

**"The Cultural Interaction between Indochina and France, in
terms of intercultural management"**

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Abstract:

In this more and more internationalized world, many international companies have begun to integrate intercultural teams within their structure to fit the new demands.

The way of communicating and work changed a lot and the interactions between France and Indochina evolved also, it is a real issue for two completely opposite cultures to work together. We will describe and analyze the differences and similarities between both and find solutions to make the interactions work, in professional situations.

This dissertation aims to understand intercultural management through the example of interactions between Indochina and France. Various solutions can be used and we will analyze what can be done to improve some situations.

The methodology in this paper is based on using literature reviews and a quantitative research, thanks to a survey, to receive other points of views and confirm the hypotheses. The questionnaire has been shared on the social medias and thanks to my personal and professional network I could receive enough valuable answers.

This dissertation has been written in two parts, first the theoretical part describing what is intercultural management and the associated concepts, explaining the context of the subject.

The second one is more practical, it is the analysis of the countries thanks to Geert Hofstede and the help of the dimensions he developed. The second part is also including the survey and analysis of the responses of the 73 participants to understand better what do they think about the case and find solutions for a smooth cooperation within the international teams.

Keywords: Intercultural management, internationalization, cooperation, international relationships, common enterprise's culture.

Abstrato

Neste mundo cada vez mais internacionalizado, muitas empresas internacionais começaram a integrar equipes interculturais em sua estrutura para atender às novas demandas.

O modo de comunicação e o trabalho mudaram muito e as interações entre a França e a Indochina também evoluíram, é uma questão real para duas culturas completamente opostas trabalharem juntas. Vamos descrever e analisar as diferenças e semelhanças entre ambos e encontrar soluções para fazer as interações funcionarem, em situações profissionais.

Esta dissertação visa compreender a gestão intercultural através do exemplo de interações entre a Indochina e a França. Várias soluções podem ser usadas e vamos analisar o que pode ser feito para melhorar algumas situações.

A metodologia deste artigo baseia-se no uso de revisões bibliográficas e de uma pesquisa quantitativa, graças a uma pesquisa, para receber outros pontos de vista e confirmar as hipóteses. O questionário foi compartilhado nas mídias sociais e, graças à minha rede pessoal e profissional, pude receber respostas valiosas.

Esta dissertação foi escrita em duas partes, primeiro a parte teórica que descreve o que é gestão intercultural e os conceitos associados, explicando o contexto do assunto.

O segundo é mais prático, é a análise dos países graças a Geert Hofstede e a ajuda das dimensões que ele desenvolveu. A segunda parte também inclui a pesquisa e análise das respostas dos 73 participantes para entender melhor o que eles pensam sobre o caso e encontrar soluções para uma cooperação harmoniosa entre as equipes internacionais.

Palavras-chave: Gestão intercultural, internacionalização, cooperação, relações internacionais, cultura da empresa comum.

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Introduction

This thesis has been written to help finding solutions to ameliorate the interactions and cooperation among international teams thanks to the intercultural management.

In this paper, we will especially concentrate on the interactions between Indochina and France, which had a lot of events in common as some were ex French colonies.

It was easy to find some documentation as many papers, books, web sites and so on are about this theme.

I also traveled for months in Indochina and realized many points by myself and confirmed them with many serious sources. These travels and the history between the two parts of the world made me want to study this idea to understand better such an interesting subject.

I also love intercultural management as it has always something new to offer, always new issues and solutions associated. I had many experiences during group works in partner universities to see the challenges of overcoming cultural differences, finding tolerance and respect to finally agree for a compromise to adapt and to cooperate in healthy conditions.

I have always seen intercultural management as a challenging game and a creative opportunity to help by finding adequate solutions to have an efficient and fulfilled team.

These passions are in line with the evolving world in which we grow up and the more international enterprises there are, the more intercultural management is needed. Even if there is no perfect answer and each situation needs a fitting solution, some general ideas can be found and adapted to every specific case.

I choose to study Indochina and France to have two contrasting cultures to compare because I feel it is harder to understand when the cultures are too similar.

Definition concepts

First at all, definitions of Culture are needed to understand well the subject as it is a complicated notion. It is a complex set of beliefs, knowledge, behaviors and symbols shared by a group of people which can be linked geographically, socially or politically for example. An important point is that they have a common identity, Culture is absolutely not genetically given but inversely acquired by learning.

Contrary to Identity, which is a conscious process, culture is almost completely unconscious. The first notion follows a norm of belonging based on symbolic oppositions so obviously consciously (Cuche, 1996).

We can separate the individual identity in three parts, the cultural, social and personal (Guerraoui et Troadec, 2000). We can notice in this point the importance of the culture in our lives, we build ourselves and our identity taking into account the social and cultural universe in which we evolve. It shapes our personality as much as our group of friends, it is part of ourselves.

I mention the notion of identity because it is linked with the culture and helps understanding cultural differences in general.

Each individual has one or more cultures of origin and is definitely part of its cultural identity. This identity can vary because of many internal and external factors, it will natural change and adapt with our proper evolution. (Denoux, 1994)

Intercultural communication is a set of competencies and skills allowing two individuals or two groups from different cultures to interact and go beyond communication difficulties that can separate them.

It does not only refer to languages differences but more generally to a different interpretation of the world itself which will vary from one culture to another.

Many examples can illustrate that change as the meaning of certain gestures, colors, relationships that will be proper to each culture. An action can be seen as rude in one culture and polite in another, as touching the head of a children among other well-known examples.

Context, description of the situation

There always were an exchange practice, everyone has a specialty or simply something that grows or that is produced somewhere and another person has another product, what is the logical way to operate? Exchange the surplus and have variety. Importations and exportations are the logical procedures and extension of a concept men and women always used.

Today with the context of internationalization, many companies had to adapt and integrate new ways of working with international colleagues or new approaches of work all over the world. If the integration of new cultures is well done, so many advantages can raise but it can also put in difficulty the whole company when the integration is badly handled and can cause the rupture of the brand. The only way to success for the acceptance is to be fully opened to new cultures, accept their behaviors, ways of acting, adapt the processes and communicate.

This increase of multicultural teams in companies change the traditional work dynamic and environment and, as said before, offers new challenges but also a lot of new opportunities. Firstly, it obviously raises the creativity and diversity coming from the different nationalities, ways of working, education, religion and more criterion. New management styles are then needed to work with such a huge diversity within the teams, but the employees themselves also need to adapt and understand the difficulty of the task. Some employees will surely think their Culture is not taken into account but they need to realize that it is not an easy task to mix well everyone's backgrounds. They will also need to learn how to work with different Cultures and integrate themselves in the intercultural team. The manager will have the role of coordinator and need to explain well how work is planned, who is in charge of what mission and why this choice. This way it will not let the employees feel like outsiders and more important they will be more motivated because more integrated.

The easy trap to fall into is to react with ethnocentrism, which means to think that your own culture is better than another, to overestimate our values and behaviors compared to the other culture studied. It is difficult not to have prejudices over the unknown and it is often unconscious to judge different customs compared to our own because we sometimes think it is the normal and best way to go. Thinking this way will have negative impacts on intercultural management, the other cultures will not always instinctively adapt themselves and everyone needs to go both ways to find an understanding and compromises.

I do not say we need to think we all are the same and need to behave equally it is not possible, each person is different, each culture also. I just think we need to understand the other culture to be able to work well together. So, respect and comprehension of cultural differences are the main requirements for cooperation.

I do not consider stupid to recognize our weaknesses and cultural bias since the beginning, it is normal to have another point of view of a situation. The angle and perspective with which we will understand what is happening and reality in general will vary for sure from one culture to another and increase diversity in the world. To accept it and have a self-criticism attitude can only be wise and helps us to avoid jumping to conclusions about the meaning of each action or behavior from another culture.

An activity that can shape a culture is tourism, the effects and consequences can be considerable on the culture. The reason is that it is not necessary to keep the authenticity of each culture to receive tourists, many cultures will even adapt to meet the tourists needs and demands as they are not forced to be themselves, to be real. The appeal of bringing more people, developing the country and earning more money, thanks to the tourists, can be part of the modification or adaptation of the values in some circumstances.

To conclude on this point, the supply and demand constraints dictate which practices to go with to match with the subjective expectations and as consequence affect the cultural diversity and authenticity of each culture.

Before getting to the literature review and analysis, I will describe shortly Indochina, the history, the traditions and so on to understand better the culture.

Indochina regroups few countries as Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia, all located in the continental South-East Asia, next to China.

The French Indochina is different because it regroups the colonies France had under control as Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia but also a little part of China at the time.

The important point for this paper is that a part has been a French colony for years (excluding Burma which was a British colony), that is why it is also called French Indochina by many persons.

As we will describe later in the analysis of Hofstede's dimensions and in the analyze of occident versus Asia, Indochina has a lot of specific cultural points. It differs a lot from France in many ways, even if it has been one of their colonies it did not keep a lot of the French culture.

Various ethnic groups still live there and still enjoy their own traditions, far from the European way of life.

I have been travelling through Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore for few months and could experience to live in different ethnic groups as the Hmong in the North of Vietnam (they are still present in different part of the world including Laos) or the Bunong group in Cambodia.

Both were unique experiences and I could understand how they are used to live, thanks to the “Mamas” which literally means “mothers”. They welcomed my friend and myself and taught us their traditions, habits and ways they are living their life. It was incredible to discover a new manner to spend the days, to work, to educate children, to use of animals for the daily life etc. I also could see many Museums about ethnology and women which taught me a lot about the culture and traditions, again proper to each subgroup. From the wedding to the work habits everything is different from our culture and really interesting to learn.

Before getting to these countries I never realized truly what the wars, the colonization and the foreigners’ influence could mean for them. I learned that Laos still suffers from the almost 80 millions of mines still under the ground, put by the US military from the Secret War operation operated during the Vietnam war.

This is why I wanted to write my thesis on this subject to be able to discover more about these incredible cultures and to speak about them, as we learn a little about these countries in class but not as much as we should.

During the twentieth century, Indochina has been decolonized little by little and many fights happened along the road. After the World War II, the cold war, French Indochina war, Vietnam war, the Khmers rouges, Laotian, Cambodian civil wars and so on these countries still suffer from all these atrocious events. Environment, public health, politics, security still have consequences of the past events and the countries have problems to recuperate their delays in many fields. It is hard to develop the countries with these characteristics and the other issues as piracy, human or drug traffic... It can reduce the tourism and therefore the commercial development of the regions it is then a vicious circle hard to get rid of.

Indochina and many Asian countries in general are paradoxical in the sense that they mix modernity with traditions. Little by little they try to reach the modernity of Western countries and United States of America in terms of business and way of life, we can see that in the way

of dressing or musical preferences for example. We can also discover that the traditions are also important and cannot be forgotten. Many customs will not change due to the habits continuing through generations.

Each country has his own traditions, some linked with religions, others with customs but they tend to prefer imitating to be able to succeed as the neighbor, without using differentiation and creativity contrary to France and Europe in general. I could see during my travels that any shops in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia has the same products to offer.

The ideology will be around few values as community (and the country linked with the collectivist dimension), family, spirituality and religion.

