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Subfly Student Democracy - Culture

Submitted to

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By

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A. Understand cultural differences:

- Define the role of national cultures, organizational culture, and styles of management

The national cultural system is made of values, beliefs, norms and basically is the collective programming of mind. According to Hofstede's original cultural dimensions, national culture differences can be expressed as values on six dimensions: power-distance, uncertainty-avoidance, individualism-collectivism and masculinity-femininity, short and long term orientation and indulgence versus restraint. At the same time Trompenaars proposed dimensions that point out that each culture has its own specific solutions for universal problems. He's approach is driven by five dimensions: universalism-particularism, individualism-collectivism, neutral-affective relationships, specific-diffuse relationships and achievement-ascription, sequential or synchronic time and last but not least inner or outer directed.

The role of national culture is influencing international business management practices and approaches. Studies have shown repeatedly that national culture as well individual culture greatly affect the corporate cultural system in many ways. For example, national culture influences managerial decision-making, leadership styles, communication, motivation and human resource management practices, organization design, people's expectations and reward system.

On the other hand we have the organizational culture, this is the key to a powerful institution construction especially when you have an international institution, or in our case universities that are hosting international students. An organizational culture is supposed to unite people regardless of their national culture, its role is to provide a common goal that will unite people. While you cannot change human nature, you can increase trust through strong organizational cultural practices. You can also promote diversity and inclusion in people's attitudes, fostering a more inclusive work environment.

The challenge is to understand how to manage a diverse community. There are 10 common known management styles that can be implemented: coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter, Laissez-Faire, coaching, transformational, charismatic and

supportive management. Management's role is to design the optical culture according to the organization's core values and needs. What makes managing diversity difficult is that it requires special care and a particular set of skills and strategies.

- Present yours and each of your fellow student's thoughts about beliefs and values during interactions between international students and University, Paola

During the interaction with the fellow students we have discussed the cultural differences we have and the first one and maybe the most noticeable was that Norwegian people have more of a neutral attitude towards what others think about them, whilst Romanian people are very concerned about this specific matter. Another thing we have observed is that Norwegian people are not as materialistic as Romanians, they don't tend to spend money on luxurious things, they have more of a minimalistic approach towards material things and that's why people here seem to make better choices in regards to how to spend their earnings. Besides that, the promotion of human rights and democratic principles is at heart at the Norwegian foreign policy, compared to other countries, the governments respect and ensure human rights to a large extent. Even though Romania is a country that also promotes that, it's not always felt in the society considering that it's still male dominated. Last but not least, Romanian people compared to Norwegian ones are more open to having social interactions with foreigners and are more comfortable in foreign environments. At the same time, we observed and got confirmation from Erik that Norwegian students are very skilled and are doing very well when you push them from their comfort zone.

- Formulate a strategy to be included in the University's founding document, Daniela

All learning programs will be designed with the purpose of helping young people build twenty-first century competencies which focus on "what's next" versus "what's now". These fall into four main categories:

Critical thinking and problem-solving: *the students will develop the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve problems.*

Communication: *the students will gain presenting and public speaking abilities in at least one international language.*

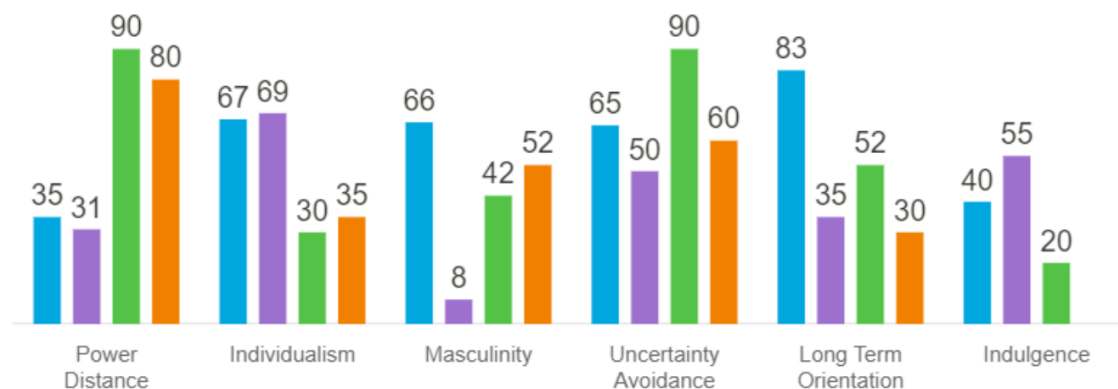
Collaboration: the students will acquire teamwork and leadership skills in diverse cultural groups.

