

## Module 1

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## 1. Culture

“The different behaviors of a person or a culture make sense only when seen through the basic beliefs, assumptions, and values of that particular group.” (Jiang, 2001, p.382)

Jiang here is referring to Archer’s (1986, p.170) “culture bumps’, the idea that when people from different cultures meet, they have expectations of one type of behavior and get something completely different. This cross-cultural interaction, can cause what Thorp (1991) called ‘confused encounters’ when teachers and students (whose expectations differ) from different cultures meet. These mismatches in expectation are further heightened when a, ‘Western educational methodology is applied in another context without rigorous adaptation to improve compatibility with the host culture’ (Nguyen et al, 2006, p.1). Without improving this compatibility risks what Witty et al. (1998) called ‘false universalism’, the idea that cultures are not different and that ‘one size fits all’ (Nguyen et al; 2006:4). This lack of understanding and adaptation can lead to ‘cross-cultural cloning’ (Walker & Dimmock 2000). To understand the environment in which you are living and working, you have to study the expectations and values of that environment and reflect on your own values and expectations you bring to that environment.

According to which theorist and to what end, culture can have many definitions, but there are generally four key components or elements which define culture that are passed on from generation to generation. These are values, norms, institutions and artifacts:

- Values comprise ideas about what in life seems important. They guide the rest of the culture.
- Norms consist of expectations of how people will behave.
- Institutions are the structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted.

- Artifacts-things, or aspects of material culture-derive from a culture's values and norms.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture> accessed 2012)

Values therefore come from one's response to one's environment and the interactions between the elements existing in that environment (namely, social groups, classes, historical conditions and so on...). One's response to one's environment is an individual decision and this diversity of thought is the norm of any culture, but it has been shown that, 'individuals within a culture tend to have a common pattern of learning and perception when members of their culture are compared to members of another culture'. (Worthey 1987, cited in Rao, 2001)

Hofstede (1980, p.25) defined culture as, collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the

members of 'one human group from another'. The idea here is that culture is deeply rooted within the subconscious of the individual within the group and that this individual is of course by collective programming a representation of his group's culture. Culture here then can be set and distinguished from one group to another. Dahl in 2001 wrote that, "On the one side, the individual determines its culture, on the other, it is determined by its culture. As the individual contributes to the culture around him, it will be part of the cultural change."

## 2. Interaction

This interaction between members of a society who contribute to the culture of that society is represented by Hofstede's hierarchy role pair patterns. (Hofstede, 1986, p.302)

Table 1

<b>Human Institutions and Corresponding Role Pairs</b>	
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Role Pair</b>
Family	Parent- Child Man -Woman
School	Teacher- Student
Job	Boss - Subordinate
Community	Authority - Member

( Hofstede, 1986, p.302)

From the table above, Hofstede gives us, “four fundamental institutions, present in some way in virtually all human societies.” (Hofstede, 1986, p. 301) The interaction between the role pair in each institution sets the values for each role pair and the institution.

## 3. Cross-Cultural Learning

“As long as human societies have been in contact with each other, voluntarily or involuntarily, there have been cross-cultural learning situations: teacher/student pairs in which the partners were born raised and mentally programmed in different cultures prior to their interaction in school.” (Hofstede, 1986, p. 302).

Stemming from Hofstede's work on the archetypal role pairs within the institutions of most societies, cross-cultural learning situations can also be looked at. These situations occur when teachers and students from different social and cultural backgrounds meet and interact. Of

course with cross-cultural learning, problems arise. Hofstede (1986, p. 203), laid out some problem areas as a result of cross-cultural teacher/student interaction.

1. Differences in the social positions of teachers and students in the two societies;
2. Differences in the relevance of the curriculum (training content) for the two societies;
3. Differences in profiles of cognitive abilities between the populations from which teacher and student are drawn.
4. Differences in expected patterns of teacher/student and student/student interaction.

The mutual expectation of both role pairs, the interaction between each pair and the values arising from each interaction and the values inherent in each member before this cross-cultural interaction have caused many misunderstandings and anxiety for both parties. Hofstede (1986, p. 301-320) presented his 5 Dimensional Model of Cultural Differences as a guideline to understand these mutual expectations of teacher/student and student/student interactions.

