A comparative study of five cross-cultural dimensions: Chinese construction companies in Congo

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In the last years, Chinese construction companies have been increasingly investing in Congo-Brazzaville. It is essential to underline that Chinese construction companies as well as their Congolese counterparts and labourers should understand cultural differences as well as similarities to create a good partnership-working environment. The two cultural backgrounds are different enough to generate tensions, if not properly understood, they can lead to unproductiveness and misunderstandings; it therefore became important and imperative for managers of Chinese construction companies operating in Congo to understand the national cultures of Congo and the impacts of this culture on the attitudes and behaviour of the local workers. Using the five dimensions of a national culture, the present paper aimed to analyse different characteristics, which constitute the basis of the two cultures. The current study deduced intercultural dimensions within the two cultural backgrounds.

Key words: Cross-cultural management, national cultures, five cultural dimensions, construction companies, China, Congo-Brazzaville.

INTRODUCTION

In the last years, Chinese construction companies have been increasingly investing in Africa. According to Shen (2011), Sino-African trade is growing at an annual rate of 30% with African economy growing steadily at 5%. With this growth rate therefore, there is an undeniable truth that over the next decades, Africa is prone to claim a significant position in the global economy. These figures are challenging Chinese companies and individual Chinese businessmen to reassess broad stereotypes and globalization strategies.

Today, there are thousands of Chinese own factories, farms, retail shops, mining, oil exploration and construction companies that are now operating or doing business in Africa and with Africans. Michel et al. (2009) noted that the African market is booming and its construction market will continue to be an attractive sector to global investors in the foreseeable future. Therefore, Chinese construction companies operating in this business area should take note of the deeply rooted cultural practices and beliefs within their host countries. As emphasized by Geert Hofstede (2001), “Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster.” Nisbett and Masuda (2003) added that different cultural back-grounds organize the world and organizations differently. However, it was reported by Herbert (2009) in his studies about the working conditions within Chinese companies in Angola, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe that these companies are “among the worst employers everywhere”. It is fundamental to analyse whether these facts are due to the impact of cultural differences or to cross-cultural management distortions in these companies. Hoecklin (1996) wrote, when different cultures are well managed they could be an advantage for a company and can lead to innovative business practices, quick learning skills, creativity as well as to competitive advantages. Thus, to run foreign companies successfully in another country it is fundamental to have a clear knowledge of the cultural background of the host country. As stated by Markel (2009) in very general terms, cross-cultural studies refer to educational background, beliefs, art, morals, customs, laws, and economical as well as political frameworks.
The conceptual body of this paper tries to draw on cultural and historical analogies on the influence of Western civilization imposed to Congo-Brazzaville during and after colonization, while China has inherited from Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism cultures. Because of these two different cultural and historical backgrounds, it therefore becomes important and imperative for managers of Chinese construction companies operating in Congo to understand the national cultures of Congo and the impacts of this culture on the attitudes and behaviour of the local workers. With its 3.8 million people, ethnologists recognize 62 spoken languages, principal 15 ethnic groups and more than 70 subgroups in Congo. Also, for the Congolese managers and workers to understand the national cultures of China and their Chinese counterparts to bring about understanding of cultural similarities and differences that facilitates positive business dealings within the Chinese construction companies operating in Congo-Brazzaville.

Through a survey of Chinese and Congolese respondents working in Congo-Brazzaville for Chinese construction companies, the study aims to explore cross-cultural particularities and characteristics based on the values survey module 2008 (VSM08) of the five dimensions of a national culture developed by Hofstede (2008).

CULTURE

Culture is one of the most discussed definitions. To date there seems to be no clear overruling definition of culture. Although the meaning of culture is generally understood, formulating a precise synonym is still a matter of discussion for scientists. Literally, there are several approaches, which attempt to explain the word culture. According to Kluckhohn (1951) in Hofstede (1984: 21), “culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (that is, historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.” Hofstede defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede, 2010). The collective programming is based on values – “a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others” (Hofstede, 2010). In this sense, culture includes systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture... the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment (Hofstede, 2010). Culture constitutes the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, meanings, beliefs, values, attitudes, religions, concepts of self, the universe, time, role, expectations and spatial relations acquired by a large group of the people in order to adapt to the environment (Markel, 2009).