As mentioned before the collectivism is an important part of the culture as the group is more important than the individual in itself. We can deduce the role of each person vary a lot from what we are used to in France and Europe in general. It is anchored in the mentalities to never put yourself forward or crush the other but to search for consensus and harmony, to share everything. The loyalty is more important than anything contrary to France where it is sometimes alright to abandon or crush someone if it is worse it for the business. For France if someone in your company cannot do the things right the person is more likely be fired even if it someone from the family or friends. In Asia, it is the contrary, the health of the family and friends goes before the health of the business.

In these cultures, it is normal to help voluntarily the community when you have the skills (for example I saw in Cambodia a policeman helping for the circulation in a market to help cars and motorbikes to get around without being paid just to help around).

The rites are also very important, in Cambodia for example we could see offerings everywhere, in a palm leaf some food and gifts were given every day for the gods to make them happy, for good luck and to prevent catastrophes. In Laos, among other countries, it is a tradition to build a little temple with offerings on the land you want to build your house on, to see if the gods agree with it and only then build the house if it is correct.

Literature review

Geert Hofstede

Geert Hofstede is a Dutch psychologist, specialized in the social area, and a professor at the university of Maastricht of two subjects: Anthropology and Management. He studied how cultures interact with each other.

It is important to say that this study is based on the answers of large groups and as each individual is different, it is relative and reflects the opinion of the majority but not the perfect reality. It shows cultural tendencies which can help understanding a culture and work with other nationalities.

Although, I am convinced that the culture each one grows in, will shape a part of their personality, we are influenced by the social sphere close to us. We cannot generalize that everyone that belong to a culture cluster will definitely be the same as the others, someone in an individualistic country can obviously be collectivist for example.

To conclude these parameters give us a large illustration but cannot be taken as the perfect truth functioning for each person.

This analyze is particularly interesting when comparing the various results, to make sense each dimension and country need to be compared to another one, with only one country studied it would be meaningless and not so useful.

To describe a bit the characteristics of each dimension before getting to the analysis I am going to study one by one and give examples:

Hierarchical distance

This dimension observes the hierarchical powers differences to understand and measure the degree of inequality between the one with high hierarchical position, so with the power, and the one controlled and submitted by this power.

It shows the perception each culture has of the power, authority and its distribution and is strongly linked with the formality or informality in society.

The structure in this dimension, when the distance is high, is pyramidal. A high importance of the boss and of the distance with the employees, these last will wait for direct orders from the boss. Each person stays at the same level and the person with high responsibilities can be untouchable and hard to talk to.

Depending on the country and culture, the employees can have respect or be scared of their boss for example. In many cases exterior powers' signs and features can be exposed, the boss will enjoy many advantages as a car of function or special credit card and so on... In most of the example, subordinates and bosses do not consider themselves as equals but have to accept the differences to work together. In these countries, many titles, precise ranks are formulated and the respect of the hierarchy and the social order is really important.

There are different ways to get the power, depending on the culture of the person, it can be thanks to the age, the wealth or the sex for example. Getting the power will directly give many privileges which can be extended to not only monetary or material things.

To illustrate these features, the countries with high hierarchical distance are for example Asian countries as China, Arabic countries, Russia, South American countries but also some European countries as France, Italy, Spain, Belgic among others.

On the contrary, in the countries with lower hierarchical distance, the pyramidal structure will be obviously flatter and the contact will be easier to make with the boss. The management will be lower and the management procedure could be more adhocratic as mentioned before. The main values of this part are equity and all members with whatever status will have the possibility to give their opinions and validate or reject the decision taken by everyone.

The employees will be waiting for a participative kind of work as their opinion should be more listened to and taken into account. The structure is also often decentralized to let the power of decisions to everyone. If each person can decide it is because not a lot of trust is given to the superiors and the hierarchy is not so respected and trusted.

To conclude, this way helps gaining trust for the legitimacy of any action of the high ranked members of the company.

It is also easier to climb the social ladder and to become the boss when you are subordinate and therefore inverse the power report, the statutory mobility is higher. To gain power in this case will be thanks to each person qualities, leadership, charism but never by a characteristic outside your personality as said before.

Exterior signs of power are more difficult to show off for the persons with the power.

We can see these characteristics in Germany, United States of America, United Kingdom, Scandinavian countries like Suede, Denmark...

Uncertainty avoidance

It represents the differences in the notions of the risk, the way risk is managed and seen within a country, culture, company or a team; it can be associated with many different structures. It is an irrational notion, it is not a conscious state of mind to accept uncertainty or to be willing to control what is uncertain. It is linked with the stress and anxiety level of a population. We can compare it to the taste of adventure the population has or not, how ones can face the unknown. It is often easy to realize the level of uncertainty avoidance thanks to the written and non-written laws, contracts and rules for example. In the countries with low uncertainty avoidance, thus more tolerant, the laws and contracts will be more flexibles and less defined ahead.

It is also possible to understand the level with the ways the country makes his agriculture in correlation with the control of the nature.

The last point to control is the death part of the Human nature with different religion or sects for example how the after is seen, with anticipation or stress depending on the culture. Religion has a strong impact in this dimension on people's behaviors and reactions.

In countries with high uncertainty and need for control, a wish for standardization and well-done procedures can be observed to avoid uncertainty, the culture will be in search for complete and permanent control in all uncertain situations. More stress in these countries for the unknown and foreign countries. What is different can even be seen as dangerous for some people used to have clear rules and habits.

Emotions will be more demonstrated as aggressiveness among other feelings. Institutions and relationships will be more structured to control and anticipate everything. Every common rule as how to behave, what is planned to eat and rules and well-defined. At work the tasks and responsibilities are separated for security.

For example, we can find almost the same countries than for the last point "hierarchical distance" as Japan, South America, France, Spain, Italy...

On the other side the lower need for control of uncertainty means higher acceptance of uncertainty, so the countries concerned will be more inclined to take risks and try new initiatives with less norms and procedures in the general structure. As mentioned before the rules, laws, contracts will be more flexible.

The behaviors will be more nonchalant, pragmatic and peaceful attitudes in these countries and willing to discover the unknown.

For the work part, in comparison with the countries with high uncertainty avoidance, the tasks are not so well defined or centralized. Also, enterprises will take a lot more risks and innovations will increase.

It regroups countries like South-east Asia, Scandinavian countries, India or even Anglo-Saxons countries as Canada, USA, UK.

Individualism versus collectivism:

It represents the way individuals perceive themselves compared to collectivity, to a group. Linked with the report of the individual and the group at a societal level, the measure technique has specificities in each both side.

To begin with the individualism which is the smaller part, more found in developed country where the economic potential is higher and where nobody needs to depend on a group to survive in a material way, not speaking of the psychological way. In this case nobody feels responsible or in charge of a mission for the bigger group but feels responsible for himself. Therefore, personal ambition and autonomy are the main values in this case.

First at all, the individualistic groups will take individual's development as more important than the group. Personal performance and interests are more important than the enterprise.

In this category, the conflicts are more accepted as the relationships will be more direct and transparent. A bigger separation can be observed between personal and professional lives.

It regroups criterion as in personal life: the time each spend alone or in professional side: the goals in work as what each person is searching to obtain or the freedom and organization of the work among other examples.

Some countries perceived as individualistic are most of European countries as France, Germany, Italy, but also United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada...

On the other side the collectivism is the most spread form, a large part of the world with less economic potential is in this category, where the group's interests come before the individual interests. Each person depends a lot more on the group, in a material but also psychological point of view, everyone feels a great responsibility towards the collectivity, the nation, their family etc.

In the business part, no separation between work and personal life, a higher team spirit, solidarity and loyalty can be observed. The relationships, on the other hand, will be more indirect and less conflicts appear, harmony and cohesion are privileged as it is very important to not lose face. One of the main goals of the group is stability, everyone agreement, approval, unison.

To measure the level of collectivism, some other points are taken into account as in the professional part, how is the formation, the transfer of knowledge, the working conditions and the personal talents recognition for example.

From the study of Geert Hofstede, we can see South American and Asian countries will be more collectivists as Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia, China, Thailand... We can see also some of the West African and few Arabic countries with these characteristics.

The impact of being a collectivist or individualistic country will be bigger than only at the workplace and will have effects on many parts as the way to deal with hierarchy, conflicts, behaviors within the family... It is negative to think everyone is only one or the other, many countries are in the middle level on some dimensions and share features from both sides. Also, the example of North European countries which are pretty developed but share some characteristics from the collectivist part, merge a bit the tendencies and make us think about if this generalization works for every country or if we just can use these technics carefully without being absolutely sure it is fully veridic.

We can observe with the example of Japan that some countries are in the middle and share characteristics of the two sides, collectivism and individualism, which is pretty interesting to realize. We know that some cultures will be in the middle for one dimension and completely on a side for another it depends of many characteristics.

Femininity versus masculinity:

In the Feminine countries, the hierarchy in the workplace will be less pronounced than with the masculine part, the relationships with colleagues takes a bigger place as well as equality and solidarity. We can see also a preference for a harmonious atmosphere with higher collaboration and higher job security. A search for consensus and quality is always more appreciated and sought in these feminine cultures.

On the personal side, individuals are soft and modest, and each person will look for more pleasant home place. The role of the two parents and even of any individual will be equal, none of the man or woman will be dominant.

The countries found as Feminine are France, Portugal, Peru, Chile, Scandinavian countries, Spain...

In the masculine countries, the work will be more hierarchized and the goals will be harder to achieve and more focused on to earn more money or material success to show off a bit more than in feminine countries. The competition will be more present as there are constant challenges to stimulate the team. They will be more eager to be recognized for their work, to reach excellence and to climb the social ladder. In many cases the professional success will be more important than personal one.

For the personal life, within a family, the father will often be dominant and the mom more submissive; the boys usually need to show off while the girls need to please unfortunately. This tendency is changing little by little over the years.

Countries like China, Japan, United States of America, United Kingdom, Mexico, Italy, Germany, among other examples, will be in this part.

Short-term versus long-term orientation:

This notion shows how the countries deal with time passing, the perception of the past, the present and the future.

Short term oriented countries will care more about the rapidity of the results, have a negative image of oldness and growing old, huge respect of traditions and rejection for new things in place in society. Past and present are the most interesting times for them as things stay the same, the truth is absolute in this side.

The notion of time is like a limited resource as the expression says: “time is money” in this case. A more organized schedule set up to avoid wasting time and to add as many tasks as possible in a specific time period.

In these cultures, the main qualities wanted are for example punctuality and efficiency. The social hierarchy is an important point and a priority as fulfilling social obligations.

It regroups many South American countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina...), Australia, Algeria, Canada...

Long-term oriented countries will be more pragmatic, will save more money thinking about the future and not wasting everything at the moment as in the short-term oriented cultures. As the future is uncertain it is well-seen in these cultures to keep many things for later, to save resources and thrift.

The best qualities to acquire in this case is perseverance, persistence, stubbornness and patience. It is also good in this specific case to be adaptable to changing circumstances.

A good perception of oldness, importance of planning the future and to wait for future rewards. Time seems like an unlimited resource and even when at one moment someone is short on time he knows that a bit later he will have time again, no stress needed.

It makes harder to plan everything at the minute but avoid the stress and hurry that can happen in the first case.

Countries like Germany, France, Russia, Belgium, China, Japan will be in this part.

Edward Twitchell Hall's work is in relation with Geert Hofstede's one and can even be considered as contribution and continuation.

To go a bit further than Geert Hofstede analyze, we will study other dimensions proper to some cultures which I feel are as important as the first ones.

