

Tuesday > 1:30pm-2:30pm
 Coronado T

739

Learning Story

Coronado T

e-Learning for a Worldwide Audience

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Designing or paying for an e-Learning course for learners with different cultural backgrounds? Do you wonder why learners from France are learning in a different way than learners in China, the US or Belgium? Creating a powerful, enjoyable and effective learning experience for all of your worldwide learners is a daunting task. Experience the differences, learn about design rules and get useful new ideas for creating content that suits various cultures.

- Experience your own cultural defined concepts (yes, you have them!)
- Instructional design framework for international audiences
- Creating an effective and powerful learning experience for learners with different cultural backgrounds

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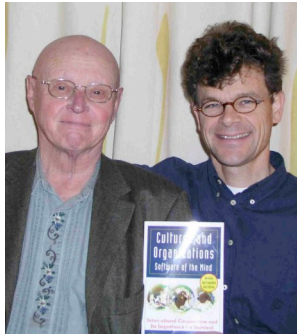
1. Introduction

In this document you find some basic information about the model of Hofstede that gives insights on the cultural differences when it comes to learning. We will also point out the implications on e-Learning.

HOFSTEDE model

We will use the model of professor Hofstede to help us with defining cultures contexts.

When you look in Wikipedia for Hofstede you will find that Geert Hofstede is an influential Dutch expert on the interactions between national cultures and organizational cultures, and is an author of several books including Culture's Consequences (2nd, fully revised edition, 2001) and Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind (2nd, revised edition 2005, with his son Gert Jan Hofstede).



Hofstede demonstrated that there are national and regional cultural groupings that affect the behavior of organizations, and that are very persistent across time.

Hofstede defines culture as: ***"The collective programming of the human mind, which distinguishes the members of one society or group from those of another."***

We hope you will enjoy the session!

Warm regards,

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2. Basics of the model

Hofstede has identified five dimensions of culture in his research:

1. **Power distance**

The degree to which the less powerful members of society expect there to be differences in the levels of power. A high score suggests that there is an expectation that some individuals wield larger amounts of power than others. A low score reflects the view that all people should have equal rights. Latin American and Arab nations are ranked the highest in this category; Scandinavian and Germanic speaking countries the least. Countries with high power distance rating are often characterized by a high rate of political violence.

2. **Individualism (vs. collectivism)**

individualism is contrasted with collectivism, and refers to the extent to which people are expected to stand up for themselves, or alternatively act predominantly as a member of the group or organization. Latin American cultures rank the lowest in this category, while U.S.A. is the most individualistic culture.

3. **Masculinity (tender vs. tough)**

refers to the value placed on traditionally male or female values. Masculine cultures value competitiveness, assertiveness, ambition, and the accumulation of wealth and material possessions, whereas feminine cultures place more value on relationships and quality of life. Japan is considered by Hofstede to be the most "masculine" culture, Sweden the most "feminine." The U.S. and UK are moderately masculine.

4. **Uncertainty avoidance**

reflects the extent to which a society attempts to cope with anxiety by minimizing uncertainty. Cultures that scored high in uncertainty avoidance prefer rules (e.g. about religion and food) and structured circumstances, and employees tend to remain longer with their present employer. Mediterranean cultures and Japan rank the highest in this category.

5. **Long-term orientation (Long vs. short term orientation)**

describes a society's "time horizon," or the importance attached to the future versus the past and present. In long term oriented societies, thrift and perseverance are valued more; in short term oriented societies, respect for tradition and reciprocation of gifts and favors are valued more. Eastern nations tend to score especially high here, with Western nations scoring low and the less developed nations very low; China scored highest and Pakistan lowest.

3. Implications on learning and teaching

The information below is taken from the book "Allemaal anders-denkenden; omgaan met cultuurverschillen", Geert Hofstede & Gert Jan Hofstede, 2007 (this is a renewed book based on Culture's Consequences).

