



Adapting International Human Resource Management Strategies for Success: A Comparative Study on Approaches for UK Companies Expanding into Japan

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Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the challenges associated with people management and International Human Resource Management (IHRM) for UK companies venturing into the Japanese market. The importance of recognizing cultural variances is emphasised, as demonstrated by the application of the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), Hofstede's framework (1990) and Lewis's model (2006), critically reflecting their impacts on people management practices to suit the cultural preferences of the Japanese context. Other elements for project team effectiveness such as team building, development phases, conflict resolution, diversity, inclusion and communication preferences are also critically explored. The recommended IHRM approach is customized to strike a balance between global integration and local adaptability, employing a combination of host-country nationals (HCNs) and parent-country nationals (PCNs). This approach enables UK firms to capitalize on the advantages of both groups, aligning with global strategies and values while satisfying Japan's distinct cultural, regulatory and institutional landscape. The combination of transformational leadership styles to cater to local cultural and communication preferences, promoting of diversity and inclusion in project teams, the implementation of effective communication and conflict resolution strategies that acknowledge cultural distinctions are proposed.

Keywords: international human resource management; cross-cultural management; UK–Japan business; leadership styles; diversity and inclusion; communication strategies

Introduction

People management is widely accepted as the processes and practices involved in managing and developing employees within an organization, encompassing a range of activities across recruitment, selection, training, development, performance management and employee relations (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). In the context of international human resource management (IHRM), these practices are extended across national borders, addressing the complexities and challenges faced by multinational corporations (MNCs) in managing human

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resources across different countries and cultures (Stahl et al, 2012). The growing importance of people management and IHRM in global organizations lies in their ability to enhance employee performance, satisfaction and commitment, ultimately leading to higher organizational performance (Brewster et al, 2016).

According to Fan et al (2021), effective people management and IHRM practices enable organizations to leverage the diverse knowledge, skills and perspectives of the workforce to drive innovation, adapt to change and navigate the complexities of the global business environment. Nonetheless, the main challenges and opportunities for organizations in managing people across different countries and cultures include understanding cultural differences, adapting HR practices to local contexts, ensuring compliance with local labour laws, regulations and managing the complexities of cross-cultural communication and collaboration.

This paper aims to explore the differences in people management strategies between the two countries of UK and Japan, emphasising on potential challenges in people management, teamwork, team dynamics, trust and team performances for UK companies to enter Japan. The first section critically reviews key theories, models and tools associated with individuals, groups, teams and management in international project contexts. The second section critically discusses how self-awareness and sensitivity to psychological, social and cultural factors may influence the behaviour of self and others in interactional projects. Based on the performed critical review and analysis, the third section critically evaluates a range of options available to improve team work and provides recommendations to improve team dynamics, trust and achieve project success.

Comparison of people management practices between UK and Japan via culture related models

Recognizing cultural differences is vital for successful people management and IHRM practices. To demonstrate the influence of culture on people management practices in the UK and Japan, prominent cultural models and frameworks developed by Hofstede (1980), Lewis (2006) and GLOBE (House et al, 2004) will be employed in the following analysis. Hofstede's cultural dimension is applied on the UK and Japan as shown in figure 1 below (Hofstede Insights, 2023), illustrating substantial cultural differences that would impact people management practices. For example, the UK's low power distance (36) signifies a preference for decentralized decision-making, flat organizational structures and open communication between different levels of hierarchy. In contrast, Japan's higher power distance (54) suggests a more hierarchical approach, with greater respect for authority and a clearer separation between management and employees. This difference affects leadership styles, with UK managers tending to be more collaborative and participative, while Japanese managers may adopt a more directive approach (Nawaz et al, 2020).

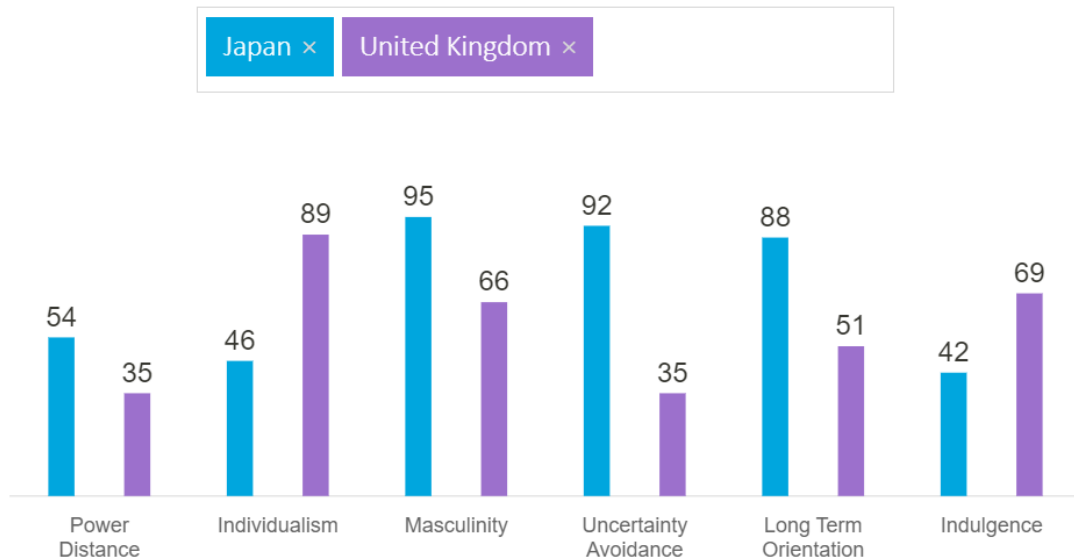


Figure 1: Hofstede's cultural dimensions: UK vs Japan (Hofstede Insights, 2023)

