

Lucie Cviklová
ORCID: 0000-0002-9565-1433
Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Intercultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence of Students in the Czech Education System

Świadomość interkulturowa i kompetencje interkulturowe studentów w czeskim systemie edukacyjnym

ABSTRACT

This contribution highlights the fact that the analysis of intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity should not be limited to an intra-generational perspective but should also include an intergenerational one. To put it differently, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communicative competence are developed throughout one's life and are shaped by various factors, including informal and formal socialization and schooling practices, that in turn influence the development of social capital. The sample related to the data collection was constituted on the basis of five dimensions, and the cultural awareness of Czech students at Czech secondary schools was measured. Items in the semi-structured questionnaire included statements such as, students are allowed to criticize their teachers, the laws apply to everyone (including rich and powerful), conflicts between students and teachers are natural, and your diploma determines your career and success, etc. In the conclusion, data obtained by means of empirical research at several Czech secondary schools are compared to those publicly available regarding the economically active Czech popula-

KEYWORDS

cultural awareness, Czech secondary schools, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, intergenerational communicative competence

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

świadomość kulturowa, czeskie gimnazja, świadomość międzykulturowa, wrażliwość międzykulturowa, międzypokoleniowe kompetencje komunikacyjne

SPI Vol. 21, 2018/3
ISSN 2450-5358
e-ISSN 2450-5366
DOI: 10.12775/SPI.2018.3.006

Submitted: 21.05.2018
Accepted: 26.10.2018

tion. The comparative perspective could become the basis of teaching strategies concerning intercultural communication at secondary schools and universities.

ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na fakt, że badania świadomości i wrażliwości interkulturowej nie powinny być ograniczane do perspektywy jednego pokolenia, ale winny również mieć wymiar międzypokoleniowy. Innymi słowy, interkulturowa świadomość, interkulturowa wrażliwość i interkulturowa kompetencja komunikacyjna są rozwijane w ciągu całego cyklu życia i kształtowane przez różne czynniki, włącznie z formalną i nieformalną socjalizacją oraz praktykami edukacyjnymi, mającymi wpływ na kapitał społeczny. Próba związana ze zgromadzonymi danymi została ustalona na podstawie pięciu kryteriów i umożliwiła prześledzenie świadomości kulturowej czeskich uczniów szkół średnich. Pozycje w kwestionariuszu zawierały następujące kategorie wypowiedzi: uczniowie mogą krytykować nauczycieli, prawo obowiązuje wszystkich (także osoby wpływowe i bogate), konflikty między nauczycielami a uczniami są naturalne, uzyskanie dyplomu jest ważne, by zrobić karierę i osiągnąć sukces. W zakończeniu dane, zebrane na podstawie badań empirycznych w kilku czeskich szkołach średnich, zostały porównane z opublikowanymi danymi, dotyczącymi aktywnej zawodowo populacji czeskiej. Ta perspektywa porównawcza mogłaby się stać podstawą strategii pedagogicznych, dotyczących interkulturowej komunikacji w szkołach średnich i na uniwersytetach.

Introduction

European integration has been considered important in the Czech educational system mainly at institutions of higher education, and the influence of common European policies as well as Czech national reforms at primary and secondary schools has only existed at the level of competences in mathematics, science and languages. Nevertheless, educational specialists and employers have found that the low performance of Czech high school and university graduates is related to a lack of intercultural communicative competence and that this can be explained by deficiencies in the curricula at Czech

secondary schools and universities.¹ In addition, the answer to the question: “How can the average Czech student can acquire intercultural communicative competence?” is to a large degree complicated by the fragmentation of curricula and teaching methods at various types of Czech secondary schools. To put it differently, the current condition is determined by the coexistence of various secondary schools, vocational schools, and different types of international schools administered by national ministries, such as the Lycée Français, Waldorf High Schools, etc. Nevertheless, intercultural communicative competence is rarely taught at Czech secondary schools.