3.1 Power distance

Originally when we talking about power distance we often look at the relation parent-child but research shown us that the same behavior patterns are appearing when we look at the relationship teacher-student.

Small power distance (low score)	Big power distance (high score)
Teachers and students are each other equals.	There is unbalanced relation between the teacher and a student.
Teacher is not treated with a lot of respect.	Teachers are treated with respect, the younger teachers are 'more equal' and therefore less popular than older teachers.
In the learning process the learner is playing a central role.	In the learning process, the teacher is playing a central role. He is planning the learning process.
Initiative from the learner is appreciated and rewarded. Students are asking questions (their own initiative).	In the classroom there is strict order and the initiative to communicate lies with the teacher.
If a student is misbehaving, the parents often choose the side of the student	Teachers are never criticized in public.
The content is not directly linked to the teacher, it is more independent knowledge.	The teacher is the guru who has the (personal) wisdom.
Quality depends on the interaction between the teacher and students, quality relies on the quality of the students.	The quality of the learning process is depending on the quality of the teacher.
Parents are treating children as equals.	Parents learn the children to obey.
Education policy has a focus on average levels.	Education policy has a focus on higher levels.

In cultures with a small power distance the independency of the learner is bigger if the educational level is higher, in cultures with a big power distance the learners keep being dependent of their teachers, regardless of the educational level.

3.2 Individualism

Collectivism (low score)	Individualism (high score)
A student does not take the floor without the approval of the group.	A student is responsible for themselves and can undertake action when he wants.
A teacher has to ask a question to a person instead of to the whole group if he want a response. Or better: split up the group and let them present the answer by one spokesman.	Students will answer questions easily also if the question is not asked to a particular person but to the group.
Grouping of students is based on ethnical grounds (which are clearly the same as the groups outside the school).	Grouping of students are based on friendship or other variables. Groups are loosely and can changed very often.
Harmony and consensus are important values. Conflicts have to be prevented. It is important not to lose your 'face'.	Conflicts are OK and part of a healthy process. Losing your face is hardly an issue.
Students wanted to be treated as a group.	Students wanted to be treated as individuals.
Education is important to prepare the student to become an acceptable member of the group. Tradition is key.	Education is important to prepare the individual to the society along with all the other people. Therefore it is important to get along with new and unexpected situations. Flexibility is the key. New things and experiences are welcome.
It is important to learn how to do things.	It is important to learn how to learn (instead of how you have to do something).
Learning is for young people and ends when you become part of the group.	Learning is a lifelong process.
A diploma is an honor for the person and his group. You can be a member of a higher group.	A diploma higher the market value and self respect of a person.
The employer and employee are having a moral relationship, more or less like a family relationship.	The employer and employee are having a contract based relationship.
Management means managing groups.	Management means managing individuals.
Personal relations are more important than the task.	The task is more important than personal relations.

3.3 Masculinity

Tender (low score)	Tough (high score)
Weak performing students are more often encouraged than strong performing students.	Strong performing students are more often encouraged than weak performing students.
Average results are good enough.	Students are asking for another change to do a test/exam after average results.
The average students are the norm, being the smartest one in the class is not a wanted position.	The best students are the norm (also from the expectations from the parents).
Students act inconspicuous. Ego has to be hidden.	Students are competing. It is good to stand out in class. Ego is important.
Bad results are relatively unimportant.	Bad results are a disaster.
Aggressive behavior is not accepted.	Aggressive behavior is part of life.
With the same performance, the students value their performance lower (compared with students from a masculine society).	With the same performance, the students value their performance higher (compared with students from a feminine society).
With judging/ranking students and teachers, the kindness and social skills are the most important aspects.	With judging/ranking students and teachers, the IQ and the academic records are the most important aspects.
The choice for a study is based on intrinsic motivation.	The choice for a study is based on future career possibilities.
Men and women are studying the same professions (if the country is wealthy).	Studies are typically for men or women.
Boys and girls are choosing more similar subjects.	Boys and girls are choosing different subjects.