Additionally, the UK's high individualism score (89) highlights the importance of individual autonomy, personal achievements and self-expression. In contrast, Japan's lower score (46) indicates a more collectivist culture, characterized by group harmony, loyalty and consensus decision-making, as these cultural variations impact recruitment, motivation and performance appraisal. UK organizations would focus more on individual merit and achievements, while Japanese organizations might prioritize group cohesion and harmony (Earley, 1993). The UK's moderately high masculinity score (66) implies a culture that values assertiveness, competitiveness and material success. Japan scores even higher (95), reflecting a strong emphasis on achievement, ambition and societal expectations for success, influencing work-life balance, gender roles and career development.

Subsequently, UK organizations potentially offer more flexibility and support for work-life balance, while Japanese organizations might encourage long working hours and more rigid gender roles (Taras et al, 2010). Moreover, UK's low uncertainty avoidance score (35) suggests a greater tolerance for ambiguity, risk-taking and a flexible approach to problem-solving and decision-making. In comparison, Japan's higher score (92) indicates a preference for stability, structure and detailed planning. Subsequently, these differences impact change management, innovation and organizational learning, with UK organizations potentially being more open to new ideas and experimentation, while Japanese organizations might prefer a more cautious and incremental approach (Kirsch et al, 2012).

The Lewis model of cultural types shown in figure 2 offers valuable insights into the communication styles and preferences in the UK and Japan, which significantly impact people management practices (Lewis, 2006). The UK is characterized by a linear-active culture that emphasizes task orientation, factual communication and direct feedback, while Japan is characterised as a reactive culture that focuses on listening, harmony and indirect communication (Lewis, 2019). In team collaboration, the UK's linear-active communication style promotes open discussions, clear expectations and efficient decision-making, but might neglect relationship-building and emotional aspects. Conversely, Japan's reactive communication style fosters strong team cohesion and a supportive atmosphere, but might slow down decision-making and reduce transparency (Califano & Spinks, 2021).

