

Cultural Perceptions of Group Work

Comparison between Nepalese and Finnish students

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this thesis was to understand the differences in cultural perceptions related to group work between Nepalese and Finnish students.

Literature review discusses some key cultural frameworks elaborating on Hofstede's dimensions of culture. Regarding the different group perception that might be affected by these cultural dimensions were communication, evaluation, leadership and decision making, convincing, expressing disagreements, perception of time and scheduling and approaches to building relationship and trust.

Questionnaire survey was used to understand the differences in perceptions between Nepalese and Finnish students. One-Hundred and forty-six responses were collected from students from many different universities of applied sciences out of which 84 consisted of either Nepalese and Finnish students.

The study shows that there is clearly a huge difference in the way group works are understood and implemented between these two nationalities. The most important group process that is culturally affected is perhaps relationship building and generally how tasks are perceived. There were some differences in the way how disagreements are expressed. In many cases, however, the results did not confirm the theoretical expectations.

This study was primarily done in educational settings and therefore applicable to the group work in multicultural environments in that context. However, since the findings discusses differences in perceptions of Nepalese and Finnish students regarding group work, it can also be applicable in business settings when the group work in this context comprises of multicultural groups from these backgrounds.

Key words: Culture, cultural dimensions, Hofstede, group work

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and statement of the research problem

When we consider different business or educational context, the importance of team or group-work has grown significantly. In the business context, the use of group-based problem solving is being used frequently. In the educational setting, the use of group-based projects and tasks are increasingly part of the norm. (Mockaitis, Rose, Zettinig & Peter 2012.) Not only is the ability to work in a group increasingly proving to be a significant skill in educational and business life, but quite much aspects of the performance of the business or education are also dependent upon the ability to work in a group.

Work groups can both be heterogenous or homogenous in terms of the group member composition. Whereas in heterogenous groups there can be group members belonging to different demographic, cultural, national groups, a homogenous group is, confined to similar group member characteristics (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt & Jonsen 2010). Increasingly, due to globalization of businesses and educational institutions, more diverse group members are the norm. Specially, members belonging to different cultural groups have to form groups in solving different business and education related tasks and projects (Popov, Brinkman, Biemans, Mulder, Kuznetsov & Noroozi 2012). In this context, this research is focused on understanding how working in a multicultural group is different from working in a rather homogenous group. More specifically, the focused research question of this thesis is to understand how the perceptions regarding group work are different in a multicultural group. Even more specifically this study will be focused on analysing the differences in attitudes of students regarding working in a group from the perspectives of the Finnish and Nepalese students.

The differences in perceptions regarding group work because of diverse cultural background will be elaborated later in the literature review section but primarily the author is concerned with few specific characteristics of

group work. These include communication, evaluation, persuasion, leadership, decision making, trust, disagreement and scheduling (Meyer 2014). The focus of this thesis is to understand how each of these group work related issues are different in a multicultural group, that is how cultural factors influence different group processes and consequently group performance.

1.2 Research objectives

The research question as stated previously is to understand how cultural factors influence different group processes and in effect the group performance. Primarily, this study will be focused in the differences between cultural dimensions of Finnish and Nepalese national culture and how that consequently shapes the attitudes towards working in a multicultural group for Nepalese and Finnish students. In order to conduct this research, first different dimensions related to culture which has some bearing in the group work will be first identified. This will be further elaborated in the theory section. Some established models related to cultural dimensions will be highlighted. After this, several group works will be studied. Although, it is mentioned that specially eight specific group works will be studied, several other relevant group related issues will be elaborated in the theory section. Thereafter, a survey will be designed based on items that are related to both the group works and the cultural dimensions. This survey will then be implemented to different students in various University of Applied Science and various recommendations suggested from the findings.

1.3 Research limitations

Although there are several factors other than culture which affect the dynamics of a group, they are outside the scope of this thesis. This thesis will only be focused on the multicultural elements that has direct bearing to the group dynamics and performance. Similarly, the study of group dynamics can include many different factors other than those eight specific mentioned earlier, but to make the research more focused, primary

emphasis will be given to these group work related issues. Additionally, in this thesis the survey is conducted among university students only, but a survey administered among employees belonging from different cultural background would have shed light on issues that are more relevant to the business context. This could still have some implications to understanding how culture affects the group processes. Although at the end the survey respondents were 146 in total including various nationalities, for the purpose of the study only respondents from Nepal and Finland will be compared for cross-cultural assessment and how that leads to attitudes towards group work in general. The rest of the students who filled up the questionnaire survey were from other nationalities and so were not included in the final analysis.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The first chapter of the thesis sets the context of the study by discussing the research problem and questions. It also discusses the scope of the research. In chapter 2, existing literature related to group work and culture will be elaborated. Existing models related to cultural dimensions will be discussed and related to various group works. In Chapter 3, the method of the thesis will be discussed. This thesis uses questionnaire survey as the main research method to collect data. In this chapter, basic assumptions about the methodology, the survey design and implementation will be discussed. In Chapter 4, main results will be discussed including the sample characteristics. Chapter 5 will be focused on discussing and analysing the survey results focusing on the literature and the research aim. In the end, in Chapter 6, major conclusions will be discussed, and basic recommendations and limitations provided considering the findings of the thesis.

2 CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Defining culture

Culture has been defined as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from those of another” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 4). The basic characteristics of culture is that they are interrelated, shared and learned. Culture is related to many different aspects of the society, are shared by the group of people and are always learned through the process of enculturation. For example, culture has also been defined as "ways of living, built up by a group of human beings, that are transmitted from one generation to another” (Keegan & Green 2015, 126).

Culture is a complex phenomenon and is often multi-layered. Often culture has been identified with the visual metaphor of an iceberg where the visible elements is only a small part of the broad phenomenon. Culture can be differentiated as material and non-material culture. All the artefacts, language, clothing, lifestyle, dietary preferences etc. has been identified as the material part of the culture. The non-material aspects of the culture is even deeper and comprises attitudes, beliefs and values that are ingrained in a society or an individual. The non-material aspect of the culture since they are ingrained and learned over a period of time are very difficult for the outsiders to understand. (Hollensen 2011.)

Additionally, culture since it is defined as the mental programming of a category of people (Hofstede et al. 2010, 15), culture can be defined at multiple levels and they interact with each other. For example, culture can also be identified as organizational culture, professional culture, industry culture, functional culture and so on (Schneider & Barsoux 2003). However, in this thesis, culture is defined as the mental programming of one national group versus another and so is focused on the national culture.

2.2 Cultural dimensions

In order to understand and to compare cultures across different cultures, several scholars have identified different dimensions of culture. One of the most well known division of different dimensions of culture are Hofstede's five dimensions of culture which includes power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and time-orientation (Hofstede et al. 2010). This is not the only framework that are used and accepted as different dimensions of culture. The other significant frameworks that have been used include Schwartz's seven value types (Schwartz 2006), Hall's classification of culture (Hall 1959), World Value Survey (WVS) (Inglehart & Welzel 2013) and GLOBE project (House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman 2002). Since most of the other cultural analysis frameworks such as Schwartz's seven value types, Hall's classification of culture, World Value Survey (WVS) and GLOBE project comprises Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the theoretical framework will be based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Similarly, since the communication aspect of group works is largely understandable through Hall's classification of culture (Hall 1959), it will also be elaborated on the coming sections.

2.2.1 Hall's high context and low context cultures

According to anthropologist Edward T. Hall, culture can be differentiated in terms of whether they are high context or low context cultures. Ordinarily, even though the dimensions of high context and low context is associated with the communication practices in different cultures this classification can also be used to identify cultures in a broad context. A high context culture is a culture where communication is not direct but considers the subtle contexts that exist while delivering the communication. In a low context culture, often the message is explicit. In a high context culture, the communication is often implicit, tacit and non-verbal. (Hall 1959.)

In addition to communication dimensions, a high context culture is differentiated from low context culture in many other aspects. For example, people dress in order to express socio-cultural roles in a high context culture

whereas in a low context culture it is used to communicate success or job roles. Even the culinary preferences in the high context culture are considered as social event whereas in a low context culture this are mostly for convenience and fast delivery. Sense of self and space is also different across these cultures. Whereas formal gestures such as bows and hugs are used in a high context culture, informal handshake are used in a low context culture. Maintenance of harmony is the overriding concern in a high context culture whereas confrontation and conflict might be considered necessary and natural in a low context culture. (Hall 1960.)

The conception of time is also different in these two types of cultures: as punctuality and linear time is adopted in a low context culture whereas the conception of time in a high context culture is either circular or polychronic. In terms of family beliefs, low context cultures value youth and often live in a nuclear family but in a high context cultures, old age is respected, and people often live in an extended family. In terms of societal values, low context cultures tend to be those which exhibit egalitarianism and gender equality which might not be existent in majority of the high context cultures. High context culture can be characterized by fatalism and hierarchical society. When business context is considered specifically, high context culture value relationships as part of the business culture, whereas the low context culture might be task and deal focused. (Hall 1960.) According to Hall's classification, (Hollensen 2011) has categorized different countries into this taxonomy which is reproduced in Figure 1 in slightly adapted manner. According to this classification, Nepal is quite clearly situated as a high context culture whereas Finland is quite comfortably situated as a low context culture.

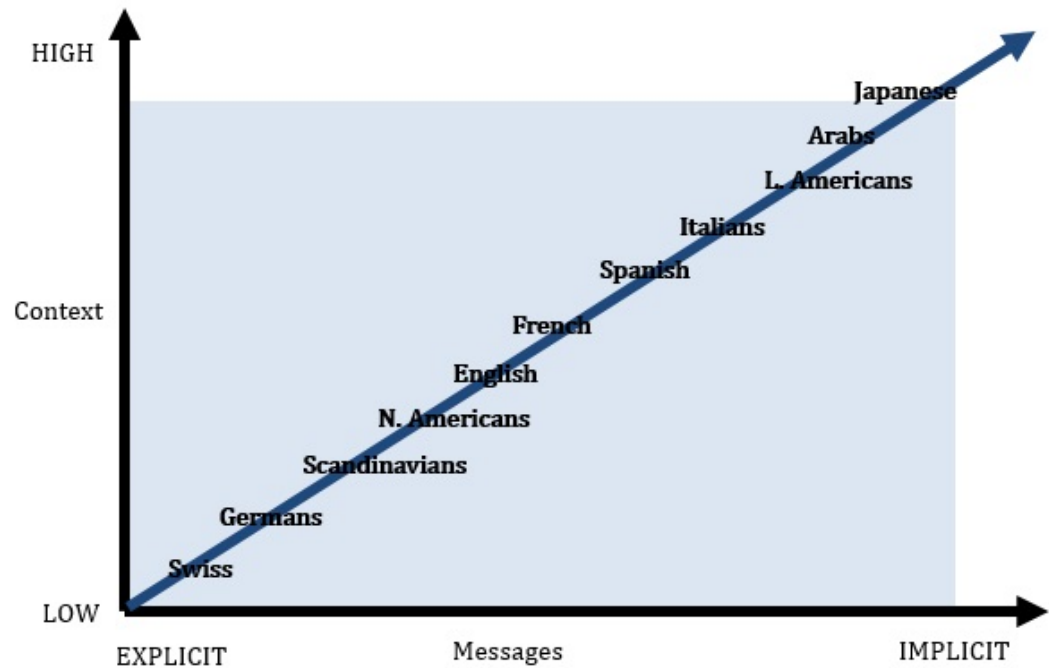


Figure 1 Hall's classification of different national cultures (Hollensen 2011)

2.2.2 Hofstede's classification of culture

Hofstede (Hofstede 1983) uses six different dimensions to categorize culture. These include individualism, power distance, masculinity, time orientation, indulgence and uncertainty avoidance. Each of these dimensions will be elaborated in this section while comparing Nepal and Finland in these dimensions at the same time.

2.2.2.1 Individualism

According to Hofstede (Hofstede 1983) culture can be understood by using five different dimensions. In order to make comparison between different cultures one of the dimensions that can be used is the dimensions called Individualism. Individualism deals with the extent to which people in a culture value individual goals over the group goals and in which group harmony is desired over the individual achievement of goals. More precisely individualism refers to the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members (Hofstede Insights 2018). In an individualistic country people define their self image through "I" rather than "we" and people in

collectivist countries belong to various in-groups through which individuals are taken care of in exchange of society.

In terms of this dimension, Nepal scores 30 and Finland scores 63 (Hofstede Insights 2018). This signifies that Nepal is a highly collectivist country in comparison to Finland where the individualism score is pretty high. This would suggest that in Nepal, identification with the collective goals and group identification is the norm. It would also suggest that in comparison to Finland, Nepalese society is structured around extended family values where the collective opinion is important to consider.

2.2.2.2 Power distance

The second dimension that is used in understanding the differences in culture is called power distance. This is defined as the degree to which power differences and inequality in society is accepted as normal (Hofstede Insights 2018). A high-power distance culture is hierarchical in nature where the differences between people of different strata of the society is high. In terms of power distance dimension, Nepal scores 65 and Finland scores 33 (Hofstede Insights 2018). This signifies that Nepal has highly unequal distribution of power in comparison to Finland. The society is also structured in terms of hierarchy with appropriate roles assigned for the members of the society. In that aspect, Finland is a much more egalitarian countries where it can be assumed to have equal distribution of power. In terms of businesses, it would suggest that there is a wider gap between the subordinates and leaders and that the role of status is more important in Nepal than in Finland.

2.2.2.3 Masculinity

The third dimension of national culture as highlighted by (Hofstede 1983) is masculinity. This dimension is defined as the degree to which individuals in a society want to be the best (masculine) or prefer to do what they like best (feminine) (Hofstede Insights 2018). In a masculine society achievement and success is prioritized over nurturing and caring for others. In such a

way, status is more important than the quality of life. In this dimension, Nepal scores 40 and Finland scores 26. In that respect, both of the societies are considered to be espousing feminine or nurturing values although it is much more predominant in Finland than in Nepal. This signifies that both of the cultures emphasize well being and caring of the other members of the society rather than working hard for achievement, status and material gain.

2.2.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance

The fourth dimension described by Hofstede (Hofstede 1983) is uncertainty avoidance. The extent to which a society feels uncomfortable with unpredictable situations and try to avoid those situations through various means is defined as uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede Insights 2018). Some cultures feel very threatened by ambiguous situations and are very risk averse. These cultures try to establish rules and regulations to avoid such uncomfortable situations. In a low uncertainty avoidance culture people are willing to take risk and are open to unpredictable situations as part of life.

In this dimension, Nepal scores 40 and Finland scores 59 (Hofstede Insights 2018). This shows that Nepalese culture is much more open towards unpredictability of everyday situations and are more risk-takers. Whereas, Finnish culture, being high in uncertainty avoidance prefers to avoid uncertainty through structured rules and developed norms in the society.

2.2.2.5 Long term orientation

The last dimension described by Hofstede (Hofstede 1983) is the time orientation. According to (Hofstede Insights 2018), it is the degree to which a culture maintains link with the past in dealing with the present and the future. Whereas some culture maintains link with the past and find it difficult to break away from traditions, other cultures have a long-term orientation towards future and prepare for the future in advance. In recent times, Hofstede has also introduced a sixth dimension dealing with the aspects of indulgence and restraint. Some societies give importance to curbing needs for immediate fulfilment of desires (restraint) whereas in other culture

immediate gratification of desires is thought to be natural (indulgence). The dimensions proposed by Hofstede are indeed valuable in trying to compare cultural values systematically.

In the long-term orientation dimension, Finland scores 38 and there are no comparative scores available for Nepal. Similarly, in the Indulgence dimension, Finland scores 57 and there are no scores available for Nepal. In the long-term orientation dimension Finland scores lower which means that Finland is more of a short-term oriented culture. (Hofstede Insights 2018.) The Indulgence dimension shows that Finland has medium indulgence which means that short term gratification is not that emphasized. Although, the scores for Nepal for both of these dimensions are not provided, it can be safely assumed that Nepal has more long-term orientation and restraint in comparison to Finland. In the Nepaleses culture, there is much more emphasis for traditional values and how that impacts future. People are also generally more focused toward saving, working and planning for the future rather than seeking instant gratification. Long term orientation and restraint is built into the cultural values rooted in religious values which is predominantly Hindu community. Figure 2 shows Hofstede illustration of the cross-cultural comparison by using this approach. The figure compares Nepal and Finland in these dimensions.

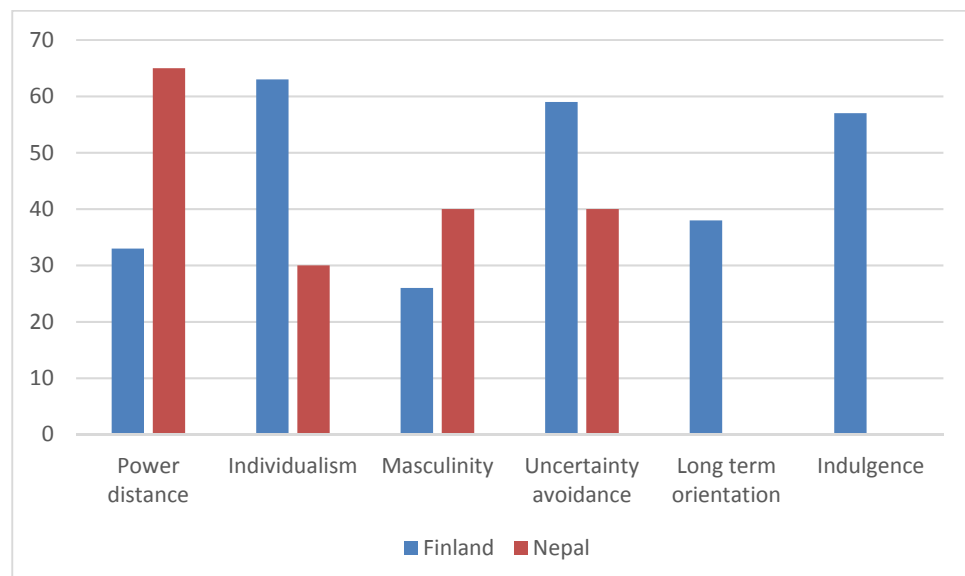


Figure 2 Comparison of Hofstede's cultural dimensions between Finland and Nepal (Hofstede Insights 2018).

2.3 Culture and group work

Many researches have dealt with group dynamics and the impact of heterogenous groups on this dynamic (Stahl et al. 2010). However, there are very few researches that explicitly deals with the the impact of culture on perceptions about group work. One such source discusses that there are basically eight key group work related factors which are influenced by the culture and these are: communicating, evaluating, leading, persuading, deciding, trusting, disagreeing and scheduling. (Meyer 2014.) This section will explore all of these in detail.