Implicit versus explicit

In implicit cultures, people do not speak so freely, it is more a communication through some indirect allusions which can lead to misunderstandings, incomprehension or even confusion sometimes.

Persons from the same cultures would understand better each other due to the fact that they are used to the specific characteristics and can guess the real meaning of the sentence. It is easier for them thanks to the habit of using more the context, the body language or the way to say it that determines the signification. When two persons from distinctive cultures meet, it can generate frustration but also conflicts. Some words or attitudes can be taken wrongly and the interlocutor can be offended or surprised. In some companies, it can have negative effects within multicultural teams and management at short and long term.

Some parts of the world as Latin America, Spain, Asia, Italy and Arabic countries can be found in this category among other examples.

In explicit cultures, it is the contrary: things are better said at loud even when it is obvious ones. To repeat, to explain again, to say transparent sentences meaning what you really think, to be sure what you say is clear, is normal in this context.

This is why it can be tricky to work with persons from both sides but positive on the long term to have diversity and different opinions.

To understand and accept other behaviors is the beginning of being able to work with people from different backgrounds and take advantages of the positive mix.

Countries like Germany, United States of America, France or Scandinavian countries for example are in this category, with low importance of the context.

Universal rules versus specific rules

This dimension describes among other points the level of corruption of a country. It can cover the differences of the laws, rules, contracts, procedures and so on.

In the first case, we can find a complete respect of the rules with strict laws, already established procedures which cannot be negotiated. Everything is already planned before as the contracts for work, renting a flat or any other situation which require a regulation when more than one person is included in the deal.

It is a fair manner of managing situations, every case is treated the same way, but when someone has a specific problem it is difficult to get a special treatment, it is an administrative point of view with the same procedures for everyone.

The mentality stays the same to avoid abuses and inequalities for example it can reassure many people but harder to get through problems when it happens, no negotiation possible at any given time. Often no preferences possible, even if you know someone high ranked it will not help much to get you something, you will have to pass through the same system than anyone else.

Some countries as Germany, Canada, United Kingdom for example belong to this category, the rules are universal and no possibility to change or adapt them to the context with negotiation or discussions.

In the second case, negotiation and discussion are possible and used a lot more. There are rules but not universal or fixed, it is changing with each situation but serve as a base for the discussion.

For example, if you want a specific job and you have contacts and connections it can help you get the position easier than other persons who do not have these relationships.

Another example is if you get in trouble with the police or public entities, you could get rid of the problem if you know someone working there or explaining what was the problem, if the reason is good enough it will be okay for you.

So, we can speak about corruption here, it is a lot more developed in these cultures than in the first case. The rules can adapt to the context and situation thanks to the trust given to each individual but also the logic, wisdom and ethics; people will judge each situation differently according to the interlocutor and the situation.

The relationships and connections made will be a bridge to many possibilities, it is important to conserve and develop them in these cultures because everyone do the same and it will penalize you to do not use these technics. You can still do everything without connections or negotiations obviously but it is more usual and anchored in the culture to use it.

In this category, we can find Asian countries, Africa, Latina America for example are completely with this mentality, with good relationships and connections many options are offered and agreements can be reached discussing. France is actually in between but a bit more on this side with particularism and adaptation to many cases.

Shame versus culpability

Shaping the mentalities and behaviors, these notions have a great impact on people's attitudes and believes on the daily basis.

Linked with the morale rules in place in each country and what is defined as wrong, good, acceptable or not; the moral regulations of these rules are complex phenomenon and two main feelings will rise: shame or culpability.

In the countries with a shame reaction to a situation, it is because of the believes people get since the childhood, it is hard to change this part of the education as it is part of each person.

To describe this feeling, it is the impression of being unworthy in regards of the status or even the social context for example. It can include the action of a single person but will often have effects on the community, family, friends etc.

If the entourage is following the implicit rules, the person who did the action provoking shame can be ostracized or stigmatized by the others if the facts are recognized and seen as unacceptable. His place in the society will be questioned and his image within the group can be deteriorated. It is then complicated to restore the honor and pride from scratch, it is a real change and everyone think twice before doing anything deviant.

Asia, India or Arabic countries are in this category, each action can have negative repercussions on the relationships and place in the community.

On the other side, the cultures with feelings of culpability are more Christian normally.

To describe the feeling, it is a sensation of having done something bad, so being mad at yourself. It comes with the fear of being punished or the sensation that you should have been and if you are not, feeling even more guilty.

It is a personal feeling, not so linked (as shame) with the others, it can help some persons to confess, punish yourself or to do something nice after among other examples to try to restore the equilibrium with yourself. Unfortunately, it is not always working and I feel a part of culpability always stays whatever action you undertake.

In this case it also has the consequence of making people think twice before acting wrongly if they know what guilt feels like.

Contrary to the first part, it is a personal act, so it does not change a thing if the others discover what you did or not, it still generates culpability.

Countries as modern and occidental ones (France, United States of America, Germany, Canada...) with a higher rate of Christianity will experience this feeling of guilt instead of shame.

Analysis of distances

To diversify the analysis, we will check another part of the cultures, which is proper to each one, the distances needed and wanted. I understand this dimension as pretty important in the definition of cultures, it impacts a lot the daily life but also the evolution of the population. In some countries, like eastern ones, the contact is harder to make, it is not in the habits to touch someone, even by inadvertence.

Using my own experience, I could feel when I was living in Poland that in the public transportations the people would prefer to wait for another tramway than to enter if there it is crowded and if there is a chance to get too near to another person.

The space between the sits were bigger and I could feel uncomfortable when having a contact with someone, even if just two arms were in contact. It can feel like an aggression when someone is not used to it, he/ she can feel outside of its comfort zone so it is important to respect habits in this case.

On the contrary India and Latin America need less distance; hugging or touching is completely normal even if you do not know the person. When I was living in Ecuador it was always crowded in public transportations and I was always in contact with few persons without feeling that the situation is awkward, not at all.

I think it is a cultural point, from one culture to another the distance needed is completely different and the interesting thing is that it is an implicit notion. Nobody will never say to someone you should stand two meters away from the others or you should shake hands before hugging among other examples.

France for example is somehow in the middle and share points from both sides, the distances are different from the South to the North and some behaviors are acceptable while others absolutely not.

Many distances exist and there is a simple way to classify them, compared to the interaction's types:

- The first one, the intimacy sphere where we have close contact, we can touch each other, kiss, whisperer etc. It is the closest interaction's form that exists between two individuals.
- The second one is the personal sphere, where are our close friends and our family so after the intimacy sphere it is the second closest we can find.
- The third one, the social sphere is the daily one where we interact with people we barely know but still have a little contact.
- Finally, the last one is the public sphere where are the persons we do not know and do not interact with them.

To understand better these dimensions, we will take an example, if the public sphere is low that means there is close contact in the daily life, some cultures do not need a protective space and, as Latin America or India, will always be touching each other by habit, without even noticing it. On the contrary, a country with a high public sphere as the Eastern countries will always need some space and as I mentioned in the example of Poland and the public transports.

These spheres work for every situation and are really important to understand to be able to have a relation with someone from another culture, which can be personal or professional. Each sphere has also different distances, some will be one meters while other one can be the double for example, it is a completely relative notion.

An interesting example is the online games, the distances are kept in accordance with the cultures, one will place his character close to the others while others will keep his distances, this notion of spheres are so anchored in the societies that it stays wherever you are, even in the virtual world.

To conclude with these analyses of various dimensions around how different cultures act is primordial to understand before working with intercultural teams. To know how can one will react, how not to be rude, to understand the differences to be able to explain how is your own way and why do you act like that. More than understanding another culture, it is important to make understand to another, how your culture works to go in both ways and try to make a compromise that will make everyone comfortable and willing to work together in healthy conditions.

It is possible to know these implicit rules without studying them and just by experience but I think it is a base for understanding and avoiding mistakes at first. It is always useful to have a material to get to know specific cultures and understand their reactions, perceptions, functioning...

These affirmations, even if true, do not mean it works for 100% of the individuals, there always are exceptions or mistakes. It is important to do not follow the guidelines from the beginning to the end, any person should always mix the theories with their own feelings and perceptions. It is a good behavior to stay humble with the knowledge one has and to not act like he knows everything about a culture because he read a book on the subject, as it is relative theories each person need to be careful and always verify every information, it can change fast that is why intercultural management is so interesting, it is a lifelong job to understand a small part.

These are the reasons why the manager should always rethink things and do self-examination, have a general vision of the team, be creative to imagine new solutions, compromises etc. It mixes different fields and need a constant rethink of everything, the manager should be able to deal with many cultural problems, more the ones existing in a team with the same nationalities.

Intercultural competence

To counter the intercultural bias and be able to communicate successfully despite the cultural differences with people from different places, the Intercultural Competence is to develop through mainly knowledge and experience. For example, learning about other cultures' characteristics and theoretical theories will help understanding the distinctive points. In my point of view, experience will teach even more about a culture, the contact with a specific population will have a bigger impact on our beliefs. An example I experienced in Poland can illustrate pretty well this part, the coldness and distance of people that I thought was rude at first was finally a sign of respect, their space of security is just higher than ours. The contact is harder to get at first but is stronger and will last longer than some other cultures where the contact will be done since the first meeting but will be more superficial. When I understood that point, it changed completely my experience and made me find out more about their specificities and more important the reason of some behaviors I would not be able to understand before.

This Intercultural competence is really complex because it includes the perception and knowledge we have on ourselves but also on others. I would relate this competence with our self-confidence, our level of empathy and sensitivity on the experience's side, meaning the ability to understand how others feel at any moment, to put yourself in someone shoes. While travelling I felt that most of what I learned about different cultures is from my logic, my senses and then confirmed by theories. Then when my self-confidence about how right my suppositions were, I begun to know for sure what was the reason for some supposedly strange attitudes. It still happen that I do not have a clue about why someone is acting a specific way, thinking is it a culture's characteristic or the person's personality?

I imagine that immigrates, expatriates or even students like me, with international studies that go live abroad, can understand and apprehend better and faster the cultural differences thanks to international experiences. Their intercultural competence is then higher and helps avoiding prejudices and the negative effects associated, by understanding how a person from a different culture thinks, feels and acts. Long-time travelers can also have a better understanding living short times in different places. This theory is to take carefully because not all travelers or expatriates will integrate themselves fully in the new cultures and some will never adapt, living with their own norms the whole stay. Other persons who never travelled or studied the subject can have a facility to understand others thanks again to sensitivity or empathy for example, so it is not a fact made in stone, many details come in the way of intercultural understanding.

Problems

In intercultural situations, some problems can arise and some risks can show up but it is a healthy thing to understand before beginning to work in an international team. It would be helpful from the both sides, for the manager and the employees.

One of the biggest risk is of course the stereotypes that can damage the atmosphere and prevent unhealthy relationships. The problem is that stereotype would began since the first meeting, even before beginning to know each other and does not let the chance to the coworkers to get to understand each other.

More than thinking some negative things about people it can have some consequences on the behavior that can become defensive or aggressive in some extreme cases.

The other problem coming from this risk is that if the person having stereotypes about someone else does not tell it explicitly, the other can never know what is wrong. Even if he feels it, he can never explain himself or make understand the other about his own culture for example. It can easily degenerate and make a difficult situation inside the intercultural team, that is when the manager, which can have experience or external point of view can help resolving the problems. The person stereotyping can sometimes take a step back but not so often and in many case he would not do a self-examination.