Creativity: the students will be encouraged to produce independent thoughts, to use their imagination and natural talents to innovate and create authentic work.

B.Implementation: Submit propositions for

- Relevance of national culture / organizational culture dimensions, Vlada

If we speak about Hofstede's theory and think about the concept "students democracy" both of these concepts resonate.



Germany ×

Norway ×

Romania ×

Syria* ×

This dimension deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal – it expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst us.

Highly decentralised and supported by a strong middle class, Germany is not surprisingly among the lower **power distance** countries (score 35). Norway scores low on this dimension (31) which means that the following characterises the Norwegians style: Being independent, hierarchy for convenience only, equal rights, superiors accessible, coaching leader, management facilitates and empowers. Both Germans and Norwegians are not afraid to avoid

power. Romania and Syria scores are high on this dimension (score of 90) which means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification.

One important difference between Romania and Moldova is **long term orientation**. Normative societies which score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honored traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.

With a relatively low score of 35, Norwegian culture is more normative than pragmatic. Norwegians have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth; they are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results. Romania has an intermediate score of 52 on this dimension.

With a high score of 60 in this dimension, Syria has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high Uncertainty Avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas.

Germany's high score of 83 indicates that it is a pragmatic country. People believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results. For example, German students think that a teacher should evaluate the business profitability, not the impact on the society.

The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine).

Norway scores 8 and is thus *the second most Feminine society (after the Swedes)*. The dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. For example, both mother and father can have a holiday to stay with their baby. Concepts like racism and sexism practically don't exist among Norwegians.

Romania scores 42 on this dimension and is thus considered a relatively Feminine society. Romanians focus on "working in order to live", managers strive for consensus, people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation. Incentives such as free time and flexibility are favoured. Focus is on

well-being, status is not shown. Syria, with an intermediate score of 52, does not have a clearly dominant preference in this dimension. With a score of 66, Germany is considered a Masculine society. Performance is highly valued and early required as the school system separates children into different types of schools at the age of ten.

During the faculty every student manifests a **collectivist or an individualist dimension**. It has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In Individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In Collectivist societies people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty. In many cases collectivist students are more friendly, extroverted and are based on a social group. Individualist persons focus on themselves, are achievement oriented and put tasks and goals above people and relationships. Likewise, when coming to a job, employees also there are individualist and collectivist persons.

On the one hand Norway (69) and Germany (67) are considered Individualist societies. This means that the "Self" is important and individual, personal opinions are valued and expressed. Communication is explicit. At the same time the right to privacy is important and respected. The employer-employee relationship is based on a contract and leaders focus on management of individuals. Feedback is direct and nepotism is not encouraged. Small families with a focus on the parent-children relationship rather than aunts and uncles are most common. There is a strong belief in the ideal of self-actualization.

On the other hand, Romania and Syria, with a score of 30 and 35 are considered collectivistic societies. This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and overrides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. Because of the variety of nationalities, here you may meet students from the Middle East, for example Syria, who have a collectivistic mindset. I think the most important challenge for them is to adapt to the Nordic mentality, which is not so hard.

The dimension **Uncertainty Avoidance** has to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? Norway scores 50 and thus does not indicate a preference on this dimension, it

means that Norway is in the middle. Maybe a reason for this are wood, fishing, extractive industries in this country, which involve some risks.

At the same time, Romania scores 90 on this dimension and thus has a very high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high Uncertainty Avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. In these cultures there is an emotional need for rules (even if the rules never seem to work) time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted, security is an important element in individual motivation. Romania was a soviet country, where citizens were used to respecting rules.

In Germany (65) there is a slight preference for Uncertainty Avoidance. In line with the philosophical heritage of Kant, Hegel and Fichte there is a strong preference for deductive rather than inductive approaches, be it in thinking, presenting or planning: the systematic overview has to be given in order to proceed. This is also reflected by the law system.

With a high score of 60 in this dimension, Syria has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Norway is the most **indulgent** of these countries.

