

# ***Cultural differences regarding development opportunities in a company***

***Master Thesis, July 2013  
Master Social Policy and Social Interventions  
Student: Anouk van Duin (3870731)  
Supervisor: Prof. dr. Trudie Knijn  
Second Supervisor: dr. Jaap Bos***



**Universiteit Utrecht**

## ***Acknowledgements***

This research is executed as a part of the master Social Policy and Social Interventions. The past few months, working on this thesis has brought me joy and new insights. There are a several key individuals that I would like to thank for their contribution to this master thesis. Firstly I would like to thank Trudie Knijn from the University of Utrecht for her feedback and supervision. Our meetings have always given me new insights and have been very helpful for me. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor at the company, for giving me the opportunity to write my thesis in cooperation with this enormous high-tech company and for letting me experience the “Blended Learning” that is so typical for the company. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to the nine HR-employees of the company that made and took their time generously to let me interview them. Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends that have contributed to my thesis by asking the right questions and making sure that I had relaxing moments when I needed them.

## **Table of contents**

<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 The company and its goals	5
1.2 Engagement survey: a survey to improve employee engagement	5
1.3 Problem description	5
<b>2. Theoretical exploration</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Backgrounds and context of the problem	7
2.2 Social Identity Theory	7
2.3 Definition of culture	8
2.4 Measuring and comparing different cultures – Hofstede’s Model	9
2.4.1 The Onion Diagram	9
2.4.2 Cultural dimensions of Hofstede’s model	10
2.5 Critiques on Hofstede’s model of cultural dimensions	11
2.6 Measuring and comparing different cultures – The GLOBE Model	12
2.6.1 Introduction to the GLOBE Model	12
2.6.2 Dimensions of the GLOBE-model	12
2.7 The debate between Hofstede’s model and the GLOBE-model	14
<b>3 Exploration of the practical context</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 The construction of the engagement survey	15
3.2 Differences that appeared in the engagement survey	16
3.3 An explanation of the company’s development opportunities	17
<b>4. Research question and research methods</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1 Research question	22
4.2 Sub questions	22
4.3 Measures	22
4.4 Research methods	23
<b>5. Results</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1 Sub question 1	28
5.2 Sub question 2	33
5.3 Sub question 3	40
<b>6. Conclusion and discussion</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Annex 1: Topiclist interviews HR employees</b>	<b>48</b>

## **Summary**

This report describes a research that focuses on development opportunities within a company and how they are experienced by the employees of various nationalities. The company is a multinational high-tech company that designs and produces high-tech systems. Besides the high-tech side of the company, the company also focusses on the development of its employees through offering a variety of development opportunities.

In 2013, the company hired an external bureau whose expertise was on conducting employee engagement research. The aim was to gain more insight in the opinion of the employees and to determine the main strong points of the company, but also the points of improvement. The engagement survey was conducted in February 2013 and when the overall region report appeared, large differences were shown between the different departments all over the world. In order to further examine this, a nationality report was made. In this report even larger differences appeared between the eight main employee nationalities (n>100) and this research was started in order to further examine the nationalities' differences on the questions on development opportunities by answering the following question: What are the main differences on perceived career development opportunities when comparing different employee nationalities and how can those be explained?

Firstly, the outcomes of the survey were compared to three cultural dimensions from scientific literature in order to determine expectations and to give an indication of possible issues. The dimensions that are used are *Individualism vs. collectivism* (Hofstede, 2010), *Performance Orientation* (House et al., 2004) and *Future Orientation* (House et al., 2004). From this comparison to the theory, a deeper dive is taken to find out the 'problem behind the problem': what exactly are the problems on development opportunities related to cultural differences that the HR employees experience and how those are currently dealt with. In order to answer these questions, three HR-employees of each region, Europe, Asia and the United States, were interviewed.

The conclusion that is drawn from the results is four-fold. Firstly, the cultural differences do influence the way the employees perceive and value the development opportunities within the company. At the same time, the company uses a country exceeding vision and thus country exceeding development opportunities. Secondly, the employees and their managers do not always see development as a priority. Linked to this is the assumption of the employees that development is an HR-driven process. The employees need to be activated and have to understand that they are responsible; they are in the 'driver's seat'. Thirdly, some of the managers are not well equipped for coaching. In some cases, extra attention is needed in order to improve the employees' development. Lastly, some causes are not just culturally driven, but also a result of the locations and its environment. Those four factors combined create the advice to keep the development opportunities as they currently are and to make small adaptations per country.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 *The company and its goals***

The company is a worldwide leading company in the development and production of high-tech systems that are used in the semiconductor industry. The head office of the company is located in the Netherlands, with approximately six to seven thousand employees and visitors present at the campus per day. Worldwide, over ten thousand people work for the company, with the most important offices in Asia, the United States and the Netherlands (The company, 2012). Due to the fact that many highly skilled technicians are needed at development, production and customer sites all over the world, the company is a multicultural company with employees of over seventy nationalities (The company, 2013). Many employees emigrate for their work and others may move to another country temporarily to implement the product at a customer site. At the same time, teams all over the world work together constantly. Multiculturalism and multicultural cooperation is thus faced on a daily basis.

Besides the company's attention on high quality technical systems development, the company also focuses on the development of their employees. The company thinks that the engagement of their employees is crucial in making the company an even better place to work, share, learn and meet at every level of the organization. Engagement of employees enables the company to work as efficiently and pro-actively as possible in the aggregation of different technical parts into one system. By doing so, knowledge is shared and the continuous development of the employees and their skills are stimulated ultimately contributing to improvements in the work (The company, 2013).

### **1.2 *Engagement survey: a survey to improve employee engagement***

In order to monitor employee engagement and its determining factors, the company has been conducting surveys on this subject (The company, 2012). The previous surveys were based on a variety of issues and did not measure the engagement of the employees, nor did the surveys provide statistical comparable data. In 2013, a new approach has been introduced: the company hired an external bureau to conduct a survey on employee engagement. Given the expertise of the company, the results of the company's surveys can be benchmarked by comparing these with the results of other high-tech international companies (external bureau, 2013). In addition, a longitudinal study is intended in order to monitor progress in employee engagement.

### 1.3 *Problem description*

The company is a company that, next to their focus on high quality technical systems, also has a major focus on the satisfaction and engagement of its employees. It is assumed that when employees are highly engaged and satisfied, this contributes to the human capital in a company. This human capital will influence economic growth, which means employees and their cooperation are essential to reach high performance in a company. Conversely, when a company has no well-equipped staff, it will not be successful. The company also assumes it is important that their employees stay challenged (The company, 2013). In 2012, it was decided that there was not enough knowledge on the employee satisfaction of the company's employees. In order to gather more knowledge and to discover and determine the main strong points and the points of improvement, according to the employees, the engagement survey was conducted.

When the reports of the current engagement survey appeared, the results indicated that the company's overall scores on satisfaction and engagement in reports of Asian departments were considerably lower than those in European departments, while the scores in reports of US departments were often significantly higher. In order to further examine this, a report on nationalities was extracted by the external survey bureau from the 2013 engagement survey's results. In this report (External bureau, 2013), the same phenomenon occurred. In this study, one of the subjects that appeared to have large differences between the nationalities will be further examined. The Human Resources (HR) department focuses on the development opportunities of all employees and the scores on the questions regarding development opportunities illustrated considerable variance in different nationalities. Therefore, a research was conducted on the development opportunities within the company. An example of the varying scores is that the Japanese scores on development opportunities were much lower than the scores of American employees. Given the fact that some major parts of certain sectors are mainly located in Asia or in the US, the company would like to examine those scores in-depth and having them compared. The question is whether the lower or higher scores really represent bad and good working environments or that the differences might have to do with possible other factors, such as cultural differences.

Within the company, the focus is on personal and career development of employees so all employees have the opportunity to stay challenged in the work they are doing. Internal career paths and employee improvement options are offered to support employees in reaching a higher level. Interestingly, the career development programs are the same at all the different locations, but the scores on career development opportunities were significantly different. The company would like to offer their employees the right career development opportunities that match the needs of the employees.

This study will dive deeper into this subject and will give an insight in how the employees of the different nationalities perceive the company's career development opportunities, how these can be explained and what kind of implications this might have for the content and implementation of the company's development opportunities. In the end, the company hopes to detect possible problems and differences in its site locations to improve the development opportunities within the company.

## **2. Theoretical exploration**

### **2.1 Backgrounds and context of the problem**

The engagement survey of 2013 showed differences regarding the questions on career development opportunities suggesting further research needed to include national factors. Thus, a report on nationalities was requested to find out to what extent there were differences between the different nationalities. This nationality report (External Bureau, 2013) revealed large differences: some of the nationalities scored significantly higher or lower than the company's overall score. Since the questions focus on the way the individual employees of the company perceive their career development opportunities, a focus on individual perception is needed for which the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1972) will be used. Secondly, a discussion on theoretical approaches on cultural differences will be presented.

### **2.2 Social Identity Theory**

The Social Identity Theory formulated by Tajfel (1972) is a psychological theory that dives into individual perception and how this is connected to the groups to which the individual belongs. Social identity was defined by Tajfel as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (Tajfel, 1972: p.272). A social group in this definition is defined as a compilation of persons that share the same social identity. The strategies and the nature of the competition that are used within the group depend on the beliefs on the nature of intergroup relations of the group members.

Therefore, a person does not have one "personal self", but rather various selves that coincide with the different circles of group membership in which a person acts. Different social contexts influence an individual in the way he or she feels, thinks and acts which is based on the basis of the "level of self" in this context (Turner & Tajfel, 1986). The "level of self" can for example be on personal, family or national level. This "level of self" can be linked to the variety of social identities that a person has. This social identity is thus a self-concept that an individual derives from the way this individual perceives his or her membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). Therefore, group membership has a social influence on an individual's social identity: group norms are constructed by the in-group members. Those in-group members internalize and act according to those norms as a part of their own social identity (Turner, 1982).

The ways the questions in the survey are answered are under influence of the social identities of the other employees. One of the social identities in which context the participants filled out the survey is that of an employee of the company. Another social identity is the nationality of the employee and the culture that comes with this nationality. Literature and academic research on

cultural differences can help to figure out how these multiple social identities influence the way the employees answer the survey.

### 2.3 Definition of culture

Different scores on development opportunities appeared in a comparison of the different nationalities in the company (external bureau, 2013). Differences in the cultures of the employees can help to explain the outcomes. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) describe culture with the metaphor 'mental programming'. Every person is influenced in the way he or she uses patterns of thinking, potentially acting and feeling throughout the person's lifetime. The term mental programming does not imply that people are similar to computers, but that behaviour can be partially explained by the mental program of a person: it indicates what reactions are plausible and intelligible when looking at somebody's past.

The 'mental program' or culture of a person lies within the social environment in which somebody grew up and the collected life experiences of that person. Culture can be defined in several ways. In the common western languages, culture is mostly very narrowly defined as "refinement of the mind" or "civilization" and in particular the results of this, such as literature or art. Culture, the way Hofstede (2010) describes it, as mental software, has a much broader meaning and is often used in anthropology and sociology. This conceptualization of culture considers it a catchword for all patterns of thinking, acting and feeling that are a collective phenomenon. It is considered to be collective because it is partially shared with and affected by those who live or lived in the same social environment. Culture is "*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group of another*" ( Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, p. 6). Culture is thus something that is learned and should be distinguished from an individual's personality on one side and human nature on the other side. The individual personality is his or her personal set of mental programs that are unique and thus only partly shared with other human beings. The personality is partly inherited (genes) and partly influenced by the influence of culture and personal experiences. Human nature is the part of mental programming that is inherited within our genes. It determines our basic psychological functioning such as the ability to feel anger, fear or joy. However, how people act from these basic psychological functions is modified by culture. Figure 1 (Hofstede, 2010) shows the three levels of uniqueness in social programming: human nature, culture and personality.