The hardest part is that each culture has a different image of another and it is impossible to know what is coming from the culture and what is true when you are the one stereotyping. It is impossible to know how each culture see you when you are stereotyped it is hard to guess it outside of the more well-known examples. This is why it can be so positive to have a multicultural team, to have many different views on the cultures, to do not do big mistakes that can be taken as wrong by other cultures or not understood at all.

Solutions

An option is to adopt a new organizational configuration as Mintzberg developed the concept, the Adhocracy, even in a context of unstable or complex environment.

Contrary to bureaucracy, this form allows to mobilize multidisciplinary and transversal skills to carry specific missions. Some companies will use it to help solving a problem, improving management efficiency or creativity among other examples. The main characteristics of this informal way of working is autonomy and integration compared to the normally used hierarchical barriers from the superiors and processes.

To coordinate such a special working way, a mutual adjustment is needed to keep the mode of management flexible. Many writers even compared this configuration as the natural functioning of nature.

I think this manner allows many positive things as said before creativity, integration and flexibility but also adaptation. All these characteristics help to be able to answer rapidly to anything that happens with great spontaneity. No need to check every detail with various superiors to give an answer to a client for example and give the opportunity to each employee to have their own opinion, share it and take action.

Another point is the similarity of some cultures on some characteristics, some persons will have an easier time working with a culture with high resemblance inside Europe for example and on the contrary others will like to use the differences in the work to higher creativity and diversity among the intercultural team.

Most of the international experiences bring tolerance (if the person is at least slightly open) and tolerance brings knowledge. It can be a virtuous circle when you begin to figure out other cultures, it is not seen as a necessary thing to understand a culture and adapt to work with but for me it is. No cooperation will last long if both sides do not try to recognize and accept the differences.

To respect cultural differences and try to associate them efficiently to have a common culture will increase for sure the cooperation within an international team. Another primordial point for me is the structural composition of the company which will help the management and cooperation in general and can only be positive for the company. Having diverse cultures in a company need to be thought before, controlled during and adapted if needed, it is not just a small change to do, the structure of the company has to be ready to offer an optimum situation

for differences and diversity to become an advantage and not a burden, as some persons can think at first. It obviously takes some time, efforts and thinking to make it work, it is never an easy task at the beginning.

Boltanski and Thévenot (theory of conventions, 1987), or Callon and Latour (theory of the traduction, 1978) are theories explaining the common agreement or compromise in an intercultural team for cooperation and then how it is transmitted by spokespersons or even translators when needed. The second notion, finding a compromise is, in this theory, referring to a common enterprise's culture (Schein, 1992). In this case it helps gathering the various cultures and appears as a collective identity shared among the members.

Unfortunately, as we can find in many writings, the diversity of cultures can be taken the wrong way and can be perceived as negative in some companies. Sometimes managers see this challenge as harmful, damaging the business and the performance. They think only bad consequences can arise from having cultural differences.

My point of view is that, as mentioned before, a good management style should be in place to handle the difficult intercultural factor to be able to enjoy the advantages it can bring. It would not be efficient to just mix an international team and wait to see the result, this process should be thought before and be organized to work well to have the employees comfortable and boost the overall creativity.

It is harder to handle an intercultural team but the benefits can be bigger than in a team coming from the same country. Of course, more difficulties can appear, the cooperation and cohesion can be harder to get and it can bring more conflicts, because of the sometimes-contradictory points of view, but I think it is worth it. A shared company's culture can help having common objectives, increase productivity and performance which can be harder to get within intercultural teams as well as managing conflicts as other examples.

To conclude an intercultural team has so many advantages but only if it is well handled, it is not natural for persons from different backgrounds to evolve on the same path. If the challenge is well explained, the objectives are clear and the management style is adapted, a mutual cohesion will happen. Even if there is no universal way and many associations of cultures can work together, tolerance and acceptance of the other should be a central point of the system.

Analysis

Quantitative study

Methodology

A questionnaire has been made in order to get as many answers as possible and therefore find results for this subject. It has been made in two languages to make easier the understanding for French and foreigners and to let them express what they really mean in a language they are comfortable with. I even offered to Spanish speakers to answer in Spanish and I translated after in English.

This questionnaire has the goal to find answers to many questions, about the information I have find before, to confirm or rethink some parts.

I proceed by sending the questionnaire to hundreds of persons thanks to social medias, especially already existing groups on Facebook. I also sent it individually to the persons I knew had experiences that could help me a lot in this study, so I used personal networking.

The questionnaire is made in a specific order, the first three questions to determine the participant profile, then about intercultural management and communication and finally about interactions with people from Indochina.

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Nationality
4. Have you ever worked with different cultures? Have you ever been part or managed an intercultural team?
5. If yes, can you develop? (Nationalities, atmosphere, ways of working...)

6. If yes, have you already had some communicational problems within this team? Please develop
7. Do you think that cultural heterogeneity is an advantage or inconvenient in a company? For what reasons?
8. Which solutions would you recommend for having an efficient cooperation in a company working with diverse nationalities?
9. Have you ever worked in old Indochina or work with persons coming from there?
10. If yes if you had some problems with the interactions please develop and how did you manage this experience? Please develop

Data/ Results

I was hoping to get at least 50 answers but I scored even more, at the end I had 73 answers. The only issue is that a majority comes from France, even if it is perfect to understand better a part of the subject as it is partly on France it is interesting to have many answer from there, I still miss answers from people from Indochina. Unfortunately, none of the persons I have contacted answered, even if it would have been great to get responses to get to know them more. During my travels in Indochina, I collected e-mail addresses, telling the person what the questionnaire will be about but when it came to actually send the mail I did not get responses. I could feel the persons were shy and some said to me they had a lot of work or found excuses I can understand but it seemed that none were really motivated to be part of the study. On the 73 answers, more than the half are female and for the nationality more than the two third are French. For the Age, only 8 persons belong to the second category (31-40 years old) and the rest have between 18-30 years old. It can be explained easily because the biggest part of the respondents are colleagues and friends that have more or less the same age than me, 24 years old.

1. Have you ever worked with different cultures? Have you ever been part or managed an intercultural team?

For this question, almost everyone said yes (68 out of 73) for having already worked with different cultures, thanks to our studies and works abroad, the network I have made often work with internationals, so perfect for this study.

Graphic 1 :



2. If yes, can you develop? (Nationalities, atmosphere, ways of working...)

On the many persons who developed this question, I will choose some of their answers and associate them in order to understand what the majority of the people think, what is repeated by many and so on, to have a global vision of the results.

Many of the persons answered they had already worked with cultures near from us (Italians, Germans, English, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish) but also Indians, Turkish, Mexican, Argentinians, Colombian, and finally Asians (Filipinos, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian), so with all these answers we have a good panel of different cultures. Some said that they had the opportunity to work with foreigners thanks to several internships, universities abroad (during group works for example) or actual work.

Some persons already explained in this question how different it is from one culture to another. One French person said: « I have worked with English people, Italian people and Asian people; the atmosphere was good; they worked differently (Italian are not focus all day and have a lot of breaks; English are really efficient and Asian are slow) ». It shows, with simple examples, how different cultures are and have diverse visions of work.

Other persons stated the contrary, one who worked with many nationalities (English/ German/ Indians/ French/ Turkish/ Chinese) said that outside of Chinese and Indians the rest was pretty much the same. The way to understand cultures is subjective and some persons have easiness to work with others and adapt faster.

These two opinions are spread but the first one about differences for working from one culture to another is predominant in this survey.

I will finish this question by a wise sentence one of the participant said at the end: “It was usually a good atmosphere, but it is very important first to understand how everyone works, what are the differences with your own culture and things that should be avoided when working together. It was always good to do some team building to get to know everyone.”

3. If yes, have you already had some communicational problems within this team? Please develop

On the 68 persons who worked with other nationalities, only 17 never had communicational problems with an intercultural team. One of them even answered: « No, it was usually ok, because everyone would make the effort to be open minded toward each culture. ». It is important to add the last part of the sentence, it changes everything as it is thanks to the individuals that the atmosphere was good and the communication was smooth, sometimes each person will be the reason of the healthy environment but sometimes the management helps setting some informal rules that encourages cooperation.

So, the other 51 persons already had minors but also huge problems. According to the words of one participant: “Yes, because of cultural differences, in the way of organizing things for example, Germans are planning everything in advance, whereas Portuguese do everything last minute”. Again, referring to the differences between one culture and another.

What most people spoke about are two main points: the language barrier repeated by 22 persons and the communication (which can be more than just the language) mentioned by 16 persons in total. One person explained well this problem saying: “As we don’t speak English with the same level, sometimes there are misunderstandings”. This means the problem can come from both sides, whether the French or the other has problems with the English language. Another person stated: “Difficulty to always speak English for the French workers”, showing that the issue can come from the sometimes difficulty or non-willingness to speak English from French persons.

Only one person spoke about the misunderstanding with Asian workers who can say “yes” but mean “no”, this person was pretty annoyed about this situation which complicated professional relationships and tasks accomplishment.

One person also declared something interesting: “We don’t have the same standards for working which can prove difficult to handle i.e one team member value the grade and the others don’t care. I guess that the problem is not due to the nationality but to the goals and expectations. As culture shapes those goals and expectations, the further to cultures the harder to work together”. These sentences show the differences between working with people from a near culture (as within Europe for example) with more similar characteristics than nationalities far away from what we are used to, this is important to notice.

Another comment I especially appreciated was: “Yes, it happened but it was solved thanks to constructive criticism”, which is a really good way of dealing with the problems. It is really interesting to see how wise is this generation thanks to all the travels, many young persons are ready to accept the challenges of interculturalism and face them with great creative solutions.

4. Do you think that cultural heterogeneity is an advantage or inconvenient in a company?
For what reasons?

None of the participants said a definitive no, but opinions are mixed. A little percentage said it was an advantage but also an inconvenient as this participant for example: “It can be both, it can allow more creativity, provide different answers to questions, but can also slow down processes on basic tasks and routine”. Depending on the situation and the tasks to achieve, it can be both like this person said, it is subjective and depends on many things, as are the people open minded? Other persons (7 out of 73) said it was an advantage but only if well managed, which is completely my point of view, it can be a burden if badly managed but it can be a real

plus when the management does well. One of the 7 answers had some illustrated examples: “I think, if well managed, it is definitely an advantage. Some nationalities will be more straightforward (for example Dutch) and others more in very detailed work (Vietnamese / Chinese), or very dynamic (Spanish). Altogether, great work can be done!”. It shows the diverse ways of working of various nationalities and how it can be used in a favorable manner. The more important is to take the best from each nationality and each individual personality to have great results.

On the 73 persons interviewed, 58 persons enounced a clear yes, some just put it was an advantage and some explained the many reasons as higher creativity, innovation...

To illustrate this way of thinking we will have a look at some answers: “everyone has specific experiences and knowledge that can be useful for the others; so that diverse members bring different ideas” or “Advantage because it brings different ways of thinking, working, communicating etc. The situation is seen different and it brings more solutions”.

One person had an interesting point of view, divergent compared to the others, this individual did not answer completely to the question and instead responded: “If you work at an international level, I think that it is mandatory to have some form of cultural heterogeneity in order to have different vision of the market. The further the culture from our own, the most important it becomes. I also think that some cultures are really close thus can be understood. Any European market is more or less the same while being completely different from an Asian one.” Not saying it was a positive or negative point but something mandatory when working internationally and even more with really different cultures. It is now true I guess, in this internationalized world it became obligatory to have various points of view to understand a new market, different needs, ways of working and so on.