Hofstede (2010) attempted to integrate these values into dimensions which would give an accurate understanding of how culture influences the working behaviours of employees, managers, leaders or other participants of organization existing in a specific country. In other words, members of one culture will have similar sets of preferences attached to their view of the world. Consequently, transferring methods and practices developed in the field of constructions in China to outfit the Congolese needs, may be confronted to a strong resistance and conflicts generated by the culture differences. For instance, the shift work practice, which is usually encouraged by Chinese managers on their construction sites, is subject to resistance from local employees, as they are not used to this type of practices. Thus, the study of cultural influences on a society needs defined typologies (Schein, 1985) or dimensions (Hofstede, 1980) to analyse behaviours, actions and values of its members.

According to Ogborn (1990), the frameworks describing these assumptions in society may be grouped into three types such as cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980, 1984, 1985, 2001), cultural paradigms (Schein, 1985), cultural patterns (Geertz, 1973) or pattern variables (Parsons and Shils, 1952). To succeed internationally, Chinese construction companies should pay attention particularly on the cultural sensitive approach. Furthermore, it is also important to understand the relationship of cultural issues and organizational decisions:

1. Culture is learned: It is not innate; thus it is possible for a person who moves to another cultural environment to learn the rules of the new culture.
2. Culture is shared: The focus is on those things that members of a particular group and country share rather than on individual differences; therefore it is possible to study and identify group patterns.
3. Culture is compelling: Behaviour is determined by culture without individuals being aware of the influence of their culture; understanding culture is important in order to understand and anticipate their behaviour.
4. Culture is interrelated: Despite the various facets, culture cannot be examined in isolation and needs to be studied as a complete entity.
5. Culture provides orientations: A particular group reacts in general in the same way to a given stimulus; understanding culture can help to determine or anticipate how team members of a similar cultural background might react in various situations.

Subsequently, the study will briefly examine the framework of cross-cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede (2001) based from the Chinese construction companies as the conceptual paradigm of the current study.

FIVE DIMENSIONS OF A NATIONAL CULTURE

To describe some dominant thinking and value systems,
Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1984, 1991, 1997, 2001) published the results of his study of more than 100,000 employees of the multinational IBM Company in 40 countries. Hofstede was attempting to locate value dimensions across which cultures vary, and he identified four dimensions such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and uncertainty avoidance, which were completed by the work of Hofstede et al. (1984) and the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) who identified a fifth dimension, a Confucian dynamism labelled long-term orientation versus short-term orientation in life.

**Power distance**

Hofstede (2010) defines power distance as “the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally”. In high power distance cultures, people are expected to display respect for those of higher status. It also refers to the extent to which power, prestige, and wealth are distributed within a culture. Cultures with high power distance have power and influence concentrated in the hands of a few rather than distributed throughout the population.

**Individualism vs. collectivism**

This dimension refers to how people define themselves and their relationships with others. In an individualist culture, the interest of the individual prevails over the interests of the group. Ties between individuals are loose. People look after themselves and their immediate families. In a collectivist culture, the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. People are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups that continue throughout a lifetime to protect in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2010). Individualist cultures are loosely integrated; collectivist cultures are tightly integrated.

**Masculinity vs. femininity**

Hofstede (2010) found that women’s social role varied less from culture to culture than men’s. He labelled as masculine cultures those that strive for maximal distinction between what women and men are expected to do. Cultures that place high values on masculine traits stress assertiveness, competition, and material success. Those labelled as feminine cultures are those that permit more overlapping social roles for the sexes. Cultures that place high value on feminine traits stress quality of life, interpersonal relationships, and concern for the weak.

**Uncertainty avoidance**

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent of which people in a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. Hofstede (2010) explains that this feeling is expressed through nervous stress and in a need for predictability or a need for written and unwritten rules. Cultures strong in uncertainty avoidance are active, aggressive, emotional, compulsive, security seeking, and intolerant; cultures weak in uncertainty avoidance are contemplative, less aggressive, unemotional, relaxed, accepting of personal risks, and relatively tolerant.

