

Marie-Joëlle Browaeys & Roger Price

Understanding Cross-Cultural Management

Third Edition



**UNDERSTANDING
CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT**

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Preface

Knowing is not enough; we must apply.

Willing is not enough; we must do.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

This third edition maintains the approach taken by its predecessors: it explores the many facets of cross-cultural management while allowing the reader to apply the many theories and ideas which have evolved in this area to actual practice. However, as the result of the feedback received from our readers as well as from the publisher's reviewers, we have given extra attention in this edition to particular areas. This has involved, in Part One for example, adding a number of theoretical issues which are now addressed in the form of *chapter prefaces*, extending our coverage of GLOBE's research findings and giving particular attention to the BRICS countries. In line with the feedback mentioned above, some of the topics in Part Two and Part Three have been replaced – or given less prominence – to allow other topics to be featured.

Updating has been an essential part of preparing this new edition. This has involved replacing a number of the newspaper articles used in the book, as well as including new case material based on recent research. This material not only facilitates the application of theory to practice, but also enables a more detailed examination of research methods used in the area of cross-cultural management.

Preparing for global business

Given the globalisation of business and increasing diversity within the workforce of so many industries and organisations, a cross-cultural component in management education and training can no longer be considered as a useful 'add-on' merely for those who might consider venturing abroad to pursue their career. Nowadays, more and more managers and professionals are required to work effectively across cultural borders. Even if they are confined to their offices, they are more and more likely to interact with people from other cultures. Training in cross-cultural management has therefore become a 'must', whatever the type of business education concerned, whether it be for aspiring graduates at the start of their career or for those senior managers who wish to increase their effectiveness in their present positions or their employability in the international market.

The approach of this book

This book is the result of our experiences in educating international executives and post-graduate students in the areas of cross-cultural management and cross-cultural business

communication. It reflects the need we felt for a practical, hands-on approach to study in this area which:

- offers a broad, if selective, view of theories, models and ideas on culture in terms of management, organisation and communication. This is preferable to providing just one particular (theoretical) approach to cross-cultural studies or giving an encyclopaedic survey of the subject area;
- allows the theories and ideas mentioned to be applied to practice through the inclusion of examples and brief case studies from the business world, as well as activities that require some of the theories outlined to be applied to business situations and to the reader's own work situation.

Combining a concise overview of cross-cultural concepts and learning-by-doing activities is an approach to cross-cultural management we have found to be effective for both instructors and students, trainers and trainees. Students are exposed to approaches to cross-cultural aspects of business rather than being overwhelmed with detail about countries and their culture based on one theoretical framework. At the same time, they are asked to apply these approaches in a practical and relevant manner to a number of case studies, many of which are taken from the business media. When doing so, students are expected not only to use the concepts, but also to apply their own intuitive insights and cross-cultural experience. This can be a rewarding experience for those concerned because the learning-by-doing activities themselves can reveal cultural assumptions and attitudes of those undergoing the learning process.

The instructor will, it is hoped, appreciate the concise overview of theories and concepts relating to cross-cultural management while also being provided with activities to *facilitate learning*. Moreover, the material enables the instructor to make maximum use of the environment in which the learning is taking place. As a facilitator in the process, the instructor helps the students not only to 'construct' their own understanding based on their knowledge and experience, but also to take advantage of the informal learning process through those activities, which encourage interaction between trainees. Having said that, however, we believe that this book is also a valuable resource for self-study because it enables readers to extend and to deepen their cross-cultural awareness.

This approach to learning reflects a concern we had when writing a book that deals with culture: knowledge of oneself is as important as the knowledge of theory.

