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CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT:
NORWAY VS. POLAND

Degree Program in Business Management and Entrepreneurship

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NORJAN JA PUOLAN KULTTUURIEROT LIKETOIMINNAN JOHTAMISEN NÄKÖKULMASTA

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Opinnäytetyön aiheena oli löytää kulttuurieroja Norjassa ja Puolassa liiketoiminnan johtamisen näkökulmasta. Tavoitteena oli käsitellä Norjan ja Puolan kulttuurierojen haasteita yritystoiminnan kannalta. Tutkimus keskittyi lähinnä näiden kahden kulttuurin eroihin, mutta pyrki myös löytämään ja esittelemään norjalaisen ja puolalaisen kulttuurin samankaltaisuuksia, joita on havaittu aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa ja mal-leissa.

Opinnäytetyö pyrki antamaan sekä norjalaisille että puolalaisille yritysjohtajille neuvoja siitä, kuinka paremmin ymmärtää kulttuurieroja ja välttää tyypillisiä virheitä. Tutkimus tarjosi paljon arvokasta ja mielenkiintoista tietoa kulttuurien välisistä eroista näiden kahden hieman erilaisen maan, Norjan ja Puolan, osalta. Kulttuurierojen ja toisen kulttuurin toimintatapojen ymmärtäminen yritystoiminnassa on perusta onnistuneelle kansainvälistymiselle.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettisena viitekehyksenä toimi Geert Hofstede'n ja Fons Trompenaars'in teorit. Myös muita tunnettuja teorioita käytettiin. Tutkimus toteutettiin käyttäen kvalitatiivista tutkimusmetodia. Puolistrukturoitu haastattelu toteutettiin kymmenelle hengelle ja saadut vastaukset analysoitiin. Haastattelutilanteessa käytettiin myös havainnointia.

Tuloksista ilmeni, että Norjan ja Puolan liiketoiminnan johtamisessa on paljon eroja, mutta toisaalta näillä eroilla ei ole suurta merkitystä. Tutkimus osoittaa, että eri kulttuurien välisten erojen ymmärtämisellä ja tiedostamisella on suuri merkitys. Kulttuurieroihin mukautuminen on erityisen tärkeää niissä organisaatioissa, jotka harjoittavat operatiivista liiketoimintaa näiden kahden maan välillä. Haastattelut osoittivat, että kulttuurieroihin liittyvän selvitystyön tekeminen etukäteen kunnolla saa liiketoiminnan sujumaan paremmin eri kulttuurien edustajista koostuvissa työryhmissä Norjassa tai Puolassa. Samalla se edesauttaa selkeämpää kommunikointia kulttuurien välisen liiketoiminnan yhteydessä.

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The purpose of this Master's thesis was to find differences between business management cultures in Norway and in Poland. The thesis introduces the challenges of cultural differences, Norway vs. Poland, in a business context. This study concentrates mainly on various differences between these two different cultures, but it was also designed to find and show some similarities between Norwegian and Polish cultures based on earlier research and cultural modelling.

The thesis also provides guidance for both Norwegian and Polish business management on how they can cope better with these cultural differences and avoid making typical mistakes. This study provides a lot of valuable and interesting information on cross-cultural differences between these two different countries; Norway and Poland. Understanding cultural differences in a business context and the ways other cultures work is the groundwork of successful globalization.

The theoretical framework used in this thesis is based mainly on two different theoretical frameworks created by Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars, but also some other well-known theories are briefly used. This research project was conducted using a qualitative research method. Semi-structured interviews of ten persons were conducted and the answers were analysed. Also the observation method was used during the interviews.

This study showed that there are many differences in business management between Norway and Poland, but these differences are not invariably of unquestionably significant importance. The conclusion in thesis demonstrates the great importance of cross-cultural understanding and adaptation in organizations that are doing business across borders; Norway-Poland. According this research, doing your cross-cultural homework in advance properly will make your own business activities run more smoothly using cross-cultural teams in Norway or in Poland and it will assist you to achieve triumphant communication in a cross-cultural business context.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Edward T. Hall, an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher wrote in his book *Beyond Culture* that “For too long, people have taken their own ways of life for granted, ignoring the vast, international cultural community that surrounds them. Humankind must now embark on the difficult journey beyond culture, to the discovery of a lost self and a sense of perspective” (Hall 1989, 240). The understanding of cultural differences and the knowledge of the hidden traps of intercultural communications is making day-to-day transactions easier and they are critical elements in reaching success in business life. We should never underestimate other cultures, but rather try to understand other cultures and our own culture. When we understand another, it does not mean that we have to lose our own culture (Website of Edward T. Hall 2013).

My own personal background gives some strong and meaningful reasons for this master’s thesis. I am a Finn who graduated from Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in 1996, but I have lived in Norway permanently since 1995. Before that, I also lived, worked and studied in Sweden for three years and in the UK for one year.

During my 20-year professional working career in various managerial positions, I have always worked in international companies, which have had activities across the borders or even worldwide. During my career I have spent the longest time working with Poland and Polish workers, seafarers and managers. This relation started in 1994 and since then I have visited Poland about 100 times. Even today I work together with Polish managers and subordinates; together there are more than 150 employees today within the shipbuilding and ship design/engineering business sector. My own business activities also have two separate companies and offices in Poland.

I have always been interested in cross-cultural management issues. This interest started during my studies in Cambridge, at Anglia Ruskin University. Today, my regular business working day consists of cross-cultural issues: I act as a business developer and investor in Norway and running nine different companies with most of the activity and the largest number of employees coming from Poland. I can con-

clude that my thesis project is based on my own 20 years of field experience of cross-cultural management together with academic bachelor and master level studies.

Another reason why I have chosen to research Polish and Norwegian culture is that Polish people are becoming a rapidly increasing group of immigrants in Norway. As of January 2012, the percentage of Polish immigrants in Norway was 13 % of the total population. Poles are the largest immigrant group in Norway, 72.100 persons or 11% of all immigrants. During 2012, about 50.000 people came to work in Norway and about 31% of those people came from Poland (Website of Statistics Norway 2013). The selection of these two countries in my research project is not only due to their current relationship, but also due to a long shared historical tradition. Norwegians have been looking for challenges abroad or with other cultures since the Viking periods. Poles are used to emigration during tough economic periods or they have seen better personal opportunities outside of their own home country; earlier Polish emigration was to the United States and more recently Poles have emigrated to European Union countries and to Norway.

“It is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change” (Charles Darwin 1872). This responsiveness to change is a vital element today in our era of multicultural business life. Fons Trompenaars, a world-renowned expert on international management, wrote, *“Our belief is that you can never understand other cultures”* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, i). This might be true, but I am at least trying to understand other cultures in my research project. While the global business life is getting more international, it is necessary to have more information about and understanding of the cultural patterns of other cultures. *“When in Rome, do as the Romans do”* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 5-6), the original source of this saying is a lot older, it is thought to be from a letter from Januarius to St. Augustine in about 390 AD. With these wise quotes I highlight the vital message in this thesis; the importance of cross-cultural understanding and adaptation in international organizations.

2 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

The research objective of this thesis is to try to find both general and specific business management differences especially in following specific branches: shipbuilding, hotel and investment businesses. The thesis introduces the challenges of cultural differences, Norway vs. Poland, in a business context. This study mainly concentrates on various differences between these two different cultures, but it is also designed to find and show some similarities between Norwegian and Polish cultures based on earlier research and cultural modelling.

The thesis offers guidance for both Norwegian and Polish business management on how they can manage to cope better with these cultural differences and avoid making cultural collisions. Understanding cultural differences in a business context and the ways other cultures work is the groundwork of successful globalization business efforts. Organizations with more diverse workforces with respect to race, gender and culture are more creative and innovative (Cox 2001). This thesis enables organizations that are working in Norwegian-Polish business to receive some theoretical and practical advice on how to develop organizations and managers in this type of cross-cultural context.

This study was designed to find answers to the following questions:

- What are the general differences between management cultures in Norway and Poland?
- What are the cultural challenges in a business context (Norway vs. Poland)?

Based on existing cross-cultural research and studies on Norway and Poland, as well as the relatively limited comparative research available, it is possible for a researcher to conclude that there is a general consensus on some cultural differences between these two countries and their cultures. These cultural traits are useful for a researcher in order to conceptualize during the research project what areas should be explored in greater details, e.g., via interviews. The following academic hypotheses are related both to ordinary business and work environmental situations.

- There is more hierarchy in Poland than in Norway.
- The decision-making process is less centralized in Norway.
- Polish are more concerned about risk than Norwegians
- Norwegians are more result-orientated while Polish concentrates to maintain social harmony in a group.

These hypotheses form the basis for studying differences between Norwegian and Polish business and work cultures through qualitative research methods such as interviews and observations. The hypotheses were tested and examined during the interviews. The interview questions in this thesis were designed to find answers to the research questions and are presented later on.

Implications in the communication and understanding of cultural differences become more important when the members of different cultures are involved in day-to-day business dealings. Business managers in international business face challenging and tough days in their working environment. They might operate on several different premises at any one time, arising from both their own native culture and the culture within which they are normally working (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 4).

This thesis explores the supporting theories combined with interviews and observations in order to be able to provide necessary feedback and information concerning the success of doing business in Norway and Poland where these two different cultures are represented. The main focus of this thesis is on day-to-day business operational aspects based on the research theories and the conducted interviews.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Previous studies

Cultural differences in business management and various cross-cultural aspects have been widely studied already. There is a plenty of supporting literature and other studies in this field, but only one study that is directly related to the two countries and the cultures in this thesis, Norway and Poland. This gives an opportunity for researcher to develop my studies in such a way that in the future Norwegian and Polish companies and managers can gain some new information and advice from my study.

Anne Vihakara has done a study of managerial communication in a Sino-Finnish joint venture in 2006, published by the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration in Finland. In this study she studied managerial communication in a cross-cultural context and various elements of these two different cultures. She further concentrated on the communication element of a joint venture between two different companies, a joint venture from very different cultures. Although her research was based on one single joint venture, conclusions can be drawn from the results. Managers can find valuable information about the practical everyday problems, which can often lead to the changes in company operations or to the extension of timetables etc. (Vihakara 2006, 297). The reason why Vihakara's study is taken up in this thesis is that her study simply illustrates that even a study about only two cultures with information of practical problems can give valuable information to businesspersons in broader sense also in other cultural setups.

Margareta Ainetdin from the University of Warsaw in Poland has been studying the impact of culture on global projects as a part of her postgraduate studies in global development. She conducted a study for Metso Automation Oy in Finland as a case study for the project unit. The following message underlays her study: "Understanding social relationship and the way other cultures work is the groundwork of successful globalization business efforts" (Ainetdin 2011, 2).

Jarvenpaa and Leidner studied “Communication and trust in global virtual teams” at The University of Texas at Austin. They concluded that even in teams that are built purely on electronic networks, virtual teams, trust can exist. Right cultural behaviour and correct actions of team members help to foster a climate of trust (Jarvenpaa & Leidner 1999, 813).

Minna Gustafsson presented a study of “Cultural diversity management in Sastamala region’s social and health services” in 2013 at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. Gustafsson, for example, noted in her case study that managing diversity should be integrated into the overall strategy of managing people and that diversity training including topics concerning cultural differences is vital for the development of organizations (Gustafsson 2013, 52).

Hanne Terese Haugnes wrote her master’s thesis at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, in May 2013. She wrote a case study of the relationship between the follow-the-client strategy and isomorphism. She studied the Norwegian oil and gas supply industry and its internationalization processes during her Master of Science program, focusing on business, language and culture. Haugnes concluded in her master’s thesis that she had managed to find support for the view that through a follow-the-client approach when entering foreign markets, decision-makers seem to have achieved legitimacy and, to a certain extent, less uncertainty. This type of follow-the-client approach is suitable for companies intending to start their export or internationalization activities (Haugnes 2013. II).

The study that partly covers Norway and Poland was written by Erik Rehbinder in October 2011. Rehbinder studied finance and strategic management at Copenhagen Business School in Denmark. His master’s thesis is an empirical analysis of Nordic firms in Poland with the following title: “Do personal networks affect the success of foreign venture performance?” Some theories suggest that personal networks have an important role when firms are going international. Erik Rehbinder contacted 1020 Nordic companies and used 103 respondents in his further analysis. His findings did not support this hypothesis and thus he was not able to conclude that the use of personal networks has had an impact on the success of Nordic ventures in Poland (Rehbinder 2011, 1).

