

THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON

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Overview

- Scope of the article
- Limits
- Process/methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions

Scope of the article

- To compare the cultures of the Czech and Slovak Republic in a business environment.



Countries at a glance: Differences

Czech Republic

- 10 M inhabitants
- 200,000 Slovaks live in the Czech republic

Slovak Republic

- 5 M inhabitants
- About 50,000 Czech live in Slovakia

Countries at a glance: Similarities

- In the same Empires till 1918
- One country: Czechoslovakia, from 1918 till 1993
- Both speak Slavic languages
- Both countries are part of NATO and, since 2004, members of the European Union.
- Slovakia is the 2nd export market of the Czech Republic and its 3rd importer; the Czech Republic is also the 2nd export market of Slovakia and its 2nd importer

Limits of the study

- Few previous researches
- Old data/articles
- Very few available data
- Researchers' biases

Process/Methodology

- Selection of 14 cultural dimensions
- Access to professional rankings (TMC, TMA, WVS, etc)
- Use of students' case studies
- Analysis of professional experiences as cross-cultural trainers
- Discussion and search for common ground

Cultural Dimensions

	Cultural Dimension	Original Model
1	Particularism Vs. Universalism	Trompenaars, 1993
2	Uncertainty Avoidance	Hofstede, 1980
3	Diffuse Vs. Specific	Trompenaars, 1993
4	Trust	Covey, 2008
5	Individualism/Collectivism	Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars, 1993
6	Hierarchy	Hofstede, 1980; House, 2004
7	Achieved Vs Ascribed Status	Trompenaars, 1993
8	Masculinity Index / Cooperation vs Competition	Hofstede, 1980; House, 2004
9	Neutral vs. Emotional / Assertiveness	Trompenaars, 1993; House, 2004
10	Locus of control	Rotter, 1966
11	Deductive/Intuitive thinking	Foster, 2000
12	Past/Present time orientation	Kluckhohn, 1961
13	Short/Long term orientation	Hofstede, 1980
14	Monochronic Vs Polychronic	Hall, 1973

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Particularism/Universalism

- About choosing between agreed upon rules or bending existing rules to fulfil engagements in a relationship (Trompenaars, 1993).
- Here lies a first difference, with the Slovaks displaying slightly more particularistic behaviours than the Czechs.

Uncertainty Avoidance

- This dimension involves the extent to which ambiguous situations are threatening to individuals, the extent to which rules and order are preferred and the extent to which uncertainty is tolerated in a society.
- Uncertainty Avoidance, is quite higher in the Czech republic than in Slovakia.
- The Czechs are not fond of uncertainty and much favour situations to be clear and not ambiguous.

Specific/Diffuse

- A diffuse culture means the split between one's public and private life is not really clear.
- Despite an observed proximity, it appears that Slovaks tend to display a more “being” orientation than the more “doing” orientated Czechs.
- **Indirect communication** is the standard in Slovakia, while the Czechs may be more direct, to the point.

Trust

- Trust as a cross-cultural dimension deals with the amount of trust existing naturally between individuals.
- Both surveyed cultures belong to the countries with little spontaneous trust.
- Indeed, one must have the right connections, or to have known someone for a long time to be ready to work with him.
- Religion plays a decisive role here, with individuals from countries of Catholic traditions tending to trust less each other's than those living in countries of Protestant influence.

Collectivism/Individualism

- Who needs whom? Does the group needs the individual and therefore accepts its individuality, or the individual accepts to adapt to the group's requirement in order to keep harmony.
- Trompenaars & Hofstede display both countries as individualistic
- However, the weight of history & geography have to be taken into account here: Expect an individualistic behaviour in capitals and more collectivistic attitudes in organizations with an old history, such as brown field factories or state bodies born in the Communist period.
- Inheritance traditions? Today, the Czechs are not only more individualistic than the Slovak, they are also more relying on

Hierarchy

- Also called Power Distance: some cultures enjoy hierarchical relationships among their members (at work, in the street, or at home), while others, more egalitarian, value equality.
- Hofstede's number (again) proved controversial: SK scores 104, CZ scores 57!
- However, it is clear that both countries are very hierarchical.