Intercultural communicative competence can be defined as comprising various types of communication, including code switching, by means of which individuals who share more than one culture express their values and worldviews on different occasions, verbally as well as non-verbally.² Intercultural communicative competence is related to intercultural cultural awareness that can be measured by different dimensions/variables and particularly their individual values.³ One can find various cultural dimensions, such as the conception of time, low context versus high context cultures, emotional versus neutral cultures, etc.⁴ Nevertheless, for my research objective and namely the necessity to operationalize the issues, the number of cultural dimensions was reduced to five: high versus low power distance, particularism versus universalism, high versus low uncertainty avoidance, collectivism versus individualism and achieved versus ascribed status. For example, power distance can be examined through the answers yes/no to attitudes such as “people are less likely to question the boss,” “freedom of thought could get you into trouble,” “management style is authoritarian and paternalistic,” etc. Universalism and particularism can be measured by yes/no answers to attitudes such as “objectivity, not letting personal feelings affect decision making, is

¹ C. Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, Boston (MA) – London 1990, pp. 99–103.

² *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings*, ed. M.J. Bennett, Boston (MA) – London 1998, pp. 34–35.

³ B. Peterson, *Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, Yarmouth (ME) – London 2004, p. 47.

⁴ M.J. Gannon, *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys through 23 Nations*, Thousand Oaks (CA) 2004, pp. 3–5.

possible and desirable,” “principles have to get bent once in a while,” “people tend to hire friends and associates,” etc. High and low uncertainty avoidance can be evaluated using yes/no answers to attitudes such as “people expect more formality in interactions,” “rules can be broken if it makes sense, for pragmatic reasons,” “people should keep emotions under control,” etc. Collectivism and individualism can be examined by yes/no answers to attitudes such as “people answer the phone by giving the name of the organization,” “it’s okay to stand out,” “face saving is important,” etc. Ascribed and achieved status can be measured by yes/no answers to attitudes such as “people adhere to tradition,” “people are promoted based on productivity and results,” “I expect people to judge me by my affiliations,” etc.

The study

Under the current global conditions, actors are increasingly confronted with various cultural patterns that have been acquired at individual stages of socialization processes by means of the official school system, as well as through channels of informal learning originating in family structures, peer groups, work units in seasonal summer jobs as well as in the framework of other interactions.⁵ How can one identify the intercultural awareness of students at Czech secondary schools and the most important variables relevant for prospective intercultural training? Are these cultural variables separate or can one identify any clustering of similar values concerning two or more of them?

The data collection was the outcome of the analysis of the five relevant paradigms of intercultural communication: (1) the Dutch social psychologist Geert J. Hofstede and his dimensions of power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence; (2) the Dutch organizational theorist Fons Trompenaars and his dimensions of universalism versus particularism, individualism versus communitarianism, neutral versus emotional, specific versus diffuse, achievement versus ascription,

⁵ G.J. Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, second edition, Thousand Oaks (CA) 2001, p. 7.

sequential versus synchronous time and internal direction versus external direction; (3) the American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher Edward Hall and his dimensions of high-context culture versus low-context culture, monochronic action versus polychromic action and high territoriality versus low territoriality; (4) the American missionary and sociologist Milton Bennett and his developmental model of intercultural sensitivity that differentiated between ethnocentric stages or personal development (denial of difference, defense against difference, minimization of difference) and ethnorelative views (acceptance of difference, adaptation to difference, integration of difference); (5) the specialist in applied linguistics, Ingrid Piller, and her critical reflections on intercultural communication through the perspective of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics where the linguist has attributed special attention to issues such as cultural identity, cultural difference and discursive constructions.

Finally, the methodological strategy of data collection at Prague public secondary schools and specific pair statements related to the five dimensions have drawn on selected components the two paradigms: (1) Hofstede's dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance and collectivism, (2) Trompenaar's dimensions of universalism versus particularism and achieved versus ascribed status.

The first principle, power distance—omnipresent not only in educational institutions but also in political life, at workplaces and in families—is reflective of the fact that actors in specific cultural environments accept and respect the superiority of power structures over legal principles and justification arguments. Power distance is particularly reflective of the stance on inequality of institutions/organizations and of expectations concerning the conduct of the superior on the one hand and the subordinate on the other.