3.2 Theoretical framework - illustration

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework of this thesis. The theoretical framework is the central theme, the main trust of this thesis. This thesis focuses on cultural differences in business management in Norway versus Poland. The figure below (figure 1), shows the theoretical framework of this thesis:

- Norway and Poland have some own different cultural features, e.g. regional cultures.
- National cultures in these countries are slightly different, but there are there are also some overlapping features between these nationalities.
- Business culture in Norway and Poland has also some own features, differences, but at the same time it has also several similarities or overlapping areas.
- A corporate culture in Norwegian – Polish organization can have adopted only these overlapping, same features from both countries.

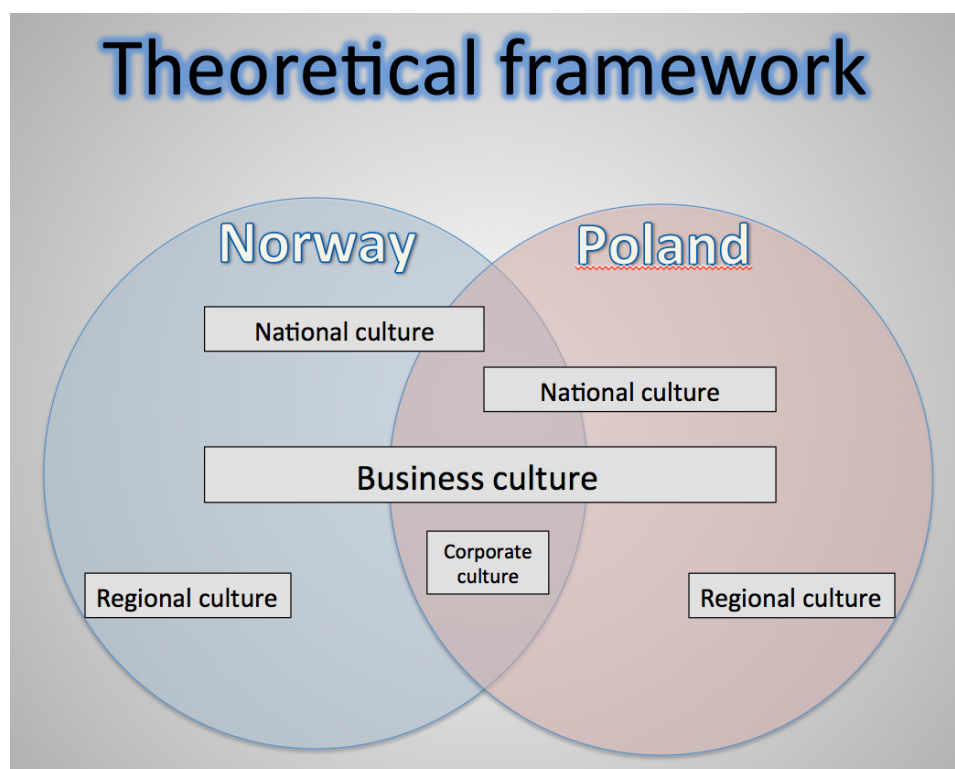


Figure 1.: Theoretical framework of Master's thesis.

3.3 Definition of the essential concepts

Culture

What is culture? *“Culture is the way which people solve problems”* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 8). *“What one culture may regard as essential may not be so vital to another culture”* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 27). There is no agreed single definition of “culture” among scholars (Mead 1994, 6). Geert Hofstede has tried to define culture in following way:

“The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another.... Culture in this sense, includes systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture” (Hofstede 1984, 21). Edward T. Hall defined culture in the following way: *“Culture hides more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants.”* (Dumetx 2012, 20).

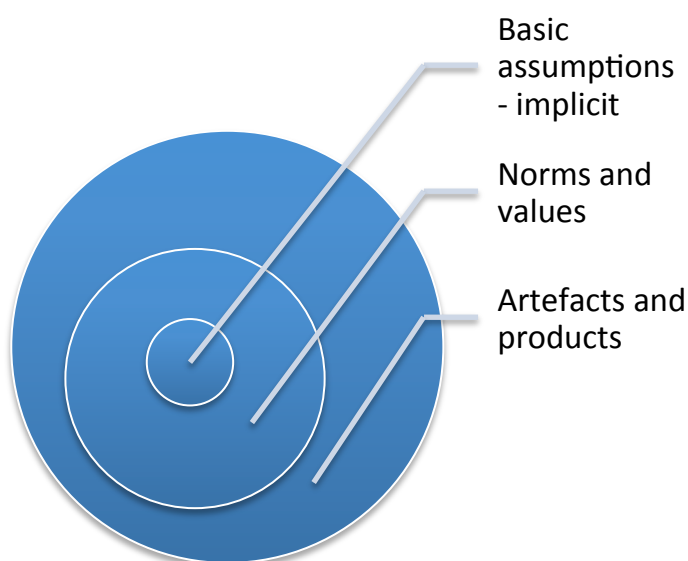


Figure 2. A model of culture as a graphic representation of culture as a series of nested spheres (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 29).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner tried to explain the culture in terms of a series of layers:

- The outer layer: explicit products (such as language, food, fashions and art).
- The middle layer: norms and values (what is “right” and “wrong”).

- The core: assumptions about existence, implicit (the core of human existence; the most basic value for which people strive is survival).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner tried to explain this way of thinking as follows: *“Culture comes in layers, like an onion. To understand it, you have to unpeel it layer by layer”* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 8).

Brown defined organizational culture in following way: organizational culture may be generally described as a set of norms, beliefs, principles and ways of behaving that together give each organization a distinctive character (Brown 1995). Concept organization is explained by Robbins and Judge as a “coordinated social unit, made up of a group of people, who work together on common goals on a relatively continuous basis” (Robbins & Judge 2009, 4).

Organizational culture is the total sum of the values, customs, traditions and meaning that make it unique for the organization. The values of the organizational culture influence ethical standards and managerial behaviour. They largely depend on the country culture, corporate field, size and structure of property as well as the company’s history (Mullins 1994, 7).

According to Trompenaars, three different aspects are important to determinate corporate culture:

- The general relationship between employees and their organization.
- The vertical or hierarchical system of authority.
- The general views of employees about [the] organization’s destiny, purposes and goals.

(Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 194).



Figure 3. The layers of Culture (Vihakara 2006, 23).

Figure 3 shows a graphical illustration of Vihakara's understanding of the cultural layers. She based her understanding of the cultural layers on studies of famous scholars like Hofstede, Holstius and Törnroos, Terpstra and David (Vihakara 2006, 23). Vihakara saw that the layers of culture, as presented in Figure 2, are interrelated and influence each other. These layers of culture in turn consist of different elements: rules, attitudes, values, norms and ethics.

Cross-cultural differences

The term cross-cultural refers to interactivity between members of disparate cultural groups. In a nutshell, I refer in this thesis to cross-cultural communication theory as a way of looking at how people from different cultural backgrounds communicate across cultures. Another aspect of examining cross-cultural differences is investigat-

ing the differences in this communication in a business and management context; research on or observation of at least two different cultural groups with perceptible cultural differences (Mead 1994, 5).

The administration of cross-cultural differences or cultural differences involves both opportunities and difficulties. Cultural diversity presents major opportunities for synergy and the mixed-culture group offers a situation in which synergetic co-operation is possible. On the other hand, cross-cultural relationships impose stresses and strains (Mead 1994, 15-16).

3.4 Theoretical framework

This thesis is based mainly on two different theoretical frameworks created by Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars. Especially the direct interview answers are interpreted by Hofstede's theories and the other theories and models are used more in the connection with the observations.

Geert Hofstede is one of the pioneers and an influential Dutch researcher in the fields of organizational studies and, more concretely, organizational culture. Hofstede's 5D-model, which describes national culture and dimensions, was based on the huge collection and analysis of the data in the 1970s and the original study was published in the 1980s. Not all scholars are impressed by Hofstede's studies and findings; even some professors claim that Hofstede's whole study is based on many fundamental research errors. This in turn reminds us about the fact that we should not accept or trust blindly other previous even well known theories, but a researcher should always be slightly critical and sceptical towards other studies.

I was introduced to the 5D-model in 1995 in Cambridge during my studies there. For me this model gives information on cross-cultural differences in a very simple and easily understandable way. Accordingly, I have used this model during my business career, including presentations in management seminars on cultural differences. This is why I have based the theoretical framework of this thesis partly on the studies of Geert Hofstede.

The other theoretical framework is created by Fons Trompenaars. He is a world-renowned expert on international management and the author of the global bestseller book “Riding the Waves of Culture”. Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner have developed a model of culture with seven dimensions. I also used this 7D-model when comparing and analysing the differences between these two chosen cultures, Norwegian and Polish.

In addition to these two main theoretical frameworks, I also use other theories in order to highlight some other findings and differences, especially when I want to discover as many differences as possible between these two cultures (Norway and Poland). These other theories were created by Richard D. Lewis – The Lewis Model of culture (Lewis 2013) and E. T. Hall (Hall 1989), which strengthen the framework for my thesis.

3.4.1 Geert Hofstede – 5D-model

Geert Hofstede is a researcher from the Netherlands in the field of organizational studies. He is a well-known pioneer in his research on cross-cultural groups and organizations. The most notable work of Geert Hofstede has been in developing the cultural dimensions theory. Hofstede has based his theory on research conducted on an extensive IBM database used in 72 countries and in 20 languages; the 116.000 questionnaires were filled by IBM employees between 1967 and 1972 (Hollensen 2011, 245). Hofstede’s five dimensions are power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation (Website of Geert Hofstede 2013).



Figure 4. Geert Hofstede, cultural styles – 5D model (Website of Geert Hofstede 2013).

The five cultural dimensions of Hofstede are briefly explained in this chapter. Hofstede's dimension methodology is used when the interview results of this thesis are analysed. Geert Hofstede points out that when anyone is applying analysis based on a theoretical model, like the 5D-model, he/she should always keep in mind the following drawbacks: the average results of a country do not necessarily relate to the individuals of that country and the data has been collected through questionnaires which have some limitations. Accordingly, the data is not 100 % accurate (Website of Geert Hofstede 2013).

- Power distance:
 - The degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally
 - Low power distance:
 - People strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.
 - Flat organization structures
 - Small proportion of supervisory staff.
 - Lack of acceptance and questioning of authority.
 - High power distance:
 - Centralized authority.
 - Autocratic leadership.
 - Many hierarchical levels.
 - Large number of supervisory staff.
 - Acceptance that power has its privileges (Minkov & Hofstede 2013, 206).
- Individualism (versus collectivism):
 - Individualism = “I” / Collectivism = “we”.
 - Individualistic cultures:
 - In societies with high individualism, individuals have a high focus on “self” and they are not expected to take care so much other persons, e.g. colleagues.
 - They calculate profit and loss before engaging in behaviour.
 - Emphasize pleasure, fun and personal enjoyment more than social norms and duties belong to many in-groups that exert little influence on their lives (Minkov & Hofstede 2013, 208).
 - Collectivistic cultures:
 - Behave according to social norms that are designed to maintain social harmony among members of an in-group.
 - Consider implications of their actions for wider collective.
 - Emphasize hierarchy and harmony within group.
 - Regulate behaviour through group norms (Minkov & Hofstede 2013, 208).

- Uncertainty avoidance:
 - The degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty.
 - Weak uncertainty avoidance:
 - Individuals have relaxed attitudes toward the future and what may happen.
 - Risk taking and flexibility.
 - Organizations with a relatively low degree of structure and few rules, promotions are based on merit.
 - Strong uncertainty avoidance:
 - Avoidance of risk.
 - Organizations that have clearly defined structures, many written rules, standardized procedures, and promotions are based on seniority or age.
 - Respect for authority (Minkov & Hofstede 2013, 208).
- Masculinity versus femininity:
 - Masculinity stands for heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success; also called as career success cultures.
 - Gender roles are clearly distinct.
 - Men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success.
 - Femininity stands for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life; also called as quality of life cultures.
 - Social gender roles overlap.
 - Both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life (Minkov & Hofstede 2013, 212).
- Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation:
 - Long-term: the truth depends on situation, context and time. Focus on saving and investing. Positively associated with economical growth.
 - Short-term: establishment of the absolute truth, normative in thinking, traditions, focus on achieving quick results. Emphasizes stability. Negatively associated with economical growth.