The structure of this book

This book is divided into three parts:

- **Part One. Culture and management** deals with the concept of culture, its facets and the levels at which culture operates. It explores cultural dimensions in the business context and examines the cultural dilemmas that arise for managers when making decisions. It finally presents a model of culture based on cultural value orientations that affect managerial and professional activities. Prior to the concepts presented, each chapter in Part One includes a short preface which introduces a theoretical issue.
- **Part Two. Culture and organisations** considers the influence of culture on aspects of organisations, including structures, corporate cultures and the role of leadership. The

cultural factors involved in strategy and strategic alliances, as well as in fundamental organisational change, come to the fore. Culture and international marketing, along with the question of cultural diversity in organisations, are also addressed.

- **Part Three. Culture and communication** examines how culture affects the process of communication both within and between cultures. Various cross-cultural contexts are dealt with, including negotiations and international teamwork. Cross-cultural conflict is given particular attention, as are the skills required to be an effective intercultural communicator.

Each of these parts is made up of six chapters

The chapters in Part One each begin with a **preface**. The chapters in Parts One and Two each contain two **cross-cultural concepts** and those in Part Three each contain one. These concepts address key ideas and theories developed by leading researchers and practitioners in the area of cross-cultural management, and present our overviews of their work. **Spotlights** and **mini-cases** (with questions) improve the application of the theories described. Each chapter of the book ends with at least two **activities**. These allow the learner to apply the concepts through exercises of various kinds.

The **points for reflection** given after the concepts encourage the readers to go beyond their knowledge of the subject matter and apply their skills to certain cross-cultural issues. Following these are a list of publications for **further reading** and **references**. These are intended for readers who wish to read more detailed accounts, or extend their knowledge of the areas in question.

The **final activities** at the end of each part pull the strings together. Being more extended in nature and incorporating the elements of each part, they are intended to provide a broader perspective of the area in question.

A particular type of exercise which plays a prominent role in the book is case analysis. We have found case studies to be a very effective learning tool: confronted with a dilemma described in each case, students are forced to consider their potential behaviour in the context described and learn from the choices they make. Interaction with their peers and instructor when accounting for their choices compels them to *talk about their experiences* and feelings, as well as the insights they have gained from reading the cross-cultural concepts in the book. The cases deal with many cultural contexts, so students are confronted with different ways of thinking, thereby helping them to develop transcultural competence.

Flexibility of approach

The arrangement of material is such that it allows flexibility in the sequence to be followed. Although we would suggest that Part One be the starting point for any programme of study, the sequence of chapters in Part Two and Part Three, as given below, need not be followed slavishly. The chapters may be re-arranged according to the priorities of the instructor and/or student. For example, if Chapters 8 and 18 are studied one after another, then the cultural aspects of leadership can be examined in terms of the communicative skills considered appropriate and effective in different national/organisational cultures. A further example: Chapters 9 and 15 can be studied together and so allow the issue of company takeovers and mergers to be combined with the negotiating process involved.

Part One Culture and management	Part Two Culture and organisations	Part Three Culture and communication
1 Determinants of culture	7 Culture and corporate structures	13 Business communication across cultures
2 Dimensions of culture: Hofstede and GLOBE	8 Culture and leadership	14 Barriers to intercultural communication
3 Business cultures in the Western world	9 Culture and corporate strategy	15 Negotiating internationally
4 Business cultures in Asia, Africa and the Middle East	10 Cultural change in organisations	16 Working with international teams
5 Cultural dimensions and dilemmas	11 Culture and international marketing management	17 Conflicts and cultural differences
6 Culture and styles of management	12 Cultural diversity in organisations	18 Developing intercultural communicative competence

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We are also grateful to the editorial team at Pearson Education and their reviewers, for their unstinting professional support, to the readers/users of the previous editions for their advice and ideas, and to the *Financial Times*, whose coverage of international business has proved to be an indispensable source of recent business case studies for the new edition.

Our thanks also go out to the numerous contributors to the book. The contributions made by Fons Trompenaars and alumni from Nyenrode Business University deserve particular mention. Last, but by no means least, we would like to thank our respective partners, Wim and Anke, for their patience and encouragement while we undertook a further, time-consuming revision of the book.