While particularism as the first principle of the second dimension prefers orientation to given roles and neglect of specific actors as well as relationships among them, the opposite particularism emphasizes personal relations and approaches to individual actors. To put it differently, particularism and universalism explain contradictory principles of this dichotomy, i.e. conflict or tension between obligations to family, friends and colleagues and to society/community.

The third cultural dimension deals with the issue of uncertainty avoidance and points to the fact that in some cultural and social

environments actors accept uncertainty as something common and consider it part of everyday life, while in others they adopt a negative attitude to risk and uncertainty and strive for those norms and regulations that can eliminate them. More concretely, uncertainty avoidance explains the degree to which societies/communities feel threatened by uncertainty and anxiety and why some feel more threatened by it than others: it also presents specific ways in which different communities invented various strategies for dealing with the phenomenon.

The fourth dimension, collectivism versus individualism differentiates between communities/societies where actors prefer group to individual interest and those where individual actors hold themselves responsible for their deeds and relations among them are more or less loose. Collectivism versus individualism also points to the orientation of every community/society concerning collective and individual motivation for decision-making and actions: in individualist societies the social action of the individual is more motivated by the satisfaction of his or her needs than by that of the group, while in collectivist societies one's identity is to a large degree a function of his or her membership in the whole system/group.

The fifth dimension, achieved versus ascribed status, divides cultural environments into those where actors justify their social status by their own efforts and have constantly to confirm it and those where social rank is derived from social origin, education, employment, age, membership of some social group, etc.

Data based on the semi-structured questionnaire were collected at several Czech secondary schools and 50% of the Czech students were male and 50% of the Czech students were female.⁶ In fact, respondents were male and female students in the last grade of their studies at those four Prague public grammar school that have been administered by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. More specifically, the Prague public schools were chosen by random sampling; available register of Czech educational institutions was accessed and the letter with the statement of the research intent was addressed to each headmaster or headmistress of the respective school; the final sample of one hundred students and the data collection resulted from the non-response of the management of some schools, the evaluation of

⁶ A. Giddens, *Sociology*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 534–535.

preliminary research and modification of the questionnaire, and the random sampling of those public secondary schools that were interested to participate at the research. Data were analyzed for evidence of intercultural awareness regarding perception of power structures, cleavages between universalist and particularist values, efforts to avoid uncertainty or strategies how to confront it, tendencies to collectivist or individual behaviour and, finally, justification of his or her status by either achievement or ascription principles.

The sociological analysis draws on an approach to cultural differences and it takes into account the above-mentioned cultural dimensions. Statements concerning the cultural dimensions in the semi-structured questionnaire were formulated on the basis of a preliminary questionnaire that had previously been distributed to several students of Czech secondary schools.⁷ During the preliminary research some questions had not been answered and were therefore omitted in the final version, while some new statements were included. Data presented here regarding the intercultural awareness of Czech students at secondary schools are the result of original research into one hundred students at several Czech secondary schools. In addition, the data collection for this research draws on contemporary knowledge concerning ethnic stereotyping in schools.⁸ For example, it has been found that differences concerning stereotyping in educational institutions can in part be explained by the influence of nationally specific regulations.

Findings

Intercultural Awareness of Czech Students at Secondary Schools through the Perspective of Power Distance.

Specific double or pair attitudes were introduced in order to measure the power distance index of Czech students at selected Czech secondary schools and students were asked about their preferences.

⁷ K. Barriball, "Collecting Data Using a Semi-structured Interview: A Discussion Paper," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 1994, vol. 19, no. 2, p. 331.

⁸ P. Stevens, R. Görgöz, "Exploring the Importance of Institutional Contexts for the Development of Ethnic Stereotypes: A Comparison of Schools in Belgium and England," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2010, vol. 33, no. 8, p. 1362.