**Long-term orientation**

This dimension was identified by Michael Bond and was initially called Confucian work dynamism. This dimension includes such values as thrift, persistence, having a sense of shame, and ordering relationships. Confucian work dynamism refers to dedicated, motivated, responsible, and educated individuals with a sense of commitment and organizational identity and loyalty.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present paper compares Chinese and Congolese cultural dimensions by analysing the data obtained from Chinese construction companies in Congo-Brazzaville. The two cultures are compared following the five dimensions of Hofstede (1980, 2008) such as power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation/short-term orientation. In addition, it provides in-depth comparison of values between Chinese and Congolese differences and similarities related to each cultural dimension. Two main approaches were used to gather information. The primary data were collected through the observation on the construction sites and survey forms (Chinese and French language) distributed to employees working for the Chinese construction companies in Congo.

Secondary data were collected through Internet network, publications, personal records and census. Thus, a questionnaire was established in order to evaluate some of these variables. The Chinese and French versions of the survey were used respectively for Chinese and Congolese respondents.

To ensure that translation problems were avoided, the back translation process was adopted to prepare these two sets of questionnaires and the two versions were mainly prepared based on the Chinese and French version of values survey module (VSM08) developed by Hofstede (1980, 2008). Once the first draft of the survey was established, ten questionnaires were handed out to ask whether the questions made sense to the prospective study participants and were easy to understand. After this primary step, the well-improved questionnaire was developed. Employees were guaranteed complete anonymity and were asked to return the completed questionnaire via mail within two weeks, and the data obtained from the direct surveys conducted on the workplace were personally collected within 72 h. The respondents had the option of completing the questionnaire in one of the two available languages.

**SAMPLE OVERVIEW AND DATA ANALYSIS**

A random survey was conducted on the working place
and through some friends network from labourers to managers working levels within the Chinese construction companies; all respondents were construction professionals with a site experience. Respondents from China were mainly surveyed using the Chinese version of the questionnaire, and local respondents were surveyed using the French version. As mentioned previously, employees from the Chinese construction companies in Congo were selected to take part in the survey in late 2010 and early 2011.

On a total of 155 surveys sent out, 134 responses were usable. The Table 1 shows the detailed information of the respondents such as gender and age for each country. However, due to the limited financial means and materials, the research was only conducted within some selected construction sites (in Congo. Besides, to better understand the importance of each variable dimension, five scales were used from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree and other scale labels; including other aspects such as employee’s attitude and satisfaction, which might directly or indirectly influence behaviours and employee performance on the construction sites. Most questions used an ordinal scale; only few questions used a nominal scale.

The following sections display how the five dimensions of national culture are computed and calculated based on the distribution of four questions per dimension developed by Hofstede (1980, 1987, 2001, 2008).

The values survey modules 2008 (VSM08) is a test designed for comparing mean scores of matched samples of respondents across two or more countries, regions, or ethnic groups. The reliability can be tested only across countries; therefore Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficients across individuals are irrelevant. Hence, in the current study the questionnaire was not pre-tested because the instrument used has been already tested for its validity and reliability by the work of Hofstede (2008). Hence, the values of the two national cultures' countries were computed and calculated as shown in the Tables 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11. The SPSS was used for carrying out these mean scores. Table 2 represents raw mean scores of the five dimensions toward Chinese and Congolese respondents working for the Chinese construction companies in Congo.

### Table 1. Sample and response rates.

| Variable      | Categories | China | Congo |
|---------------|------------|-------|-------|
| Gender        | Female     | 5     | 6     |
|               | Male       | 31    | 75    |
| Age (years)   | Under 25   | 5     | 19    |
|               | 25~35      | 18    | 24    |
|               | 36~45      | 23    | 35    |
|               | Over 45    | 7     | 3     |
| Number of respondents | Total     | 53    | 81    |

### Power distance index (PDI)

This dimension refers to the extent to which power, prestige, and wealth are distributed within a culture. It describes the relationships in a country, as well as the power distribution among members of a group, organization, and society. Cultures with high power distance have power and influence concentrated in the hands of a few rather than distributed throughout the population (Hofstede, 2001, 2005). The power distance index (PDI) was computed based on the country mean scores of the following questions (Hofstede, 2008):

1. Are you consulted by your boss in decisions involving your work?
2. Do you have a boss (direct superior) you can respect?
3. How often, in your experience, are subordinates afraid to contradict their boss?
4. Should an organization structure in which certain subordinates have two bosses be avoided at all cost?

