

Cultural orientations – A group puzzle

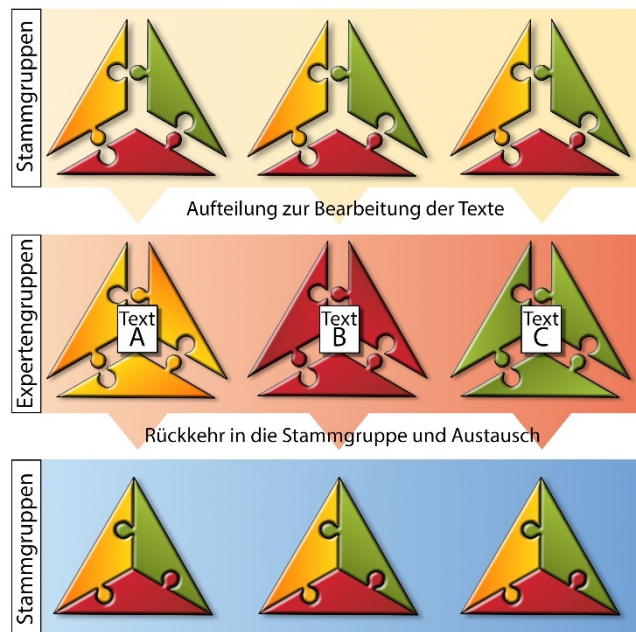
M 7

In groups, you will now work with different texts on the topic “cultural orientations”.



Task

Read the rules for a group puzzle in class. Ask questions if necessary.



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Info box – Group puzzle

1. Form groups of three students. This is your **home group**. Get to know each other. Agree on who will work on which material.
2. In the next step, you will work on different aspects of the culture model “cultural orientations” by Karl-Heinz Flehsig. You will do so in different groups. These are called **expert groups**. Each expert group consists of one person of each home group. Each expert group takes care of one material.
3. Now each expert goes back to his/her **home group**. Each expert reports to the other group members what he/she found out in his/her expert group.
4. Write down your findings in the grid below.
5. Discuss in class: is there still anything you need clarification about?



	Main aspects mentioned in the material
Material 1: Communication	<p>Direct communication - low context communication impersonal relationship mostly exchanging information</p> <p>Indirect communication - high context communication personal relationships Status, expression are needed informations to understand the context</p>
Material 2: Ideas about time	<p>one-dimensionally: focus on one task at a time = task oriented</p> <p>focussed on deadlines and appointments. multi dimensionally: multiple task at the same time = focus on social relationships not that focussed on deadlines and appointments</p> <p>. A culture that is oriented in the present looks at events, plans or changes according to whether they are of use in the short term or if they have any consequences in the short run. Future orientation means that every plan or event or change of plan will be checked for the long-term consequences or the 20 expected benefit. If a company is future-oriented, it always looks for new products and new tendencies on the market, whereas a past-oriented company always invokes the tradition and the experiences of the company.</p>
Material 3: Individualism and collectivism	<p>Collectivism collective is more important than Success of one Person</p> <p>Individualism Self centered Focused on success</p>

Cultural orientations – Expert group 1

M 8

Tasks

1. Read the text. Look up the words you do not understand.
2. Underline the most important information in the text.
3. Discuss the text with the other members of your expert group.

Cultural orientations by Karl-Heinz Flechsig

The model of cultural orientations (*kulturelle Orientierungen*) was developed by Karl-Heinz Flechsig, a university professor in Göttingen. It is a model that can be used regardless of explicitly defined cultures. It describes cultures in a contrastive way. You can use it to diagnose conflicts between cultures.

Communication

There are different ways to communicate in different cultural orientations. In some cultures, communication is rather indirect. This is called high context communication which means that the speaker needs a lot of contextual information about individuals before a private or a business relationship can be established. In order to be able to conduct business you need to have a really

5 good personal relationship with your business partners. Communication does not only take place verbally but other non-verbal elements such as body language, facial expressions, eye contact or pauses in speech need to be paid attention to. On top of that previous encounters, status and mutual friends play a role, too. A message can be implicit which means indirect which again means that you have to be able to read between the lines.

