Re-conceptualising the Lewis model for addressing the challenges of diversity and social inclusion

Based on a critical discussion between Hofstede's and Lewis' model of culture

By S.Ramsahai (Ph.D.)
Specialist in diversity inclusion and migration issues

Abstract

Today's harsh reality is that countries are mixed with a multitude of ethnic and cultural entities, and this process is only increasing with the continuous evolution of the Internet, Social Media and Mobile Technology. Further mass influxes of migrants and refugees have changed the ethnic, cultural and socio-demographic landscapes of most countries in the world forever. For scientists, entrepreneurs, World leaders, Universities, directors of HRM, but also politicians and policy makers, the question now is how to deal with the concept of the diversity of culture and how to navigate the tensions and challenges of inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relationships in order to define and promote the citizenship of people in a Nation-State.
In this light, this article compares Hofstede's theory based on his well-known work Culture’s Consequences and The Lewis model of dealing with culture in his book When cultures collide. Hofstede's cultural analysis is based on national cultures and can be typified as Western, originally relates to the IBM Staff, which is represented in five cultural dimensions. Since most countries consist of different cultures and are constantly undergoing changes, it is almost impossible to make cultural analyses of individuals. In contrast to this functionalist view of culture, Lewis offers a cross-cultural perspective from a social-constructivist point of view. The nature and character of culture is always dynamic. Cultural analysis is based on the individual, family and community and not on a so-called “national culture”. National culture is an abstract that is derived from diverse local cultural forms, identity and practices that define every nation or country. In this way, two people belonging to the same ethnic group, born in the same village, can represent different cultural patterns. This is because people are not clones of each other; each individual undergoes cross-cultural and transnational influences in their own way. Lewis named his three typologies: Linear-active, Multi-active and Re-active. Furthermore, Lewis' work is suitable for selection of new employees, composition of teams based on diversity and working effectively from a distance. The research that preceded this article is based on desk research and case studies.

Key words: national culture, cultural dimension, cross-cultural assessment, Lewis’s model, Hofstede’s model, diversity social inclusion, team management, unconscious bias, globalisation, cultural profile, preventing clashes, leadership, selection interview

Introduction

In today's competitive global environment, one cannot neglect the importance of diversity anymore. Successful organisations' advantage lies in their embrace of diversity and inclusion as management philosophy and should invest in human resources, the most valuable asset of any organization. Due to globalization, diversity issues are now the most central and persistent factors that influence international business activities. Companies operating internationally face cross-cultural or diversity challenges in understanding the differences in communication patterns and styles, preferences for leadership approaches, different principles and notations of hierarchy and organizational structures, and different systems of decision-making.

It is generally assumed that leaders and senior management in Dutch corporations are well versed in the knowledge and research on diversity and inclusion. Every year, thousands of directors of human resources agencies, managers, and leaders attend lectures, conferences and workshops on developments in their field. The subject of change management was and will continuously to remain central to the corporate agenda. This is a logical move on their part because every self-respecting company knows that change is an ongoing convergent or divergent movement and affects all business

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1. “Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity”. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion
2. Acknowledgement

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processes. It is only those who are open to change and who act proactively that will harvest the full benefits of change.

Partly, due to the 'Black Lives Matter Movement' in the USA, the Netherlands is under the spell of diversity inclusion as we can see from the numerous advertisements on the Internet. Ministries of Government, Municipalities and institutions are paying close attention, and are acting on these societal changes. When dealing with the influx of diversity within companies and how to manage it very often, cross-cultural consultants are leveraging the cultural model of G. Hofstede. One can also see the same pattern of behaviour within universities where students from different fields such as; International Business Management, Organisation Studies, Business Management, European Studies and Culture, Linguistic Studies, MBA, studies for Cross-cultural Communication, Organisation, Leadership and Culture etc, are overloaded with the theory of G. Hofstede, “Allemaal andersdenkenden: omgaan met cultuurverschillen”, Amsterdam Contact, 19910. When I was a student in the 1990s, for example, I also became very familiar with this theory and availed myself as a self-proclaimed ambassador in its teaching. It was not until I was confronted in real life as a business consultant and supervisor to implement research among employees from different backgrounds situated in the same country that I realised the wisdom of these teachings.