The low score of 40 on this dimension indicates that German culture is Restrained in nature. Societies with a low score in this dimension have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. Also, in contrast to Indulgent societies, Restrained societies do not put much emphasis on leisure time and control the gratification of their desires. People with this orientation have the perception that their actions are Restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong. With a very low score of 20, Romanian culture is one of Restraint.

- Building knowledge and insights on cultural differences, Paola

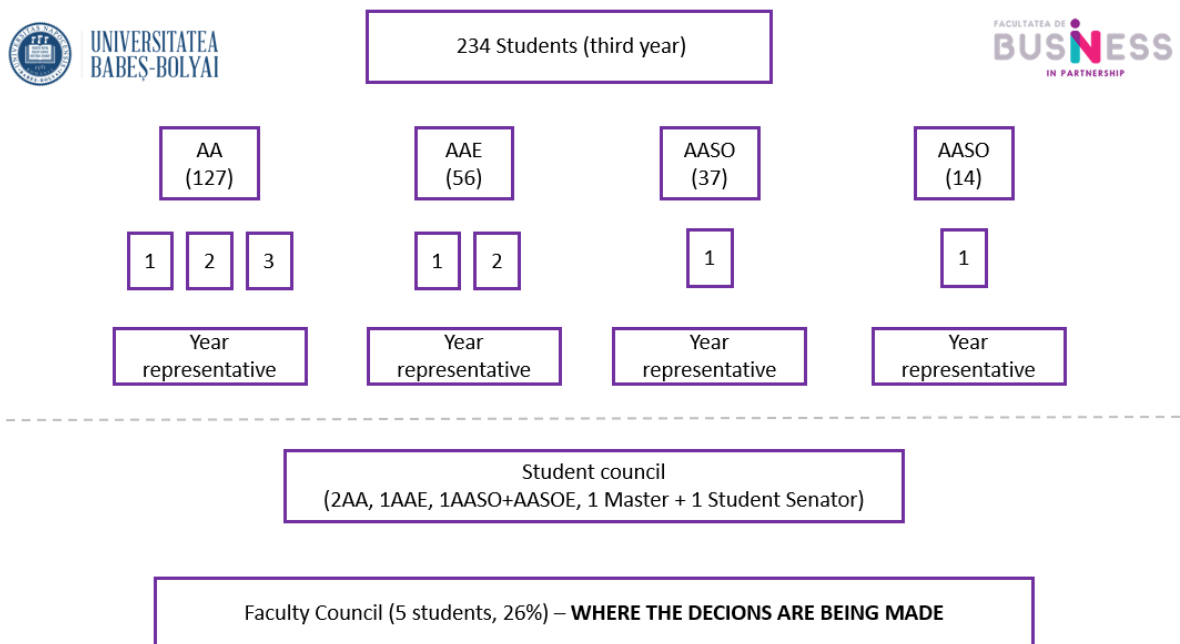
The interactions between the international students has created an enhancement of intercultural interactions leading to a series of advantages, for instance it made us more conscious of our culture and made us appreciate it even more. Moreover, it's an unforgettable experience where we learned the differences between us, between the mindset we have, the language barrier, the stereotypes and so on. Therefore, this led us towards acceptance and understanding the variety of cultural perspectives. Also, from the educational perspective it

has enhanced our interest in global issues as well as a broader general knowledge. On a personal level, this experience has encouraged students to develop independent opinions, informed decisions and strived to attain fresh goals. Nevertheless, a noticeable change was that this international experience has challenged us to get out of our comfort zone and create meaningful relationships, made us more mature and ready to face future challenges related to this type of interaction. Talking about a long-term perspective, this made us find ourselves more prone to be comfortable in foreign environments. Increased pressure to communicate and relate to others developed an awareness of group dynamics and personal sensitivity towards others. Last but not least, throughout this whole student exchange students would manage to obtain an excellent measure of personal flexibility, reaching the ability to compromise, focus and succeed through challenging times.

- Student representation in boards and committees, Daniela

Of course it is very important to have student representation in our universities and in public administration structures, and we came a long way to ensure that in our country.

