Models For Comparative Analysis Of Culture: The Case Of Poland¹

Dr. Emanuela Todeva

Abstract

This paper examines the main theoretical frameworks for analysis of comparative cultural attitudes. A critical discussion of the work by Kluckholm and Strodtbeck, Hofstede and Trompenaars leads to a new theoretical approach for study of the national cultural attitudes and norms of behaviour. A methodology based on action research is designed to compare the 'internalised' norms of behaviour with the 'perceived' norms. Two different but complementary techniques are applied to a small sample of Polish students to investigate Polish cultural attitudes using Hofstede's dimensions. Significant discrepancy is found between what people perceive and communicate in public as the 'national cultural norm', and what they have internalised as cultural attitude and norm of behaviour. The findings from this exploratory research indicate that there are different levels of internalisation of cultural attitudes, and that respondents express different cultural values in response to different research tools.

Key words: comparative culture, cultural predispositions, transformation in Eastern Europe

Introduction: The Role Of Cultural Studies In International Management

Some of the earlier studies of culture in relation to international business operations date back to the work of Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961), Narain (1967), Nath (1969), Barrett and Bass (1970) and Davis (1971). The second wave of research and publications was marked by the work of Hofstede (1980), Ouchi (1981), Pascale and Athos (1981) and Trompenaars (1993). The growing interest in international and comparative management has produced a number of research perspectives that regard the 'cultural factor' as important.

First, this is the research agenda brought through *social anthropology*: focusing on cultural values, attitudes, structures and relationships (both at national and organisational level, within a single multinational corporation (MNC) and between companies cross-borders) - (Hofstede, 1980, Mead, 1994). Social anthropologists also focus on language, religion, education and the general social and political context in a country (Terpestra and David, 1991).

The second research project is inspired by researchers in the field of *international dimensions of organisational behaviour*. They focus on issues of cross-cultural leadership, employee attitudes and motivation, decision making, communication barriers across cultures, interpersonal relations, cultural synergy, and international management careers (Ronen, 1986, Adler, 1991).

A third agenda is brought by *general management and strategic management* writers, discussing the role of culture in shaping organisational structures of MNCs and the role of their headquarters and subsidiaries (Ronen, 1986, Mead, 1994); the international human resource management in MNCs (Deresky, 1994); and managing competition and collaboration across borders (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1995).

¹ In: *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 10, N. 4, August, 1999, pp. 606-623.

The fourth agenda is driven by practitioners researching the *international dynamics in management practices*. Their focus is on communication and negotiation across cultures, on coping with cultural shock, on managing organisational cultures, and on training for expatriate managers (Terpestra and David, 1991, Jackson, 1993, Ferraro, 1994).

These four research agendas show the broad interdisciplinary interest in *management and organisational culture studies*. They are dominated overwhelmingly by assumptions related to culture - its meaning, boundaries, measurement, understanding, differentiation and convergence. Yet the concept of culture remains one of the main research obstacles. The problem rests not only with the definition of the concept, but also with the biases of its measurement, interpretation and analysis.

The aims of this paper are: to reassess the use of the concept culture in the international management literature; to review the subordinate concepts of values, attitudes, beliefs, and norms of behaviour; to analyse critically some of the leading methodologies used for comparative research; to propose a new methodology for comparative cultural studies, and to apply this methodology in a specific case.

Poland was chosen deliberately for the pilot study as the project conducted there provided an opportunity for an experimental use of new methods and techniques for recording cultural data. The research was conducted in 1995 with a group of students on a course of business administration at the Bialystok Polytechnic in Poland. As a result of this research, a profile of the Polish cultural attitudes is developed, which aims to give a picture of the typical cultural pre-dispositions, prevailing in the Polish society.

Our task is not only to produce a profile of the Polish cultural attitudes, that is comparable with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, but also to establish a new methodology for research in the dynamics of cultural artefacts, such as *attitudes for action* and *societal norms of behaviour*. More importantly, we would like to throw some light on the transformation of the cultural attitudes in Eastern Europe.

While Hofstede's operationalised conceptual framework is used for our research, we apply a modification of Trompenaars' methodology for collecting the data. Trompenaars' approach is incorporated in a methodology for *action research*, details of which are described further in this paper.

The overall aim of the paper is not to compare and contrast Hofstede vs. Trompenaars. We believe that both approaches have been criticised in the literature, and each of them has specific weaknesses and strengths. We would like to build on what we believe are their strengths.

Theoretical Perspectives on Comparative Culture

There are three leading perspectives, according to Martin (1992), that reflect the theoretical discussions on comparative management and organisation culture. First, this is the *integration perspective*, describing cultural manifestations in organisations as self-reinforcing factors, and analysing their effect on organisational behaviour. Second, this is the *differentiation perspective* describing the ambiguity and variation across subcultures - both at national, and organisational level. Third, this is the *fragmentation perspective* describing the internal dynamics of culture, and

the fluctuations in consensus and dissension among members (Martin, 1992). These three perspectives grasp hardly the variety of individual and research approaches.

The classification of another writer in this field defines two major strands of research: on the one hand - *comparative cross-national research*, and on the other - a more *detailed analysis of organisational / corporate / management culture* in particular organisations (O'Reilly, 1996). The first strand, according to O'Reilly, within its boundaries has produced two leading paradigms - *ideational approach*, interpreting national culture as a system of individual beliefs and values within a given society (Hofstede, 1980, Trompenaars, 1993), and an *institutional approach*, looking at the institutions that support the configuration of traditional values and practices (Berger and Luckmann, 1971, Sorge and Warner, 1986). Both ideational and institutional approaches support ambitious cross-national comparisons that may form wider frameworks of interpretation of cultural attitudes and norms of behaviour.