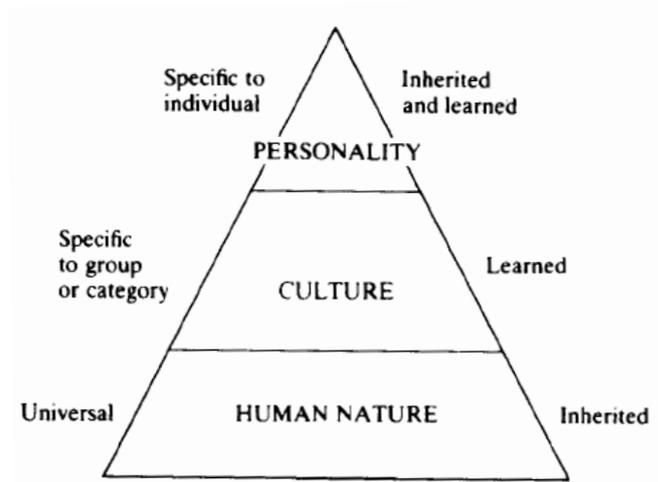


Figure 1: Tree levels of uniqueness in human mental programming (Hofstede, 2010)

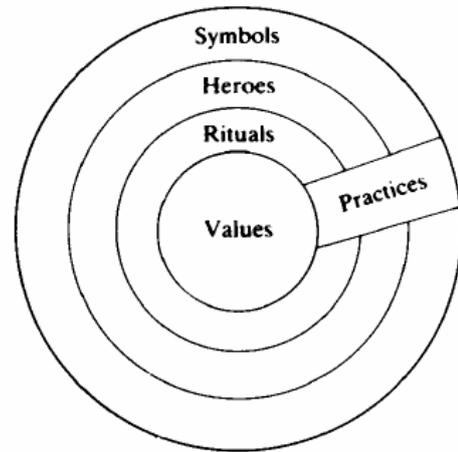


Figure 2: The 'Onion diagram' (Hofstede, 2010)

## 2.4 Measuring and comparing different cultures – Hofstede's Model

### 2.4.1 The Onion Diagram

Cultural differences can manifest themselves in a variety of ways. The following four concepts – symbols, heroes, rituals and values – help to comprehensively illustrate the broad concept of culture. These concepts are often shown as the skins of an onion: the 'onion diagram' which is shown in figure 2 (Hofstede, 2010). Symbols are pictures, objects or gestures that have a particular meaning that will only be recognized by somebody who shares the same culture. An example of a symbol could be certain hairstyles or certain words that are used. Symbols can change quite regularly and are easily developed. Because of this, symbols are placed in the outer layer of figure 2. Heroes are persons with certain characteristics that function as a model for behaviour. Their characteristics are highly prized. Rituals are collective activities that are actually pointless to reach a desired goal, but that are considered socially essential within a culture. Examples of rituals are religious ceremonies or greeting other people. Rituals also include discourse; the way language is used in talking, written text daily, interaction and communicating beliefs.

The concepts symbols, heroes and rituals together can be incorporated in the term practices. They can be observed, but their exact meaning can only be interpreted and determined by the insiders. Values can be seen as the core of culture. Hofstede (2010) defines values as "feelings with an added arrow indicating a plus and a minus side. They deal with pairings such as evil versus good, dirty vs. clean... forbidden versus permitted" (Hofstede, 2010). Symbols, heroes, rituals and basic values are all acquired very early in lifetime. In the first twelve years of our life, persons are very receptive and in this period, humans quickly and unconsciously absorb necessary information

from their environment. After those years, persons gradually switch to another way of learning that is more conscious and mainly focused on new practices (Hofstede, 2010).

Different layers of culture exist and because people are always part of several categories and groups, they carry several layers of mental programming. Those layers correspond to the different levels of culture. An individual's social identity therefore relates to the national level, a gender level, a generation level and an organizational level at the same time (Hofstede, 2010).

#### 2.4.2 *Cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model*

Hofstede (1980) conducted a research among IBM employees from which he derived a model of dimensions of national cultures. Those dimensions exist of aspects of cultures that can be measured and be compared to each other. The foremost model existed of four dimensions. The first dimension is *power distance*. This can be defined as the extent to which members of an institution (e.g. a school or a community) or organisation (e.g. the companies where people work) within a country await and accept that there is an unequal distribution of power. An example is hierarchy in an company or business or how the relationship between parents and their children or students and their teacher can be defined. Do they treat each other as equals? An indication of power distance within an organisation is also the salary range between the top and bottom of an organisation and the way decisions are made, in a democratic or an autocratic way.

The second dimension is *individualism versus collectivism*. The extent to which a culture is either individualistic or collectivistic determines the cultures position in this dimension. When a culture is mainly individualistic, the ties between individuals are weak. Everybody has to take care of themselves. Collectivist culture is the exact opposite: there is a strong cohesion between people. This strong cohesion protects persons in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

The third dimension is *masculinity versus femininity*. This dimension is defined by the extent to which the dominant values are either masculine or feminine. A masculine culture is a culture in which social gender roles are very distinct. Men are for example supposed to be assertive and focused on material success while women are supposed to be more concerned with the quality of life and more modest. A feminist culture is a culture in which social gender roles are not distinct and overlap.

The fourth dimension of the foremost cultural dimension model of Hofstede is *Uncertainty avoidance*. This is the extent to which members of a certain culture feel threatened by unknown or uncertain situations and the extent to which those members try to avoid situations in which uncertainty is high. When there is a high degree of uncertainty avoidance, a culture will have many rules. When there is a low degree of avoidance insecurity, there are not so many rules and different opinions are more appreciated (Hofstede, 1980).

The first publication on cultural dimensions in 1980 induced many critiques. In the second and revised edition of *Cultures and Organisations: software of the mind* (2010), Hofstede added a fifth dimension to his model: *Confucian dynamism or long-term versus short-term orientation* in life. This dimension refers to which extent the culture is more focused on either the long-term or on the here and now. When people are more long-term orientated, they will make more long-term plans, such as investing in savings. Short-term orientated cultures are more focussed on the here and now; they are not worried about the future and their actions and choices may reflect a short-term perspective (Hofstede, 2010).

This literature on cultural dimensions can be used to compare the variety of nationalities that filled out the engagement survey using on one or more of the dimensions. Based on this analysis, a description can be made how those nationalities would react on certain circumstances and the link to how individuals experience the career development programs can be made. For example: an individual that is from a very collectivistic culture might not think about his own contribution to a certain product, but more about the fact that he contributed to the team that developed a certain product. A very individually focused career development program might then be a misfit to this person. Hofstede's theory on cultural dimensions can thus be used to make comparisons between the different nationalities that filled out the survey and what implications this might have for the company's career development programs.

### 2.5 *Critiques on Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions*

Although Hofstede's model on cultural dimensions is one of the most cited theories (Bond, 2002) on cultural differences between nationalities, the theory has been criticised in part or whole by other academics.

The first critique is that a survey is not an appropriate instrument for accurately measuring and determining cultural differences (Jones, 2007). Schwartz (1999) argues that, because of the fact that the variables are culturally subjective and thus sensitive, a survey might not be the right instrument. Hofstede (1998) reacts to those critiques by arguing that a survey was not the only method he used.

Another critique has to do with the fact that Hofstede uses nationalities as a unit of proxy for culture. McSweeney (2000) argues that this is not an appropriate proxy because cultures are not always bounded by borders. Hofstede (1998) argues that, in measuring and identifying cultural differences, national identities are the only option.

Thirdly, Olie (1995) and Graves (1986) argue that a research done in one company can never give enough information to formulate a theory on cultural systems. Hofstede (1998) argues that the fact that he used only one multinational company eliminates the effect of the company's

management practices and the company's policy. Because only one company was used, there is no influence of the company itself, which leaves only national culture as an explanation for cultural differences (Hofstede, 1980).

Jones (2007) argues that only four or five dimensions do not provide sufficient information on cultural differences. Hofstede (1998) agrees with this critique and argues that new dimensions should be added to his original theory continuously.

Taking all these different critiques into account, for this study an alternative theory focused on explaining cultural differences will be considered.

## 2.6 *Measuring and comparing different cultures – The GLOBE Model*

### 2.6.1 *Introduction to the GLOBE Model*

The "Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness" Model (GLOBE Model) by House et al. (2004) presents an alternative model on the structure of national cultures. Since its publication in 2004, there has been an ongoing debate between the GLOBE scholars and Hofstede. While GLOBE Model is less criticized than Hofstede's model, the fact that the model is more recent implies that researchers might not have fully tested the model yet or that the model is less controversial (Shi, 2010).

The GLOBE model was developed by a long-term research project that aimed to take a closer look into the complex effects of culture. The impacts of those effects include topics such as leadership, economic competitiveness of societies, organizational effectiveness and the human conditions of the members of the societies (House et al., 2004). The GLOBE-research was designed to reproduce and expand Hofstede's model (2001). Additionally, the GLOBE-researcher's aim was to develop measurement standards in order to give precise definitions of the similarities and differences among different cultures. The GLOBE research team ultimately developed nine cultural dimensions to be used as units of measurement. Each of those dimensions encompasses both values as well as societal practices in the diverse cultural and social settings (House et al., 2004).

### 2.6.2 *Dimensions of the GLOBE-model*

The nine dimensions of the GLOBE- model are *Uncertainty Avoidance, Institutional Collectivism, In-group Collectivism, Power Distance, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Humane orientation, Future Orientation and Performance Orientation* (House et al., 2004). Some of the dimensions were measured in the same way as in Hofstede's (2010) model on cultural research, such as Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance. House et al. (2004) describe how they split Hofstede's Individualism vs. Collectivism dimension into two separate dimensions: Institutional collectivism and In-group collectivism. The roots of In-group collectivism has been previously studied by Triandis

(2005), while Institutional collectivism has not been studied before in research. On basis of the discussion on Hofstede's masculinity dimension, two new dimensions were developed: Gender Egalitarianism and Assertiveness. Thirdly, Hofstede's dimension on Short vs. Long Term Orientation is not used. Instead, the GLOBE research team used the dimensions of Performance Orientation, which was derived from the work on need for achievement of McClelland's (1961), Humane Orientation and Future Orientation rooted in the work of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961).

The first dimension that the GLOBE-researchers define is *Uncertainty Avoidance*. This is "the extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events" (House et al., 2004, p. 30). When a culture scores high on this dimension, people tend to lead lives with very few unexpected events. The second dimension is *Institutional collectivism* and is defined as "the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action" (House et al., 2004, p. 30). In the case of a high score on this dimension, individual goals can suffer because loyalty is higher to a group, for example an organisation or government. Group members feel interdependent with a group or an organisation and important decisions are rarely considered just for their effects on individuals, but rather towards whole groups. The third dimension zooms into another part of collectivism that the GLOBE-researchers define: *In-group collectivism*. In-group collectivism is "the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families" (House et al., 2004, p. 30). When a culture scores highly on in-group collectivism, the culture might have characteristics such as great distinctions between in-groups and out-groups and the extent to which people might emphasize being related to a certain group. The fourth dimension is *Power Distance* and is defined as "the extent to which a community accepts and endorses authority, power differences, and status privileges" (House et al., 2004, p. 30). Cultures with a high score on this dimension traditionally expect people to follow their leaders without asking many questions and where there is limited upward mobility. The fifth dimension is *Gender Egalitarianism* focusing on "the degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality" (House et al., 2004, p. 30). Gender egalitarianism essentially asks whether men and women get equal chances in the given society. The sixth dimension, *Assertiveness*, refers to "the degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others" (House et al., 2004, p. 30). A culture with a high score expects people to act dominant in relations to each other in order to gain control over the situation. The seventh dimension, *Humane Orientation* is defined as "the degree to which an organization or society encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others" (House et al., 2004, p. 569). A high score on Humane Orientation suggests that people of a culture are likely to be very tolerant towards each other. The eighth dimension is *Future Orientation*. This dimension is defined as "the degree to which

a collectivity encourages and rewards future-oriented behaviours such as planning and delaying gratification” (House et al., 2004, p. 282). The ninth and last dimension is *Performance orientation*., defined as “reflects the extent to which a community encourages and rewards innovation, high standards, excellence, and performance improvement” (House et al., 2004, p. 30). In a culture with high performance orientation, training, development and competitiveness are highly rewarded.