2.3.1 Communication in a group

The most important group process that is affected by culture is probably communication. There are of course various facets of communication that are influenced by culture and affect the performance of the multicultural group. It can range from simple misunderstandings of different accent, differences in languages used, non-verbal communication (Hollensen 2011), body gestures, gesticulations and so on. It is quite much beyond the scope of the thesis to discuss all of these modes of communication.

The major cultural dimension that affects communication in multicultural group is the high and low context nature of communication (Hall 1960). In the low context-culture people are trained to communicate literally and explicitly (Meyer 2014, 31). In many cases, if the message is not communicated straight, the person might not even be considered as trustworthy (Meyer 2014, 42). In this kind of communication, what is said is meant and what is meant is said. In the high context culture, communication is subtler and depends upon the unconscious assumptions about common reference points and shared knowledge. (Meyer 2014, 35.) In many cases, it is necessary to “read the air” to gather the message. (Meyer 2014, 37). In such a situation, it is not only important to consider what is said but also how it is said in addition to what is not said (Meyer 2014, 48). The more educated

a person is, the more likely a person is likely to confirm to the extreme stereotype, that is, a highly educated person in the high-context culture will generally have more sophisticated and nuanced type of communication whereas a highly educated person in the low-context culture will generally learn to communicate in a clear and precise manner (Meyer 2014, 47).

Regarding the management of communication in groups, it is important to realize that the positioning of one culture in the communication spectrum (high context or low context) is relative. Although, a country might be placed in the high context end of the communicating spectrum in general, this might still be considered as a low context culture from the perspective of the country positioned at the very end of the spectrum. This is referred to as cultural relativism (Meyer 2014, 44). This has direct bearing on the group communications even in the business context. For example, in the low-context culture it might be important to recap the key points after every meeting and sent to all of the participants (Meyer 2014, 46). Similarly, while managing communication in the group setting, contrary to commonsense assumption the problem is not always between high context and low context culture (Hall 1960) but it is rather between two high context cultures with two different roots such as Brazil and China (Meyer 2014, 55).

The crucial issue in managing communication in a multicultural group is to use low context communication wherever possible. This might include being explicit about communications such as taking recap after meetings in a written format and distributing to all group members (Nes, Solberg & Silkoset 2007). Whenever possible it is better to explicitly communicate key information such as organizational charts, titles of employees, objectives of the group, performance appraisals and so on to all the group members. Some scholars also suggest that it is better to use such low context practices, in writing and documentation when the team is just forming. When the team is just forming there are no established group norms or there are no visible problems with communications. (Meyer 2014, 57.) Figure 3 below summarizes the key differences in communication and categorizes several countries in this spectrum.

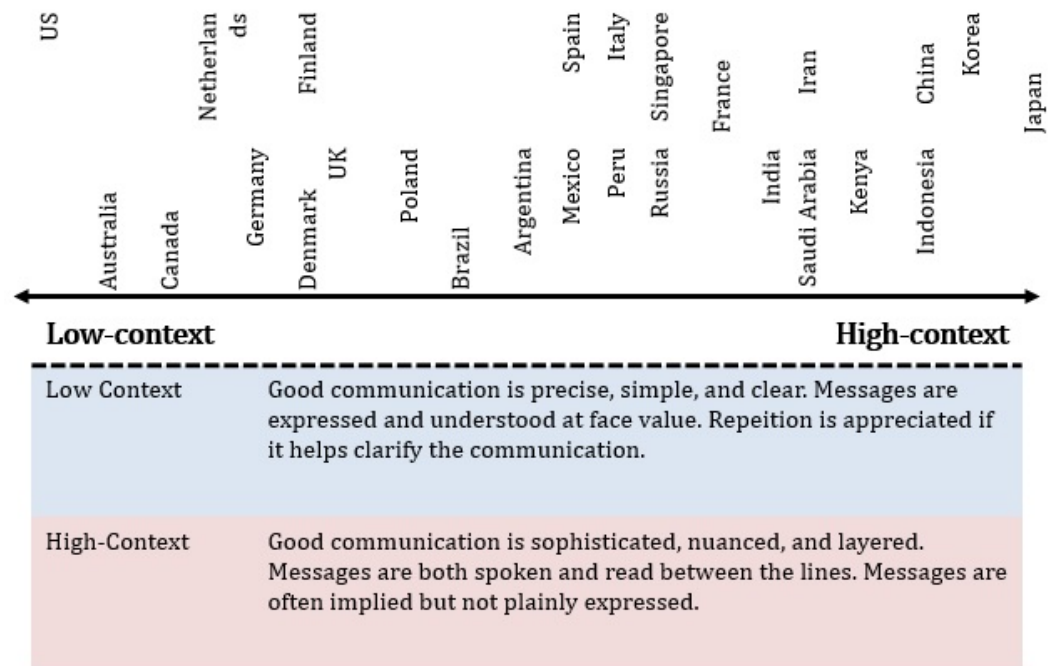


Figure 3 Key difference in communicating across culture and classification of countries in this range (Meyer 2014, 39)

2.3.2 Providing evaluation and feedback in a group

The second group process that is affected in a group is the way people evaluate work of others. In some cultures, it can be customary to provide direct negative feedback which can be blunt and direct whereas in other cultures negative feedback is given in an indirect manner. When direct negative feedback is given, there is less concern with the feelings of the people receiving the feedback. The focus is on providing exact criticisms. When the negative feedback is given in an indirect manner, the person giving the feedback tries to tone down the criticisms so as not to hurt the feelings of the one receiving the feedback. What is considered as a constructive feedback might not be looked in the same way in another culture (Meyer 2014, 62). The way managers are trained to give feedback to their subordinates might also be different because of these differences in culture (Bradley L.Kirkman, 2006). While in some culture it might be considered appropriate to give feedback honestly and straight, in other cultures it is customary never to criticise other people in front of others. Similarly, people accustomed to giving direct feedback are prone to use

words which can be termed as upgraders such as “totally”, “absolutely” whereas people accustomed to giving more indirect feedback are prone to use words which are downgraders such as “sort of”, “probably” etc. The major reason behind such choice of wording is to moderate the emotion and to tone down the criticism given in the feedback. (Meyer 2014, 65.) The major differences in evaluating across different cultures are provided in Figure 4.

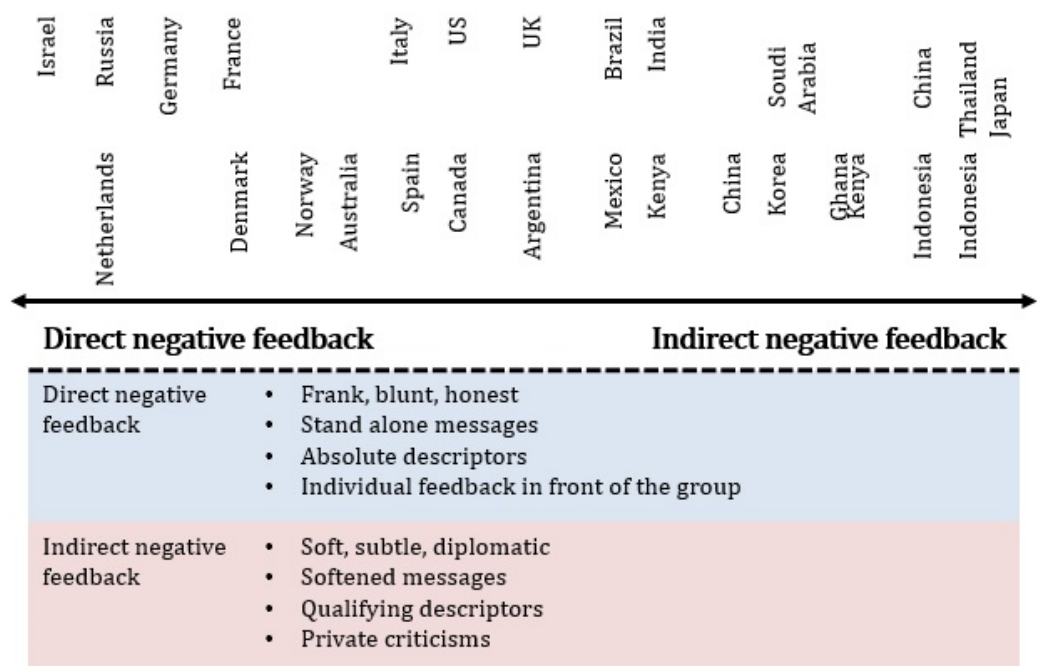


Figure 4 Differences in evaluating across different cultures and classification of some countries in this scale (Meyer 2014, 69)

When

looking at the situation from a very simple perspective, one might assume that low context cultures are more prone to direct feedback whereas high context cultures are more prone to indirect feedback (Hall 1960). This is necessarily not so. As a general example, Israel can be considered as a country where both high context communication and indirect feedback is

common. The way of communication and evaluation are related in a very complex way and effective management of both communication and evaluation across different cultures needs understanding of this subtle point. (Meyer 2014, 70-88.) Figure 5 below shows the interactions of these two dimensions.

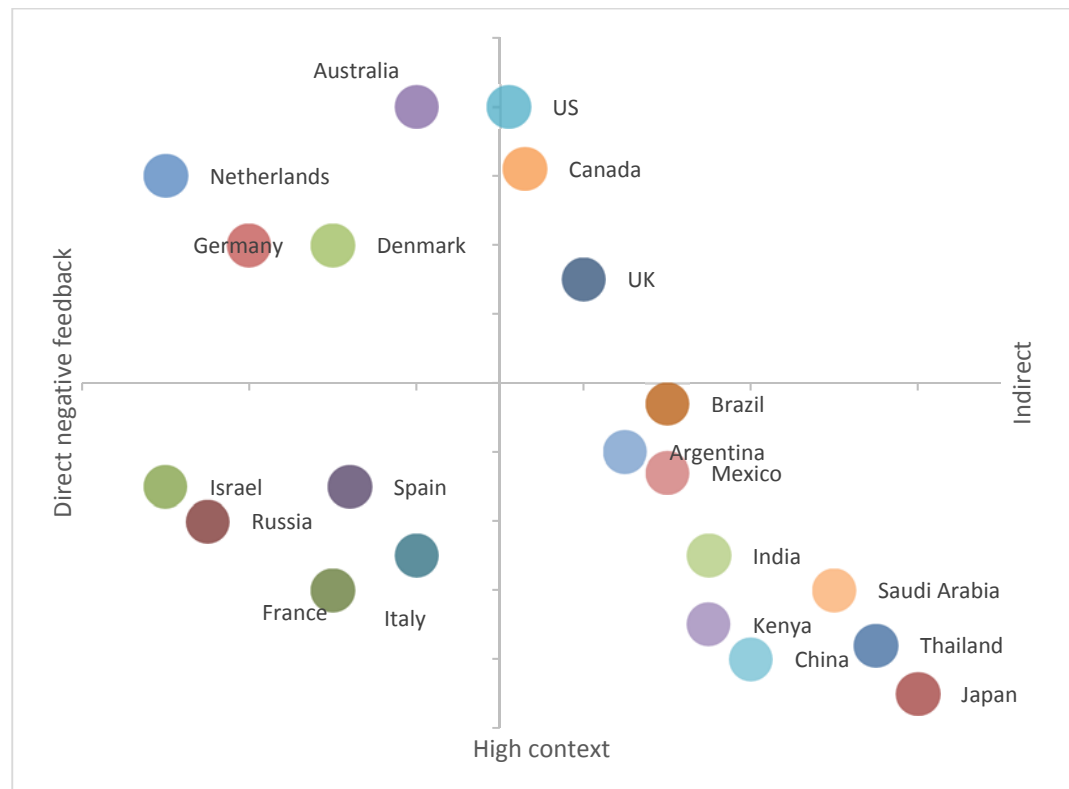


Figure 5 The relationship between communication and evaluation styles across cultures (Meyer 2014, 72)

Depending upon which quadrant each of the culture lies, in a multicultural group, it suggests different management techniques to avoid cultural conflicts. The easiest people to understand belong to a low-context culture who prefer direct negative feedback. This is kind of expected because we assume that people from low-context culture prefer accurate feedback. (Meyer 2014, 74). People from high context and direct negative feedback culture are hard to understand because this is not expected. We think that people belonging from high context culture would be indirect and subtle

about providing negative feedback to others. That is why it is important to understand the relative position of different culture as presented in Figure 5 to evaluate others according to their cultural norms. This tendency is even more complicated when we consider how feedback is given to people belonging to different hierarchical positions. Whatever the preference for providing feedback, in all cultures it is seen that a person at a lower hierarchical level is usually provided with direct and negative feedback. In contrast, when a person belongs to higher hierarchical position than the evaluator, feedback is often provided in a diplomatic manner. (Meyer 2014, 76.)

Similarly, people from low context and indirect negative feedback culture are difficult to manage somehow. Several techniques for appropriately dealing with this type of cultures are discussed. First, it is necessary to be positive in evaluating people from these cultures at the beginning then only proceed to the negative feedback. Second, it is a good idea to be low context about both positive and negative feedback while balancing the amount of both positive and negative feedback given. Third, it is necessary to show cultural sensitivities while providing the feedback and frame the feedback in terms of the recipients. When it is about people from high context and indirect negative feedback type of culture, it is extremely important to give negative as well as feedback only in private. It is also important to provide feedback over time rather than at once often in some different social occasions. In this type of situation, it is important to focus on the positive feedback and leave out the bad so that the receiving person intuitively receives the message. (Meyer 2014, 77-88.)

2.3.3 Convincing other members of the group

It takes different approaches to persuade people from different cultures. The way people try to convince people also consist of different approaches which can vary across cultures (Lewis 2006). The arguments that are deemed to be deeply persuasive are often rooted in culture (Meyer 2014, 90). In some cultures, deductive reasoning is given priority and is thought to

be convincing when principles are discussed before applications. In other cases, inductive reasoning is given priority and arguments which focus on applications rather than principles are given priority. Quite simply, principles-first culture are preoccupied with the “why” of any context, whereas application first culture are preoccupied with the “how” of any context. While working in a multicultural group, it is necessary to understand how people are convinced across different cultures to push through an agenda or explain certain issues. (Meyer 2014, 89-95.) Figure 6 summarizes the key differences in the way people are convinced and try to categorize different countries in this dimension.

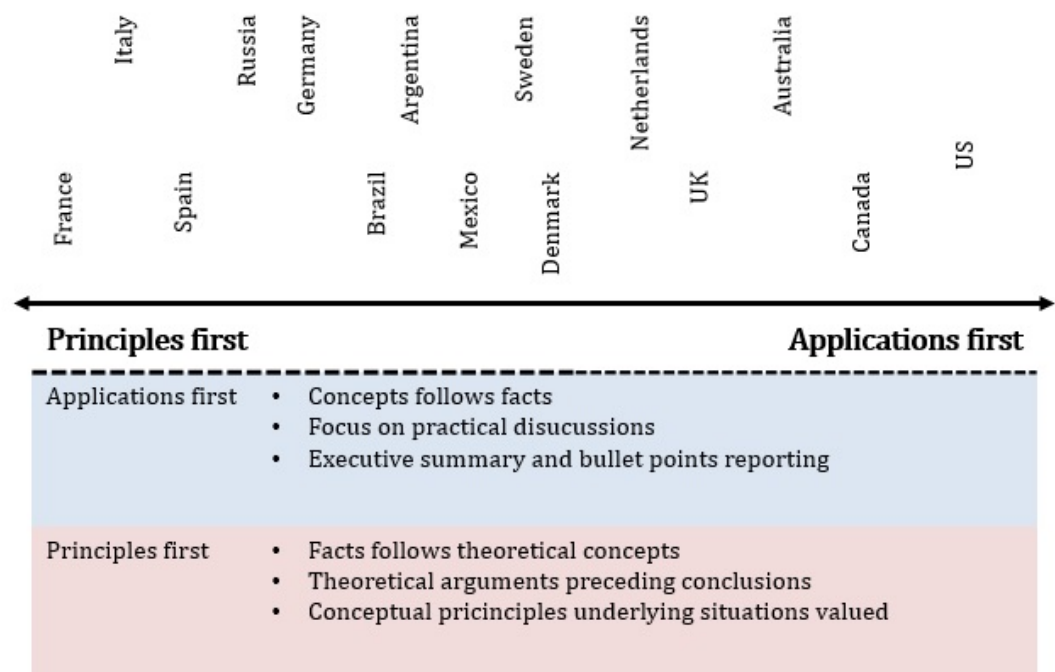


Figure 6 The differences in the way people are convinced across different cultures and classification of countries in this spectrum (Meyer 2014, 96)

2.3.4 Leadership in a group

The difference in the understanding of power, leadership and hierarchy is different across cultures (Kirkman, Lowe & Gibson 2006). The concept of power distance (Hofstede 1988), already illustrates the extent to which unequal distribution of power is normalized in the society. A high power distance culture also means that the relative distance between people at different hierarchical level, such as the boss and the subordinate is relatively

large (Stahl et al. 2010). The level of respect or deference shown to the authority figure, the status of the leader, whether it is acceptable to bypass layers in the hierarchical chain while communicating as well the symbols and rituals are different according to the differences in the power distance. In many cases, the understanding of leadership, power and hierarchy is rooted in the history of particular culture. (Hofstede 1983; Hofstede Insights 2018; Meyer 2014, 121-122.)

The general differences in the attitudes to leadership and power can be categorized into two broad divisions: egalitarian culture and hierarchical culture. In an egalitarian culture, it is considered appropriate to disagree with the leader even in front of others. Actions can be taken without explicit recognition of the superior and when engaged in business dealing it may not be necessary to contact counterparts of similar hierarchical status. Superiors and subordinates of differing hierarchical status can be contacted easily and when communicating with business colleagues one need not follow a specific format according to hierarchical order. In the hierarchical culture, the case is opposite. The boss has to be respected, not criticised in the public and approval is necessary before taking any action. In business dealings, it is necessary to contact people of corresponding hierarchical order and the information flow is according to the status of the people in the organization. Even practical seating arrangements might be made confirming to social or hierarchical status. (Meyer 2014, 131.) The basic differences across cultures in the leading dimension are summarized in Figure 7.