In contradiction with the last point, another participant declared that: “Advantage but it does not have to be an objective. If there is it is better but if not it is fine.” A different opinion interesting also, I think it is better not to integrate someone from another country if it is just to have a quota or to have a foreigner in the team. The person should have the skills to work there and a mentality adapted to work in an intercultural team. As I declared before it is important to have an international team when working with other cultures but it also has to be with the right persons so it is a kind of compromise and a lot of research to find the good person or to train the employees to prepare them to work together.

5. Which solutions would you recommend for having an efficient cooperation in a company working with diverse nationalities?

Many participants answered well to this question and developed a lot, I feel the interviewed persons were feeling involved, wanted to give their opinion and help as much as possible, I am grateful that they were implicated and willing to find great recommendations.

Some of the answers were repeated, as team building to teach how to understand others, one person even recommended with a specific theme concerning cultural differences.

Another answer that appeared many times was smooth communication to ensure being able to talk about anything freely. One of them also offered to add feedbacks.

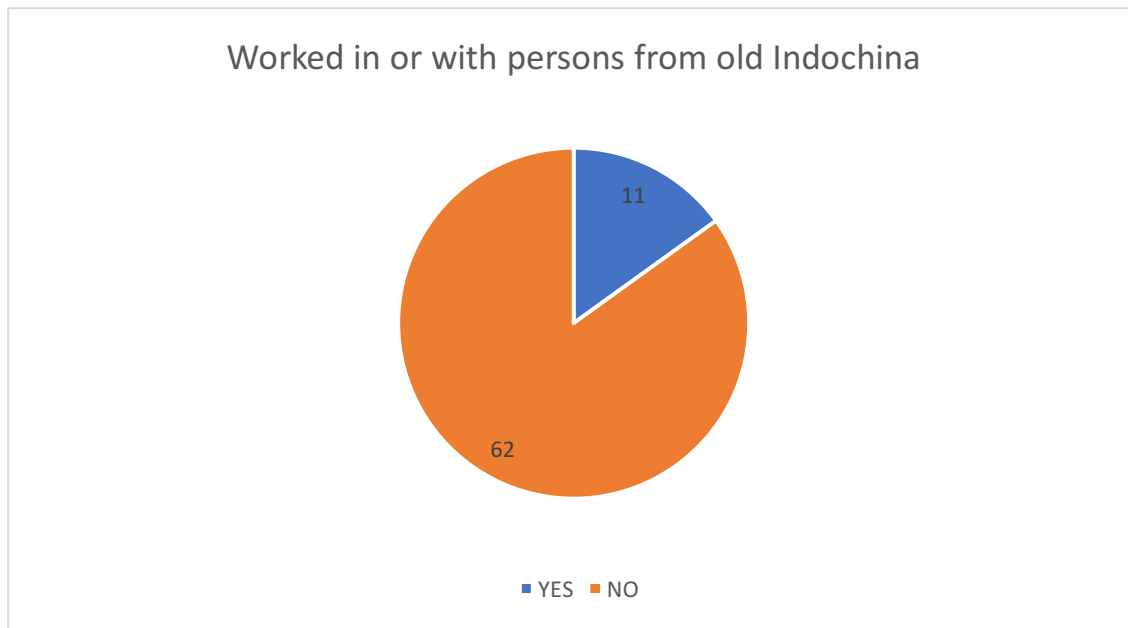
One person suggested to: “- Set common goals - Discuss about the various ways to achieve those goals - Take the best from everyone to implement a strategy.” This person has some good ideas that can help the company to have good communication and clear common goals while motivating the team and each individual using its own specific skills. Each step is important and has to be done to have an optimum cooperation within the team.

In another citation: “I would make sure everyone speaks well one language (English) to favorise a good understandability; and develop tools to facilitate the exchanges (group meeting..) and help members to get to know each other’s and the way everyone work so that it is easier”. Choosing persons that speaks the same language fluently or teaching them a common language can be an advantage to increase efficient team cooperation and obviously communication while avoiding misunderstanding.

I feel that knowing the other team members is primordial to understand and accept the behaviors, reactions and so on without being annoyed for nothing.

6. Have you ever worked in old Indochina or work with persons coming from there?

Out of the 73 participants, only 11 worked in old Indochina or with people coming from there. In the next question, we will develop their answers.



7. If yes if you had some problems with the interactions and how did you manage this experience? Please develop

On the many answers I received, 2 really called my attention. The first is: “Yes because they were really slow to accomplish a task or respond to a demand so you have to push them a lot to obtain what you want; but once you know how they work; you just plan in advance your work with them to be sure to be on time”. This person has a good mentality and searching for solutions, even when difficulties arise, there always is something to do or to get used to. In this case the person got the habit to work with them and adapt its own customs.

The second: “I did my first internship in Vietnam. It was very hard to settle because our ways of working are completely different. For example, Vietnamese don't know how to say "no", and say "yes" even if they don't know. Which leads to misunderstanding. I took some time with my manager to learn the codes of Vietnamese people, and would always try to take more time with my Vietnamese colleagues to make sure that everything was clear and understood from both sides. I would try to make them very comfortable during meetings, since they usually are very shy, and don't dare to ask questions. And would make extra time to review all aspects.”. This person also made a lot of efforts to try to get to know the other culture, ask advices to the ones who knows and take the time to understand. Again, there always are solutions when there are problems in a multicultural team if both sides are ready to find compromises and are willing to understand each other.

Analysis of differences between Occident and Asia

To understand the cultural differences without judgment I will state some points found in various studies, many points can differ because of the geological situation but also the religion, the history of the country etc. This is a non-exhaustive list as there is too many points to study, differences and variations but I think it is still important to describe some of them to understand a bit better the cultures.

- Problem management/ resolution:

In France, like in other European countries, the instinct is to face the problem right away, even if we have to get or make someone angry, sad and so on. The truth and the immediately are more important, we need to get rid of the problem as soon as possible to do not have to deal with it later anyway and let it get worse.

In Indochina and Asia in general they will get around the problem, they will find whatever solution to avoid the confrontation at any price. To get angry is a sign of weakness in some countries as Vietnam for example. Sometimes they will answer yes at any question just not to disappoint or be in problem.

- Ways to say hello

In France, we are used to say hello by doing one, two, three or even four kisses on the cheek depending on the region, the age and the gender. Two men will almost never kiss on the cheek but shake hand or hug if they are good friends but girls will often kiss to say hello, even more true about teenagers. If one does not respect the usual way to say hello it can be taken wrongly, as an offense or disrespect.

It is the same with the body contact, if one person is too tactile it can be seen as invasive and on the contrary if it is not enough it can be rude.

To be sure when you are an adult and the person in front of you is someone you have never seen, the normal way would be to shake hands but if you are a teenager or the person is presented by a friend it can be a kiss on the cheek it depends on the situation. The tricky part is to feel it, trust your instinct, sometimes you just have to try to understand how is the person, how he/she behaves and adapt to it.

I imagine it is hard for a foreigner to understand these implicit rules right away but for a French person it is normal and natural.

These explications are mainly use in the daily life, in the professional life it is easier, at least for men, because almost all the time except exceptions we have the habit to shake hands with anyone at the office, as well with the boss or with the employees.

On the contrary in Asia to be respectful one needs to keep distances, it will be seen as rude to be too tactile.

In the business world, in the past few years it has been more and more usual to shake hands mainly with French or in general with Europeans. Before it was not in the habits to touch each other, the normal way was to greet without any contact.

Obviously, it depends on the country and the emotional link you have with the person but in some Asian countries, it is normal to raise your two hands, stuck together, a bit down the face and incline your body to say hello. In others, people incline just the head and the chest or incline the head to the ground. It is hard as well to get the good way since the beginning and it is normal to make some mistakes at first, people will be always more comprehensive when someone is from another country.

To show the difference, in different part of the world as in Latina America it is normal to hug or shake hand for the first meeting but in United States it is usual to just shake hands and not having so much contact. Women who are close friends always have different ways to say hello and is less representative of the culture of a country.

I feel it is always harder and trickier for a woman and a man to greet than for two persons from the same gender.

- Free time

In France, the Sundays or free time will be spent mostly home to rest from the difficult week of work. Sometimes the French will not even go out of their house or just to eat, see friends or go to the church if the family is religious. In majority, the free time will be spent with family and friends to enjoy the spare time not talking about work, relax and emptying the mind.

On the contrary, in Asia the streets will be full on Sundays and after work to enjoy the free time outside of the house, also with friends and family, going for a karaoke or whatever activity also to empty the minds of the hard week of work.

To conclude, it is primordial to check before and analyze the customs during the stay in another country to be respectful and accepted in the community.

For the work, it is more than important to respect these implicit rules to close a contract or just to work with another nationality because for some it is impolite to do not respect and thus impossible to work with this person. To do not miss any opportunity and have advantages it is good to study before the culture and the habits to respect traditions and be well seen.

- Truth:

Europe: In France among other countries we are more transparent, we will tell directly what we think without changing the point or the meaning.

We will take less into account what could be the reaction of the person in front and share exactly what we have in mind even if it can hurt someone or damage our image, the truth is more important. In this case we do not take so much into consideration what the people might feel and react.

In Asia, the most important thing is to be careful about what to say or not, many countries have the habit to think something and say another to preserve someone or their own image. Also, to do not show much emotions, not getting angry or sad, for example, without thinking of the consequences the fake information can generate.

- Showing emotions:

Europe: It is usual to show emotions, to cry and to show sadness for the loss of a person at a funeral, to take the others in the arms to cheer them up. It is also normal to organize a large meal with the close family and friends after the funeral.

In the streets, it is often in the uses to show your emotions; anger, happiness, sadness and so on. It is not badly seen to expose all of these emotions and it is even common while driving a car to get annoyed, insult or scream at another driver because of its behavior. It can unfortunately even be seen as weak to do not answer back to someone angry at you.

Each country has his particularities even inside Europe many countries are different we can see in Eastern Europe more distance between people contrary to Southern countries like Spain where people are warmer and a lot more cordial.

In France, it is a compromise between Eastern and Southern countries some characteristics from both are shared, public affection is allowed but distance can be taken to avoid being too invasive, depending on the situation and the person in front of you.

Asia: In the Buddhist culture (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand...) it is forbidden to cry when someone die because soul of the dead person would stay on earth in this case.

In public places, it is a sign of weakness, rudeness to show emotions, it is a shame for them to explode and do not be able to hold feelings.

Particularly in Thailand it is impossible to see people even hold hands, affection signs will just be done at home far from the others' eyes.

During my travels in French Indochina I never saw persons showing affection to each other in the street contrary to Latina America for example where hugs and kisses are completely normal to do in public. It is even the contrary it can be seen as rude or cold to be distant and not so affective.

- The role and place of the boss:

Europe: In western countries, the system is more horizontal, the boss is not untouchable it is possible to speak to him/ her in a human way to ask anything always with respect obviously.

In France, there are a lot of strikes for any reason, French allow themselves for a lot of actions against anything. The dialogue is open and French will complain when they feel there is a reason for it, so it can be a good thing to be able to raise the voice when necessary but unfortunately it became a bit too often and the reasons too diversified without sometimes real needs. I think it lower credibility and impact of the actions when it is too recurrent.