These double or pair attitudes reflect whether Czech students accept unequal influence and different roles of students and teachers at their secondary schools as well as in other parts of their lives. They reveal whether Czech students perceive power and status as artificial and to what degree they would like to de-emphasize or minimize differences between teachers and students.⁹

(1a) Students are allowed to criticize their teachers (since teachers don't have to be deferred to); (1b) Students are not allowed to criticize teachers (since there is more fear of displeasing the teacher in high power distance cultures). (2a) Status symbols of teachers are important part of their profession (since emphasizing distinctions between teacher and students is the norm); (2b) Clothing style of teachers does not play any role (since rank does not bring about privileges). (3a) Critical thinking is encouraged (since no one is threatened by the independence of thinking for oneself); (3b) Critical thinking could get you into trouble (since independence is not valued in students). (4a) The chain of command is mainly for convenience (since power differences among teachers and students are not emphasized); (4b) The pecking order is clearly established (since rank must be respected and you should not go around people). (5a) Students are given precise instructions from teachers (since close supervision or the visible exercise of power is common to their culture); (5b) Students are given only general instructions (since autonomy and an invisible exercise of power is common to their culture). (6a) Communication between teacher and students is more casual (because the distance is minimized); (6b) Communication between teacher and students implies strict etiquette rules (because it is necessary to emphasize the power gap). (7a) The teaching methods are authoritarian (because teachers are supposed to exercise their power); (7b) Teaching methods are consultative and democratic (because we are all in this together and power distance is de-emphasized).

⁹ R. Aronhime, *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*, Washington 1997, p. 112.

Statement	Supporters of it	Non-Response
High power distance: 1b, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5b, 6b,7a	41 (28%)	
Low power distance: 1a, 2b, 3a, 4a, 5a, 6a, 7b	82 (64%)	
Total	123	7 (8%)

Table 1.
High Power Distance
versus Low Power
Distance

Source: Own research.

Intercultural Awareness of Czech Students at Secondary Schools through the Perspective of Particularism and Universalism.

Specific double or pair attitudes were introduced in order to measure the degree of universalism and particularism at selected Czech secondary schools and students were asked about their preferences. These double or pair attitudes are reflective of whether Czech students respect universal values at their secondary schools as well as in other parts of their lives. While one cannot claim that specific cultural environments are totally particularistic or universalistic, one can speak about certain attitudes or tendencies of individual societies/communities to treat family, friends and their in-groups the best they can and let the rest of the world protect alternative in-groups. On the other hand, members of other individual societies are convinced that at least certain absolute moral standards can be applied everywhere in the world, regardless of specific circumstances.¹⁰

(1a) The laws apply to everybody, including the powerful and rich (since for universalists the law does not depend on who you are); (1b) A deal is a deal, until circumstances change (since particularists would say that principles can be adjusted to circumstances). (2a) You don't compromise on moral standards (since universalists are convinced that certain principles apply regardless of the particular situation); (2b) Settlements can be influenced by personal preferences (particularists would say personal feelings would have to be taken into account). (3a) A deal is a deal, whatever happens (universalists avoid exceptions since they believe in absolutes); (3b) Deals are made

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 68.

on the basis of personal relationships (because particularist logic says a bond is more important than the facts of the case). (4a) Philosophy of the heart is important (since particularist logic is of the heart); (4b) Logical reasoning of the head is important (since universalist logic is of the head). (5a) Subjective rules are normal (since particularists are subjective/universalists are objective); (5b) Subjective rules should not exist (universalists like consistency because principles are absolute). (6a) Written contracts are necessary (since universalists believe in rules anchored in contracts); (6b) Written contracts are not necessary (according to particularists, friends can always be trusted and you don't do business with strangers anyway). (7a) The courts should mediate conflicts (universalists believe in absolutes and no circumstances are relevant); (7b) It's embarrassing if one has to go to court (particularists believe that social action should be guided by a specific situation and not by general maxims).

Table 2.
Universalism versus
Particularism

Statement	Supporters of it	Non-Response
Universalism: 1a, 2a, 3a, 4b, 5b, 6a, 7a	54 (41%)	
Particularism: 1b, 2b, 3b, 4a, 5a, 6b, 7b	63 (49%)	
Total	117	13 (10%)

Source: Own research.