The second strand of research in O'Reilly's classification aims mainly at the analysis of organisational culture, and focuses its attention on intra-national cultural characteristics. It has its intellectual origins within the domain of *social anthropology* (Geertz, 1973) and *organisational sociology* (represented in the work of Durkheim, Weber, Argyris and Bennis, Lawrence and Lorsch, Katz and Kahn, Pfeffer)². The definition of the main concepts in this second strand of research suggests interest mainly in the specific *manifestations of culture* (values, rituals, symbols, artefacts, practices), but with more details than the cross-national research of Hofstede / Trompenaars.

What these two classifications of comparative cultural research give us, in addition to these mentioned in the introduction, is the assertion that the field of comparative cultural analysis is far from a state of consolidation. What is common in this variety of interpretations of culture, is the subjective nature of the research, and the implicit value judgements made by the researchers. The subjectivity of cultural research stems not only from the nature of the observed phenomenon, which requires in any case interpretation and labelling of the facts, but also from the very fact that all of our theoretical constructions are only an approximation to the complex socio-cultural world.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961)

One of the first systematic discussions of national culture and *national value orientations*, and their influence on organisational systems, has been developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). They define five common human problems to which nations collectively are searching for solutions.

In the context of 'personal construct theory', these value orientations are 'constructs' that are commonly shared within a community, and therefore resemble a pattern of *expected / agreed upon /or 'authorised' behaviour*.

Adler (1991)

Very much in the same tradition, Adler (1991) defines these problems as *individual interpretations* that exist at the level of values and attitudes, and that determine human

²For a detailed discussion see Brown (1995).

behaviour. The emphasis here is on the fact that whatever different labels we use, they all mean '*common cultural pre-dispositions to behaviour*'.

The five problems and their alternative solutions, according to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) & Adler (1991), are the following: 1: *the nature of the human being* (good / mixed / evil); 2: *human relationship with the world* (dominant / harmonious / subjunctive [or submissive]); 3: *primary mode of activity* (doing / becoming [or controlling] / being); 4: *individual relationship to other people* (individualism / collaterality / lineality [or hierarchical groups]; 5: *temporal orientation* (past / present / future); and a sixth dimension introduced by Adler (1991) 6: *conception of space* (private / mixed / public).

Parsons (1951)

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck and Adler are obviously influenced by Parsons' classification of relationships that an individual within a society maintains with the environment: *emotionally charged vs. emotionally neutral*; *diffuse* [multidimensional] *vs. specific*; *universalistic* [in terms of applications of the rules] *vs. particularistic*; *ascription vs. achievement oriented*; *self- vs. collectively oriented* (Parsons, 1951).

Interesting fact is that the cultural attitudes that evolve as solutions to these relationships and fundamental human problems are describes in non-orderable categories. For example, 'good' and 'evil' (point 1. in Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck) are not direct opposites in all situations. Both could form different scales, could be measured by different indicators, and could co-exist as dispositions for an action by human beings.

The point here is that the qualitative nature of the personal pre-dispositions enables individuals to make choices that may seem incoherent to an external observer. Individuals could accommodate contradictions, while construing their world, they are living in (Kelly, 1955, Burr and Butt, 1992). This is one of the fundamental facts that corresponds with personal construct theory, and undermines the validity of many research methodologies used for comparative analysis of culture.

Hofstede (1980)

One of the most popular, and yet the most contradictory research, is by Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1990). He aimed at developing 'a commonly acceptable, well-defined, and empirically based terminology to describe cultures' (Hofstede, 1983, p. 77) and, with his systematically collected data across 50 countries, he achieved unmatched simplicity and assertiveness of findings.

The main appeal of Hofstede's research is that it is based on a systematic collection of cultural data. The author describes the process in the following way: 'the four dimensions were found through a combination of multivariate statistics (factor analysis) and theoretical reasoning' (Hofstede, 1983, p.78). Hofstede's factors, however, explain only 50% of the variance across nations.

The four dimensions of Hofstede for evaluation of cultural dispositions are the following: '*power distance*', '*uncertainty avoidance*', '*individualism / collectivism*' and '*masculinity/ femininity*'. Consequently a fifth dimension is introduced by the author - '*Confucian dynamism*', described as the maintenance of long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation (Hofstede, 1993).

Hofstede's theoretical reasoning is linked with Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck and starts from the same assumption that nation's culture, as a collective mental programming, derives from the answers to fundamental problems related to human nature and human existence, that societies, in their historical evolution, have found.

Trompenaars (1993)

Trompenaars has a more pragmatic view on culture. He draws upon the work by Parsons (1951), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), and defines the concept as the way people solve problems, particularly related to relationships, time and the external environment (Trompenaars, 1993). He suggests the following scales on which individual responses to problems are interpreted: '*universalism versus particularism*', '*individualism versus collectivism*', '*neutral* (meaning instrumental and achieving objectives) *versus emotional*' (meaning being personally involved in the choices and the solutions), '*inner-directed* (through personal judgements, commitments and decisions as guides to action) *versus outer-directed* (driven by signals, demands and trends in the outside world)', '*specific* (meaning a prescribed relationship through a technical contract) *versus diffuse* (relationship based on understanding and trust)', '*analysing* (or fragmenting the issues) *versus integrating / synthesising* (as an approach to problems)', '*achieved status* (when status is acquired through recent accomplishments) *versus ascribed status* (when status is attributed by birth, kinship, age, gender or social network)', '*equality versus hierarchy* (the way one treats others)', '*attitudes to time*' (when values lay in the past or in the future and the time is perceived as a linear function, vs. as a repetitive cycles), '*attitudes to environment*' (individual versus nature determinism) (Trompenaars, 1993, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993).

