

10th IACCM Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral Workshop,
University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 29 June – 1 July 2011
**CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

AGE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT: IS IT A CULTURAL ISSUE?

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Abstract

The issue of age diversity management (ADM) has gained importance principally as a response to demographic trends and pensions crises at government level. Other imperatives associated with the issue are optimal resource use, inclusion and employability of individuals, concern for age discrimination as a legal and moral issue, fit with organizational needs and customer base and management of stocks of tacit knowledge. These correspond to a three strand approach to diversity.

ADM means that organizations pursue strategically oriented policies, implement procedures and systems, foster attitudes and invest time and money in age related initiatives. Short term concern for cost-cutting and the plight of young people has diluted the urgency of the long term problem in 2011. Attitudes, regulations, institutional arrangements and the relative cost of retirement for workers vary in different locations. This is to be seen against the background of a deep recession in many Western countries, which may make retention of older workers less attractive for many employers.

We hypothesize that cultural variables are significant in explaining these variations. Using the GLOBE model of cultural variables we contribute to explaining the situation in Spain. Many other etic dimensions may be relevant including long term orientation, goal orientation, status by attribution and femininity. Corporate culture is a powerful influence and we consider Cameron and Quinn's competing values framework to examine the influence on policy, attitudes and practices in dealing with older members of organizations. Given that culture is an important influence we propose to approach the issue as one of cultural diagnosis and change.

Keywords: age diversity management, active population, participation rate, corporate culture, GLOBE cultural model, cultural change

Introduction

Age diversity management is a sub-set of diversity management, an area in which gender, race, disability and sexual orientation are other important categories. In US in 2008 for example the incidence of discrimination claims were 35,6% based on race, 29,7% on gender and 25,8% on age (<http://agingandwork.be.edu>) The issue of age management has arisen principally as a response to demographic trends along with changing attitudes to immigration (Dixon, 2008).

The term strictly speaking refers to the management of diversity involving all age groups but here we focus on older groups. In this context it should be noted that the widespread and stubborn recession from which many Western countries including Spain is suffering has meant a perception of competition between younger and older workers for a limited pool of jobs. Young people demonstrating in Madrid and Barcelona against the election system in May 2011 complained among other things about "grandchildren unemployed and grandparents working". This is a symptom of the "lump of labour fallacy" long identified by economists as the illusion that the number of jobs is fixed and that hiring is a zero sum

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game since it leaves someone else unemployed. It is argued that this is a fallacy over the longer term since employment generates spending and expands the economy so that over time it is argued there is an increase in employment. Unfortunately in the short run this is not very obvious (Walker, 2007).

In times of technological change the problem of optimizing use of older workers is compounded by the need for re-training and in many cases slower learning curves. This investment however may well be more than justified by streamlining effects on work processes – once the mechanisms are mastered. These issues concern simultaneously the interests of the older worker and of the organization: it is the meeting of these that guarantees successful implementation of ADM initiatives.

Our interest in this paper is management of older workers (OW), in the upper range of what is at present considered normal working age in Western countries (15-64), specifically the 55 to 64 group, and those of 65 to 71, who are immediately above retiring age in Spain and many other European countries at present, who, though they are considered to be outside working age are a potential reservoir of manpower for organizations and society. At present high wastage of talent occurs since there is a low rate of participation in the productive economy but many workers in this group still have considerable potential for contribution to the efficacy, wisdom and climate of organizations. We argue that it is largely attitudes and custom that keep them from working, in other words cultural values.

The loss of workplaces over recent years as companies turn first to older workers to reduce staff partly because they represent higher costs, obviously creates problems for the worker affected since it is difficult to re-enter the labour market later in life; but also for the organization, which loses skills and knowledge accumulated over the years and finally society in general which has to support the unemployed workers. There is a widespread perception that older workers are more dispensable - apart from being significantly more expensive for employers. (Johnson, 2007)

From the point of view of the older person, it is crucial to maintain personal capacities and keeping them usable by organizations, that is maintaining employability. Skills are only useful if kept up to date but long term experience in which updated skills are embedded is a key strength of older workers. Age discriminatory attitudes of employers run deep: we value older people but imply: “don’t send me candidates over 60 to interview”. For candidates in such circumstances demonstrating natural energy, enthusiasm and responsible attitude may not help in the face of subtle prejudiced attitudes. The candidate with too much experience can be a problem: employers fear they will not stay or that they should be paying more. (Johnson, 2007).

It is commonly argued that older workers cannot easily learn new tasks especially when these involve ICT (information and communications technology), an aspect of the famous digital divide, that it is not worth investing in OW since they will not stay long in the organization, and that they are less adaptable among other arguments.