Cultural Types: The Lewis Model

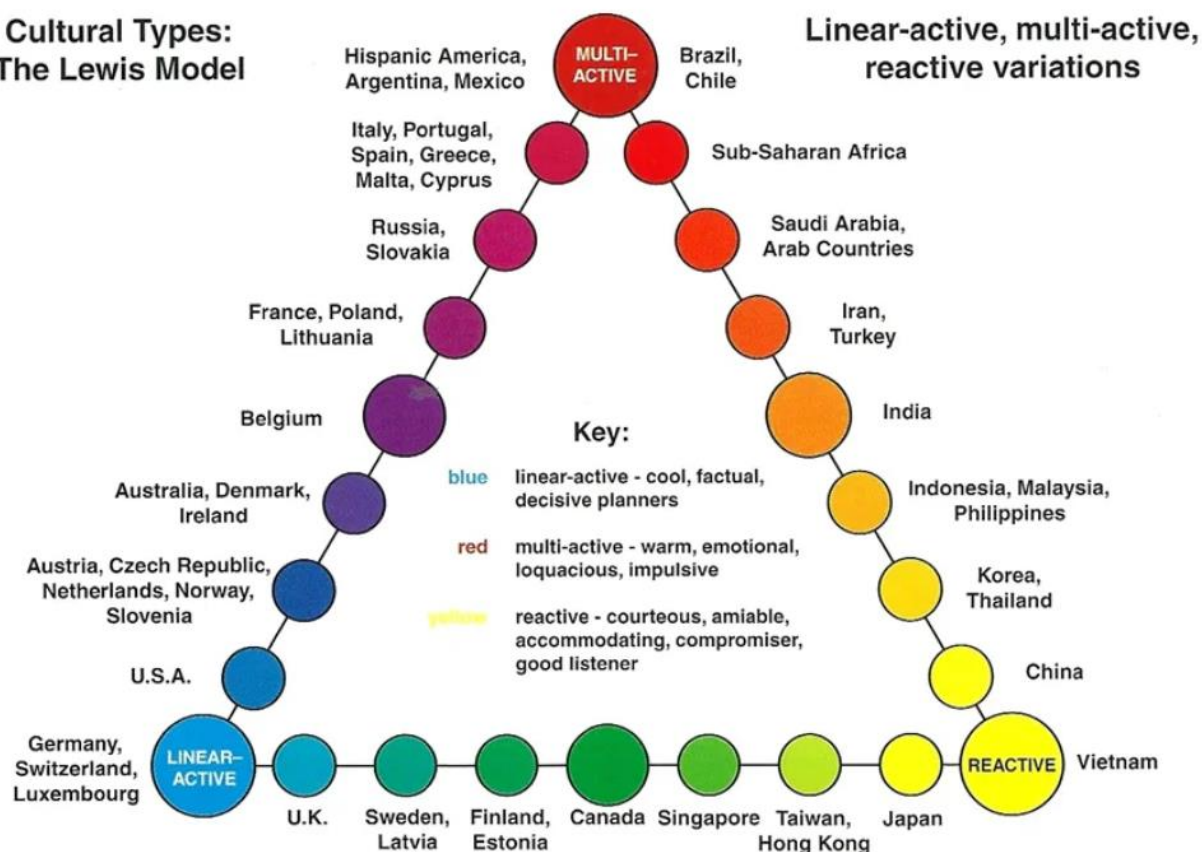


Figure 2: The Lewis Model (Lewis, 2006)

In relation to feedback and performance appraisal, the UK's direct feedback approach leads to clear expectations and objective evaluations, but may cause misunderstandings or hurt feelings if not delivered sensitively (Oulton, 2018). Japan's indirect feedback style preserves relationships and face-saving, but can result in ambiguous messages and unclear performance expectations, hence adapting feedback strategies to local communication styles enhances employee understanding and motivation (Wang & Piesse, 2009). In terms of conflict resolution, the UK's linear-active communication style encourages open discussions and confrontation, leading to quicker resolutions but potentially exacerbating conflicts if not managed carefully (Lewis, 2019). Japan's reactive communication style prioritizes harmony and avoids confrontation, which might result in unresolved issues being overlooked. Thus, developing conflict resolution strategies that respect local communication preferences can improve team dynamics and overall people management effectiveness (Lewis, 2019).

Alternatively, the GLOBE study offers valuable insights into the societal cultural practices and values that influence leadership styles in the UK and Japan (House et al., 2004). According to House et al's (2004) GLOBE country clusters as shown in figure 3, the UK is part of the Anglo cluster, while Japan belongs to the Confucian Asia cluster. These clusters have unique characteristics that shape the leadership styles in their respective countries. For example, the leadership styles of the Anglo cluster are generally characterized by a participative approach, low power distance and focus on performance orientation. In the GLOBE study, the UK scores high in performance orientation (4.74), indicating a strong emphasis on achievement and

results, as UK leaders tend to be goal-oriented and encourage individual accountability. Moreover, UK leaders are also inclined to involve team members in decision-making processes, fostering open communication and collaboration that promotes more efficient decision making and high degree of employee empowerment (Waldman et al, 2006).

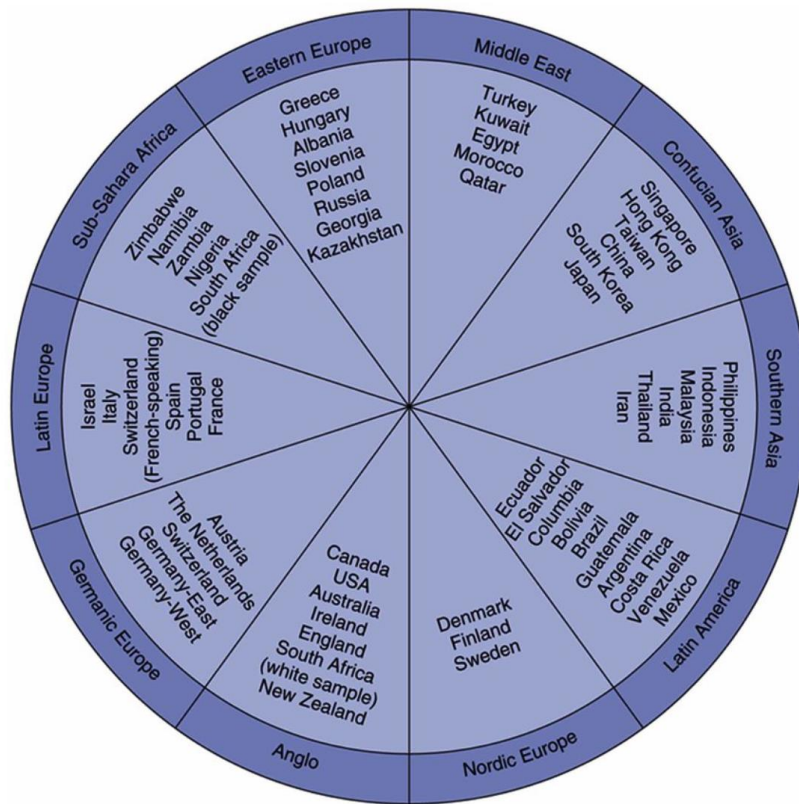


Figure 3: GLOBE country clusters (House et al, 2004)

