

# CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT: ESTABLISHING A CZECH BENCHMARK

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## Introduction

Vast amounts of literature are available on Cross-Cultural Management whereas, little is readily available in English for both practitioners and researchers specific to the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the scholarly articles pertaining to Czechia lack substance. Even the Hofstede cultural dimensions for the Czech Republic are based on replications or estimates [16]. The Czech managerial environment is specific in many aspects. As with the introduction of any 'foreign' management practices, enterprises analyse the cost of introduction and if substantial benefits exist, implement oftentimes, to the chagrin of employees. In recent history, the introduction of Knowledge Management [5] or ISO 9000 quality standards met with substantial reticence both on the side of corporations (costs) and employees (resistance to change). Issues are not technically related but as one director summarises, „the cooperative aspects seem too much like old socialist (*communist*) brigades, and it is difficult to teach workers the difference“ [6] (The word *communist* added by the authors). It seems that it is difficult under the best conditions to have Czechs rally behind a cause other than a hockey match that invokes a sense of national pride. Literature reviews conducted in the 2004–2005 period provide little insight into the Czech cultural psyche [3]. The recent consultation on the body of literature demonstrates that there has been little or no movement in this area. Rankings, classifications, and categorisations generated by the leading cross-cultural anthropologists as well as other organisations, continue to portray the original Czech cultural dimensions devised in the early 1990s. Furthermore, studies identify significant discrepancies with the Hofstede ratings [3]. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to

expose the current state of Czech cultural dimensions and consequently, stimulate an open discussion on this topic.

## 1. Culture and Cross-Cultural Management: Literature Review

Culture, as with other terms of this nature does not possess a single definition that is universally accepted. One merely has to enter the noun using any search engine on the Internet to be astounded by the number of results „which is more than for 'politics', 'war', 'environment', or 'sex'“ [47]. Three of the definitions found to be appropriate to this study, view culture as an abstract from the concrete manifestation of comportment transmitted through symbols, and artefacts [30]. Trompenaars and Turner [49] view culture as the method groups resolve problems and Hofstede [15] defines it as the collective programming of the mind that differentiates one group from another.

Despite the number and variety, three elements are consistent in most definitions in that culture is shared through groups ; culture is intangible as it consists of meaning, symbols, and values; culture is confirmed by others as witnessed through the findings of Hofstede and other cultural anthropologists.

Hall provides three cultural elements based on field experience and observations: high/low context cultures, space, and time orientations. Within high context cultures, „transactions feature programmed information that is in the receiver and in the setting“ with little actual information in the message. The opposite is true with low context cultures as „the information must be in the transmitted message“ [14].

Space is yet another dimension to Hall's portrayal of cultures. He identifies three as being intimate, public, and social observed in different ways depending on the culture.

„Each person has around him an invisible bubble which expands and contracts depending on a number of things.“ [14]. Hall's time orientation depicts how cultures utilise and structure time. High context cultures usually deal with various issues simultaneously whereas, low context, sequentially.

The Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck construct [30] consists of six orientations:

1. relationship to nature – control or mastering of nature (domination), submit to nature (subjugation), work with nature (harmony);
2. relationships between people – oneself and immediate family (individualist), one's own group (collateral); one's group rigidly organised (hierarchical);
3. time orientation – events concentrated in the past, present, or future;
4. human activity – concentrate on living for the moment (being), striving for goals (achieving), or reflecting (thinking);
5. human nature – people are good, evil, or a mix of both;
6. space – used as private, public, or public-private.

Unlike other theorists, their model is not dichotomous in that preferences for one orientation do not exclude predilection to another albeit at a lesser degree. Their work provides a model from which cultural variation is conceptualised through the management literature [35]. The framework often cited as being the least used by management practitioners as it lacks measurability. However, recent studies demonstrate the validity of the construct [35].

Triandis simplifies culture into objective and subjective components. Artefacts comprise the objective and norms and values, the subjective [48]. Social behaviour reflects the complexity of the culture. Tight cultures cultivate norms and regulations to avoid deviation while, loose cultures tolerate non-compliance. Likewise, individualistic cultures, as the name suggests, emphasise the individual and self-achievement. In the opposite direction, collectivistic societies accentuate the group.

However, Erez and Earley [11] recommend that individualism-collectivism is not a relationship based on dichotomy between self and communal interests. It is feasible for collectivists to pursue egocentricities in parallel to group-interests as long as the group remains their primary concern.

Hofstede [15] defines five dimensions prevalent to national cultures. **Power Distance** relates to the level of acceptance within a culture to inequality and the existence of an elite group. **Individualism-Collectivism** measures the degree by which the individual or the group are central to cultural attitudes and behaviours. In individualistic cultures, the self is primary over the common good. In collectivistic cultures, family, job, society, and country loyalty predispose behaviour. **Uncertainty Avoidance** gauges the degree to which unknown factors or circumstances threaten the culture. **Masculinity-Femininity**, masculine cultures seek achievement and challenge; feminine cultures include equal treatment for both genders and overall security. Hofstede's most recent dimension is **Long/Short Term Orientation** also known as the 'Confucian Dynamism'.