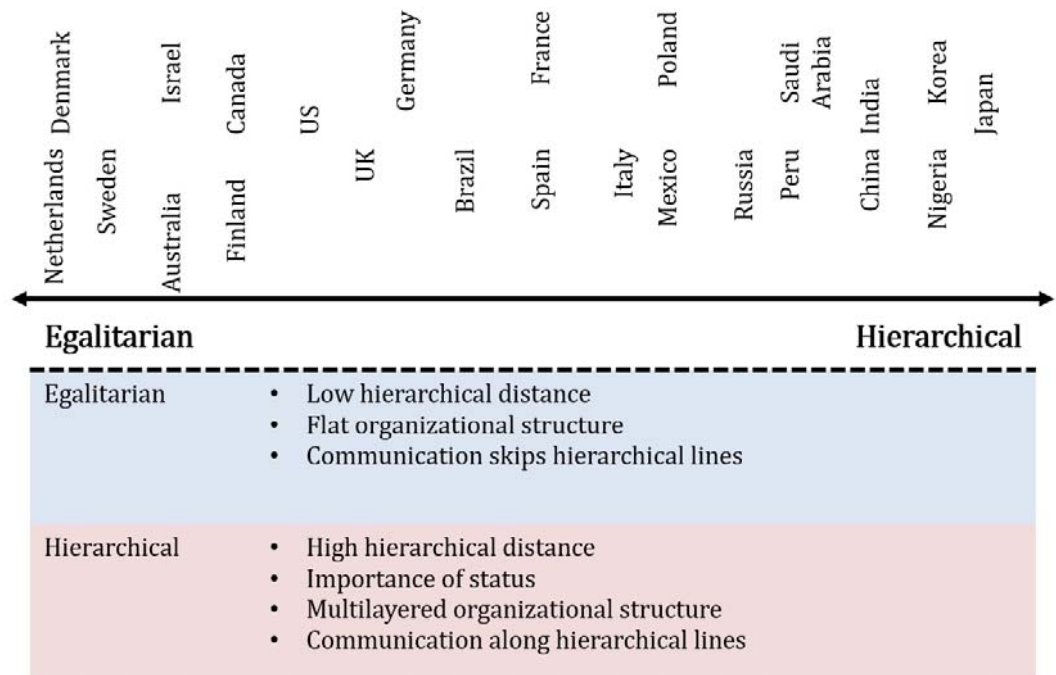


Figure 7 Leading across cultures and classification of countries in the range (Meyer 2014, 125)

2.3.5 Decision making in a group

The process of decision making is also affected by culture specially in a multicultural group setting (Schermerhorn & Bond 1997). Whereas some cultures emphasize consensual decision making and bringing everyone on board before deciding on a certain issue, some other cultures do not follow similar norms. In these situations, usually the decision making is implemented in a top down manner. In a consensual decision-making approach, the decision making is part of the group process and is often conducted after lengthy deliberation. Only when unanimity is achieved in certain issues, then the decision is implemented. There can be a long period of time when there are joint group discussions and then when the decision is made it is implemented outright. In other situations, when the decision making is made in a top-down manner which is often done by an individual of appropriate authority then, the decision in many cases may have been already made, and the purpose of the group discussions later is to seek approval and consensus. (Meyer 2014, 143-161.)

In order to avoid clashes in decision making across cultures, there are several things to be noticed. First, in a culture where the decision-making

process is primarily consensus, the decision-making process itself is longer and requires more interaction. Perhaps it consists of several meetings where even no decisions are taken. Commitment building is essential before making any decisions. Both formal and informal contacts are necessary in order to build and influence commitment to a certain decision. Although it might be tempting to push the decision-making process faster, it is inadvisable to do so as the made decision is final. Second, in a culture where the decision making takes place in a top down manner, the decision may be made by the leader without adequate consensus building and soliciting support. Even when there are objections they may be overruled in the process as the decision-making process and consensus building may be just a formality. When there are no obvious decision makers, voting procedures may lead to quick decision making in such situations. The only difference in this sort of decision making is that even when the final decision is made there might still be room for changing the decisions later. (Meyer 2014, 158-160.) Figure 8 summarizes the key differences in decision making across cultures and categorises different nations in this spectrum.

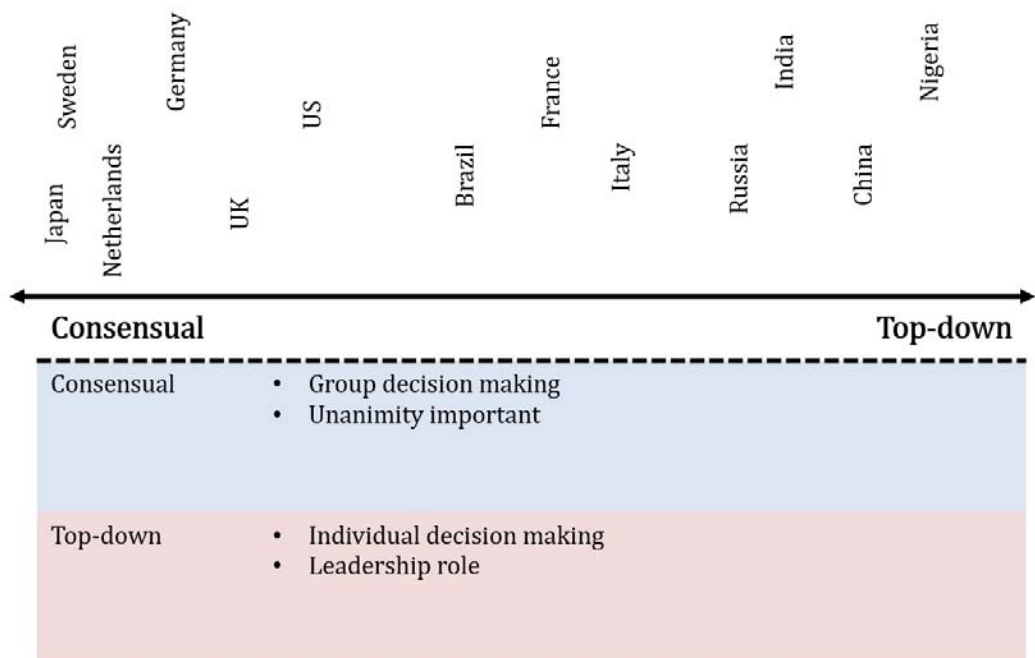


Figure 8 Cultural differences in decision-making and division of countries accordingly (Meyer 2014, 150)

2.3.6 Building relationships and trust in a group

The importance of relationships, the way to build relationships and trust differ across cultures. These are very important in any kind of group work as trust between group members is one of the glue that has direct impact on the group performance. There are basically two types of trust that are formed in any sort of relationship: cognitive trust and affective trust. Whereas cognitive trust is formed when one has confidence in the other member's technical skills; affective trust is formed due to feelings for others. Affective trust is the result of feelings for other people. (Meyer 2014, 168.) Some culture prioritize cognitive trust and some other cultures prioritize affective trust.

The direct impact of these two kinds of trust is that in a group setting relationships are either task based or relationship based. These are the primary group related source of conflicts as well. In a task based relationship culture, trust is build and dropped easily and is based on the reliability, professionalism and the skills that the other person demonstrates. In a relationship-based culture, trust is formed rather slowly, and it is mostly based on personal feelings rather than the skills of other group members. (Meyer 2014, 163-194.)

One key implication of this is also that just because some people demonstrate friendliness does not signal willingness to build long term relationships which can easily cause confusion and misunderstanding. In a relationship-based culture there might not be that much of a segregation between personal life and work life. Often relationships are formed through participating in social events where the issue discussed in many cases might not be related to work at all. This also means that across cultures the choice of communication medium should also be done widely. While in task based cultures, impersonal communication medium may be preferred, in a relationship based culture the choice of communication methods often lean towards more personal medium and face to face interactions. All these cultural orientations have no doubt crucial implications in how trust is formed in group setting and by default on group performance. (Meyer 2014, 163-

194.) The key ideas related to trust building across cultures is summarized in Figure 9 and some countries categorized in this spectrum between relationship and task orientation.

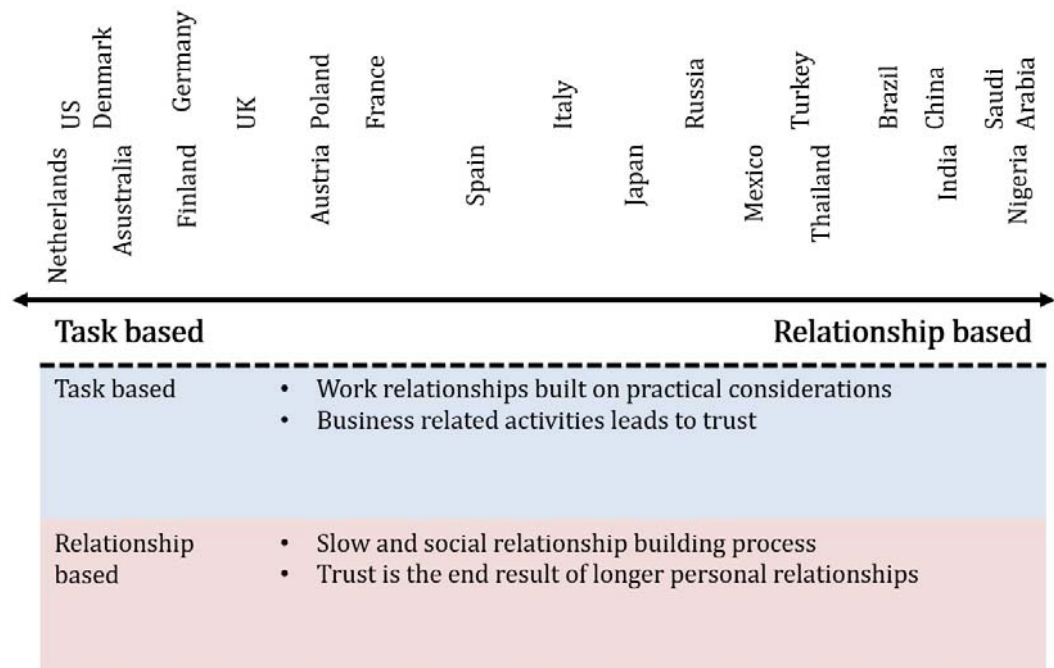


Figure 9 Orientation towards trust building across different cultures (Meyer 2014, 171)

2.3.7 Expressing disagreement in a group

In a group setting, disagreeing on any issues such as the agenda, the schedule or various goals is the norm. However, how this disagreement is expressed in different cultures varies. Therefore, it is important to consider how disagreement is expressed in a multicultural group. Some cultures are confrontational as the disagreement is expressed directly and bluntly. In other cultures, there is a norm of avoiding confrontation when there is disagreement in certain issues. In the cultures, where avoiding confrontation is actively sought, direct disagreement might be considered as “losing face” in front of others. Where expressing disagreement directly and bluntly is the norm, disagreement might even be considered as productive as it leads to discussion and debate. (Smith & Dugan 1998.) In the confrontational culture, confrontation does not have direct consequences to

personal relationships and personal relationships and work-related confrontation are kept separate. In the confrontation avoidance culture, however, work related confrontation can have adverse impact in personal relationship and could even affect the group dynamics negatively. (Meyer 2014, 195-218.)

One other important issue is to what extent people from different cultures are emotionally expressive or unexpressive when they express disagreement (Immordino-Yang, Yang, Damasio 2016). This is one of the major sources of confusion in group processes. While it might seem that confrontational cultures are paired with being emotionally expressive it is not necessarily the case. In some cultures, it is a norm to disagree in a confrontational manner while being emotionally expressive such as Greece or Italy. In other countries, the case might be that while people desire to avoid direct confrontation they might be emotionally expressive of their discontents. This is the case in countries like India and Saudi Arabia. Building on this, some cultures are confrontational and emotionally unexpressive such as in Netherlands and Denmark whereas in other countries such as Sweden and China, people have the desire to avoid confrontation but are emotionally unexpressive. This is very important to realize because in some cases disagreement might be visually expressed without any sort of direct confrontation. (Meyer 2014, 195-218.) Various countries are classified according to their preference to avoiding confrontation or not and their tendency to be emotionally expressive or not in Figure 10.

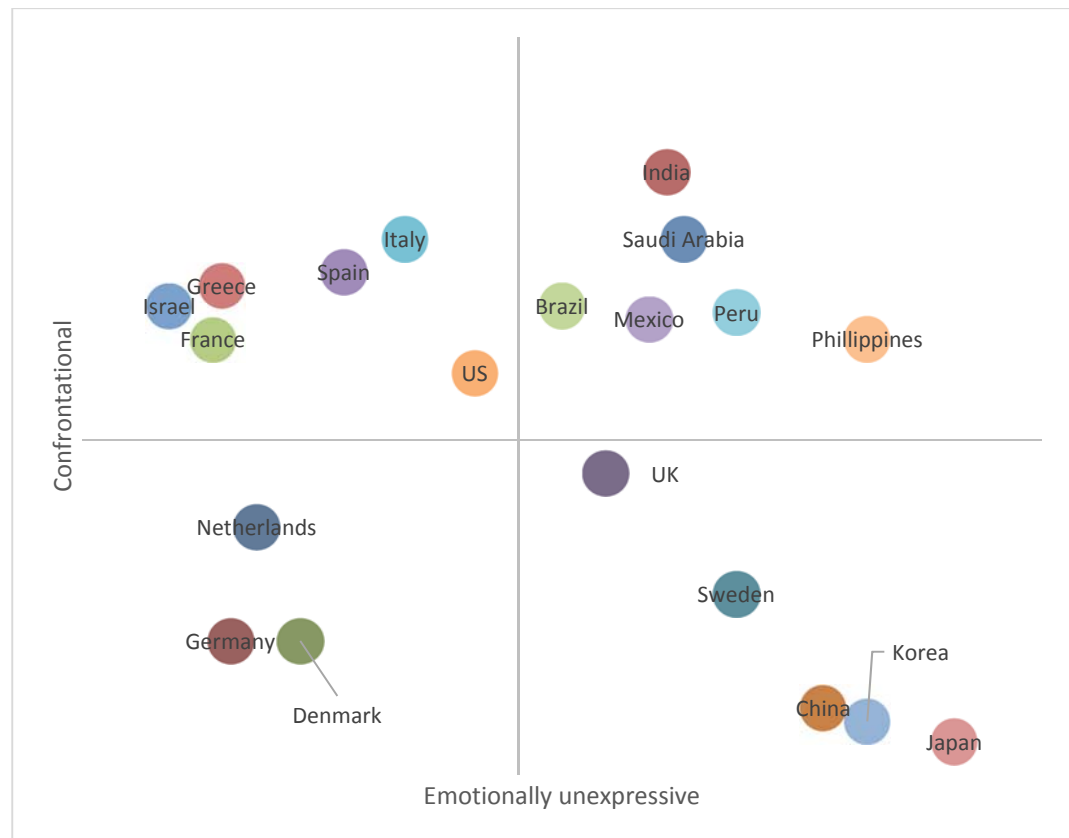


Figure 10 Classification of countries according to the tendency to be emotionally expressive/unexpressive and confrontational/avoid confrontation (Meyer 2014, 204)

This idea is summarized more clearly in Figure 11 and some countries classified in this scale ranging from confrontational to avoiding confrontation.

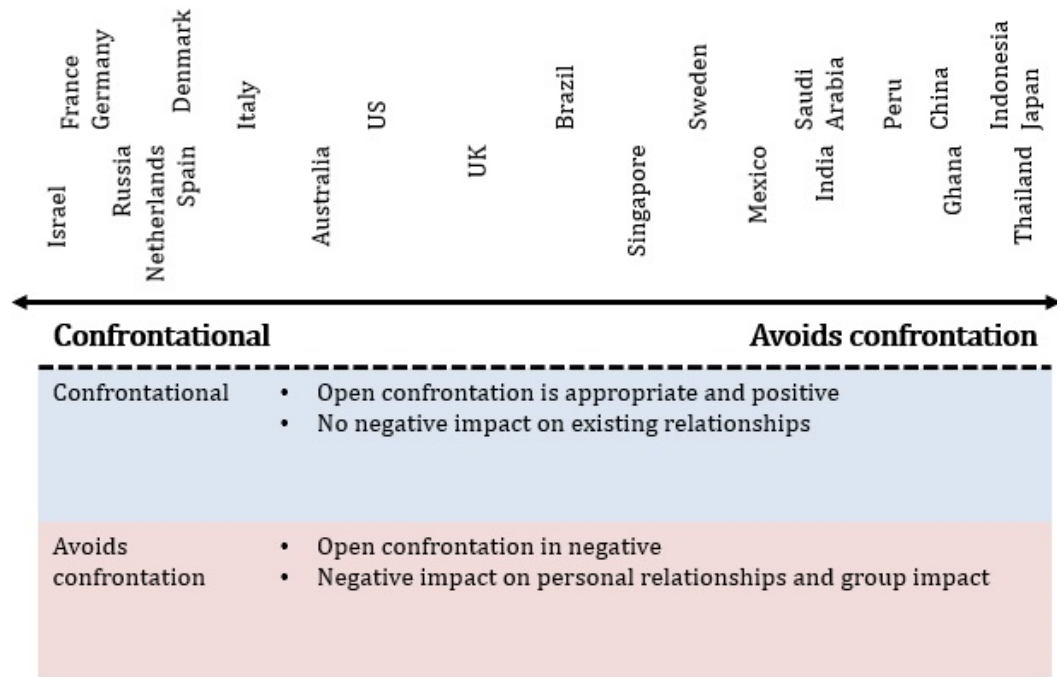


Figure 11 Preference across cultures regarding confrontational or non-confrontational behaviour (Meyer 2014, 201)

2.3.8 Perception of time and scheduling

It is quite well known that different cultures have different sense of time. For example, linear active people are thought to focus on one thing at a time within a scheduled timescale. They are oriented to tasks at hand and are in many cases highly organized planners. In direct contrast, multi-active people get more done their way. (Lewis 2006, 37.) From the perspective of the linear active people, multi-active people might look very disorganized. From the perspective of the multi-active people, linear active people will look stiff and time-dominated. This can rightly be the source of conflicts in multi-cultural teams.

For cultures with the perception of linear time, time is precious. Therefore, there is a focus on getting things done efficiently. In such a monochronic perception of time, time is money and to be idle is to waste resources. Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Scandinavian people can be classified in such type. People with a polychronic conception of time fill fulfilled and happier by getting several things simultaneously. For such people the concept of schedule and punctuality is not directly compatible with the existing cultural

norms. (Lewis 2006, 55.) Hall (1960) referred to these two-different orientations to time as monochronic (M-time) cultures and polychronic (P-time) cultures. In a P-time culture, time is seen to be flexible and often appointments are not taken seriously and are broken without any serious consequences (Hall 1960).

Those cultures who have linear time approach to scheduling view that tasks are to be done sequentially and the next task starts after the completion of the first task. There is always a focus on completing a certain task at once without interruptions. Sticking to the scheduling and completing the tasks within the deadline are important scheduling principles. It is better to stick to the schedule and do things promptly. In contrast, in a flexible time scheduling approach, tasks are done hapazhardly, not necessarily disorganized but in a fluid manner. Many activities may be undertaken at once. Interruptions are normal way of life and one has to learn to adapt to constant changes rather than being stickler for details. (Meyer 2014, 219-251.) With such completely different orientations in scheduling it would be surprising if there were no conflicts resulting from scheduling issues in a multicultural group. Figure 12 summarizes the key cultural differences in scheduling and categorises different countries in the scale ranging from linear time to flexible time.