Most of these scales originate in previous research and the authors themselves have rejected some of them as vague and ambiguous for an empirical study (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993). However, Trompenaars's acceptance of the constructivist methodology, that individuals make choices through alternative (or bipolar) constructs, is in accordance with our interpretation of the cultural predispositions.

Trompenaars's and Hampden-Turner's research approach to expose respondents to situations with irreconcilable alternative solutions, matched very well with our belief that dispositions to actions and are revealed through individual choices, rather than through verbal accounts in a questionnaire. This was the main principle that we adopted in the design of our research methodology.

Returning back to Hofstede, some of the discrepancies in his approach are the assumptions he makes of a correspondence between national territory, national culture and organisational culture. His findings are based upon a sample, where the respondents have been clearly influenced by the management of a particular multinational company, and in a specific industry (Jaeger, 1986 and Mead, 1993). This means that the attitudes of the surveyed individuals could be responses to the specific mixture of national and international factors, or could vary across organisations within one national culture.

In a most recent comparative research of organisational culture Hofstede himself distinguishes between three levels of cultural manifestations - *national level*, dominated by the values internalised through the family institution; *occupational level*, dominated by internalised values and adopted practices within the educational system; and *organisational level*, dominated by

learned and adopted practices at the workplace (Hofstede, 1990). This innovation in Hofstede's own work raises another fundamental question - how relevant are his previous findings and to what extent they represent a national norm of beliefs and behaviour, or rather an occupational, or an organisational one.

In spite of the criticisms of Hofstede's work, Mead states that, with its simplicity and well structured approach, the model promises to be the major influence in comparative cultural studies for a long time to come (Mead, 1993). The level of operationalisation of the selected by Hofstede dimensions, was one of the most attractive features that determined our choice for discriminates of the cultural attitudes with our Polish sample.

Personal Attitudes, Values and Norms as Cultural Predispositions to Behaviour

In addition to the problem of appropriate conceptual framework for the comparative analysis of national cultures, there is another fundamental question - what is the object of measurement - relationships, cultural artefacts, or predispositions to behaviour. In the following part we review the key issues in that area, and introduce the hypothesis for our research.

Internalised vs. perceived societal norm of behaviour

In one of his earlier publications Hofstede raised the methodological question about distinguishing between 'desired' and 'desirable'. However, he does not suggest a solution to this paradox. When individuals give an answer to a question - do they refer to their own perspective or view (desired), or to what they perceive is expected from them (desirable), or to what other people would say (desirable as well)? The implications are that empirical research of cultural predispositions, based on opinions of 'what is important', and 'how important it is' are more likely to reflect on the category 'desirable', rather than 'desired'. Therefore, the answers of the respondents to questions of Hofstede's type will measure what is *perceived as important*, rather than what is *internalised as important*.

The distinction that we make here is related to the level of self-awareness, rather than the separation of the private and the public domains. According to the principles of the personal construct theory, the two domains are inseparable (Kelly, 1955, Burr and Butt, 1992). However, through a public discourse of cultural norms, the individuals become more aware of their own behavioural predispositions, and what is expected from them in a particular social context.

The constructs that are developed under the influence of a particular socio-cultural environment, and that are fully integrated into the entire range of behavioural options, hold by the individual, we call *internalised norms of behaviour*. This means, in social psychological terms, that the individuals have fully accepted a particular mode of behaviour as the most appropriate in given situations. These internalised modes of behaviour could be triggered almost automatically in situations, without the individuals being particularly aware of the reasons for their behaviour.

On the contrary, there are constructs that are in the public discourse and individuals are aware of them. Individuals may have internalised them, or may still question them (Kelly, 1955, Burr, 1992). However, the individuals in their attempts to identify themselves with a particular social group (or a nation) will refer to these constructs and will be more willing to articulate them in the public discourse.

This formed our **first hypothesis**, that *there are at least two representations of cultural attitudes (or mental programmes)³ - what individuals perceive as a societal norm of behaviour, and what the majority of individuals have internalised as their own cultural norm.⁴*

National values, attitudes and cultural norms of behaviour

One of the evident contradictions in Hofstede's work is contained in the definition of what actually he has measured with his 116,000 questionnaires? Hofstede claims that he has measured 'values' (as people's desires, preferences and choices) rather than 'attitudes' (as people's perceptions) (Hofstede, 1983, p. 77). Yet, his work is most often quoted as 'a measurement of work-related attitudes across a range of cultures' (Mead, 1990, p. 17), and an explanation 'of the differences in work-related values and attitudes' (Adler, 1991, p.46).

In relation to Hofstede's findings, Adler has difficulties to differentiate between values and attitudes. At the same time she distinguishes between 'values' - as the *general beliefs and preferences* on one hand, and 'attitudes' - as the *personality constructs* which dispose a person to act or react to a certain motive, on the other hand.

We have to stress that this is a misleading conceptualisation of the terms 'values' and 'attitudes'. First of all, these concepts (values, beliefs, preferences, choices, attitudes, norms) are all personal constructs that enable the individuals to make sense of their cultural environment, and to act according to the circumstances and the projected expectations of the 'others'. From the perspective of personal construct theory, these concepts contain both the predispositions for behaviour and the actual behaviour (Kelly, 1955, Burr and Butt, 1992). If we accept this basic principle, the individual response/behaviour and the social environment, in which this response takes place, are inseparable.

Returning back to Adler's work, there is no doubt for her that the individual responses to a problem (or the societal 'solutions' mentioned above) form ordinal scales, which researchers could use to make value judgements about a particular national culture. These judgements are made according to what the respondents think is *typical for a nation*. A classification of cultures therefore appear to be a classification of *typical forms of behaviour*, or *typical predispositions* for an action, expressed by the majority of the members of a culturally coherent group.