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Part One

CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Introduction to Part One

Setting the scene

This introductory chapter will give an outline of the research in the field of culture and management, which in turn serves as a framework for Part One.

The concept of culture

Many experts in their fields have wracked their brains to come up with what they consider to be their concept of 'culture'. Those working in the field of cultural anthropology, alone, for example, have come up with a long list of definitions of the concept, based on their analysis of ethnological, social, psychological and linguistic data. The attempt made by Bodley (1994) to summarise these (Table I.1) gives an idea of all the facets of culture that need to be taken into account from an anthropological perspective.

Although acknowledging the multiplicity of cultures, the authors of this book consider that the fundamental aspect of culture is that it is something all humans learn in one way or another. It is not something people inherit, but rather a code of attitudes, norms and values, a way of thinking that is learnt within a social environment. Family, the social environment, school, friends, work – all these help to form this code and determine how people see themselves and the world. The national culture and the particular region which people live in also help to shape a person's cultural profile.

Although culture is reflected in individual behaviour, it is a way of thinking shared by individuals in a particular society that makes culture what it is.

Table I.1 Diverse definitions of culture

Topical	Culture consists of everything on a list of topics, or categories, such as social organisation, religion and economy
Historical	Culture is social heritage, or tradition, that is passed on to future generations
Behavioural	Culture is shared, learned human behaviour; a way of life
Normative	Culture is ideals, values, or rules for living
Functional	Culture is the way humans solve problems of adapting to the environment or living together
Mental	Culture is a complex of ideas, or learned habits, that inhibit impulses and distinguish people from animals
Structural	Culture consists of patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols, or behaviours
Symbolic	Culture is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a society

Source: Bodley, 1994: 9.

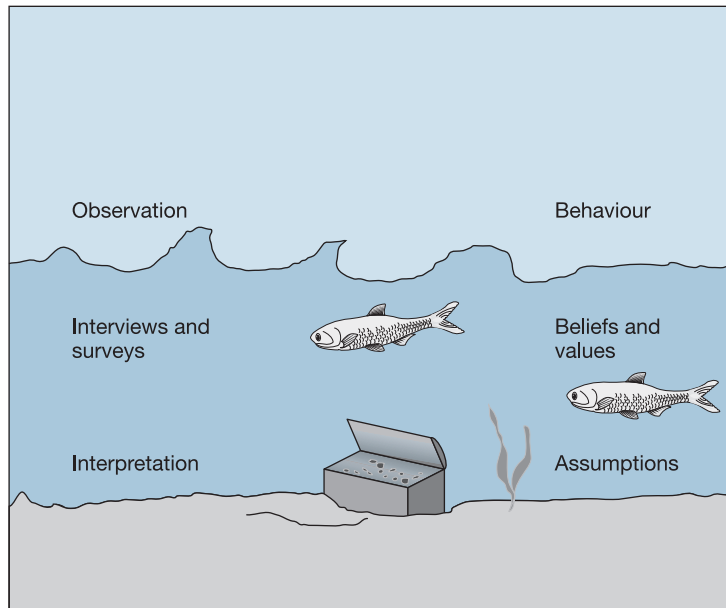


Figure I.1 Navigating the seas of international business

Source: adapted from Schneider and Barsoux, 2003: 21.

Culture operates on three levels

Culture operates on three levels, the first being on a level where it is observable and tangible. Here, **artefacts** and **attitudes** can be observed in terms of architecture, rituals, dress codes, making contact, contracts, language, eating and so on. Operating at a second level, culture is to do with norms and values. **Beliefs** – or **norms** – are statements of fact about the way things are. These are the cultural rules, as it were, which explain what is happening at level one and determine what is right or wrong. **Values** are to do with general preferences as to what is good or bad, how things should be. The third – and deepest level – has to do with **basic assumptions**. This level is difficult to explore and what lies there can only be construed through interpretation of what is happening at the other levels. Interpretation involves trying to explain why we act according to particular rules or in line with particular values. It is to do with the question ‘Why?’ and the attempt to answer it with more than just a ‘Because!’