The index formula is:

\[
PDI = 35 \left( m_{07} - m_{02} \right) + 25 \left( m_{23} - m_{26} \right) + C(pd).\]

The resulting values are presented in the Table 3. The resulting values shown in the Table 3 illustrate that the culture of Congo has slightly larger power distance than the national culture of China. This means in Congo, superiors and subordinates consider each other as unequal; the hierarchical system is felt to be based on some existential inequality. Indigenous organizations centralize more power, and subordinates are expected to be told what to do; superiors are believed to be entitled to privileges in Congo. Table 4 shows a comparative analysis of Chinese vs. Congolese characteristics related to power distance dimension.
Table 2. China and Congo mean scores.

| Questions (VSM 08) | Five dimensions | China    | Congo    |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Q23                | PDI             | 3.75     | 3.67     |
| Q26                | PDI             | 3.62     | 3.31     |
| Q02                | PDI             | 2.99     | 3.56     |
| Q07                | PDI             | 2.45     | 3.02     |
| Q01                | IDV             | 2.77     | 2.95     |
| Q04                | IDV             | 2.47     | 3.00     |
| Q06                | IDV             | 3.04     | 3.81     |
| Q09                | IDV             | 2.85     | 3.00     |
| Q10                | MAS             | 2.89     | 2.95     |
| Q03                | MAS             | 2.91     | 3.00     |
| Q05                | MAS             | 2.55     | 2.96     |
| Q08                | MAS             | 2.45     | 2.90     |
| Q16                | UAI             | 2.53     | 2.93     |
| Q20                | UAI             | 3.81     | 3.28     |
| Q24                | UAI             | 3.62     | 3.31     |
| Q27                | UAI             | 3.72     | 3.32     |
| Q15                | LTO             | 3.79     | 3.35     |
| Q18                | LTO             | 3.51     | 2.93     |
| Q25                | LTO             | 3.59     | 3.12     |
| Q28                | LTO             | 3.70     | 2.94     |

Q23 = question 23, Q10 = question 10 and so on.

Table 3. Power distance index (PDI).

| Country | PDI |
|---------|-----|
| China   | 64  |
| Congo   | 70  |

Individualism index (IDV)

Individualism is the opposite of collectivism. It stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: a person is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which continue to protect them throughout their lifetime in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2001, 2005). Hofstede (2008) computed the individualism index (IDV) of the country mean scores based on the following questions:

1. Do you have employment security?
2. Do you have sufficient time for your personal or home life?
3. Do you have a job respected by your family and friends?
4. Do you have an interesting work?

The index formula is:

\[ IDV = 35 (m04 - m01) + 35 (m09 - m06) + C \text{ (ic)} \]

The resulting values are showing in the Table 5. The index values shown in the Table 5 illustrate that a national culture of China is slightly higher compared to Congo. This means that Chinese employees compared to Congolese tend to think of themselves as "I" and tend to classify themselves and each other by individual ambitions rather than collective orientated goals. Table 6 shows a comparative analysis of the Chinese vs. Congolese national culture characteristics related to individualism vs. collectivism.

Masculinity index (MAS)

Masculinity is the opposite of femininity. This dimension refers to societies where gender roles are clearly distinct: men are “assertive, tough, and materialistic” and women are “modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life”. Femininity stands for a society in which social gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (Hofstede, 2001, 2005: 120). Hofstede (2008) stated that the index of country mean scores of this dimension can be computed based on the following questions:

1. Do you work with pleasant people?
2. Do you get recognition for good performance?
3. Do you live in a desirable area?
Table 4. Power distance: Chinese vs. Congolese.