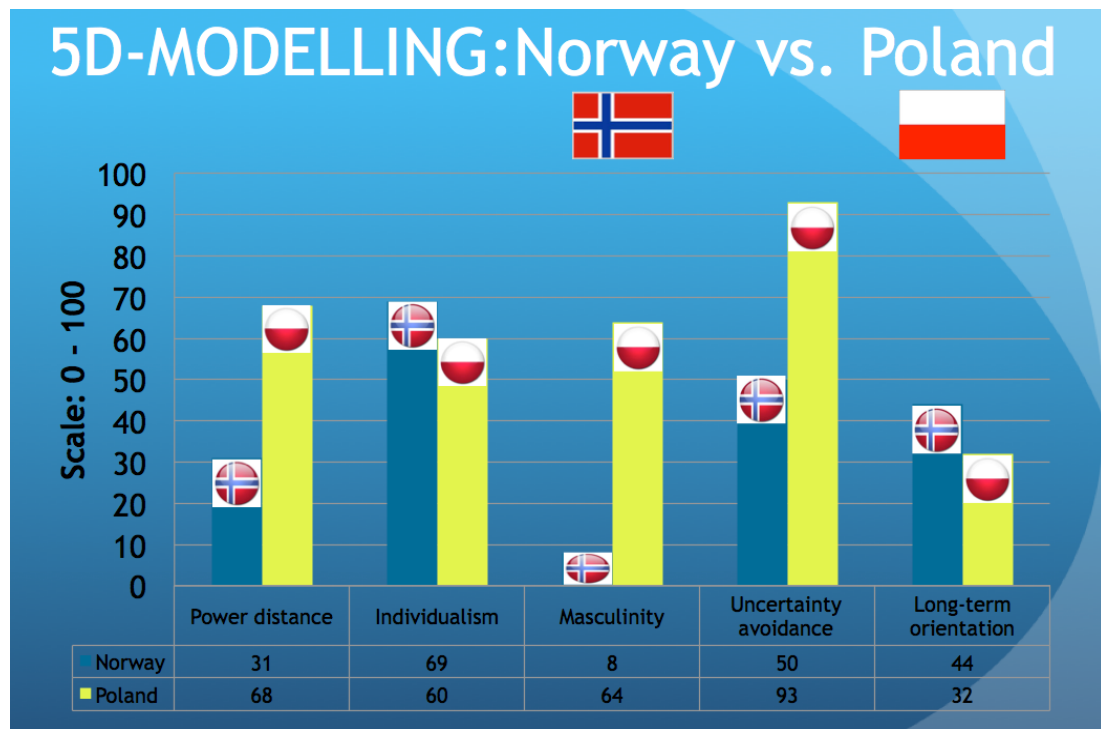


Figure 5. Geert Hofstede – 5D modelling (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

The figure above shows the results based on the 5D-model of Geert Hofstede of how these two cultures, Norway and Poland, score on these five different cultural dimensions.

3.4.2 Hofstede's 5D modelling: Norway

According to the Hofstede's 5D modelling, Norwegian culture Norway is a very democratic country and this can also be seen from the low score of power distance, indicating again a low acceptance of unequal distribution of power. Managers in Norwegian organizations are accessible to their subordinates and they listen to the experience of and advice from their team members. The team-building concept is widely used in Norwegian companies and this is in turn evidence of a low power distance culture: power is decentralized and employees expect to be consulted. Norway is a typical representative of the Scandinavian ideal that no one should succeed too far and no one should slip too far behind. This finding indicates an aversion to hierarchy in Norway and implies that any unequal distribution of power needs to be justified (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

When it comes to the second dimension, individualism, the result from Hofstede's model is slightly surprising. A score of 69 is considered as an individualistic culture, where "self" is important. I agree that personal opinions are valued in Norwegian management culture, but I am less confident of the statement that there are very clear lines between work and private life.

The masculinity dimension in Norwegian management culture scored only 8, which means that the culture is very feminine, actually the second most feminine country after Sweden. One connected behaviour is that decision-making is normally achieved after discussion, which in turn makes the process sometimes too long and even too democratic (Ulven, 2004, 15).

The uncertainty avoidance results in Norway are mid-range. This in turn means that Norwegian organizations have a focus on planning, but at the same time these plans can be changed at short notice (Warner-Söderholm 2013, 11). Norwegian people are very relaxed and they can also be good risk takers; for example, Norwegian results in the oil and gas or shipping industry can be unpredictable and this gives support to this declaration. Low-uncertainty cultures prefer to work informally with flexibility (Hollensen, 2011, 664).

The long-term orientation dimension in Norway scored 44. This means that the country has a rather short-term orientation in its culture. Companies expect quick results and there is a high focus on results and the bottom line (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

Hofstede also tried to get evidence of a correlation between individualism/collectivism and GNP in 1970. Forty years ago, the poorer countries tended to be more collectivist and collectivist cultures tended to be poorer. If we look at Norway, there is a high correlation between individualism and a high GNP per capita, even today. However, these findings do not prove that any causal relationship holds between economic values and economic development; however, there is circumstantial evidence (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

3.4.3 Hofstede's 5D modelling: Poland

Poland is a very hierarchical country; the power distance score of 68 provides good evidence of this fact. This relatively high score on this dimension compared against the score in Norway (31 = low) indicates a more hierarchical form of organization and little need for justification of unequal power distribution. Subordinates expect to receive strict instructions from their autocratic managers. Based on their historical and political cultural experience, the negative outcome of this is sometimes that subordinates are not encouraged to think for themselves and come up with new creative and better solutions and ideas: they are actually afraid to appear smarter than their managers. In high power distance cultures, like Poland, the top managers are often directly involved in negotiations and they are also the final decision makers (Hollensen 2011, 664). Polish culture does not see contracts as 100% binding before the actual contract document is signed (Ulven 2004, 252).

Poland also scored relatively high in the respect of individualism. Polish citizens are expected to take care of themselves, their immediate families and even their colleagues in certain private situations. The special dimension in the Polish culture is the combination of high power distance and individualism. In the business context, good managers should also establish a second level of communication to ensure that there is personal contact with everybody in the organization (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

Polish management culture is very masculine and women still have a slightly lower status in the business world in Poland compared to Norway (Ulven 2004, 254). A very firm hand is needed to take budgeted performance out of an organization and resolve organizational conflicts. At the same time, a firm proper handshake and presentation of yourself in Poland is the correct way of meeting business partners for the first time (Ulven 2004, 252).

Poland scored 92 on the uncertainty avoidance dimension. This means that without rules Polish people are not able to work; they are lost. This can also easily be seen in practice. They have a very high need for rules and even very detailed rules before

they are confident with their current work situation (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

Poland is not a long-term oriented country, but people and organizations expect quick results. Ordinary employees want to see raises in their payroll on a monthly basis; they do not have the confidence to wait for yearly company bonuses distributed equally among the employees based on the yearly-achieved results. They want to see results now, not tomorrow. When it comes to punctuality in Poland, for example, a small delay of up to 15 minutes is acceptable when you can give a good reason for it (Ulven 2004, 253).

3.4.4 Fons Trompenaars – 7D-model

Business management consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner identified the seven dimension of culture in the first version of their book “Riding the Waves of Culture” in 1997. The core of their findings was that different cultures are not just randomly different from one another: different cultures differ in very specific but even predictable ways. This is due to the fact that each culture has its own way of thinking; it has its own values and beliefs and different preferences placed on a variety of different factors (Website of Trompenaars Hampden-Turner Consulting 2013).



Figure 6. A 7D-model of culture as a graphic representation (Website of Trompenaars Hampden-Turner Consulting 2013).

The seven cultural dimensions of Fons Trompenaars are explained here under shortly and used later when these dimensions are utilized in the results chapter to make comparisons based on this model.

- Universalism versus particularism:
 - Universalist or rule-based (e.g. do not lie) behaviour tends to be abstract and it tends to imply equality (all persons under the same rules should be treated equally), slightly bureaucratic dimension.
 - Universalist believes in that contract should not be altered and that rules determines what is right.
 - Particularist behaviour has a focus on the exceptional nature of present circumstances (the person in question is my friend and for this reason I must protect him/her despite the rules) (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 42).
 - Particularist believes in that agreements are changeable.
- Individualism versus communitarianism:
 - Individualism is encouraging individual freedom and responsibility.
 - Individualist believes in that representatives make decisions on the spot.
 - Communitarianism is encouraging individuals to work for consensus in the interest group; a peaceful democratic result (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 72).
 - Communitarianism is characterized by that decisions are referred back by the delegated to the organization.
- Specific versus diffuse:
 - In specific-orientated cultures a manager segregates the task relationship he/she has with a subordinate and this relationship is insulated from other relationships or dealings.
 - Specific is characterized by direct communications.
 - In diffuse-orientated cultures every life space and every level of personality is connected to each other (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 101).

- Diffuse is characterized by indirect communication; does not always say what is really meant and there is no clear distinction between work and private life.
- Emotional versus neutral:
 - In emotional cultures people show their feelings by smiling, laughing and gesturing even in work situations.
 - In neutral cultures people are affectively neutral and do not express their feelings but keep them controlled and moderated (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 87).
- Achievements versus ascription:
 - In achievement-based cultures people are judged by their achievements; “doing”. These cultures are characterized by fluent and dramatic delivery of statements and display of thoughts and feelings.
 - In ascription-based cultures people are judged by their ascribed status: “being” (age, gender, education, family status, etc.) (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 125). These ascription-based cultures are characterized by monotone delivery of written materials and that people are not revealing what one is thinking or feeling.
- Past versus future:
 - The time-orientation dimension has two main aspects: the relative importance cultures give to the past, present and future, and their approach to structuring time. For example, if a culture is past orientated then the future is often seen as a repetition of past experiences. A future-orientated culture does not see the past as significant for the future (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 147-169).
- Internal versus external:
 - Internal (push) orientated persons view nature in such a way that they think that they can dominate nature. They have a focus on themselves.
 - External (pull) orientated persons think that humanity is controlled by nature. They have a focus on the environment (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 173-189).

3.4.5 The Lewis model

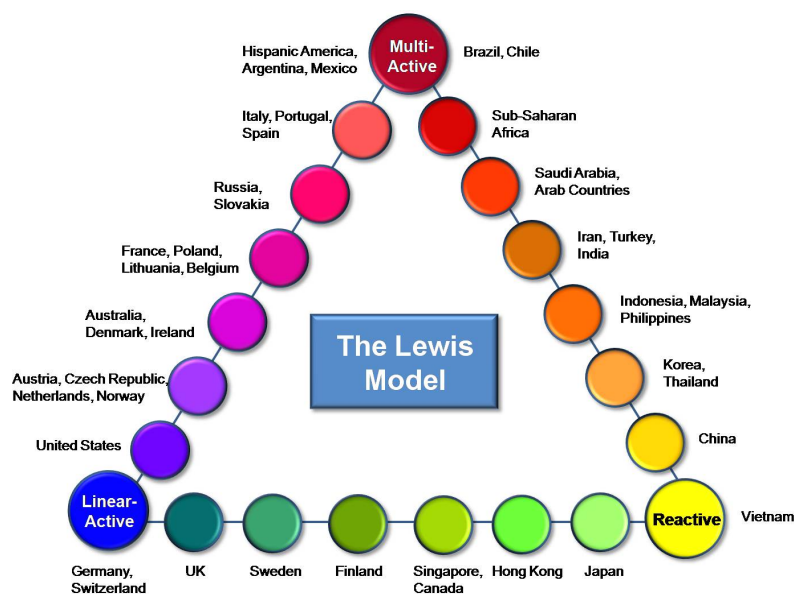


Figure 7. The Lewis model

The Lewis model of culture is a very practical theoretical approach to classifying cultures and the model is very suitable to apply in various work and business situations. The Lewis model is a triangular model making several claims about national cultures based on concepts that Lewis has developed through his experiences.

The chosen countries in this study, Norway and Poland, are both on the Linear-Active-Multi active axis. Norway is relatively close to Germany, where planning is executed according to a strict time schedule. Poland in turn is closer to Russia, where the planning process relies on the importance of various elements and not on a time schedule (Website of Richard Lewis Communication 2014).