Many syndicate protect French employees and make us feel we have more rights and possibility to be heard.

The example of SNCF is pretty representative in France, the company lost its credibility after striking too much so French people do not pity them anymore but are just annoyed, it is the opposite reaction that SNCF wanted.

French will often feel free to negotiate for salary, ask holidays, favors and so on to their boss or colleagues and it is not badly seen, of course depending on the way of asking, because a lot of persons do the same. It is also because of the mutual help, if one person asks something to a colleague, this person will probably ask something too one day, as an exchange of good practices.

In Indochina the system is vertical, it is hard to communicate with the boss and to ask any question, the respect needed and the distance are huge and it makes the communication harder. The orders need to be accomplished without asking questions or complaining. It is difficult to see a boss and employees sharing a desk for example it is way more professional than in Europe. No negotiation possible for a change of position or an augmentation of salary, the employees can feel the distance and would be shy and more reserved near their superior.

Networking:

- In France, our networks are pretty limited, from our family members or friends we can get some tips or connections but one by one. It will be asked as a favor and is not such a usual thing.
- In Asia: the networks are all connected between family and friends, it is a lot easier to construct a complete network fast thanks to each connection. People know more each other and agree to help for anything thanks to their knowledge in many areas and willingness to help.

Seniors:

- In France, older persons are seen as weaker and to protect but not to take care of them all the time and during the whole life. Old persons are not asking young people to take care of them, even if they raised them, it is not in the mentality. Parents and grandparents prefer their children and grandchildren to go abroad and enjoy better than stay with them. Older persons often go to retirement home and do not stay home all lifelong. They sometimes can be seen as senile and not so wise almost crazy sometimes, it is not a sign of wisdom to grow old in the French culture unfortunately. Young persons can show

their wisdom, professionalism, credibility and get a good job, the experience is important.

- In Asia, the oldest the person is, the more respect he will get. In the culture, they are wiser because of their experience.

We can see while travelling in Indochina that seniors have a preponderant place in society. They also are still pretty active and made me realized how much anyone can do until late in life, the resources of a person depend obviously of his health conditions and personality. The parents and grandparents stay with the family until the end, like in Latina America, and often share a home all together.

I have met some families in Indochina that were hopping to have boys to have someone to help them when they grow old because the girls would, in many cases, get married and leave home to join the husband and abandon the family.

They still work or help until the end normally even for physical help to build something for example.

In companies and in the daily life, advices from older people are taken into account as valuable information and gain of experience. It is hard to contradict them and have the last word.

It is harder for a young person to get a high ranked job and to be credible without experience, just the image of a young person is seen as less serious.

Study of the fears

France

There is a real difficulty to admit fears, French would definitely prefer to appear arrogant or ironic than fearful in front of others which can damage professional relationships. It is in the culture that to have fears is a sign of weakness, but in reality, it shows discomfort or better said it is an effort to hide it in many cases. This is linked with the analysis of Geert Hofstede and the high level (86 on 100) of uncertainty avoidance so a high need to control incertitude.

It influences also the trust given to others, the French is hard to get to trust someone in a professional but also personal way. I am sure it is a point that others can feel and in a multicultural team it would be seen as rude or disrespectful from other cultures really trustful.

Another big fear in French people linked with management style and work positions in general is the fear of a servile position stated by Philippe d'Iribarne, a French researcher working on diversity of cultures and the effects on the functioning of a company. He explains this particular fear with French history, the long Monarchy in place and the hierarchic system in the heart of the working process. This point led Frenches to be marked by the importance of the status, prestige in work and shaped the mindsets in general.

This fear of entering into a relationship of subordination perceived and lived as servility is accompanied by other points as the refusal to submit to stronger than oneself, the resistance to obedience, the challenge of order, the enjoyment of frustrating the superior of the exercise of his power. In my point of view these characteristics are unfortunately not serving the French community in term of peace and understanding at work. It generates conflicts I think linked with the high pride and ego among other reasons. It explains a bit all the strikes and contestations happening in France.

Thanks to these explanations we understand the complexity of the exercise of authority in both way from the employee and superior point of view.

For centuries, the aristocratic society used its power over a domesticity (at the time represented as inferiors) and then influence how people behaves and apprehends others.

The revolution helped reducing the inequalities but psychologies need more time to change profoundly.

That makes us understand, in terms of management, how hard it is in France to have a balanced customer relationship and related service given.

It can be really problematic and conflictual depending on how both sides act, if they take advantage of the situation or on the contrary help each other as I repeat I think the ego is a pretty big part of the problem. To develop this point, and understand the reasons, it is still hard (after this lesson of French History) to be in an interpersonal link because the status and position are different so unbalanced for them and in both part (more the “inferior” of course) will be uncomfortable unfortunately.

I feel it is irrelevant to think like that because everyone needs everyone and this notion of superior and inferior is useless and do not mean anything. If I take the example of two persons working in two different field, let’s say one in the car industry and another one in the cloth one, when the first one needs cloth it is the inferior and on the contrary when the second one needs the car the role are inversed! It is completely subjective even to say one is better than the other one, it is just an idea anchored in the mentalities that to have the more responsibilities or “better” job give you superiority. But if you are a person who does not like responsibility and would like to be employed and follow orders, good for him/ her, nobody should care or even feel superior. It means this person found what suits him/ her better, the other one has less chance to be happy if they just follow what is trendy or seen as better professionally.

It is sad to think like that but it is part of the culture, of the history and I personally think that the new generations begin to think differently, many young people have dreams and follow them, even if the older generations (parents, grandparents) judge it as unprofessional or “not the best you can do” but still many jobs are missing effective because there are maybe not the superior ones but still every profession is needed.

Let’s hope the reason and rationality of the intellect of each person will be high enough to balance again the old subordination system and give way to a balanced intelligence to intelligence ratio.

Another study on management carried out in 10 different European countries reveal an interesting fact: 57% of French employees agree that they obey to their superior only if their reason is convinced. Then comes the Germans with 51%, then Spain 41%, Italy 39%, United Kingdom 34% etc...

It is pretty interesting to see how important it is for the French to be sure of what they are doing, not doing things for nothing and questioning any order (which finally if they have a good ethics

is favorable, they are using their minds and intellect instead of following orders eyes closed). In some cases, it can lead to strikes and protestations but at least everybody has a point of view. This number comes again from the fact the French does not want to be in a servile position coming from the ancient times as explained before and they needs to have rational explanations to go with the orders given. The reason is to put in an equal basis the intellect of the both sides to be more balanced and to put in a second plan the hierarchical distance between them. To understand why to do that can also help giving a point of view and ameliorating the solution and then the final result.

To conclude this long point of French fears which I feel is important to understand their ways of working and managing, it is imperative to give motives and intentions as well as avoiding misunderstanding and mistakes to give the illusion of complete equality to have a balanced cooperation. To act superior will never work with French persons nor taking them with pity; equality is the most important point in the French mentality and working process to keep high motivation.

As there always are two faces, if the ethics is wrong or the reasons not really acceptable or logical it can affect a lot the motivation, also for raising motivation in French persons they often need to feel useful and not just responding to orders as a robot would do. But without explanations at all it will always be worst, it should always be explained the reasons why to do something and the objectives behind the action. More than the motivation, the dignity can be hurt has well and the team spirit will be undermined to feel as just average executants or used for personal purposes or for work everybody can do but that nobody wants to do.

All these explanations are in terms of intercultural team, to make understand other nationalities how to work with French persons, to adapt or just to understand some reactions that can be seen as strange or arrogant, to get the main points.

Indochina

- Irruption of emotions in Indochina

Coming from the need to have a perfect harmony within the country, it is in the implicit set of rules to keep feelings down, no irruption of emotions in public for fear of chaos or violence underlying. We can then deduce that social cohesion is more important than individual expression which is not really free and need to conform to specific norms.

This is essential to know when working with these cultures, to understand their behaviors during meetings for example and mostly to know how to behave. It would be bad seen to explode in front of someone or just being angry because of a mistake.

It can be a sign of weakness or craziness so in both case not appropriate for work, or we should explain the difference of culture or adapt to the culture and not show too much emotions.

- Loss of face

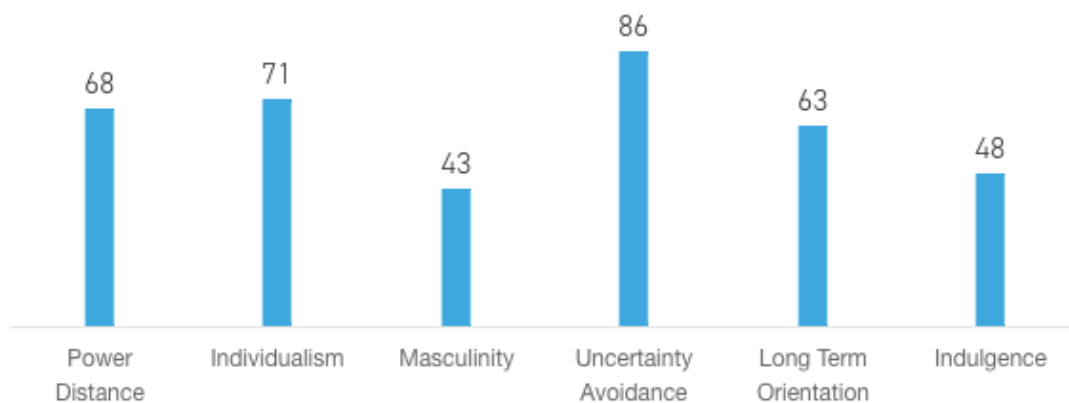
It is primordial to avoid misunderstanding, shame or embarrassment for example to not lose face in front of others. It is one of the many rules and codes always formal existing between people to organize society. One example of the organization of the society is the way to treat older people, with respect principally.

Hofstede country comparisons

Hofstede analyzes many countries from Indochina but not all of them, it is still interesting to see what are the characteristics of the ones studied: Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. I will obviously study France as well to see the differences and similarities.

France:

Graph 1: On a scale to 100



Hofstede country comparison: France

Power distance 68

Medium-high ratio meaning disparate power is pretty much accepted in France.

Power is more centralized than in other countries, as we can see Paris is the center of business and so on. In companies also, the power is completely centralized. There is a kind of dependency on superiors in most of the fields.

The relationship with the boss is somehow inaccessible, it is difficult to share an office with them or have a close relationship. They have many privileges and advantages within the company compared to the employees, meaning material but also not material privileges.

Individualism 71

France is more individualist than collectivism meaning each member care for themselves more than for the group where they belong, they are then more independent but less loyal than other countries as in Latin America for example. The group does not mean family which is a specific part where independence and loyalty have less links with individualism, it can be really different from one family to another depending on the education they had, the education they want to give, social cluster and so on.

This dimension also influences the mentality, linked with the high power distance, each one can speak loud and express his ideas freely. Some will do like they obey in front of their superior but do the contrary but the majority will say when something is wrong and even start or join a strike whenever there is a little reason for it. In conclusion, there is a huge reject for dominance and rebellion at any age.

Another reason for this is the need for private life being separated from the working one, French need both sides but not mixed. It is hard for a French to dedicate his life to work and by consequence not having a lot to do in their personal life, as we can see always after work many French will go join their friends in the many coffee terraces or spend time with their family to cut with the long day at work.

We can see French are individualistic when it comes to the time schedule, when time at work is over, they just go, many do not care if they did not finish.