Our concern in this paper is primarily with the *national cultural norms* that affect the economic behaviour of the individuals, and are perceived by these individuals as typical for the nation. Our definition of the concept 'national culture' overlaps with the pragmatic description by Clark, et. al. (1997) - "national culture ... refers to the shared attitudes, values and understandings in a society which are shaped by common experiences, and result in collective mental programmes" (Clark, et. al., 1997, p. 350).

This definition refers to 'mental programmes' as the artefacts of the process of socialisation that determine individual and collective actions. These mental programmes are treated as individual predispositions to behaviour. Research on these 'mental programmes' (or both the *perceived* and

³In this paper the concepts of *dispositions, attitudes, or mental programmes* are used as carrying the same meaning.

⁴Our argument is that people communicate in public and share their perceptions of the societal norm. Therefore, the *perceived societal norm* is what individuals *think* other people from their nationality believe in, and what they *know* is expected from them by the public.

internalised norms of behaviour), will have to focus not on individual opinions, but on *individual choices* and their most plausible *decisions for an action* from their own perspective.

These individual response to a problem situation will be based on a temporal assessment of the situation, and a personal judgement with regard to what might be evaluated as the most appropriate action. In this context, a group/collective/national response will be based on an assessment and a decision for an action, driven by norms of behaviour that are either widely communicated and shared within that group, or internalised by the majority of its members.

It is expected that the group awareness of the cultural norm will have a direct impact on the 'choices' of each member of that group, and that the publicly communicated norm will differ by orientation and strength from the internalised norm. This formed our **second hypothesis**, *that there will be a significant difference between the perceived cultural norm of behaviour (articulated in open public discourse) and the individual internalised norm of behaviour, assessed through test methodologies*.

In different situations individuals are expected to resort to different norms in making their assessment of the situations they face, and in making judgements of what is an appropriate action. Our **third hypothesis** in this respect is that *the internalised norm will represent more stable cultural configurations, while the perceived norm will be more dynamic and open for changes and manipulation* (for example, by the media, by the political environment, and by temporary changes in the society).

We need to bear in mind that individuals can make different choices if they refer to different norms - societal, occupational, or organisational norm of behaviour. If we want to assess the national culture, we need to ask the individuals to refer to what they perceive as a 'societal' norm, or value. Therefore, we measure the individual's perception of the societal norm / value, in spite of the extent to which this norm is internalised and has affected the behaviour of this particular individual.

In this respect the method of action research was chosen as the most appropriate, as it involves direct participation of both researcher and respondents in a detailed discussion of the theoretical concepts, the research context, the instrument of observation, and the alternative choices available to the respondents, their meaning and implications both for the learning and the research processes. Our project was designed as an exploratory study, and the main objectives were to test the first two hypothesis defined in this sections.

Research Methodology

It is obvious from a methodological point of view that a comparative research focused on individual behaviour will require a fundamentally different approach. It has to look at the process of interaction between the individuals and the environment, shaped by the cultural predispositions of these individuals. It also requires that the respondents are completely aware of all alternative choices they have as options, and the way their choices will be assessed and interpreted.

Trompenaars proposes a partial solution to the problem of studying predispositions to behaviour very much in accordance with the personal construct theory, by exposing his respondents to a decision situation when they have to make choices between irreconcilable alternatives.

Trompenaars himself does not pretend to develop a scientific approach and to apply a vigorous methodology. His scales, however, are built around some of the dichotomies listed above, and measure the general orientation of the individual preferences (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993).

What we added to this approach was a thorough discussion with the respondents prior to the data collection of all concepts used for the research. Respondent's knowledge of the meaning of different concepts and alternative interpretations is treated in our methodology as a vehicle for mutual understanding, rather than as a source of biases into the data. A shared meaning between researcher and respondents is regarded as a prerequisite to 'clear' cultural data, rather than a 'noise' into the research situation.

In our choice for a methodology we were guided by the fact that standard techniques like Likert type scales, survey questionnaire, and factor analysis can not reveal the particularistic characteristics of individual and collective behaviour. Therefore, in our methodology we aimed at using not only the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative techniques, but to design a new approach, which will measure the most likely individual choices for an action.

We used dichotomous scales, confronting the respondents with irreconcilable positions, and requiring that respondents associate themselves with one of the options, disclosing in this way their *personal predispositions for an action*. This approach allows an assessment of *the majority replies*, interpreted later on as how typical is the manifested orientation in the sample. The larger the proportion of the majority replies is, the stronger predisposition is observed in the sample.

This methodology was used *both* for the study of the *perceived* and the *internalised cultural norms*. The design of the research methodology followed our understanding that the perceived norm of behaviour could be identified through a conversation in public, and the internalised norm requires an indirect testing method. Therefore, it was decided that our field work should use two different methods - one based on a discursive technique for data collection and a conversation analysis, and the other - based on a test technique.

Both methods were designed as modifications of Trompenaars' field approach, asking individuals to make choices between two extreme options, and to assess qualities attributed to Hofstede's four dimensions of culture. The questions for the measurement of the perceived cultural norm referred directly to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, while the questions used in the questionnaire for the measurement of the internalised norm were based on the descriptors of the four cultural dimensions, given by Hofstede (1980).

The action research methodology was chosen as an umbrella framework for the research. It involved both teaching the subject of comparative culture to second year undergraduate students of management and business administration in Byalistok Polytechnic in Poland, and studying their cultural attitudes.

The situation, chosen for our research, was a two hour seminar on the topic of comparative culture with a sample of 38 students divided into three mixed male/female groups, age between 18 and 25 years. This sample for our exploratory research could be labelled accidental and it represents only this particular age and occupation group. However, students were instructed to refer not only to their personal experience, but to what they perceive is the value norm within

their families, communities and nationhood. This gives us a reason to believe that the perceived norm represents a typical cultural predisposition at national level.

