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Subfly to Romania

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Understand cultural differences

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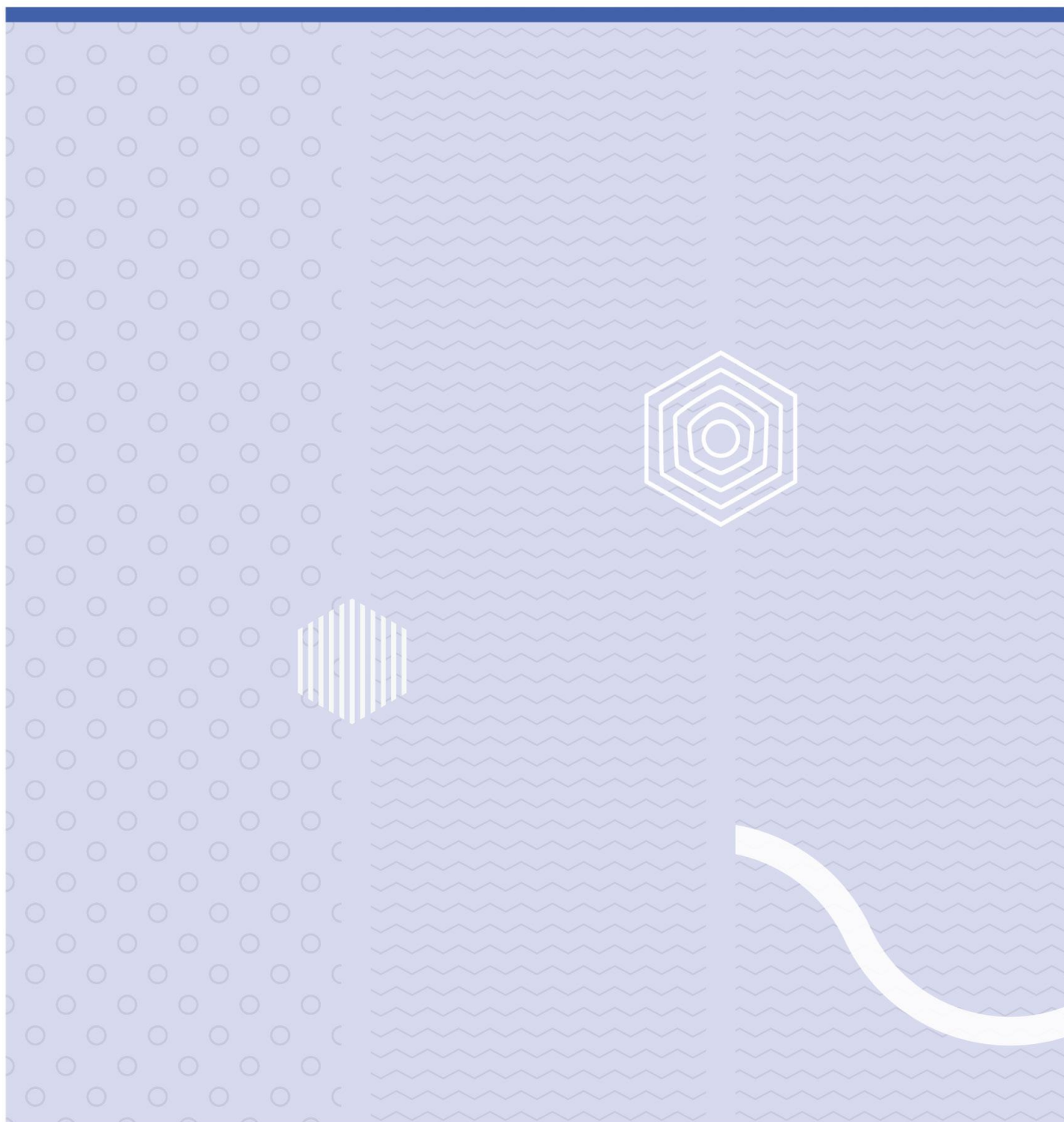


Table of contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Formulate a strategy to be included in the University's founding document... Error! Bookmark not defined.	
3	Relevance of national culture/organizational culture dimensions Error! Bookmark not defined.	
4	Building knowledge and insights on cultural differences	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5	Building a common culture and identity	6
6	Student representation in boards and committees ... Error! Bookmark not defined.	
7	What is most important and why?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8	Our thoughts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	Bibliography	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1. Introduction

For this project six students were grouped who had little to no previous connection. Group 3 has an interesting mix of cultures, namely, Norwegian, Romanian, Italian, and Dutch people. Although this cluster of cultures is exactly the assignment and is useful and interesting for exploring different cultures, it can and does bring its challenges. The difficulties lie mostly in the short timespan as we ought to get to know each other to an extent but we also have only 4 days to work together and make a report and presentation. According to (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997), the Dutch and Scandinavian people relate on three out of the seven factors of the model. A factor such as neutral vs emotional could pose a challenge during the collaboration as the Italians are more emotional whereas the Dutch and Norwegians are generally more neutral. These differences, although based on extensive research, are stereotypes and do not necessarily represent the individuals of the group. The group members were all very aware of the cultural differences within the group.