Intercultural Awareness of Czech Students at Secondary Schools through the Perspective of Uncertainty Avoidance.

Specific double or pair attitudes were introduced in order to measure the degree of the uncertainty avoidance index at selected Czech secondary schools where students were asked about their preferences. These double or pair attitudes are reflective of whether Czech students respect uncertainty at their secondary schools as well as in other parts of their lives.¹¹

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 118.

Concrete social environments are characterized either by high uncertainty avoidance or low uncertainty avoidance; while national units with high uncertainty avoidance demand compliance, with many regulations, laws and procedures that were elaborated in order to avoid prospective insecurities, national units with a low uncertainty avoidance limit, regulate or control fewer areas of human interaction and feel more curious than frightened about the unknown.

(1a) Students and teachers should let their emotions out (because there's nothing to fear from emotions); (1b) Students and teachers should keep emotions under control (since when people lose control of their emotions, anything can happen). (2a) Diversity is intriguing and challenging (because the unknown is enticing); (2b) Diversity is dangerous (because it is unpredictable or unknown). (3a) Students change school infrequently (because stability is sought and change is threatening); (3b) Students change school with more frequency (because change is not so frightening). (4a) Regulations can be broken if it makes sense, for pragmatic reasons (because rules can be limiting and there's nothing inherently satisfying about rules); (4b) Regulations should not be broken (because rules are foundations or order). (5a) People expect less formality in interactions (since risks are inherently unsettling because they involve the unknown); (5b) People expect more formality in interactions (since the unknown isn't particularly worrying, risks are not to be feared). (6a) Conflicts between students and teachers are natural (order doesn't break down or get undermined that easily); (6b) Conflicts between students and teachers should be eliminated (because conflict threatens the smooth running of things). (7a) The chain of command should never be bypassed (since the chain of command guarantees order and keeps things under control); (7b) Teachers more readily accept dissent (because control is not that comforting).

Statement	Supporters of it	Non-Response
High uncertainty avoidance: 1b, 2b, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6b, 7a	57 (44%)	
Low uncertainty avoidance: 1a, 2a, 3b, 4a, 5b, 6a, 7b	61 (46%)	
Total	118	12 (10%)

Table 3.
Uncertainty
Avoidance

Source: Own research.

Intercultural Awareness of Czech Students at Secondary Schools through the Perspective of Collectivism and Individualism.

Specific double or pair attitudes were introduced in order to measure the degree of collectivism and individualism at selected Czech secondary schools where students were asked about their preferences. These double or pair attitudes are reflective of whether Czech students prefer collectivism to individualism at their secondary schools as well as in other parts of their lives. While in individualist societies, one is supposed to take care of oneself and independence as well as self-reliance are highly valued, in collectivist societies the success and survival of the group presupposes the well-being of the individual as well as harmony.¹²

(1a) Teachers should be hired on the basis of their skills (since individuals need independence); (1b) Teachers should be hired from within the organization (since people are defined by what they belong to). (2a) Teachers as well as students should not lose their face (because saving face maintains harmony and is the glue that keeps the group together; (2b) The best strategy is to be straightforward with students (collectivists shun conflict because it could damage harmony). (3a) Individual recognition is not acceptable (because no-one feels left out as opposed to majority rules which leave the minority out); (3b) Individual recognition is normal (because individualists reject self-effacement). (4a) Students and teachers change worldviews frequently (since they have to adapt to abrupt changes given by the global condition; (4b) Students and teachers adhere to tradition (in the sense that older, senior people are listened to). (5a) Students and teachers organise cocktail parties (since their lives are determined by short-term relationships); (5b) The marriage rate is high (since marriages keep the group and families happy). (6a) Teachers answer the phone by giving the name of the educational institution (since collectivists present themselves through their affiliations); (6b) It's common to ask students how they want to be addressed (since individualists present themselves through their name). (7a) Students can become friends relatively quickly (since the individual enters and leaves relationships on his or her own); (7b) It takes a long time to make a new friend among students (since it is necessary to become familiar with members of the group your new friend belongs to).