Faculty level:



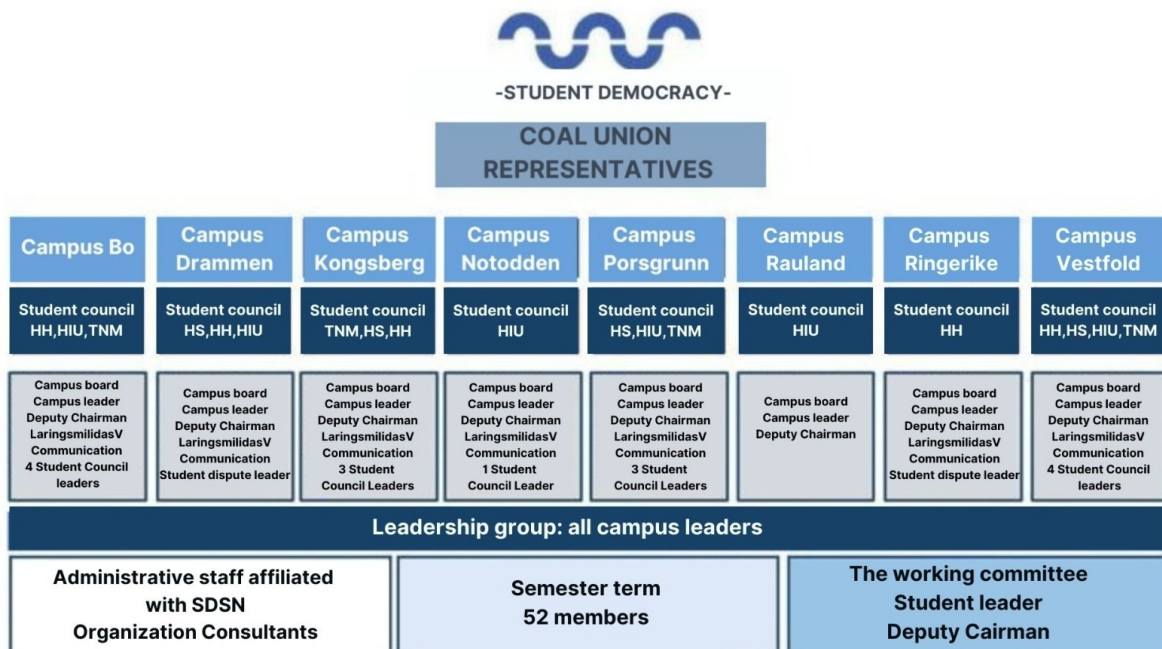
University level:

- University Senate
- University Board of Directors
- Student Entrepreneurial Society
- Evaluation and Quality Assurance Commission
- Scholarship Commission
- Commission for Accommodation in Dormitories
- Commission for granting Student Camps

State level:

- Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)
- Delegates from student federations in Ethics and Management Commission
- National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania - member of European Students and EuroDOC

Norway:



And for sure, these complex structures of Student Democracy are a huge progress for our societies, but as I emphasized two month ago in Cluj, another major aspect is where does Student Democracy take place. Definitely not in boards concerning climate and environment

Of course there is the argument that we don't understand enough about this complex matter, or aren't mature enough for deciding about the future of all people on earth. But isn't it highly unfair? Because it is our future in the first place, and our stake in this is huge.

I personally have invested a great deal of time studying the cause of the environmental crisis we have now and what we need to do in order to address it and I'm convinced that many students, all around the world did the same or at least would be interested in climate science if they had the opportunity to learn. Maybe this should be a call for action to our universities to focus more on environmental education and to us, students, to demand from them relevant actions.

- Building a common culture and identity, Daniela

Who is deciding what the common culture and identity of an institution should be like? We suppose it is done by the founders and then, as the administration, the generations of students and the times change, it is adapted in order to be relevant, or at least it should be. We interviewed our colleagues from Romania, Moldova, Germany and Norway and using their opinions, came up with this set of values that are important for us, things we resonate with and we want them to be reflected in the culture of our universities:

1. *Inclusiveness*: All the students, including the minorities and the non-academic staff should be consulted before making decisions that affect them directly or indirectly. They also should be included in the process of designing, revising and improving the educational programmes.
2. *Relevance*: The subjects and assignments have to be adapted to the current business practices and to the technological and scientific progress. Design for the real world. (In Germany they have projects with startups, in Norway they don't use just excel but software that is actually used in companies. How relevant is what we're doing at our faculty?).
3. *Expertise*: It is mandatory for the teachers to have real work experience in the field of the subject they are teaching. How can we learn about administrating a business from people that never had administrated one?