- 10 The opposite is low context communication, a very direct form of communication. In this case you do not need a lot of contextual information about the individuals that participate in the conversation. Business relationships are rather impersonal and need no long periods of trust-building. The focus is on the business and the facts that come with it. Messages are conveyed verbally and are expressed explicitly. What you say is what you mean. Therefore, communication is very direct
- 15 and seen as a means of exchanging information.

Text: Dr. Petra Schappert

Most important information from the text

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M 9



Cultural orientations – Expert group 2

Tasks

1. Read the text. Look up the words you do not understand.
2. Underline the most important information in the text.
3. Discuss the text with the other members of your expert group.

Cultural orientations by Karl-Heinz Flechsig

The model of cultural orientations (*kulturelle Orientierungen*) was developed by Karl-Heinz Flechsig, a university professor in Göttingen. It is a model that can be used regardless of explicitly defined cultures. It describes cultures in a contrastive way. You can use it to diagnose conflicts between cultures.

Ideas about time

- People have different ideas about time. They can imagine time as one-dimensional or as multi-dimensional thing. If you experience time one-dimensionally, you focus on one task at a time and devote all your concentration to it. This means that you work task-oriented and you try to be on time with the fulfilment of your task. You do not do several tasks at a time. If, on the other hand,
- 5 people have a multi-dimensional idea about time, they do several things at a time. Additionally, their focus is more on social relationships than on deadlines and appointments. Requirements are not very important. They are always willing to revise their plans. In accordance with these ideas, time can be experienced as fixed or fluid. If the concept of time is seen as fixed, punctuality is very important. People expect meetings to begin on time, deadlines are not to be neglected.
- 10 Tasks have to be completed at short notice, as well. A fluid concept of time implies that punctuality is not a top priority. Meetings begin when the participants are ready for it. If something takes longer than expected, nobody is really worried. Delays are rather seen as normal. Tasks will be completed without a schedule or deadlines. There is also a difference of how the continuum of time is seen. Some cultures are defined by their orientation in the past, others by their orientation
- 15 in the present or even by their orientation in the future. If the past is the reference point, then plans or the change of plans are judged by the congruence with history or tradition. A culture that is oriented in the present looks at events, plans or changes according to whether they are of use in the short term or if they have any consequences in the short run. Future orientation means that every plan or event or change of plan will be checked for the long-term consequences or the
- 20 expected benefit. If a company is future-oriented, it always looks for new products and new tendencies on the market, whereas a past-oriented company always invokes the tradition and the experiences of the company.

Text: Dr. Petra Schappert

Most important information from the text

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Cultural orientations – Expert group 3

M 10



Tasks

1. Read the text. Look up the words you do not understand.
2. Underline the most important information in the text.
3. Discuss the text with the other members of your expert group.

Cultural orientations by Karl-Heinz Flechsig

The model of cultural orientations (*kulturelle Orientierungen*) was developed by Karl-Heinz Flechsig, a university professor in Göttingen. It is a model that can be used regardless of explicitly defined cultures. It describes cultures in a contrastive way. You can use it to diagnose conflicts between cultures.

Individualism and collectivism

If cultural orientation is individualistic, social ties are rather loose. People with this cultural orientation see themselves as being independent. They expect from others that they take care of themselves. The "I" is more important than the "we". Personal identity is the goal that everybody tries to achieve. It is seen as a sign of honesty to say what you mean. Honesty is important. Politically seen this means that the laws are the same for everyone and that all individuals participate equally in the political system. Economically seen motivation is shown by performance and an increase in power. A good performance is better than social relations. In a company you benefit from the performance of the company that pays your salary and the company benefits from the commitment you give. That conflicts can come up is seen as unavoidable.

If the cultural orientation is collectivistic, things are different. Individuals have to subordinate their interests to the community. The community, on the other hand, supports its members for the obedience and truthfulness it gets from them. Social control is guaranteed through the fear of sanctions, loss of face and shame. The "we" is more important than the "I". The goal that shall be achieved is a collective identity. To say what everybody thinks is a sign of loyalty. Politically seen, the power is given to a "leader" who articulates the goals of the collective group. Economically seen, motivation is created by the feeling of togetherness. Social ties are more important than performance. Relationships between the company and its employees are seen as family ties. And conflicts should be avoided since they have a negative connotation.

Text: Dr. Petra Schappert

Most important information from the text

- ● Collectivism collective is more important than Success of one Person
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- ● Individualism Self centered Focused on success
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