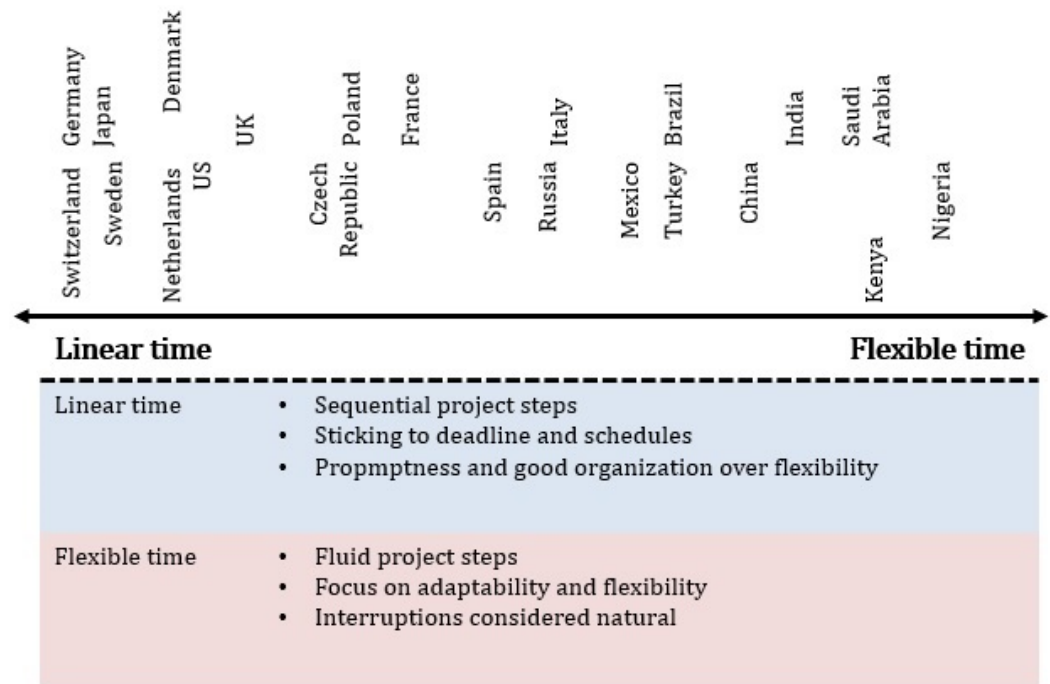


Figure 12 Differences in scheduling approaches across cultures and positioning of different countries in this scale (Meyer 2014, 227)

2.4 Key findings from the literature review

Culture is values, beliefs and attitudes shared between a group of people (Hollensen 2011). It is in fact the mental programming of a group of people which differentiates them from the others (Hofstede 1988). To systematically compare between different cultures, it is important to understand different dimensions that are common and comparable across different cultures. Hofstede proposes five key dimensions comprising uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, short-term/long-term orientation, indulgence/restraint and individualism/collectivism (Hofstede Insights 2018). Still others suggest additional dimensions such as secular-rational values and traditional values along with security and expressive views (Inglehart & Welzel 2013). Other approaches such as that of Schwartz's Seven Value Types (Schwartz 2006) and that of project GLOBE (House et al. 2002) include some additional dimensions of culture.

While considering how culture affects several group processes, there are various different approaches. However, the approach used in this thesis is that of Meyer (Meyer 2014). According to Meyer (2014), the major group

work that are affected by culture are communication (along the high context and low context culture) like the approach used by Hall (1966). Other group work are the process of evaluation (ranging from direct to negative feedback), leading (ranging from egalitarian to hierarchical), persuading (ranging from principles-first to application first approach), disagreeing (ranging from confrontational to non-confrontational), trusting (ranging from task based to relationship based), deciding (ranging from consensual to top-down approach) and finally scheduling (ranging from linear time to flexible approach). (Meyer 2014.). Based on these orientations to group processes several cultures can be classified one way or the other. The important point to consider is that there is no absolute point in each of these ranges, that is one cannot say for example Japanese people are always gain trust on the basis of personal relationships rather than task-orientation. While it is true that Japanese people have more relationship-based trust building approaches compared to very task-based nationalities such as that of Germany, while comparing to China however, even Japan may be more task oriented. Chinese people are considered to build trust based on relationships more than the Japanese. Therefore, culture is always relative and in a multicultural team rather than stereotyping one should always consider the relative position of different cultures according to various ranges of behaviours. As a summary, Figure 13 summarizes different aspects of group processes that are affected by culture by comparing few key countries along different ranges.

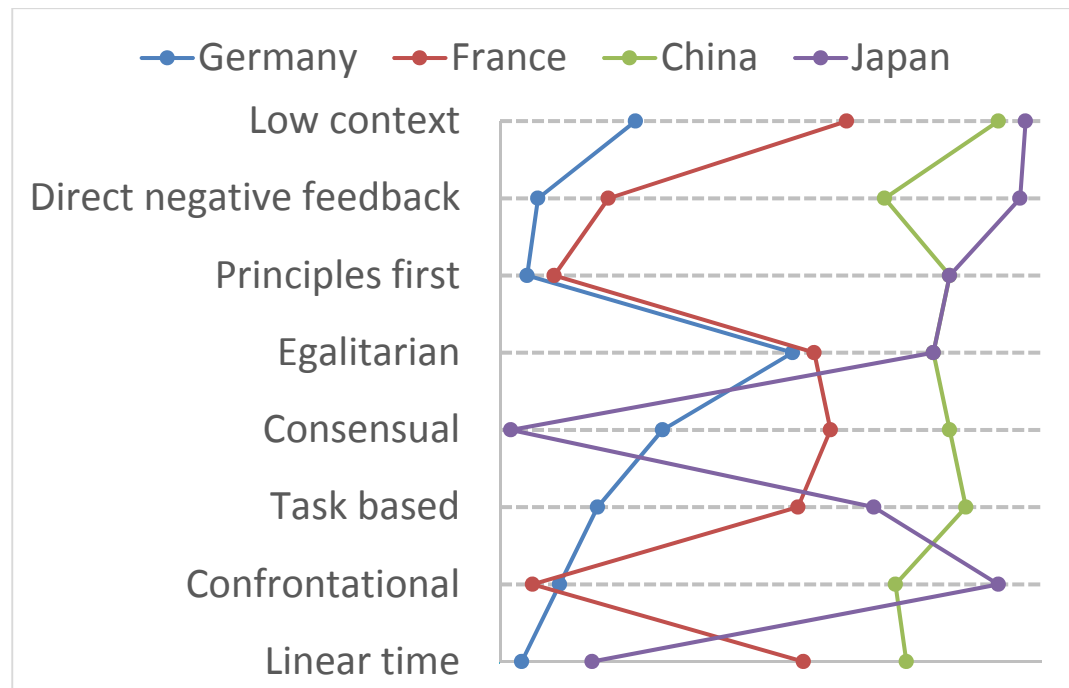


Figure 13 Summary of key group processes affected by culture and positions of few countries in the range (Meyer 2014, 246)

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Quantitative method

There are generally two possible methods to conduct research: quantitative and qualitative methods. The selection of the method depends ultimately upon the research question. When detail about the participants or the research question is required the preferred method is qualitative but for any kind of standardization and systematic comparison quantitative methods are preferred. When the perspective of the respondents are important in terms of their attitudes, behaviours and experiences; the preferred method is qualitative research methods. (Punch 1988, 244; Silverman, 2000.)

Qualitative research is used to explore naturalistic settings and rely mainly on data in the form of texts such as archival data, interviews, field notes and so on. As mentioned, the main objective of the qualitative research is to understand the perspective from the respondents. It is also used in cases when building theory is important and the main purpose of the study is not to generalize the findings. (Silverman, 2001.) Since this study uses numerical data and the main purpose of the thesis is to compare the differences in cultural orientations in groupwork of people from different segments, quantitative method is more appropriate. This study is also not focused on the detailed understanding of the participant's perspective or to build theory. Rather the study uses numerical data and the purpose is to confirm whether what the theory suggests can be seen from the data and to generalize the findings. In such cases quantitative methods is more appropriate.

3.2 Questionnaire survey

The main research method used in this study is questionnaire survey. There can basically be three type of questionnaire surveys: personally administered questionnaires, mail questionnaires and electronic questionnaires. Since electronic questionnaire are easy to administer as well as has the potential to reach participants across wide geographical

area, it is the preferred method in this study. Considering the resources available to the researcher in terms of time and budget, this method has some advantages as it is both inexpensive and the responses are obtained in a short period of time. From the participant's point of view, they can also answer the questions in the place and time of their own convenience which is an added advantage. The other options such as personally administered questionnaire requires much more time and effort and is also limited to an area. Similarly, mail questionnaire is proven to have low response rate and it is very difficult to clarify the questionnaire to the participants and follow up on their responses. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013.) Therefore, the preferred method of questionnaire survey was electronically administered questionnaire. The platform used to create and administer the questionnaire was Webropol.

3.3 Questionnaire design and administration

In order to design the questionnaire items, past literature review was used as the basis. Several researches have attempted to study the influence of culture on group work. Many of the items were derived from these past researches. The questionnaire was divided into several sections. The first section consisted of general demographic information about the respondents including country of origin, mother tongue, gender, age and the number of years they have already been in their home university.

The second section of the questionnaire dealt with the general preference that students have regarding group work. Although there could have been several different items included in this section to check the preferences towards group work between Finnish and Nepalese students, in the end there were only two questions included. The first item dealt with the extent to which group works were the preferred problem-solving methods depending upon the country of origin (e.g. group works are common way of solving problems in my home country). Research also show that the one of the reasons why there is perhaps higher degree of perception of difficulties in multicultural group works is the perception of free riding among group

members. This would lead to members to be less enthusiastic about group works in a multicultural group. Therefore, another question included that was asked to the respondents was whether they perceive free riding to be a systematic problem in multicultural group and so prefer them less over unicultural group works (e.g. There is more free riding in multicultural group). These consisted of items in this section to understand respondent's view of group work in a general manner. All of the items were measured in a Likert scale with 5 different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree. It should be noted that in the final analysis however due to only 84 respondents in total the scale was recoded to include completely disagree and somewhat disagree to just disagree, neither agree nor disagree remained the same and finally somewhat agree and completely agree was recoded to agree. This was necessary to understand the clear differences in perceptions among the Finnish and Nepalese respondents in a small sample. This was done for all questions involving the Likert scale.

According to the literature review, it is quite clear that communication process in a group is quite highly influenced by the cultural background of the members especially their degree of high or low context communication preference. In order to understand this effect, respondents were asked whether they like the team members to be direct in their communications and whether the meeting should end with recap of the key points. More precisely the items included were: a) I prefer my group members to be direct and to the point in group discussions and b) It is a good idea to prepare meeting minutes at the end of the meeting to avoid confusions later. All of the items were measured in a Likert scale with five different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree.

Similarly, the preference for evaluation is also affected by the cultural background of the group members. In order to understand that, the third section of the questionnaire included questions such as whether students prefer to have more direct and blunt feedback rather than gentle and diplomatic one and whether when they provide evaluations to other group

members they consider others' feelings. More precisely, the stated questions were: a) I prefer more direct and blunt evaluation rather than gentle and diplomatic one and b) When I evaluate work of others I consider their feelings rather being exact about the criticisms. All of the items were measured in a Likert scale with 5 different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree.

According to the literature review, the understanding of leadership, power and hierarchy is quite much dependent upon the cultural background of the group members. To understand this phenomenon, participants were posed with several questions. This included questions such as: not knowing who the leader is leaves them confused, that teacher should not be involved when there are group problems and that building consensus is important in decision making. More precisely, the statements included were: a) I feel confused when there is no one in charge in the group b) Group problems should be resolved among group members rather than involving the lecturer/teacher and c) Building consensus in decision making among group members leads to poor decision making and wastes time. All of the items were measured in a Likert scale with five different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree.

The preference for relationship building and developing trust is quite much influenced by the cultural background of the group members. In order to understand this issue participants were asked several questions such as: they are generally suspicious of people from other cultures and that they go out of their way to help group members even if the help required does not involve the group tasks as such. On one hand the result of this would show that a group of people would be more suspicious of people from other cultures so necessarily the building of multicultural relationships would take time. On the other hand, if people would go out of their way to help other group members in tasks not generally the specific tasks in group works, then it would show relationship orientation of the group members. More precisely the statements included were: a) I am generally more suspicious of people

from other cultures and b) I provide assistance to other group members even if it does not involve group tasks. All of the items were measured in a Likert scale with 5 different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree.

Literature review was conclusive in pointing out the fact that the way people disagree with each other is highly influenced by culture. In order to understand how that is so several questions were asked to the respondents. Some of them were whether they think expressing disagreements would affect group relationships negatively and if they are emotionally expressive when they provide disagreements to other members. Literature review showed that people from different cultures have different orientation towards being confrontational and non confrontational in expressing disagreements and the use of emotions in expressing those disagreements. More precisely the questionnaire items included were: a) I do not express disagreements because it can engender bad feelings among group members and b) I am generally demonstrative in my facial expressions and body language while expressing disagreements. All of the items were measured in a Likert scale with five different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree.

Literature review also indicated that there is a difference among cultural groups regarding the issues that are considered to be more persuasive than others. It was highlighted that, in some cultures which prefer holistic cognition it is necessary for the group members to be able to first see the big picture of the group tasks in order to be able to do the group tasks effectively. Similarly, cultures with holistic cognition as opposed to analytical cognition also tend to prefer to do the group tasks as a whole in a collaborative manner rather than dividing the tasks among group members and doing the tasks sequentially one after the other. In order to understand this difference among Finnish and Nepalese students, the precise items included in the questionnaire were: a) I prefer to see the big picture before starting on my own tasks and b) I prefer to do my task first and pass it off to other group members rather than doing the task collaboratively. All of the

items were measured in a Likert scale with five different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree.

The last group process that is heavily dependent upon the cultural background of the group members is the issue of scheduling according to past literature. To understand the preference of scheduling among people from different cultures, several questions were asked such as: they are always punctual in group meetings and schedules once decided should not be changed. More precisely, the questionnaire items included were: a) I arrive in meeting venue in scheduled time and b) It is a good idea to be flexible in preparing group meeting schedules. Both of these items have the potential to show whether there are differences in students from Finland and Nepal regarding their perception of punctuality and flexibility of scheduling. All of the items were measured in a Likert scale with five different choices: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree. In total, there were several background questions and other questions related to preference for group work and communicating, evaluating, leading, persuading, disagreeing, trusting, decision making and scheduling dimensions.

A preliminary pilot questionnaire was first sent to 8 different Nepalese students to check whether the questionnaire items were relevant and understandable. The final questionnaire was set up in January 2018 in the Webropol system and the public link was sent to students from various university of applied sciences universities (UASs) mainly LAMK, XAMK and Centria University of Applied Science. The public link was also posted in personal Facebook and other social media. In this regard, the sampling strategy of the study could be considered as snowball sampling as each person who completed the questionnaire passed it or referred to other respondents in the survey. The responses were received until 15th of March 2018 and the link closed after that for analysis. Altogether there were 147 respondents in total by the end of the data collection period. The respondents of the survey belonged to 18 different nationalities. For the analysis, however, only Finnish and Nepalese respondents were

considered which were 84 in total. This was done so because the research question was to compare the perceptions of Nepalese and Finnish students towards group work. The data collection took approximately three months during January to March of 2018. The final questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 1.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 General characteristics of the respondents

Although the final number of respondents in the survey were 147 (N=146) as shown in Figure 14, the responses considered in the final analysis were only Nepalese and Finnish respondents (N=84). This was done because the research question dealt with systematic comparison of Nepalese and Finnish students regarding group work processes and there was no way to control the nationality of the respondents in the way the questionnaire was electronically distributed.

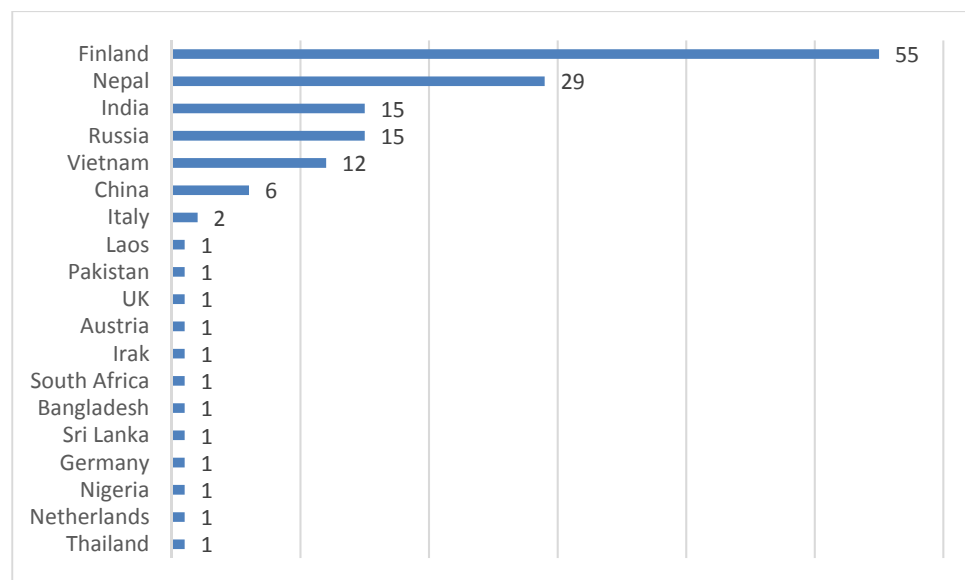


Figure 14 The types of nationalities in the overall sample

Considering the sample with Finnish and Nepalese respondents (N=84), the proportion of the two groups was not equally distributed. The percentage of the Nepalese respondents that were Nepalese was 34,5% and the rest 65,5% were from Finland as shown in Figure 15.