Figure I.1, based on one devised by Schneider and Barsoux (2003), gives a visual interpretation of these levels of culture and the ways they can be investigated. Exploring culture can be compared with exploring the ocean. On the surface, artefacts, rituals and behaviour can be seen. These give an idea of what may be below. The underlying norms and values can be ascertained through interviews and surveys. The assumptions lying at the very bottom can only be inferred through interpretation.

Giving dimensions to culture

Assumptions in the exploration of culture – the key dimensions – can be ascertained from the work of the anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck. In 1961, they developed a comparative model with six cultural orientations:

1. the nature of people;
2. the relationship to nature;
3. the relationship to other people;
4. the modality of human activity (doing and being);
5. the temporal focus of human activity (future, past, present);
6. the concept of space (private/public).

These cultural orientations have inspired researchers in culture and management, such as Schein, Adler, Hall, Hofstede and Trompenaars. These dimensions can help to define the cultural profile of people and discover the preferences that cultures have in relation to their environment.

Such dimensions are not to be considered as static but as being evolutionary in nature. The culture may change not only as a result of influences from outside the culture being depicted, but also from within, through changes to the orientations outlined above. Changes from within could, for example, occur as a result of the increasing multicultural nature of the society in question.

Understanding culture and management

The researchers referred to in Figure I.2 have developed models relating to this area:

- Edgar Schein examined the effect of the organisation on culture.
- Edward Hall was one of the first to study the role of communication in management.
- Nancy Adler pioneered the study of the influence of culture on organisational functions.
- Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars both established dimensions to measure the impact of national culture on management.

Part One explores the effect of culture on management by examining the insights each of these researchers has developed. Work by other researchers in the same field is also discussed. Each chapter in Part One has a **preface** which introduces a theoretical issue related to the subject matter to be covered in the concepts. The approaches presented are intended not only to provide some understanding of culture and management in an international environment, but also to help develop the attitudes and behaviours desirable in a specific cross-cultural context.

The **concepts** presented in each chapter generally contain a number of spotlights and mini-cases. A **spotlight** is usually a short text that serves to illustrate a particular theme or subject developed in the concept in question. A **mini-case** is essentially a short case study taken from business life and which requires analysis by means of questions posed afterwards. Many of these cases are based on (edited) articles from the *Financial Times*. The **points of reflection** which follow the concepts are intended to consolidate the reader's learning by raising key issues arising from the subject matter presented. The **activities** which round off each chapter allow the reader to apply what has been learned from the preceding concepts to a particular scenario or extended case study. Two **final activities** will close Part One.

Part Two and Part Three are structured in a similar way and contain all the features described in the above paragraph.

