

Kristen Reid:

We are going to be talking about Hofstede's cultural dimension scores as it applies to our own experiences in the States and in Tanzania.

I can actually see how the scores relate to my own experiences, particularly the ones on individualism and power distance. He gave a 91 on individualism for the United States and attributed that to a more individualistic attitude more self reliance among working people and, you know, I'd say that, that definitely applies to a country that's renowned for rugged individualism, a hands-off, laissez-faire approach to, government interfering in business and people in the US often value individualism in their work, that they want their success and performance to be judged on what they do individually and, in fact, some people even say that Americans are workaholics and I know I, myself kind of fall into that same category.

Did you see anything in the individualism scores he gave for East Africa relating to your own experiences in Tanzania, Proches?

Proches Ngatuni:

Oh yes, Hofstede gave a much lower score for individualism for the East African region to which Tanzania belongs.

Kristen Reid:

What was that score?

Proches Ngatuni:

The score was about 27.

Now this may relate to Tanzania, especially taking into account the fact that most families, most societies in Tanzania are heavily grouped ...

Kristen Reid:

Uhum.

Proches Ngatuni:

... in family networks, which might also apply in the United States but the difference here is the interdependence ...

Kristen Reid:

Mmm.

Proches Ngatuni:

... between individuals and families and also to the community to which they belong.

Kristen Reid:

Well, yeah, there is that too. You know, I notice that Hofstede related his ideas on culture to more than just employee performance, that there was, kind of, this family dimension to it and American families, I would say in general, tend to be nuclear so they are probably a little bit smaller, not as extended, but I think it's important to notice or to know that the US is a very diverse country and, while there is a focus on nuclear families, in kind of this general sense as being the strongest family unit, there are many ethnic groups, for example, Mexican American and Hispanic populations, many of our Asian populations and definitely African American groups. They have a large, extended kith and kin network and so there's really a large diversity, a wide diversity across the country, you know, whether you look at the East Coast versus the West Coast or whether you look North or South or at different parts of the country, there'll be a lot more cultural difference than what's reflected in just a single score for the United States.

Proches Ngatuni:

Tanzania too has over 120 ethnic groups and these will also include Asian population but what is more important here is that there is interdependence. So, for example, when I work, all the decisions that I make, I have to take into account, er, the effect my decision will have on the extended family and to my community as well. So in these cases people will judge organisations in terms of how such organisation, er, respects this kind of connection between an individual and his or her, er, family and the community.

I'll give you an example here. If one wants to judge an organisation for which he or she wants to work for, he will probably look at, um, to what extent some of the social policies of that organisation extends to individuals' extended family and such benefits include like medical benefits, the more help an individual gets from an organisation the better. [And within an?] organisation this extended family, er, this, er, social grouping affect the way they interact within the organisation too. They want people working as a team but it's more to protect their interests, than to achieve better results.

Kristen Reid:

That's pretty interesting comparing that to the United States. this idea of health insurance benefits – I know it's, um, it's become a pretty hot topic in the United States. The health insurance in the United States is a little tricky because not everybody has health insurance and so the idea that, people in your country would want their health insurance to extend to their extended family or to, to cover their extended family. I mean, I wouldn't even think most people in the States would even think about that. They, you know, if they were happy that they were covered and you know, their immediate family was covered that they would be happy with that. So I, I think that that's pretty interesting that, that, um, you find that in Tanzania.

Um, let's see, you know I'd say too that the United States is developing what Hofstede might call, um, collectivism in the way that people do business. Um, there's definitely an increasing trend in team working. Um, for example, one of my jobs that I had, I had this dotted line accountability to two different managers and I was working as a team leader where my individual performance was, in part, based on the success of, um, and performance of the team and, um, I know that, that that kind of working where you, you depend on, um, other people and partners for your performance, for actually being successful in your work is something that, that's going on in the US. Have you seen any changes in the way you do business and the way people work in Tanzania?