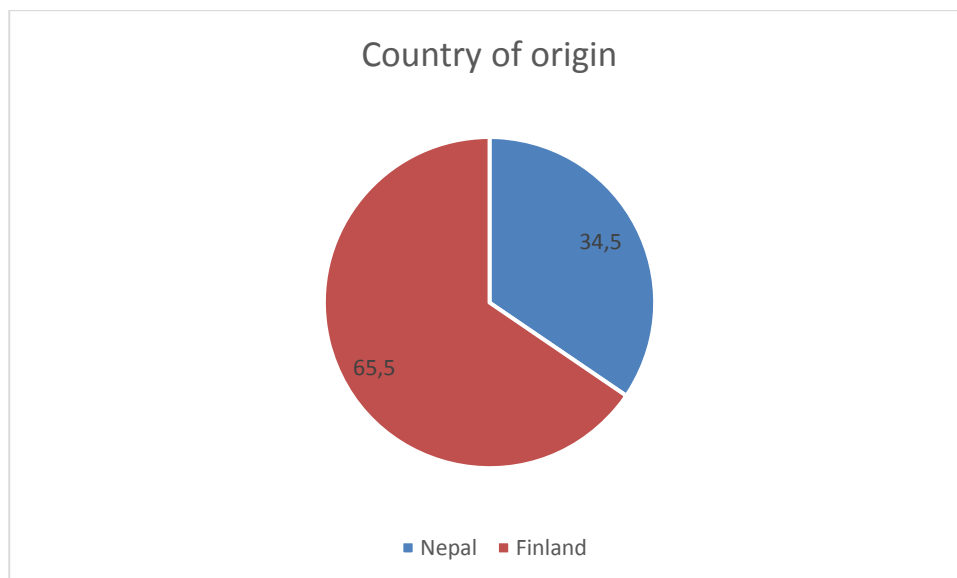


Figure 15 The proportion of Nepalese and Finnish respondents

Among the respondents from Nepal and Finland, the gender of the respondents was more or less equally distributed as shown in Figure 16. 46,4 percentage(%) of the respondents were female whereas 53,6% of the respondents were male.

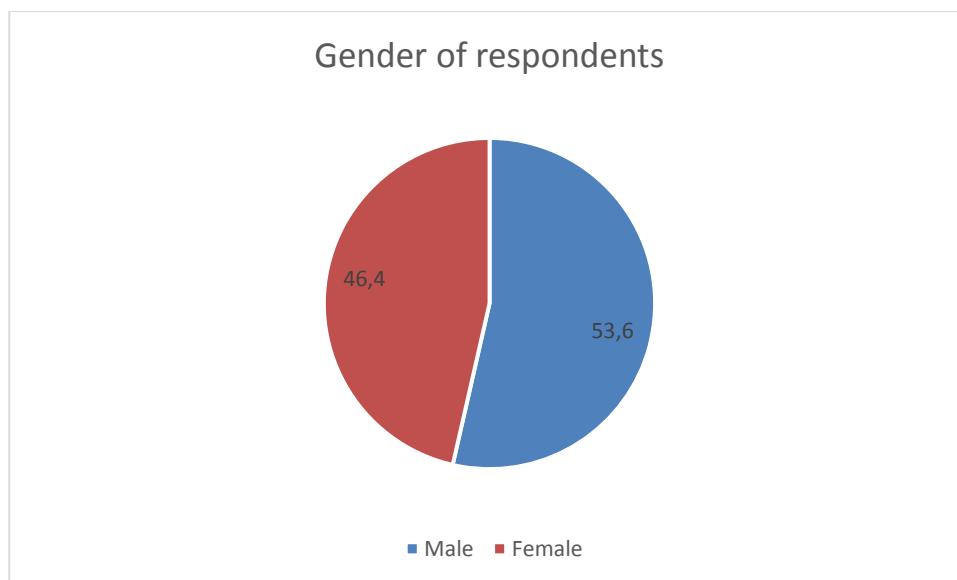


Figure 16 Gender distribution of the respondents in the sample

When looking at the distribution of age group of the respondents, majority of the respondents (60,7%) were between the age of 21 and 25 followed by respectively 13,1% of students between 26-30 years of age and less than 20. After this 9,5% of the respondents of the respondents belonged to the age group of 31 to 40 and finally about 3,6% of the respondents were also in between 41-50 years of age. Although the age group is not equally distributed, this was expected as most of the students in various UAS belong to the age group in between 21-25. This is more clearly depicted in Figure 17.

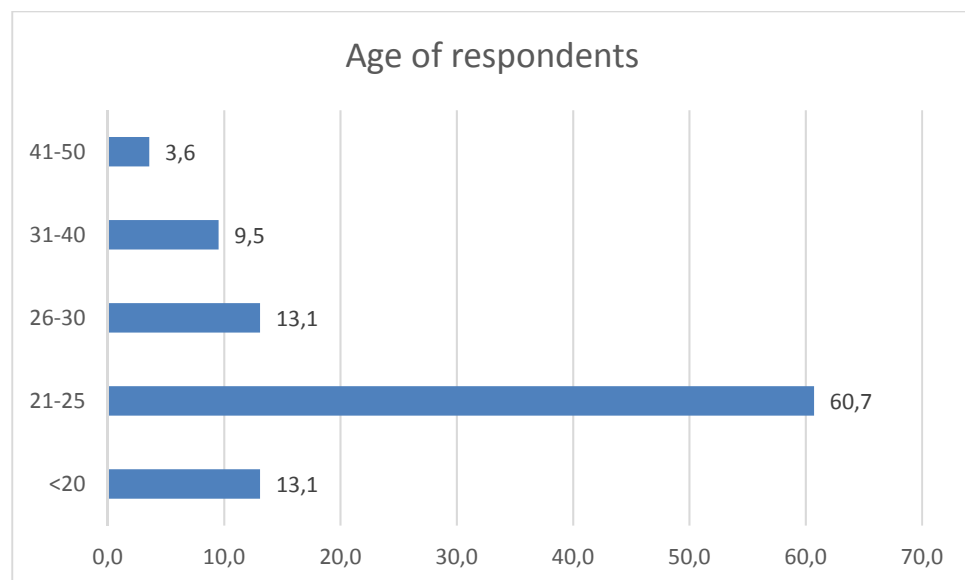


Figure 17 Age distribution of the respondents

Similarly, respondents were also asked the number of years they have been in their respective universities. This was included in the questionnaire thinking that if the student has been in the university for a longer period of time, then probably the student has been used to group works and would be more positive towards group work. Although this relationship was not investigated in this study itself, the general distribution of the respondents in terms of the number of years they have been in a particular university shows that majority of the respondents (42,9%) of them were in their first year followed by 34,5% of the respondents who were currently in their

second year, 15,5% of the respondents who were in their third year and finally 7,1% of the respondents who have been for more than three years in their university. This is shown in Figure 18.

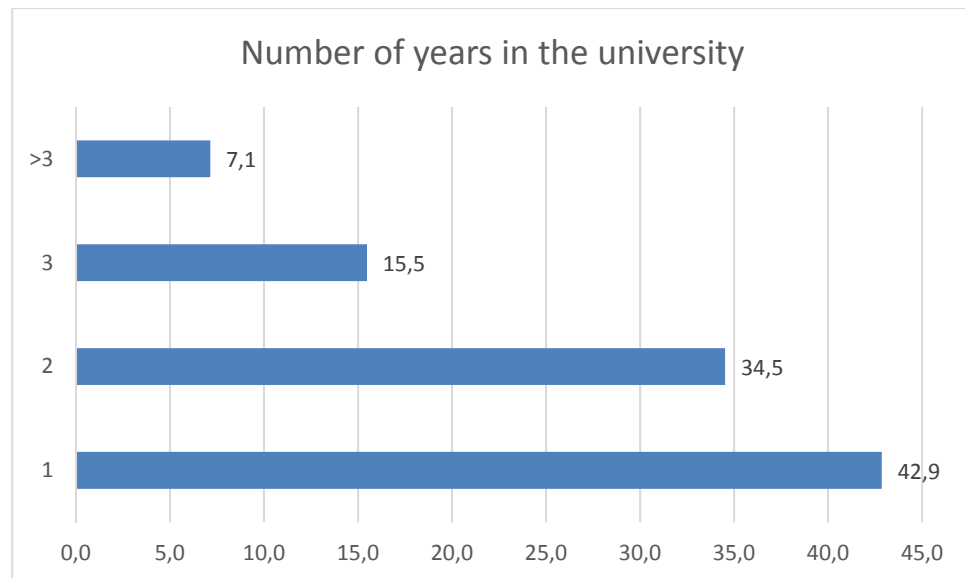


Figure 18 The number of years respondents has been studying in their universitites

4.2 Attitudes towards group work

In this section, the results related to attitudes of Finnish and Nepali students towards group work are presented and discussed. First, the general preference towards group work will be discussed. Thereafter other attitudes related to evaluating other members of the group, convincing other members of the group, leading and making decisions in the group, developing relationship and trust, expressing disagreements and the conception of time and schedules will be presented comparatively for students from Finnish and Nepali students. Wherever possible, the implicaions of national culture on these attitudes will be explored.

4.2.1 General preference for group work

The first item related to general preference for group work was related to understanding whether there are differences in the degree to which

respondents from both nations are familiar with group works. Theoretically it could be assumed that since Nepal is much more of a collectivist country where collectivist goals are important than individual goals, group works would be much more commonly used in Nepal as compared to Finland. This could also be expected as Finland scores high in Individualism dimension. However, the results are surprising in the sense that although there is significant association between country of origin and whether group works are used as common education methods in a country, it is in the opposite direction than expected. It is for Finnish people that group works are perceived to be much more common than Nepal as 91,7% of the Nepalese respondents agree that group works are not common educational method in their country. It can be expected that when Nepalese students come to Finland to complete their education and as group works is such a vital part of educational system, this can lead to underperformance or cultural conflicts in group works due to Nepalese people being unfamiliar with group works in general. The general attitudinal differences between Nepalese and Finnish respondents are presented below in Figure 19.

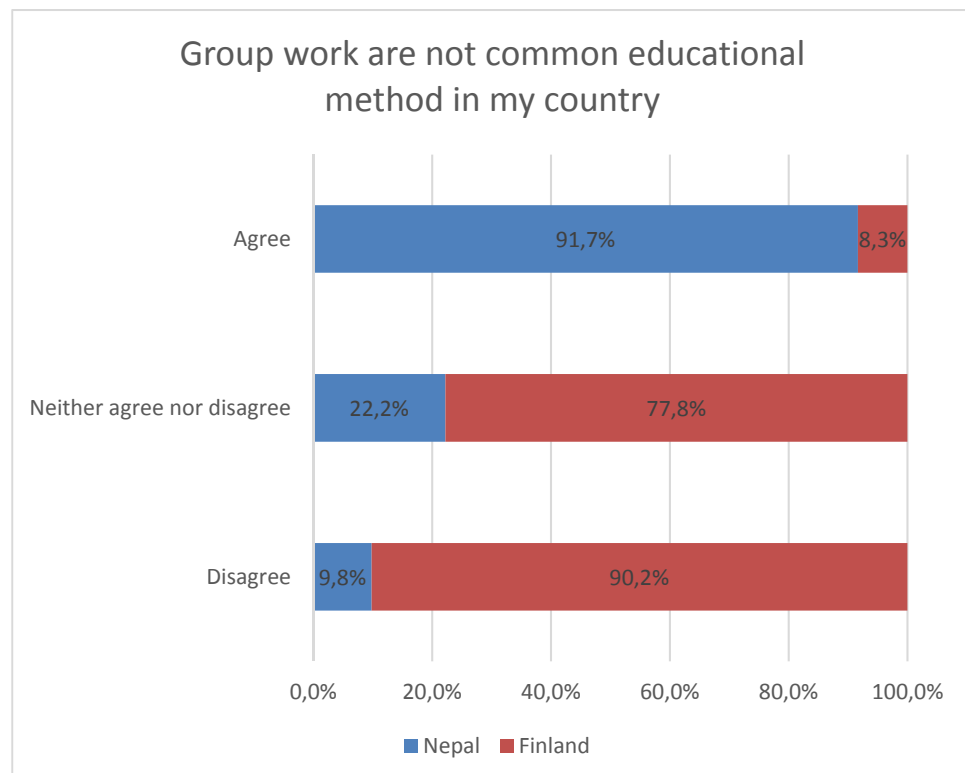


Figure 19 The difference in the extent to which group works are familiar to respondents from Finland and Nepal

Similarly, respondents were also asked whether they perceive free riding is more common in multicultural groups in comparison to unicultural groups. Social loafing is a major problem in group works and some research also show that social loafing may be more common in a multicultural group as compared to unicultural group. The higher the cultural expectations of free riding in a multicultural group, perhaps that leads to general attitude to shy away from group works for the students from that cultural group. The association between the country of origin and the perception of whether free riding occurs more in a multicultural group was significant. Figure 20 shows that there are completely different attitudes towards free riding in a multicultural group when compared between Nepalese and Finnish students. The results shows that Nepalese people think more that free riding occurs in a multicultural group in contrast to majority of the Finnish students who disagree with this statement.

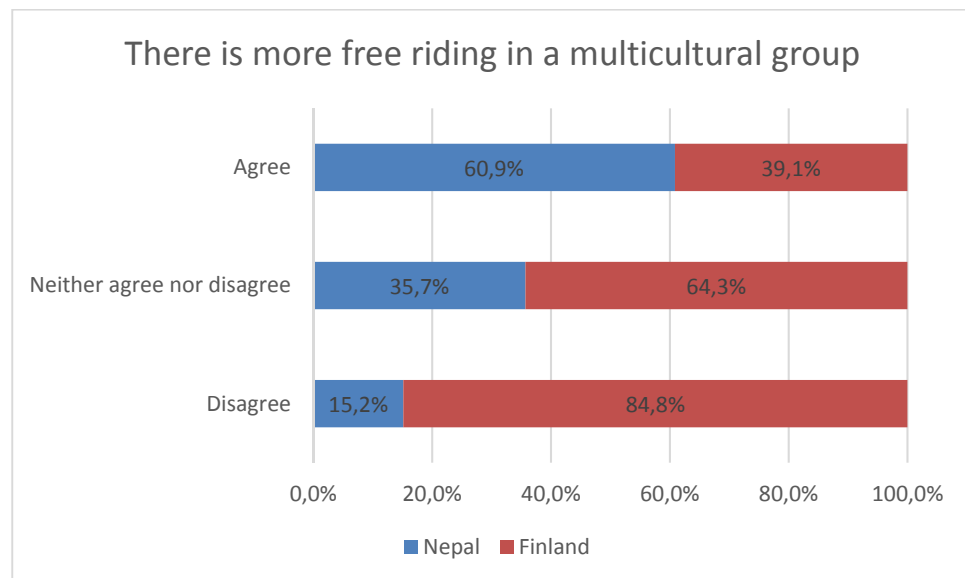


Figure 20 Perception towards free riding in a multicultural group between Nepalese and Finnish students

4.2.2 Communicating in a group

From the literature review it would be expected that Nepalese culture as it is more towards the high context communication style would prefer more indirect and nuanced communication style. Similarly, as Finnish culture is more towards a low context communication style, the preferred communication style would be more towards blunt and direct communication. In other words, the expectation was that Finnish students would prefer more that kind of communication where the communicator means what is said and says what is meant. However the association as seen in Figure 21 is clearly not significant between the country of origin (Finland and Nepal) and the preferred communication style (high context or low context). Nobody, not even Nepalese respondents as would be expected disagree that team members should be direct and to the point during group discussions. This clearly is unexpected result based on the theory.

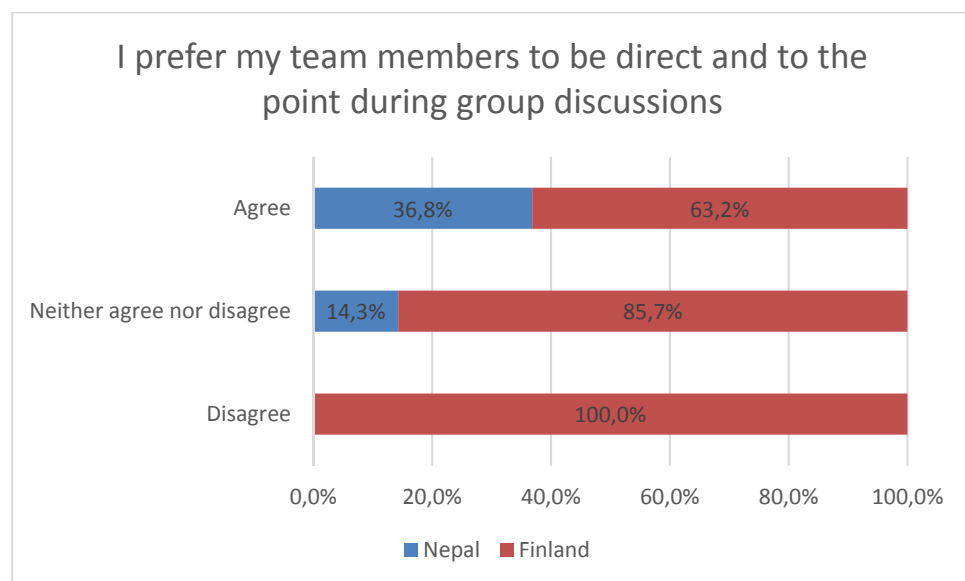


Figure 21 The difference in attitudes about communication style between Nepalese and Finnish students

Building on the discussion above, depending upon the high context and low context nature of communication, the attitude towards the degree to which communication and memos should be explicit and written down as opposed

to being tacit and understood can be expected to be different. Theory would suggest that in a high context culture, the agreements would be more towards the tacit and spoken understanding. Therefore, it would not be necessary to codify and formalize decisions that are made during group discussions. In contrast, it could be expected that a more low context culture would show inclination towards more formalized memos after meetings. Since Nepal and Finland are clearly different in this specturum, Nepal being at one end of the high context spectrum and Finlad being situated in the other end of the low context spectrum, they will clearly exhibit different attitudes towards this issue. However, the results, as presented in Figure 22, shows no clear pattern or significant relationships between the country of origin and the preference for written memos towards the end. Majority of the respondents are ambivalent towards this statement and in fact, majority of the Finnish students show exactly opposite attitude than expected from theory i.e. 81,3% of the Finnish respondents would prefer not to have written memos towards the end of the meeting, clearly more familiar for a high context culture.