The three dimensions of the Lewis model are as follows:

- Linear-actives:
 - Cultures that plan, schedule, organize, pursue action chains and do one thing at a time. A linear-active culture talks half of the time.
 - Examples of linear-active cultures:

- Germans and Swiss.
 - Norway is relatively close to these two countries in this dimension.
- Multi-actives:
 - Cultures that do many things at once and plan their priorities not according to a time schedule, but according to the relative thrill or importance that each appointment brings with it. Multi-active cultures talks most of the time.
 - Examples of multi-active cultures:
 - Italians, Latin Americans and Arabs.
 - Poland is about in the middle between linear-active and multi-active cultures.
- Reactive:
 - Reactive cultures prioritize courtesy and respect, listening quietly and calmly to their interlocutors and reacting carefully to the other side's proposals.
 - Examples of reactive cultures:
 - Finns, Chinese and Japanese (Website of Richard Lewis Communication 2014).

The country specific information in the respect of Norway and Poland from Richard Lewis Communication is not available for this study. As we can see from the figure before, The Lewis Model, Norway and Poland, are both on the Linear-Active-Multi active axis and relatively close to each other. This is turn is making the empirical part of this study more challenging in the respect of the usage of The Lewis model when analysing the interview results.

3.4.6 E. T. Hall – Beyond Culture

Edward Twitchell Hall, Jr. (1920 -2009) was an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher. Hall developed the concept of non-verbal communication, proxemics and a description of how different cultures and people behave and react in different types of culturally defined personal space. Edward Hall set up three theories:

- High/low context theory
 - A country is either a low-context culture or high-context culture depending in the way the people communicate.
 - High-context culture: people in these more harmonized cultures emphasize indirect interpersonal family and society relationships. High-context cultures values slow changes, group decisions and indirectness.
 - Poland: high-context culture.
 - Low-context culture: logical, linear, individualistic and action-oriented. People from low-context cultures value logic, facts, and directness.
 - Norway: low-context culture (Ulven, 2004, 23).
- Monochrome/Polychrome conception of time:
 - Polychrome time:
 - No fixed schedule.
 - Flexible.
 - Different tasks at one time.
 - Short-term orientated.
 - Monochrome time:
 - Has a fixed schedule.
 - Inflexible.
 - One task at a time.
 - Long-term orientated.
- Proxemics: personal space variation depending on the culture.

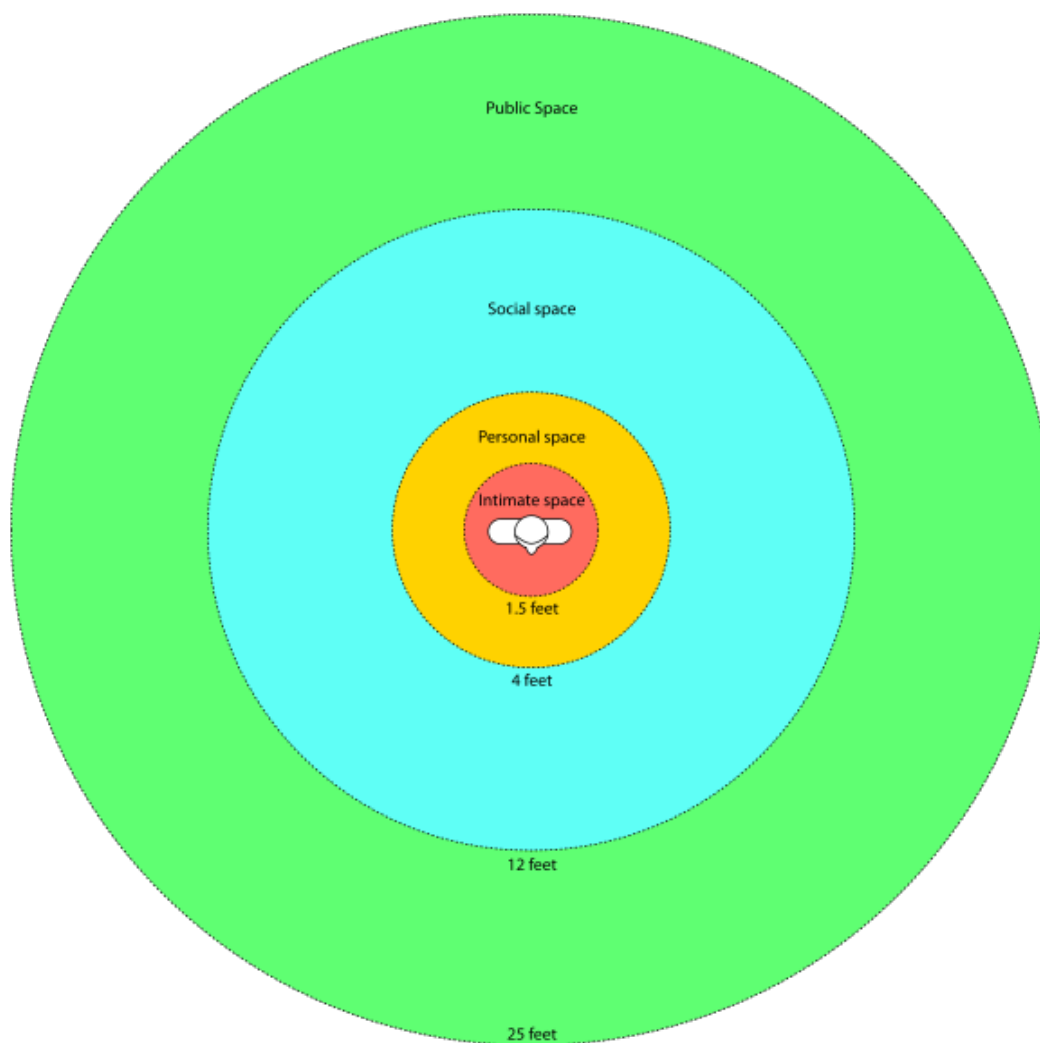


Figure 8. E. T. Hall – illustration of Hall’s personal reaction bubbles, revealing how much space people typically need in various social situations (Website of Center for Spacially Integrated Social Science 2014).

According to E. T. Hall, perception of the levels of intimacy of space is culturally determined. In business situations it is important to understand and know the differing cultural frameworks for defining and organizing personal and intimate space, otherwise it can lead to serious failures of communication (Hall 1989).

E. T. Hall and his study and findings give some general understanding to this study of cultural differences in a management context between Norway and Poland. The studies of Hall are generally more theoretical and give philosophical understanding to cross-cultural questions than other the studies.

3.4.7 Critique of existing theories

These theories, which have been discussed briefly above, provide categories that can be used to analyse and draw general conclusions about certain cultural tendencies within different countries. The body of research on culture in a business context has also several weaknesses. First, these theories do not normally provide a clear set of assumptions and propositions that can form a single theory that can be utilized in business leadership processes. Second, the terms and labels that researchers use, e.g., dimensions, are somewhat vague and difficult to understand. This sometimes makes it difficult to interpret the findings on specific cultures fully.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been criticized for providing generalizations without any research value. As these frameworks are based on generalizations, there is a need to analyse and discuss general cross-cultural theories within a deeper ethnographic understanding of the cultures in question (Northouse 2012, 405-407). This criticism is especially important for this study because this thesis is exploring cultural phenomena by making interviews and observations from the chosen business management point of view.

Trompenaars, like Hofstede, also has had his critics. Trompenaars looked in his research more at behavioural responses to various scenarios to test out his own concepts. Geert Hofstede questioned the reliability of Trompenaars's data, due to claims of an evident lack of content in it. Fons Trompenaars has discussed criticism of his own research approach, especially the charge that he has focused too much on cultural comparisons and that he has not had enough focus on cultural interactions. We can therefore understand that Fons Trompenaars is somehow accepting the criticism at least partly (Website of Geert Hofstede 2013). This thesis strives to avoid these problems by not only concentrating on differences between Norwegian and Polish business cultures, but also by mapping these cultural interactions during the execution of interviews of Norwegian and Polish businesspersons of their cross-cultural experiences.

3.5 Other literature findings

In every research project it is very important to conclude something about a particular occurrence, so-called generalizability. Generalizability in a research project is asking, can the results of the research be applied more generally and more widely than the study itself or are they only relevant to the specific context of the study? This is very important in a study, because if we are not able to make some generalizations, it means that we are not able to bring knowledge forward, which is actually the whole objective of the research project (Adams et al. 2010, 239).

Professor Peter Woolliams asked: “Are cultures converging?” as the world becomes more of a global village (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, vi). It is likely that internationalization will lead to a common culture worldwide and this commonality will make the everyday life of international managers simpler. When companies go global, there is a need to move towards universalist ways of thinking (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 51).

McKinsey consultants from Europe have executed a study where they analysed companies between 2008 and 2010 with following results: companies with more diverse top teams were also top financial performers. There might be many reasons for this, e.g., that a team of top executives with varied cultural backgrounds and life experiences can broaden a company’s strategic perspective. Companies from France, Germany, the UK and the United States were analysed in this study and companies with diverse executive boards enjoyed significantly higher earnings and returns on equity. At the same time, the McKinsey consultants acknowledged that these findings are not proof of a direct relationship between diversity and financial success. They were not able to quantify the exact relationship between diversity and performance in their analysed cases. The companies they studied are simultaneously pursuing top-team diversity, ambitious global strategies and strong financial performance (Barta, Kleiner & Neumann 2013, 1-3).

Further information is available in the economy rankings by the World Bank Group. The economies of countries are ranked on their ease of doing business from 1 to 189. A high ranking on the ease of doing business index means the regulatory environ-

ment is more conducive to the starting and operation of a local firm. This index averages the country's percentile ranking on 10 topics, made up of a variety of indicators, giving equal weight on each topic. The rankings of all economies are benchmarked to June 2013. Norway is ranked as number 9 among these 189 countries; it is very easy to do business in Norway. Poland is the number 45 in this survey, so it is more complicated to do business in Poland than in Norway. It can also see from this survey that there are actually also some other East- and West-European countries ranked after Poland (Website of the World Bank Group 2013).

Economy / country	Ease of doing business Rank	Starting a business	Dealing with construction permits	Getting electricity	Registering property	Getting credit	Protecting investors	Paying taxes	Trading across borders	Enforcing contracts	Resolving insolvency
NORWAY	9	53	28	17	10	73	22	17	26	4	2
POLAND	45	116	88	137	54	3	52	113	49	55	37

Table 1. Economy Rankings; economies are ranked on their ease of doing business from 1 - 189 (Website of the World Bank Group 2013).

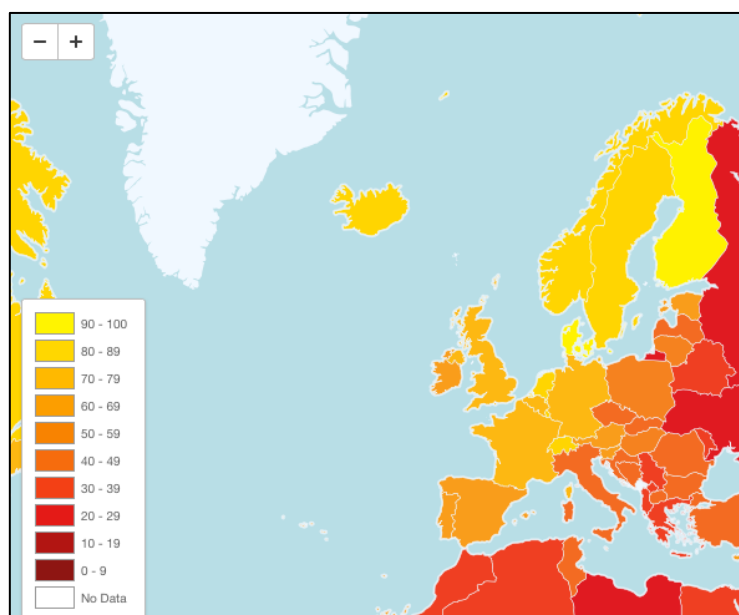


Figure 9. Corruption perceptions index 2013; 176 countries and territories ranked (Website of Transparency International 2013).

The corruption perception index for countries and territories is based on how corrupt their public sectors are perceived to be. Corruption, broadly, involves behaviour in any institutions that might violate formally defined role obligations in search of some private profit (Luo 2002, 113). The scale on this survey is from 0 to 100, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 100 means it is perceived as very clean. The 2012 corruption perceptions index ranked Norway number 7 with a score of 85; in the other words the country is very clean and corruption is not commonly recognized. Poland was ranked as number 41 (of 176 countries) with a score of 58. This in turn indicates that Poland has, unfortunately, a public sector corruption problem (Ulven, 2004, 53).

Another characteristic that is worth mentioning is motivation. Are there some differences in motivation and the business context between Norway and Poland? We can use here the work of Maslow from 1943, in which he put forward a theoretical framework of individual personality development and motivation based on a hierarchy, pyramid, of human needs. The five levels of this pyramid range from, at the lowest level, physiological needs, through safety needs, love needs and esteem needs, to the need for self-actualization at the highest level (Mullins 1994, 49).