## 2.7 *The debate between Hofstede’s model and the GLOBE-model*

Since 2006 there has been a debate between researchers of the two models and among scholars on the two models which one to use in research.

In November 2006, the Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS) published the article “What did GLOBE really measure? Researchers’ minds versus respondents’ minds.” by Hofstede (2006) in which Hofstede describes the similarities and differences of his own model and GLOBE-model. Additionally Hofstede (2006) re-analyses some of the GLOBE-data and criticizes the conclusions of the GLOBE-researchers. Hofstede (2006) quotes Miller (1956), who said that the human’s mind has a limited capacity for processing new information, which also counts for very complex dimensional models. When a dimensional model is too complex, it will not be seen as useful. Miller (1956) argues that a classification, in order to be useful, should not have more than seven categories. Hofstede (2006) argues that the GLOBE-model is thus surpassing the human’s capacity for processing information and therefore data reduction is needed to create a useful model. Hofstede (2006) proposed changes through which the data of GLOBE-model could be reduced to the same five dimensions as in Hofstede’s model on cultural dimensions.

Shi (2011) claims that both the models of Hofstede and GLOBE are highly valuable and that both studies provide useful dimensions to compare and create a better understanding between different countries. In order to compare the two different models, Shi (2011) compared the scores of China and the US in both models and found that for example the scores on Uncertainty Avoidance differed, although this dimension was expected to be the same. Shi(2011) recommends that in future research, more comparisons need to be made between the two models in different research fields and across different cultures. Posthuma (2009) claimed that “Contrasts between GLOBE and Hofstede scores revealed that GLOBE culture constructs were better predictors and they also enabled an improved understanding of the relationships between national culture and union membership”(Posthuma, 2009, p.527). Shi (2011) adds that the GLOBE-model combined several studies on cultural differences and that she has a tendency to prefer the GLOBE model because it is more appropriate in analysing the cultural distance between countries.

### 3 Exploration of the practical context

#### 3.1 The construction of the engagement survey

The engagement survey was conducted by an external bureau specialized in conducting surveys that measure employee satisfaction. The survey consists of a list of questions with answers measured on a zero to ten-point scale, beginning with eight main questions to determine a first impression of the general satisfaction of the employees. Those initial eight questions focus on overall satisfaction, job satisfaction, satisfaction of working conditions, satisfaction on job compensation, satisfaction about colleagues, satisfaction on the employees direct manager, satisfaction regarding the personal development opportunities within the company and the satisfaction with the company itself. The rest of the survey dives deeper into each of these subjects. The external bureau has reported on the results for every team with more than ten respondents (External bureau, 2013).

The external bureau has reported on the results for all organizational units of the company with more than ten respondents. The first part of the report provides scores on the individual questions. In addition to the answers on individual questions, so called 'theme-scores' are calculated and included in the report. A theme-score consists of several weighted scores from some of the questions from the survey. The questions are bucketed together in a theme in order to create an in-depth insight that can be used for follow-up actions. Because of the fact that there are reports at each level in the organisation, actions can be undertaken started at each level in the organisation. In total, the survey contains twelve themes. Those twelve themes are then again gathered into three main buckets that influence an organisation: Capability, Ability and Willingness. The main principle behind the survey is that a company can only perform at the highest level if employees are capable in their work, if the employees are willing to go the extra mile and if the employees have the ability to do so, for example if they work efficiently. If all three buckets are positive, high performance can be achieved by the company.

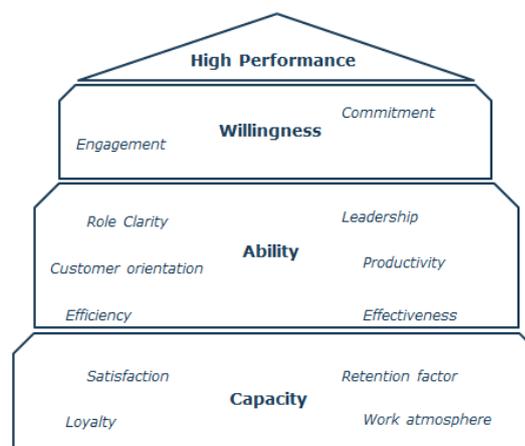


Figure 3: Build-up of high performance on themes (External bureau, 2013)

In order to make comparisons between the different nationalities, a nationality report of the survey was made by the external company that conducted the survey. This nationality report contained all 72 nationalities that were present in the company at that moment.

In this research the focus will be on the main eight nationalities, that each have more than 100 employees. When comparing the nationality report, the scores on development opportunities varied between the different nationalities. Because of the varying scores, the company wanted those scores on further examination. The company's aim is to understand why the scores are varying and what could be done to improve the scores.

### 3.2 Differences that appeared in the engagement survey

In this paragraph, differences that appeared in the questions on development opportunities of the nationalities with  $n > 100$  will be compared to each other and the company overall score in order to make good comparisons and keep the validity high. The eight nationalities with  $n > 100$  are: American, Chinese, Dutch, Belgian, German, Japanese, South-Korean and Taiwanese.

The following results of the nationalities with  $n > 100$  were derived from the nationality report of the engagement survey of 2013 (External bureau, 2013).

		The company	American	Belgian	Chinese	Dutch	German	Japanese	Korean	Taiwanese
My Development Opportunities										
A	The company offers me a challenging working environment	7.3	7.7	7.3	7.0	7.4	7.1	6.4	6.3	7.2
B	My job offers me sufficient opportunities to acquire new knowledge	7.1	7.3	7.4	6.9	7.1	7.0	6.5	6.5	7.2
C	I would like to develop within my field of expertise	7.9	8.2	7.9	7.8	7.8	8.1	7.5	7.6	7.9
D	My direct manager encourages my development and coaches me	6.4	6.8	6.5	7.0	6.3	6.0	5.6	6.6	6.7
E	I receive as much training as I need to do my job properly	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.1	6.2	5.5	4.9	5.6	5.9
F	I have the opportunity to develop my career within the company	6.5	6.4	6.7	6.3	6.6	5.9	5.3	6.2	6.4

Figure 4: Main eight nationalities ( $n > 100$ ) in the company on questions on Development Opportunities in the engagement survey of 2013 (External bureau, 2013)

The above overview provides an insight in the answers of the employees of the main eight nationalities within the company ( $n > 100$ ) on the questions on Development opportunities in the

engagement survey of 2013. The scores of the different nationalities are compared to the company overall score. Green colouring indicates a score above the reference score, red colouring indicates a score lower than the reference score. When a score is coloured this indicates that the absolute deviation is larger than 0.7 (light colouring) or larger than 1.5 (dark colouring). Absolute deviations are based on the difference between two averages: the score of a nationality and the reference score, in this case the company's overall score. In addition to the absolute deviations, colouring is also done based on significance. Significance indicates that a certain deviation is not accidental, but important and eliminates the distribution of the scores in the calculation. For example: if an answer is given very often, the distribution will be smaller and the average will be 'stronger'. A reliability of 99% is shown by dark colouring, while light colouring is used to indicate a reliability of 95%. When a score is blue, there is no significant difference, nor is there an absolute deviation larger than 0.7.

A few obvious differences appear in figure 4. The American scores on the questions on development opportunities are coloured dark green in four out of six questions, while Japanese and Korean scores are mainly dark red. The Dutch and Chinese scores give a mixed picture of their opinion on development opportunities. The Taiwanese scores are mostly neutral and often match the company's scores. When comparing these scores to the other Asian countries, the Taiwanese scores are strikingly different.

### 3.3 *An explanation of the company's development opportunities and HR's roles in this*

The HR department has a key role in the design and implementation of the development opportunities. The HR-department itself is organized according to the HR Business model of Ulrich (1997). This model's aim is to include the HR professionals in the organizational processes and adapt their goals with the organisation's goals, so they can contribute to the organization in an effective way (Ulrich, 1997). The HR department can thus add value to the organization. In his book *Human Resource Champions* (Ulrich, 1997), Ulrich states that the competitive landscape between companies is changing, resulting in new challenges towards differentiating themselves from other competitors. Organizational capability is one of the sources that has become more important and HR professionals can play a role in this development. Ulrich's theory describes how HR professionals can play a role in creating organizations that add value to customers, employees and investors. Ulrich defines seven challenges that the HR-department needs to adjust to and from those challenges he defined a typology: the HR Business model. Ulrich's model exists of a typology of four situations in which an organization can find themselves. A business partner is able to fulfil all four roles. Figures 5 and 6 show the four different parts of the typology and their goals and activities (Ulrich, 1997).

When business strategies are translated into HR practice, this will help a business in three different ways. Firstly, the business can bring together the business's needs and customer demands,.

Secondly, the time in between conception and execution of a strategy is shortened, which means that the business can easier adapt to changes. Thirdly, the execution of strategy is more effective, which enables the business to achieve financial performance (Ulrich, 1997).



Figure 5: HR Roles in building a competitive organisation (Ulrich, 1997).

Role/Cell	Deliverable/ Outcome	Metaphor	Activity
Management of Strategic Human Resources	Executing strategy	Strategic Partner	Aligning HR and business strategy: "Organizational diagnosis"
Management of Firm Infrastructure	Building an efficient infrastructure	Administrative Expert	Reengineering Organization Processes: "Shared services"
Management of Employee Contribution	Increasing employee commitment and capability	Employee Champion	Listening and responding to Employees: "Providing resources to employees"
Management of Transformation and Change	Creating a renewed organization	Change Agent	Managing transformation and change: "Ensuring capacity for change"

Figure 6: Definition of HR Roles (Ulrich, 1997).

## HR Generalist - Profile

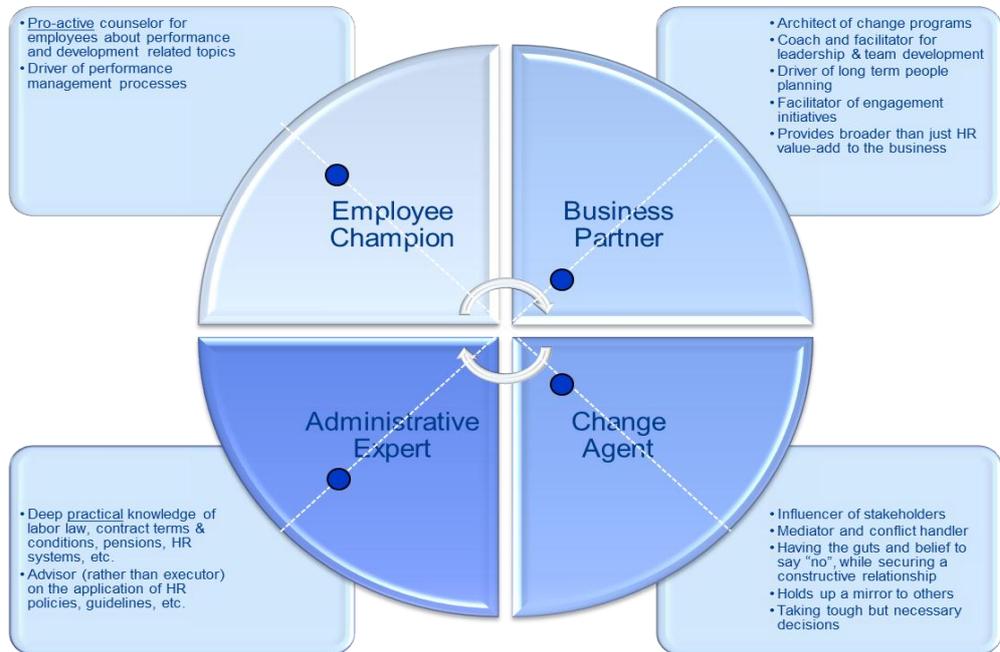


Figure 7: The company's HR Generalist Profile (The company, 2012)