Following their review of one hundred eighty articles and book chapters published between 1980 and 2002 that use Hofstede as benchmark to their research, Kirkman et al. [28] state, „Hofstede-inspired research is fragmented, redundant, and overly reliant on certain levels of analyses, and direction of effects“. They believe that this over-reliance promotes stagnancy in the field of cross-cultural management and encourage others 'to break new ground'. Although Hofstede's findings often substantiate cultural differences across cultures, his work is frequently subject to criticism. Hofstede elaborates his dimensions from a series of surveys conducted among IBM employees. McSweeney [36] notes that some sample sizes for an entire culture were fewer than one hundred, „so why should a claim to have measured national cultures absolutely or comparatively from the responses of similarly minute proportions of national populations be regarded as more valid?“ On other issues of methodology, criticism identifies the factor analyses as lacking data points for a number of questionnaire elements; two of Hofstede's dimensions are separate without reason, and many items appear unrelated [35].

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' model is that culture is the method by which a culture resolves problems and relates to interactions with others, time, and the environment. The dimensions of culture [49] include Universalism versus Particularism; Individualism versus Collectivism; Neutral versus Affective; Diffuse

versus Specific; Achievement versus Ascription; Attitude to Time, and Attitude to the Environment. Truth and goodness exist universally; while conditions of a unique nature create causality factors, summarises **Universalism versus Particularism**. Individual in contrast to group interests characterise **Individualism versus Collectivism**. **Neutral** cultures control emotions and demonstrative expression is the norm with **Affective** cultures. Attitudes towards space and communication represent **Diffuse versus Specific**. The separation of the private from one's public life describes specific cultures. Diffuse adherents prefer a mingling of both. **Achievement versus Ascription** relate to accomplishment or age, class, gender or education. **Attitude to Time** may be associated with the past, present, or the future. The **Attitude to the Environment** classifies the culture as being part of nature, or that it imposes itself through control.

Schwartz [44], [45] describes culture using three sets of value types: conservatism/autonomy; hierarchy/egalitarianism and

master/harmony. He believes that these couplings are common and consistent among cultures. Social order and security are symbolic of the conservatism value type. Autonomy represents an emphasis on individual pursuit of own ideas. Hierarchical societies stress the validity of an unequal distribution of power and resources whilst egalitarianism is an overt display of justice, freedom, and the associated responsibilities accompanying these values. Ambition and success stylise Mastery and nature and beauty, Harmony. As with others in this field, there is a degree of overlap between Schwartz's classifications and Hofstede's dimensions.

Originally designed to measure organisational leadership perceptions and attitudes, the GLOBE project now monitors cross-cultural differences. GLOBE investigates nine attributes of culture: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Humane Orientation, Collectivism I, Collectivism II, Gender Egalitarianism, Future Orientation, and Performance Orientation.

Tab. 1: GLOBE Attributes of Culture

| Attribute               | The degree that...   |
|-------------------------|--|
| Power Distance          | Society shares power.  |
| Uncertainty Avoidance   | Society tolerates the unknown.   |
| Humane Orientation      | Society rewards fairness, altruism and generosity.                         |
| Collectivism I          | Society encourages and rewards group distribution of resources and action. |
| Collectivism II         | Individuals express pride, and loyalty to family and/or institutions.      |
| Gender Egalitarianism   | Society minimises gender inequality.                                       |
| Future Orientation      | Society invests for the future.  |
| Performance Orientation | Society encourages and rewards performance improvement and quality.        |

Source: [17]

According to Huntington [18], culture „is both a divisive and a unifying force“. Huntington adds a supracultural dimension to the discussion on culture. It is important to note the context from which Huntington develops his categorisation of civilisations, „with the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out its Western phase, and its centrepiece becomes the interaction between the West and

non-Western civilisations and among non-western civilisations“ [18]. Huntington groups the planet into seven civilisations: Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Western, Latin American, and African. His classifications are based largely on religious or ethnic lines and have gained increased interest in recent largely on his views of probable clashes between Western and Islamic civilisations.

Kogut and Singh [31] provide an instrument to measure the degree by which cultures differ from one another. Known as **Cultural Distance**, the index uses an algebraic formula and the scores of Hofstede's original four cultural dimensions. The result represents the extent to which two cultures differ. The method did find support among other academics in determining potential barriers to foreign direct investment (FDI). Álvarez and Marín [1] affirm in reference to the Kogut and Singh theory, „and they carry out an empirical test over 228 entries in the US, founding that MNE with high cultural distance to the subsidiary country may be more likely to choose (sic)“.

Others adopt a more critical approach to the Cultural Distance theory. Evans and Mavondo [12] complain that the index relativity is limited to the United States in that „most people do not benchmark cultural distance on the United States“. In addition, given the nature of the cultural anthropologists cited to date, and in particular Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner [49] dedicate entire discussions on the encounters and possible problems likely to develop during such encounters.

The term **Psychic Distance** is not a synonym for cultural distance. Based on a review of literature, Figueiredo et al. [13] provide a summary of psychic distance as being the result of „cultural differences/ differences in values/ problems of communication“. Dow and Karunaratna [8] assert, „researchers need to be aware that cultural distance is only one aspect of psychic distance“ and outline a set of hypotheses they believe identify the principle dimensions of psychic distance 'stimuli'.

From his on-going experience with the World Values Survey, Inglehart identifies two value orientations relative to a country's wealth: materialistic and post-materialistic. The studies support his thesis that as national wealth increases, cultures become similar as differences diminish. „Modernisation theory implies that as theories develop economically their cultures will tend to shift in a predictable direction, and our findings fit this prediction. Socioeconomic differences are linked with large and pervasive cultural differences“ [19].