¹² Ibidem, p. 31.

Statement	Supporters of it	Non-Response
Individualism: 1a, 2b, 3b, 4a, 5a, 6b, 7a	65 (50%)	
Collectivism: 1b, 2a, 3a, 4b, 5b, 6a, 7b	58 (45%)	
Total	123	7 (5%)

Table 4.
Collectivism versus
Individualism

Source: Own research.

Intercultural Awareness of Czech Students at Secondary Schools through the Perspective of Achieved versus Ascribed Status.

Specific double or pair attitudes were introduced in order to measure the degree to which students are convinced that status should be achieved or ascribed. These double or pair attitudes are reflective of whether Czech students prefer social environments in which status is achieved to those in which status is ascribed and vice versa. In “achieved status” societies and communities, professional accomplishments, performance and record of success are highly valued and the status of the individual is conditioned by his or her actual deeds, while in “ascribed status” societies the individual is to a large degree seen through the lens of his or her function, birth, age and seniority. In “ascribed status” communities/societies the social standing of the individual cannot be lost completely and it is determined by the family situation, the social class into which he or she is born, the amount of education he or she receives and similar variables.¹³

(1a) Informal training and experience determine your career and success (since practice is more important than formal education); (1b) Your diplomas determine your career and success (since at universities you meet privileged people). (2a) The most important thing is that nobody has an unfair advantage (since everybody should be judged by his or her performance); (2b) The social standing of your family is important for your career and success (since at your workplace you are judged by your origin). (3a) You should choose friends regardless of their origin or social standing (since private life and public achievements are separate); (3b) You should become friend with

¹³ Ibidem, p. 123.

someone from your own social class (since useful friendship helps to maintain your social status). (4a) You can never completely lose your social prestige (since your reputation is determined by education and family origins); (4b) It is necessary to make constant efforts in order to maintain and justify your social prestige (since you have to justify it constantly). (5a) You should not enter in love relationship with a person who has lower social status than yours (since by means of these friendships your social status can be endangered); (5b) You can enter in love relationship with anybody if he or she complies with fair principles (since your social status depends on your own achievements and not on your formal affiliations). (6a) You can enter any university regardless of your background and family support (since your teachers will judge you by your performance); (6b) You cannot enter any university without family investment and moral support (since your teachers will consider your family background). (7a) It is necessary to show off your diplomas in public and private life (since your standing at the workplace is interrelated with your private life); (7b) One does not have to show off one's diplomas in private (since your private and public life are separate).

Table 5.
Achieved Status versus
Ascribed Status

Statement	Supporters of it	Non-Response
Achieved Status: 1a, 2a, 3a, 4b, 5b, 6a, 7b	83 (64%)	
Ascribed Status: 1b, 2b, 3b, 4a, 5a, 6b, 7a	41 (31%)	
Total	124	6 (5%)

Source: Own research.

Conclusions

The analysis of the questionnaires demonstrated that students are not particularly in favour of unequal influence and different roles for students and teachers at their secondary school and that they would like to promote these ideas in other parts of their lives. Only 28% of students agreed that relationships should be formal and should

involve a hierarchical component. The results of research realized by Hofstede and his team regarding the Czech economic population found that Czechs are listed among countries with a high power distance index where the population more or less accept power asymmetry between superiors and subordinates in organizations and institutions (67%). Nevertheless, the results of the research realized at secondary schools have shown intergenerational differences concerning the perception of power by Czechs, i.e. a tendency to replace vertical forms of communication with horizontal ones.

The analysis of the questionnaires demonstrated that students are not completely in favour of being protected by their families and friends and that they are more or less in favour of fair principles. Only 49% of students agreed that preferences should be made on the basis of family background or informal position and they endorsed equal principles not only at school but also in other parts of life. The results of research realized by Fons Trompenaars regarding the Czech economic population found that Czechs are listed among particularist nations where clientelism as well as a merger between the private and public domains of life are omnipresent.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the results of the recent research realized at Czech secondary schools have shown intergenerational differences concerning a disrespect of universal principles such as laws and other regulations, i.e. the tendency to replace various forms of favoritism with fair treatment of all the actors involved.