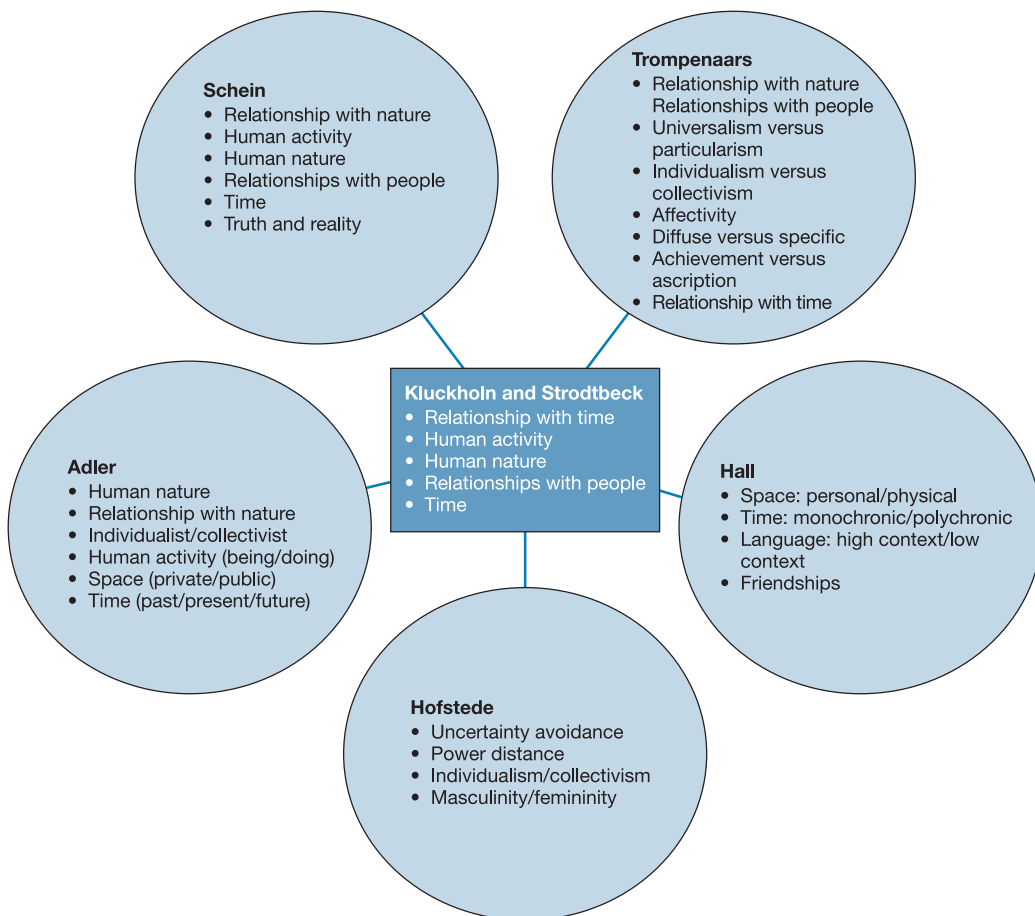


Figure I.2 Key dimensions of culture

Source: Schneider and Barsoux, 2003: 34.

Chapter and concept overview

Chapter 1 Determinants of culture

Chapter 1 examines the very concept of culture, its facets as well as the role of norms and values. The levels at which culture operates – from family through organisation to society – are also described. Organisational culture as a ‘metaphor’ is briefly explored.

The chapter is divided into a preface and two concepts:

- **Preface:** organisational culture and ethnography.
- **Concept 1.1 Facets of culture.** After giving a short definition of the word ‘culture’ and its various ‘layers’, the concept will analyse the meaning of value systems for societies.
- **Concept 1.2 Levels of cultures.** This concept considers the levels of cultures ranging from national to organisational level and examines those elements that define them.

Chapter 2 Dimensions of culture: Hofstede and GLOBE

Chapter 2 explores cultural dimensions in the business context with particular reference to research by Geert Hofstede and GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness), an ongoing research project. It also puts forward criticisms concerning the cultural dimension construct, particularly that devised by Hofstede.

The chapter is divided into a preface and two concepts:

- **Preface:** a model from social anthropology.
- **Concept 2.1 Hofstede's national cultural dimensions.** The five dimensions developed by Hofstede are explained, and the extremes of each characterised in terms of management and business. The criticisms made about Hofstede's research method as well as about the characterisation of national cultures are also outlined.
- **Concept 2.2 Cultural dimensions according to GLOBE.** The nine cultural practice dimensions devised by the GLOBE project are reviewed. A brief exploration of societal cultures practices ('As Is') and values ('Should Be') exemplifies how these values and practices affect organisational culture on all nine dimensions of organisational cultural practice.

Chapter 3 Business cultures in the Western world

This chapter, together with Chapter 4, gives an overview of business cultures in the world. The culture clusters as devised by GLOBE and presented in Chapter 2 are the starting point.