These arguments may be countered by underlining the experience, positive attitudes, alternative training methods and task modification. Organizations are often not aware of the merits and resource value of older workers and managers in a time when immediacy and rapid solutions to new problems is considered so highly. Using the distinction between

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fluid and crystallized intelligence (Cattell 1963) it is demonstrated that over a life time whilst there is a rise and fall of fluid intelligence, crystallized intelligence continues improving with age. The change is based on neurological factors in the case of fluid intelligence but cultural and experiential factors in the case of crystallized intelligence, which means that older workers and managers have increasing potential value for organizations (Horn & Cattell, 1966)

In analyzing data we should beware of some terminological problems, distinguishing between various terms:

- a) Working age population: the totality of people of ages at which it is legal to work and above which people are pensionable by virtue of their age; generally 15 to 64 at present in Europe.
- b) Active population: those in this age bracket who are fit and available for work, thus excluding disabled, those suffering from long term illness and those not seeking work (such as housewives) but including the unemployed, part time, full time and self employed.
- c) The participation rate is the ratio of active population to working age population, expressed as a percentage.

A major contrast detected almost universally is that between women and men, with the former normally working and seeking work substantially less. This is reflected in participation rates and has institutional ramifications affecting pension rights and rates.

Demographic shifts arise from birth rate falling below sustainable rate (i.e. maintaining population levels), increasing longevity, smaller families, later age of having children and the effects of immigration. The net result is a fall in the proportion of the population in the active population, which will shift dynamically during the next generations usually assessed over a time frame from the early years of the century to 2050 (Commission of European Communities, 2009).

The demographic changes occurring in the world are dramatic. Globally the population over 65 is about to overtake the number of children under 5 according to the latest US Census Bureau report (USCB 2008). The number of over 65's is forecast to double from 7% to 14% of world population in coming decades. This increase is explained by high post war fertility and health improvements that increase longevity. If this is combined with a trend to lower birth rates the result is indeed dramatic and the region most affected is the EU: by 2040 one in four Europeans will be over 65. This shift does not only affect Western countries: the developing world will also be affected: by 2040 76% of world population aged 65 and over will be in emerging market economies (EME). By 2020 this figure is estimated at 57,1% (Euromonitor, 2010). In 2010 China has already 43,4% of the world population over 65, but this is less than 10% of her population (ibid).

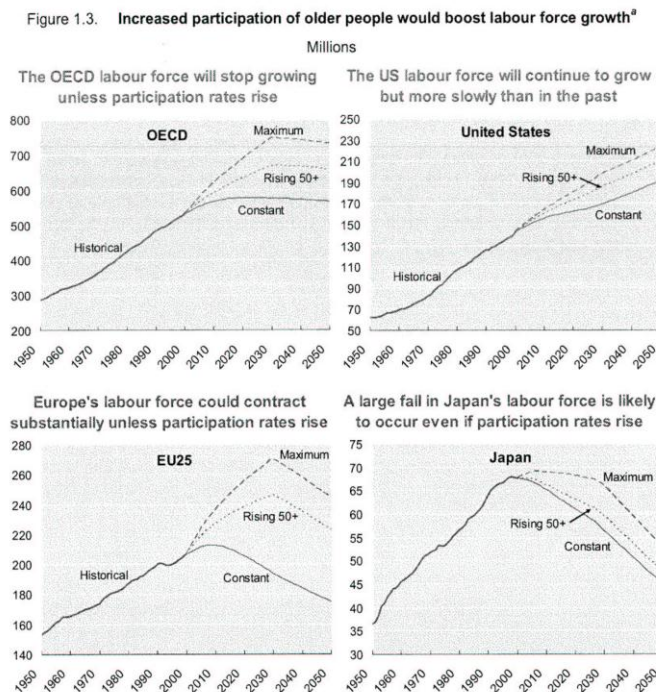
The ODR (older dependency ratio) gives the number of over 65's for every 100 persons between 20 and 64: 33 in Japan, 26 in UK, 21 in US. On the other hand for the moment the figure is 6 in Kenya and 7 in Bangladesh given low life expectancy (Guardian, 2008).

Dealing with these changes over the medium to long term will require compensating changes in labour supply: children coming into the labour market younger (impossible in the foreseeable social climate), shift from labour intensive to more capital intensive

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activities, increasing productivity, changes affecting family size and propensity to have children, female employment, use of immigrants to supplement the native born work force inclination to work to ages well beyond the currently normal retirement age and an increase in older workers' capacity and inclination to worker to greater ages. This suggests legal and institutional changes for example accumulating pension rights while working over the age of 65 but also cultural changes in the minds of employers, employees, government and the general public.