French need to become entrepreneur, boss, superior and so on because education told us it is what to do to become “someone” as mentioned before.

A paradox is that when you are a client you expect to be treated as a king but when you become a superior you expect others to respect you and therefore clients are not treated as much as kings.

Masculinity 43

This dimension is not so clear in France, it is supposed to be a bit more feminine but it is still masculine in many working behaviors.

The feminine part is obviously the many holidays we have, the great welfare system but also the strict hours (35 hours a week) for example. These characteristics join the feminine way of working to reach a good quality of life.

The masculine part will be about competition within companies, the need to show the skills and competencies, to be better than others, which can be found in many enterprises.

Uncertainty Avoidance 86

This point is completely clear, French need to have an organized structure with all the information in hands to never be surprised and always be prepared to any situation. French are used to plan almost everything ahead to have a structured meeting or strategy among other examples. A normal French person will have difficulties to fit in an unstable environment compared to cultures with low uncertainty avoidance.

This is why many rules and laws are in place in France, a real need for regulation exists in this country, in companies as well as in private life, almost every French has a need to feel safe.

To contradict a bit this last point, joining the high power distance analysis, a big percentage of the population need these rules but will not respect it anyways. The high ranked persons will not always follow the rules because they feel protected by the power they have and on the contrary low ranked ones will do on purpose to reject the rules to show their dissatisfaction most of the time by strikes or whatever way possible.

Long-term orientation 63

With a medium to high score in this dimension, France is more long-term oriented than short term therefore pretty pragmatic, so saving money for the future, investing in long term projects and education, thrifting, persevering for reaching a result are part of their characteristics.

Indulgence 48

This number alone does not tell us so much about the culture but when we study the uncertainty avoidance dimension and the score linked we understand that French people are quite stressed out and more restraint than indulgent with themselves. They will not let their feelings of joy for example out too much and control more their impulses than indulgent countries, the low level of happiness actually confirm this analysis.

Malaysia:

Power distance 100

Malaysia scores the maximum in this dimension, the population accept without problem the fact that the power is distributed unequally. Everyone has its specific place and rank and nobody complain about it, employees have to do what the boss tell them to do without arguing.

This is where it is so different from France, no reasons given and no disagreement possible, the chief is untouchable in this autocratic system. The power is centralized and there is no justification for that, no explanation, no need for approval.

Individualism 26

Malaysia has a low score in this dimension meaning that people are collectivists, the group is more important than the individual.

Loyalty is one of the main value in this society and is the proof of a total commitment to your relatives (groups you are into: family, friends, coworkers...) who will take care of you in exchange and vice versa. It is based on dependency and mutual help. In this case scenario, it is a shame and disgrace to affront or offense someone. The relationship with the superiors is pretty strong and close.

Masculinity 50

As mentioned before this dimension studies how a society will act speaking of attitudes, if the persons will be more competitive, understanding and so on. With a score of 50, the middle of the range it is pretty difficult to analyze the result as it is fitting the two descriptions.

Uncertainty avoidance 36

This is a really low score showing how Malaysians are not afraid of the unknown and uncertain events. In business, it is positive as more innovations can be developed without the fear of failing and flexibility can be higher also thanks to high tolerance.

On the other side, the lack of rules because of this high tolerance can cause chaos in societies not ready for this freedom and need to be taken with care. If the society is open it can be even

better and increase motivation thanks to this freedom and trust among members relaxed and tolerant.

To precise, to have too high score in this dimension can be a problem also, too much stress and pressure is never good for the individuals and the company. This is one of the dimensions, anchored unconsciously, that can cause problems in a multicultural team with many nationalities if everyone does not take the time to understand the positive and negative points of each side.

Long-term orientation 41

Malaysia is more a short-term oriented culture with no specific need to save for the future, contrary to France which is a pragmatic culture, this one on the other hand is a normative society caring about traditions and not so inclined to see the norms changing.

In a company, the way to manage will be focus on the short-term meaning a need to achieve results fast without thinking too much ahead.

Indulgence 57

Somehow higher than France so on the other side of the wall, Malaysia is then considered as an indulgent country where emotions, feelings and impulses do not have to be restraint and where happiness will be higher. Dreams have more chance to be realized because your relatives will push you to opposite culture with low scores in this dimension.

For business, it means less time working and more time enjoying leisure times but actually more happiness, optimism so more motivation and creativity, positive points in both cases as usually. Linked with short term orientation, money will be spent more easily and no need for thrift because the present moment is more important than the preparation for the future for these cultures.

Thailand:

Power distance 64

Thailand has a medium to high power distance meaning the unequal repartition of power is generally expected and accepted among the community. Every person of the society has its own status with the associated privileges, responsibilities and rights.

With or without power everyone has advantages and disadvantages, for example bosses can enjoy freedom, loyalty, creativity, usually better paid and many other benefits whereas employees have less responsibilities and maybe less stress among other examples.

As people accept the hierarchical differences, employees own a total respect to their superiors, always have to behave well in front of them, develop a complete loyalty, a formal relationship is established, never an informal one.

Individualism 20

A high score for collectivism, the people in this country have strong connections with the persons around, the group they are in. Conferring total loyalty and trust to the relatives, inhabitants have to take care of each other, a strong dependency exists.

Relationships should be harmonious so the communication can be hard sometimes, to avoid harming the feelings of the other or to avoid having to confront, people would rather not say what they have in mind. This problem may come from the fact that shame is unacceptable and even more in front of others so no offence possible in this culture.

Masculinity 34

This score shows that Thailand is a highly feminine culture with a low competitiveness, high importance of caring one for another and values at the center of the mentalities.

It is the country with the lowest rate from the ones we are studying therefore the more feminine. At work, we can see that feminine culture will be sweeter and understanding compared to a masculine culture where people will encourage and reward the person the more performant for example.

Uncertainty avoidance 64

The only Asian country (within the ones we studied) with a medium to high score for uncertainty avoidance with France.

This number explain the many rules and laws in place to avoid facing uncertainty, unexpected situations as for France, countries with high uncertainty avoidance score would do whatever to keep control of the events.

In companies, these characteristics prevent from creating new original products, restrain creativity because of the fear of the new, so innovations are not encouraged.

Long-term orientation 32

Thailand, as well as Malaysia, are short-term oriented cultures willing to achieve any objective as quick as possible without thinking much about the future.

They have a normative mentality and care for the preservation of traditions.

Indulgence 45

This medium score is in the middle and unfortunately makes difficult the analysis for this country.

Singapore:

Power distance 74

With 74, a high score, Singapore follows many rules and regulations and the bosses give their orders because it is expected. As much as employees are expected to follow what the superior asks them to do. It is hard in these cultures to have informal contacts with the boss, it always will be formal relationships with a permanent control.

As Singapore regroup many different ethnic groups, with a lot of Chinese living there (more than two third of the population) and others nationalities, we can understand that their approach of religion is a gathering of many and particularly Confucianism. This religion emphasizes inequality in terms of relationships within the society.

Individualism 20

The number 20 shows how collectivist is Singapore, everyone is part of a specific group and care about it, has social obligations, loyalty to give and so on.

Confucianism influence can still be part of this dimension, emphasizing that the family is more important than the individual for reaching harmony.

Loosing face is hardly imaginable in this culture, because harmony is the society goal and only reachable if every individual as a group keep its dignity, prestige and so on. Therefore, communication cannot be direct as it is important to keep peace and avoid fights.

Masculinity 48

This score is neither high neither low, but a tiny bit more on the feminine side. As mentioned in all the other countries before, a feminine society will be softer and less competitive than a masculine culture and all people belonging to the group will seek for harmony.

Uncertainty avoidance 8

A really low number showing the calmness and no fear of the unknown in general. Unexpected events can arise without problem to deal with them.

Long-term orientation 72

With a high score in this dimension, Singapore has no need for quick results and patience is one of their characteristics. Saving money for the future is normal in this culture.

Indulgence 46

This score is in the middle of the range so it makes difficult to analyze this dimension for this specific country.

Vietnam

Power distance 70

A high score for Vietnam so acceptance of unequal hierarchy where each person belongs to a specific place.

Individualism 20

As the other countries of Indochina, Vietnam is also collectivist and see the group as more important than the individuals.

Masculinity 40

As all the other countries, Vietnam is more feminine than masculine and thus value peace, harmony, solidarity and so on.

Uncertainty avoidance 30

In Vietnam, there is no fear of the unknown, unexpected events can show adaptation will follow. Flexibility is a good quality to have there and not many rules are in place.

Long-term orientation 57

As said before, long term orientated cultures are ready to adapt traditions, save money for the future and wait for results.

Indulgence 35

Vietnam is seen as restraint contrary to Malaysia, in these cultures, desires need to be controlled and leisure time is not a priority.

To conclude and put all the information together, there is a high power distance in every country studied.

France is pretty individualistic compared to all the countries studied, forming part of Indochina.

All the countries studied are more feminine than masculine.

Thailand and France have high uncertainty avoidance compared to other countries with low uncertainty avoidance.

Malaysia and Thailand short term oriented, all the other countries are long-term oriented.

Malaysia is the only one indulgent, every other culture is restraint.

Problems found in French companies related to international members

French people travel a lot and many settle down to work abroad. This leads to a lot of French workers in foreign companies, it makes difficult to understand the other markets and hard to develop internationally in this case without knowledge or experience from other nationalities. The better redistribution of nationalities to have homogenous teams of foreigners would be helpful to be more open and understand better different markets and ways of thinking.

Unwillingness from French to speak English often, by laziness, proudness or even shame. French accent really marked and always in English classes many children are laughing about each other's accent and I feel it is part of the French problem with English, even though we speak and understand English there will always be a reluctance to do so. It can be seen as pretty rude from a non-French speaker to be in a group and be kind of excluded because of the language barrier.

It is hard for French people to transmit and explain to foreigners our way of working, our work practices, to welcome and integrate them. In my opinion, there is a real lack of know-how in this area for now.

More flexibility is needed to adapt work technics and methods, schedules, negotiations or anything that can change from a culture to another. French are not so flexibles when it comes to change work habits to please or just adapt to another culture when we travel for work meetings for example.

Linked with the high level of uncertainty avoidance level than I mentioned before thanks to Hofstede dimensions, the security we have, working with French people (our comfort zone),

understand the principles, ways of working and so on. It makes harder to discover a new culture and work with it, we are used to our habits and afraid to go to new territories and adapt to a new form of work.

As mentioned before in the fears of the French, a fear to be dominated, and a feeling of cultural overhang as the history shaped the mentalities, a habit to feel superior in front of other cultures. It will always be seen as rude, haughty or arrogant to internationals and can damage the work partnership.

Last but not least, as many other cultures, French imagine other nationalities with the stereotypes they know, which some of them can be partly true but most of them not at all. It is dangerous to think like that and a bit stupid, it is better to let the chance to get to know them before putting a label on someone and have an eternal fake image of an entire culture. It comes from our lack of knowledge of other international context and few information we have on them but anyways is negative for working abroad or with internationals.

Some companies do not want to open to the international because they do not want to get out of their comfort zone or because of an apprehension of the unknown, thinking if it is working for us today why changing? They do not realize the extent of what progress can be achieved with international cooperation.