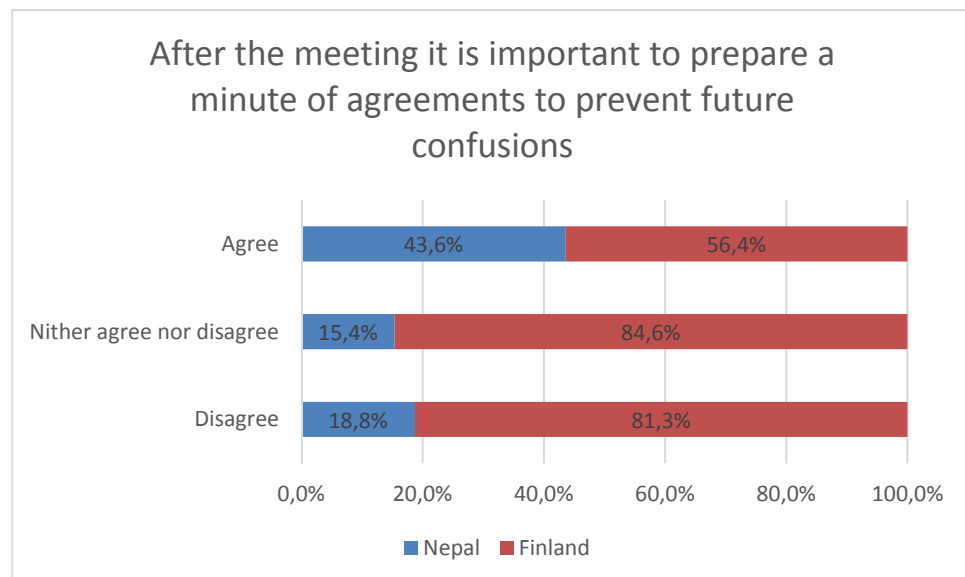


Figure 22 Attitude towards the degree to which there should be formal and written memos for meetings

4.2.3 Evaluation of group members

Literature review suggested that there is a cultural difference in how evaluation is conducted, and feedback provided by the leaders to the subordinates as well as by other group members to peers. The way how feedback is provided by group members can be either direct or indirect. This is somewhat differentiated from the way communication is made in a low context and high context scenario. In some culture, it is customary to provide direct negative feedback directly and bluntly whereas in others it is considered polite to give direct negative feedback indirectly, gently and diplomatically. To contrast to the earlier point, even high context culture countries can be totally direct about negative feedback whereas even low context culture such as USA can be indirect about negative feedback. To understand the degree of this differences in between Nepalese and Finnish students, the degree to which they prefer to be provided with negative feedback directly and bluntly was asked. The results are presented in Figure 23 and the results show that there is no significant association between the country of the origin of the respondent (Finland or Nepal) and the degree to which negative feedback is preferred to be direct. For Nepalese people there were high proportion of students who agreed that they prefer direct negative feedback (73,9%) but then again there are also Nepalese students who prefer the opposite (58,6%). There is no general pattern of associations between the country and the preference for negative feedback.

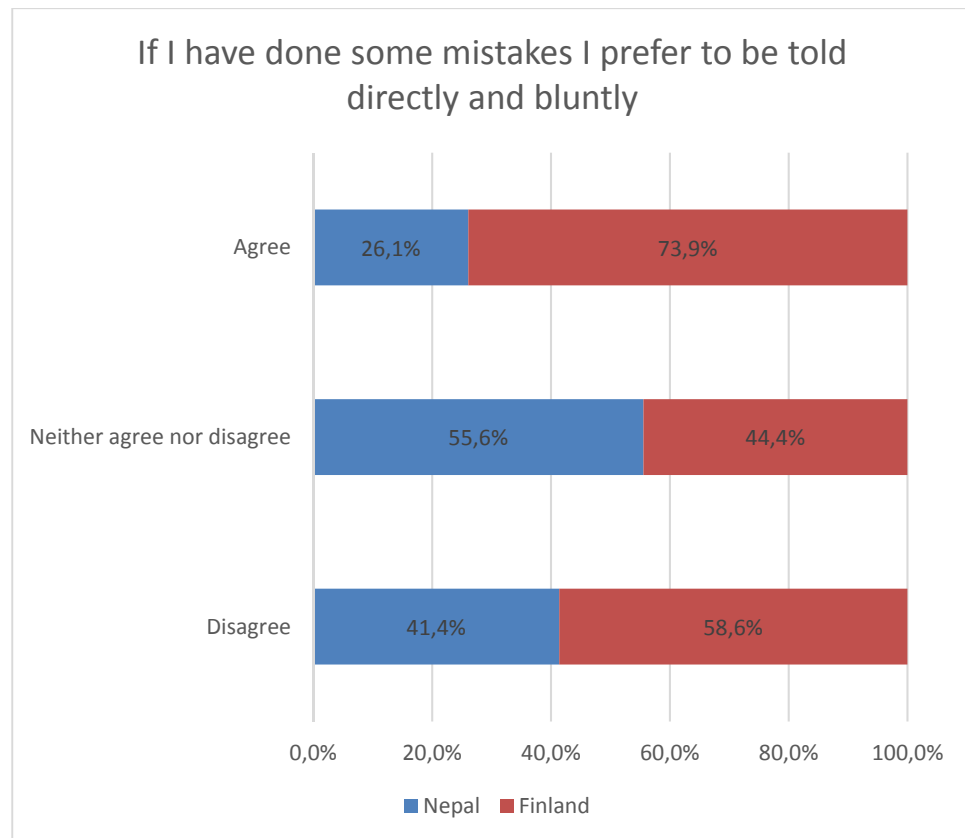


Figure 23 The degree to which respondents preferred negative feedback to be direct and blunt

Literature also suggest that the way feedback provided is palatable has cultural roots. For example, in a culture where direct negative feedback are accepted usually they are made more palatable by use of downgraders and upgraders as discussed in the literature section. The degree to which a group member considers the feelings of other group members while providing criticism and evaluation is also culturally influenced. In some culture, the feelings that it leads to in the person being criticized is much more important, whereas in other cases it is the exactness of the criticism that matters. In the latter case, people from this culture would not take personally in face of criticism and would prefer more exact criticisms. In order to understand whether this is different according to the country of origin, respondents were asked to evaluate the statement, “I care about other people’s feelings rather than being exact about my criticism”. It could be expected that in cultures where direct negative feedback is the norm, people’s feelings would take secondary place in comparison to the

exactness of the criticism. However as Figure 24 shows there is no significant association between the country of origin and the tendency of respondents to care about feelings of the feedback receiver than being exact about the criticisms. There is no clear pattern in the answers. Whereas, majority of the Finns (73,9%) disagree with the statement signifying that they want to be exact about the criticisms, it can also be seen that 63,3% of the Finnish respondents also agree that they should care about feelings of the group members.

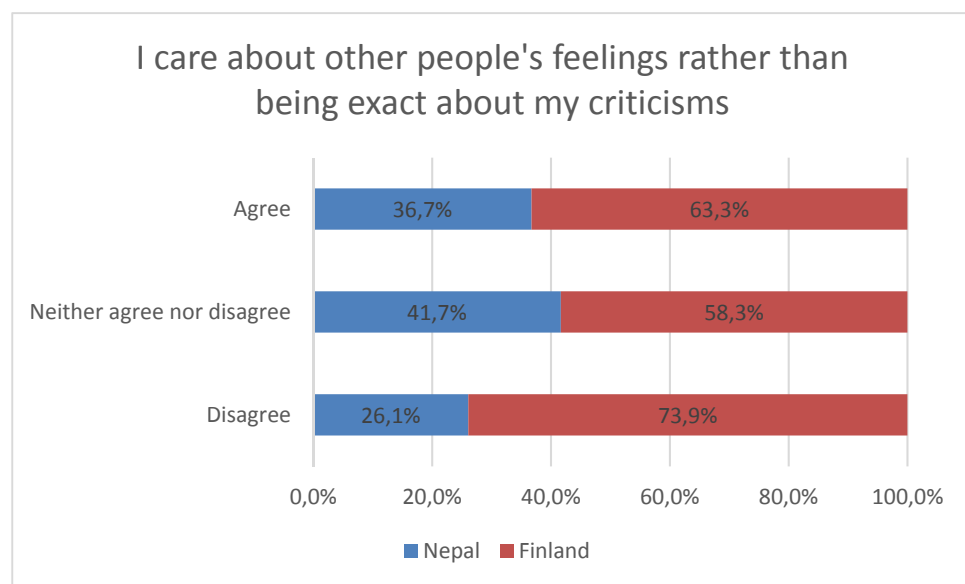


Figure 24 The extent to which respondents prefer to consider feelings of group members rather than being exact about criticisms

4.2.4 Leading and decision making

It was discussed during the literature review that leadership and decision-making process are culturally oriented. There are various degree to which a member from the culture perceive the importance of the role of the leader, the degree to which the problem solving and decision making should be consensual and the degree to which the group members should solve problems in an egalitarian manner rather than in a top down approach. In order to understand this issue, three statements were included in the

questionnaire: a) I am confused if there is no one in charge of the group b) problems with the group should be resolved by the group members without involving the leader and c) consensual decision-making wastes time and leads to bad decisions. The results shows that the association is not that straightforward.

It can be argued that the degree to which the importance of the role of leader is perceived has cultural roots. In a culture with lower power distance, perhaps the role of the leader is not considered to be that important. Similarly, in an egalitarian society communal decision making is given priority over the top down decision making. However, as Figure 25 shows there is no clear association between the country of origin and the perception of the importance of the role of leader. When asked if respondents were confused if there was no designated leader there was no clear pattern of responses. Almost equal proportion of Nepalese respondents agree with the statement (41%) and disagree (33,3%). Similarly, almost equal proportion of Finnish respondents agree (59%) and disagree (66,7%) of the respondents. At least in the sample of respondents, there was no clear indication about whether they prefer the role of a designated leader or not.

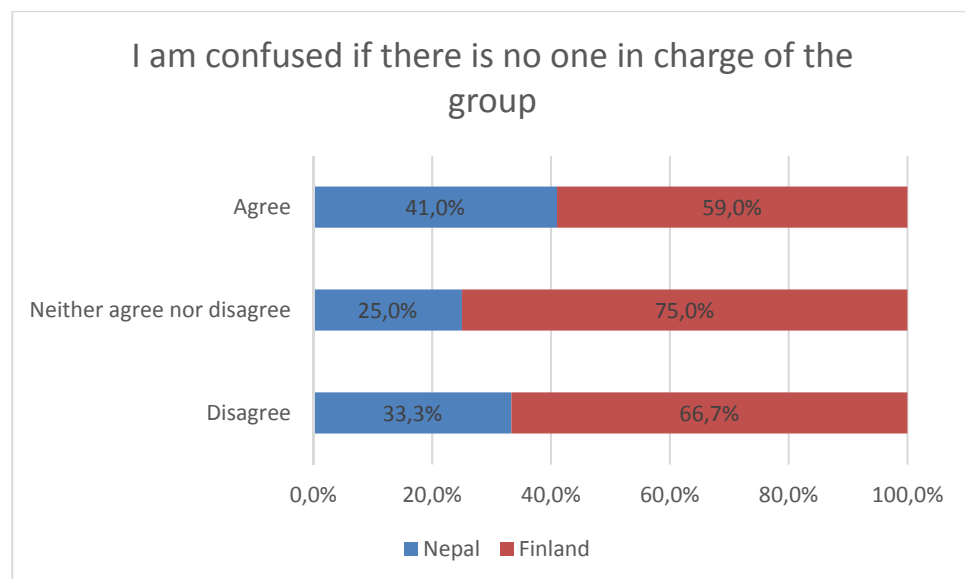


Figure 25 Responses concerning the perception of the importance of the role of the designated leader

Similarly, in an egalitarian society where the power distance is lower, it could be expected that in such cultures, communal decision making would be preferred rather than top down decision making. By extension, in the group setting, members of the group would prefer to resolve group related issues among themselves rather than involving the leader. In group works in educational settings, group members would prefer to resolve the problems themselves rather than involving the lecturer. As can be seen from Figure 26, the association between the country of origin and the preference for communal decision making (in contrast to top down decision making) is significant. There is clearly a difference in the pattern of responses among respondents from Nepal and Finland. The pattern also confirms to the expectations i.e. overwhelmingly larger proportion of the Finnish respondents (72,9%) believe that problems with the group work should be resolved by the group members without involving the lecturer, whereas larger proportion of the Nepalese respondents (83,3%) disagree with the statement. This can be expected as respondents from a higher power distance culture prefer more top-down approach of decision making but respondents from a lower power distance culture prefer more egalitarian approach to decision making.

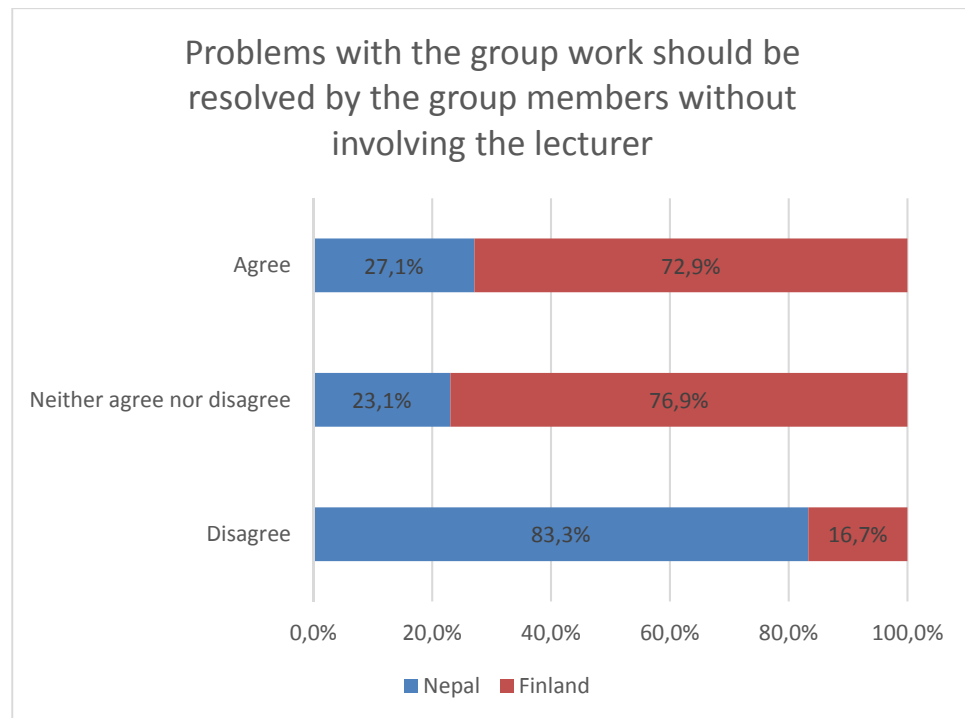


Figure 26 The attitude of respondents regarding whether the group problems should be resolved without involving the leader

Building on the previous assessment, it has been established that people from low power distance culture prefer more consensual decision making rather than a top down approach. In this regard, it can be expected that people preferring to resolve the problems among themselves without involving the leader would have some sort of assumptions regarding the effectiveness of consensual decision making. It can be expected that those who prefer egalitarian approach to decision making would have positive perception to consensual decision making. However, the results presented in Figure 27 do not confirm to this expectation. While clearly it could be expected that Finnish respondents would have more positive perception of the consensual decision-making process, this is not seen from the responses. Here there is no clear patten to responses. Almost similar proportion of Finnish respondents agree and disagree with the statement (45% agree, 31,3% disagree). Similar is the case with the Nepalese respondents (55% agree with the statement and 68,8% disagree with the statement).

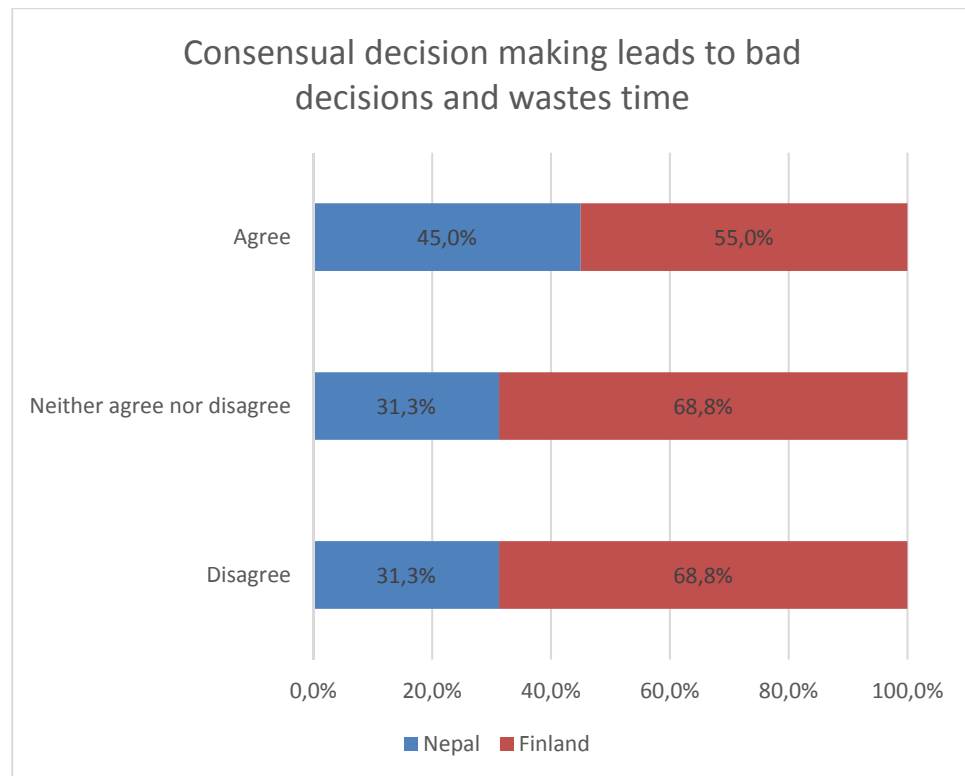


Figure 27 Attitudes of respondents towards consensual decision making

4.2.5 Convincing in the group

It was already argued in the literature review section the arguments that are seen as convincing has cultural roots. The issue here is basically about the approach to cognition: how different cultures process information. In principles first culture, deductive reasoning is emphasized and the principles of “why” things work the way they do is important. This approach is more towards analytical cognition where tasks are done in a sequential manner. In some other cultures where application is more important. These cultures are more tuned towards holistic cognition, that is in understanding the big picture and understanding the relationships between tasks as a whole.

Most Asian culture are expected to perceive matters by holistic cognition. That is for these cultures, it is important to see the interrelationships of the tasks as a whole before understanding and setting out to do the task. As Nepal belongs to Asian culture, it could be expected that Nepalese respondents would prefer holistic cognition and to see the big picture of the tasks before setting out to do it. In contrast, since Finnish culture is rooted

in principles first culture, they would subscribe to analytical cognition. They process the tasks linearly. The results in Figure 28 shows clear pattern and significant association between one's country of origin and the degree to which it is necessary to perceive the big picture of group tasks before setting out to do it. Clearly for majority of the Finnish respondents (91,7%) this is not relevant, whereas for majority of the Nepalese respondents (53,7%), this issue is important. It can be concluded that in comparison to Finnish respondents, the necessity of seeing the big picture of the tasks before setting out to do the tasks is quite much important for Nepalese respondents.