Figure 1: labour force projections with constant and rising OW participation



Ironically, the immediate situation is one of high unemployment of the young, estimated at 45% in Spain in 2011 (Naumann, 2011) so that the focus of current debate is difficult to focus on older groups or longer term demographic changes. If we consider the compounded effect of the contribution of greater longevity to increasing dependency ratio we can see how the problem is exacerbated and observe that immigration is unlikely to cover the shortfall. A key variable is participation in the active workforce. In Japan labour force decline has already started; in EU it will start in 2010 if participation rate remains constant; in OECD labour force will remain constant if participation rate is constant. At present in the Europe of 27, 50% are in employment at the age of 60 (COM 2009)

Attitudes to older workers

Type of work has a considerable impact both on desire to work and employability. Jobs involve repetitive work, lifting heavy weights and poor conditions and in general lower educational levels the desire to stop working is stronger and the incentives to continue lower. For older middle class professionals the denial of work opportunities can be a humiliating affront to people who see themselves as active, keen and able to contribute to active life. This could be argued of the unemployed at any age of course but having devoted one's professional / working life over many years to an organization and then find oneself without this central activity may be bitterly hard to accept. It is important to note

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that many of the physical effects of ageing may not be relevant for knowledge workers making it easier to continue employment later, typically to the age of 70 or beyond.

OW are supposed to resist change, learn more slowly and are perceived as less flexible. When HR professionals were asked in a 2003 survey what they view as disadvantages of hiring older workers, the most frequently indicated was that they do not keep up with technology (53%), followed by older workers causing expenses such as health care cost to rise (36%) and being less flexible than younger workers (28%). (Collison 2003)

Evidence of age discrimination is frequent. In a 2002 survey 9 percent say they believe they have been passed up for a promotion because of age, 6 percent say they were fired because of age, 5% passed up for a raise because of age and 5% attribute their not being hired for a job to their age. (Roper 2002). In addition the image of youth and youth-centric advertising is enormously powerful in TV advertising. It is widely assumed that they older groups are less creative and innovative in comparison with the younger worker. OW are seen as re-living the past rather than inventing new ideas for the future and may lack confidence in competing with the young. As productivity declines costs go on increasing so the “net productivity” curve shows a falling trend. Naturally companies tend to favour the lower salaries and rising productivity of the younger worker.

When faced with the choice between laying off workers and offering early retirement companies, unions and workers committees (comités de empresa in Spain) prefer the latter option as more socially acceptable and less traumatic. The inclusion of early retirements often makes an “expediente de regulación de empleo” (“ERE”: large scale redundancy deal) acceptable in labour negotiations (ibid). Workers as young as 48 may be made redundant and will have great difficulty finding another place in the labour market, though intermediate solutions with conditional returns to work may ease the situation somewhat.

Predictions and prospects

There is predicted to be a period of 10 years in which active populations will increase in Europe (COM 2009) after which the onset of decline will exacerbate the problem. According to the EU the current economic recession threatens future growth and so does the effect of ageing. In any case clearly the pay as you go system is threatened as payments depend on current income to the system. Long term solutions relate to bringing workers back into the system or preventing them from leaving. The European economic Recovery Plan (EERP) aims to foster appropriate investment and skills development to maintain growth potential. Clearly training and management development become key variables in spite of the short term discouragement to invest in these.

Public spending would be increased by increasing average age by a projected figure approaching 5% by 2060 in EU: Spain is one of the countries affected. Action to tighten pension requirements can help marginally including relating benefits to work over a longer period of time. Central and Eastern European countries are increasingly using privately funded alternatives to public pensions while private occupational pension are being boosted in a number of northern European countries (COM, 2009).

Key policies identified by the Stockholm European Council (2001) were better conditions for families and demographic renewal; more jobs and longer working lives; tax and benefit

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reforms; raising employment rates of older workers and a healthier older population. A key variable is productivity which implies investment in education and training; (COM, 2009) but there is also a demand side encouragement to expand production of services and products for the older markets. EU organisms can support many initiatives Europe wide with specific encouragement at national level.

It is increasingly recognized that immigration is a vital contributor to economic growth with the average age lower, higher fertility, in general higher flexibility in work place attitudes and work and low costs of hiring. Costs are lower in comparison with maintaining or hiring older workers in terms of salaries, health and protection and related expenses. At the same time there may be negative productivity effect if long term skills are lost and replaced by temporary labour whether immigrant or not.