In comparison, the Confucianism Asia cluster is characterized by high power distance, collectivism and long-term orientation. Japan scores lower in performance orientation (4.17) compared to the UK, suggesting a different approach to achieving results as Japanese leaders typically prioritize group harmony, loyalty and consensus decision-making, adopting a more paternalistic leadership style, guiding and mentoring their subordinates while maintaining a certain level of hierarchy (House et al, 2013). This difference in leadership styles between the UK and Japan can have various implications for people management practices as summarised in figure 4 below (Hoppe, 2007). In the UK, the participative leadership style may lead to more autonomous and empowered employees, who are encouraged to take initiative and contribute to decision-making (House et al, 2013). On the other hand, in Japan, the more paternalistic leadership style may promote strong team cohesion and a supportive atmosphere, but may also result in less autonomy for individual employees and slower decision-making processes due to the emphasis on consensus (Cheong et al, 2014).

Performance Oriented <i>Higher</i>	Team Oriented <i>Higher</i>	Participative <i>Higher</i>	Humane <i>Higher</i>	Autonomous <i>Higher</i>	Self or Group-Protective <i>Higher</i>
Anglo Germanic Nordic SE Asian L. European L. American	SE Asian Confucian L. American E. European African L. European Nordic Anglo Middle Eastern Germanic	Germanic Anglo Nordic	SE Asian Anglo African Confucian	Germanic E. European Confucian Nordic SE Asian Anglo African Middle Eastern L. European L. American	Middle Eastern Confucian SE Asian L. American E. European
Confucian African E. European		L. European L. American African	Germanic Middle Eastern L. American E. European		African L. European
Middle Eastern		E. European SE Asian Confucian Middle Eastern	L. European Nordic		Anglo Germanic Nordic
<i>Lower</i> Performance Oriented	<i>Lower</i> Team Oriented	<i>Lower</i> Participative	<i>Lower</i> Humane	<i>Lower</i> Autonomous	<i>Lower</i> Self or Group-Protective

Figure 4: Culture and leader effectiveness (Hoppe, 2007)

IHRM model options

According to Dorrenbacher et al (2013), three common IHRM options for global organisations include parent company national (PCN), host country national (HCN) and third country national (TCN) choices. For PCNs, employees from the home country of the organisation, while HCNs employ local employees in the host country and TCNs use employees from neither the home nor host countries as illustrated in figure 5 (Dorrenbacher et al, 2013). Subsequently, for a UK company looking to expand into Japan, PCNs may have an advantage in terms of understanding the parent company's culture and strategies, which can facilitate knowledge transfer and global integration. However, the UK and Japan have significant cultural differences, such as individualism versus collectivism and low versus high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede Insights, 2023). Therefore, PCNs may face challenges in adapting to the Japanese cultural context, potentially affecting their ability to manage local employees effectively.

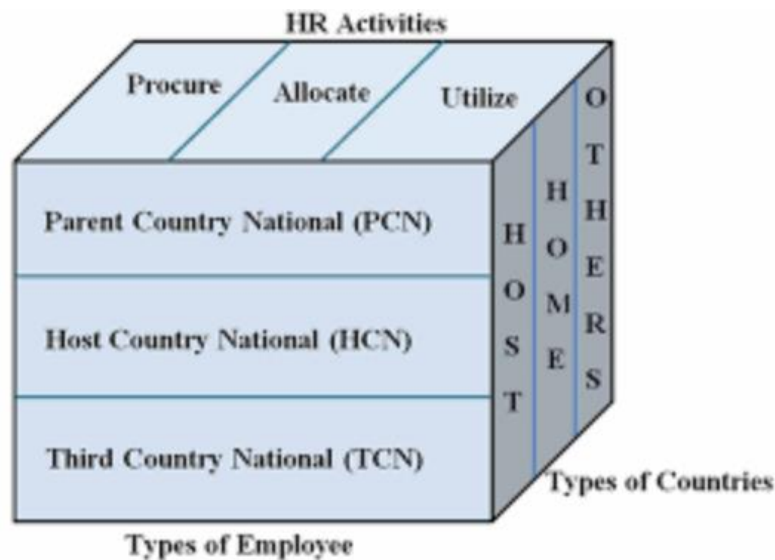


Figure 5: IHRM options for global organisations (Dorrenbacher et al, 2013)

On the other hand, HCNs possess local knowledge and expertise, which can be valuable in navigating the Japanese market and regulatory landscape. HCNs may also be better suited to manage Japanese employees, given their familiarity with local communication styles and cultural norms (Lewis, 2006). Nonetheless, HCNs may have difficulties aligning with the UK parent company's global strategies and culture, potentially leading to a lack of integration and coordination between the headquarters and the subsidiary as seen in the failed international expansion of UK food retailer Tesco in Japan (Son et al, 2018). Alternatively, TCNs offer a balance between global and local perspectives, which can contribute to effective people management in the Japanese context. However, TCNs may require additional training and development to align with both the UK parent company's culture and values and the Japanese subsidiary's local environment.