| China national culture                                      | Congo national culture                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Access to information: highly                             | Access to information: less highly structured               |
| Hierarchies in mental models: tall                         | Hierarchies in mental models: shallow                       |
| Emphasis on the social and moral order (for example        | Emphasis on the social and moral order (for example, ethnic |
| nationalism or family circle)                              | appurtenance or friendship)                                 |
| Focus on expertise, authority, experts, certifications,    | Focus on expertise, authority, certifications, official     |
| official stamps: moderate                                  | signatures: weak                                            |
| Prominence given to leaders and citizens                   | Prominence given to leaders and partners                    |
| Importance of security and restrictions or barriers to     | Importance of security and restrictions or barriers to      |
| access: implicit, enforced, frequent restrictions on users  | access: enforced, frequent restrictions on users, implicit   |
|                                                            | freedom to roam                                            |
| Social roles used to organize information: frequent        | Social roles used to organize information: moderate          |

Table 5. Individualism index (IDV).

| Country | IDV |
|---------|-----|
| China   | 33  |
| Congo   | 23  |

Table 6. Individualism/collectivism: Chinese vs. Congolese.

| China national culture                                                  | Congo national culture                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cooperation, collaboration, and individual rights                       | Cooperation, collaboration, and interdependence                             |
| Self-interest, concern for group: moderate                              | Concern for group: strong                                                   |
| Conformity: moderate                                                    | Conformity: loose                                                           |
| Personal achievement underplayed (in favour of group achievement):     | Personal achievement underplayed (in favour of group achievement): strong   |
| moderate                                                                |                                                                             |
| Loose ties, questioning loyalty, group consensus                        | Cohesive groups, unquestioning loyalty, group consensus                    |
| Harmony, maintaining social relationships, subdued controversy          | Harmony, maintaining social relationships, subdued controversy              |
| Personal challenge, material rewards                                    | Mastery of skills, material rewards                                          |
| Boss, wise, experienced leaders                                         | Older, wise, experienced leaders                                            |
| Encourage teamwork, discourage individual competition                   | Encourage teamwork, discourage individual competition                        |

Table 7. Masculinity index (MAS).

| Country | MAS |
|---------|-----|
| China   | 52  |
| Congo   | 77  |

4. Do you have chances for promotion?

The index formula is:

\[ \text{MAS} = 35 (m05 - m03) + 35 (m08 - m10) + C (mf). \]

The resulting values are listed in the Table 7. The index values shown in the Table 7 illustrate that a national culture of Congo is higher than the index value of China. This means that in Congo, people place high values on masculine characters, stress assertiveness, tenacity, and material success. Table 8 shows a comparative analysis of Chinese vs. Congolese national culture characteristics related to masculinity vs. femininity.

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI)

This dimension is defined as the degree to which the
Table 8. Masculinity/femininity: Chinese vs. Congolese.

| China national culture | Congo national culture |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Traditional gender/family/age distinctions | Traditional gender/family/age distinctions |
| Work tasks, roles, and age, with quick results | Work tasks, roles, and mastery, with quick results for limited tasks |
| Mutual cooperation, exchange, and relational support | Mutual cooperation, exchange, and relational support |
| Work in order to live | Live in order to work, quality of life |
| Reserved, personal relationship | Privacy, Interference on personal issues at work |
| Managers expected to be decisive and assertive | Managers expected to be decisive and assertive |

Table 9. Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI).

| Country | UAI |
|---------|-----|
| China   | 79  |
| Congo   | 44  |

members of institutions and organizations within a society feel threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous, or unstructured situations. According to Hofstede (2008), the uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) can be computed based on the country mean scores of the following questions:

1. All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days?
2. How often do you feel nervous or tense?
3. Can one be a good manager without having a precise answer to every question that a subordinate may raise about his or her work?
4. Should a company's or organization's rules not be broken - not even when the employee thinks breaking the rule would be in the organization's best interest?

The index formula is:

\[ UAI = 40 (m20 - m16) + 25 (m24 - m27) + C \text{ (ua)} \]

The resulting values are illustrated in the Table 9. The values in Table 9 show that China has a higher index value compared to Congo. This means that in China, people feel more threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous, or unstructured situations. In addition, they are active, aggressive, emotional, compulsive, security seeking, and less tolerant. Table 10 shows a comparative analysis of the Chinese vs. Congolese national culture characteristics related to uncertainty avoidance.