Whilst we have noted that the long term demographic issue may be seen as competing with short term preoccupations in times of recession in particular the difficulties faced by younger people trying to join the labour market, in recent EU documents recession and ageing population are seen as compounding the loss of potential economic output: “the EU faces the risk of a decrease in its potential growth, already put at risk by population ageing” (COM, 2009: P 6). In addition the financial burden for governments is compounded: “the crisis adds to the economic impact of demographic ageing on pension provision” (COM, 2009: P6). This paper takes the view that structural reform agenda to address demographic shift needs to be strengthened: raising employment rates substantially in particular encouraging baby-boomers to stay in the labour market and not waste their potential (COM, 2009). The five-fold goals stated in October 2006 included promoting employment, better quality working lives, increased productivity, integration of migrants and secure public sector financing (COM, 2006).

In 2007 65,4% of working age population in Europe were in employment, in contrast to the Lisbon strategy goal of 70% by 2010 (Frey, 2009) The OECD estimates only 39% of Europeans between the ages of 55 to 65 work (OECD, 2011) . If Frey's prediction for Europe's rising median age is correct, Europe's economic output could radically decrease over the next four decades.^[3] The recession, with young people unable to enter and older workers being obliged to leave the work force has slowed improvement in this area. Ironically, in recessionary conditions OW may seek to get back into the labour market even if this means sacrificing aspirations and skills levels by accepting lower category jobs (FT 09/05/09: “older workers rush back into job market”). This phenomenon depends on the extent of government support for unemployed or early retired workers, and the trend is to reduce such support to discourage workers leaving the market place given that a smaller working population supporting a greater dependent population is increasingly unviable (COM, 2009). Mechanisms to achieve these goals include reforming disability and early retirement schemes, increasing effective retirement ages, removal of employment obstacles, eliminating mandatory retirement age, introducing flexible retirement mechanisms, enabling earning additional pension entitlements and increasing part time work opportunities (COM, 2009).

Health is key and higher productivity and participation is conditional on healthy life expectancy. Even so there are costs in terms of health and social services and training measures (COM, 2009, P8).

Spanish situation and demographic background

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The participation rate of 55-64 age group in 2003 in Spain was 43,6%: 62,8% men and 25,5% women. This has been in decline as a result of government policy encouraging early retirement. According to Eugenio Recio (2007) the Spanish pension system means there is not a substantial loss in earnings for workers who retire early, that is, a high replacement income, unlike for example UK, where there are less attractive post retirement payments. Companies themselves make sure the early retirement option is attractive (Recio, 2007). Recio proposes turning to an extended group of workers up to the age of 71 to supply the needs of business in coming years. This involves persuading workers that their contribution is valuable – and not only the professional classes who in many cases are already keen to continue working; this will imply financial incentives to continuing working. However, none of this is likely to happen as long as youth unemployment is a priority.

Spain and Europe whether EU15 prior to or EU27 after 2007 project drops in the 0 to 15 age group of 18 or 19% to 2050 though the drop is 30% in the new member states that joined in 2004 but most spectacularly the over-65 segment in Spain will increase by 111% over the same period in contrast to the European average of 77%. The most spectacular increases of all in Europe and in Spain are in the 80 and over segment where increases approach 200%. In consequence the working age population will decline by 21% in Spain, 16% in EU 25 and 27% in the NMS.

Figure 2: Spanish population projections in %ages

	2005	2030	2050
0-14	14,6	11,9	11,6
15-64	68,6	63,8	53,4
Over 65	16,8	24,4	35,0
Of which, over 80	4,3	7,1	12,3
ODR (65+ / 15-64)	26,1	37,1	47,0

A dependency ration of 47% means almost 1 for 1 balance between those who are working and those who have retired. Increased participation rates are essential to improve this. During the same period the proportion of over 65s in the population will increase from under 20% to nearly 40%. The logic of drawing older people into participation is intuitively strong

Participation rates not surprisingly show considerable gender skew especially in the 55-64 age bracket. Spain had the lowest female participation rate in Europe in 2005 but the highest male rate; this imbalance suggests an area for seeking improvement in participation in the labour market in coming years by attracting more women.

Figure 3 Spanish participation rates, 2005

	2005	Male	Fem
15-24	44,7	49,8	39,3
25-54	79,6	92,5	66,5
55-64	43,6	62,8	25,6
15-64	67,5	79,9	55,1

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These numbers had changes somewhat by 2008 rising to 62% for 15 to 65 somewhat below the EU27 average of 66%. In the 50-65 group Spain stood at 53% whilst the EU27 was 57%.