## HR & O manager - Profile

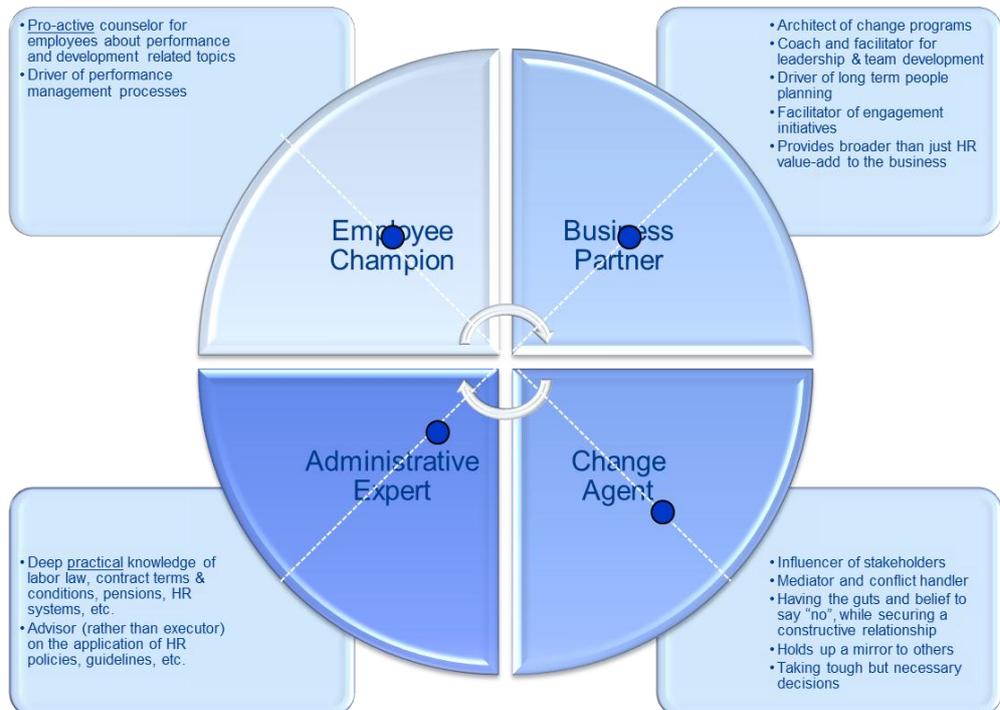


Figure 8: The company's HR & O manager Profile (The company, 2012)

Within the company, the roles of the different HR-functions are determined according to the HR business partner model of Ulrich. Figures 7 and 8 show two examples of the position of two different HR roles in the company. HR Generalists focus on operational HR matters that have to do with employees and managers. The focus of the HR-managers is on the tactical and strategic HR, focussing on management and teams (The company, 2012).

When it comes to development opportunities, the HR Generalists are the ones that coach the employees and are the main persons to whom the employees can address their questions. The HR managers design the development opportunities and implement those into the organization. Within the company, there are multiple ways to develop. The so-called 'Blended Learning Solution' approach is used to provide the employees more knowledge. In short, the 'Blended Learning Solution' means that employees should always learn in more than one way at the same time. In order to track the employees' learning, the organization uses Development Action Plans (DAP). This DAP is formulated by the employee and is a document that the employee can use as a foundation for professional-, career- and personal development (The company, 2012). Within the company, it is expected that the employees take their own responsibility when it comes to developing themselves. An employee thus has the responsibility to drive and monitor his own development. Managers review the DAP's with their employees during the Mid Year Review (MYR) and the Performance Review (PR). During the year, the HR supports the employees through coaching and feedback in the on-going process. During the MYR, the employee's development is evaluated and targets will be adjusted if needed. At the PR, the whole year is evaluated. New targets and training that is needed in order to reach the new targets will be set.

A wide range of development options are given. Firstly, the company considers "experience and coaching on the job" as a way of learning. Through working the employees develop new qualities, knowledge and experience. The second way of learning that is defined are courses and training the employees can follow, for example e-learning – a course on the computer – or "in-class activities" – training in a classroom. Those courses and trainings can be either technical or non-technical. An example of a technical training is a training in which the employee learns more about the part of the machine on which he or she is working. An example of a non-technical training is training on communication. The level in the organisation and thus the function of the employee plays a role in the number of trainings and courses that are available. For example, the managers are entitled to have an extra training on leadership, such as the Leadership Capability Program (LCP). The third way of learning that is distinguished is special assignments. Those are extra curriculum assignments, which means that they are not standard for every employee. An example of a special assignment is working on a project in which the employee works with employees of several departments. The fourth and last part of the Blended Learning Solution is Networking and

Networking opportunities. Within the company, there are many possibilities in which employees can meet employees of other departments or other companies. These offer the employees the possibility to acquire new knowledge.

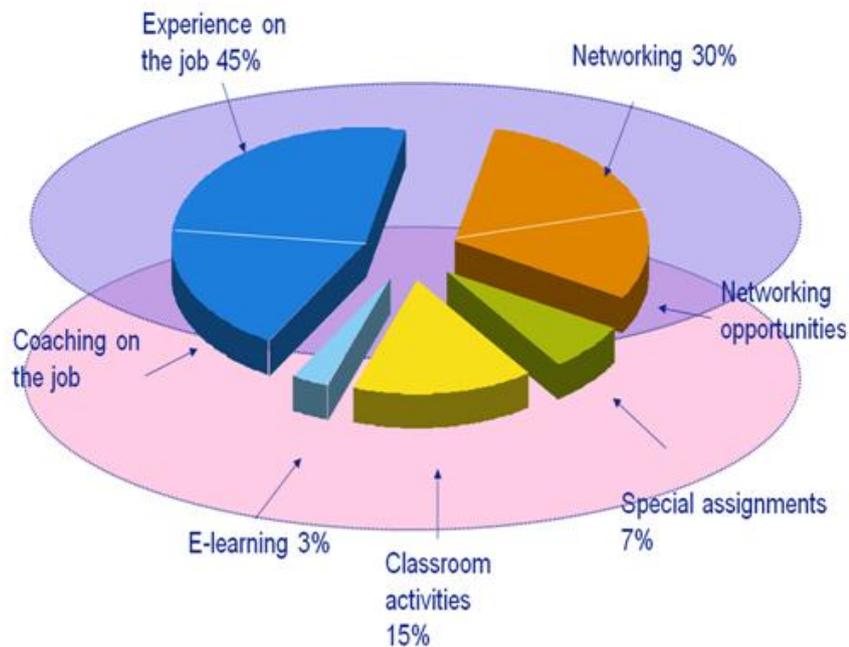


Figure 9: The Blended Learning Solution (The company's HR-department, 2012)

The development opportunities that are offered within the company, allow the employees to develop themselves and promote themselves to a next career step. The possibilities when it comes to making either horizontal or vertical movements within the organization are presented in the schemes of the HR-tool "Career Tracks". This online tool is available to all departments in the organisation and shows what the most typical career steps in the organization are and what is needed to get there. The HR employees can help the employees with selecting the right development options that might supply them enough knowledge and skills to develop in their current role and grow to a role on the next level (The company, 2012).

#### **4. Research question and research methods**

##### **4.1 Research question**

The research question of this study is formulated based on the different theories, empirical studies and practical context that were summarized in the previous two chapters. What the company would like to know is how their employees of different nationalities perceive the company's career development opportunities, how the differences in experience can be explained and what kind of implications these differences might have for the content and the implementation of the company's career development programs. Thus, the research question is: *What are the main differences on perceived career development opportunities when comparing different employee nationalities and how can those be explained?*

##### **4.2 Sub questions**

In order to answer the research question, sub questions are formulated. In paragraph 4.3 the variables that will be used are described. Paragraph 4.4 describes the research methods per sub question and the expectations of sub question one.

- *Sub question 1: Are the differences found in the engagement survey of 2013 regarding development opportunities congruent with the distinguished cultural dimensions in the literature?*
- *Sub question 2: Do the HR-managers experience differences and/or problems related to cultural differences within the development opportunities of the company?*
- *Sub question 3: How do the HR-managers of the company currently deal with cultural differences within the development opportunities of the company?*

##### **4.3 Measures**

The variables used in this research are chosen based on the previous theoretical chapter. In this research, a combination of both models on cultural dimensions will be used. Firstly, Hofstede's dimension on *individualism vs. collectivism* will be used. When linking this to employees in a company, the dimension can be used to determine the extent to which the employees consider their individual selves or the collective company important. Do they focus on personal success or do they focus on success for their company and do they leave their own development and success out of account? The individualism vs. collectivism dimension will be combined with two dimensions of the GLOBE model: *performance orientation* and *future orientation*. These dimensions focus on how cultures perceive taking the future into account and what their position is towards high performance.

Both these dimensions can be linked to career development through the extent to which employees of a certain nationality focus on their future and how they value high performance.

Using this combination helps to assess how employees of different nationalities value the development opportunities within the company is guaranteed. Further discussion into the three dimensions is presented in the following sub-questions.

4.4 *Research methods per sub question*

- *Sub question 1: Are the differences found in the engagement survey of 2013 regarding development opportunities congruent with the distinguished cultural dimensions in the literature?*

In order to compare the different nationalities on their score on career development opportunities, the outcomes of the engagement survey will be analysed using the three cultural dimensions of Hofstede and GLOBE model individualism, performance orientation and future orientation. From the three dimensions and the scores per nationality, assumptions on how the nationalities are expected to score on the engagement survey questions are made. Based on those assumptions, the differences between the expected scores and the determined scores in the survey can be determined per nationality.

*Expectations regarding sub question 1: Survey expectations based on theory*

The previous theoretical chapter has led to the selection of the three dimensions to which the engagement survey results on development opportunities will be compared. When comparing the survey results to the dimensions of Hofstede (2010) and GLOBE (2004) that will be used, it is assumed that the development opportunities in the company are well developed and match the needs of the employees. Figure 10 provides an overview of the six questions asked regarding development opportunities in the engagement survey.

Questions of the engagement survey on “My Development Opportunities”	
A	The company offers me a challenging working environment
B	My job offers me sufficient opportunities to acquire new knowledge
C	I would like to develop within my field of expertise
D	My direct manager encourages my development and coaches me
E	I receive as much training as I need to do my job properly
F	I have the opportunity to develop my career within the company

Figure 10: Questions of the engagement survey of 2013 on “My Development Opportunities” (External bureau, 2013).

Figure 11 shows a number of the characteristics of the three dimensions used in this study. With these characteristics, each of the six engagement survey questions will be linked to high scores on the dimensions. From there, expectations on the engagement survey scores are formulated per dimension. In the results of sub question 1, the nationalities scores on the dimensions will be compared to the expected scores and conclusions can be made.