Figure 10. The work of Maslow: a hierarchy of human needs.

One special Norwegian “law” or custom must be mentioned in order to get a deeper understand of Norwegian culture: “Jante Law”. The poet Aksel Sandmose put Jante Law into words and they convey an important element of Norwegian culture, includ-

ing Norwegian business culture. Jante's law teaches people that they should be modest and they should not think big. Norwegians try to see all people as being on an equal footing. They do not flaunt their wealth or financial achievements (Website of Working in Norway 2014).

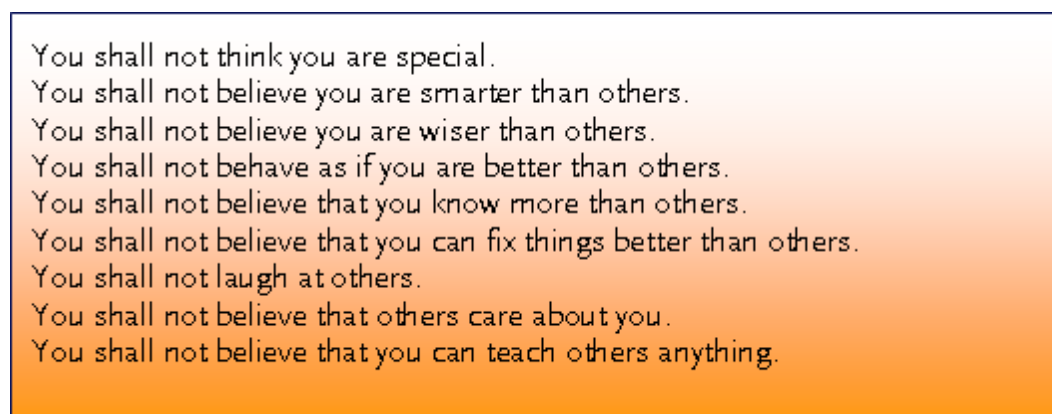


Figure 11. Norwegian “Jante Law”.

It is also worth mentioning here one peculiar Polish cultural expression: “Polish parliament”. This expression came up during my interviews and I also remember it from my own experience when dealing with Polish businesspersons. This expression can be still used in business meetings in Poland, especially if the outcome of the meeting is not as expected. This expression actually refers to chaos and general disorder and indicates that no real decision can be reached during a meeting. The origin of this expression is from the 17th and 18th century, when any single member of the Polish parliament had an absolute veto (Åslund 2002, 389).

3.6 Norwegian business culture in a nutshell

The Norwegian business culture is generally characterized as having little hierarchy, flat organizational structures and very informal business communication. The business culture in Norway is based on Norwegian and generally accepted Scandinavian work values. One of the main values is the focus on equality. In 1913 Norwegian women got the right to vote and Polish women received their right to vote just few years after Norway, but still very early in the international point of view.

Norwegian feminine business culture is less impressed by titles and symbols of power than in other European countries. In Norway, there are small differences in society and in the workplace. Cooperation in Norway is also highly valued. The “Norwegian model” consists of sound cooperation between the government, employers and employee organizations. When we look at this at the company level, the cooperation between employer and employee and between a manager and a subordinate is a vital element of Norwegian business culture.

Here are also some other elements in Norwegian business culture that are worth mentioning. In Norway empowerment is a vital characteristic in a work place; employee is expected to take responsibility and show initiative. Trust is generally important in Norwegian society and also at the workplace. High trust cultures like Norway are fast in negotiations (Dumetx 2012, 202-205). The Norwegian workforce is seen by themselves and by other countries as productive, competent and motivated. Norwegians view themselves as egalitarian people whose culture is based on democratic principles of respect and interdependence (Ulven, 2004, 15).

In the Norwegian business context, managers must be aware of the national cultural characteristics. In Norway, feminine culture, a manager is not expected to give strict orders, but to act more as a coach or facilitator. Subordinates and colleagues should be involved in decisions. A good manager in Norway must understand the flat organizational structure and use openness as a tool to achieve the desired results.

As indicated earlier, Norwegians rank free time, family, friends and hobbies very highly. This can also have an effect in the business context. It is often difficult to schedule meetings during July and August, which are popular vacation times. The same applies also during the two weeks before and after Christmas and during the week before and after Easter (Ulven, 2004, 15).

3.7 Polish business culture in a nutshell

The business culture in Poland is not greatly different from the business etiquettes of other European countries and cultures. Nevertheless, there are some national traditions in Poland with significant roles. In European and Western culture the traditional business office day is from 9 am to 5 pm. This is slightly different in Poland. Poland has a business day from 8 am to 4 pm without any official coffee or lunch breaks. However, some international businesses have adopted the more Western approach, working from 9 am to 5 pm (Ulven, 2004, 253).

Punctuality during business meetings in Poland is important, as it is in most business cultures worldwide, especially in Europe. Meetings do not always end at the scheduled time; one reason for this might be that in Poland it is acceptable to bring a new idea or programme which was not originally included on the agenda. Edward Hall has mentioned that Poland has a somewhat relaxed view of time, which in turn means that Poland is a high context country or culture. However, this assumption is a little contradictory, as Polish businesspersons take time and punctuality issues seriously.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, businesses in Poland have a strong respect for hierarchy and authority. This hierarchical style is easily seen in Poland in many business formalities and settings and especially in the decision-making process including the use of professional titles. A business agreement is not binding in Poland or for Polish businesspersons, before all parties by correct authorized persons sign a written agreement and stamped with a company stamp (Ulven, 2004, 253).

In business meetings and in negotiations it is important to understand the Polish style and extended periods of silence. These periods are an essential part of negotiation in Poland. Accordingly, it is advisable to refrain from breaking the silences with unnecessary talk and to avoid pressing Polish counterparts for their final decisions. Some introductory small talk is acceptable in Poland before the actual meetings and negotiations. Conversational topics may cover a wide range of issues; however, the subject of money should be avoided.

In business life in Poland it is almost considered a virtue not to show emotions such as anger or to use strong language. The Poles are not necessary direct in their communication. The neighbours of Poles, Germans, are very direct and straightforward. Also Norwegians are straight and straightforward, but not as direct as Germans are. Poles also plan their business and other activities, but not to the extent of every detail being laid down. In this respect Norwegians are more thorough here.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Methods

There are two main fields of research that are commonly observed in various literatures: quantitative research and qualitative research. It should be also noted that research method and research methodology are not the same thing (Adams et al. 2010, 25). A research method is a way to make and implement research, while research methodology is the science and philosophy behind all academic research.

The quantitative research method refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical or mathematical techniques. The development of mathematical models, theories and hypotheses are the objectives of quantitative research. The measurement process is a vital part of the quantitative research method because this provides the important connection between empirical observation and mathematical expressions of quantitative relationships (Adams et al. 2010, 25).

The qualitative research method is a method of inquiry used in many academic disciplines. Qualitative research is designed to promote understanding of in-depth human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. This method investigates the why and how of decision-making and not just the what, where and when. Accordingly smaller, but more focused samples are needed than the larger samples that are more typical for the quantitative research method. Qualitative methods generate information on case studies and can thus be used to seek empirical support for research

hypotheses. The qualitative research method involves and combines several different elements such as case study, personal experience, life story, interviews, artefacts, cultural texts and productions. In addition to these observations, historical texts describing routine problems of individual life are qualitative research method elements (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, 4). The qualitative research method is a suitable method to explore a phenomenon that has not been studied before (Ospina 2004). This study is conducted by using qualitative methods because the objective is to understand the differences between Norwegian and Polish cultural differences in business management, the area that have not been studied directly before.

Before we go further with the qualitative research and development method, it is important to understand the whole picture of research and development methods. The wheel of science by Walter W. Wallace (Wallace 2009, 18) explains this in the following way.

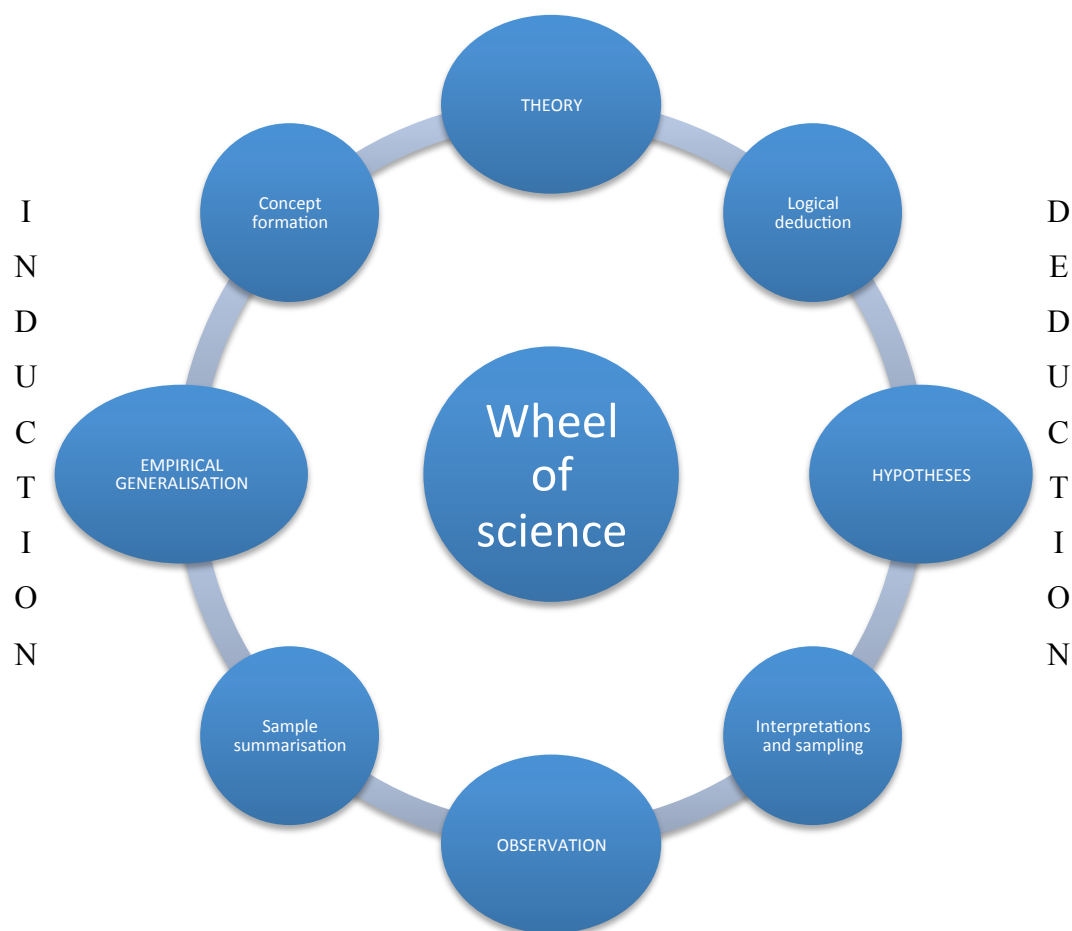


Figure 12. Wheel of science (Wallace 2009, 18).

A deductive research study starts with a proposed theory or a model, which is tested by empirical observation. An inductive study starts with empirical observations, which are generalized to form a new theory or a model (Minkov & Hofstede 2013, 66). In deductive research both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be employed, but in inductive studies only qualitative research and development are possible (Adams et al. 2010, 29).

In this thesis, I used the qualitative research method and focused on conducting interviews. Interview methods can consist of various types of techniques: semi-structured interview, group interview, in-depth interview or conversation. In my study of Norwegian and Polish culture, I used the same types of research methods as the researchers of my main theories used earlier.

- Semi-structured or focused interview: the interviewed person can speak freely while the researcher is making his/her notes on each theme. This method is very useful when the intention is to compare answers of several interviewed persons.
- Group interview: this method is very similar to the semi-structured interview, but here several persons are interviewed at the same time. There can also be several interview groups.
- In-depth interview: these interviews are long interviews where a tape recording is normally taken for further analysis. The analysis of in-depth interviews is very difficult, including the preparation of comparisons.
- Conversation: this method is very common in development projects where the research needs certain types of information directly from participants.

Writing a qualitative research report is not simply a matter of describing what has been done and how it has been done. The writer must have full focus on the specific topic and purpose of the research project when writing about the results and findings. A report must also be presented in an easy and understandable style in order for readers to make connections between the various parts of the report: objectives, analysis, conclusions and recommendations (Adams et al. 2010, 255).