Brewster's (1995) European model highlights the significance of external factors, such as socio-economic and legal environments in shaping IHRM practices as shown in figure 6. According to this model, UK companies operating in Japan must adapt their people management practices to accommodate the local cultural, regulatory and institutional settings to ensure their effectiveness. For example, UK firms need to consider Japan's strong emphasis on group harmony, seniority-based promotions and long-term employment relationships in their people management strategies (Brewster, 1995). This model helps organizations recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach to people management might not be effective, but instead, understanding and adapting to Japan's unique local context is crucial for success.

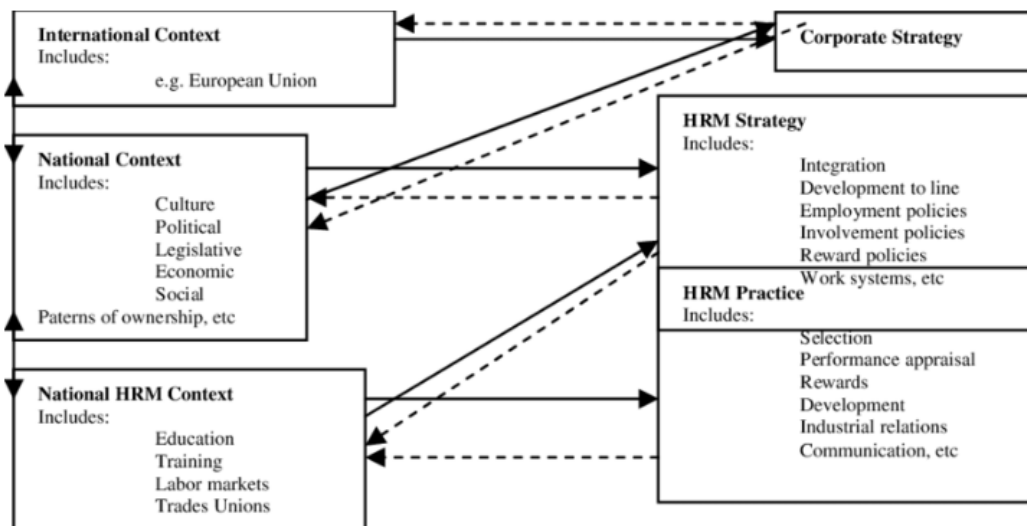


Figure 6: Brewster's (1995) European model on people management

Alternatively, Shen's (2005) Integrative IHRM framework combines strategic and institutional perspectives, acknowledging the interplay between global integration and local responsiveness. According to this framework, UK companies operating in Japan should develop a tailored IHRM strategy that strikes a balance between aligning with global strategies and values and adapting to the Japanese cultural and institutional context (Shen, 2005). This approach encourages organizations to develop a more nuanced understanding of their overseas operations, considering both the need for consistency across global operations and the local adaptations required to optimize performance. For instance, a UK company operating in Japan might adopt a hybrid approach to performance management, combining individual performance metrics with a focus on team collaboration and harmony, reflecting both global corporate values and local cultural preferences.

Furthermore, globalization, integration and dominance approach theories also offer additional insights into the choice of delivery models and tools for people management in UK companies operating in Japan. The globalization approach emphasizes the importance of developing standardized practices and policies across subsidiaries, establishing a unified set of human resource management (HRM) practices across all international subsidiaries to ensure consistency and efficiency, supporting the development of a strong corporate culture, efficient knowledge transfer and economies of scale (Edwards & Rees, 2006). The integration approach suggests the need to balance between global standardization and local adaptation, highlighting the importance to maintain global HRM policies whilst being locally responsive through adopting flexible and context-sensitive IHRM strategies (De Cieri et al, 2007). The dominance approach posits that the parent company's culture and practices should be imposed on the subsidiary, emphasising on the need to establish a strong corporate culture and clear lines of control (Ji & Ji, 2013). Given the significant cultural differences between the UK and Japan, a combination of integration and localization approaches may be most effective in addressing the unique people management challenges in the Japanese context according to Schulenze et al (2011).

Self-awareness and sensitivity influence on the behaviours of self and project teams

Self-awareness and sensitivity to psychological, social and cultural factors play a crucial role in the success of international project teams. Rumsfeld's concept of the known knowns can help teams identify and manage risks associated with cultural differences and unfamiliar business practices in Japan (Logan, 2009). Moreover, adapting to Honey & Mumford's (1986) learning styles enables better collaboration among diverse team members, as UK and Japanese employees may have different preferences in acquiring and sharing knowledge. Moon's (2001) map of learning facilitate effective problem-solving and decision-making in multicultural settings, as the team needs to navigate the complexities of Japanese business culture while aligning with the company's global strategy.

Additionally, utilizing Johari's window can assist in fostering open communication and trust within the team (Luft & Ingham, 1955), crucial in bridging the gap between linear-active communication styles prevalent in the UK and the more reactive styles in Japan. Goleman's (1995) five domains of emotional intelligence supports empathy and adaptability in a culturally diverse environment, enabling UK managers to better understand and respond to the needs and expectations of their Japanese counterparts and subordinates. Similarly, Berne's (1966) transactional analysis helps in managing interpersonal dynamics and resolving conflicts, which may arise due to different management styles or communication preferences between UK and Japanese team members. In consideration of the importance of self-awareness and sensitivity to the behaviours of self and project teams, the following sections will critically discuss the relevant people management problems in project team development for UK companies entering Japan.