The chapter is divided into a preface and two concepts:

- **Preface:** two approaches to the concept of multiculturalism.
- **Concept 3.1 European cultures.** Elements in particular countries belonging to the European clusters are highlighted. One further country is included in this concept – Turkey. European business cultures are examined in cluster terms, and some similarities and differences between component countries noted. Attention has been paid to Central and East European emergent economies, particularly to Russia, the only BRICS country in Europe.
- **Concept 3.2 American and Australasian cultures.** This concept focuses on countries to which European cultures were 'exported' along with new immigrants. The countries covered include those in North America, Latin America, particularly Brazil (a BRICS country) and Australasia.

Chapter 4 Business cultures in Asia, Africa and the Middle East

The chapter will cover those clusters which were not covered in Chapter 3. The countries in these clusters are examined in terms of certain similarities that set them apart from Western business cultures. Attention is paid to three of these countries – China, India and South Africa – which share similarities with the clusters described in Chapter 3 while belonging to the BRICS group.

The chapter is divided into a preface and two concepts:

- **Preface:** two different cognitive approaches to management.
- **Concept 4.1 Asian cultures.** Two clusters are considered in Asia, the one influenced by Confucianism, the other – in Southern Asia – influenced by Hinduism. The significant role of the Chinese and Indian diasporas in business is explained.

- **Concept 4.2 African and Middle East cultures.** The importance of tribal identification among sub-Saharan countries in Africa is touched upon, together with the cultural diversity of one economically important country, South Africa, the newest BRICS country. Finally, an outline is given of the cultural elements shared by Arab countries in the Middle East.

Chapter 5 Cultural dimensions and dilemmas

Chapter 5 explores further cultural dimensions, particularly those from the work of Fons Trompenaars, and highlights the dilemmas these raise in management decision-making. The dilemma of motivation is addressed in the preface. Furthermore, the chapter deals with the issue of connecting people and organisations within a culture of innovation,

The chapter is divided into a preface and two concepts:

- **Preface:** motivation – needs and values.
- **Concept 5.1 Value orientations and dimensions.** This concept returns to the sources that inspired researchers in cross-cultural management. Particular attention is given to the Trompenaars' dimensions, which can be useful for the analysis of cultural differences in management. Hofstede's review of these dimensions is outlined, together with the reaction given by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars to Hofstede's comments.
- **Concept 5.2 Reconciling cultural dilemmas.** This concept explains the method devised by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner for finding a way to resolve dilemmas when doing business with different cultures.

Chapter 6 Culture and styles of management

This chapter proposes value orientations drawn from those presented in Chapters 1 to 5, as well as other value orientations taken from the work of Edward Hall, among others.

The chapter is divided into a preface and two concepts:

- **Preface:** the conceptualisation of culture – a static or dynamic approach.
- **Concept 6.1 Management tasks and cultural values.** This concept presents a model of culture based on cultural value orientations and examines their influence on managerial activities. This model is later used in the chapter in an activity during which readers can draw up their own cultural profile. Using this profile, readers are asked to outline strategies to enable them to operate effectively in a particular country.
- **Concept 6.2 Other views on cultural values.** This concept briefly examines other theories – which are relevant to managers who are involved in globalisation – where cultural values are regarded as being subject to change through interaction with other cultures. The concept then considers the idea that culture is not a set of values but the meaning which we as individuals attach to our environment.

Final activities

Part One ends with two extra final activities:

1. **The Alizee case.** Readers are asked to analyse the results of an investigation into online behaviour among airline consumers – from Brazil, Malaysia and the USA – in which the GLOBE cultural dimensions have been applied.
2. **The Galderma case.** Readers are asked to assess the research design of a research paper investigating the ways in which French, German and British managers in an international company cope with cultural differences when they are working together.

What you will gain

After working through Part One, you will gain more insight into:

- the link between culture and management;
- the effect of culture on the management of business;
- models and methods for analysing cross-cultural contexts;
- ways to develop cross-cultural effectiveness.

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