The seminar combined both educational and research objectives. The main educational objective was to facilitate learning by discovery in the area of comparative cultural attitudes. The emphasis of the research aspect was the comparison between a group assessment of the cultural values and attitudes (considered to be typical for the Polish people) and an individual self-assessment through responses to our questionnaire.

Hofstede's research findings were used to introduce the leading theories and concepts in organisational and management culture, and to launch our own research project with the students. Issues of cultural differences between nations, equality and inequality, power relations, social values and individual cultural attitudes were discussed with the students.

The entire process of collecting the data comprised of two sets of data: *Assessment of the perceived societal norm* (or what is *typical* for Polish culture) through individual choices and voting on each scale, and *Measurement of the individual attitudes* through a questionnaire designed with 18 questions - all questions required a choice between two alternatives only - *Yes vs. No* answer, or *A lot vs. Very little*. All questions followed Hofstede's operationalisations of the four cultural dimensions.

During the first stage of the research - the group discussion - students were encouraged to elaborate on their personal experience and observations of the typical for the Polish society cultural values, and the way they change and evolve under different influences from the environment (including political, economic, cultural factors, religion and historical tradition). Following that, students were facilitated to analyse the changes in their society through self-reflection and group discussion. Students were asked to state openly their choices between alternative propositions on the Hofstede's four dimensions. The choices were expressed by voting.

During the second stage, students were asked to answer a questionnaire, designed on Hofstede's descriptors for the four cultural dimensions. Power distance was measured through relationships with the authority, including trust and disagreement with superiors. Uncertainty avoidance was measured through responses to change, risks and uncertainty. Individualism was measured through attitudes to rules, and personal expectations for the assessment of performance and achievements. Masculinity was measured through relationship to money, material possession, ambition, environment, quality of life and concern with the society.

The specific objectives of the action research were the following:

- (1) to introduce to students Hofstede's research, and how his theory of organisational culture could be applied to eastern Europe;
- (2) to assist students through a reflective discussion to achieve understanding of the concepts 'power distance', 'uncertainty avoidance', 'individualism-collectivism' and 'masculinity-femininity' and to acquire different means of assessing one's own social experience and the societal norm of behaviour;
- (3) to develop knowledge about the factors that influence transformation in organisational culture in Poland through students' personal accounts of the recent changes;

- (4) to observe how students change their perception of organisational culture throughout the discussion;
- (5) to throw light on the validity of different research and teaching methods applied in the area of comparative culture and to discuss national cultural differences in this context.

The main steps of the research process were the following:

- STEP 1: *Introduction* of the study of organisational culture, conducted by Hofstede with definitions of the key theoretical terms and presentation of Hofstede's classification of the eight different types of cultures.
- STEP 2: *Group discussion* of the four scales for measurement of organisational culture, introduced by Hofstede. Students then were asked to discuss how they perceive Polish culture in terms of these scales. In the discussion they were confronted with questions to present additional arguments in support of their statements. This raised students' *awareness* of different aspects of culture, including factors affecting one's values and judgements and the role of cultural norms as consequences of one's socialisation in a particular society.
- STEP 3: *Self-reflection* - students were confronted with their own different statements and examples so the discussion entered a second phase of deep reflection on the meaning and possible interpretation of the theoretical concepts. Students were reminded at all stages of the discussion that while using particular examples the task is to identify what is *typical for Polish culture* (inspite of gender, age, occupation, or employment differences).
- STEP 4: *Assessment of the perceived societal norm* - the group had to assess what is *typical* for Polish culture through individual choices and voting on each scale (for example, large vs. low power distance). All students were encouraged to think that there is no right or wrong answer that usually there is a spread of opinions in a society and through this experiment they will find out more about their own culture. For three of the scales students insisted on additional proposition - medium power distance, medium uncertainty avoidance and mixed masculinity-femininity. Results were recorded for further comparison.
- STEP 5: *Measurement of the individual attitudes* - students were asked to answer a questionnaire designed with 18 questions, expressing their opinion not on what is typical for the Polish culture, but reflecting upon their personal experience, beliefs and attitudes. All questions required a choice between two alternatives only - *Yes vs. No* answer, or *A lot vs. Very little*. There was one open question on power distance included in the questionnaire. It required students to describe situations in which they would disagree with their boss / superior.
- STEP 6: *Analysis* - students provided technical assistance in the preliminary analysis of the results from the questionnaire including the analysis of the open question on power distance. The results from the voting were compared with the results from the questionnaire and the discrepancies were discussed openly. Both the students and the researcher as a seminar tutor offered alternative explanations for the discrepancies in the two sets of results.

There is obviously a question whether the two types of data collection are compatible. Our argument is that they were designed within the same theoretical framework - Hofstede's four cultural dimensions, and applied with the same fieldwork method of forced choice decision situation. The questions for the questionnaire were based on the descriptors, proposed by Hofstede (1980).

The main difference between our two methods for data collection was the recording of the questions and responses. The first technique implying verbal questions using directly Hofstede's concepts and required publicly announced choices by the respondents. The second technique implied written questions that referred to attributes of Hofstede's four dimensions, and required private choices by the respondents.

Discussion Of The Findings

The main results are presented in Fig. 1. Two profiles of Polish cultural attitudes are described. The first one is based on the vote by the students during the open discussion and the second one is based on the questionnaire responses. Both profiles represent the majority replies, or the mode in the distribution. The two profiles show significant discrepancies between what is perceived by the individuals as a typical cultural value, and what is the internalised value manifested in their questionnaire replies.

