

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Define Culture and its Elements
- Dimensions of Culture – Hofstede
- How Culture facilitate Conflict Management
- Potential areas of conflict at the organizational level

The cultural environment

Culture- is derived from the Latin word “cultura”, related to cult worship.

1. Culture – is an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristics of the members of any given society.
2. Culture is the totality of the way of life evolved by our people through experience (*The Cultural Policy of Ghana, 2004*)
3. The collective programming of the mind (Hofstede, 1980)

Characteristics of Culture

- Learned – not inherited biologically, acquired by experience
- Shared by members of a group, organization, society not limited to an individual
- Trans-generational – it is cumulative, passed down from one generation to the other
- Symbolic – based on human capacity to symbolize, one thing representing the other
- Patterned – has structure and is integrated, change in one part will result in changes to other parts.
- Adaptive – based on human capacity to change or adapt

Elements of culture

- Language & Communication
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Social institutions
- Values and customs
- Time orientation
- Aesthetics

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

- **According to Hofstede (1991) differences in national culture can be explained according to 4, (later expanded to 5) dimensions**
- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Power distance – levels of equality in society
- Uncertainty avoidance – acceptance of risk or need for formal rules and regulations
- Masculinity vs Femininity- attitude towards achievement, and roles of men and women
- Confucian Dynamism- developed with M. Bond

INDIVIDUALISM-COLLECTIVISM

- Individualism is the tendency for individuals to look after themselves and their immediate families only.
- This is measured in contrast with Collectivism, the tendency of people to belong to groups or collectives and to look after each other in exchange for loyalty. Hofstede realized that wealthy countries score higher on individualism. E.g. US, Canada, Australia, Denmark etc. Conversely Sub-Saharan Africa, South American countries score lower on individualism.
- Countries with high score tend to have greater support for the protestant work ethic, work initiative and promotions based on market value of performance. Lower societies promote people based on seniority among others.

POWER DISTANCE

- The extent to which less powerful people members of an institution and organizations accept that power is unequally distributed. Cultures where people largely obey the orders of their superiors have higher power distance.
- In such communities strict obedience is found even at higher levels of the organizations and even by highly educated ones. E.g. Korea, Mexico, West Africa.
- Effect on organizations: Low power distance organizations tend to be decentralized with flatter org structures. They have smaller proportion of supervisory staff and lower levels of the org consist of highly qualified people. USA, Sweden, Australia, Canada

Uncertainty avoidance

- The extent to which people deal with risks and ambiguous situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid them.
- Countries high on this dimension tend to have high need for security and strong belief in experts. Germany, Japan and Israel.
- Effect on organizations: countries with strong uncertainty avoidance emphasize structures, written rules and procedures, less risk taking by managers, low labour turnover and less ambitious employees.
- In contrast low uncertainty avoidance societies have less structuring of activities, fewer written rules. E.g. Denmark, Sub-Saharan Africa

MASCLUNITY VERSES FEMINITY

- Masculinity is a culture in which the dominant values are success, money and things (material possessions); whilst femininity is society where the dominant values are caring for others and quality of life.
- High masculine countries such as Greece, Japan, Italy, US place great importance on earnings, recognition, advancement and challenge.
- Countries which are feminine such as Norway, Sub-Saharan Africa places emphasis on cooperation, friendly atmosphere, employment security and group decision making, emphasize conservation of the environment, with more women in decision making roles.

Confucian Dynamism

- Developed on the basis of traditional Confucian values prominent in East Asia
- Unequal relationship between people create stability in society
- Harmony in family must be preserved & maintained dignity, self respect & prestige of parties
- Individuals may have ideas different from group norms but would not be acted on due to group harmony

Universal Factor Model

- These Theorist believe that irrespective of society's culture, individuals could be forced to adopt attitudes and behaviours that comply with imperatives of industrialization.
- They argue that Subordinates, work environment, individual's motivation, maturity level, and decision making level determines work behaviour.