## 2. Research Methods

This paper is based on qualitative research, which is partly supported by a quantitative

survey. Babbie [2] describes qualitative research as the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purposes of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. This entails an open-ended observation, and analysis, searching for patterns, and processes that explain the „how“ and the „why“. With the present case, research involves the use of qualitative data acquired from primary and secondary sources, informal discussions, published works and management documents, action research, and participative observations. A definition of quantitative methods used in the survey is „the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect“ [2]. Tsui et al. [51] recommend that researchers „go native“ in order to avoid the pitfalls encountered within comparative cultural analysis. Cross-cultural investigation often relies heavily upon existing theories and categorisations that often misled researchers through this reliance. The authors cite an earlier remark by Tsui [50] in which she encourages country-specific studies „indigenous“ as „such research does not aim to test an existing theory but strives to derive new theories of phenomena in their specific contexts“.

The hypothesis tested in this research is: **Hofstede cultural dimensions attributed to the Czech Republic require substantial review and re-evaluation on a 'culture-alone' basis.**

This study represents a modified ethnographical approach heavily supplemented by traditional academic research and personal experience. The ethnological method as defined by Creswell [7] is „a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system“. The explication is supplemented throughout by former research and observation used to compile previously published works and documents. The research methods selected albeit a mixture of techniques permit flexibility.

The initial and current literature study suggest that while Cross-Cultural Management comprises a diverse and growing body, there is little that discuss the Czech condition since European Union adherence in 2004. As stipulated previously, most cultural studies and analyses date from the 1990s. In addition,

discussions on culture deal principally with organisational culture thus lacking an important correlation with national cultural values. There exists a need to produce a theoretical base from which case studies arise in the future thereby, benefitting the body of knowledge.

The major instruments of the research comprise:

- qualitative research:
  - interpretation of previously published works and management documents;
  - analysis of primary and secondary sources;
  - accomplishment of field observations, and
- quantitative research based on the conducted survey.

To supplement the qualitative research, the survey consists of thirty questions replies of either a 'yes/no', nature or using a Likert Scale (Always / Most of the time / Sometimes / Never). Then, based on respondent opinion and selection, the statement reads as, „I always prefer structure and organisation.“ or „I never prefer structure and organisation.“ Four out of the 6 sets of questions correspond to Hofstede's original four cultural dimensions. The remaining ten questions (5 allocated to each) centre on the cultural correlates of religion and language. All surveys in the protocol are web-based using a specialised commercial service. Consequently, acquired data are processed by elementary statistical methods. Generalisation and induction are then used for the formulation of findings and conclusions.

An invitation to participate that includes a description of the survey, the commitment of anonymity, and the assurance of voluntary participation appears in the Czech language on a number of social and professional networking sites. Electronic mail and Short Message

Service (SMS) also assist in the distribution function.

### 3. Survey Results

The discussion that follows disregards the many rankings and comparative analyses on the Czech Republic and concentrates solely on an in depth perspective of Czech culture ('culture-alone'). Most studies within the discipline of Cross-Cultural Management utilise comparative analysis to substantiate hypotheses drawn from a larger sample. The objective of this discussion is to arrive at conclusions unique to one culture without inferences arrived from recognised sources.

The questionnaire consists of thirty statements from which the respondent modifies the statement to reflect their opinion. For example, the statement, 'I prefer structure and organisation to spontaneity', the respondent selects from the options: always/ most of the time/ sometimes/never. Based on their opinion and selection, the statement then reads as, 'I always prefer structure and organisation...' or 'I never prefer structure and organisation...' On-line since April 2, 2011, the survey produces two hundred one entries, of which 186 are valid – 60,7 % of respondents are male, while 39,3 % are female. Of note is the differentiation of respondents according to historical events having strong influence on the national culture and opinions, attitudes and behavioural patterns – 3,5 % experienced the Communist coup in 1948, 39,8 % the Prague spring in 1968, and 98 % the Velvet revolution. Further respondent characteristics are depicted in Table 2. Table 3 introduces selected answers and their relative frequencies. The entire set of answers together with other data sources (see section 2) are used for further deduction of the research results.

**Tab. 2: Selected respondent demographics (part 1)**

| Age Distribution | %    | Number |
|------------------|------|--------|
| <20              | 2.0  | 4      |
| 21-30            | 26.4 | 53     |
| 31-40            | 31.8 | 64     |
| 41-50            | 27.4 | 55     |
| 51-60            | 9.0  | 18     |
| 61-70            | 2.5  | 5      |
| 71+              | 1.0  | 2      |

**Tab. 2: Selected respondent demographics (part 2)**

| Title and/or Position | %    | Number |
|-----------------------|------|--------|
| Academic              | 14.4 | 29     |
| Manager               | 26.4 | 53     |
| Owner                 | 9.5  | 19     |
| Student               | 12.4 | 25     |
| Clerical              | 10.9 | 22     |
| Tourism-related       | 3.0  | 6      |
| Artist                | 2.0  | 4      |
| Technical             | 4.5  | 9      |
| Professional          | 15.9 | 32     |

| Industry            | %    | Number |
|---------------------|------|--------|
| Government          | 7.5  | 15     |
| Tourism/Hospitality | 5.5  | 11     |
| Consulting          | 9.5  | 19     |
| Entertainment       | 3.0  | 6      |
| Legal               | 1.5  | 3      |
| Telecom             | 11.4 | 23     |
| Banking /Finance    | 5.5  | 11     |
| Medical             | 3.0  | 6      |
| Service Industry    | 14.4 | 29     |
| Education           | 26.9 | 54     |
| Other               | 4.0  | 8      |