When the researcher uses a qualitative research report structure correctly, it also gives reassurance that the qualitative study is academically trustworthy. When the researcher is planning his/her qualitative research study or while the actual writing is going on, he/she should always keep in mind following evaluation criteria of his/her project:

- Objectivity;
- Reliability;
- Internal validity;
- External validity;
- Utilization: do the findings of the research study have any pragmatic value (= usable)?

This writing plays a crucial role in qualitative research. The rhetoric of transparency or the tacit adaptation of qualitative research is a more complex issue than in quantitative research (Schram 2006, 17). I have used advice from Burnard on how to organize the writing process and the actual structure of a qualitative research report and the Table of Contents is based on this information (Burnard 2004, 174-179).

4.2 Data collection method

It is a serious mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly, one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of adapting theories to suit facts. This is a saying of Sherlock Holmes, a fictional detective created by Scottish author and physician Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Minkov & Hofstede 2013, 72). This is a major issue in all social sciences: whether to prioritize theory or empiricism. This study conducts the empirical data collection in order to be able to analyse the collected data and finally makes some conclusions and recommendations based on the underlying theories and analysed data.

I have chosen to use a semi-structured interview method as my data-collection method in this study. I chose 10 different managers or investors from Norway and from

Poland with long experience in Norwegian and Polish companies where these two different cultures have been put together. These chosen participants have substantial knowledge and experience in the fields of this study. My own semi-structured interview questionnaire, in Appendix 1, gives the framework for the interview, but participants were also given the opportunity to clarify some areas in greater detail. The aim of qualitative research is to describe a phenomenon or process.

In addition to a semi-structured interview method, I used another common data collecting method: observation. Observation is both a very basic and a very difficult skill for qualitative researchers to understand and manage. It is difficult to turn away from our ordinary usage of observation and try to move towards a research-orientated observation. A researcher must be able to turn his/her senses away from a central focus and rather pay attention to what is happening on the edges and at the limits of the researched topic. This skill can be difficult to learn for a qualitative researcher and for anyone else, but when used correctly it can produce fruitful results (Shank 2006, 22-23). The advantages of respondent observations are several, but according to Woods, two important elements of observation should be borne in mind when used in a research project: the observation process blends in with natural activity and observation makes a worthwhile contribution to the life of organizations and relevant business situations (Woods 2006).

While I was conducting interviews, I made field notes and observed the interviewees. The observation method is generally quite time-consuming. My personal observations served as a complementary method to the data I collected. My observations were made in most interview situations from an outsider's perspective, because I am not currently working with these people. This outsider's role gives more objectivity into my observations.

4.3 Collecting data

It is very important that all surveys, questionnaires and interviews are tested before the actual survey is conducted. A pilot survey ensured that the questionnaire was clear to chosen respondents and that it could be completed in the way I wish (Adams

et al. 2010, 136). I first drafted my interview questionnaire and then I sent the first version of the questionnaire to two of my colleagues, both managers, the first one working in Norway and the second one working in Poland. I received some valuable feedback from these colleagues in the respect of my questionnaire and I adjusted the final version of the questionnaire, in Appendix 1, according to this feedback. I tried to avoid problems due to over broad generalizations that were drawn from too few observations based on poorly designed questionnaires (Daniels et al. 2011, 7).

In the next phase I conducted my pilot interview with my Polish colleague as a face-to-face interview at my own offices in Norway. This pilot survey was a good exercise before the actual interviews. In my interview schedule, ten managers from different branches of different companies were contacted: shipbuilding, design, hotel development, consultancy and investment. The interview questionnaire was sent to them as an e-mail attachment a few days prior to the actual interview date. All persons received the same English version of the questionnaire, but the actual interviews were conducted in Norwegian with the people who have Norwegian as their mother tongue and in English if the interviewee had Polish as a mother tongue.

The chosen sample group in my study represented a group of people about whom I was planning to make inferences. Those respondents had information that I needed to answer my research questions. The sample size was not very large, but it was sufficient to conduct a reliable qualitative research study (Adams et al. 2010, 146).

Most of the interviews were conducted as face-to-face interviews in Norway and in Poland, but some interviews were also arranged via Skype. Several different interview venues were used: my own office, the offices of respondents, my home office and a local restaurant. Some people on my first interview schedule did not participate in this study, because we could not find a suitable time and place for the actual interview. The total number of conducted interviews was 10 and the average interview session time was 30 minutes per interviewee. The interviews were recorded and the key information in respect of each question was transcribed for later data analysis.

Number of interviews: 10	Result: % / average	
Used language: English & Norwegian	%	50%
Respondent nationality: Norwegian	%	50%
Respondent nationality: Polish	%	50%
Age: years	Average	42.9
Male:	%	80%
Female:	%	20%
Interview duration (minutes):	Average	30
Working Experience - Manager (years):	Average	14.7
Managerial Experience - International (years):	Average	11.2
Business field of respondent:		
General management / Investment:	%	20
Hotel	%	20
Shipbuilding / Shipping	%	60

Table 2. Statistical information of the interviews.

In connection with the interviews and especially after official interviews I spent some time with interviewees discussing cross-cultural management more generally. During these discussions I managed to make a lot of valuable observations that are at the same time worth mentioning. I managed to find some statistical information that also supported my observations.

4.4 Analysing the data

“If there were only one truth, you couldn’t paint a hundred canvases on the same theme” (Pablo Picasso). The “analysis” term comes from the Greek verb “analyein” which in turn means “to break apart” or “to resolve into its elements” (Shank 2006, 165). Once the data is available, the next challenge for a researcher is how to select and evaluate the data (Terpstra & Sarthy 1994, 234). When I was analysing my interview data, I tried to turn my data into research findings. Content analysis can be used in all qualitative research studies. When used properly, content analysis is a powerful data-reduction technique. Content analysis or textual analysis is based on the assumption that the words and phrases mentioned most often are those that carry important information. This method starts with word or keyword frequencies. This

enables researchers to describe the topic in a general and summarized way. Systematic usage of content analysis involves classifying the interview material in such a way that credible conclusions can be drawn (Adams et al. 2010, 161).

The answers and observations received during the interviews were analysed systematically by me going through the data and comparing various answers. Irrelevant information was not taken into account and important information and words were highlighted. After this phase, I built a table of questions and used the key words from the answers of each interviewee. In addition to this, I created a short summary of each question. The whole process of content analysis is lengthy and relatively time-consuming; this process also required me to go over and over the data to ensure that I had done a thorough job of analysis of my interview data.

5 RESULTS

5.1 General research results

This thesis mainly describes various differences between Norwegian and Polish cultures, but we should also understand that globally these two societies are not so different and that they actually possess many similarities. Both Norwegian and Polish people exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future and a focus on achieving quick results. This result confirms the earlier noted results of Hofstede's short-term orientation dimension for Norway and Poland. These both countries have relatively low scores (44 and 32 of 100 scores), which in turn means that both countries represent short-term orientation cultures (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

The analysis of these two cultures, Norwegian and Polish, was done within the framework of earlier explained theories. By comparing statements from the interviews with cross-cultural theories and other studies, the hypotheses in Chapter 2 can be tested. In order to seek a deeper or greater understanding of the most central differences and/or similarities between Norwegian and Polish cultures, a wider range of

experiences, observation and knowledge were used to analyse the material. Unfortunately things are not always so simple in qualitative research projects. The generalization process across a sample of interviews is a relatively complex endeavour (Trochim 2006).

5.2 Interview results, answers and observations

5.2.1 Interview structure

The interviews provided of course a lot of valuable and highly appreciated information for this master's thesis. In this chapter, I go through most interesting and relevant answers and my own observations, either during the actual interview situations or after while doing the analysis of all collected answers. The interview questions were categorized under six different sections, each containing between two and six different questions.

5.2.2 Cross-cultural management skills

The first interview section sought answers and collected information from interviewees in respect of their own cross-cultural management skills in the Norwegian-Polish business context. According to the answers, respondents do not see it as problematic to co-operate with another nationality and culture in their own companies and organizations on a daily basis. Of course their own work in this type of organization is more challenging than working only with persons with the same nationality without any cross-cultural impacts.

Another aspect that came up was that when starting to work in a bicultural, Norwegian-Polish, company, or when a new employee from another culture is starting in a company, learning the culture is more time-consuming than working in a monocultural company. It is useful to devote a substantial amount of time in advance for preparation processes such as interviews, conversations, familiarizations, information collection and giving detailed written instructions.

None of the respondents have done or received any training in cross-cultural communication, differences and management. The majority of the interviewed persons had a relatively long international management career and accordingly, they did not see it as necessary for them to start taking up any kind of cross-cultural training at this stage. However, they felt that in the early days of a career, or when a person starts to work in a company with other nationalities and cultures, it would be an advantage to undergo some type of cross-cultural training where a young manager can, for example, receive information on the specific cultural features and habits of the new country and culture.

The feedback from respondents to these questions is relatively easily understandable. The general results of Hofstede's 5D modelling, the comparison between Norway and Poland, shows that on several dimensions the differences are small. Accordingly a businessperson managed to operate in Norwegian-Polish context without any specific training due to relatively small cultural differences.

5.2.3 Working in a cross-cultural company

The second interview section was designed to get answers and more information about working in a cross-cultural company: for example, how two cultures in the same company affect its performance, are there any challenges in this respect, do respondents see more benefits or disadvantages when working in a cross-cultural management team?

The respondents generally saw their own situations positively; they saw more benefits than disadvantages when mixing different cultures. According to some comments while mixing between two and four different nationalities is positive and can have recognized synergy effects, but mixing 10 different cultures might end up in chaos. The respondents also commented that when you mix two different cultures, it is obvious that you are trying to take the best characteristics from both cultures. This in turn can lead to good teamwork on the higher level, top management team, but the cross-cultural teamwork on the lower level is sometimes more challenging.

The interviews also revealed some interesting information about the challenges in cross-cultural management in mixed Norwegian-Polish management teams. It was commented, for example, that some managers see the Norwegian managers as pragmatic problem solvers while on some occasions the Polish managers are rather problem makers, partly due to the old-fashioned Polish hierarchical management style. This comment from respondent is referring to Trompenaar's universalism versus particularism dimension findings. Norwegians and particularist behaviour accept that rules and contracts can be altered, while Polish and universalist behaviour do not like or accept this. Due to this kind of experience, one respondent commented that Norwegian managers managing a Polish organization in Poland need a very firm hands-on style and at the same time need more managerial resources than they would in a similar, purely Norwegian organization. These extra resources are also needed partly because Polish managers and subordinates expect to receive more detailed written instructions, scope of works, agreements etc. This in turn is supporting the results of 5D-model of Hofstede; Poland scores high in the respect of Masculinity and Power Distance. Poland, masculine and high power distance culture, expects assertive, tough and detailed directions and the leadership style in Poland is still autocratic (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

As stated in the earlier chapter 3.4.1, the masculinity dimension in Norwegian management culture scored only 8, which means that the culture is very feminine. This scoring result was expected and it can also be observed easily in my own working situation when I analysed my received interview answers. Free time is particularly highly appreciated in Norway and these days it has started to be a problem in some industry sectors. For example, in the Stavanger region many office employees in the oil and gas industry are working only 4,5 days a week and it is relatively common to stop working on Fridays around lunchtime. The weekend and free time together with family and friends start early on Friday afternoon.

The respondents saw more benefits in the cross-cultural environment. They noted that a homogenous work group or management team is not as creative and innovative as a mixed, cross-cultural team is. They saw and understood the situation that their higher expectations and higher results were not achieved without any challenges, but

at the same time they realized that several eyes from different cultures can see things differently and in more creative and innovative ways.

5.2.4 Communication and language

The third interview section is about communication and language. Is communication or the language a challenge in a cross-cultural management team? Have respondents experienced communication or language problems in their Norwegian-Polish relationships? I have separated this section into communication and language. The definition of language in this context is relatively simple: the common language used in the mutual communication; e.g., English, Norwegian or Polish. Communication is not only concerned with language, but also with other elements such as non-verbal communication (gestures, body language etc.) and the way of using common communication means (speaking, phoning, e-mailing etc.). Unfortunately the answers from respondents only gave answers about language issues. I tried to define, explain and ask some helpful extra questions in respect of different communication habits between these two cultures (e.g., body language), but the respondents could not give any answers or had not noticed any differences in these areas.