Fig. 1: *Profiles of the Polish organisational culture*

The three rows on Fig. 1 represent three types of predispositions. Type 1 (including A1, B1, C1, D1) is labelled *Independence attitude* and comprises of affiliation to low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, high individualism and high masculinity. The second type includes all intermediate characteristics - medium power distance (A2) and uncertainty avoidance (B2) and mixed individualism / collectivism (C2) and masculinity / femininity (D2). It could be labelled *Mixed attitudes*. The third type represents *Dependency attitudes*. It includes high power distance (A3), high uncertainty avoidance (B3), high collectivism (C3) and high femininity (D3).

The results for the internalised norm of behaviour reveal a dependency type of cultural attitudes for Poland, based on high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, high collectivism, and mixed masculinity / femininity. The students' perceptions of the four cultural dimensions, expressed during the discussion stage, draw a completely different profile. Students perceived themselves as having medium power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, high individualism and mixed masculinity / femininity (Fig. 1). The discrepancy therefore is between what is perceived as a norm, and what is internalised as a norm.

The perceived norm is measured through three categories rather than two. Interesting fact is that the intermediate category, introduced during the discussion phase on request by the students, attracted the majority of students' responses only on the scales of power distance and masculinity.

On three of the dimensions we observed significant differences between the perceived and the internalised norm - 'power distance', 'uncertainty avoidance' and 'individualism'. More details of the scores on each scale are given in the Fig. 2-5.

Fig. 2: *Power Distance Value Compared*

	<i>Perceived Norm</i>	<i>Internalised Norm</i>
High Power Distance	21%	54%
Medium Power Distance	47%	
Low Power distance	32%	46%

The internalised norm of *high power distance* (54%) could be explained both with the role of the Catholic church with its hierarchical structure and philosophy (as suggested by the students during the group discussion), and with the extensive hierarchical structures, developed in organisations as part of the bureaucratic machine of the central planning system. However, according to the students' self-assessment, expressed openly through the discussion, typical for the Polish society is a *medium power distance* (47% of the respondents), topped-up by another 32% who believe that the societal norm is low power distance.

Our explanation of these results lies in the role of the communist ideology during the past few decades proclaiming equality in all aspects of social life. However, the recent experience of the Poles has indicated to them a rising inequality and a rapid differentiation of the society in terms of income and opportunities. Students were aware that they have to compromise their views and they insisted on a third category which was not offered initially - medium power distance. We believe this indicates a process of a massive shift in their attitudes, and is a result of contradictory influences on the value system related to authority and power.

Interesting are the answers that students provided on the open question in the questionnaire, related to the power distance scale⁵. Asked about the reasons for disagreement with their superior, they offered two types of reasons. We labelled them *rational* (or clear), and therefore individuals are ready to confront the authority, and *irrational* (or vague) reasons, where there is a large distance between the emotional response and the predisposition for an action.

⁵The results from the open question were obtained through a text analysis of the students' replies.

Among the rational reasons for disagreement with the authority students included: *assessment results, work overload, decisions, discrimination, reliability*. Among the irrational reasons they included: *authoritative opinion, lack of tolerance, suppression, ignorance, irresponsibility, style*. The rational reasons were interpreted as high awareness of the exact role relationship and therefore indicating low power distance. The irrational reasons were interpreted as unclear reasoning which expressed negative feelings against the existing authoritative relationship, and therefore indicated high power distance in terms of readiness for action. These answers were included in the final measurement of the power distance index.

Fig. 3: *Uncertainty Avoidance Value Compared*

	<i>Perceived Norm</i>	<i>Internalised Norm</i>
High Uncertainty Avoidance	13%	52%
Medium Uncertainty Avoidance	39%	
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	48%	48%

In relation to the category uncertainty avoidance we observe another discrepancy between what is *perceived* as typical for the Polish people - *low uncertainty avoidance* (48%) - and what is *internalised* as a norm - *high uncertainty avoidance* (52%). Our explanation of these results lies in the role of the communist system and its claims to provide security for the population. It had induced expectations of protection and certainty.

This norm obviously has been internalised by the young generation even though their present and more distant history maintains the image of a self-reliant individual, driven by entrepreneurial motives. Students therefore opted for low uncertainty avoidance as a perceived norm, 'desirable' by the people. However, they themselves demonstrated high uncertainty avoidance as internalised norm of behaviour.

Fig. 4: *Individualism /Collectivism Value Compared*

	<i>Perceived Norm</i>	<i>Internalised Norm</i>
High Individualism	84%	46%
Mixed Individualism / Collectivism		
Low Individualism / High Collectivism	16%	54%

This was the only scale on which students did not insist on an intermediate category of mixed individualism and collectivism. Their explanation during the discussion for the *high individualism* choice was quite clear. They referred to the Catholic church which projects the individuals as wholly responsible for their actions. The figure of 84% for high individualism assessed through the voting is the highest in the whole research profile. Both the researcher and the respondents were surprised by the results for the internalised norm, which measured clearly a choice of low individualism, or *high collectivism* (with a majority of 54%).

The joint researcher and respondents interpretation of this discrepancy refers to conflicting values and fears of high pressure from the environment. Individuals expect that this environmental threats will require support from a social group to secure both success and survival. As a consequence of that, we may expect that individual's behaviour will be

situationally determined and may vary from case to case. Individuals will still seek social recognition, but will be prepared to take individual responsibilities.

Fig. 5: *Masculinity /Femininity Value Compared*

	<i>Perceived Norm</i>	<i>Internalised Norm</i>
High Masculinity		50%
Mixed - With Predominant Masculinity	84%	
Mixed - With Predominant Femininity	16%	
High Femininity		50%

On this scale students almost refuse to accept the two extremes. They were able to perceive only the category of mixed masculinity and femininity. They all supported the option for a medium masculinity value 84%. The result from the voting confirms the result from the questionnaire - a mixed masculinity-femininity attitude which corresponds with Hofstede's *medium masculinity*. This suggests that individuals tolerate both independence and interdependence and they aspire both nurturing attitude - oriented towards people, and a more decisive attitude - oriented towards achievements and money (see Hofstede, 1980).