Source: authors' research

**Tab. 3: Relative frequencies of selected respondent answers (part 1)**

| Selected Statement   | Overall (%) | Male (%) | Female (%) |
|--|-------------|----------|------------|
| <b>Most of the time</b> I prefer structure and organisation to spontaneity.              | 47.4        | 42.2     | 46.1       |
| <b>Sometimes</b> I take risks.   | 44.2        | 50.0     | 35.5       |
| <b>Most of the time</b> I research my options before taking a decision.                  | 57.9        | 58.8     | 56.6       |
| <b>Most of the time</b> I like a sense of routine in my life.                            | 52.6        | 32.5     | 60.5       |
| <b>Most of the time</b> spontaneity is often an excuse for poor organisational skills.   | 36.3        | 32.5     | 42.1       |
| <b>I believe</b> that child rearing should be shared by both parents.                    | 96.8        | 97.4     | 96.0       |
| Maintenance of the family household <b>should be</b> the responsibility of both parents. | 97.9        | 98.2     | 97.3       |

**Tab. 3: Relative frequencies of selected respondent answers (part 2)**

| Selected Statement   | Overall (%) | Male (%) | Female (%) |
|--|-------------|----------|------------|
| <i>There is a need</i> for more women in decision-making positions.                              | 75.1        | 66.5     | 97.3       |
| <i>I do not</i> consider myself to be homophobic.  | 88.9        | 86.8     | 92.0       |
| <i>There is a place</i> for foreigners in the Czech Republic.                                    | 89.9        | 92.1     | 86.7       |
| <i>Most of the time</i> I view myself more with a team rather than being alone.                  | 48.4        | 46.9     | 50.7       |
| <i>I always enjoy</i> sharing my views with others.  | 54.8        | 54.9     | 54.7       |
| <i>Most of the time</i> , I seek consensus before taking a decision.                             | 45.2        | 41.6     | 50.7       |
| <i>I am always sought</i> for my opinions and views.   | 50.0        | 48.7     | 52.0       |
| In today's busy world, it is <i>sometimes desirable</i> to seek solitude.                        | 67.0        | 61.9     | 74.7       |
| <i>I believe</i> that the government should assist those less fortunate.                         | 85.6        | 78.6     | 96.0       |
| Corruption <i>is</i> a way of life in the Czech Republic.  | 87.7        | 84.8     | 92.0       |
| Elected officials <i>do not</i> require my respect.  | 85.0        | 81.3     | 90.7       |
| <i>I can do</i> something to correct social injustices.  | 73.3        | 65.2     | 85.3       |
| Individuals with large incomes <i>should not</i> pay more taxes.                                 | 58.3        | 58.0     | 58.7       |
| <i>Enough emphasis</i> is placed on the Czech language in our educational system.                | 66.1        | 70.3     | 60.0       |
| Legislation <i>is</i> needed to protect the Czech language.                                      | 54.3        | 45.9     | 66.7       |
| Foreigners seeking employment in the Czech Republic <i>should be</i> obliged to learn Czech.     | 52.7        | 44.1     | 65.3       |
| There <i>is</i> too much advertising in languages other than Czech in this country.              | 71.5        | 61.3     | 86.7       |
| The Czech language <i>is</i> an integral part of the notion of a unique Czech culture.           | 96.8        | 95.5     | 98.7       |
| <i>I do not</i> follow an organised religion.  | 76.3        | 82.0     | 68.0       |
| One <i>does not</i> need a religion to know what is right and what is wrong.                     | 88.7        | 89.2     | 88.0       |
| Catholicism although practised by a minority <i>is</i> still part of Czech culture and heritage. | 94.6        | 92.8     | 97.3       |
| Czech politicians <i>should have</i> some sort of religious affiliation, no matter the religion. | 73.7        | 64.9     | 86.7       |
| Restrictions <i>should be</i> established on the building of mosques.                            | 60.2        | 64.9     | 86.7       |

Source: authors' research

## 4. Discussion

This discussion is largely based on qualitative research results, while quantitative research results in Table 3 serve as support for particular statements. However, an explicit link to this table is not used, as there does not exist a need for the redundant introduction of survey results. As with many other researchers, the interpretation of the results uses Hofstede as basis. It also assures consistency with previous publications, lectures, and discussions of the past two years. The cross-cultural values (CCV) consists of seven categories Equality; The self, the group, and others; The Macho and the Virgin; Risks and distrusts; Looking towards the future; Language and communication; and Spirituality and belief. The first five equate to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, language and communication as well as spirituality and belief being a hybrid of both Hofstede and Hall. Furthermore, five other culture aspects are also discussed in this section – Uncertainty Avoidance; Masculinity/Femininity; Individualism-Collectivism; Power Distance; and Language and Religion.