3.4 *Uncertainty avoidance*

Low uncertainty avoidance	High uncertainty avoidance
There is not such a thing as the ultimate answer. A teacher can admit that he doesn't know the answer.	Teachers are supposed to know everything and know all the answers.
Learning can take place in a more open situation. Vague objectives are OK, global tasks are preferred.	The didactical path has to be highly structured.
Teachers are using plain language and students appreciate books where complex issues are explained in simple way.	Teachers who are using academic jargon are highly appreciated. Books are presenting complex concepts in a complex way with formal, complex writing style.
Discussions are essential to learn.	To disagree with the teacher is not appreciated. It is a sign of lack of personal loyalty.
Accomplishments are often attributed to quality of the student.	Accomplishments are often attributed to coincident or external factors.
Contact between parents and teachers are meant to involve the parents with the learning process of their children.	Contact between parents and teachers are meant to inform parents. Teachers are the experts, parents are novices.
New methodologies are welcome, there is a fast adoption of new technology.	There is a critical attitude towards new technology and methodologies.

3.5 *Long-term orientation*

Short term orientation (low score)	Long term orientation (high score)
Students are good in solving open problems.	Students are good in solving formal problems. (e.g. Maths).
Old age is an unhappy phase in your life but it start relatively late.	Old age is a happy phase in your life, which start relatively early.
Others can take care of the kids during kinder garten time.	Mothers need to spend time with their kids during kinder garten time.
Kids are taught to have respects for others and be tolerant towards others.	Kids are taught to act economically with resources.
Age is not a relevant variable when it comes to authority.	Older kids have authority over younger kids.
Abstract and general subjects are easy to learn.	Concrete and applied subjects are easy to learn.

4. Consequences for e-Learning

The model of Hofstede is just a way to make you aware of the different cultural contexts. It is not a prescriptive model. So if we are talking about the consequences of cultural contexts for the design and development of e-Learning it is more a list of aspects to take into consideration. Sometimes you can even violate against the aspects because you want to create a learning experience full of emotions or unexpected experiences. In a few months we will complete an instructional design framework that guide you in a more detailed way. Let's take a closer look at the different dimensions and let's think about the consequences of a score on the dimensions. This is not a limitative list.

4.1 *Power distance*

Within cultures with a high score on PDI the teacher is the guru, this means that he takes responsibility for the learning process. If you are organizing a self-study course it is important to help students to guide the study process. Coaching in a guided, prescriptive way will fit the learners style. When you are using discussion forums, you have to put more effort in this because the learners will find it hard to criticize you as an expert. As an expert/facilitator you will have a formal relation with the learners. You will not share personal background with the learners.

4.2 *Individualism*

Within cultures with a high score on IDV the learners act as individuals. It is easy to group learners because they will group in different ways, the groups are not formed on forehand. In a discussion forum learners will find it easy to post reactions and with collaborative activities they will find it easy to provide and receive feedback, loosing face is not important. Self study is considered as a very nice and effective way of learning. Techniques to learn how to learn are well accepted.

4.3 *Masculinity*

Within cultures with a high score on MAS (tough) the learners are competitive and focusing on achieving the highest results. Competitive activities will work fine and rewarding the best performers in a visible way will be accepted and appreciated. Collaborative activities are OK but the social aspects are not that important. It is the result that counts. Certificates and grades are important.

4.4 *Uncertainty avoidance*

Within cultures with a high score on UAI the learners will appreciate a very structured e-Learning course. Open assignments are not well received and clarity about grading, the process, formats, people will be needed. Formal course materials with academic jargon are highly appreciated. The writing style is formal. The learners will not question the opinion of the expert so you need some more efforts to create a lively forum discussion. Learners will have some problems adopting new and unknown learning methods (e.g. gamebased learning) or learning devices (PDA, iPods).

Long-term orientation > Because of the lack of research results this dimension is not taken into account.