Forms of implementation

Preparation is needed before, control during and communication should continue to stay on a good path, each point should be discussed by everyone to get to a consensus, which each person approves and understand. If the association does not work, few options can be chosen, first an internal analyze of the situation should be done and then an adaptation or a structural change can be the solution in many cases. If the problem does not come from inside the company it can also be an external problem, for example if the sector is stuck or the marketing is not fitting the target group, other solutions should be thought of to respond to the specific problem.

If nothing is working, experts on the subjects can help understanding where the problem is coming from or what to change to ameliorate cooperation, whether change the position of a person, change the team repartition, subdivide the teams, adding a wise and experienced person

in the team etc. Many options are possible and tools available depending on each situation nobody should give up at the first difficulty and make their mind about the subject.

The human resource board is a major protagonist in the schema and has a great responsibility in the functioning of the process. They can support by regulating the cultural differences and ameliorate the overall collaboration. All the efforts should not come only from employees but also from the management which will impact a lot the atmosphere for the employees. Passing the information without changing the meaning is really important to do not have misunderstanding and risking to have negative consequences. So again, communication in my point of view is one of the most essential element to keep clear to benefit from all the assets of multicultural teams and even teams from the same cultures actually. In any ways, it is not possible without it to have an optimum efficiency and cooperation.

To look into examples of other companies can give a guideline to understand what one did wrong or right, even if each situation is different, some points can be the same and it never hurts no one to study others who tried kind of the same intercultural mix. Hypothesizes can be done thanks to other examples and solutions can raise from these studies, sometimes we do not expect what is finally going wrong and can never be found alone. Many points of views are always a richer source to understand the problem.

Different approach for intercultural communication:

- Culturalist approach: It is the more pessimistic approach because each member is closed minded and stuck in his own culture without thinking that others may think differently. In this case it makes an obstacle and the communication impossible between persons from different cultures, but facilitate communication between persons that share the same culture.
- Interactionist approach: It is the more optimistic, by offering international, even universal solutions to facilitate the interaction between different cultures. It states that if we follow these strategies, the intercultural communication can be done between any persons, even from cultures that have nothing similar. The limit we can see in this approach is the fact that the cultural dimension has not been taken into account unfortunately and makes it less reliable in general.

I think to make it works, a fusion of the two approaches need to be done using many factors as clear communication, cooperation and empathy, to be open to other cultures and understand the differences as well as the similarities.

None of these problems is forever and the first step is to realize it. With the mundialization and the context more and more international, French companies will have to increase their relations with different cultures and understand little by little how to do to make it works, including compromises and efforts from both sides. Being conscious of some of these problems will help a lot improving the system in a good and healthy way to increase efficient international exchanges.

One of the many answers could be, to increase creativity and decrease internal conflicts, to have a team of leaders from different backgrounds, universities, areas and so on with different points of view. The analyze of the environment would be richer and the management of various cultures would be better with different opinions from high level managers.

Also, leaders from different backgrounds will have different networks and will be more able to ask for help or opinions from other persons. It would provide a greater overall view and give advices and solutions about how to manage their international team. Sometimes when you are in a hard situation and in the middle of the conflict it is somehow difficult to solve alone and with a subjective eye, it is always beneficial to ask outsiders to help and the other way around can work also. When this person will be in a tense situation the first one will maybe be able to help, this mutual experience shared is often great for the companies.

The point of having managers that are basically different is to change the entire company's culture to an international one, to include better every member of the team wherever they are from and learn to use their differences as beneficial.

To radically change the enterprise's culture is not an easy task, more than having diverse managers, it is to align the values, ethics, principles, rules with a collective agreement and efforts that come along. It has to come from every single person working in the company to generate shared points of reference to success in reducing cultural gaps among members and to respects all known specificities.

The second challenge after establishing the new company's culture is to keep it on the long-term scale, adapting some points if necessary but keeping the main lines. Maybe beginning to

have reunions on the subject on a monthly base as examples. It is hard to avoid letting the old habits of the leaders or the team coming back and little by little changing the culture to the ancient one. It can happen without doing it on purpose just because it is natural sometimes with time to relax and the reflexes come back as before, this is another risk to lose the healthy equilibrium put in place.

Another challenge can be if the leaders or one of them leave the company for any reason it can be hard to keep going with the common culture in place but possible if everybody tries hard, help and if the cohesion is maintained.

The main difficulty is still and will always be to have a leader ready to begin to change the company's culture, not every manager will want or even know this possibility. In Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand or France for example the power distance is high, the structure is though vertical and hard and sometimes impossible to convince the boss to change opinion in the majority of the cases.

How to work with Asian countries?

Some expressions and ways of expressing can be wrongly taken as “I will think about it” or the “I will do my best”.

In Occident, it will definitely mean that you are motivated and there is a way to achieve what you need. On the contrary, in most of Asian countries it indirectly means a no, that it is impossible to do and they have to give up but they will never tell it strait to you, as their way of communicating is completely indirect you will never get a proper “no”. This is an important point to understand before working with Asian people to do not get mad in the worst-case scenario, understand and accept their way of being without judging.

For a country like France which is really direct in his communication it can be difficult to understand and the other way around works also, try to choose your words with care to not chock the interlocutor. This way of sharing the information can be linked with the main religions as Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism...

As they do not have a god constantly judging each action as in Christianity they privilege common peace and harmony and therefore think it is better not to offense anyone by saying no.

It can be seen as absurd in Europe as we tell the truth to avoid problems afterwards, not to report the issue.

I imagine that the knowledge about the culture and experience of working with such different cultures helps understanding and adapting, you will need also your instinct to judge what they really mean. As we know they will never lose face and show emotions as it is a mark of weakness, nobody can force them to express anything special. Everyone will have to test some options in many opportunities to see if it means a real yes or a hidden no.

We are used in France to show our emotions, and even more when we feel comfortable where we are, if the company's policies are great we will get more implied and be less shy, giving more advices, points of views but we need to understand everybody is not the same.

We need to accept that Asian people have grown up in a different system where showing your emotions is wrong and we need to stay calm and patient to get to know them and to work with them to explain how we work and how we can both adapt for a better result and understanding.

Another advice is to communicate through a third and objective person which has nothing to lose or earn in the situation to make the Asian coworker comfortable and ready to give more precise information and not biased, closer to the truth.

Another method is to have an informal diner or reunion, to speak about something else, small talk and so on. I feel it is a good point to speak about personal things with most of persons from Asia before getting to the professional subject it will help building trust among the members.

Trust is one of the most important point to get, without it, it is almost impossible to close a contract and even more to have a healthy and sustainable work relationship. It is really hard to get and even harder to keep so anyone should put a lot of efforts in it.

For example, in a negotiation it is always positive to try to satisfy everyone and to have benefits in both sides for the trust but also for the long-term partnership.

When the trust is acquired, it is hard but essential to sustain it by showing as much as possible your loyalty, to be sure to get things done for the general welfare and motivation.

Even if the communication is not so smooth, if the trust is insured it will help avoiding misunderstanding or clash. People will ask easier what they did not understand when they trust fully. To make every person of the multicultural team comfortable and felling part of the

project, managers should listen, encourage and be ready for any questions without judging or laughing even if the question seems stupid.

I think it is easier in little teams to get to know each one and each specific skill to be sure everyone understood well everything and feel comfortable with the decisions and situations, when the team gets bigger it is a lot harder to manage and control how each one feels. It is, in this situation, easier for each team member to feel useless, unappreciated and not heard when the manager does not take time to explain well every detail and encourage cooperation among the team. As mentioned before each member of the team has specific skills and abilities which should be used and recognized, even rewarded to make everyone feel useful and special in the group. They will then feel also more appreciated and stimulated intellectually speaking. This can be a huge source of motivation for most of the workers and the leader also.

After motivation; productivity and efficiency are important factors, to achieve them, the manager should offer a clear and appealing direction fitting every need, with transparent reasons and information available for all. The resources to accomplish the tasks should also been accessible at any time to do not loose time or motivation while working on a project. So, the structure should be always coherent and understood to not let the company become a chaos without rules or norms to follow.

To establish these standards to respect the manager can take example on other companies or cultures to know what will work the best with the specific team he/ she is in charge of. As long as the employees understand why they should act in a certain way for the health of the entire multicultural team, the success will be there, it is not only the professional part but also the Human one.

Speaking of the Human part of any management style of any multicultural team, special bonds should be built reasonably in a personal way while getting to know each of the members, with limits obviously to avoid crossing the line. The employees and manager are not going to become best friends but they should get along well to understand each other better and being able to work together and connect in healthy conditions, make compromise, being motivated and so on. Many ways can be used to help the cooperation and good understanding as gatherings, dinners, reunions with the entire team and managers.

Another technic is to ask feedbacks to motivate employees to express themselves and feel integrated but also to better understand their point of view.

Whenever conflicts appear, the problem should be confronted directly. Some cultures as Asian ones would prefer to try to forget the issue and avoid dealing with it, but for me it is not the best way to avoid conflicts in the long-term. Europeans are more used to confront the complication right away to be sure it goes away as soon as possible. This is why small problems do not turn into huge ones and fights among the team stop thanks to discussions.

The best option is to try to understand the cultural aspects and reasons of the misunderstanding before getting to the talk, to do not be angry or frustrated about the specific situation. When the conflict comes from the employees, the leader should almost always try to help minimizing the tensions.

To conclude on this point, you should always accept invitations that persons from Asia make around diner or anything they inviting you to, you need to gain the trust, build a relationship to be able to break their barriers and communicate easily. That is why it is primordial to create and maintain networks to know as many persons as you can and help each other. Asian people count a lot on each other, so networking is an important point for the professional world.

As we were mentioning, it is benefic to begin a reunion by a bit of personal subjects, never be shocked if an Asian person ask personal or private questions, it does not mean the same. It is to get to know the person, if they can trust, there is nothing wrong about it. They will often be curious about if someone is married, have children, the occupation and so on...

They will also wait for spending time with you, going to a restaurant but also inviting you to a party, visit a city, shopping or karaoke, any occasion is a chance to get to know each other better.

As said before it is to build a relationship, to test if you are a reliable person and judge the business partners with the affect and intuition, not so much with the skills at first. If the discussion goes well, then the contract can be signed, not the other way around, so an advice: take your time to get to know them, show you are reliable and answer their questions with patience.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the abstract, the main purpose of this thesis is to understand intercultural management through the example of the interactions between Indochina and France. It is important to understand this notion but also to know how to improve the issues.

Working on this subject increased my passion for intercultural management and travelling to discover new cultures and do everything possible to find ways to work together in a smooth way.

In this internationalized world, different cultures need to cooperate within companies to offer the extent of their complementary knowledge and be able to respond to the demands. It is nowadays more and more usual in an international company to have diverse nationalities to offer a greater global view.

The quantitative study developed for this thesis, thanks to the answers of the participants, helped to understand how French see work with Indochina and how to ameliorate some points. Thanks to literature review and the answers of the survey, we can identify many solutions when working in intercultural teams and adapt the results to the specific group. The only limitation I faced during these interviews was the non-response of the persons from Indochina, most of the respondents are French and that limit the overall understanding to only receive the opinion of part of the people.

In the last part, thanks to all the sources including literature reviews, survey and experience I found many recommendations for working in a multicultural team, have efficiency and cooperation.

Hofstede also guided me through his dimensions, showing the main differences between cultures and some reasons of different behaviors.

More than just understanding intercultural interactions between France and Indochina in terms of intercultural management, this dissertation aims to find solutions to improve these interactions in a daily professional life.

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