Factors affecting project team development

The importance of project team development is widely regarded as a vital element of people management for global organisations, especially due to the diverse background of personnel in teams influenced by distinctive cultural preferences and the need for established trust to optimise team productivity (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005). Moreover, effective project team building is influenced by a variety of factors that can significantly impact team performance and success including clarity of goals to ensure that team members understand their objectives and priorities (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993), well-defined roles help members contribute their unique skills and expertise (Higgs et al, 2005), open communication to foster trust and collaboration (Lencioni, 2005). Furthermore, it is found shown that diverse teams tend to be more creative and innovative, as they bring different perspectives and experiences to problem-solving (Homan et al, 2007). Additionally, establishing trust within the team is essential for promoting collaboration, information sharing and risk-taking (Cohen & Bailey, 1997).

Belbin team roles

The Belbin team roles framework is developed by Dr. Meredith Belbin in 1981 with the identification of nine team roles that contribute to a balanced and high performing team as shown in figure 7 (Belbin, 2004). In the context of a UK company entering the Japanese market, understanding and applying the Belbin team roles framework can be crucial for creating a well-balanced, high-performing team capable of navigating cultural differences, ensuring that the team comprises a mix of coordinators, shapers, plants, monitor-evaluators, implementers,

resource investigators, completer-finishers, team workers and specialists can improve cross-cultural collaboration and communication, as members can leverage their unique skills and expertise (Tsunoda et al, 2010). For example, resource investigators can be invaluable in understanding the Japanese market, while team workers can facilitate harmony and cohesion among team members which is essential in the Japanese context (Gunji, 2022).










			Team Role Contribution	Allowable Weakness
Thinking	Plant	PL 	<i>Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas & solves hard problems.</i>	<i>Ignores incidentals. Too pre-occupied to fully communicate.</i>
	Monitor Evaluator	ME 	<i>Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.</i>	<i>Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Can be overly critical.</i>
	Specialist	SP 	<i>Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides rare knowledge and skills.</i>	<i>Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.</i>
Action	Shaper	SH 	<i>Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has drive to overcome obstacles.</i>	<i>Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.</i>
	Implementer	IMP 	<i>Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organizes tasks.</i>	<i>Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.</i>
	Completer Finisher	CF 	<i>Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Finds errors. Polishes and perfects.</i>	<i>Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.</i>
People	Coordinator	CO 	<i>Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.</i>	<i>Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads own share of the work.</i>
	Team Worker	TW 	<i>Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.</i>	<i>Indecisive in crunch situations. Avoids confrontation.</i>
	Resource Investigator	RI 	<i>Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities, develops contacts.</i>	<i>Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm expires.</i>

Figure 7: 9 Belbin (2004) team roles

Tuckman's (1965) team development stages

When a UK company enters the Japanese market, navigating the stages of team development as proposed by Tuckman (1965) can be particularly challenging due to cultural differences. During the initial forming stage (figure 8), establishing trust and rapport may take longer in Japan, as building relationships often involves understanding and respecting cultural nuances (Gunji, 2022). Moreover, the storming stage might require careful management of conflicts, as Japanese team members may be more inclined to avoid confrontation and prioritize harmony (Hofstede Insights, 2023). Managers need to be aware of these differences when guiding the team through the norming and performing stages, ensuring that cultural considerations are incorporated into shared norms and standards, ultimately leading to a successful adjourning stage.