The analysis of questionnaires demonstrated that students are not afraid of uncertainty and that—at least to a certain degree—they are willing to accept risks. Only 44% of students agreed that social environments, including their schools, should be based on strict rules enforced by different authorities, including their teachers. The results of the research realized by Hofstede and his team¹⁵ regarding the Czech economic population found that Czechs are listed among nations with a high uncertainty avoidance where, similarly to countries such as Austria or Germany, actors are expected to agree with official state doctrines (including scientific ones) and the deliberation

¹⁴ R. Brunet-Thornton, V. Bureš, “Cross-Cultural Management: Establishing a Czech Benchmark,” *Economics and Management* 2012, vol. 15, no. 3, p. 47.

¹⁵ G.J. Hofstede, *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures*, Yarmouth (ME) – London 2002, pp. 87–88.

of individuals has been considered to be a potential threat. Nevertheless, the results of the recent research at Czech secondary schools have shown intergenerational differences regarding resistance to innovation and new ideas, i.e. the tendency to replace a lack of tolerance of non-systemic phenomena with an approach seeing risks as opportunities.

The analysis of questionnaires demonstrated that students only partially share collectivistic worldviews and that they are aware of individual responsibility for their education and advancement. Only 45% of students thought that the collective at their secondary schools should be a higher unit and that individual students should comply with its needs. The results of the research realized by Hofstede and his team¹⁶ regarding the Czech economic population found that Czechs are listed among collectivist nations where the interests of the group are more important than the interest of the individual (56%). Nevertheless, the results of the recent research at Czech secondary schools have shown intergenerational differences regarding the superiority of the group interests to those of the individual; i.e. a tendency to replace strong bonds between the group and the individual with looser ones.

The analysis of questionnaires demonstrated that students are more or less convinced that their social status should be achieved and not ascribed by variables such as education, family background, age, etc. Only 31% of students think that their social status at their school as well as in other parts of their life should be ascribed and that it should be only partially a result of their individual efforts. Hofstede and his team found that that there is correlation among power distance, uncertainty avoidance and collectivism versus individualism, not only in the case of Czechs but also in the case of other European and non-European nations: correspondence among these variables also influences arguments concerning the source or justification of social status. To put it more concretely, the combination of a low power distance index, low uncertainty avoidance index and diversion of collectivism found by means of the research in Czech secondary schools have been important values for the justification of social status by means of individual achievement.

¹⁶ J. Světlík, *Marketing pro světový trh*, Prague 2003, pp. 50–51.

Bibliography

- Aronhime R., *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*, Peace Corps, Washington 1997.
- Barriball K., "Collecting Data Using a Semi-structured Interview: A Discussion Paper," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 1994, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 328–335.
- Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings*, ed. M.J. Bennett, Intercultural Press, Nicholas Brealey, Boston (MA) – London 1998.
- Brunet-Thornton R., Bureš V., "Cross-Cultural Management: Establishing a Czech Benchmark," *Economics and Management* 2012, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 46–62.
- Gannon M.J., *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys through 23 Nations*, Sage, Thousand Oaks (CA) 2004.
- Giddens A., *Sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1997.
- Hofstede G.J., *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, second edition, Sage, Thousand Oaks (CA) 2001.
- Hofstede G.J., *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures*, Intercultural Press, Nicholas Brealey, Yarmouth (ME) – London 2002.
- Peterson B., *Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, Intercultural Press, Nicholas Brealey, Yarmouth (ME) – London 2004.
- Stevens P., Görgöz R., "Exploring the Importance of Institutional Contexts for the Development of Ethnic Stereotypes: A Comparison of Schools in Belgium and England," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2010, vol. 33, no. 8, pp. 1350–1371.
- Storti C., *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, Intercultural Press, Nicholas Brealey, Boston (MA) – London 1990.
- Světlík J., *Marketing pro světový trh*, Grada, Praha 2003.

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

Dr Lucie Cviklová
 Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic
 lucie.cviklova@fhs.cuni.cz