### 4.1. Hofstede-based results

#### 4.1.1. Equality

This CCV illustrates the view of society today and determines the level of satisfaction with the state of perceived inequalities and injustices. Czechs continue to view their elected officials in a dim light indicative of the number of caretaker, minority and coalition governments. They lack any notion of trust or respect for politicians. Scandals are not necessarily covered-up but there appears to be an unwritten agreement among politicians wherein elected officials – like criminals – respect each other [27]. In a recent poll, cleaners are more positively viewed than members of parliament and ministers [26]. Also reflected in the workplace, there is greater concern for the competency of the leadership.

Although the indication that individuals with larger incomes should not pay higher taxes this reflects the impact of paying additional taxes adds to an increased flow of money from which the elite may pilfer. Despite the media coverage and public opinion, the average Czech seems to be immune to the controversies as long as their life-style is not affected and the economy is good [24].

There exists a level of elitism in those who attend the opera, ballet, and theatrical season

openings, but then this is often common in western cultures wherein those who fancy high culture and can afford it, attend. It is important to note that many cultural events are televised on one of the many Czech public television stations most often ČT2.

Sandholtz and Taagepera [42] categorise the Czech nation as a Euro-Catholic Communist affected country. Their thesis identifies the relationship between communism and elite integrity based on the Welzel model [56] wherein Elite Integrity (EI) comprises Transparency International scores over a five-year span as the actual manifestation of the rule of law. The authors identify the correlation to EI impact as resulting from communism as it „can increase the emphasis on survival over self-expression“ that in turn, reduces values of self-expression and EI. Communism increases secularism through its official anti-religious stance, thus „increasing secular-rational values and hence increasing EI“. Lastly, communism exercises a direct negative setback to EI. They also bring to light the often-common perspective of western non-communist affected cultures that these new democracies are prone to high levels of corruption despite their efforts of democratisation.

In-group elitism is prevalent among academicians and politicians. Although titles are seldom used at the office and employees are on a first name basis [4], they remain popular in academia and the political arena despite the number of scandals related to ‘degree mills’ and doctoral degrees issued without dissertations.

At the workplace, decision-making is still predominantly centralised however, subordinates continue to seek a greater role. There is an increase in the division of the ‘grey’ or ‘black’ suits versus the actual workers. This reflects the notion that there is a mentality mix of the old and new managerial methods and values [6].

There is a tendency towards a rather right wing mentality. Many Czechs (30 %) want President Klaus to occupy a political position after his tenure in office terminates next year despite the number of his blunders [37]. There is speculation of the formation of an ultra-conservative party touting family and Catholic values mingled with anti-EU rhetoric.

As in past generations, the average Czech is concerned with their state of well-being, if comfortable, there is acceptance, if not, there is



discussion. Kuraš [32] states, „above all, their craving for comfort overrides everything else, and they do feel more comfortable than they have been for a very long time“.

### 4.1.2. The self, the Group and Others

There is a growing sense of hedonism, and commercialism. Newspapers, billboards, Metro stations and television advertisements urge the consumer to buy their vacuum cleaners, or to take an inexpensive holiday to the Caribbean this coming winter. With a birth rate lower than the average of the CEE/CIS area (Central and Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States) [52], and one of the highest increase in the divorce rate in last 40 years among OECD countries [38], Czechs now prefer to cohabit. In cases where there is a child and as both parents work, the child spends the day at a nursery school or with grandmother [40].

The individual Czech attempts to remain non-confrontational but this is quickly eroding. Students contribute in class discussions often encouraged by the grade allocation for class participation. There is an increased vocalisation in the workplace. Employees openly discuss projects and methodologies. The workforce has also become mobile accepting better paying jobs outside their region or even country. There is a sense of 'career' especially for new graduates. Hofstede [16] proposes that individualism may also be determined by the richness of a nation measured by the human rights rating and the Human Development Index (HDI). If such is the case, the Czech Republic ranks highly in both and the HDI classifies the country in the category of „Very High Development“.

The omnipresent *we* so prevalent in past generations is replaced by *me*. Czech youth benefit from adhesion to the EU, the Schengen Protocol, academic programmes such as Erasmus, and enhanced language skills. The current generation requires reminding that when they refer to the 'socialist past' that the reality was communist. Students mention that they are privy to little of their parents' experiences and that their educational system does not reflect upon it. One student did remark that with the fall of communism her parents rejoiced at the thought of being able to travel.

Nationalism in the Czech Republic represents an on-going revitalisation of past but mostly future opportunities and glory. Great pride is

taken at sports events; the Czech flag is flown proudly throughout the nation. Even Klaus' sceptical EU stance wins him great acclaim. Despite the recession and even during the adhesion process that carried the slogan 'return to Europe' Czechs outweighed their neighbours financially. There is however an aspect of greed that is often highlighted by the press in that despite this stance as being to a large degree miscreant of the EU and the Euro, the country benefits substantially from its grants.

Clark and Soulsby [6] stress the notion of „Czechness“ particular to nationalism and a „parallel scepticism“ towards Western ideals and motives. Traditionally xenophobic, the country struggles with the acceptance of visible minorities such as the Roma, Vietnamese, Chinese, and others. This is less frequent with the current generation but exists with those of the previous. Public officials overtly pronounce racist remarks concerning the Roma, and neo-Nazis continue to protest unabated in many Czech towns [21]. On a brighter note, recognising the number of foreign crime syndicates in the country, legislation to recruit foreigners into the police force is currently under review [25]. There is less animosity towards the traditional west and east considering the huge annual influx of tourists, the number of MNEs within the territory and the dependence on the natural resources originating from the Russian Federation [20]. There is a reliance on resources of cheap labour from Moldova, the Ukraine and other sections of the former USSR.