Spanish employment is forecast to increase to nearly 71% by 2050 through increases in both female (38,86%) and older worker participation (53,9%). However, the female component is predicted to rise more rapidly than the take-up of older workers. It is further predicted that employment in the 65-71 age bracket will increase from 3,9% in 2003 to 12,5% by 2025, but that this figure will not then increase further till 2050. Major changes are predicted by 2025 with very limited change thereafter in all age groups and indeed the bulk of changes will have been realized by 2015 (Obeso, 2009)

Part 2: To what extent is this a cultural issue?

As we have seen, major shifts are occurring over time in demographic patterns which will require changed attitudes towards age and the older worker. These changes, however, will be affected by sets of social attitudes and values with major cultural content which are and will continue to cause resistance to change.

Age is a constant that all societies deal with, like birth and death, gender, parenting, social organization, relationship with nature and dealing with time and consequently become the subject of social constructed values and behavioural norms (Eriksen, 1995). Depending on the cultural context age may be highly valued for its experience and wisdom or dismissed as offering only obsolete knowledge and declining achievement.

One has only to consider Shakespeare's seven ages of man in "As you like it" for a graphic representation of ageing as a process of deterioration: "the lean and slipper'd pantaloone" declines finally to "second childishness and mere oblivion". Not much sign of reverence for age there. This might also suggest deeper uneasiness about old people continuing to play an active role in society as if they were younger. All societies see life in stages with rites of passages in changing from one stage to another (van Gennep, 1960). These mark liminal moments, when a person is neither what he or she was or will become. Such rites involve temporary isolation from the rest of society (Eriksen, 1995; Barley, 2000). Older people who continue working can be seen as stuck in this liminal stage and uncomfortably excluded from social acceptance by virtue of behaving as if they had not passed the luminal stage since they should no longer be performing "young people's work".

Etic value dimensions approach

From a work values point of view many studies have attempted to make culture level statements using etic dimension rankings which effectively are used as proxies for culture. These are then predicted to have behavioural implications in fields of interest to researchers, in this case the management of age. The dangers of this method are considerable since this kind of over-simplification eliminates layers of cultural influence at non-national levels and ignores other types of influences on situations and behaviour. Not only this, but the results are often based on samples which may not be the most appropriate for our purposes. These criticisms are summed up by McSweeney's well known criticism of Hofstede's dimension ranking approach. (McSweeney, 2002).

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The use of such models can be helpful but should be considered at least partly speculative and at best indicative rather than determinant. What we can legitimately do is reflect on the likely consequences of the values measured on dimensions without making linear predictions from national proxy profiles. At the same time to approach a multi-faceted picture of any culture it is essential to incorporate “emic” factors, that is, the specifics of the history, symbols, artefacts, rituals and heroes on the higher of the depths of culture and their meanings on a deeper level.

The most promising value dimension of culture as a cultural influence on attitude to age is attribution of status as a pattern variable (Parsons & Shils, 1951). Cultures vary in terms of how status is attributed: to what extent by social positioning in terms of family, contacts and networks (status by attribution) and at the other extreme of the continuum by personal achievement and merits (status by achievement). (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). This dimension may also reflect individualism, specificness and goal orientation, with status by achievement corresponding to higher values on each of these. Other things being equal, attitudes higher values should favour older members of society though such must be treated with some caution.

The best known value dimensions model is of course Hofstede’s, whose rankings assert that Spain is middle ranked on individualism (score 51), rather low on masculinity (42) higher on power distance (57) and very high on uncertainty avoidance (86). As noted, it is extremely dangerous to use these raw scores (or any other mono-dimensional score) on a national level to draw conclusions or make predictions: these rankings should not be used as a “single-number” proxy for culture.

Nonetheless, we might expect that a feminine culture will be more supportive of older workers as vulnerable individuals; high collectivism suggests an inclusive attitude towards older members of groups. On the other hand, collectivism can also be expected lead to self-sacrificing behaviour by older people to support the group. High uncertainty avoidance would lead us to expect people to think within accepted frameworks, which would suggest they behave according to pre-conceived ideas of what is appropriate for their age, that is retire at 65 or before if, as in the case of Spain, this is the normal pattern. High power distance, as associated with Spain for example, suggests that the choice of carrying on working depends on the status enjoyed by the person involved. Long term orientation would lead us to expect more positive attitudes in organizations toward younger workers at the expense of older members since the former affect longer term performance.