The discrepancy between the two profiles raises the question of which account is more valid. If we take Trompenaars definition of culture as *a particular way of solving problems*, we may argue that the internalised norm will have much stronger impact on decisions and choices and therefore will determine directly the individual's behaviour. If we look at Hofstede's analysis, we may argue that both the perceived norm and the internalised norm may influence the individual's behaviour. In a situation of high social visibility that requires high responsibilities individuals may refer to the perceived norm, as 'desired' and 'expected by people'. In other situations, the internalised norm may have a stronger impact on behaviour.

What is important here, is the fact that there are different personal constructs that may determine individual's behaviour in a problem situation. The individual has the full 'liberty' to resort to any previous experience, or any constructed predispositions for an action. It depends entirely on the situation, and the way the individual assesses the expectations of the 'others' from him/her. Both norms could be triggered with equal chances. Therefore, our view is that both profiles are representative for Poland, considering the limitations of the sample size and selection.

Conclusions

The main outcomes of the action research were twofold: firstly, contribution to academic knowledge (pilot testing of the application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions to eastern Europe), and secondly, dissemination of academic knowledge, achieving students' deep understanding of the key concepts from comparative cultural theory. Students' main satisfaction was related to the successful completion of the research, and to the opportunity to reflect upon their own values and attitudes from an external perspective.

The results from the research show a large discrepancy between what is communicated between people as social values and what has been internalised as personal values and attitudes. Possible explanations are, on one hand, the nature of the cultural norms of behaviour as dynamic

constructs that determine individual preferences and choices, and on the other hand - the processes of societal change that affect collective beliefs and values.

The results confirm our first two hypotheses - that there are different cultural norms determining individual conduct, and that there is a variation in the orientation of behaviour which these norms induce. If we generalise upon our results, we could expect that in all societies and cultures we may have at least two different norms - an internalised and externalised one.

The implications for international management practices are that in different situations individuals will make different choices according to one or another norm. There are many training courses for international managers that are built upon Hofstede's cultural profiles, and that project managerial behaviour on that ground. What our findings show, is that national cultures do not affect behaviour in a simple deterministic manner, but facilitate individual's choices for an action.

Referring back to Hofstede's findings, it is not clear which norm he has actually measured. Most of his questions relate to working in organisations, rather than the wider value system of the respondents.

Our third hypothesis was related to the processes of fundamental change that are taking place in eastern Europe. Due to a lack of previous data on cultural attitudes it is difficult to assess what is the direction of the cultural dynamics. We may expect that all societies undergoing rapid changes (including the rapid growth in South-East Asia) will be rebuilding their cultural base which will undermine existing norms of behaviour and generate new ones. What we see as a difference between internalised and externalised norm may in fact be a difference between the tradition and the new socialisation. Further research will be able to provide more answers to these questions.

Early reference to this kind of cultural dynamics is made by Fromm (1995) who discusses the process of commodification of individuals in modern societies due to their awareness of labour markets and value. As individuals become conscious of the fact that their labour could be bought and sold, they discover also that they could 'invest' personal efforts to increase their own 'commodity value'. Although Fromm sees this process in the context of industrialisation of societies, it is certainly an issue related to the process of 'marketisation' which is taking place in eastern Europe.

This also suggests that in rapidly changing societies, that are departing from established traditions, we may expect different and sometimes contradictory cultural attitudes that could trigger opposite behaviour. The implications for international management would be the increased uncertainty of the cultural environment, and the unpredictability of the behaviour of employees or partners in negotiations.

According to students' perceptions of what is typical for Polish culture, it is *Medium Power Distance*, *Low Uncertainty Avoidance*, *High Individualism*, and *Medium Masculinity*. The medium power distance means that they believe in equality and shared democratic values. The low uncertainty avoidance could be interpreted as a strong support for entrepreneurial activities. The belief in high individualism means that people are prepared to take responsibilities themselves, and the medium masculinity response suggests an attitude to balance and harmony between the personal and the societal sphere.

What our research has produced as a profile of internalised values is *High Power Distance, High Uncertainty Avoidance, High Collectivism, and Medium Masculinity*. These results could be interpreted as alienation from authority, intense feelings of insecurity, or need for protection, a strong need for social recognition and support, and internalised values of balance and harmony between the personal and the societal sphere.

Students' insights from the debate provided significant information about the leading factors exercising pressure for change of the values and attitudes, like the macro-economic situation, the political discourse of the new political parties, the rapid democratic changes and the role of privatisation, the role of the Catholic Church and the old traditions in Polish culture. However, major limitation of this exploratory study is that it needs further verification of both the methodology applied, and the results which derived from a fairly small sample with narrow representation.

Finally, we would like to address the question - how different is Poland from its east European neighbours? Each of the east European countries differs in its historical and cultural heritage. Analysing Polish historical roots, Gomulka and Polonsky highlight some features like the romantic nationalism, the belief in 'gentry democracy' (or elected monarchy), the desire to respect minority opinions, and a deep-rooted egalitarianism of the Polish society (Gomulka and Polonsky, 1990). These 'paradoxes' according to the authors are a result to a great extent of the partitioning powers which ruled Poland for large periods during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The foreign authority has generated a division between a sacred patriotic sphere and the 'greyiness of everyday life' in the hearts of the ordinary citizens. This feature has been further enforced during the communist period.