Long term orientation index (LTO)

Long term orientation is the opposite of short term orientation. It is based on Confucius’ teachings of daily pragmatic rules in ethics with no religious content, combining values and virtues, that is, perseverance and thrift. Short term orientation stands for a society, which fosters virtues related to the past and present, in particular respect for tradition, preservation of “face”, and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede, 2001, 2005). Hofstede (1987, 2008) labelled this dimension based on the four following questions:

1. Are you the same person at work and at home?
2. If there is something expensive you really want to buy but you do not have enough money, what do you do?
3. We should honour our heroes from the past.
4. Persistent efforts are the surest way to results.

The index formula is:

\[ LTO = 40 (m18 - m15) + 25 (m28 - m25) + C \text{ (ls)} \]

The resulting values are shown in the Table 11. The index values shown in the Table 11 illustrate the national culture of China is much higher compared to the culture of Congo. This means that Chinese are persistent, have a sense of shame and ordering relationships. Besides, they are dedicated, motivated, responsible, and educated with the sense of commitment and organizational identity and loyalty. Table 12 shows a comparative analysis of the Chinese vs. Congolese national culture characteristics related to long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and results obtained by computing data of country mean scores and completed by a statistical analysis of the five national culture index values, the paper reviewed cross-cultural dimension implications among Chinese construction companies in Congo. Table 13 shows a summary of the results of national culture differences analysis among Chinese and Congolese derived from a framework of Hofstede. The description provides a basic knowledge of cross-cultural influences of Chinese constructions companies operating in Congo-Brazzaville. Effective use of intercultural teams can provide a source of experience and innovative thinking to improve the likelihood of the company’s success and enhance the competitive position of the organization.
Table 10. Uncertainty avoidance: Chinese vs. Congolese.

| China national Culture                                      | Congo National Culture                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Simplicity, with clear metaphors, limited choices, and      | Simplicity, with clear metaphors, limited choices, and      |
| restricted amounts of data                                  | restricted amounts of data                                  |
| Navigation less control schemes intended to prevent users   | Navigation less control schemes intended to prevent         |
| from becoming, lost                                         | users from becoming, lost                                   |
| Mental models and help systems that focus on                | Mental models and help systems that focus on reducing       |
| understanding underlying concept                             | "user errors"                                               |

Table 11. Long term orientation index (LTO).

| Country | LTO |
|---------|-----|
| China   | 72  |
| Congo   | 59  |

Table 12. Long-term orientation/short-term orientation: Chinese vs. Congolese.

| China national culture                                      | Congo national culture                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content focused on practice and practical value              | Content focused on truth and certainty of beliefs           |
| Relationships as a source of information and credibility     | Rules as a source of information and credibility             |
| Patience in achieving results and goals                      | Desire for immediate results and achievement of goals       |
| Acceptance of that business results may take time to achieve | Results and achievements are set (loose)                    |

Table 13. Results of national differences by country.

| S/N | China | Congo |
|-----|-------|-------|
|     | Results of Power Distance Index (PDI) | Greater centralization; Steep organization pyramids; Managers seen as making decisions autocratically and paternalistically; Close supervision positively evaluated by subordinates; Managers like to see themselves as benevolent decision-makers; Power holders are entitled to privileges; Status and power are motivators. |
| 1   | Less centralization;                  |                                               |
| 2   | Flatter organization pyramids;        |                                               |
| 3   | Managers seen as making decisions after consulting with subordinates; | Managers seen as making decisions autocratically and paternalistically; Close supervision positively evaluated by subordinates; Managers like to see themselves as benevolent decision-makers; Power holders are entitled to privileges; Status and power are motivators. |
| 4   | Close supervision negatively evaluated by subordinates; |                                               |
| 5   | Managers like to see themselves as practical and systematic; they admit a need for support; |                                               |
| 6   | Hierarchy means an inequality of roles, established for convenience; |                                               |
| 7   | Superiors are accessible.              |                                               |
|     | Results of Individualism Index (IDV)  |                                               |
| 1   | More frequent use of "I" and "me";    | More frequent use of "we";                     |
| 2   | In negotiations, decisions typically made on the spot by a representative; | Decisions typically referred back by delegate to the organization; People ideally achieve in groups which assume joint responsibility; Consensus and cooperation highly valued; |
| 3   | People ideally achieve alone and assume personal responsibility; |                                             |
| 4   | Individual initiative and effort highly valued; |                                             |
| 5   | Role of leadership is to foster initiative and independent behaviours; |                                             |
| 6   | Employees are expected to defend their own interests; | Promotion from inside and based on seniority; |
Table 13. cont’d

|   | Promotion from inside and outside, based on market value; | Employees are expected to defend their own interests; |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 | Employees expect organization to defend their interests; | Policies and practices should allow individual initiative; |
| 8 | Policies and practices vary according to relations.     | Policies and practices apply to all.                  |