Dimension	Characteristics of a society with a high score on the dimension	Characteristics of a society with a low score on the dimension
<b>Individualism</b> (Hofstede, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employees are 'economic persons' who will pursue the employer's interest with their own interest</li> <li>- Hiring &amp; promotion decisions are supposed to be based on rules and skills only</li> <li>- Management is management of individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The employee is a member in an in-group who will pursue the in-groups interest rather than its own interest</li> <li>- Hiring and promotion decisions take employee's in-group into account</li> <li>- Management is management of groups</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Orientation</b> (House et al., 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Value training and development/believe that schooling and education are critical for success</li> <li>- Believe that individuals are in control and value and reward individual achievement.</li> <li>- Value assertiveness, reward performance and view feedback as necessary for improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Value "attending the right school" as an important success criterion</li> <li>- Value harmony with the environment rather than control</li> <li>- View feedback and appraisal as judgmental and discomfoting and view assertiveness as socially unacceptable.</li> </ul>
<b>Future Orientation</b> (House et al., 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Value the deferment of gratification and place a higher priority on long term success.</li> <li>- Leaders have to see the patterns in the chaos of uncertainty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Value instant gratification and place higher priorities on immediate rewards</li> <li>- Leaders have to focus on the repetition of reproducible and routine sequences</li> </ul>

Figure 11: Characteristics on either high or low scores of the three dimensions used in this study (Hofstede, 2010, House et al. 2004)

A high score on question A, *"the company offers me a challenging work environment"* (External bureau, 2013) is linked to high scores on individualism and performance orientation. Having a challenging work environment is an aspect that is assumed important for the employee's interest and thus very individualistic. The company states that it offers their employees a challenging working environment because they offer their employees extra trainings and courses to stay challenged. This can be linked to the characteristic of a high score performance orientation that training and development are valued. The characteristics of a high score on future orientation cannot be linked to the survey question and therefore no assumptions on this dimension can be done.

Secondly, a high score on question B, *“My job offers me sufficient opportunities to acquire new knowledge”* (External bureau, 2013) is linked to high scores on individualism and future orientation. Firstly, the new knowledge that is earned through working at their job implies that the job itself is giving the employees enough opportunities to develop themselves. Therefore, the employer’s interest coincides with the employee’s interest, which matches with the characteristics of a high score on individualism. At the same time, the employee is working more on long term success through staying at the same job rather than immediate success, which implies a high score on future orientation.

Thirdly, a high score on question C, *“I would like to develop within my field of expertise”* (External bureau, 2013), can be linked to a high score on individualism and performance orientation. Firstly, this question is considered individualistic because the employers’ interest coincides with the employee’s interest: when an employee scores high on this question, he is satisfied with developing within his field of expertise, which also benefits the company. Secondly, an employees’ willingness to develop himself within the company means willingness to use the blended learning solution and use a variety of trainings (The company, 2012). This implies that training and development opportunities are valued, which can be linked to a high score on performance orientation.

A high score on question D, *“My direct manager encourages my development and coaches me”*, can be linked to high scores on performance orientation and future orientation. Firstly, coaching implies giving feedback as important, which can be linked to a high score on performance orientation. Secondly, the manager is seen as somebody with whom an employee can discuss its development opportunities. The manager is therefore as somebody that has knowledge of the possibilities, which can be linked to a high score on future orientation as well. This question cannot be linked to a high score on individualism because a high score on this question implies that a manager is needed to achieve development, thus the employee is not in control himself.

Fifthly, a high score on question E, *“I receive as much training as I need to do my job properly”*, can be linked to a high score on individualism and performance orientation. Firstly, a high score on this question implies that training is valued, because it helps the employee to do his job properly. Doing your job properly is seen as an individual achievement. Both imply a high score on performance orientation. A high score on this question also implies that although the employee receives enough training to develop himself, doing a job properly is also in the interest of the employer. This implies that this question can also be linked to a high score in individualism.

Lastly, a high score on question F, *“I have the opportunity to develop my career within the company”*, can be linked to all three dimensions. Firstly, willingness to develop a career implies that performance is rewarded. In order to develop a career within the company, training and development are needed. Having enough career development opportunities within the company can

thus be linked to performance orientation. Secondly, developing a career shows a focus on long term success and looking forward to next possible steps, which can be linked to future orientation. Thirdly, developing a career is a clear example of something that is not only in the employers' interest, but also in the employees' interest. Therefore, this question can also be linked to a high score on individualism.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Individualism</b>	<b>Performance Orientation</b>	<b>Future Orientation</b>
<b>A</b>	+	+	
<b>B</b>	+		+
<b>C</b>	+	+	
<b>D</b>		+	+
<b>E</b>	+	+	
<b>F</b>	+	+	+

Figure 12: Graph of the expectations of high scores on the dimensions linked with a high score on the question. A "+" represents an expected high score.

The way the questions of the engagement survey are linked to the three dimensions as explained above, are represented in figure 12 as well to provide a clear overview. Thus, when taking the first dimension of *Individualism* into account, the nationalities that score high on individualism are expected to score high on the questions that regard the development and career opportunities of individuals. The survey questions that focus on this are A, B, C, E and F. Those questions focus on having a challenging work environment, acquiring new knowledge, training to do their job properly and developing their career within the company.

When taking *Performance Orientation* into account, nationalities that have a high score on performance orientation will score high on the questions that regard the development opportunities that can be linked to high performance: questions A, C, D, E and F. Those questions focus on a challenging work environment, developing in their field of expertise, training to do their job properly and developing their career within the company.

The third dimension used is *Future Orientation*. The questions that are expected to score high are the questions that take the future working environment into account and are questions B, D and F. Those questions focus on acquiring new knowledge, developing within the field of expertise, development encouraged by manager and developing a career within the company.

The combination of either high or low scores on the three dimensions can have an effect on the expectations. For example, a nationality that scores very high on collectivism and also scores high on performance orientation implies that the performance that people would like to achieve is mainly in the interest of their group, not for their personal interest.

- *Sub question 2: Do the HR-managers experience problems related to cultural differences within the development opportunities of the company?*

In order to answer this sub question, HR-managers were interviewed through semi-structured interviews in which a topic list was used. This topic list can be found in Annex 1. All interviews were analysed using open and axial coding. HR-managers were chosen to be interviewed for several reasons. Firstly, they work with employees and managers on development opportunities on a day to day basis. Also, they work with different nationalities and since they are professionals, they might recognize certain problems that appear when working with certain nationalities. In order to get to the possible problems, the interviewer asks some introducing questions. First, the HR-managers were asked to what extent they recognized the scores of the nationalities they have in their client base. After the questions on recognition, the three dimensions that were used in sub question one are presented in three statements each to determine expectations. The HR-managers have to rate the nationalities they work with on a one to five point scale. These statements are used to let the HR-manager think more about the different nationalities and what are factors that distinguish one nationality from another. After the introductory questions, the HR-managers are asked what problems they have noticed regarding the development opportunities and the different employee nationalities they work with.

Two HR employees were interviewed from each region in which the company is operating. The six HR-managers all had a function as HR-Generalist or HR-Manager which means they work very closely with the employees of the company. The HR employees have an executive role in the use of the development opportunities in the company. Besides those six HR employees, the three senior managers of People Development in Asia, United States and Europe were interviewed. These senior managers are responsible for the design of the development programs in the company and how these are implemented in the organisation. In total, nine HR employees were interviewed.

- *Sub question 3: How do the HR-managers of the company currently deal with cultural differences within the development opportunities of the company?*

The nine HR employees were also questioned regarding how they currently deal with problems related to cultural differences. Until 2008, the company used an internal cultural navigator (The company, 2008) that guided persons through cultures: a person could choose a certain nationality and would get more information on this nationality and its habits. At this moment, there is no longer such a tool that can be used to learn about another person's culture. By answering this question, an insight is gained on how cultural differences are already taken into account within the development opportunities of the company.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Sub question 1

*Are the differences found in the engagement survey regarding development opportunities congruent with the distinguished cultural dimensions in the literature?*

When comparing the survey results to the dimensions of Hofstede (2010) and GLOBE (2004), it is assumed that the development opportunities in the company are well developed and match the needs of the employees. Figure 13 on this page shows the scores of the eight nationalities in the company with n>100 on the questions on development opportunities in the engagement survey. The figures 14 and 15 on the next page show the scores of the eight nationalities of the company with n>100 and their scores on the three dimensions of Hofstede(2010) and GLOBE (2004) that are used to make assumptions on the survey's outcomes. These assumptions are compared to the scores that appeared in the survey. In order to answer this sub question a cross country analysis, in which all countries will be discussed, is made. Whether or not differences between the expected and the appeared scores represent an issue related to cultural differences or that those issues have another cause will be studied in sub questions three and four. Hofstede (2010) used a scale of 1-100, while the GLOBE-model uses a scale of 1-7. In both cases, a high score means a high amount of this characteristic. For example: a score of 91 on Individuality means that the employees of this nationality are very individualistic.

My Development Opportunities		The company	American	Belgian	Chinese	Dutch	German	Japanese	Korean	Taiwanese
A	The company offers me a challenging working environment	7.3	7.7	7.3	7.0	7.4	7.1	6.4	6.3	7.2
B	My job offers me sufficient opportunities to acquire new knowledge	7.1	7.3	7.4	6.9	7.1	7.0	6.5	6.5	7.2
C	I would like to develop within my field of expertise	7.9	8.2	7.9	7.8	7.8	8.1	7.5	7.6	7.9
D	My direct manager encourages my development and coaches me	6.4	6.8	6.5	7.0	6.3	6.0	5.6	6.6	6.7
E	I receive as much training as I need to do my job properly	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.1	6.2	5.5	4.9	5.6	5.9
F	I have the opportunity to develop my career within the company	6.5	6.4	6.7	6.3	6.6	5.9	5.3	6.2	6.4

Figure 13: Main eight nationalities (n>100) in the company on questions on Development Opportunities (External bureau, 2013)

	<b>Individualism</b> (Hofstede, 2010) (Scale 0-100)	<b>Performance Orientation</b> (House et al., 2004) (Scale 1-7)	<b>Future Orientation</b> (House et al., 2004) (Scale 1-7)
<b>Belgium</b>	75	n.a.	n.a.
<b>China</b>	20	4.45	3.75
<b>Germany</b>	67	4.25	4.27
<b>Japan</b>	46	4.22	4.29
<b>Korea</b>	18	4.55	3.97
<b>Netherlands</b>	80	4.32	4.61
<b>Taiwan</b>	17	4.56	3.96
<b>U.S.</b>	91	4.49	4.15

Figure 14: Scores on the three chosen dimensions of Hofstede and GLBOBE model of the main eight nationalities in the company (n>100) (Hofstede, (2010) and House et. al. (2004))