**Working with models for culture diagnosis: what works better?**

Whilst working in the Netherlands as a consultant for international firms, I noticed that it is more common to use Professor Hofstede’s cultural model when dealing with the influx of cultural differences in organisations. When the focus is on organisational change and management, Hofstede’s contribution to the field is respectable as he demonstrates the influence of national cultures on company cultures. However, his operationalization of culture in five pairs of cultural dimensions is limited, and not always functional. According to Hofstede, the national cultures in the world consist of five dimensions, viz: Power distance index, Individualism versus Collectivism; Masculinity versus Femininity; Uncertainty avoidance index, Long term Orientation versus Short term Normative Orientation (based on data, collected from the staff of IBM in the 80’s). Later he added more cultural dimensions.

For a long time, I used to lecture on ‘diversity and inclusion’ at a university (mention name of University) for higher vocational education in the Netherlands, and provided training and coaching in several leading companies in and outside this country. I lead a project in India to measure how employees in various Southeast Asian countries evaluated their executives on how decisions were taken, how confident they were about the future and image of the company where they were employed, how they experienced work and change processes, communication styles, values toward men and women, gender-matter, decision-making processes and law-abiding attitude. A major dilemma arose. My fellow researchers and I faced many challenges because we had based our vision and approach on the national cultural model of Hofstede.

This national cultural model of Hofstede was not workable for the following reasons:

1. Some countries consist of more than 60 ethnic groups, for example, Malaysia and China. How can one assume that there is a national culture?
2. Operationalization of culture according to Hofstede’s theory is based on national culture, which consists of five pairs of cultural dimensions. How does one understand and carry out research to understand individual cultures and cultural patterns?
3. Understanding culture means understanding how people like to communicate with each other, and with authority, and how holistically they give meaning to their life, to the planet and to nature.
4. Furthermore, understanding the behaviour of people in accepting the law. A law-abiding index or trust in government and behaving according to rules are not the same as power distance; rational or metaphysical reason for birth, quality of life and death, sustainability index and taking care of nature; tolerance index; kind and cruelty towards animals index, how people communicate, how they negotiate, how decisions are taken, how do people listen, what kind of conflict solving styles are people using, what kind of leadership is embedded in the culture and in the company?
We were not looking for answers regarding all these aspects of life as that was not the aim of our research. Instead, we simply could not work with the national framework of Hofstede. That was too narrow and too much based on an old and static national identity of a country in contrast to the numerous identities that exist within some countries. The harsh reality is that those countries are mixed with a multitude of ethnic and cultural entities, and this process is only increasing with the continuous evolution of the Internet, Social Media and mobile technology. This is even more extensive for internationally oriented companies. We simply could not compile our indicators on the basis of Hofstede’s work. For us, it was troublesome and the whole project was in danger of failure. Then came an unexpected solution. A network from Denmark advised me to go through the work of Richard Lewis "When Cultures Collide". Surprisingly, I was not familiar with this book nor the author. Lewis’s model focuses on the individual level and unfolds a broader perspective to understanding human behaviour, without being stuck on national cultural identity - a premise based on a dominant paradigm from the 19th century.

**The work of Lewis - when cultures collide**

Lewis' masterpiece - When cultures collide – has the character of a post-modern trans-nationalistic approach based on the individuals, regardless of their nationality or origin. The Lewis’ Model is designed to indicate which particular ideal cultural group an individual would have empathy for.

Lewis named his three typologies: Linear-active, Multi-active and Re-active.

(a) Linear-Active typologies are task-oriented highly organized planners who prefer getting things done, one task at a time in a planned sequence. Arguments are made with logic, while rules are to be followed.
(b) Multi-Active typologies are; emotional, loquacious and impulsive. They see family, feelings and relationships ahead of following an agenda. They are comfortable at multi-tasking.
(c) Reactive typologies are polite attentive listeners who rarely initiate action or discussion and instead react to it and form their own opinions. Harmony and avoiding embarrassment to themselves or others is core to their personalities

The following table shows the three typologies in detail on the level of behaviour.
In the following diagram, one can see a visual representation of linear-active, multi-active and reactive variations among major national cultures on the basis of decades-long observations, and thousands of assessments of cultural profiles. It indicates the relative positioning of each national culture in general terms of its linear-active, multi-active or reactive nature.

Man is a quirky hybrid entity

After completing the assessment, a diagram shows where the cultural pattern of the participant can be seen, and where the similarities and lines of conflict can be expected between the participant, other takers of the assessment, or between them and people who belong to a certain cultural group around the world. The cross-cultural assessment initially analyzes the cultural profile of people without linking it to national culture, whereas Hofstede’s model emphasises national culture as a decisive factor for the cultural profile of the individual. The peculiarity of Lewis' cultural model arises when most countries have a hybrid culture that is more or less situated between two main ideal-typical cultures. It is also possible that certain countries are close to an ideal-typical culture often together with a few others. For example, the picture above shows that the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech Republic, Norway and Slovenia have many similarities. In fact, it is so special, that the Netherlands is culturally closer to Denmark than to Belgium.