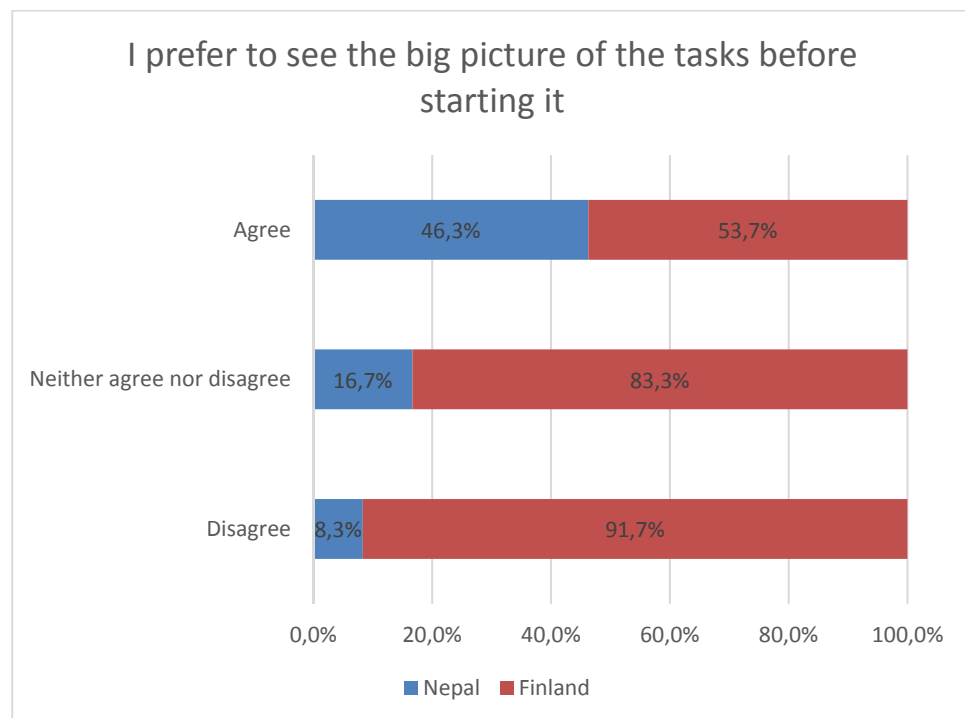


Figure 28 The degree to which holistic cognition is important among respondents

Developing on the arguments before, if a culture prefer holistic cognition, they would prefer to do the group tasks simultaneously with other group members while understanding the big picture. The division of tasks according to group members and sequential processing would be confusing for these respondents. However, the results from Figure 29 shows that there

is no clear association between the country of origin and the sequence in which tasks should be completed. Although it could be expected that Finnish respondents would prefer more to divide the tasks among group members and the Nepalese respondents would prefer to do the tasks as collaborative whole, the results do not show a very clear pattern. Majority of the Nepalese respondents (45,7%) still prefer to do the task collaboratively, and 77,8% of the Finnish respondents preferred to focus on their own individual tasks, the association none the less is not significant.

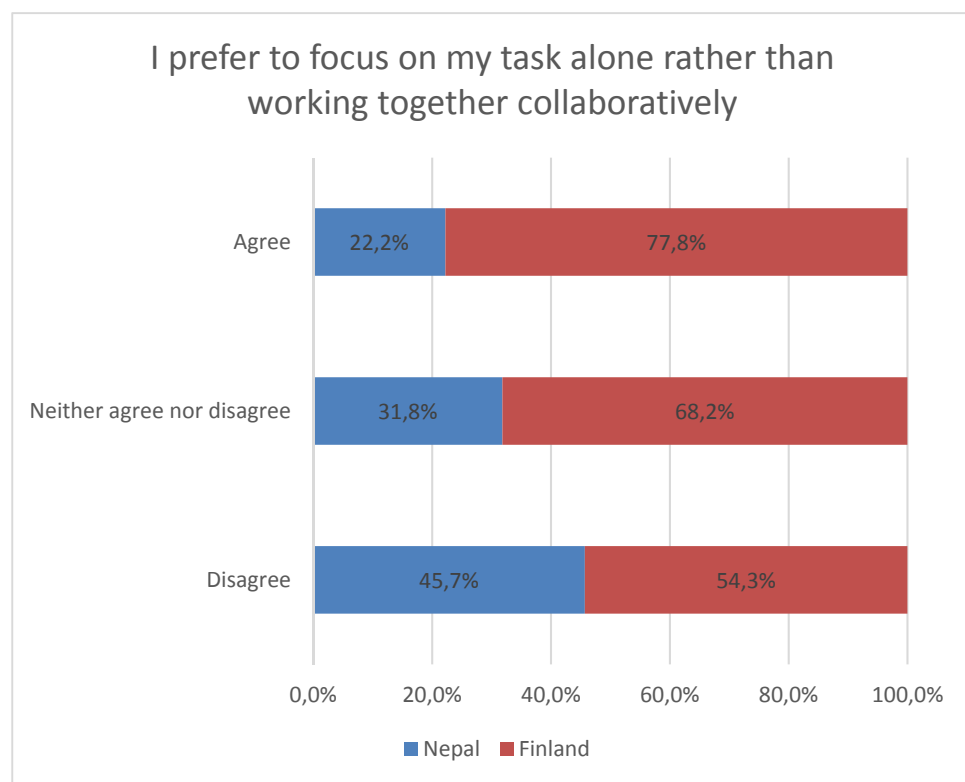


Figure 29 The tendency of respondents to prefer focusing on their task alone or work collaboratively as a whole

4.2.6 Expressing disagreements

From the literature review, it has been suggested that the way disagreements are expressed in different cultures is different. Whereas some cultures are confrontational in nature, others are non-confrontational

in nature. In a confrontational culture, disagreements are directly expressed without use of any moderators. In a confrontational avoidance culture, disagreements are not expressed directly. Wherever they are, they are used in conjunction with moderating expressions. In such cultures, “saving face” is important and so disagreements are also expressed in private wherever possible. In a non-confrontational culture, work related criticisms can have direct effect on personal relationships. In a confrontational culture, the task related criticism and personal disagreements are kept separate. When a member of the group voices disagreements with the other members of the group in a non-confrontational culture, it can have negative impact on existing personal relationships. The respondents from both countries, Nepal and Finland were asked whether they think that happens, that is when other members of the group challenge their personal opinion it has negative effects on personal relationships. The results shown in Figure 30 clearly shows that there is a significant association between the nationality of the respondent and whether they think when their opinions are challenged it will also affect personal relationships. As expected, Nepalese culture much towards a non-confrontational culture and preoccupied with saving face leads to majority of the Nepalese respondents (77,8%) clearly agreeing with the statement. Majority of the Finnish respondents (75%) disagree with the statement which is as expected as Finnish culture is more towards the confrontational extreme where task related conflicts and relationship related conflicts are kept separate. There is a clear pattern to the responses in the sample.

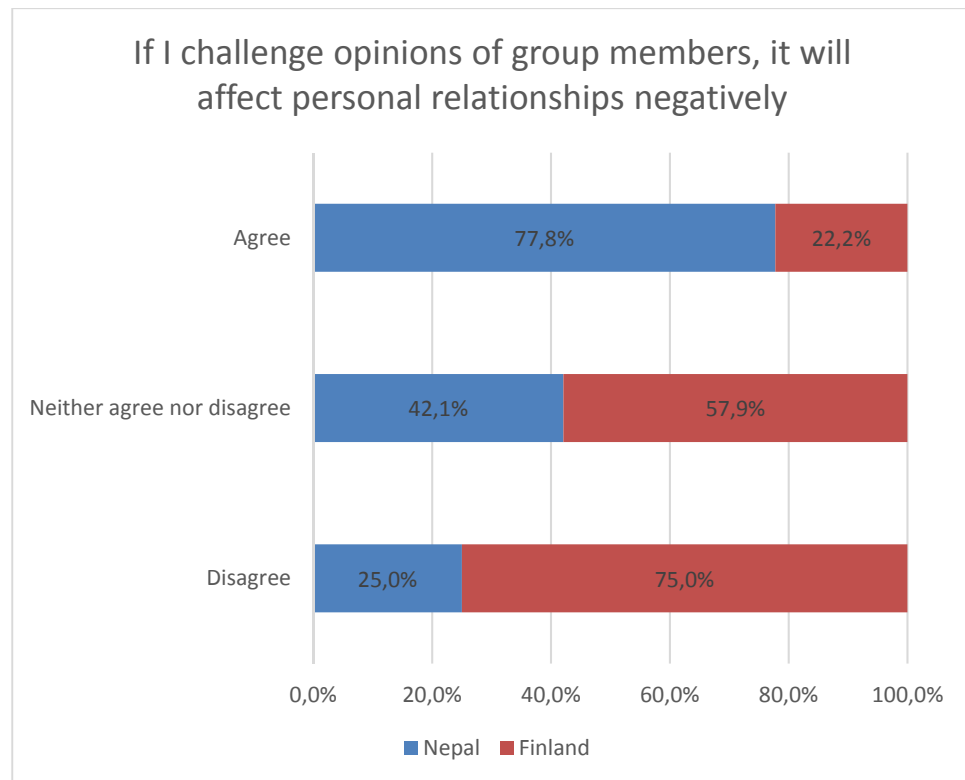


Figure 30 The degree to which respondents think that when others challenge their opinions it has effect on personal relationships

Regarding the confrontational and non-confrontational culture, literature review also suggested that the way disagreements are expressed varies across cultures. Some cultures while being confrontational will still be unemotionally expressive while voicing disagreements, whereas in other cultures, emotional expression is visible when voicing disagreements. There is no direct association between being non-confrontational or confrontational and being expressive in facial expressions and body language. That is, those cultures that are confrontational can be both expressive and non-expressive. In order to understand the cultural differences in emotional expressiveness while voicing disagreements, respondents from both Nepal and Finland were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, “I am very expressive in my facial expressions and body language when I express disagreements”. The results shown in Figure 31 shows that there is some association between the nationality of the respondents (Nepal or Finland) and whether they think that they are emotionally expressive while voicing disagreements. 50% of the Nepalese

respondents agree with the statement while 38,5% disagree. Regarding the Finnish respondents, 50% of the respondents agree with the statement whereas 61,5% of the disagree. Although there is some association between the country of origin and the tendency to be emotionally expressive while voicing disagreements, the direction of pattern is not clear cut.

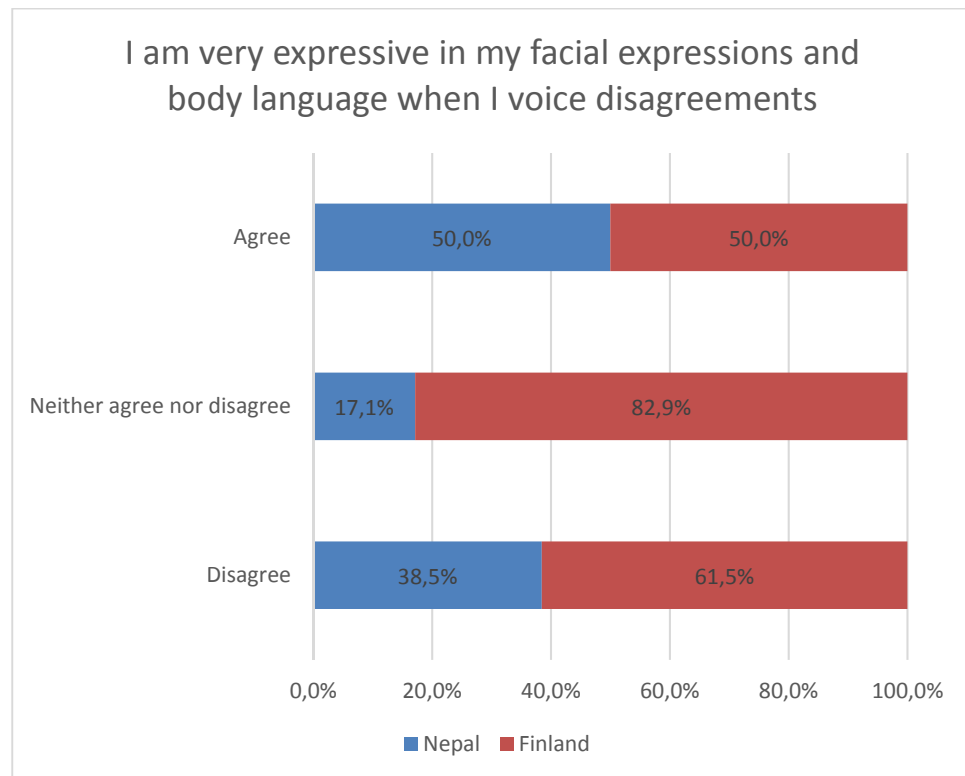
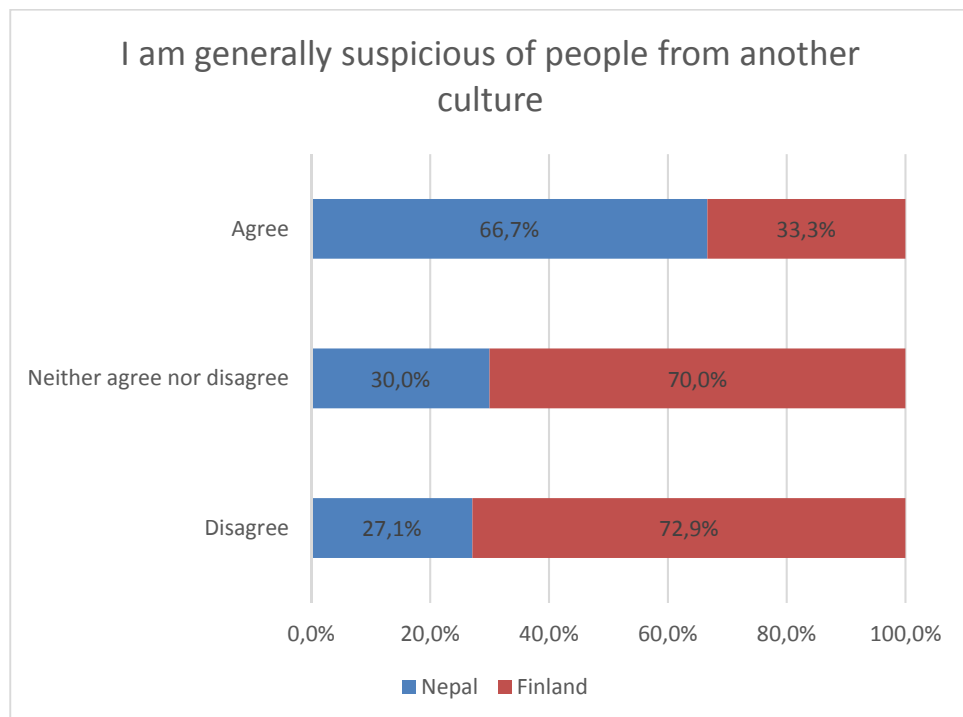


Figure 31 Nationality of the respondents and the degree to which respondents are emotionally expressive while voicing disagreements

4.2.7 Perceptions towards relationship and trust

In the literature review it was discussed that different cultures have varying degree of relationship building approaches and how the trust is built over time. Some cultures are relationship oriented in which the degree of trust developed is not necessarily due to the skills that the group members exhibit but due to the time that is used in building personal relationships. In the task-oriented cultures, the person who is considered trustworthy is the one

who exhibit high degree of task specific skills. In such a situation, personal trust is separate from task specific trust without one affecting the other. Some cultures have natural distrust for other members that do not belong to their own cultural group. In this sort of cultures, it takes lots of time to develop personal relationships and eventually trust. In order to figure out whether there is a difference between cultures regarding the amount of natural trust that they show towards people of different cultures, respondents from Finland and Nepal were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "I am suspicious of people from other culture". The results provided in Figure 32 shows that there is clearly association between the country of origin and the degree of natural trust that a cultural group expresses towards people of another culture. The results show that Nepalese people tend to generally suspicious of people from another culture (66,7% agree) whereas Finnish people tend to be generally open towards people from another culture (72,9%) disagree.



In order to understand the degree to which a particular culture is task oriented or relationship oriented, respondents from both of the countries (Nepal and Finland) were asked to evaluate the statement, "I provide personal assistance to other group members even though it is not related to the group tasks". The assumption is that the higher the relationship orientation, the more likely the group members will go out of their way to provide personal assistance to the group members even if it not directly related to the task at hand. More task-oriented cultures would be more confined to focusing on tasks and keeping the work-related relationships separate from personal relationships. The results in Figure 33 shows that there is an association between nationality and the tendency to provide personal assistance to the group members even if it is not related to the group tasks. However, the results are opposite from expected. Earlier, it was seen that Nepalese culture is more relationship oriented than Finland and so it was expected that Nepalese people will be more interested in providing personal assistance. The results show that, Finnish people will be more prone to providing personal assistance (59,4%) agree and Nepalese people are less likely to do so (52,9%) disagree. Although the results show that there is clearly association between these two issues, the pattern of association is not that clear cut.

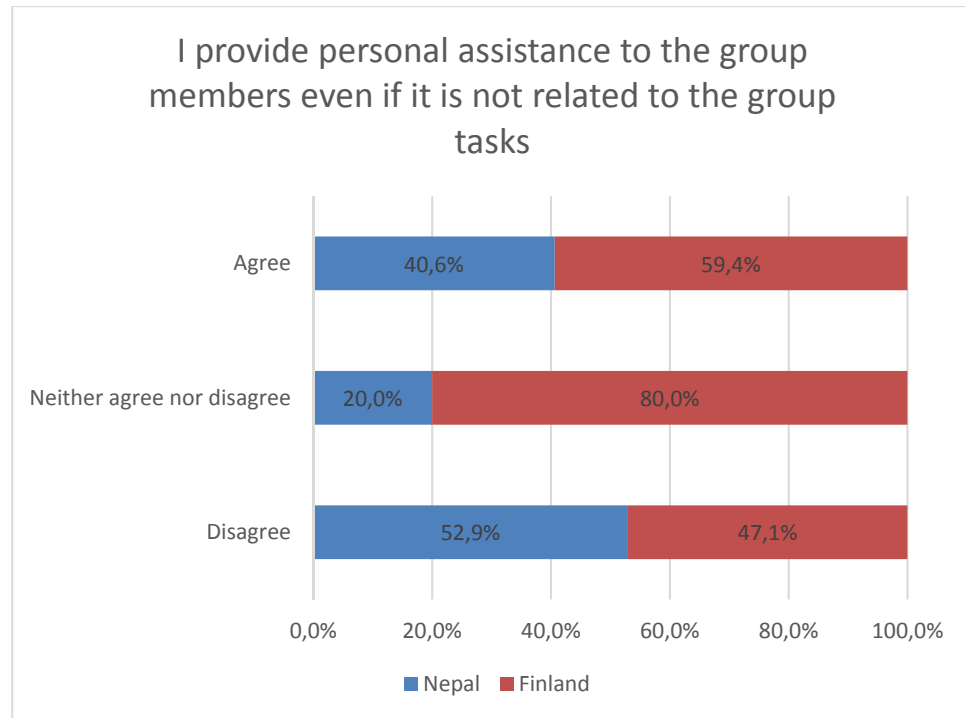


Figure 32 Nationality and the degree to which group members would be interested in providing personal assistance to other group members even though it is not related to group tasks at hand

4.2.8 Scheduling and perception of time

As discussed in the literature review, cultures are very different in their perception of time and scheduling. Some cultures are monochronic (M-time) culture and some culture are polychronic (P-time). In a monochronic culture, time is conceived to be linear-sequential and time is a commodity of value. In a polychronic culture, time is not a linear-sequential event where time is not money. Since, Nepal is a polychronic culture and Finland is a monochronic culture, it can be expected that respondents from both of these cultures have different perceptions of time and scheduling. In order to understand the difference in attitudes about time, one of the item in the questionnaire was, "I arrive at the group meetings when the meeting is supposed to start". It could be expected that monochronic culture, since they value time, will be much more punctual to meetings. In terms punctuality, since Finland is a monochronic culture, it could be expected that for Finnish respondents arriving in the meeting punctually would be more important

than for Nepalese respondents. However, results in Figure 33 shows no clear association between the nationality of the respondents and the perception of punctuality. Generally, more Finnish respondents (67,3%) as compared to 32,7% of Nepalese respondents value punctuality. However, quite large percentage of the respondents (57,1% of Finnish and 42,9% of the Nepalese respondents also disagree with the statement. In that respect, there is no clear pattern of relationship between the nationality of the respondents and their perception of punctuality.

