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The business of international business is culture

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Abstract

National cultures are distinguished from organizational cultures. The first have been studied from over 50 countries, and described with the help of five dimensions. The differences shown set limits to the validity of management theories across borders. Special attention is paid to characteristics of East Asian cultures that help explain the recent economic success of these countries. Organizational cultures were studied across 20 organizational units in Denmark and the Netherlands; this research identified six dimensions of organizational cultures. The findings lead to a number of suggestions for the management of organizational cultures. Managing international business means handling both national and organizational culture differences at the same time. Organizational cultures are somewhat manageable while national cultures are given facts for management; common organizational cultures across borders are what keeps multinationals together.



Keywords

National Cultures; Organizational Cultures

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The author is emeritus professor of Organizational Anthropology and International Management, University of Limburg at Maastricht and also Senior Research Associate, IRIC (Institute for Research of Intercultural Cooperation). This article is a summary of Geert Hofstede's book *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (1991, McGraw-Hill, London).

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