Within these hybrid cultures, people as individuals form their own entities and even if they belong to the same ethnic group and live (so to speak), in the same street, they can still show great cultural differences from one another. Take, for example, two native Dutch persons from, let us say Sint-Oedenrode, a village in the Northern part of Brabant situated in the South of the Netherlands, who live as neighbours on Johan Frisostraat. It is assumable that if they completed the cross-cultural assessment of Lewis, they would show different cultural patterns because they don’t belong to clones: they have their own emotions, have their own vision and values about life, they have their own internalized emotion, freedom in their inner space and wishes, the value they give to seniority, to time, space, change, durability, the way they prefer that decision should take place, the way they think about law and order, value about women and diversity, negotiations style, listening style etc. Any research carried out using Hofstede’s analytical model would show more or less similar cultural patterns based on a national culture with a limited scale of only five cultural dimensions. Another problem (that we can extract from the example) is that the cultural identity of the people from Northern Brabant is quite different from the autochthon population of the Northern part of the Netherlands. This suggests that in Sint-Oedenrode, people who originated from Surinam, Morocco, India, Turkey, Poland, Syria, Iran,
Afghanistan and so many other countries would live naturalized and would be officially recognized as Dutch. How should one carry out research on the basis of Hofstede’s national culture that seems to be so homogeneous? Hofstede usually sees countries as static, which hinders working at an individual level; almost no country on earth consists of just one culture. The Netherlands, for example, does not have a uniform national culture, but has been enriched by cultures from Morocco, Indonesia, Turkey, Surinam, Syria, Germany, England, France, the Antilles, India, Iraq, Iran, and so on. There are also major cultural differences between the native Dutch themselves. Take for example the Brabant and the Frisian culture or the Zealanders! Queen Maxima of the Netherlands was right to say "The Dutch culture does not exist".

According to Mcsweeney (2002) the respondents of Hofstede’s research belong to the staff of IBM, thus values of them and this is hard to believe that this stand for representation of the culture of a country. Williamson (2002) said this could not justify a national culture. According to him, there are a broad variety of factors, which affect cultural factors such as human nature and institutional influences. According to Mead & Andrews (2009), Hofstede’s model ignores countries that consist of different ethnic groups with their own cultures. There are countries such as China with more than 50 ethnic minorities, with their own languages, norms, values, customs and beliefs. It’s foolish to believe that because they all live in China, that they are ethnically Chinese and that there is just one culture. Furthermore, it is difficult to differentiate between the main culture and subcultures, as there are shifting by political and economical factors.

In my PhD research I criticized the “nation-state paradigm” (Ramsahai 2008) wherein cultures of migrants are not taken into account. These nineteenth century functionalism paradigm do not fit in a modern world as development cannot perceive culture from a dominant and static point of view, but as a continuous process of local and transnational influenced change. As Baskerville (2003) has pointed out, people live in society with intensifying networks of exchange and communication. In that light it is hard to accept that the bilateral model used by Hofstede’s dimension to a global organisation as so many cultures are interacting and influencing each other (Mead & Andrews, 2009).

Social constructivism is a modern paradigm that assumes that people themselves give meaning to their environment and that social processes influenced by so many actors at the digital platform such as the Internet and Social Media play a prominent role in this. Knowledge is constructed by each person or group in their own way or is strongly influenced by the reactions and opinions in the broader changing social and global environment. The social and ethnic identity of a person is constructed continuously. The Lewis cultural model represents the social-constructivist approach and is of great value in today’s Anthropological, Corporate Anthropological, Sociological, Political, Economical and Linguistic research.

**What can cross-cultural assessment be used for?**

In the foregoing, I indicated the difference between the models for cultural analysis of Hofstede and Lewis. I demonstrated why the national cultural model of Hofstede is not suitable to analyze culture in a globalized world. The Lewis cultural model is related to an individual and not in first instant to a national culture. Trans-national cultural influence is predominant in this fast growing global communication due to the Internet, Social Media and increased global travel. The frameworks and scientific developments in the Lewis Cross-cultural Assessment make it possible to enter this post modern era with an understanding of the impact that culture has on the point of view of human beings in a more precise manner when compared to previous theories. It is an excellent tool to manage change processes within companies, especially when it comes to introducing diversity inclusion as a philosophy. In many cases, groups of employees will deny the importance much better diversity and in those cases this assessment can be used as a pleasant tool to get to know yourself much better and will open doors to know others. Further it promotes the entry, mobility and progression of diversity within a company by selecting applicants, and managing team compositions, monitoring quality from a distance and effective global communication. In detail, The Lewis Cross-cultural Assessment can be used for.