However, the duality between the formal and the informal sphere of life is perhaps one of the distinctive features of all east European societies during the years of the socialist system. The argument that Poland is somehow different in terms of historically rooted public attitudes and beliefs, is difficult to sustain compared with the other countries in the region. The public response during the events of 1989 - 90 in all east European countries demonstrated that below the surface of formal totalitarian rule, there was a dynamic informal sphere of self-perception, attitudes and relationships.

On these grounds, we would expect more similarities between east European nations in regard to their cultural predispositions. On the other hand, the mere fact of different languages, different institutional framework of government, different representation of religions in each country, and different historical experiences, suggests that different cultural predispositions would have been institutionalised and widely shared within the different national boundaries. Further comparative research is required to throw light on this major question.

References

- Adler, N., (1991) *International Dimensions of Organisational Behaviour*. 2/e, Wadsworth Publ. Co., Belmont, California.
- Barrett, G. & Bass, B., (1970) "Culture and Other Explanatory Variables in Comparative Management Studies", *Academy of Management Journal*, 13 (1970), pp. 153-163.
- Bartlett, C. & Ghoshal, S., (1995) *Transnational Management: Text Cases, and Readings in Cross-Border Management*. 2/e, Irwin, London.

- Brown, A., (1995) *Organisational Culture*. Pitman, London.
- Burr, V. & Butt, T. (1992) *Invitation to Personal Construct Psychology*. Whurr Publ., London.
- Clark, T., et. al., (1997) "From a Universalist to a Policentric Approach in Organisational Research", *Advancement in Organisational Behaviour. Essays in Honour of Derek Pugh*, Ed. by T. Clark, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Davis, S., (1971) *Comparative Management: Cultural and Organisational Perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Deresky, H., (1994) *International Management: Managing Across Borders and Cultures*. Harper Collins College Publ., New York.
- Ferraro, G., (1994) *The Cultural Dimension of International Business*, 2/e, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Funk, Rainer (ed.), (1995) *The Essential from Fromm. Life Between Having and Being*, London: Constable.
- Geertz, C., (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, New York.
- Gomulka, S. & Polonsky, A. (eds.), (1990) *Polish Paradoxes*, Routledge, London.
- Hampden-Turner, C. & Trompenaars, F., (1993) *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*. Doubleday, N.Y.
- Harrison, G., (1994) "Culture and Management", *Australian Accountant*, November 1994, pp. 14-22.
- Hofstede, G., (1980) *Culture's Consequences. International Differences in Work Related Values*. Sage, London.
- Hofstede, G., (1983) "The Cultural Relativity of Organisational Practices and Theories", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Fall 1983, pp. 75-90.
- Hofstede, G., (1991) *Cultures and Organisations. Software of the Mind: Intercultural Co-operation and Its Importance for Survival*. McGraw-Hill Int., UK.
- Hofstede, G., (1993) *Images of Europe*, valedictory address delivered at the University of Limburg at Maastricht, 1 October 1993.
- Hofstede, G., (1997) "Linking Structure to Culture", In: *Advancement in Organisational Behaviour. Essays in Honour of Derek Pugh*, Ed. by T. Clark, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Jackson, T., (1993) *Organisational Behaviour in International Management*. Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd, Oxford, UK.
- Keat, R. and Aberchrombie, N., (1991) *Enterprise Culture*. Routledge, London.
- Kelly, G. (1955) *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. Vol. 1: A Theory of Personality, W. W. Norton & Co., New York
- Kluckhohn, & Strodtbeck, (1961) *Variations in Value Orientations*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson & Co.
- Macdonald, S. (ed.), (1993) *Inside European Identities*. Berg, UK.
- Martin, J., (1992) *Cultures in Organisations: Three Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Mead, R., (1993) *Cross-Cultural Management Communication*. John Wiley & Sons, UK.
- Mead, R., (1994) *International Management: Cross Cultural Dimensions*. Blackwell, Oxford, UK.
- Narain, D., (1967) "Indian National Character in the Twentieth Century", *Annals*, March (1967), pp. 124-132.
- Nath, R., (1969) "A Methodological Review of Cross-Cultural Management Research", *Comparative Management and Marketing*, ed. by J. Boddewyn, pp. 195-223. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman

- O'Reilly, J., (1996) "Theoretical Considerations in Cross-National Employment Research", *Sociological Research On-Line*, vol. 1, no. 1, <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/1/1/2.html>>
- Parsons, T., (1951) *The Social System*. Free Press, New York.
- Pittam, J., et.al., (1995) "Australian and Japanese Concepts of Expressive Behaviour", *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 26, No. 5, Sept. 1995.
- Ronen, S., (1986) *Comparative and Multinational Management*. John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Segall, M., et.al., (1990) *Human Behaviour in Global Perspective. An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Pergamon Press, Inc.
- Sorge, A. and Warner, M., (1986) *Comparative Factory Organisation: An Anglo-German Comparison of Manufacturing, Management and Manpower*. Aldershot: Gower, UK.
- Stapley, L., (1996) *The Personality of the Organisation: A Psycho-dynamic Explanation of Culture and change*. Free Association Books Ltd., London.
- Storr, A. (1960) *The Integrity of Personality*. Penguin, London.
- Terpestra, V. & David, K., (1991) *The Cultural Environment of International Business*. South-Western Publ., Dallas.
- Todeva, E., (1997) "Transformation of Organisational Cultures in Eastern Europe: The Case of Poland", *Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Conference on Central and Eastern Europe in a Global Context*, 24-25 June, 1997, Buckinghamshire Business School, UK.
- Trompenaars, F., (1993) *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*. Nicholas Brealey Publ., London.
- Xenikou, A. and Furnham, A., 1996, "A Correlational and Factor Analytic Study of Four Questionnaire Measures of Organisational Culture", *Human Relations*, vol. 49, 3, pp. 349-371.