Generally, based on the analysis of the answers from the respondents, it can be stated that communication and language today is not a major obstacle in a cross-cultural business context between Norwegians and Poles. In general, foreign language skills in Poland are getting better and the English skills of younger managers are relatively good. The situation is not so good among older people or lower-level and less-educated persons. The English skills in Norway are better than in Poland, but respondents also noted that older and less educated persons do not have such good English skills in Norway.

I would like to take up some comments from the respondents in the respect of these communication and language issues in the cross-cultural Norwegian-Polish situation. In Poland it is necessary to be very firm and direct in order to get your message through. Sometimes there might be some challenges due to the lack of a common mother tongue: participants observed difficulties in discussing difficult professional

matters when English language skills are not good enough. In order to be sure that the message is understood correctly, businesspersons in a cross-cultural context should learn to use indirect control questions in a diplomatic and gentle way to check if the delivered message has been understood correctly. In this respect we can get support to this observation from Hall's high and low context theory. The fact is that Poland is high-context culture country and Norway low-context culture. Polish high-context culture does not like direct corrections from Norwegian low-context culture representative, but this should rather be done indirectly, in a diplomatic and gentle way.

5.2.5 Cross-cultural management team

In the next interview section the focus is on the cross-cultural management team: equality between two nationalities, management style, challenges and problems in cross-cultural teams, and finally motivation issues in mixed organizations.

It can be summarized generally that in the respect of equality, nationality is irrelevant. In both Norwegian and Polish cultures, managers coming from these countries are generally treated equally. It was also mentioned that in some situations a person with the same nationality might get slightly different treatment or have a slightly different relationship than a person with a different nationality, but the concern of this study is not about discrimination.

The management style used by the respondents and their organizations is mixed: a Norwegian-Polish, or rather an international-European management style. When making a deeper analysis of the interview responses, some extra comments come to the fore. It has been mentioned that, for example, top managers of the company and administration are generally using a more international management style, but when one moves downwards in the organizational chart, the management style becomes closer to the relevant national management style. Another respondent gave a similar answer, but explained that the managers of some specific departments, e.g., technical departments, are more likely to use a national management style than an international style.

The interviewees have not had too many problems in their cross-cultural management teams. They have had some challenges in respect of the motivation of individual persons in their mixed teams. It is recommended that they acquire a sound understanding the other culture, their history, their habits and the business culture. Among the answers, there are direct connections to Hofstede's 5D-modelling and the dimension of long-term orientation. Norway received 44 points and Poland only 32 points of available 100 points in the respect of this dimension, long-term orientation (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014). One respondent mentioned that in motivation issues we must understand the different time perspective between Norway and Poland: Poland = short/Norway = longer time perspective. The motivation process in Poland must be done almost now and here with a very short perspective, for example it is better to pay out small bonuses several times in a year in Poland rather than have a larger yearly bonus which might be a standard procedure in Norway.

Another interesting observation from one respondent mentioned that there were different individual needs between Norwegian and Polish team members. It is necessary to understand Maslow's pyramid of needs in order to find the correct way to motivate your individual team members. Norwegian employees are generally on the higher levels on Maslow's pyramid than Polish employees. Accordingly higher wages can be very motivating in Poland while Norwegian employees are expecting something more for example more free time.

5.2.6 Tips, recommendations and danger areas

In this interview section, the target was to receive some valuable information from the respondents in the respect of Norwegian-Polish business management culture. After analysing the received answers and comments, it is more difficult to try to make some generalized comments or give advice to other persons.

Ask, listen and learn is maybe the most general and most used answer in this interviewing section. Knowledge about Hall's high / low context theory will benefit here, when a businessperson remembers that Poland is high context culture and Norway

low context culture. It is helpful to do your homework before starting to work with other cultures and nationalities: study and understand other cultures. It is more time-consuming and challenging to work in cross-cultural teams. A business person should build a comprehensive network in the other country and it has been mentioned that in Poland it is especially important to build network, trust and find one or two persons you can trust 100%, e.g., your lawyer, who can assist you with strict Polish rules and regulations. The reason for this is based on Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension and Poland's very high scores here. Strong Polish uncertainty avoidance is characterized by the avoidance of risk and with the very strong respect for authorities.

The following interesting answers and comments were also received during the interviews, but also very important small differences accordingly to the respondents:

- If you need to learn only one Polish word, it must be "konkurs". It has nothing to do what you most probably think right now, but this word has much more positive meaning. The English word for this is "competition".
- Due to Polish history, too much information going from the boss or top management team to subordinates might have a negative influence in Poland. Polish persons might feel that the company or the boss is trying to cheat them.
- In Poland more hands-on involvement is needed and direct instructions must be given and also followed up 100%; Hofstede's masculinity dimension (Website of Geert Hofstede 2014).

5.2.7 Conclusions from respondents

In this last part of interview the intention was to receive some important conclusions from the respondents.

The desired and helpful personal skills and competences in cross-cultural business management that were mentioned by several respondents are openness/open mindedness, good listener skills and expertise within your own business field. One single

word summarizes the answers from the respondents when discussing the benefits of cross-cultural management: synergy.

The respondents did not give too much valuable information or answers that can be used for general purposes when asked about their own conclusions and tips in cross-cultural management. The most useful answer was, “Do not take anything for granted, people are different!” All the interviewed persons had the same opinion that the cultural differences between Norway and Poland in the future will be less than today.

The final comments from several respondents took up almost the same issue. The respondents recommended that before a Norwegian businessperson starts doing business in Poland or with Poles, that he/she should first do the relevant homework: study Polish history and Polish culture, in order to have a better ability to understand the behaviour of Polish persons even in the business context. My personal opinion is that if a businessperson should learn only one simple cultural theory, it must be in that case the theory of high and low context cultures by Edward T. Hall.

5.3 Fons Trompenaars – 7D-model observations

The executed interviews and accomplished observations added with the personal experience gained following results:

- Universalism versus particularism:
 - Polish people in the organization tend to follow standardized rules and/or Norwegian people prefer a flexible approach to unique situations. Universalist, Polish, does not like that contract should alter, while Particularist, Norwegian accept that agreements can be changeable.
- Individualism versus communitarianism: the culture in Norway foster individual performance and creativity. The focus in Poland is on the larger group and their democratic results.

- Norway, individualist culture, is focusing on “I”: representatives make decisions on the spot. Norwegians are taking vacations in pairs or even alone.
- Poland, collectivism culture, is focusing on “we”: decisions referred back by the delegates of organizations. Polish are taking vacations more in organized groups and even with their extended family members.
- Specific versus diffuse: Norway and Poland are about on the same level and I have not managed to note any remarkable differences during my interviews. The focus in the respect of this dimension was for example of on small or large “private” life and the difference between work and personal life.
- Emotional versus neutral:
 - Poland is a very neutral country and it is not normal to show emotions in business life. A neutral culture is also characterized by that this culture is not revealing what one is thinking or feeling.
 - In Norway this slightly more acceptable and common in business life. In an emotional culture it is acceptable to use nonverbal and verbal display of thoughts and feelings.
- Achievements versus ascription: It has been observed that in Norway your own individual performance is ruling while in Poland e.g. your family background can have a significant importance.
 - Achievement culture: the usage of titles is not common in Norway.
 - In Poland, ascription culture, the usage of titles is very important. In motivation context a new title in Poland might have better effect than higher wages.
- Time orientation (sequential-synchronic): This study has not managed to find very large differences in the respect of this dimension, if a culture is focusing on past, present or future.
 - Norway has more focus on future orientation: planning and future strategizing is done enthusiastically.
 - Poland has slightly more past orientation focus and several things are viewed in the context of tradition or history.
- Internal versus external:

- Internal direction, focus on internal control: people believe that they can control nature or their environment to achieve goals. This includes how they work with teams and within organizations.
- External direction, focus on external control: people believe that nature or their environment controls them and that they must work with their environment to achieve goals. At work or in relationships, they focus their actions on others and they avoid conflict where possible. People often need reassurance that they're doing a good job.
- The observation in the respect of this dimension based on the interviews claims that in Norway the inspiration is coming from your inner drive while in Poland still external events are affecting on inspiration.

5.4 Observations based on The Lewis model

Due to the earlier mentioned disadvantage that the country specific information in the respect of The Lewis model was not available for this study, is making the analysis and observation part more challenging. Fortunately at least two relevant observations are made based on the pronouncement from one interview respondent. The respondent was informing that in Poland business colleagues are not giving such a high focus on the agreed time schedules than in Norway. In Poland they are rather making their own priority list for various task and not following notoriously all the time the agreed time schedule. This statement can be based on the graphical illustration of The Lewis model and the placement of Norway and Poland on the axis of Linear-Active – Multi-Active. Norway is placed on that figure closer to Germany, a very strict agreed time schedule following style. Poland in turn is closer to Russia and other Easter-European countries, where the agreed time schedule does not have the highest focus, but they are putting more weight on the other factors; importance of tasks etc. (Website of Richard Lewis Communications 2014).

Another observation was made in the respect of talking. Liner-active culture, Norway, talks half of the time while multi-active culture, talks most of the time. Poland is closer to multi-active culture than Norway and it has been observed that Polish employees and businesspersons talk more in work situations and in business meet-

ings. The calculation of spent time on interviews is not supporting this observation remarkably; Polish interview respondents spent only marginally longer time on interviews than their Norwegian counterparts.

5.5 Observations based on theories of E. T. Hall

Based on the earlier described three theories of Edward T. Hall, this study has managed to generate observations connected to two of his theories: High / Low context theory and Monochrome / Polychrome conception of time.

In Norway, a low context culture according to E.T. Hall's findings, a wording in a written business agreement is very important and this wording should be followed 100 % and not any other weighting elements should be used when making an interpretation of this agreement (Ulven, 2004, 23). This finding was supported by the feedback from interview respondents. In Poland in turn, there are more room for other elements than the actual wording in an agreement, when discussing the actual meaning or target of business agreement.

The second concept of Hall, Monochrome / Polychrome conception of time, the following observation was done. Norwegian culture represents more Monochrome time conception, where a fixed time schedule and a long-term orientation have a significant importance. This mentioned assertion has been supported by several respondents during the executed interviews. In addition to this observation, we can also get support from Hofstede's 5D-modelling; Norway vs. Poland: long-term orientation (Norway 44 / Poland 32) (Website of Geert Hofstede 2013). The fixed time schedule observation connected to the Monochrome conception of time was also observed during the interviews; Norwegian culture is based on the fixed time schedules. This observation is also supported by The Lewis model and the placement of Norway and Poland on the axis of Linear-Active – Multi-Active (Website of Richard Lewis Communications 2014).

5.6 Other findings and observations

Firstly, the earlier described Economy Rankings Survey by the World Bank Group, chapter 3.5., supports some of my personal observations during the interview situations with the interview respondents:

- Poland is a very formal country and you must observe the correct formalities towards the authorities or even be careful with the authorities. Poland's rank of 113 on paying taxes partly explains this observation. One of the respondents mentioned, for example, that when starting a business in Poland you should find a good Polish lawyer who can assist and support you with the very challenging Polish rules and regulations.
- "Everything must be in writing in Poland" and "You must operate with very detailed job descriptions with new employees in Poland". Poland's rank of 55 on enforcing contracts supports this observation. This also supports my own observations and experience and several of my respondents took up exactly this matter: Poles prefer important messages, specifications etc. in writing.

Secondly, the Corruption perception index survey also supports some of my personal observations during the interviews as discussed in the chapter 3.5. Other literature findings:

- "Do not be too naive in Poland; as a credulous Norwegian person, you must build up trust in Poland. Try to find one or two local persons you can trust 100%, otherwise Poles might use the opportunity of your naivety and abuse the situation and they might even try to cheat you" – comments from one interviewee.

Another issue that arised as a result of my observation is motivation. There is a slight difference in motivation and the business context between Norway and Poland. Norwegian and Polish cultures and business persons are not on the same level in all areas for example if we look at the pyramid of Maslow and this in turn can have a heavy impact on modern management approaches to motivation and the design of business organizations to meet individual needs. Norwegian respondents have noticed that

when they work/operate in Poland they need to point for the Polish that actually nothing separates company management and ordinary employees: management means responsibility, not status. Unfortunately this is still not the case in many Polish organizations, which are lagging 10-20 years behind Western or Scandinavian management styles in this respect, this was the comment from one interview respondent.