Analysis using the GLOBE model

We considered the GLOBE leadership study covering 62 countries and producing 9 dimensions based on responses from middle managers. The use of these rankings is subject to the same cautions as those of Hofstede though this painstaking and statistically rigorous study produced values and practices responses, that is the culture “as is”, intended to assess present realities and the “as should be” which reflects declared ideals. The latter can be considered a reflection of values and the relationship between the two an idealized expression of wishes or even a self-deprecating image of national deficiencies. The figures in the case of Spain are as follows; the band ratings show how items group from A (high) to C or D (low).

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Dimension	“as is”	Band	rank	“sh/be”	Band	Rank	Difference as is / should be
Performance Orient'n (PO)	4,01	B	37	5,80	C	41	1,79
Future Orientation (FO)	3,51	C	45	5.63	B	27	2,12
Assertiveness (AS)	4,42	A	17	4,00	B	18	-0,42
Inst'l Collectivism (IC)	3,85	C	51	5,20	A	12	1,35
Gender Egalitarianism (GE)	3,01	B	51	4,82	A	20	1,81
Humane Orientation (HO)	3,32	D	60	5,69	B	5	2,37
Power distance (PD)	5,52	A	14	2,26	D	59	-3,26
Family Collectivism (FC)	5,45	A	30	5.79	B	21	0,34
Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)	3,97	C	37	4,76	B	17	0,79

Let us summarize the likely impact of these dimensions

Where performance orientation is high we expect age discrimination and resistance to inclusive attitudes since status is gained by achievement rather than seniority (Parsons & Shils, 1951): since status tends to be accorded relatively more commonly by attribution in Spanish culture (Trompenaars, 1998) and PO is medium in Spain this would appear to be neutral with respect to older workers.

Where future orientation is high we would expect the young to be preferred as an investment rather than the old as a source of knowledge grounded in the past, though FO is not necessarily incompatible with respect for tradition, as in the Chinese view. We would expect this to favour the OW in the Spanish case since FO is very low.

High assertiveness is likely to favour the young at the expense of the old if we assume that this value declines with age. Reported as high in Spain, which would not favour OW in their life choices.

Institutional Collectivism: identifies collective organizational interests so might favour the older worker by favouring length of tenure but also could encourage the older worker to withdraw from the workforce if this appears to be in the interests of the organization. Since this is low in Spain this would appear to work against the OW.

Gender egalitarianism: High in the Spanish case, which favours male over female workers in making life choices. Since the figures for male and female retention in the work force strongly favour the former and there is a tendency to retire early this could be reinforced as male OW make their own choices supported by employers.

Humane orientation is recorded as exceptionally low in the Spanish figures. Since this variable favours inclusive attitudes supporting the older worker this would suggest little support from employers in choices of OW. This is reinforced by a negative attitude which often tries to solve down-sizing problems by getting rid of the OW in the organization aided

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by a voluntary tendency to encourage early retirement and generous replacement rates of income (see above). This finding is ambiguous and also counter-intuitive, appearing to run contra to Hofstede's finding that Spain is relatively feminine.

Power distance, high in Spain, might be thought to favour gerontocratic organizations but in fact depends on which are dominant sectors, which increasingly means younger generations with the ineluctable advance of digitalization. There is no reason to expect high PD to favour older workers of low status. Status by attribution which is fairly high in Spain as noted would favour OW but high PD means low valuation of low status OW.

Family Collectivism suggests that older members of a community are protected thus favouring older groups by offering a cushion when they are forced out or retire from the working community; they are more likely to be protected by family networks on leaving employment.

Uncertainty Avoidance suggests reluctance to change frames for understanding the world which implies resistance to change in the convention that older people should retire at a given age. It is the place of the young to enter and the old to leave the workforce. Since UA is fairly high in Spain (Hofstede claimed it was very high) this would appear to work against the OW.

These weak predictions from the GLOBE model give insights into cultural values and suggest culture change processes to bring about desired results. The older worker in Spain appears not to be heavily discriminated against but on the other hand not much inclined to struggle for the right to worker more years. As noted, national culture generalizations ignore other variables which might be significant including sector, status (domestic, foreign or multi-national), size of organization, ownership (private or public) and must be used with caution.

Etic models also overlook the emic specificities of cultures. In Spain one heritage of the vertical corporatist unions of the Franco period is strong support for workers including a generous pension system with high replacement rate of income (income from benefits / income when employed (Whiteford, 1995; Recio, 2007). This also means older workers are more expensive and harder to get rid of, encouraging early retirement deals.