Status

- Achieved status cultures give importance to past results, achievements or recent successes. Ascribed cultures believe status depends on the intrinsic characteristics of the person, such as seniority, gender or social connections.
- If ascription was the norm in communist Czechoslovakia, when the countries opened up, many national and foreign companies promoted young people to management positions based on their studies abroad, language skills and their competitiveness.
- So, older generations are more ascribed than the young ones, in both countries.

Cooperation vs. competition

- While the Czechs appear slightly cooperative, the Slovaks are more assertive and competitive.

Emotions

- Both cultures belong to the middle group of countries in terms of assertiveness.
- It means individuals are not particularly aggressive in their relationships.
- We are in the presence of two cultures that do not favour **emotional** arguments over reason.

Locus of control

- External vs. Internal **locus of control** concerns how much individuals believe they control their own lives.
- While both countries feel quite externally controlled (like most countries in the world), the religious aspect suggests the Slovaks to be even more externally controlled than the Czechs.

Deductive Vs. Inductive thinking

- Should we first present a project from its conceptual, theoretical perspective, or by showcasing the desired results in the form of examples, models or a plan of implementation?
- Both cultures belong to moderately Deductive cultures, meaning that theory, processes and details are essentials to convince a counterparts.
- This coincides with a Neutral attitude towards emotions

Past/Present/Future orientation

- Both countries are usually considered “Present” oriented which means past events are of lesser importance than current aspects: Brand reputation, for instance, is likely to be more quality based than history-based.
- That being said, Slovakia may actually be more “Present” orientated than the Czech Republic.
- Recent History reasons? While the Czech Republic preserved the flag and the anthem of former Czechoslovakia, the Slovak Republic came up with new national symbols.

Short or long term orientated

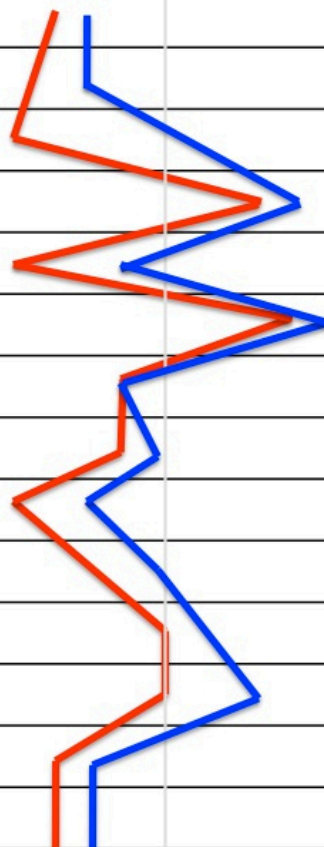
- Reflects the degree to which a community encourages and rewards future-oriented behaviours, such as planning and delaying gratification.
- Hofstede's Long Term Orientation index of 77 for Slovakia and 71 for Czech Republic.
- However, observations show two short-term orientated cultures, despite Hofstede scoring both countries as Long term orientated.

Monochronic Vs. Polychronic

- While Monochronic cultures view time in a linear manner with clear segmentation of task, polychronics tend to have a holistic understanding of time, where effectiveness is favoured over efficiency.
- Both cultures highly value punctuality and visitors counting on a Slavic influence are often surprised by the strictness the Czechs and Slovaks enforce timetables.
- Based on the authors' experience, both countries see the other one as less fixed than self. The Slovaks consider the Czechs to be more relaxed... and vice versa!

Conclusions

CZ SK		
Universalistic		Particularistic
High Uncertainty Avoidance		Low Uncertainty Avoidance
Specific / Direct Com°		Diffuse / Indirect Com°
High Trust		Low Trust
Individualistic		Collectivistic
Equalitarian		Hierarchical
Achieved		Ascribed
Cooperative / (Feminine)		Competitive / (Masculine)
Neutral		Emotional
Internally controlled		Externally controlled
Intuitive		Deductive
Past orientated		Present orientated
Short term orientated		Long term orientated
Monochronic / Fixed		Polychronic / Fluid



Recommendations

- Studies confirms key differences related to the dimensions of **Particularism, Specific** and **Emotions** display.
- The Czechs view the Slovaks as more relationships oriented and point out their more evident display of emotions during professional or private events.
- Vice-versa, the Slovaks expect their Czech colleagues to be more rule-driven, task orientated and more neutral with their emotions.
- While those differences are not considered an obstacle for doing business or working together, they need to be carefully taken into account when cooperating with Czech and Slovak cultures.

Thank you for your attention

- Any questions?