1. **Cross-cultural assessment as tool for change**

When companies decide to introduce diversity inclusion as their fundamental business philosophy one should realize that this can only be executed by a solid change management program spread over a time period depending on the size of companies with regard to number of employees and departments and sometimes the nature of work per department. Often, there will be resistance to making changes to welcome people on the basis of diversity. Statements such as "it is an immigrant problem, let them
assimilate and there will be no more problem any more" or ‘it’s not my problem’ are common. Sometimes it looks like a battle between the Established and the Outsiders paraphrasing Elias (1994). By lacking of the right knowledge and insight about diversity, the need for it will be trivialised. Another psychological process that takes place is that, when in a short period of time relatively many members belonging to ethnic or social groups enter the company, it often happens that especially members belonging to the native group or ‘established group’ are than much more strongly attracted to each other than before and will counteract the influx of diversity or social group. In such a changing company, processes will occur where people belonging to a certain diversity category are excluded or disadvantaged in different ways (Kanter et al 1990;1992). According to Verweel (2000) dominant discourse on corporate culture refers to homogeneous and monolithic codes of conduct that members must internalise. According to him, however, within sports associations there is more of a sharing and differentiation culture characterised by: "a struggle for power, competition among members of an organisation, conflicts, self interests and dissent" (Verweel 2000:18; cf. Weick 1995). The same type of competition is also taking place in companies. According to Dohertij and Chelladurai (1999), individuals who enter an organisation are generally expected to assimilate its culture so that they become similar to the other members of the organisation.

Figure 1 The influence of cultural diversity as a function of organizational culture, according to Dohertij and Chelladurai (1999:290, see also Ramsahai 2008).

Differences in attitude should then be avoided. Such organisations are risk-averse and strive for stability by wanting to maintain uniformity in the dominant culture. They also believe that the organisational culture can go from uniformity to diversity and the degree of ethnic/cultural diversity of people can go from low to high (Dohertij and Chelladurai 1999). Figure 1 shows that when the dominant culture in an organization remains similar, there will be minimal benefit of cultural diversity, even though the representation of cultural diversity will be high.
The character of change process indicate generally the following phases: the denial that change is important; the rationalisation of the denial; a cautious exploration and finally commitment. The cross-cultural assessment can be used to carry out such a change process professionally and very decisively. How does it work?

1. Initially, all managers and HR professionals make this assessment and they will see for themselves how diverse they are;
2. They will share the own experiences within their own teams, showing the cultural profiles that they have already collected from the other managers and HRM;
3. Within the own team, the managers also let the employees make an assessment followed with comparing the different cultural profiles of each other;
4. After phases 2 and 3 more awareness will increase about the essential of diversity.

2. Selection interview, promotion of inflow and mobility. Selectors and the applicant make the cross-cultural assessment. The advantage is that they are better able to anticipate mutual communication processes without becoming irritated and falling into prejudice and unconscious bias - especially from the site of the selectors. Conducting a job interview on the basis of the STAR model is recommended, because the applicant's concrete behaviour and actions are central to it. Once the applicant has been selected he or she can be better coached on the basis of the culture profile from the cross-cultural assessment. The manager will also be better able to take into account the specific coaching style that suits the person.

3. Team composition. In a 'global economy', a team is effective if it is represented by diversity. Diversity makes high resilience of such a team and problem-solving solutions are highly effective. Suppose you need two engineers in your team as managers. Technically, you would select applicants who have graduated in engineering. Ten candidates applied, all with good grades and equivalent work experience. Without knowledge of Lewis’ cross-cultural assessment, you as a selector would probably select two of the candidates who would be close to your own feelings that are mostly the hidden bias. Those who would stand further away from your own cultural and emotional sphere would be rejected. So in that case you would have selected the candidates on subjective basis! This is happening most of the time. Selectors themselves have prejudices and therefore discriminate (in)directly against new applicants (Turner, 1995; Brief et al., 2000). The prejudices of the HR manager, P&O employee and recruiter are based on the person's own background, culture, experiences and attitude (Oswald, 2005).

When there is an applicant with a different background opposite the HR manager, the HR manager often lacks the sensitivity to empathize with the applicant's world of experience. On the Dutch labour market, native Dutch with a high level of education are more likely to find a job than comparable members with an ethnic background. The cause of this must be sought in discrimination and selective preference (CBS 2016; ROA-R-2016, Bouwhuis 2015).