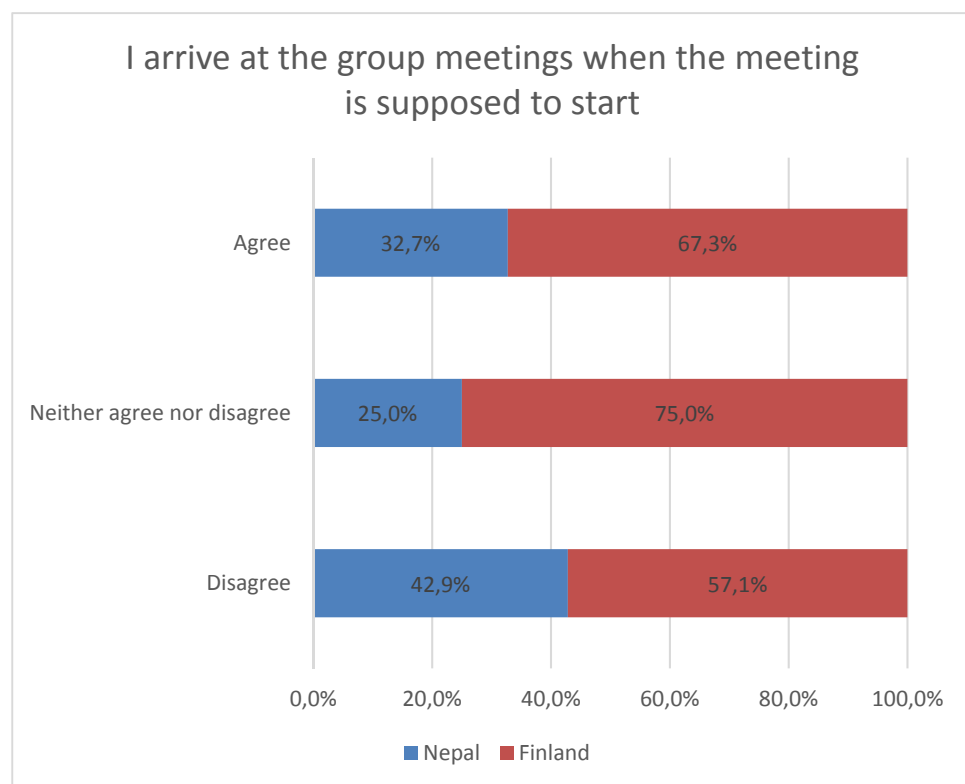


Figure 33 Nationality of respondents and their perception of punctuality

Buiding on the arguments above, as monochronic culture perceive time to be linear-sequential and valuable, in such a culture, scheduling can be expected to be more rigid. It can be said that the scheduling is taken seriously and not following schedules to be a serious offence. In contrast, in a polychronic culture, where the cultural expectation is that many different events can be done together at the same time, the concept of rigid

scheduling is somewhat alien. If many different events can be considered together and changed according to the demand of the situation, it can be said that polychronic culture would be more open towards flexible scheduling process and rigid scheduling would be too confining. In order to understand whether this issue is of particular interest, respondents from Nepal and Finland were asked to evaluate the statement, "It is a good idea to be flexible about scheduling meetings". In such a case, in a polychronic culture like Nepal, respondents would be more likely to agree with the statement than Finnish respondents. However, results from Figure 34, show no such clear-cut association between nationality of the respondents and the degree to which they prefer their scheduling to be flexible. Whereas, 65,6% of the Finnish respondents agree with the statement, again almost equal proportion of the Finnish students (66,7%) of the students disagree with the statement. In the case of Nepal, while 34,4% of the Nepalese respondents agree with the statement, equal proportion of the Nepalese students (33,3%) disagree with the same statement. In other words, there is no clear relationship pattern between the nationality of the respondents and the degree to which they prefer flexible scheduling, which is rather unexpected considering the theory discussed.

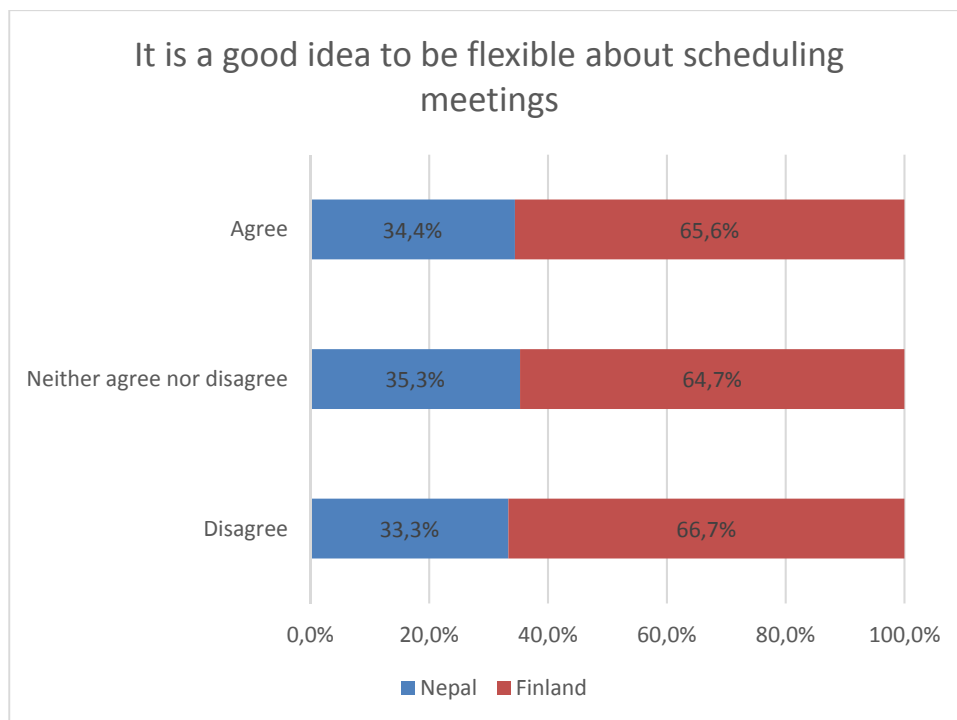


Figure 34 Nationality of the respondents and the degree to which they prefer flexible scheduling

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary of main findings

This study dealt with the implications of national culture in the group processes specially in the educational settings. In the literature review section, different cultural frameworks were discussed particularly on Hofstede's and Meyers cultural dimensions. Although, there are also other cultural frameworks, this framework was used in detail because it is the most common and applicable framework. After that various group work were discussed, namely, communication, evaluation, leadership, convincing, expressing disagreements, decision making, trusting and relationship building and perception of time and scheduling. A questionnaire survey was conducted (N=146) out of which Nepalese and Finnish respondents were chosen (N=84) for cross cultural comparison about perceptions of various group processes.

The main findings of the study concern the differences in attitudes in between Nepalese and Finnish respondents regarding various group work. There were several significant differences in cultural attitudes towards group work. Primarily, there is overwhelming difference between Nepalese and Finnish students regarding the degree to which group works are common culturally. Nepalese students according to their cultural and educational background are much less used to then Finnish students to solving problems in a group. Nepalese students also perceive that there is more free riding in a multicultural group than in an unicultural group.

There were not much clear difference in attitudes regarding the communication process between Nepalese and Finnish students. Students from both of the nationalities were ambivalent regarding explicitness of communication. Similarly, the preference of both group of students regarding the degree to which meeting minutes should be prepared after the meetings was also not clear. In that respect, it was not easy to differentiate preference for communication styles among Nepalese and Finnish students.

Considering the evaluation mechanism preferred between Nepalese and Finnish students, there was once again no clear pattern of relationships. Both Nepalese and Finnish students equally agree or disagree regarding how blunt the evaluation should be when negative evaluations are provided. There was also not clear difference between how much feelings of other group members should be considered in comparison to the exactness of criticism provided.

Regarding the attitude towards leadership both Nepalese and Finnish people did not show clear preference towards the role of the leader. However, clearly, Finnish students preferred egalitarian approach to resolving approach, that is they preferred to resolve group related issues without involving the leader or a teacher. Nepalese students in contrast would prefer to make the teacher directly involved. This was one of the major differences in this attitude between Finnish and Nepalese students. Similarly, there was no clear difference in perceptions of the effectiveness of consensual decision making among Nepalese and Finnish students.

When considering relationship and trust building, Nepalese students overwhelmingly seemed to be more suspicious of alien culture than Finnish students. There was also a difference between the degree to which students were willing to provide personal assistance to other group members even if it is not related to the group tasks specifically. There was also clearly difference in how much opinions of group members can be challenged in order not to engender the relationships with them. Nepalese students were more likely to not challenge others' opinions in order not to risk positive personal relationships. Nepalese students were also more likely to be emotionally expressive while voicing disagreements. In that respect, the greatest difference between Nepalese and Finnish students in terms of culture was in the way relationship and trust building was approached between these two cultures.

Although it could be expected that there would clearly be difference in attitudes between Nepalese and Finnish students regarding the perception of time and flexibility of scheduling, the results showed no such clear

difference. Another clear difference in attitudes regarding group tasks when comparing Finnish and Nepalese respondents was that Nepalese students perceive things holistically whereas Finnish students perceive in a linear-sequential manner. That is Nepalese students prefer to see the big picture of the tasks before even starting it whereas that is totally not necessary for the Finnish students. There was no clear difference between the Nepalese and Finnish students regarding to what degree the tasks should be approached sequentially and individually versus wholly and collaboratively.

5.2 Practical applications

From the summary of the major findings it is quite clear that culture has huge influence in group work processes. The effect of culture on group processes and consequently on group performance is well documented already (Thomas 1999). Although the study was done among students in various UAS, it is also relevant and applicable to business context. The study confirms that the communication process in terms of the high context and low context approaches clearly is affected by the cultural background of employees. Managers should also be more cautious in providing feedback to their subordinates specially when they are from another culture. In some culture it is customary to provide direct negative feedback bluntly whereas in other cultures the message needs to be toned down.

Some cultures which are hierarchical in nature prefer stronger leader and leadership roles, whereas in an egalitarian culture, the problems are much preferred to be solved among group members than necessary involving the leader. There is also different degree of preference among culture related to the degree to which decision making should either be top down or consensual in nature. Clearly some cultures view that consensual decision making is more effective whereas others do not.

While voicing disagreements in a group, clearly managers need to be aware of the cultural background of the recipient. In some cultures, disagreements should be expressed bluntly rather than in a roundabout way. The sensitivity towards facial expressions and body language that the

recipient shows while achieving disagreements is also a cultural matter. In the end, culturally some individuals are more prone to confrontational attitude whereas others are more prone to non-confrontational resolution of problems. The arguments that are convincing in one culture is clearly different from another culture. A manager seeking to convince a group of people should be aware of the cultural background of the audience. Those preferring holistic cognition need to be provided with the big picture and interrelationships between other points. A culture where analytical cognition is the norm are much more comfortable with logical, deductive kinds of arguments.

Culture indeed affects how relationship and trust is built. In some cultures which are more task oriented, trust can be gained from business partners by demonstrating the product functionality or one's own ability. In a relationship-oriented culture, it is very difficult to gain trust by being able to complete the task effectively. A manager needs to cultivate personal relationships in order to gain business deals and trust from business partners from relationship-oriented culture. Clearly there is also a difference in the conception of punctuality and flexibility of scheduling. A manager involved in scheduling should be open to the possibilities that people from polychronic culture are not used to working with a linear schedule and they would much prefer a flexible schedule. All these understandings are important for a manager to effectively manage group work in multicultural settings (Fitzsimmons 2013).

5.3 Evaluation of own study

The reliability of the study was guaranteed by conducting a pilot questionnaire before the actual survey to better consider the questionnaire items. All the questionnaire items were derived from previous research in this field. While contacting the respondents, care was taken in trying to make the sample generalizable by contacting students from many different UASs rather than one. The completeness of the responses was checked towards the end and those with some items missing were removed from the sample.

As many varieties of respondents as was possible were included in the sample.

Although, this study only used 84 respondents from Nepal and Finland, it can be argued that it gives quite clear picture of the differences in cultural perceptions towards group work. Since there were only two countries with almost similar proportion representing both countries, the results can be generalizable. Specially in the context of educational setting, the results can be directly applicable. Throughout the study proper research protocol were followed including maintaining objectivity.

5.4 Limitations of the study

There were several limitations to this study. In this study, only one cultural framework was considered namely Hofstede's dimensions. As already mentioned in the literature review, there are several more analytical frameworks for culture which were not considered. There could have been also several other group work that could have been directly implicated by the differences in culture. In this study, only eight major group work were considered.

Methodologically, this study only used quantitative method and questionnaire survey as the method. It could have been possible to use other methodology and research methods. Perhaps with qualitative methods, it could have been possible to study the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents in an explorative manner. In the questionnaire survey, the sample size was comparatively quite small in number (N=84). This was because although the original number of respondents was 146, only 84 of the respondents were either Nepalese or Finnish. A larger sample would have made the study more generalizable. In the selection of the sample also, most of the Nepalese respondents have been already in Finland, used to educational system and culture of Finland. In that respect, many of the Nepalese students may not be the most representative sample of the average Nepalese cultural values. The final analysis was also limited to looking at frequency of the responses and further analysis to understand

the relationships between different statements, characteristics of different respondents, the correlation and analysis of dependence etc. were not considered. In that respect, the analysis of the data gathered was quite limited.

In the sample only, students from various UASs in the English degree program were considered. This can also have the possibility to seriously bias the sample as even the Finnish students who have already been interested and studying in English degree program are already relatively open towards new culture and used to working in a multicultural group. Similarly, although the data collected includes students from many different nationalities, in the final analysis only students from Nepal and Finland were considered. This could have led to loss of valuable insights. In the end, all of the students were students in English bachelor's degree programs in various UAS. One might question in this context how valuable, relevant and generalizable the findings are to the multicultural group processes in a business organizational context.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Following from the limitations of the study in the previous section, several suggestions for further research could be proposed. Further studies could look at different other cultural frameworks and look into whether dimensions mentioned in these frameworks has any direct implications to group work processes. Future studies also could be looking into other forms of group work than the one analysed in this study. For example, there could be possibilities to consider various other factors related to leadership processes in the group.

Methodologically, it could be further possible to use explorative qualitative methods to elaborate on theory. For example, from literature review it could be expected that as Nepal and Finland both have different orientation to time, there should have been different perceptions regarding flexibility of scheduling. The results however do not show this. It could then be possible to further interview the respondents to understand why this is the case and

elaborate on theory. Of course, even in this study it is always possible to increase the sample size so that more complex statistical analysis could be done to understand the problem from various perspectives. A larger sample also makes findings more generalizable in further studies.

One further possibility is also that in this study we see that Nepalese students do not show the attitudes that can be expected from theory. One of the reasons is that most of the students have been in Finland for some time and this could have helped them to enculture in Finnish culture. What kind of processes leads to that form of enculturation and what kind of impacts that have in attitudes towards group work can be a subject for further studies. Future studies could do sophisticated statistical analysis such as regression analysis etc. to figure out dependence between different variables.

The extent to which the attitudes of students are directly transferable to the business context is another issue. Perhaps, future studies could directly try to understand the attitude and perceptions of employees working in different business organizations. It might be also possible to trace the group processes over a longer period and see if there are changes in the attitudes towards group processes as the employees started to get encultured in the host country culture. This study could take place in different kind of organizations and different levels of hierarchy. The study also considered the situation of Finland and Nepalese respondents. Of course, it is always possible to extend the comparative analysis between other countries or include more nationalities in the same study to better understand the differences in attitudes towards group processes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

General information					
Country of origin					
Mother tongue					
Gender					
Age					
Number of years in your home university					
1= Totally disagree, 2= Slightly disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Slightly agree, 5= Totally agree					
General preference for group work					
Group works are common way of solving problems in my home country	1	2	3	4	5
There is more free riding in multicultural group	1	2	3	4	5
Communication process					
I prefer my group members to be direct and to the point in group discussions	1	2	3	4	5
It is a good idea to prepare meeting minutes at the end of the meeting to avoid confusions later	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluation					
I prefer more direct and blunt evaluation rather than gentle and diplomatic one	1	2	3	4	5
When I evaluate work of others I consider their feelings rather being being exact about the criticisms	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership and decision making					

I feel confused when there is no one in charge in the group	1	2	3	4	5
Group problems should be resolved among group members rather than involving the lecturer/teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Building consensus in decision making among group members leads to poor decision making and wastes time	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship and trust					
I am generally more suspicious of people from other cultures	1	2	3	4	5
I provide assistance to other group members even if it does not involve group tasks	1	2	3	4	5
Expressing disagreements					
I do not express disagreements because it can engender bad feelings among group members	1	2	3	4	5
I am generally demonstrative in my facial expressions and body language while expressing disagreements	1	2	3	4	5
Persuading other group members					
I prefer to see the big picture before starting on my own tasks	1	2	3	4	5
I prefer to do my task first and pass it off to other group members rather than doing the task collaboratively	1	2	3	4	5
Scheduling and perception of time					
I arrive in meeting venue in scheduled time	1	2	3	4	5

It is a good idea to be flexible in preparing group meeting schedules	1	2	3	4	5
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