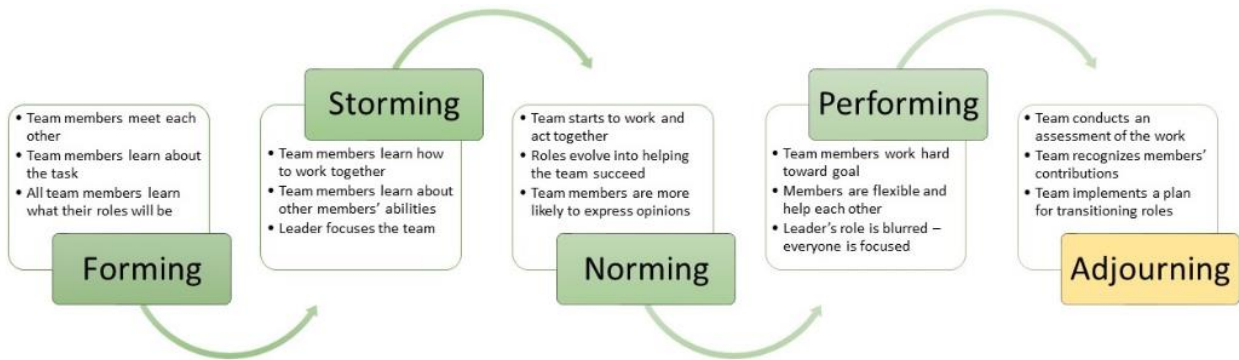


Figure 8: Tuckman's (1965) team development stages

Conflict resolution in teams

Understanding conflict resolution strategies in the context of cultural differences and communication styles is vital for a UK company entering Japan. For example, the Lewis (2006) model suggests that UK's linear-active communication style encourages open discussions and confrontation of issues, while Japan's reactive style emphasizes harmony and conflict avoidance, highlighting contrasting preferences in addressing conflicts and issues. Additionally, Hall's (1990) high vs low cultural context framework positions the UK as a low-context culture in contrast to Japan's high-context culture as illustrated in figure 9 (Segers, 2013), representing different communication preferences that would affect the effectiveness of different conflict resolution approaches. A UK company in Japan should adapt its conflict resolution strategies to respect local communication preferences, such as employing a more indirect approach and focusing on preserving relationships, while still addressing the underlying issues to avoid long-term negative impacts on team performance and project success that are prioritised by high context cultures (Ma, 2007).

	Low-Context	High-Context
Example Countries	US, UK, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Norway	Japan, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France, Italy, Spain
Business Outlook	Competitive	Cooperative
Work Ethic	Task-oriented	Relationship-oriented
Work Style	Individualistic	Team-oriented
Employee Desires	Individual achievement	Team achievement
Relationships	Many, looser, short-term	Fewer, tighter, long-term
Decision Process	Logical, linear, rule-oriented	Intuitive, relational
Communication	Verbal over Non-verbal	Non-verbal over Verbal
Planning Horizons	More explicit, written, formal	More implicit, oral, informal
Sense of Time	Present/Future-oriented	Deep respect for the past
View of Change	Change over tradition	Tradition over change
Knowledge	Explicit, conscious	Implicit, not fully conscious
Learning	Knowledge is transferable (above the waterline)	Knowledge is situational (below the waterline)

Figure 9: Low vs high cultural context preferences (Segers, 2013)

Recommendation of IHRM approaches

In consideration of the conducted critical review of key people management theories, models and tools associated with individuals, groups, teams and management for a UK company to enter Japan, the following sections provide recommendations for selecting the most effective approach to IHRM and improving various aspects of international project management.

Transformational leadership

To address the apparent cultural differences between the UK and Japan, adopting a flexible and situational leadership style such as transformational leadership is beneficial for UK companies entering the Japanese market. According to Bass & Avolio (1993), there are four elements of transformational leadership including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration as shown in figure 10. Similarly, given Japan's higher scores in in-group collectivism and humane orientation (Hofstede Insights, 2023), the emphasis on loyalty, cohesiveness, strong interpersonal relationships, altruism, fairness and caring in Japanese organizations can be addressed through the individualised consideration component of transformational leadership.

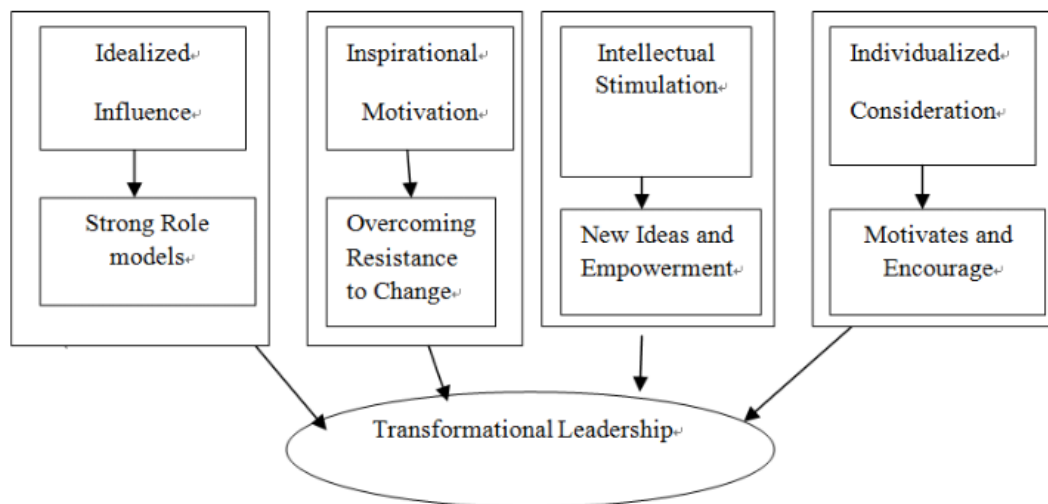


Figure 10: 4Is of transformational leadership (Bass & Avoilio, 1993)

Through exercising idealized influence, UK managers can serve as role models, fostering trust and commitment among Japanese team members. Inspirational motivation can help create a shared vision that resonates with Japanese team members' cultural expectations, whereby intellectual stimulation encourages creative problem-solving, aligning with Japan's focus on continuous improvement and long-term development (Ishikawa, 2012). A transformational leadership style would enable UK managers to adapt their communication style to effectively engage with Japanese team members, further reinforcing Lewis's (2006) reactive communication style of Japan. The emphasis on harmony, indirect communication and consensus-building combined with the recommended transformational leadership approach, better collaboration, decision-making and project success can be facilitated when entering Japan.