It was very clear from the beginning that every group member went into the assignment with an open mind to collaborate as best as possible. The overall consensus within the group is that everyone shared a common interest in writing an excellent report and presentation.

Moving on to cultures on a national and organization level. Culture is a comprehensive term, and can be explained in many different ways so there is no concrete definition. National culture is inclusive of all the beliefs and values shared by the population of a particular nation. History also teaches us how important it is for people to define their own identity to ensure that the individual develops a sense of belonging to their territory, necessary to ensure progress in society.

We can think about the organizational culture as the collection of traits that make your company what it is, like the collection of values, expectations, and the actions of all team members. The culture of the organization must be open to the outside world, have their mind on innovation and encourage the emergence of ideas.

Styles of management is the particular way managers go about accomplishing different objectives so it can be different by the company, level, and from person to person. It can be in how they organize and plan the work, and in the way that they make decisions and exercise authority.

2. Formulate a strategy to be included in the University's founding document

In order for a university to be considered excellent and able to offer a service up to the standards of the twenty-first century, it must have certain values in its founding document. The university must be public, secular, pluralistic and free from any ideological, political and economic conditioning. It must protect the freedom of scientific research and aim at the development of critical knowledge.

The university must recognize the value of diversity and offer equal opportunities to disadvantaged people, working for the well-being of the individual and the entire community. It is necessary to reward students for their commitment to study and for their ability to build the future and at the same time encourage the permanent training of staff to constantly improve.

Aiming for the excellence of teachers and staff in order to provide high-quality teaching and services to students is essential for achieving brilliant results in both national and international research, fostering the development of high-level collaborations and interdisciplinarity. Today's students are the ruling class of tomorrow and for this reason they must be protected.

In order to define a strategy for a university that wants to guarantee a correct international integration, as a group we have decided to exploit our different backgrounds to discuss the diversity of our countries of origin and use our experiences to formulate a strategy. We have exploited the heterogeneity of our group as strengths and starting points for our analysis. From our dialogue the great differences that existed emerged incredibly and to have a unique vision of diversity, we created a table (table 1) that summarized the characteristics of our nations using as criteria of analysis the eight models of a culture.

Once we have made a graphic representation that would allow us to visualize the equalities and differences of the cultures of our nations, we began to discuss together and reason about what could be the most effective strategy for a university. Following a brainstorming together we came to the conclusion that to ensure international integration it is important to have a

polychronic culture based on relationship and people focused, as well as a more public space we think can focus more on interpersonal relationships, the structure based on collectivism that emphasized the sense of belonging to a group, the action based not on results but on common and shared values, time orientation based on developing common goals for the long term, power to guarantee equality, relationship-based communication and finally competition to ensure continuous cooperation. We think that a reasoning based on our experience and personal perception, can have all the right characteristics to ensure international integration within a university.

General framework: table 1

MODEL OF CULTURE	NORWAY	ROMANIA	NETHERLAND	ITALY
Time focus	Monochronic	Monochronic	Monochronic	Monochronic
Space	Public	Private	Private	Private
Structure	Individualism	Individualism	Individualism	Collectivism
Action	Doing culture	Being culture	Doing culture	Doing culture
Time orientation	Past-oriented	Future-oriented	Future-oriented	Past-oriented
Power	Equality	Equality	Equality	Hierarchy
Communication	Low context	High context	Low context	Low context
Competition	Co-operative	Co-operative	Competitive	Competitive

Our idea: table 2

MODEL OF CULTURE	OUR IDEA
Time focus	Polychronic
Space	Public
Structure	Collectivism
Action	Being culture
Time orientation	Future-oriented
Power	Equality
Communication	High context
Competition	Co-operative

3. Relevance of national culture/organizational culture dimensions

The concept of national culture is very complex, being able to relate not only to political but also to social, cultural, historical and anthropological aspects of a community.

The question of nation, national culture and national identity is a recent phenomenon if we take into account the fact that the concept of nation as we understand it today arises in the 19th century.

The national culture is represented by an infinite number of symbols, traditions, and ways of thinking. These representations can be concrete (such as a typical food of a region) or abstract (such as the desire to defend the nation and the country in any circumstance).

The national culture of each territory is unique but at the same time some national cultures may be the result of a combination of different national identities that have overlapped over time (for example, the case of American countries).