The best objective solution would be to select the candidates on the basis of the Lewis’ cross-cultural assessment. The first step is: make an analysis of the present team members; analyze the different cultural patterns. Find out what kind of person – cultural pattern – you miss in the team and mention why this is important. Go through the cultural patterns of the applicants with the best experience. Step three is to select the cultural type that will be best fitting in your diversity team. If, on the basis of this analysis, you notice that the current engineers in your team are mainly linearly active, it would still be advisable, when choosing new candidates, to focus on candidates who are more multi-active and reactive, as long as they meet the technical requirements. The advantages of this are: (a) avoiding of unconscious bias, prejudice and discrimination; (b) increasing diversity and therefore resilience in your team and; (c) increasing the quality of your team.

4. Leadership of the 21st century. Upgrading and keeping track of one's own developments also fits within the new élan of leadership in the 21st century, which is characterized by a strong vision, passion and inspiration, sustainable transformation and working from the heart for people and planet Earth. Partly as a result of rapid change processes and acting responsibly, managers and employees are also expected to play a different role. Rather, there will be less” management of the old” where managers are more concerned with team efficiency than with team members who will upgrade each others qualities more in their team community.

5. Preventing clashes and increasing team collaboration. Drawing up individual culture patterns and comparing them with the culture patterns of others in order to see where clashes occur and how to eliminate them, but also how to strengthen collaboration. The cross-cultural assessment shows what style of communication one uses, with which inner values one looks at the world through, what who intrinsic appreciation one has for women, for example, how one listens and deals with conflicts, how
far or close is a person to someone else in the organisation, how one can negotiate better. Using this instrument makes a team more transparent and harmonious on the basis of diversity.

6. Effective global communication. The COVID-19 has forced us to communicate and collaborate with teams at a distance. After the Corona crisis many forms of work and activities will again take place in the classroom, such as teaching, but the tone has been set for working virtually and this development will be further professionalized technically in much better apps for team meetings. It has been experienced that working and having team meetings at a distance works effectively, is low cost and is environmentally friendly. Without this crisis, it would have taken at least 50 years before people would have switched to remote work so massively. This is so because the old style of working is based on centuries-old tradition, and man is not inclined to break with tradition quickly. The effective use of Lewis' instruments can take place in the following way. The participating members of a team meeting or conference have all taken the cross-cultural assessment and the cultural profile is visible to everyone. As a result, people are also aware of each other's communication style, negotiation style and other cultural patterns. With this information, it is easy to get to the heart of the matter in the communication process and goal achievement will be effectively realized. Unnecessary irritations and cultural clashes will be drastically reduced. There is often a lot of noise or error in communication, usually when there are many differences between sender and receiver in communication style, dealing with time, listening skills, expectation patterns and ordering systems of information. Lewis' learning model fits perfect in this dimension of 'distance work force', remote education' and 'distance meetings'. For team coaches, this assessment is an extremely efficient and effective tool. One can even monitor the development of the group remotely. Learning teams can use this product to keep track of their own developments and manage that by themselves. It sounds like music to the ears when one can be the pilot of his or her own further development.

Finally, it is time to realize that the National cultural model of Hofstede is based on an odd 19th century functionalistic nation-state paradigm that does not fit anymore in this transnational interacting global environment. It's a matter of psychological power to break with tradition and that is not happening quickly: only a crises can fasten that process, as the Corona virus did, but the price is unbearably high, in this case!

Conclusion

Today's world is a world full of human movement, influence, change and awareness of the value of diversity and social inclusion. It is almost impossible today to use Hofstede's homogenous nation-state based cultural model. Lewis' cultural vision translated in his book “When cultures collide and his cross-cultural assessment” offer serious solutions for today and tomorrow's world.
This approach helps us to identify and understand the diverse range of cultural identities and practices that together constitute the cultural profile of an individual, family, community or society at large. Only by understanding and appreciating cultural diversity can each one of us respect and engage with different cultural values, norms and practices that together make up the social identity of humanity.
Against this background, in the corporate and business world, the Lewis’s cross-cultural assessment can be used effectively:
1. As tool for change
2. For selection interview, promotion of inflow and mobility;
3. For team composition;
4. For the modern vision of 21st century leaders
5. Preventing clashes and increasing team collaboration;
6. Promotes effective global communication.
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ROA-R-2016/2, Schoolverlaters tussen onderwijs en arbeidsmarkt 2015