### 4.1.3. The Macho and the Virgin

Despite being recognised as the gay porn capital of the world [54] the citizens of Prague as well as the country as a whole are conservative and modest. Given the communist past, gender roles continue to be fluid outside the newly created management and business sectors. Women are making strides in leadership roles. The Globe Gender Gap Report 2010 indicates that females are better educated, live longer, but earn approximately 60 % less than their male counterparts.

Czechs are avid sports enthusiasts proclaiming that hockey is now their national sport thereby replacing football. *Hokejista* hold national hero status. Their activities are followed in the daily newspapers or on-line. As many Czechs play for the NHL games are

transmitted from Canada and the US with Czech commentary. Both sports are often criticised for their violent behaviour and fan hooliganism. Englund [10] proposes that this love of hockey translates to national visibility on an international level and of course, money. Both hockey and football convey a macho image given the violent nature of the game. They also bestow upon the player instant prestige and a sense of nationalism by playing for Team Czech.

A recent Intel Corporation survey on manners, comments that the Czechs consider both nail biting and nose picking as extremely impolite [33]. They however, tolerate vulgar language, smoking, and extensive use of technology often at the supper table or in public but never in the bedroom. Further interpretation of what many would consider as quirks offer insight to the Czech psyche. The association of bodily functions with modesty correspond to the western notion of feminine attributes. Swearing and 'high tech toys' portray a more masculine image. There is also the element of vanity by which one displays their recent acquisition of the latest technology in a mobile or netbook.

#### 4.1.4. Risks and Distrusts

Avoiding risks signifies a return to what is Czech, what is comfortable, and what is known. Despite the ordeals experienced during the former regime, the Nazi protectorate, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there was a systemic order to life in the Czech Lands. Intellectuals opposed and the average person complied. For some Czechs, the transition period that has lasted now for over twenty years, is unnerving and a longing for stability is centre to their sense of welfare.

Economics drive the new Czech society. Economic is synonymous to financial gain that consecutively gauges the collective level of comfort and happiness. Distrust of the European Union despite the benefits in trade, commerce, education, and international visibility, remains a vehicle by which the state reinforces the uniqueness of the Czech nation. Risks are often identified based on their impact to national stability as in the case of foreigners, visible minorities, and the increase of foreign-based criminality. Despite the high level of state corruption, foreign-based corruption appears as a social menace requiring the assistance of anti-crime teams. Czech-based, home-grown

corruption hardly musters interest in implementing corrective legislation.

Despite the non-religious persuasion of most Czechs, Czech society and culture is conservative and often more right wing than centre. The re-catholicisation process started by the Jesuits coupled with Hapsburg rule continues to distil an inherited sense of risk avoidance through well-established rules and values. Seeking a sense of nationhood, loyalty and patriotism is essential to the identification of Czech culture. The means by which this process fulfils its mandate are questionable where Czech cultural values continue to differentiate between 'in' and 'out' groups that invoke discrimination and violence.

Vodrážka [55] suggests that without an overhaul within the civil service that social capital in the Czech Republic falls behind that of most European nations. Based on the World Value Surveys, he cites the low level of Czech trust on their social and governmental institutions. This he claims is largely due to the level of corruption that is higher than its high level of economic performance.

#### 4.1.5. Looking toward the Future

Despite the cynicism of the government, Czechs appreciate their EU membership and its benefits. They tend to associate the EU with their success and prosperity while seeking an independent and self-serving role in the union [4]. Czechs are innovation driven (Švejk mentality), and possess the necessary efficiency enhancers and sophistication factors to rank within the top fifty countries (out of 142) by the Global Competitive Report (2011–2012) [43]. In addition, Prague is the leader in Central and Eastern Europe for business location [23]. The infrastructure exists but is the culture ready becomes the question. There is a generational divide. Youth are better prepared in adapting to societal circumstances and changing conditions. They are better educated and travelled. The current generation is 'Euro-americanised' by the constant exposure to outside media distributed through their local cable company, internet service provider, radio stations, and the press. As in many western countries, the elderly seek solace in a respect for tradition and comfort whilst living on their state pensions. Many prefer the old ways when life was more constant and less belligerent.

Hofstede [16] provides characteristics particular to short- and long-term orientations (LTO). Although more aligned with eastern societies they depict opposites in a range permitting little grey area in between. For example, a short-term orientation possesses „talent for theoretical, abstract sciences“, whereas, long-term characterises, „talent for applied, concrete sciences“. With these parameters how does one categorise a nation that gave the world the contact lens (Wichterle and Lím), modern pedagogy (Komenský) and the most effective drug in the treatment of AIDS (Holý).

### 4.1.6. Language and Communication

The Czech language is an extremely rich and complex method of communication consisting of seven cases. Sentence structure is determined by the emphasis the user wishes to convey. It consists of three tenses only, past, present, and future. The grammar although appearing complicated, is logical in structure with few exceptions. The language deploys double negatives and prepositional prefixes. Articles and pronouns are used only to accentuate. When spoken, the accent is placed on the first syllable often leaving the impression of a monotone. One phrase that often baffles the non-speaker is *strč prst skrz krk* (stick a finger through your throat). Notice the lack of vowels.