4. *Continuous-learning*: Encourage and help the teachers update and improve their knowledge and skills. You can't effectively teach relevant subjects if your skills as a teacher and your knowledge on the subject are not relevant anymore.
5. *Innovation*: Praise creative thinking and celebrate innovation. It's our best weapon for the big battles that are begging out there. And trust me, each of us has it. Just think of it as a muscle and train it as often as you can.
6. *Sustainability*: Starting from what is the source of the material resources that the faculty is using, the habits of the staff at work, the existing facilities for the students and the attitude you inspire to the students - be sustainable. *Business as usual* has led us to pumping 55 gigatonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere each year. It is destroying the planet, nothing and no one does it better. Don't you think that a business school should try to make a change? *Intrinsic motivation*: Cultivate through each activity and process the intrinsic motivation of the students. They will never achieve their full potential and become the world changers we need in a competitive environment where their motivation relies on the grades they get.
7. *Intrinsic motivation*: Cultivate intrinsic motivation through all the students' experiences. It is impossible for them to develop their full potential and to become the world changers we need if their motivation relies on the grades they get.

What is most important here and why? Daniela

What's alarming is that our current business operating system - think of the set of assumptions and protocols beneath our businesses, how we motivate people, how we apply our human resources - it's built entirely around extrinsic motivators, around carrots and sticks. That's actually fine for many kinds of 20th century tasks. But for 21st century tasks, that mechanistic, reward-and-punishment approach often doesn't work, and often does harm.

The good news is that the scientists who've been studying motivation have given us a new approach. It's built much more around intrinsic motivation. Around the desire to do things because they matter, because we like it, they're interesting, or part of something important.

And this new operating system revolves around three elements: autonomy, mastery and purpose. *Autonomy*: the urge to direct our own lives. *Mastery*: the desire to get better and better at something that matters. *Purpose*: the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves. These are the building blocks of an entirely new operating system for our businesses.

Interview Box. Erik Lankut, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, USN

Ariadna: On a scale from 1 to 10 how good do you think that the interaction between international and Norwegian students is? And why?

Erik: I would say 5, it's because Norwegians tend to be a bit shy, in general. They are not comfortable with making connections with strangers, especially international students and vice versa international students think that Norwegian students are hard to engage or connect with, unless it's not in a social setting like in a party or something else.

Ariadna: How did you find the interaction between Romanian and Norwegian students through the SUBFLY project so far?

Erik: It seems to work, it's interesting. We are forcing them to meet. What is nice with Norwegians is that when they are forced to interact, then they are actually good at it. They have the skills and knowledge. There are a lot of Norwegian students that are really good, it's just that if you don't push them, they don't even know how good they are. And I think that Romanian students are the catalyzing force for Norwegians to relax a bit and be relaxed.

Ariadna: As a cultural Ph.D graduate do you think you can help the international students with the integrating progress in Norway? And how?

Erik: I can relate to how it is to be an exchange student in an foreign place, so I try to do my best to make sure there is an open area that is safe to integrate and connect to people between Norwegian and international students.

Ariadna: What kind of institutions does the university, or the city, have for helping the international student to integrate in a new culture?

Erik: We have a student coordinator which is responsible for each campus, responsible for each main education line, so one for economics and business, the other one for industrial courses. We also have the international exchange officer, so I think there is a good connection between me as a teacher, through the leadership team into the coordinators so there is a good dialog, making sure we have all in place when it comes to introduction days and information, communication, social media, it's a good flow between the staff and then the students. So if a student is dealing with a problem it's quite easy for him or her to get the help, on all levels, whether they come to me first, or the coordinator, or the head or someone else, we keep in touch, so if an international student will have an issue and will let me know and I can relate in on people that are important and who can solve the task.

Ariadna: What kind of new institutions or actions can the university implement so the new international students will feel safer and more included?

Erik: Probably, a bit more on social integration, meaning that you make sure that international students feel welcome to participate in whatever is happening in Kongsberg. So whether it's a student association, social clubs, sports, it has to be a good connection with the student's body with the international students that are coming, you need to have a good synergy. Because if you have happy students both Norwegian and international, then they will be better in the lectures. The other thing would be making sure you have English services: English mental services, studying coordinator, everything that is related to the exchange.