Diversity and inclusion in project teams

In order to enhance teamwork, team dynamics, trust and overall success of international project teams, the emphasis on promoting diversity and inclusion are crucial especially when entering Japan where a collectivism culture and high context communication styles are preferred (Hofstede Insights, 2023; Hall, 1990). Emphasizing diversity and inclusion can help overcome potentially challenges in integrating diverse team members effectively, as it would enable the fostering of a culture that promotes openness, respect and collaboration, encouraging all team members to share their perspectives and contribute to decision-making (Hosoda, 2021). The importance of diversity and inclusion when entering Japan is further illustrated in Hirata & Warschauer's (2014) proposed paradox of harmony in Japan, arguing that strong focus on loyalty, cohesion and harmony in Japan might inadvertently discourage diverse opinions or innovative ideas.

Therefore, through promoting diversity and inclusion, UK companies can ensure that diverse viewpoints are valued and encouraged, leading to increased creativity, problem-solving capabilities and adaptability, ultimately improving team dynamics and trust, as team members feel heard, respected and valued (Otake, 2022). Moreover, incorporating diversity and inclusion practices can help address potential biases and stereotypes that may arise due to cultural differences between UK and Japanese team members. To effectively facilitate open communication, cultural sensitivity training and team-building activities are recommended to celebrate diverse backgrounds and experiences (Visser et al, 2002), allowing UK companies to

build strong and inclusive teams that can effectively navigate the cultural complexities of the Japanese market.

Recommended IHRM approach in people management

In order to adequately address the apparent cultural, institutional and regulatory challenges for firms entering Japan, a tailored IHRM strategy that balances global integration and local responsiveness can help UK companies navigate the complexities of the Japanese business environment while aligning with their global strategies and values. It is recommended that a hybrid approach combining the use of host-country nationals (HCNs) and parent-country nationals (PCNs) could be the most effective IHRM strategy. Through employing HCNs, companies can gain valuable local knowledge, cultural understanding and connections that facilitate adaptation to the Japanese market. Furthermore, retaining PCNs in key management positions can ensure alignment with global strategies, values and practices.

To effectively achieve people management from the proposed hybrid IHRM approach, the incorporation of conflict resolution strategies that consider cultural differences and communication styles is also essential. UK managers should adapt their conflict resolution approach to the indirect communication style prevalent in Japan (Hall, 1990), adopting techniques such as mediation, negotiation and active listening can help facilitate harmonious and productive working relationships as suggested in Ohbuchi & Suzuki's (2003) study. Moreover, it is recommended that the provision of support and guidance as the team progresses through the forming, storming, norming and performing stages can better assist the management of team dynamics (Tuckman, 1965), as the utilisation of Belbin's (2004) team roles to optimize individual strengths and enhance team cohesion, ensuring all team roles exists with the prioritised emphasis on resource investigator and team workers that can facilitate harmony and cohesion, which is vital in the Japanese context (Gunji, 2022).

It is also recommended that there is establishment of clear communication protocols and expectations, particularly in virtual teams where technologies are leveraged to bridge communication gaps and facilitate collaboration. It is also encouraged to use of various communication channels (e.g., video calls, instant messaging, email) to accommodate different communication preferences and ensure timely information sharing (Hunsaker & Hunsaker, 2008). Moreover, an effective IHRM approach should address ethical, employment and regulatory considerations to ensure the smooth functioning of project teams (Shen, 2011). Therefore, compliance with local labour laws, adherence to organizational policies and industry standards are also crucial for maintaining a positive team environment and avoiding potential issues.

Conclusion

This essay critically examined the people management and IHRM issues faced by UK companies entering the Japanese market, highlighting the importance of understanding cultural differences such as those identified in the GLOBE study (House et al, 2004), by Hofstede (1990) and Lewis (2006), advocating for the need to adapt people management practices to the unique Japanese cultural context. Key factors for project team success, including team building, development stages, conflict resolution, diversity, inclusion and communication preferences, were explored in relation to the UK-Japan cultural context. The recommended IHRM options

emphasize the need for a tailored approach that balances global integration and local responsiveness, utilizing a mix of host-country nationals (HCNs) and parent-country nationals (PCNs).

This approach allows UK companies to leverage the strengths of both groups, ensuring alignment with global strategies and values while navigating the Japanese cultural, regulatory and institutional environment. Furthermore, the adoption of a transformative leadership style is recommended to address distinctive cultural and communication preferences in Japan, overcoming identified people management and project team challenges with the provision of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. The promoting of diversity and inclusion in project teams, implementation of effective communication and conflict resolution strategies that consider cultural differences are also recommended. Ethical, employment and regulatory considerations were also addressed as essential components of a successful IHRM approach. Through adopting the proposed tailored IHRM approach that considers unique cultural contexts, UK companies can enhance their chances of success, effectively manage project teams and navigate the complexities of the Japanese business environment.

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