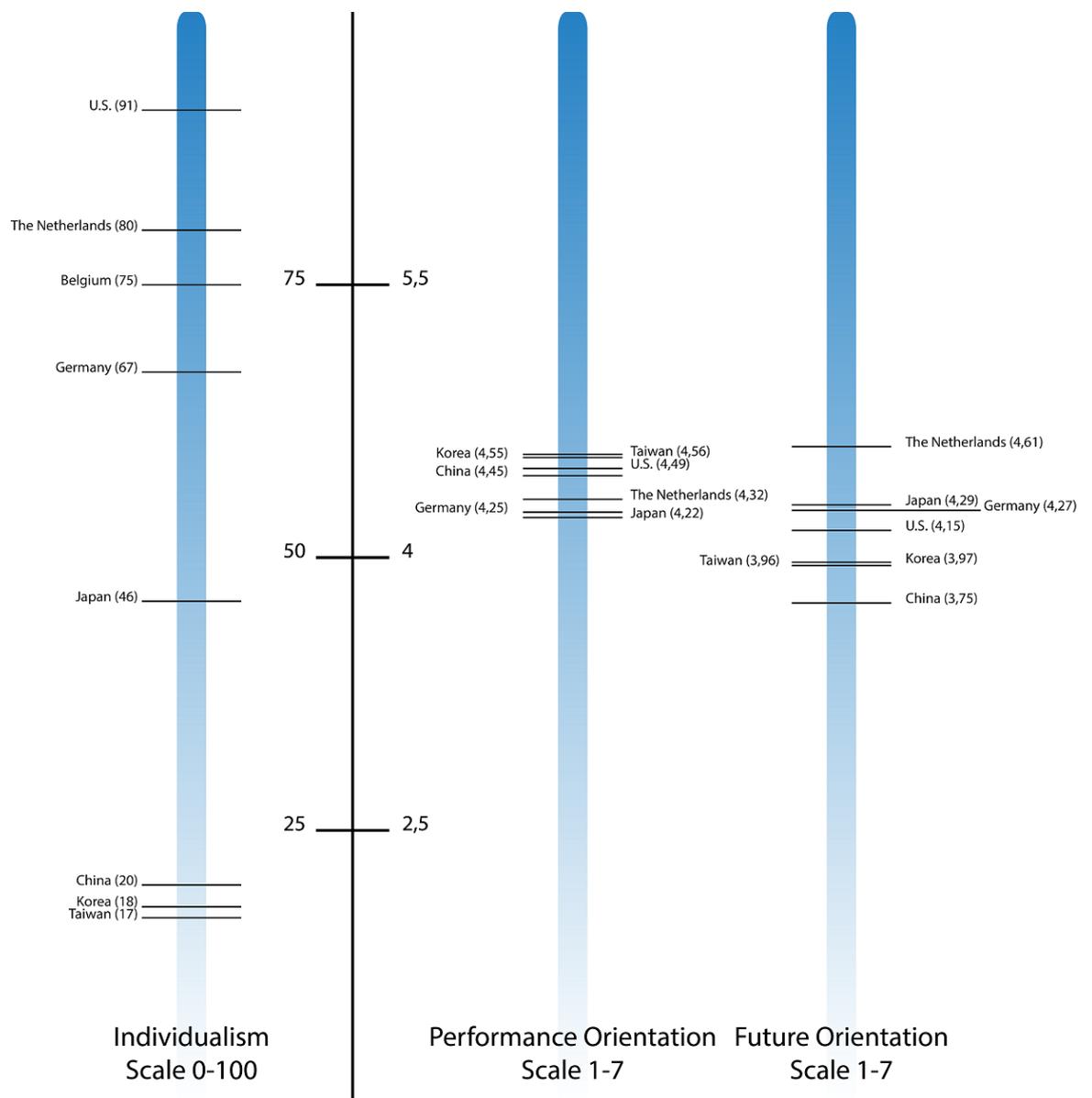


Figure 15: Overview of the scores on the three chosen dimensions of Hofstede and GLBOBE model of the main eight nationalities in the company(n>100) (Hofstede, (2010) and House et. al. (2004)).

Figure 14 and 15 on the previous page show the scores of the eight countries on the three dimensions that are used in this research. From these scores, an impression of the organizational culture according to the nationalities of the employees can be made. From this impression, assumptions on the expected survey scores are made. The descriptions are made per nationality. Per nationality, the description will start with the nationalities' score on the Hofstede and GLOBE-dimensions and the expectations that follow from this. Secondly, the link to the survey scores of the company's employees per nationality will be compared to the expectations that follow from the literature.

### ***Belgian nationality***

Since the Belgian nationality is not measured in the GLOBE-model (2004), the assumptions on the Belgian employees can only be made based on the individualism dimension of Hofstede (2010). The Belgian nationality score on individualism is 75, which is high ranking Belgium a place in the top ten countries that score high on individualism. From this score, it can be expected that the Belgian employees will score high on questions that regard the development and career opportunities of individuals. It would thus be expected that the Belgian employees would score high on the questions on challenging working environment (A), acquiring new knowledge (B), developing within field of expertise (C), training to do their job properly (E) and opportunity to develop a career within the company (F).

When looking at the data of the engagement survey, the Belgian scores are not expected. The Belgians only score significantly higher on question B that regards the opportunities to acquire new knowledge. The rest of their scores are in line with the company's scores.

### ***Dutch nationality***

Similarly to the Belgians, the Dutch employees score very high on individualism and can be found in the top ten ranking of the individualism scale of Hofstede as well (Hofstede, 2010). When linking this to workplace, employees are expected to act in line with their own interests and work is a place that is organized in such a way that the employer's and the employee's interest coincide. According to Hofstede (2010) employees are seen as individuals with their own needs and incentives are given when an individual's performance is high. When taking the GLOBE-dimensions into account, the Dutch nationality scores the highest on Future orientation, while they score moderate on Performance Orientation. This implies that achieving success is highly appreciated but training and development is not always valued.

In the engagement survey, the scores of the Dutch employees on development opportunities are different. Although they are satisfied with the development opportunities and the training they receive, the Dutch employees show significant differences on their willingness to develop themselves. Also, they score significantly worse the extent to which they are satisfied with the encouragement and coaching of their manager on their development. The score on their willingness to develop themselves matched the moderate score on performance orientation. On the other hand, the Dutch are very satisfied with the training they receive, which is contradictory to the moderate score on performance orientation that implies that training is not always valued.

### ***Chinese nationality***

According to the individualism dimension of Hofstede (2010), employees of the Chinese nationality are extremely collectivistic. When looking at the GLOBE-dimensions, the Chinese score moderate on Performance Orientation and low on Future orientation. Scoring high on collectivism in Hofstede's dimension implies that the Chinese employees less focused on individual development for their personal gain, rather emphasize development in order to improve team performance. For example, an employer is less likely to hire an employee for their individual qualities, but rather a person that can fulfil a certain role in a group. Accordingly, the employee will not act according to their own interest, but according to the interest of the group he or she belongs to (Hofstede, 2010).

Relating the theory to the engagement survey's questions, the score on question D is expected to be high, since this question matches the low score on individualism and a moderate high score on performance orientation. On the other hand, it is expected that the Chinese score low on question A, C, E and F since those questions have an individualistic focus and thus do not match the needs of the Chinese employees. When looking at the scores that appeared from the survey, the score on question A is indeed lower than the company's score. The low scores on question C, E and F do not appear in the outcomes. This could imply there might be an issue here.

### ***German nationality***

In Hofstede's dimension of individualism vs. collectivism, German employees score rather moderate with a score of 67. This implies that individualism is slightly dominant, but that there are also characteristics of collectivism among the German employees. On GLOBE's dimensions Performance Orientation also scores low, while their score on Future Orientation is high when compared to the other nationalities. This implies that although German employees are slightly individualistic, they are not mainly focused only on high performance, but more on the future. The combination of these scores is contradictory, which makes it hard to make assumptions on either

high or low scores that appeared from the survey. Therefore, the scores are expected to be in line with the company's scores.

The German employees' scores in the engagement survey match those expectations on several of the questions. On the first four questions (A-D), the Germans score in line with the company's overall score. The scores on "I receive as much training as I need to do my job properly" and "I have the opportunity to develop my career within the company" both scores significantly lower. This score is not in line with the dimensions used and might indicate an issue.

### ***Japanese nationality***

The Japanese scores on the three dimensions used are rather different from the other countries. On Hofstede's individualism scale the Japanese score right in the middle. On GLOBE's dimension Performance Orientation, the Japanese score relatively low, but at the same time they score high on Future Orientation. This implies that the Japanese are strongly focused on the future, but not on high performance. In practice, this implies that having a steady job might be more important than achieving success and move up in function in a company. This suggests that training and development are not valued as very important, unless it is needed to have the knowledge to stay at their current job. The last question, on developing their career within the company is thus expected to be significantly higher, since this question is under positive influence of high future orientation and individualism.

In the engagement survey, the Japanese employees score significantly lower on literally every question asked on development opportunities. The last two questions – on training to do their job properly and develop their career within the company – even score an insufficient mark of under 5.5. This is not in line what could be expected according Hofstede's and GLOBE's dimensions and might indicate an issue.

### ***Korean nationality***

The Koreans score low on Hofstede's dimension on individualism and thus score very high on collectivism (Hofstede, 2010). This implies that the Koreans place a group's interest above their own interest. At the same time, the Korean score on Performance Orientation is relatively high and their score on Future Orientation is the third lowest of the eight countries that are compared. This implies that although Koreans tend to go for the group's interest, they strive for high performance. Whether or not they achieve promotion in their career is less important. These scores on the three dimensions imply that it can be expected that the Koreans will score low on the last question on the career development opportunities within the company, since those do not match their needs. At the same time, the Koreans strive for high performance, which implies that training to do their job is very

important to them. It could be expected that, because of their high expectations, the Koreans score low on this question as well.

In the engagement survey, most of the Korean scores are significantly lower than the company's overall score. Although the differences are significantly lower, the scores are not as low as the Japanese scores when it comes to the last two questions.

### ***Taiwanese nationality***

In Hofstede's model, Taiwanese score the lowest on individualism when compared to the other seven nationalities. On the other hand when comparing their score on GLOBE-dimensions, they score the highest on performance orientation, but the third lowest on Future Orientation. This implies that the Taiwanese are very collectivistic and place the groups' interest over their own interest. At the same time they consider high performance as very important, but their future as less important. From this combination of scores, it is expected that the Taiwanese will score high on question C and E of the engagement survey. Those questions regard development within field of expertise and having enough training to do their job properly.

When looking at the scores that appeared from the engagement survey of 2013, the expectations did not meet the results. The Taiwanese did not score significantly higher on questions C and E, but did score higher on question D. Apart from question D all scores were in line with the company's scores.

### ***American nationality***

When taking Hofstede's dimension on individualism into account, the Americans score the highest of all nationalities, meaning they are the most individualistic of all. Their score on GLOBE-dimension Performance Orientation is also high and their score on Future Orientation is moderate. From the high scores on individualism and as well on performance orientation, it is expected that the Americans will score high on questions A, C, E and F of the engagement survey, those four questions are linked to high scores on both individualism and performance orientation.

The scores of the Americans that appeared from the engagement survey were almost all significantly higher than the company's scores. The scores on questions A, C, and E are thus in line with the expectations. The score on question F, regarding developing a career within the company is lower than expected, which might indicate an issue. The American employees also score significantly higher on questions B and E. In order to find out why these scores are so high, further examination is needed.

## 5.2 Sub question 2

Sub questions two and three were answered through nine interviews with employees of the HR-department of the company. Three of the interviewed employees were the heads of the People Development, located in Asia, Europe and the US. The remaining managers are HR-managers and HR-generalists that have been in the company for a few years and in diverse roles in different departments of the organization. Two of the managers were located in Asia, two in Europe and two in the US. In order to make sure that the interviewees remain anonymous, all interviewees will be referred to as the HR-manager.

*Sub question 2: Do the HR-managers experience differences and/or problems related to cultural differences within the career development opportunities of the company?*

During the interviews, the HR-managers were asked to look at the overview of the scores of the main eight nationalities on the survey's questions on development opportunities. This overview can be found at page 28, in the results of sub question one. Each HR-manager was then asked to what extent they recognized the scores of the different nationalities and, more specifically, for the nationalities they saw in their daily working environment or had in their client base. After checking for recognition, the managers were questioned on possible problems that arose considering development opportunities in relation to the different nationalities.

The US scores were recognized by several HR-managers. This manager said that – from his experience – Americans tend to think more in opportunities than in limitations and therefore he recognized the positive scores. This was also said by another manager, who said that the Americans have always scored higher on satisfaction and are always very positive on most subjects. On the other hand, another manager said that he went on the American work floor, where he talked to some employees. These employees gave more feedback than he would have expected according to the positive US scores. A HR-manager said that what could be a problem arising in the US, is that the employees are not willing to move at all. Because of the fact that the company is much smaller in the US than in Europe, not all development opportunities for every employee are available. For example: some US employees have to travel to Europe to follow a training or course, because this is not taught in the US. The employees are not willing to move to Europe to have more development opportunities, but rather prefer stay at the same place despite having less development opportunities. Several HR-managers said that they would have expected a lower score on the opportunities for development since there are less development opportunities in the United States. Also, it was said that the US-locations are more hierarchical than the Dutch location. An example that was given is that promotion within the company is always done by the manager. In the Netherlands, it is also possible to promote within the company when you can show you have gained enough new

knowledge and abilities to change function. Another example on the differences in hierarchy in the US and Netherlands was given by an HR-manager that was providing training in the US: *“During the training, we always had an exercise on deciding on your own priorities and how you can check them with your manager. In the US, this module was not going well at all. The employees said that they did not really understand the exercise, because their boss would say what they would have to do and decide on the priorities”*.

