

GEERT HOFSTEDE: Cultural Dimensions

Power Distance (PDI)

This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of power distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. In societies with low power distance, people strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.

Individualism versus collectivism (IDV)

The high side of this dimension, called Individualism, can be defined as a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. Its opposite, Collectivism, represents a preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. A society's position on this dimension is reflected in whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "we."

Masculinity versus femininity (MAS)

The masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success. Society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented.

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

The uncertainty avoidance dimension expresses the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. The fundamental issue here is how a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? Countries exhibiting strong UAI maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. Weak UAI societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles.

Long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO)

The long-term orientation dimension can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue. Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth. They are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results. In societies with a long-term orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results.

GEERT HOFSTEDE: Cultural Onion

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture. The words in a language or jargon belong to this category, as do dress, hairstyles, Coca-Cola, flags. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear.

Heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behavior. Snoopy in the USA, Asterix in France.

Rituals are collective activities, technically superfluous in reaching desired ends, but which, within a culture, are considered as socially essential: they are therefore carried out for their own sake. Ways of greeting and paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies are examples.

Symbols, heroes, rituals can be subsumed under the term **practices**.

The core of culture is formed by **values**. Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. Values are feelings with an arrow to it: they have a plus and a minus side.

They deal with:

evil vs. good

dirty vs. clean

ugly vs. beautiful

unnatural vs. natural

abnormal vs. normal

paradoxical vs. logical

irrational vs. rational

Values are among the first things children learn - not consciously, but implicitly.

Development psychologists believe that by the **age of 10**, most children have their basic value system firmly in place, and after that age, changes are difficult to make. Because they were acquired so early in our lives, many values remain unconscious to those who hold them.

Therefore they cannot be discussed, nor can they be directly observed by outsiders. They can only be inferred from the way people act under various circumstances.