The organizational culture is given by the combination of values that guide the actions of a group, which are realized in the behavior of those who make it up and in internal or external relations.

A solid organizational culture with a strong identity allows you to face the world (and the market) with a recognizable image and allows salespeople, HR experts and possible new members to connect the inside and the outside of the organization in a win-win way.

4. Building knowledge and insights on cultural differences

We live in environments characterized by a growing multiculturalism and these changes have naturally also had repercussions in group works characterized by workers with the most disparate backgrounds, with the diversity of backgrounds, history and mentality.

Recent studies have shown how the presence of people from completely different realities can guarantee a more efficient achievement of a goal thanks to the possibility of interfacing with methodologies but above all different approaches. It is precisely diversity that must be exploited as a strength and turning point to be able to innovate its proposals and objectives.

The apparent neutrality of the level of cultural diversity is due, presumably, to the sum of two opposing effects: on the one hand, the presence of a greater heterogeneity of cultures, practices and behavioral modalities makes the management of a group more complicated and hinders its efficient functioning to varying degrees, on the other, however, if the problems that emerge from this diversity can be solved, then the multiplicity of cultures that find themselves coexisting within the group can even become a competitive advantage.

The keystone in this process is defined by the ability to increase the knowledge of nature and the consequences of this diversity and to manage it in an inclusive way and, in this way, to enhance it to the maximum. Developing this knowledge and raising awareness especially in the academic system, has always been perceived as a complex and demanding challenge. To be able to win it, in fact, it is necessary to be willing and able to change one's natural perspective and be ready to empathize thanks to a correct knowledge, diversity.

5. Building a common culture and identity

Culture is a defining feature of a person's identity, contributing to how they see themselves and the groups with which they identify. A person's understanding of their own and other's identities develops from birth and is shaped by the values and attitudes prevalent at home and in the surrounding community. If people work with others that don't have the same vision in the company, then there is a chance they would slow thing down or give up. In order to ensure that a workplace has a common culture, people could interact with others that have a different culture. Only united will the team achieve something great and enjoy more working there. A way for people to get together, they can try to know each other. By people knowing each other and getting along, they can organize in a way so that they can accomplish a lot of work much easier. For example, some employees that have a lot of experience in a business, they can help the others that just started their job. Only united will the team achieve something great and enjoy more working there.

6. Student representation in boards and committees

As a student representative your job is to represent the students' interest, raising the students' voice, and you work closely with the staff to make a better education. Therefore, it is important that you socialize with your classmates and interact with the culture around you. Furthermore, it is important that you as a student representative make sure to include everyone, with the result that everyone will feel seen, heard, and respected.

When we talk about culture, and inclusivity, our proposition for student representatives on boards and committees, is that there should be student representatives on each faculty in the university. We propose that each cohort in every study program has at least two student representatives, where one of them has more responsibility and takes the main lead and tasks, and the other one steps in whenever he or she needs it.

Another proposition is that every university has one or two students who have the responsibility to take care of international students. By this we mean keeping in touch with them on a regular basis, so they do feel included. They can also listen to the students and fulfil their wishes for students with different backgrounds and culture.

Let me give you an example of how we can include everyone. Norway is a multicultural society, and USN Campus Drammen do have a separate room for people to pray. This is something that student representatives can also bring up in boards and committees, to get a more cultural society.

7. So what is the most important?

After assessing and discussing each of the implementation aspects we decided that ‘building a common culture and identity’ would be the most interesting and important aspect. This is because creating a common identity amongst students facilitates inclusivity amongst students from different backgrounds. If students feel that they have a common ground with their peers they might be more likely to relate to each other and build relationships on both a professional and a personal level. Taking a university such as Harvard, their graduates share a pride as they were able to graduate from such a prestigious and elite university. We would like to create a university where the students feel the same amount of pride and international recognition. Furthermore, we wish that employers around the world recognize this status.

If such a university can be established, students from around the world will want to go there. This could help with globalization not only for the university but also for the city the university would be located in and even the country as a whole could profit from it.

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8. Our thoughts?

This experience was very interesting for many reasons:

- Working with many different cultures is a way to learn more about different nations and this can help you in your future working life especially when you have to create partnership with other people from other countries. Having an open mind is something fundamental in 21 century; the future is globalization so we have to be prepared.
- Another positive aspect about this project is the possibility to improve English skills. English is known for being a global language and especially the language of business. If you can't speak English nowadays you can be considered as an outcast.
- You can also learn new skills in your student life because different cultures work in different ways and sometimes you can find more productive methods.
- Adaptation skills are also things that you can learn in time with this kind of experience, being able to work in every environment without stress is useful in a frantic world like ours.
- The last thing that we can mention is making friends, creating deep and lasting relationship with people from different backgrounds can help you to create a network.

Bibliography

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