The uniqueness in the language is in its directness and compactness not requiring abbreviations or subtext to convey the message. Czechs are prolific users of social media [22] and prefer chat (IM) and SMS to e-mail. In business although e-mail is used, a telephone call is still the communication method of choice.

Despite the syntax of the language, it is how Czechs use it to communicate especially with foreigners. Czechs enjoy talking and the more intellectual the topic, the more stimulating the discussion. There is a tendency to avoid blame through evasiveness; confrontation through appeasement or simply 'never mind', and avoidance through ignoring the issue or topic. Leading questions are replied with a simple 'ne' (no) or 'ano' (yes). This requires another question to further the discussion.

Over recent years, there is concern over the presence of English words such as *tomatový džus* instead of *rajčatová šťáva* for tomato juice.

### 4.1.7. Spirituality and Belief

While overwhelming non-practicing, the majority of Czech do believe in a superior force and want their political leaders to be church (or synagogue)-goers [34]. The President often reminds his fellow citizens to return to Christian values following the lead of the pontiff during his last visit to the Czech Republic. Despite their lack of trust in organised religion, particularly the Roman Church, there exist cultural and political ties that continue to exercise strength. Annual Christmas Mass (as well as the 2009 Papal Visit) is televised in their entirety by the state owned broadcaster.

Vávra [53] analyses religion and social values using both Inglehart and Schwartz as foundation to his research. His findings suggest that there is a distinct relationship between religious affiliation and values. He also clarifies an issue often misinterpreted by the popular Czech press specifically, that the Czechs are not atheists but rather are not adherents. From his study, two elements arise. Trust in the Church as an institution is on the decline "in the nation's collective memory the Catholic Church (the most significant and for many people, the only church) due to the current issue on restitution (post-1989)".

The Church continues to dialogue with anyone willing to listen. In recent months, the newly appointed archbishop has sought mayoral support in condemning the Prague Pride Parade whilst finalising the twenty-year long restitution package from which the state transfers to the Church 59 billion CZK over 30 years and fifty-six per cent of confiscated properties.

## 4.2. Further cultural features

### 4.2.1. Uncertainty Avoidance

There is little evidence of a 'Bohemian' lifestyle of spontaneity and living for the moment, as the majority of those surveyed prefer a sense of structure and organisation. Risks-taking is not averted although one may categorise the latter as being of the calculated variety. Individuals are better trained either through formal instruction or through experience. Risk Management although a popular course offering, is always supplemented by 'what feels best at the moment' given the circumstances at hand. Using Schwartz, Řeháková [41] demonstrates that openness to change and tolerance is

frequent among ages up to 24 whereupon it decreases with other age groups. This demographic possesses a keen sense to travel and visit within the country as well as out. The isolationist fear of the past unknown to this generation is replaced with adventure despite the inherent risks. Students enrol in programmes to study abroad and to gain work experience wherever the opportunities exist be it in China or the United States. In their study on intolerance, Klicperová-Baker and Košťál [29] contend that the population of the Czech lands is “relatively homogeneous“. When queried as to their views on immigration and the subsequent effects on Czech society, only 13 % of those surveyed viewed positively. Individuals not in favour often cite concern over the well-being of the country. This idea associates itself with the Czech sense of avoidance to repeat past periods of state-sponsored deprivation. With a striving tourist industry and Czech universities eager to attract foreign students, it is not surprising that close to 90 % agree that the country is foreigner-friendly for those enjoying a temporary visit to the Czech Republic.

#### 4.2.2. Masculinity/Femininity

The responses suggest that on the home front traditional gender roles although still prevalent in the workplace are more liberal. Individuals seek a harmonious balance in both the upkeep of the household and child rearing. Three-quarters agree that the presence of women in decision-making positions is substantially lacking. Despite comments in the media to the contrary, those polled are overwhelmingly non-homophobic despite negative remarks from the Czech President [39].

#### 4.2.3. Individualism-Collectivism

Drnáková [9] deploys the Schwartz human values scale in a study conducted in the early 1990s, repeated at the beginning of this century. She reports that with the continual transition, the Czech Republic therein the “general tendency towards self-direction, hedonism, universalism, and achievement are on the rise“. Having to work with a team as an individual does not continue the collective ideologies of former regimes. Given the nature of many of the occupations cited by the respondents (project management, tourism, medicine), it is impossible for these individuals to work in

solitary confinement. Consensus is oftentimes a central element in many professions. In addition, there is indication of idea sharing and consultation indicative of a professional sense of goal achievement while at the same time, identification of those who possess the knowledge required. The former adage of ‘pretending to work while pretending to be paid’ no longer holds significance as the majority agree that it is advisable to seek solitude from a busy schedule when possible.

#### 4.2.4. Power Distance

After a succession of coalition and caretaker governments and internationally recognised corruption, Czechs are worrisome of their elected leadership. Czechs readily identify that corruption is rampant and is taken for granted. Politicians no longer deserve respect. Despite these political drawbacks, those surveyed still believe that they are in a position to better social injustices. In view of the political climate, the on-going role of the media in exposing scandal and corruption on a daily basis, the Czech citizen believes that there is little worth in taxing the rich to add additional funds to what is publicised as an increasing corrupt national administration. Like many democracies, Czechs are extremely critical of their political elite.