The scores of the Asian countries give a mixed picture. For the Taiwanese scores, a manager noticed *“What really stands out for me are the fact that the Taiwanese scores are very congruent with the company’s overall scores, while the scores of the other Asian countries differ a lot from those scores.”* As a possible explanation, the manager said that the Taiwanese location of the company is a smaller version of the headquarter in the Netherlands. All the different disciplines are present, which means that people can develop themselves the same way as they can at the headquarters. The Taiwanese were also said to be more westernized than the other Asian countries, which could also explain the scores to be more positive than other Asian countries. An example that was given was that several HR-managers said that they thought Taiwanese employees were better able to show initiative in order to improve their own development.

All managers that had Japanese employees in their client base said they recognized the scores. They mentioned that the Japanese have a very strong hierarchy in their working environment and that often employees are very awaiting on what their manager expects them to do. Comparing the Taiwanese to the Japanese, the manager said that the Taiwanese are better enabled to speak up for themselves than the Japanese. Another example that stood out clearly is that the Japanese and Korean employees are not as competitive as the Chinese and the Taiwanese. The manager said that in his experience the Chinese and Taiwanese consider money as very important and are therefore competitive. The Japanese and Korean employees are not materialistic at all. They tend to live in smaller houses using the money they earn for the education of their children. So to say, they are investing in the next generation. High performance is not seen as gain for an individual, but seen as important for contributing to the company. Also, one of the managers said that *“There is a difference in what people know what is important and in their abilities to do so”*. An example that was given by one of the HR-managers was that he was providing training in Japan and was asking for feedback. Nobody said anything: the conversation was completely stuck. This manager said that most of the Asian employees do know that being assertive is considered as important in the company, but that they do not know how to do this. Within their culture, being assertive or speaking up for your own opinion can be considered to be rude and impolite. Another factor, mentioned by the HR-managers, that could explain the low scores in the engagement survey, is the bad economic situation in Japan. *“Since the Tsunami in 2011, the economy in Japan has been shrinking. One of the companies our*

*company mainly works with is not sure whether or not they want to stay in the semi-conductor industry. This also has its influences on the development opportunities of the Japanese employees.”*

The HR-managers stated that because there is a lot of uncertainty, there are less development opportunities for the Japanese employees at their current location. The HR-manager noticed that the Japanese employees at this specific location do not want to move to another location in Japan. A last item that one of the HR-managers mentioned is that in the Japanese culture it is considered almost unforgivable to make mistakes. For example, he said: *“When a manager makes a mistake that influences other people, this means that the manager feels very ashamed and has to make a public excuse. But sometimes, a manager feels so ashamed that he will kill himself”*. This way the Japanese deal with mistakes and expectations also influences their attitude towards the companies’ development opportunities.

The Korean scores in the engagement survey were also recognized by the managers. What appeared is that the managers described some similarities in the Korean and Japanese cultures. The managers described that the way the Korean (and Japanese) employees consider hierarchy as very important as well as its influence on the employees’ perceiving of the development opportunities. Several managers described that employees in Asian countries often do not express their opinion because of this high awareness on the hierarchy. Also, this view on hierarchy has its influence on the amount of internal solicitations. One of the HR-managers quoted the employees: *“what if I apply and I don’t get the job, my boss will still think I want to leave... And when possibilities arise within the team, my boss will not think about me, I’ll be on a black list, as somebody that would like to leave from his team”*. Another example of the difficulties arising in working with the Korean employees mentioned is that when everybody agrees on an issue, nobody will say anything, because it has already been said. The HR-manager described that at the same time, silence can also mean that the Korean employees disagree. It depends on the situation what the silence means. The HR-manager said that in the multinational cooperation in the company, this can influence the communication, because for other nationalities, it is sometimes not clear what is exactly meant, which causes miscommunication. Another factor that appeared, which has nothing to do with cultural differences, but has its influence on the employees’ development as well, is that the working circumstances in Korea are considered as very hard by several HR-managers. One of them described the situation in Korea more precise: *“You study and work very hard and receive a master’s degree in – for example – mechanical engineering, a study that provides you the possibility to work for the company. But, about eighty percent of the employees in Korea work in shifts, because they work in the fabric. I can understand you would like to promote yourself and become a manager, but we do not need that much managers.”* Another manager said that, because the employees work in shifts and are really

busy, the development opportunities do not have any priority. Because of this reason, he expected low scores in the engagement survey on development opportunities in Korea.

The fourth Asian country, China, is less mentioned by the HR-managers. What appeared is that the HR-managers often describe China and Taiwan together and Korea and Japan together. The Chinese and Taiwanese are considered to be more westernized. An example of this is that Chinese and Taiwanese employees find it easier to speak up for themselves, which gives them more access to development opportunities.

Several managers expected that the Dutch employees would score very high on the questions on development opportunities in the engagement survey. They expected this because the main headquarter is in the Netherlands, which means they have the best access to development opportunities of all employees. All trainings are available in the Netherlands. Several HR-managers mentioned that the Career Tracks tool is sometimes interpreted by the Dutch employees as a determined career path. They do not realize that it is an overview of the most logical career steps, which can help indicating a possible next step. Sometimes, employees are disappointed because the Career Tracks tool is not always followed. What stood out the most according to them is that the Dutch employees scored low on satisfaction of their manager. One of the HR-managers said: *“The Dutch employees very often consider their manager as responsible for their development, which causes them to be more critical towards their manager”*. An example of this is that Dutch employees dare to discuss a manager’s decision with their manager. *“When a manager makes the decision to go left and an employee thinks it is better to go right, a Dutch employee will try to discuss this with his manager”*. One of the managers said that the different focus on a person’s development also already arises in the way children are raised. He mentioned that in the Netherlands, children are stimulated towards good study results, but that if this is not possible because the child does not have the right abilities, this doesn’t cause problems. In Japan, the parents expect their children to achieve good results at a good University. If this doesn’t happen, parents will sometimes cut loose the contact with their child. Another possible cause that was mentioned is that Dutch managers often do not have their priority on the development of their employees. One of the HR-managers even said that he noticed that managers are afraid to let their employees go to another department, because they are afraid they will not get new well-equipped employees. Another possible cause that was mentioned is that the Dutch employees do not always know what they want and that they will see what will cross their path. The HR-managers mentioned that it is relatively easy to start a conversation on an employee’s development, compared to other nationalities. One of the managers mentioned that he also saw some individual differences between the Dutch employees. The ones that were more assertive achieve more progress in their development. This manager said that sometimes, the people that are not that assertive have less chances to develop themselves.

The HR-managers found it hard to give a good comment on the German and Belgian scores. This has to do with the fact that some of those employees work in their home-country, while others work at the headquarter in the southern part of the Netherlands but still live in their home-country. On the Belgian employees, the HR-managers only said that they have the same infrastructure as in the Netherlands. Because they are either at the headquarter or on a location close to the headquarter, they have the same development opportunities as the Dutch employees. This explains their scores to be quite congruent with the company's overall scores. The main observation of the HR-managers on the German employees is that they follow the Career Tracks exactly. This means that they, similarly to the Dutch employees, sometimes feel disappointed about the possibilities within the company, because the Career Tracks tool is just an indication of possible career steps. This can explain their low score on development opportunities. Another comment was that the German employees are often working on their development with aforethought. They decide beforehand what they would like to do and what they have to do in order to achieve that.

It was mentioned by several managers about several nationalities that the development opportunities are not always clear to the employees. There are so many different training options and so many ways to promote within the organisation that it can be hard to know what exactly should be done to develop yourself. As a solution, the HR-department made the Career Tracks tool a few years ago, but apparently, this is not sufficient. The information on different training options could be improved. This might also have to do with the priorities of the managers. When a manager considers development of his team as less important than the daily issues, the employees will not have enough time to develop themselves.

When linking the answers of the HR-managers to the dimensions of Individualism (Hofstede, 2010), Performance Orientation (House et al., 2004) and Future Orientation (House et al., 2004), some similarities and differences can be noticed. Firstly, the descriptions the HR-managers gave about the American employees are contradictory to the high score on Hofstede's dimension of individualism. This can be seen in the fact that, accordingly to the HR-managers, the American employees are not willing to move for their own development. They rather have less development opportunities so they can stay at home. This would also be an indication for a high score on future orientation, which is moderate according to the findings of House et al. (2004). Also, promotion is done by the manager and thus not just based on gained knowledge and development. This means that the employee has less influence on his own development, because somebody else decides. Secondly, when describing the Asian countries, the low scores on individualism were confirmed in the answers of the HR-managers. The Asian employees find it hard to speak up for themselves and let their manager determine what the main priority is. Giving feedback and being appreciated are

also less appreciated, which is also an indication of low individualism. The HR-managers split the Asian countries into two parts: Chinese and Taiwanese are more assertive than the Korean and the Japanese employees, although they are still not close to the assertiveness of the American and European employees. Another difference is that the Japanese and Korean tend to invest in the future by spending their money on the education of their children. This can be seen as an indication for a high future orientation. On the scale of House et al. (2004), Japan does have a high score on future orientation, but Korea does not. Thirdly, according to the HR-managers, the European employees would score high on individualism and performance orientation. They find it easy to stand up for their opinion and it is considered easy to start a conversation with them on development.

As seen in the preceding description, the scores are most of the times recognized by the managers. Some of the scores can be linked to the different cultures of the employees, while others might also be influenced by other factors. Some of the managers saw the varying scores as a result of a combination of different factors, not just of the different cultures. As one of the managers said *“we do have a lot of different nationalities, but some of the problems might be really hard to anticipate on because they are very culturally determined, while others can be influenced more easily”*. An example of this is that current problems are also influenced by location differences, such as a small location with 80% of the employees working in shifts in Korea or an uncertain economy in Japan. These differences per location influence the development opportunities, which might also cause varying scores in the engagement survey.

Several HR-managers said that the main priority of the employees and their managers is not always on their individual development. Very often, the practical and daily issues take precedence on the development opportunities. Next to this, several HR-managers said that the employees do not feel the responsibility; they do not feel as if they are in the “driver’s seat” and have to control their own development. This also counts for the managers at the work floor. They do not always consider the development of the employees, especially on extra curriculum items, as very important. Also, the HR-department is often seen as a “provider” of development. The HR-managers often get a reaction that the employees do not understand that they are responsible for their development themselves, but that they expect that the HR-manager will do everything for them. One of the managers said: *“We shouldn’t change the tool, but make a behavioural change, I can tell you flat out... Managers have a bigger role. Right now the problem is that they think it is all HR. “Oh HR, wants us to do this, They don’t understand we don’t have time to do this, we’re busy building and designing the Twinscan”. That’s the problem today. People think it is an HR driven process. We won’t be successful in people development until we change this thought”*.

Another problem that appeared in the interviews is that the Japanese and the US-employees are not willing to move. An HR-manager described the American employees as *“They make a commitment to the place where they live and where they want to raise their children”*. It is possible that employees of other locations do not want to move to another country either, which influences the employees’ development opportunities.

All together, the employees and managers find themselves in at a point where the employees’ culture and the companies’ culture have to unite. The company is a Dutch company and wants to keep their main company culture this way. One of the HR-managers said that: *“You have to watch out that the companies’ goals become to national, it is important that you create a country exceeding culture with the company. With core values, a vision and a strategy and development opportunities that are in line with those three points I mentioned before. Flexibility and commitment are two of our core values and those are universal. Flexibility might mean something different in Japan than it does in the US, is something we have to understand”*. Problems might arise that need to be solved in order to keep the employees satisfied and their development on a high level. The solutions that are needed might differ, depending on the employees’ nationality and their culture.