Proches Ngatuni:

Well yes there is the so-called, er, what's called "African Socialism" which is built, er, on the assumptions of family, [??] and society. So this notion is, um, built within the families and within the schooling system and including the religious teachings. But it is important also to note that over the recent years Tanzania's economy is moving fast towards market economy. And in this case the role of private sector is becoming more and more highlighted and with it more and more [new practices?] brought in. For example people who are working in [international?] organisations are more likely to develop individualistic attitudes. More people now strive for individual achievement. The public sector also has introduced, um, new performance management practices which also encourage individual achievement rather than collective achievements that we are used to.

Kristen Reid:

I see. Well I know that Hofstede and other scholars have looked at many different employee populations and, er, what they are looking for is to see how their scoring system applies to a wide range of different groups of people and, from that, what I gather is that there's kind of been this running trend of, er, scores so that it's, it's very consistent across different groups and, um, and different, um, different areas. And, again, you know, I can see how the power distance, er, score that they give for the United States which is a 40, bears some relationship to, to US business practices. Um, in fact, as people work more in teams I think the power score will actually decrease because there will be this more cooperative culture, more equality among

social groups and, certainly in my experience, um, it's been perfectly acceptable and often encouraged to participate in the decision making, of the leadership and so people might find that they have more control and autonomy, um, to make decisions in their everyday business practices in their work place for example. And have you seen any kinds of changes going on in Tanzania?

Proches Ngatuni:

Oh yes, as I said before, um, the country developed, er, a kind of centrally managed economy where power was concentrated on the top management ranks. So you find that top management is expected to make most of the decisions and take responsibility for them. On the other hand you find that top management is not willing, doesn't feel comfortable to delegate their authority because they know when it comes to taking responsibility, um, or being accountable for the decisions they take, it's them and not their subordinates.

Kristen Reid:

Uhu, that's interesting.

Proches Ngatuni:

Which is something different from what you have explained as, er, in relation to the United States. [But I will say there have been foreign economic influence of the 90s??]. There is an increased presence of, er, global companies and this brings in new management practices. And these management practices also permeate into public sector so everything is changing all the time. It is my good guess that the power distance score that Hofstede gave to East African region would be much lower today than it was when the research was conducted.

Kristen Reid:

Uhuh, uhuh, I think I agree with you there.

Proches Ngatuni:

And I think in the coming decade or so the difference in power distance score between Tanzania and United States might even become more blurred.

Kristen Reid:

Yes, I think, I think I agree with you there. You know it would be interesting to see how Hofstede's scores change as globalisation really takes root in the world. Um, you know you might find some blurring and, um, sharing of cultural values across, um, a number of countries and so there really might be this kind of evening out in 10 years time and, you know, I suppose the research is good, um, to give us kind of a basic idea of cultural values and an understanding of how, um, different nations may behave differently in business and so forth but there does seem to be this trend toward a more global perspective. Do you see that at all in, in Tanzania?

Proches Ngatuni:

Oh yes, Tanzania is also part of the global culture. And, um, as time goes by I think, um, the [economy ??] is becoming more exposed to global business [?] so, um, [pause], so, um, we must [??] many companies are opening up, do business with them, you know, global companies, er, we have, er, heavy presence of, er, Chinese companies, Indian companies, Western companies, um, and all these companies come with new management practices, as I said before and so what we think is important here is that, er, in order to enhance communication ...

Kristen Reid:

Right. Right.

Proches Ngatuni:

... um, across cultural environments, organisations, especially global organisations need to have in place [?] different ways of recognising and managing potential impacts of , er, cultural differences that way, I think, an organisation will be more successful across cultures.

Kristen Reid:

So I think that really, um, the, the main point here is that businesses will, um, will need to kind of account for this globalisation, as you say, in that, um, there really may be kind of this new emerging way of doing business and I think students will be able to see that when they study globalisation later on in the course. So, er, thank you very much for talking with me today. I think, I think this has been kind of an interesting conversation so thank you, Proches.

Proches Ngatuni:

It has been my pleasure. Thank you.

Kristen Reid:

Thanks. Okay. Goodbye.