#### 4.2.5. Language and Religion

Shenkar and Luo [46] cite that language and religion are substantial correlates to national culture. A Czech proverb once translated reads, learn a new language and get a new soul. Although Czechs in general are flocking to language-schools and most universities offer advanced degree programmes in English, French, German, and Russian, there is a distinct sentiment that the Czech language deserves respect and is an integral component of national culture. Advertising at Metro stops and stations are often exclusively in English. One immediately thinks that it is for the benefit of tourists however, the goods advertised include such banal items as summer sandals or housewares. It is common to see these laminated posters vandalised with spray paint requesting ‘in Czech please!’ with the latter being the more polite version. Religion is often misreported by the media claims that the Czech Republic is an atheist entity. Increasingly the proper term deployed by Czech sociologists is

'non-religious'. Comparable with other secular societies such as Québec, religion is considered part of Czech culture and heritage and religious symbols as cultural representations of the past. Religious festivals and holidays although without religious significance are still celebrated. Mikuláš falls on the eve of Saint Nicholas Day wherein Mikuláš accompanied by an angel and a devil visits children. Father Christmas does not deliver presents at Christmas but rather the Baby Jesus. The Feast of the Three Kings (Tří Králové) ends the Christmas celebrations. Early Slavic saints and even a Czech heretic (Jan Hus) are allocated special days as statutory holidays as is Ash Wednesday and Easter. Consistent with recent national statistics those surveyed contend that they do not follow an organised religion and that Czech politicians should have some sort of religious affiliation. There is an issue relative to the 60.2 % ready to impose restrictions on the building of mosques. To categorise immediately this result as a reflection of xenophobia is premature. This possible 'knee-jerk' reaction could essentially result from media coverage in the west since 2001.

## Conclusion

The hypothesis "*Hofstede cultural dimensions attributed to the Czech Republic require substantial review and re-evaluation on a 'culture-alone' basis,*" is confirmed based on the qualitative research demonstrated by the literature review, field observations, and survey. The Czech cultural values identify that although the sense of Švejk is still a predominant factor in the Czech psyche, this becomes further complicated in a period of economic turmoil with a rebirth of conservative values, high corruption, and a return to „Czechness“. Newly discovered freedoms assist in developing a vibrant economy and Euro-scepticism. While equality exists within the new vision of the family, women retain oftentimes, second-class roles at work regardless of their contribution. Although welcoming tourists who contribute a substantial factor to the nation's finances and prosperity, Czechs remain closed to minorities and worrisome of foreigners. Indeed organised religion plays an insignificant role in the daily lives of most citizens, but it is considered appropriate to be buried within the rites of the Latin Church.

Nevertheless, this explication is limited in the scope of research and discussion. In each area, there remain many opportunities for further investigation and study. One avenue is to replicate the questionnaires with more varied and larger populations. A Czech-language version of the CCV questionnaire along with interviews adds to the possibilities.

Drawn from a number of studies, this article delivers an updated overview of Czech culture. It contributes to both an academic as well as a practical appreciation of a specific entity. Managerial culture is often loosely defined as the way that one does business within the context of an enterprise. Transposing this notion to a national culture signifies that a culture shared at a larger, national level equally provides insight as to how the majority of citizens would conduct commerce within a specific political body sharing a common cultural identity.

The authors firmly believe that countries such as the Czech Republic deserve serious study given their historical past and recent advances made over the past twenty years. This research permits the practitioner additional insight into the Czech psyche possibly alleviating or facilitating business concerns and issues. To the academician, especially the non-Czech speaker, it opens a new venue for further research and study.

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**CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT: ESTABLISHING A CZECH BENCHMARK****Richard Brunet-Thornton, Vladimír Bureš**

*One of the more frequently used terms to describe international business in the twenty-first century is globalisation. To many, this implies an easier access to foreign markets and a harmonisation of business practices across the planet. However, to some this movement threatens indigenous values, norms, and traditions. Cross-cultural management has long been perceived as an important branch of international management. In the past, it has provided the community with insight as to why social and commercial processes may differ from culture to culture. The scholarly articles pertaining to the Czech Republic lack substance. Even the Hofstede cultural dimensions for this country are based on replications or estimates. Therefore, this paper investigates the current state of Czech cultural dimensions. Based on the qualitative research consisting of literature review, field observation, and surveys, the hypothesis „Hofstede cultural dimensions attributed to the Czech Republic require substantial review and re-evaluation on a ‘culture-alone’ basis“ is confirmed. The paper discusses attained results from seven perspectives namely, Equality; The self, the group, and others; The Macho and the Virgin; Risks and distrusts; Looking towards the future; Language and communication; and Spirituality and belief. The first five equate to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, language and communication as well as spirituality and belief being a hybrid of both Hofstede and Hall. Furthermore, five other cultural aspects are also discussed in the paper – Uncertainty Avoidance; Masculinity/Femininity; Individualism-Collectivism; Power Distance; and Language and Religion. The paper establishes a Czech benchmark, which is open to discussion and may be used in both theory development and practice.*

**Key Words:** culture, cross-cultural management, Czech Republic, Hofstede cultural dimensions.

**JEL Classification:** M14, P20.