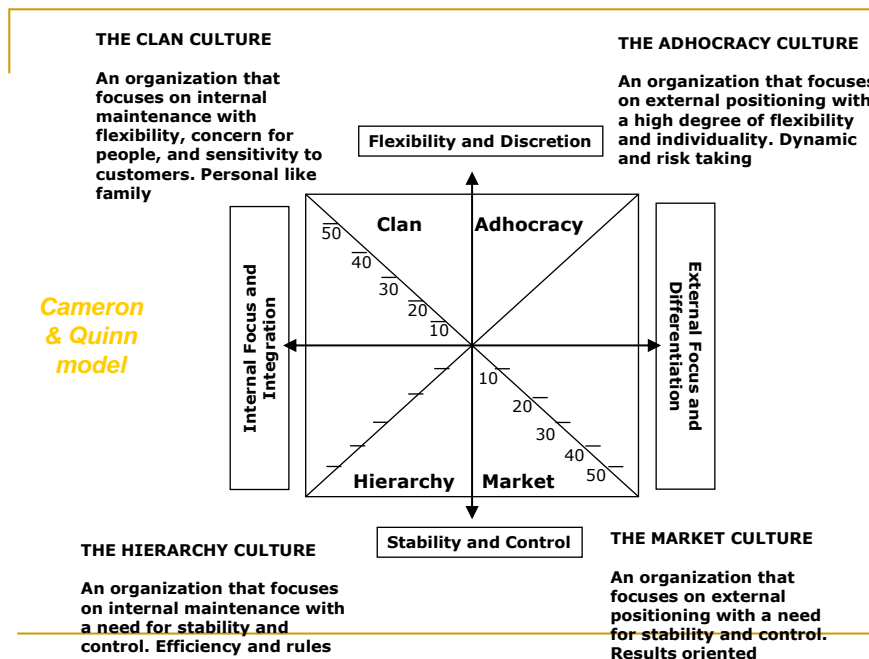
In comparative terms there is a clear pattern in Europe with Scandinavian and Germanic countries consistently showing higher participation rates than Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. This would probably be consistent with estimates in the GLOBE findings on a European level were a complete comparison to be made: this should be a step in future research.

Corporate culture focus

Corporate culture is a powerful influence at a sub-societal of analysis on attitudes to older people. The degree of aggressive competitiveness of a company for example will be reflected in less supportive attitudes to what is perceived as the declining power of the OW, in particular with respect to the so-called digital divide, which relegates them to obsolescence and assumed inability to learn. One well-known quadrant analysis is Cameron and Quinn's competing values framework based on axes of inward/outward orientation and flexibility/stability, producing a typology of corporate cultures as in Fig 4.

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Figure 4: Cameron & Quinn competing values framework



The four quadrants identified are the clan (human concern focus) bureaucracy (rules focus) market (results focus) and adhocracy (responsiveness to change focus). Any organization has all these competing values present but in varying ratios: the authors' methodology involves attributing 100 points across the four types in order to assess this balance between cultural types. In this model we predict the attitude to OW will vary depending on the weighting of the culture types.

Highest levels of understanding and support for OW can be expected in clan and adhocracy culture types than in bureaucratic or market types. They are located in the upper area of the space in the diagram, which tends to seek greater flexibility rather than stability. The greater the degree of internal focus (clan type, on the left of the diagram) we would expect a more supportive attitude for the OW as organizational member, and the greater the orientation to the external environment (adhocracy type on the right of the diagram) we would expect a greater degree of open-ness to using younger or older workers and finding a use for their skills and potential regardless of age. In contrast we would expect the bureaucracy quadrant to favour rule bound attitudes and thus inflexibility in dealing with people of retirement age and market culture types to be merciless in evaluating the attractiveness of OW in contributing to the bottom line.

This fit between corporate culture and attitude to OW is hypothesized but has not yet been tested empirically; a questionnaire for managers has been prepared for this purpose. Its use has been delayed given the high concern for youth unemployment, estimated at 45% in 2011 as noted above.

Diversity discourse approach

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Age diversity management is concerned with the dynamics of different age groups insofar as these groups are increasingly likely to be working together and integrated in organizations. This will increasingly be the case insofar as acceptance of the older worker increases over the years. Diversity management is concerned with managing diverse human resources (that is to say: people), the relationship between diverse groups and the integration of diverse collectives in the organization. According to the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) business risk caused by demographic change (ageing) was cited as the greatest diversity challenge by 48 percent of survey respondents, almost twice the figure for gender three times that for nationality (BCG, 2009).

Following Ely and Thomas (2001), we argue that diversity perspectives are classifiable into three types: integration and learning, access and legitimacy, and discrimination and fairness. The first of these, integration and learning, focuses on diversity as taking advantage of the rich potential of varied inputs and resources offered by diverse groups within organizations and links diversity to work processes as a means of learning and adaptive change. Thus the qualities of loyalty, patience, good customer relations are often adduced.