### 5.3 Sub question 3

*How do the HR-managers of the company currently deal with cultural differences within the career development opportunities of the company?*

In the previous sub question, the problems that arise have been discussed. The HR-managers were asked how they dealt with the problems that arose in the previous sub question. Firstly, I will shortly discuss some examples of specific countries. Secondly, I will describe the problems that arise in more than one country.

An example that was given regarding the US was an example by the HR-manager that provided trainings. He noticed that a certain exercise in the training was not understood by the American employees, because they had another view on the hierarchy than their trainer. The HR-manager said that he skipped this exercise in this training. A good solution would be another exercise. The HR-manager pointed out that in the future, it might be necessary to check whether or not the exercises in the trainings that are given are congruent with the needs of the employees.

An issue that appeared in several interviews, which also counted for several countries, is the low willingness to move. People make a commitment to the place they work, by buying a house for example. When asking the HR-managers what could be done to solve this issue, they came with a short term solution: The employees are asked to work at another place for one or a few years, instead of moving across the country or to another country forever. The HR-managers say the employees consider working somewhere else for a few years as more interesting, since they know

for sure they will be able to go back to the place they used to work at. In the case of the Americans employees that didn't want to move, the temporary move is presented as a sort of traineeship. In the case of the Japanese, it is seen as an opportunity to stay at the company because staying at the current location might not be possible due to economic reasons. Another current solution is the formation of a mobile team that travels all over the world to solve certain issues on the machines

Another problem that appeared from several interviews, that has its main origins in Asian countries is the problem with being assertive and that employees do not always speak up for their own opinion. This problem is rooted in the culture of those Asian countries and is thus not easy to change. Being assertive can be considered rude and people do not value this. Within the company, it is expected from the employees that they are assertive. A solution that is currently used is that the HR-manager intervenes when managers cross a border. They prevent the development of a black-list of employees with solicitations and try to start a conversation on the employees' development. Currently, some of the HR-managers in Asia are Dutch persons. One of them said that he used the fact that he's from another nationality sometimes, because the Asians consider him as a "dumb foreigner" and therefore judge him less when he is being assertive. The disadvantage of this is that when the HR-manager has just arrived, there are issues that he will not understand.

Thirdly, several managers said that the main priority of the employees and their managers is currently not at the development opportunities. This has to do with the high workload, but also with the fact that the employees often do not know what possibilities exist. Currently, there is not really a solution for this. There are plans to set up a technical training centre that provides more insight into the possible technical trainings. Nevertheless, this does not create any insight into the non-technical trainings or the other development opportunities that are available. The HR-managers say that a behavioural change among the employees and their managers is needed. *"The change we must make exists of three different steps. First of all, the employees' development should be seen as priority and the employees and their manager should make time for their development. Secondly, the managers should be better equipped. Equipping can mean learning how to do coaching conversations, but also knowing what is available. Thirdly, the employees should be activated. They have to realize that they are responsible for their own development, they are in the drivers' seat"*. This quote is very clear on what should be changed in the future and what steps are needed in order to have better developed employees and managers. The HR-manager added to this quote that according to his experience, most of the managers that are not well-equipped are in the Asian countries. A few years ago, the HR-department was not well equipped either, which is why right now, there are foreigners supporting the local HR-departments in the Asian countries.

Fourthly, being assertive or not being assertive was seen as an influence on the amount of development opportunities the employees had access to. This can be linked to the low assertiveness

in the Asian countries, mainly Korea and Japan. When managers do not appreciate that the employees stand up for themselves and there is no priority on development opportunities, the employees will not get a chance to develop themselves. On the other hand, this also counts in the westernized countries such as the US, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. There is not enough clarity on the development opportunities that are available, which means that the employees have to be assertive and speak up for themselves in order to find out what their possibilities are. One of the HR-managers said that the employees that he sees at his desk are the ones that know what they want and are searching for the opportunities to get there. There is currently no solution for this problem. As a possible solution, an HR-manager said that it might be an idea to formalise the development opportunities. On the other hand, formalising would influence the possibilities the employees have within the company. The employees' 'work package' and career track are then preliminary determined, which means employees cannot choose their own development path anymore. Another solution that might help is a clear way to get insight into the development opportunities that are available and make this overview available to all employees. This way, the employees have more equal chances to access the development opportunities.

When taking all those points together there are several points that still need improvement and thus need to be worked on. The main points that should be worked on are the clarity of the development opportunities, making a behavioural change: make development a priority and make the employees aware that they are responsible for their own development. Other solutions, such as how the employees and their managers should deal with the location differences differ per country. A possible solution for not having enough development opportunities is temporary moving to another (larger) location, in order to follow training and work at that location. Another example of a solution that has to differ per nationality is the amount of assertiveness that is expected and is accepted. This issue is culturally determined and is thus not easy to change. Since the amount of problems that arise differs per country, the solutions that have to be designed also differ per country.

## **6 Conclusion and discussion**

When taking the theoretical background, practical context and the sub questions into account, it appears that the outcomes of the engagement survey can be interpreted in a variety of ways. A comparison with literature was made which provides indications of where to search for issues. But, nor the survey, neither the literature do explain exactly how a score was realized. It does not give insight in the so-called 'problem behind the problem'. The interviews gave more insight into the scores that appeared, whether or not they were recognized and what could be issues that lay behind the bad scores. Overall, the scores were recognized and the HR-managers that were interviewed could find a cause for the scores. Some of these causes were linked to cultural differences; some were not, such as a bad economic situation or a small location with limited possibilities. Thus, cultural differences are not the only cause of possible problems; other factors have their influence on the emergence of problems as well.

In order to improve the employees' development opportunities within the company some changes can be made. Firstly, the cultural differences do influence the way the employees value the development opportunities within the company. At the same time, the company would like to have a country exceeding vision, which means the same core values for everybody. Secondly, the employees and their managers do not see development as a priority. Linked to this is the assumption of the employees that development is an HR-driven process. The employees need to be activated and have to understand that they are responsible; they are in the 'driver's seat'. Thirdly, some of the managers are not well equipped for coaching. In some cases, extra attention is needed in order to improve the employees' development opportunities. Lastly, some causes are not just culturally driven, but also a result of the locations and its environment. An example of this is that the locations in the US are relatively small, which means not all development opportunities are available. Some HR-managers have been making up solutions themselves, but in order to solve this problem on a longer term, a central approach is needed.

Taking those four factors into account, my advice would be to keep the development opportunities as they are and try to make small adaptations per country, so all employees have the same development opportunities or make sure they have a correct expectation of development opportunities.

## Bibliography

Bond, M. H. (2002). "Reclaiming the Individual From Hofstede's Ecological Analysis- A 20-Year Odyssey: Comment on Oyserman et al. (2002)." *Psychological Bulletin* 128(1): 73-77.

ASHE higher education report (2005). Organizing for Diversity: Fundamental Issues. *ASHE higher education report*, 31(1), 49-61.

External bureau (2013), *Our Methodology*.

External bureau (2013), *Nationality report on the company's engagement survey of 2013*.

Graves, D. (1986). *Corporate Culture - Diagnosis and Change: Auditing and changing the culture of organizations*. London, Frances Printer.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International differences in work related values*. Beverly Hill, CA, Sage.

Hofstede, G. (1998). "Attitudes, Values and Organizational Culture: Disentangling the concepts." *Organization Studies* 19(3): 477.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: international differences in work-related values*. London: Sage.

Hofstede, G. (2005). *Allemaal andersdenkenden; omgaan met cultuurverschillen*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact.

Hofstede, G. (2006). What did GLOBE really measure? Researchers' minds versus respondents' minds. *Journal of international business studies*, 37, 882-896.

Hofstede, G. (2010). The GLOBE debate: back to relevance. *Journal of international business studies*, 41, 1339-1346.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organization: software of the mind. intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival ( 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Hogg, M.A. & Vaughan, G.M. (2002). *Social Psychology (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. London: Prentice Hall.
- House et. al. (2004). *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations. The GLOBE Study of 62 societies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Jones, M.L. (2007). *Culturally questionable?*, Oxford Business & Economics Conference. Oxford, UK.
- Karjalainen, H. and Soparnot, R. (2010). Interpersonal Cooperation in Multicultural Working Context. *International business research*, 5(6), 73-82.
- Kluckhohn, F.R. & Strodtbeck, F.L. (1961). *Variations in value orientations*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lauring, J. (2009). Managing cultural diversity and the process of knowledge sharing: A case from Denmark. *Scandinavian journal of management*, 25(4), 385-394.
- Lauring, J. and Selmer, J. (2013). Diversity attitudes and group knowledge processing in multicultural organizations. *European management journal*, 31(2), 124-136.
- McLelland, D.C. (1961). *The Achieving Society*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.
- McSweeney, B. (2000). *The Fallacy of National Culture Identification*. 6th Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Accounting Conference, Manchester, UK.
- Miller, G.A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information, *Psychological Review*, 63(2), 81–97.
- Olie, R. (1995). The 'Culture' Factor in Personnel and Organization Policies. *International Human Resource Management: An integrated approach*. A. Harzing and V. R. J. London, Sage Publications, 124-143.
- Posthuma, R.A. (2009). National Culture and Union Membership: A Cultural-Cognitive Perspective. *Industrial relations*, 64(3).

- Rogers, A. (1998). The spaces of multiculturalism and citizenship. *International social science journal*, 50(156), 201-213.
- Rosen, L. & Luhrmann, M. (1996). Other Intentions: Cultural Contexts and the Attributions of Inner States. *American anthropologist*, 98(3), 674-675.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1999). "A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work" *Applied Psychology*, 48(1): 23-47.
- Shi, X. (2010). Interpreting Hofstede Model and GLOBE Model: Which Way to Go for Cross-Cultural Research?. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(5), 93-99
- Tajfel, H. (1972). Social categorization. In S. Moscovici (Ed.), *Introduction à la psychologie Sociale*, 1, 272-302. Paris: Larousse.
- Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. C. (1986). The Social Identity Theory of inter-group behavior. In S. Worchel and L. W. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Chigago: Nelson-Hall.
- The company (2008). *Cultural Navigator*. Retrieved from the company's Intranet.
- The company (2012). *Career tracks tool (internal document)*.
- The company (2012). *Managers HR Presentation (internal document)*.
- The company (2012). *Presentation of HR-roles within the company(internal document)*.
- The company (2012). *Sustainability Report 2012*.
- The company (2013). *Intranet information (internal document)*.
- Triandis, H.C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. *Psychological Review*, 96, 506-520.
- Turner, J. C. (1982). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In H. Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ulrich, D. (1997). *Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results*. Harvard Business School Press.

## **Annex 1: Topiclist interviews HR employees**

### ***Introduction***

- Providing an overview of the use of the interview (anonymity guaranteed)
- Introducing myself (engagement survey, final research for the Master Social sciences)
- Role of the employee in the organization
- Introducing the nationalities report on the engagement survey and focusing on the development opportunities
- Showing the results of the main 8 nationalities within the company

### ***Regarding the differences that appeared in the engagement survey's results***

- Which of the main 8 nationalities of the employees you have in your client groups?
- Diving deeper per nationality:
  - o To what extent do you recognize the scores?
  - o If the manager has only one nationality: compare to the company's overall score: Do you recognize the differences? What differences are the most striking?
  - o If the manager has more than one nationality: Do you recognize the differences? What differences are the most striking? How can those differences be explained?

### ***Influence of cultural differences***

- What is the influence of the different cultures when it comes to how the employees perceive the career development programs of the company?
- What advantages do you see related to the development opportunities based on cultural characteristics? How do these cultural characteristics influence the attitude of the employee towards developing their career? (Positive and negative?)
- Do you experience any problems related to those cultural differences when it comes to career development?
- In case of "yes", how are those problems dealt with?
- How could we anticipate onto those cultural differences even better in the future?
  - o What would that mean for the current career development tools? (new tools needed? Adjustments in the tools?)
- Do you have anything else that you would like to share related to cultural differences and career development opportunities?