Conflict Management defined

- Covers the various processes required for stopping or preventing overt conflict and aiding parties to reach peaceful settlement
- Globalization requires cross-cultural knowledge for survival (chua,2003)

How culture can Facilitate Conflict Resolution

- Develop cultural fluency Skills - familiarity with cultures of parties involved
- Awareness of communication style- High or Low context
- Ways of resolving conflicts. Significant Players used e.g. Formal mediators, traditional elders, courts etc
- Identities- Individualist or Collectivist

5 Outcomes in Resolving conflicts-

Rahim & Blum

1. Integrating (Win-Win) high concern for all parties
2. Dominating (win-lose) high concern for self, low concern for others
3. Compromising (no win-no lose) intermediate concern for self and others
4. Avoiding/withdrawing (lose-lose) low concern for self and others
5. Accommodating/smoothing (losing more than one gains) low concern for self, high concern for others

Approaches in handling conflicts

- Individualistic cultures adopt more competitive style through the courts
- Collectivist societies utilize more accommodating and avoiding style to preserve harmony, trust and personal relations
- Internationally, the use of negotiation/ arbitration using Outsider-Neutral facilitator

Potential issues of Conflict - Discipline

- Collectivist largely obedient to rules if sanctions are well spelt out. Scapegoats serve as deterrent to unwanted behaviour.
- Due to nepotism, supervisors reluctant to sanction infractions especially termination, as each is his brother's keeper.
- Interventions from opinion leaders and chiefs, Religious leaders hold sway over established rules. If unchecked could lead to apathy and eventual collapse of an enterprise.

Potential Issues of Conflict - Hierarchy

- In Hierarchical societies respect is accorded their aged, experience, wealth and/or position. Older people are viewed as wise and are granted respect.
- In a group one can always see preferential treatment for the eldest member present. With respect comes responsibility and people expect the most senior person to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.
- Though women are accorded respect, they play second fiddle to men in daily socio-economic activities.

Potential Issues of Conflict - Hierarchy

- Expatriate managers from developed countries with technical skills may be relatively younger than their subordinates.
- In hierarchical societies this could be a source of conflict if such managers do not apply tact in dealing with older subordinate employees

Potential Issues of Conflict - Compensation

- Source of livelihood and survival. Each worker bears a heavy dependency load to support kinsmen in urban centers as well as those in the countryside.
- The practice fuels corruption since one's income can hardly meet fraction of these demands.
- Organizations should offer conditions that enable staff maintain good standard of living

Potential Issues of Conflict - Industrial Relations

- Unions exist world-wide organized under ILO
- Have become mass movements used for protest and Political agitations.
- Militant unions have caused the removal of managers including expats, as they sometimes accused on racial and abusive grounds.
- One needs to engage them with local managers involvement, agreements should be in writing endorsed by both parties, when in doubt consult relevant Employers Association or industry chamber of commerce, or an experienced lawyer.

Issues of Conflict - Time Orientation

- **Monochromic** – things are done one at a time, and time is segmented into precise, small units. US, Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Far East etc. To them time is precious resource and should not be wasted. Daily events are structured into parts for appointments, schedules, tasks and targets.
- **Polychromic** – a system where several things can be done at one, and a more fluid approach is taken to scheduling time. Latin America, Africa, the Middle East etc. They are more interested in relationships rather than in tasks. (*Cohen, 1997*)

Potential Issues of Conflict - Governmental Relations

- Varied national Regulatory laws and practices
- Tax regimes
- Diversity management
- Bribery and corruption
- Social responsibility

Impact of ICT on Decision Making

- The use of ICT's reduce the influence significant members in group decision making processes in large power distance cultures.
- Thus the internet (social media) might change governance in the world
- Control over media will be much more diffused.

Ghana's Traditional consensus building approach modernized

- **ICT Enabled Courts** - dubbed Fast track courts adjudicate mostly commercial cases.
- Litigants have option to use arbitration (Alternative Dispute Resolution) as a 1st Option
- ADR being used to decongest the courts

The NCA Act have provisions for dispute resolution

- Section 82.1 mandates NCA to establish a conflict resolution process
- No court action will be taken by any party until established procedure is exhausted-
- Level 1 – Between Operators
- Level 2 – NCA's involvement
- Level 3 – Industry Disputes Resolution Committee
- Level 4- Electronic Comm Tribunal (High Court)
- Level 5- Appeals Court

END OF PRESENTATION

- CHARLES AMOAH-WILSON
- NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY,
GHANA.
- charlesamoahwilson@yahoo.com
- Charles.amoah-wilson@nca.org.gh