### **3.1 Dimensional Model of Cultural Differences**

“Values represent the deepest level of a culture. They are broad feelings, often unconscious and not open to discussion, about what is good and what is bad, clean or dirty, beautiful or ugly, rational or irrational, normal or abnormal, natural or paradoxical, decent or indecent. These feelings are present in the majority of the members of the culture, or at least in those persons who occupy pivotal positions.” (Hofstede 1994 )

Inherent values of the individual are deep seeded, nurtured, built on and cultivated. A society breeds cultural beings, and each being has values which in turn nourish the culture of that society.

But how can the values of these beings be communicated and understood cross-culturally?

Hofstede in a study conducted with IBM between 1967 and 1973, covering more than 70

countries, looked at; “how values in the workplace are influenced by culture”.

([http://www.geerthofstede.com/hofstede\\_dimensions.php?culture1=46&culture2=82](http://www.geerthofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php?culture1=46&culture2=82) accessed 2012)

Primarily a model connected to the world of business, Hofstede identified five Dimensions which help in differentiating cultures; these being:

1. Power Distance
2. Individualism vs. Collectivism
3. Masculinity vs. Femininity
4. Uncertainty Avoidance
5. Confucian dynamism (derived from a study of students in 23 countries around the world)

### **3.1.1 Power Distance**

This is the characteristic of a culture where people of less power accept and acknowledge inequality in society and see it as a norm. (Hofstede,1986, p.307)

### **3.1.2 Individualism vs. Collectivism**

Individualism is seen as opposed to Collectivism in an anthropological not political sense.

Individualist cultures see self-interest paramount and that any individual looks after his/her own interests and the interests of his/her immediate family. Collectivist cultures suggests that a person from birth is born (or in later events) into a social grouping, such as a family or an organization to which the group is paramount to the needs of the individual. Permanent loyalty to the group is expected. Collective societies are tightly integrated whereas individual societies are loosely integrated.( Hofstede,1986, p.307)

### **3.1.3 Masculinity vs. Femininity**

Masculinity is connected to the social roles of the two sexes in society, particularly the social roles attributed to men in that society. In Masculine societies men are expected to be ambitious, strive for wealth, competitive, assertive, respectful of whatever is big, strong and fast, women are

expected to be maternal and closer to nature, carers of children and the weak. In Feminine societies, the social roles overlap, where men are not expected to take on masculine roles, they can also take on feminine roles if desired.( Hofstede, 1986, p.308)

### **3.1.4 Uncertainty Avoidance**

This is defined as:

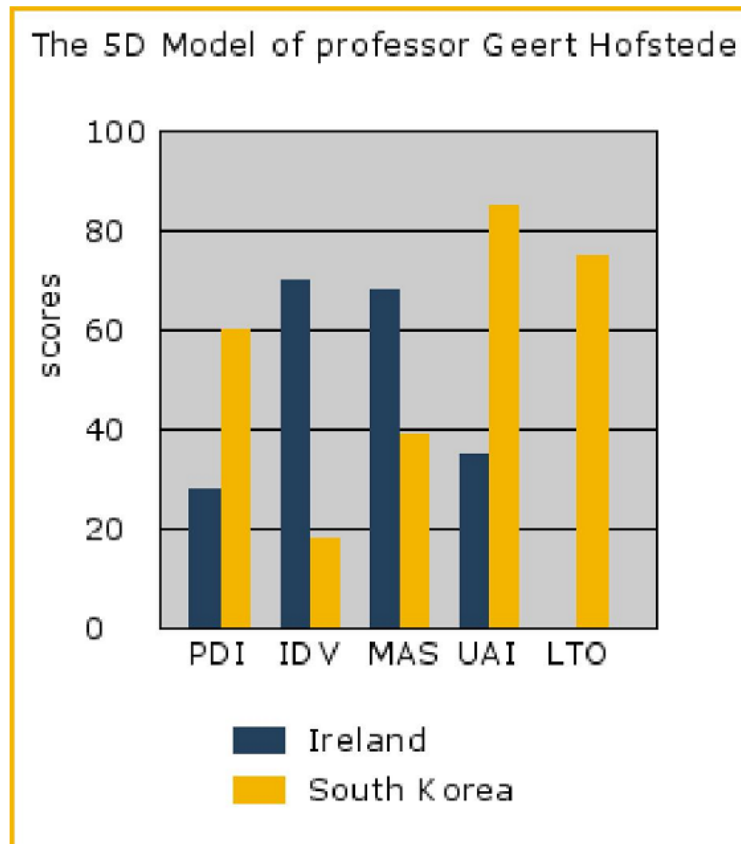
“the extent to which a people within a culture are made nervous by situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear or unpredictable, situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable, situations which they therefore try to avoid by maintaining strict codes of behavior and a belief in absolute truths. Cultures with a strong uncertainty avoidance are active, aggressive, emotional, compulsive, security-seeking, and intolerant; cultures with a weak uncertainty avoidance are contemplative, less aggressive, unemotional, relaxed, accepting personal risks, and relatively tolerant.” ( Hofstede, 1986, p.308)

