowledge. This means that with the use of a superior goal (*e.g.* profit; here cultural differences need to be taken into account), differences might not even be a problem and be instead easily tolerated. However, it is doubtful that this would eventually lead to a "learning environment", where all members feel motivated to learn from differences. Learning is an individual choice, but powerful incentives could encourage a more positive approach towards diversity.

Moreover, the model (Podsiadlowski 2013: Five Diversity Perspectives) seems limited in understanding the consequences of the various motivations to diversify, and insights into the original *diversity management* paradigm (Dass & Parker 1999; Thomas & Ely 1996) are necessary to understand the organizational consequences of each perspective. The rationale for each of the five perspectives proved to be accurate in all three countries under analysis, meaning that the model is of great value, if the consequences of each motivation would be further analyzed.

Some cultural values showed distinct impacts on the diversity management perspective *i.e.* equality for the "*colour-blind*" perspective and adaptability for the "*access*" perspective. These cultural orientations might predict the preference of a certain diversity management perspective, when dominant. This is the case in Finland, where a dominant equality-orientation was correlated with the "*colour-blind*" perspective, and in Sierra Leone, where a dominant orientation to adapt, supported the "*access*" perspective. From this I can presume that there is indeed a more suitable approach towards diversity management for every context and that the approach towards diversity must always be tailored towards the contextual and cultural environment *i.e.* finding incentives, structures and methods that work for the specific environment.

Cultural values, as proposed by Hofstede (2005), were inaccurate and insufficient to explain differences of diversity management across cultures. They do have an impact on the approach towards diversity management, but mostly in an European context. In Germany and Finland, a low PDI was proven to support the a positive diversity approach, by instilling values of equality and fairness, while a high UAI was confirmed to be a challenge, one that is being actively addressed in Germany through measures of adaptation. Contrary to previous research, (see p. 20) a high MAS was found to support diversity initiatives, by promoting achievement over social harmony. This is an interesting finding, one that can be promoted through education and organizational culture, since an achievement-orientation is also a question of practice. The high IDV was not found to have a direct impact on diversity initiatives (see p. 29, 33), demonstrating that the group or individual orientation of a culture can be both supportive of as well as opposing diversity attitudes. The essential question is more likely, that who is considered to belong, and who is perceived to be a threat for the group. For Sierra Leone, all predictions, except the moderately high MAS (or more specifically, the achievement-orientation), were inaccurate, demonstrating that the veracity of the theoretical assumptions (see p. 21-22) is questionable in a non-Western climate and more qualitative and quantitative research into the specific values, habits, cultures, beliefs and practices and their impact on behaviour is needed.

The cultural value-dimensions model chosen (Hofstede 2005) might pose a limitation to the research, since the value-indices seem very simplified, are subject to inaccuracy (especially in Sierra Leone), and other value models might cover aspects more relevant to the study (*e.g.* Schwartz, with values such as: achievement, harmony etc.). For further research, especially in an African context, it is advisable to make own value collections for the specific culture, and thereafter compare these to known value dimensions. Only in this way interesting nuances and variations will be perceived.

Additionally a limitation is presented by the choice of participants and their selection as a "suitable" organization representative of the national culture. It is assumed that the organization is indeed influenced by national culture values, but organizational culture effects are not taken into account. For future research a better differentiation and a more profound study into these cultures and their differences is necessary to obtain more accurate answers.

Furthermore the sample of participants is very small and the answers are too subjective, making it problematic to generalize the findings and to be certain of their veracity. Diversity management seems a sensitive topic and participants might have answered what is considered "politically correct" and not how it actually is. To get more accurate and truthful answers, complete anonymity of participants was employed, but the veracity of statements is still not guaranteed. Nevertheless this thesis provides a basis for study, against which future results can be compared. It also raises the hypothesis that a high MAS might actually be beneficial for diversity, which would need to be tested in various environments. For future related research, it is recommended to use qualitative data to create a starting model and assumptions (*e.g.* these one's), which is then tested quantitatively (large survey) to make clearer assumptions about the actual (and customized) national culture value-impacts on the perspective towards diversity management.

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Interview for Bachelor's Thesis on Diversity Management

Goal: *To understand the national approach towards diversity, as well as determine the influences of cultural values.*

1. Do you, as a company, focus on diversity and on which aspects specifically? (e.g. gender, age, race, education, religion, ethnicity, functional). Give your relevant definition of diversity.

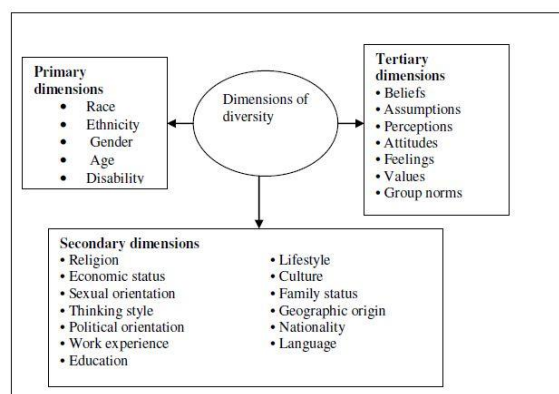


Figure 1: Dimensions of Diversity, Adapted from Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005).

2. How would you describe your approach towards diversity (you can position yourself on the paradigm below)? Where would you like to be? Is this the most cost-efficient/beneficial/strategically valuable?
 - a. **Reinforcing homogeneity** – People who are similar fit better into our company. Our organizational goals are best reached under conditions of shared values and a common goal.
 - b. **Colour-blind** – Those that match the job qualification fit into our company. We aim at hiring the best candidate available for each position.
 - c. **Fairness** – We provide equal employment opportunities and support disadvantaged groups. We want to become more diverse because all humans are equal and deserve an equal chance.
 - d. **Access** – In certain functions people with different backgrounds are very valuable. With different cultural groups represented on our staff, we will be better able to serve our clients/customers from various backgrounds.

- e. **Integration and learning** – The work process of diverse people is a resource for learning and adaptive change. We want to become more diverse because there is a lot to learn from different cultures. As a result we can perform our work better and define new goals.
- 3. Can you tell me about the practices you have in place to encourage diversity *e.g.* quotas, board diversity etc?
- 4. Pick the one you prefer:
 - a. **Monolithic organization** – homogeneous workforce
 - b. **Plural organization** – conform to laws about workplace equality
 - c. **Multicultural organization** – fosters and values diversity, incorporates all members via pluralism and acculturation
- 5. Why did you choose this option?
- 6. What are the biggest challenges you can foresee for your company concerning diversity in the near future?

National culture:

- 7. How are diversity initiatives influenced by public pressures in your company, do you have an example? (*e.g.* for legitimacy or image reasons)
- 8. What values in your country encourage diversity?
- 9. Select the most suitable which support your answer in question 2.
 - a. Equality
 - b. Achievement/Ambition
 - c. Adaptability
 - d. Well-being
 - e. Community
 - f. Freedom
 - g. Power
 - h. Traditionalism
- 10. Pick the most suitable for you (opinion):
 - a. Assimilation: adopt rules of dominant society
 - b. Multiculturalism & pluralism: protect the diversity based on shared belonging
 - c. Segregation & exclusion: separation between ethnic-cultural communities