6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

Validity, reliability and objectivity are criteria used to evaluate the quality of research in the conventional positivist research paradigm. As an interpretive method, qualitative content analysis differs from the positivist tradition in its fundamental assumptions, research purposes and inference processes, thus making the conventional criteria unsuitable for judging its research results. Measuring the reliability of a research project is estimating the degree to which an instrument measures the same way each time it is used under the same conditions with the same subjects. The validity of a study measures the strength of researcher's conclusions, inferences or propositions (Adams et al. 2010, 235). Validity is dealing with truth: are the observational records of the researcher true? The concept of truth is a very complex issue in qualitative research projects; some researchers claim that there is no such thing as truth and that at the very end everything is the personal opinion of the researcher (Shank 2006, 111).

I carefully and systematically designed my own research project. The research project schedule was designed to give me enough time to do my other daytime activities, run my own business and continue with entrepreneurial activities. The study schedule started in October 2012 and the interview section, including preparations and actual interviews, was conducted during the summer and autumn of 2013. The final project-writing phase was completed in early 2014. The total research study period was about 18 months, which is long enough to conduct a reliable and valid project.

I have a long experience in this field of study, cultural differences in business management, through my own establishment and various travels within these two different countries, Norway and Poland. In addition to this my working experience with Norwegian and Polish managers, colleagues and business contacts that are neither Norwegian nor Polish citizens gave an added value to this project as they provided an external perspective.

This research study project is a public study available for all readers. The only part of the study material that is not being published is the recorded interviews and transcripts in order to give privacy protection to the respondents who were interviewed for this research project.

The interview part of this project was carefully planned and prepared. The actual interview questionnaire and the interview questions were tested in advance with two people. The final version of interview questionnaire was based on the comments received and the evaluated feedback from the respondents. The interview questionnaire was based on the finding that sometimes the researcher must ask many different questions to get at what researcher is actually trying to find (Shank 2006, 110).

A pilot interview was conducted before the actual interviews. The researcher believes that the size of the sample group is also large enough for this type of master's level research project taking into account the actual research topic. The substantial number of interviews, 10 individual and separate interviews, was conducted with half the respondents from Norway and half from Poland. The respondents represent a relatively high-level managerial group with a long working experience, especially within international business, and the researcher believes that this group of respondents constitutes a representative sample in this research project. The actual interviews were conducted with neutrality and without any proposals etc. in order to receive honest and genuine answers from each respondent. So-called power asymmetry can always be a challenge in any research based on qualitative interviews. The authority or seniority position of the interviewer might lead to the interviewees confirming what the interviewer expects to hear. Another challenge that was slightly worrying me before interviews was the expectation that most managers in international companies have some knowledge of cross-cultural issues. This can lead to situations

where the main theories on cross-cultural differences are already familiar to interviewees and may influence their answers; they might answer based on their learned information instead of their actual experiences. Fortunately this researcher's worry did not become applicable among the interviewed respondents.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This research has shown that there are several differences in business management between Norway and Poland, but on the other side, these differences are not invariably of unquestionably significant importance. There are also several similarities between these two cultures. It is true that in our era of multicultural business, the global business life is getting more international and it is necessary to have more information on and understanding of cultural patterns of other cultures. The respondents offered the opinion that there will be fewer cultural differences in the future; partly due to new rapid information exchange via various media, including social media, more frequent travelling from one country to another country etc.

It can be now concluded that this thesis has managed to find answers and valuable information to those questions that were presented in the beginning of this study:

- The general differences between management cultures in Norway and Poland.
- The cultural challenges in a business context; Norway vs. Poland.

Some of the notable cultural differences in this study are not unique to the meeting between Norwegian and Polish organizational culture, but could also be valid for Norwegian and/or Polish companies in many other countries and cultures.

In addition to these main questions in this study his study has also managed to find earlier described hypotheses true based on the theories, models and interviews. This study and the executed interviews have had relatively easy connections especially to

Hofstede's 5D-model and the other used theories as well, and the noted various differences between Norwegian and Polish cultures.

The conclusion of this study demonstrates the great importance of cross-cultural understanding and adaptation in organizations that are doing business across borders; Norway-Poland. As the interviews indicated, properly executed cross-cultural homework in advance properly makes business activities smoother in cross-cultural teams in Norway or in Poland and it will assist in achieving triumphant communication in a cross-cultural business context. As the interviews indicate, the correct cross-cultural training in the very early stages of an international career would be very useful. The respondents from Norway in particular were focused on understanding Polish history and culture before starting any business activities in Poland.

The graphical illustration below shows conclusions of this theses based on the earlier described used main theories and models. As the figure shows the business culture between these cultures is slightly different, but still with several overlapping elements. These cultures have some similar cultural dimensions, while some other dimension in turn are different.

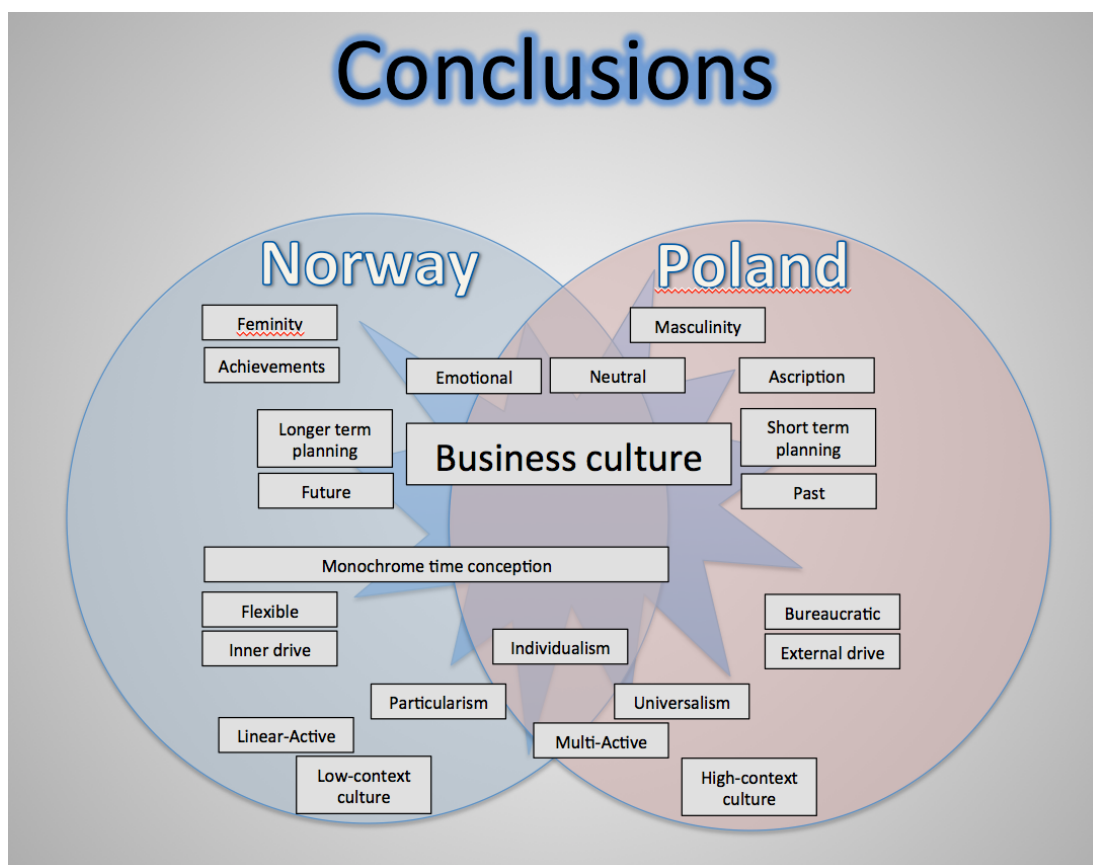


Figure 13. Conclusions – illustration.

8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND STUDIES

8.1 Development suggestions for Norwegian and Polish business persons

Even though it has been stated earlier in this study that there will be fewer cross-cultural differences in the business world in the future, we must still understand and take into consideration these important differences (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, vi). Another important finding that should also be included in the company strategy of a multicultural company is that if an organization truly wants to be multicultural and successful, these needed changes must be planned and executed via a systematic approach (Cox 2001, 30). This type of planned and systematic approach in a business organization can include, for example, cross-cultural training for young managers in the early stages of their careers and they can then avoid having a steep learning curve in their first international assignments. Human resource departments

in business organizations can prepare this type of cross-cultural training for those persons in the organizations who have need for deeper understanding and knowledge in respect of cross-cultural differences between various countries. Human resource departments need to focus on competence of leaders (Trompenaars & Woolliams 2003, 313).

According to a study of Lewis, about ninety per cent of chief executive officers believe that if cross-cultural communication in organizations is improved, this in turn will also increase company's revenue, profits and market share (Website of Richard Lewis Communication 2014). It is thus highly recommended that also Norwegian and Polish businesspersons are taking this finding into account when planning their systematic approach to cross-cultural issues in their own business organizations.

8.2 Suggestions for future studies

As there is no other direct study available about cross-cultural Norwegian-Polish business management, additional studies are essential in order to gain a more holistic view on this topic. This study approaches the issue of cross-cultural differences in a relatively broad manner in order to conceptualize trends that differentiate Norwegian and Polish cultures. The interviews in this study have not shown any branch-specific connected differences in this cross-cultural business management context. For this reason future research projects could analyse specific industrial branches, sectors or even companies, in order to find the relevant cross-cultural differences between these two cultures, Norwegian and Polish business culture.

In the light of the McKinsey study presented earlier and some ideas that arose from that document, it would undoubtedly be interesting to arrange an academic research project designed to prove a correlation between diversity, cross-cultural management synergy effects and financial success between Norwegian, Polish and Norwegian-Polish companies.

Another possible future research area is within the concept of leadership and cross-cultural differences. Research on how people from different cultures view leadership

is valuable, but there is also a need for further research on how leadership functions in different cultures, such as the two chosen countries in this Master's thesis; Norway and Poland.

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STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW

Background information

- Master studies of Jaakko Isotalo: Business management and entrepreneurship – Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Finland.
- Master's thesis of Jaakko Isotalo: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT: NORWAY VS. POLAND.
- Interviews as a part of thesis study project; qualitative research method.
- About eight persons to be interviewed: Norwegian and Polish persons in Norway and in Poland from Norwegian or Polish companies.

Interviewee

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

Education:

Language skills:

Working experience as a manager (number of years):

Working experience in international business with cross-cultural managers/management team (number of years):

I – Interviewee's own management skills

- a) How do you manage to co-operate with Norwegian/Polish managers in your management team/company?
- b) How are you prepared to manage new managers with different nationalities (Norwegian/Polish)?
- c) Do you have any training in cross-cultural communication/differences or cross-cultural management?
- d) Do you feel that should receive some training in cross-cultural management issues? If yes, why?

II – Working in a cross-cultural company

- a) How would you describe the current situation in your company/management team: how are the cultural differences (Norwegian/Polish) affecting the performance in your company/management team?
- b) Can you describe the most challenging issues when managing managers with different cultural background (Norwegian/Polish)?
- c) Do you see more benefits or disadvantages in a cross-cultural management team?

III – Communication and language

- a) Is communication a challenge in your cross-cultural management team? Have you experienced communication problems?
- b) Is the common language a challenge in your cross-cultural management team? Have you experienced language problems?

IV – Cross-cultural management team

- a) Are all managers of different nationalities treated equally in your company?
- b) What kind of management style do your managers have: management style of their national culture/management style of their working country/mixed management style?
- c) Have you experienced any problems or conflicts due to a cross-cultural management team?
- d) Do you believe that this kind of problem or conflict could have been avoided if all managers had undergone training on cultural issues/cross-cultural management etc.?
- e) The largest challenges when building up and motivating team in cross-cultural company?

V – Tips/recommendations/danger areas

- a) Can you provide some advice to other managers/investors/companies that are dealing with Norwegian-Polish businesses?
- b) Can you mention some cultural differences areas that need special attention?
- c) Are you able to mention some cultural differences that should be borne in mind and avoided in the business context in order to avoid conflicts?

VI – Conclusions

- a) What kind of personal skills and competences have assisted you to gain success in managing in an international company?
- b) How would you describe the benefits of cross-cultural management?
- c) Can you describe the greatest challenges when working with a cross-cultural management team (Norwegian/Polish)?
- d) Can you draw any conclusions on cultural management differences between Norway and Poland?
- e) Future: what is your opinion of cultural differences between Norway and Poland in the future (same level/larger/less)?
- f) Other cross-cultural management issues on which you would like to comment?