**Results of Masculinity Index (MAS)**

1. Management more likely to be concerned with task accomplishment;  
   Management more likely to be concerned with nurturing social relationships;
2. Motivation based on the acquisition of money and things;  
   Motivation based on improving the quality of life;
3. Role of leadership is to ensure bottom-line profits in order to satisfy shareholders or to set demanding targets;  
   Role of leadership would be to safeguard employee well-being, and to demonstrate concern for social responsibility;
4. Good leaders are considered strong and aggressive;  
   Leadership is valued for understanding and nurturing;
5. Organizations should not interfere with people’s private lives.  
   Organizational interests are a legitimate reason for interfering with people’s private lives. Social gender roles overlap.

**Results of Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)**

1. More worry about the future;  
   Less worry about the future;
2. More emotional resistance to change;  
   Less emotional resistance to change;
3. Tendency to stay with same employer;  
   Less hesitation to change employers;
4. Loyalty to employer is seen as a virtue;  
   Loyalty to employer is not seen as a virtue;
5. Managers should be selected on the basis of seniority;  
   Managers should be selected on other criteria than seniority;
6. Less risk-taking;  
   More risk-taking;
7. Fear of failure;  
   Hope of success;
8. Conflict in organizations is undesirable;  
   Conflict in organizations is natural;
9. Initiative of subordinates should be kept under control;  
   Delegation to subordinates can be complete;
10. Role of leadership is planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling.  
    Role of leadership is facilitating activities of others.

**Results of Long-Term Orientation (LTO)**

1. Ordering relationships by status and observing this order;  
   Personal steadiness and stability;
2. Perseverance, sustained efforts toward slow results;  
   Efforts should produce quick results;
3. Thrift, being sparing with resources;  
   Social pressure toward spending;
4. Respect for circumstances;  
   Respects for traditions;
5. Willingness to subordinate oneself for a purpose;  
   Concern with personal stability;
6. Having a sense of shame;  
   Concern with social and status;
7. Main work values include learning, honesty, adaptiveness, accountability, and self-discipline;  
   Main work values include freedom, rights, achievement, and thinking for oneself. Leisure time is important;
8. Leisure time is not important;  
   Managers and workers are psychologically in two camps.
9. Focus on market position;  
   Focus on bottom line;
10. Importance of profits 10 years from now;  
    Importance of this year’s profits;
11. Owner-managers and workers share the same aspirations.  
    Managers and workers are psychologically in two camps.

Depending on the management skills, it was found that teams constituted of intercultural groups are more innovative and creative compared to the ones that are culturally homogeneous (Hess, 2007). Therefore, Chinese expatriate managers should take these differences into consideration when stepping into business in
Africa, particularly in Congo. Good management practices should incorporate cultural differences as well as similarities since they vary from one country to another and even within the country.

There are, however, some limitations to the current study. The sample size of 134 respondents used in the study may not be entirely representative of all cross-cultural influences throughout Congo-Brazzaville. Due to the limited financial means and materials, the research was only concentrated in some selected construction sites mainly in Brazzaville and other cities such as Pointe-Noire, Imboulou, Ollombo and Nkayi. Hence, it is difficult to draw conclusions about Congo national culture being homogenous within the country and neighbourhood countries in Central Africa. Intercultural differences are bound to exist in a region as vast and as diverse as Central Africa in terms of ethnicities. These limitations should be taken into account when considering the findings of this study. Africa counts about 1.02 billion people, and over 3,000 ethnic groups speaking more than 1,000 indigenous languages—in addition to the six European languages (French, English, Portuguese, German, Spanish, and Italian) carried over from prior colonization; it is hoped that a more extensive study covering a much larger sample size could be conducted in the near future not only by region but also individual since the continent is constituted of 54 independent nations.

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