### **3.1.5 Long-Term Orientation**

“ indicates a society’s time perspective and an attitude of persevering; that is overcoming obstacles with time and patience, if not with will and strength...values associated with LTO are thrift and perseverance; respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one’s face”. (Litrell, no date, p.14)

Table 2

Comparisons of Hofstede's Four Dimension (with LTO) between Ireland and South Korea



	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
<b>South Korea</b>	60	18	39	85	75
<b>Ireland</b>	28	70	68	35	

(<http://www.geert-hofstede.com/index.shtml>)

Link - [http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\\_dimensions.php?culture1=46&culture2=82](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php?culture1=46&culture2=82)

(accessed 2012)

## 5. Staff Survey and Discussion

Please work with your partner or group to discuss the following questions. After your discussion, please, let the class know your findings. Thank you.

1. What cross-cultural communication problems have you experienced in Keimyung?
2. What problems/concerns do you have with a Face to Face meeting with International Faculty?
3. What problems/concerns do you have on the Telephone with International Faculty?
4. What problems/concerns do you have when Emailing with International Faculty?
5. What do you Expect from the International Faculty?
  - a. A basic understanding of the Korean language?
  - b. A basic understanding of Korean Business Culture?
  - c. Knowledge of the matter being discussed?
  - d. Knowledge of working practices in your department?

## 6. International Faculty Survey Feedback and Discussion

There were a total of 5 respondents to the Survey, so the findings are not to be taken as representative of all International Faculty on campus, only for the 5 respondents.

1. What problems/concerns do you have with a Face to Face meeting with KMU Administration Staff?
  - a. Basically just a lack of English and sometimes what appears to be a lack of knowledge of the job they're supposed to be doing
  - b. No major problems, except sometimes a lack of knowledge about their job
  - c. None
  - d. Language issues, most of them can't speak at least passable English.
  - e. Being Dismissed: Questions are rarely answered with anything other than "don't worry about it" or "maybe". Not all staff members have this problem. It is not university wide, but it is common in most offices I've dealt with. Staff members are often unwilling or unable to provide detailed answers to questions that they should know the answers to. It's possible that the problem is language related, but I suspect it's not.
  
2. What problems/concerns do you have on the Telephone with KMU Administration Staff?
  - a. The same as 1 above
  - b. As with face to face meetings, sometimes they do not know important details
  - c. None
  - d. Language issues, most of them can't speak at least passable English
  - e. Same as #1
  
3. What problems/concerns do you have when Emailing with KMU Administration Staff?
  - a. The same as 1 above
  - b. Emails are often unanswered
  - c. They sometimes ignore emails, even in Korean
  - d. No problems
  
4. What do you Expect from the KMU Administrative Staff?
  - a. A basic understanding of the English language? 60% Definitely Yes
  - b. A basic understanding of Non Korean Business Culture? 60% Somewhat Yes
  - c. Knowledge of the matter being discussed? 80% Definitely Yes
  - d. Best efforts being made to assist you? 80% Yes
  
5. What do you think the KMU Administrative Staff Need, to help you while working at KMU?
  - a. A better knowledge of English and sometimes their job
  - b. They need to understand that there are cultural differences, and they need to be prepared to answer questions about problems, that while seemingly unimportant, may be important to the person asking.
  - c. Try to have some basic level English knowledge.
  - d. A basic level of knowledge of university policy regarding whatever area they work in and the language skills to communicate this policy.