The second, access and legitimacy sees diversity in organizational work force as serving to fit stakeholder profiles principally the make-up of the market; the argument is that older people within the organization can respond better to the needs of older customers. The third, discrimination and fairness, is the argument for inclusion and support for diverse individuals as having equal rights to fair treatment and has increased in appeal over the last decade.

The diversity argument is influenced in organizations from the critical point of view of inter-group relations which argues that the social perception and value attributed to groups is a function of their power position in society (Alderfer, 1987). Thus as older groups increase in purchasing power and numbers attitudes can be expected to swing to a more age responsiveness.

Cultural changes processes.

If we argue that the role of OW in society, whether Spain or any other, is culturally marked then seeking to change attitudes requires a cultural change process. Cameron & Quinn, whose major book is called "Diagnosing and Changing Organizational cultures", argue for a process of assessing present and desired characteristics of culture using their Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument under six domains, all of which are revealing of attitudes towards groups of people, including OW: apart from the dominant features of each of the cultural types domains to assess are leadership, people management, "organizational glue", that is, the spirit that unites the organization (with strongest cultural associations perhaps), strategic focus and success criteria.

Depending on views of these criteria attitudes towards OW are more or less supportive or potentially discriminatory: for example if a success criterion is the degree of digitalization in the organization (likely to be associated with market type) clearly groups such as OW are at a disadvantage; if the focus is on human development they are more likely to be favoured (clan cultural type). The steps proposed to bring about change are reminiscent of Kotter's 8 change steps involving developing key people and urgency to develop vision

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and make it stick (Kotter, 1996): identify key individuals, use exhortatory stories, map out action steps, implement symbolic changes and create an implementation plan.

For the OW group this means mobilizing organizations to champion this group (such as TAEN in UK), publicize the positive achievements of older people – initiatives could come from HR departments – develop vision by articulating positive diversity approach as top management level, symbolic appointments could include older managers and implementation by maintaining an awareness for example using in-house publications, rewards, prizes and other recognition mechanisms. Deutschebank in Germany is a classic example of introducing this process in their organization successfully. <http://www.humanresourcesmagazine.com.au/articles/82/0c01fa82.asp>

Others companies who have an explicit policy towards age diversity management are l'Incontro an Italian social cooperative employing older maintenance workers as instructors, Fahrion Engineering in Germany who advertized for older engineers, Home Care in UK and T-interim in Belgium (EFILWC, 2006).

Culture tends to resist change for numerous reasons not least institutional inertia. Where labour relations are consensual such as in Germany worker interests are strongly represented and typically resist extending working life (Muller et al, 2010). The arrangements for financing early retirement may also be influential; in a freer labour market such as UK where retirement benefits are also lower the participation rate of OW is high for example: 56% compared with EU average 41% (European Commission, 2005). Disentangling cultural and institutional variables is complex but we can suppose that institutional arrangements tend to be the consequence rather than cause of cultural variation.

Conclusions

Given that there will be a need over coming years to extend working life and to increase the participation rate of workers in the older age groups, especially 55-64 years, organizations, legislators, employers, and associations concerned with the place of work and ageing as social issues can play a major role. The influence of culture in the take up is likely to be important and to clarify this, a study in which cultural influences in different locations are identified could be carried out..

Policies, practices, attitudes and investment in age diversity management in Spanish companies will need to reflect the changing demographic and more slowly cultural context. If it is the case that the average age of workers will increase over the next 20 (to 2030) to 40 years (to 2050) organizations will have to take this into account in expectations, organization and procedures. It is worth bearing in mind that poor or stressful working conditions can in themselves lead to premature ageing (CNCT 2009). This may imply job re-design to maintain older workers in the work force and look after their health at the same time. Physical effort, eye-sight, balance, circulation, breathing and mental processes such as reaction time may be affected (Texas DOI, 2005). This is essentially a human resource management question of matching posts and job demands to available people and offering suitable training where necessary. It also implies the management of tacit knowledge held in employees' heads as individuals, in teams and work functions (CNCT 2009).

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The phenomenon of ageing is a demographic shift of huge importance for the medium term future economically and socially. Governments are already facing major difficulties in financing pensions and health care burdens of the dependent older population. Changes in attitudes involving more socially useful involvement of older people are inevitable and reduction of the cultural resistance is a major area through which to address this issue. There is little doubt that the effort to address the need to increase the participation of older people in economic activity will become easier as the European economies emerge from the worst recession since the 1930s and the demographics become more urgent. As always the cultural aspects of change are likely to appear more slowly than the economic ones.

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