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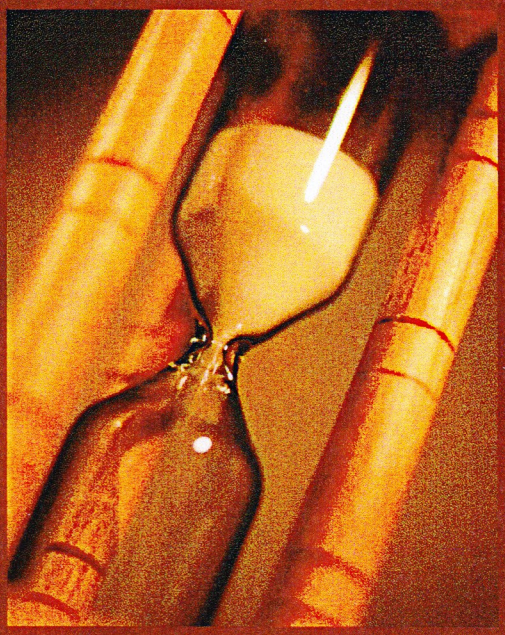

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John F. Kennedy University, San Jose, California, USA

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EDUCATING TRI-CULTURAL MANAGERS IN LUXEMBOURG

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the Luxembourgish trilingual education system prepares for tricultural managers or not. A total of 46 interviews were conducted among 1) Luxembourgers with Luxembourgish Nationality (Lux.Nat.), 2) foreigners who reside in Luxembourg (Lux.Frgn.), 3) people who come to work to Luxembourg every day from Germany, France, and Belgium (cross-borderers), and 4) the rest of the world (World). Hofstede's cross-cultural research (Hofstede et al., 2010) and Schein's research on organizational culture (Schein, 2010) serve as basis for this research. The author finds that respondents from the category Lux.Nat. defend tri-lingualism in education and the ideal of educating tri-cultural managers, contrary to the other three categories who mainly are more critical in regards to the outcome of the trilingual education system. However, there are contradicting results as of the opinion about transmission of culture via the transmission of languages even among Lux.Nats. Conclusion, discussion, implication, future research and references follow.

Keywords: Cross-cultural management, international business, Hofstede, Schein, language and management, trilingual education system, Luxembourg

1. INTRODUCTION

The research question of this paper is: Does the Luxembourgish trilingual education system prepare for tricultural managers? Despite the complexity of the situation and the need for reforms to the Luxembourg educational system, Lux.Nats. stick to their system and defend it energetically. However, are the needs in qualification and competencies for the job market met? Is it 'Uncertainty Avoidance' or 'fear of change' that make them so reluctant to change? Does the system educate the managers the country really needs? Cultural research and managerial research meet in this study, following Geert Hofstede and Edgar Schein. 46 interviews were performed in 4 categories, research by the Chamber of Commerce of October 2014 was included, and a detailed literature review was made. The author comes up with 3 propositions, followed by discussion and implications. Luxembourg being a country with historically little research, further work is needed to fill this gap in knowledge.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Context

The demographical context of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is unique in the European Union and in the World. On 1st of January 2014, Luxembourg counted 549.680 inhabitants of whom 248.914 (45.3%) were of foreign nationality (Chambre de Commerce, 2014). The Portuguese population is the strongest with 16% of the total population. 60.2% of the school children do not speak Luxembourgish as first language at home, 24.1% speak Portuguese as first language at home and 21.6% any other language (Chambre de Commerce, 2014). Yet, the current school system is still based on the law of 10 May 1968, when the population was more homogeneous, with 84.1% of the school children holding the Luxembourgish nationality. However, the final objective of the education system should not be forgotten: integration of the pupils into the professional and social life of the country. Especially social inequalities among the pupils are larger today than in 1968 (Chambre de Commerce, 2014). Particular attention should be paid to the big challenges of the social, cultural and linguistic specificities of today's Luxembourgish society, where the population has grown strongly over the last decade with an accelerating speed, and given the dynamic labor market with attractive working conditions, high salaries and fringe benefits, a central location in the heart of Europe, with beautiful nature and excellent infrastructure. However, this stability is at the same time origin of the latent inertia of change, especially in the education system. Given the high immigration rate, the percentage of foreign pupils is on the rise, and with them the social, intellectual and linguistic diversity. Challenges for the teachers in particular are on the rise. In fact, the lack of teachers is one of the

biggest issues to overcome. Teachers in Luxembourg have to be able to teach in the three official languages of the country and at the same time hold the competences of the subject such as mathematics, science, geography, technology, etc. Pupils repeat classes or fail completely more often than in other countries. They therefore arrive later on the job market. The results by the PISA tests were catastrophic. A reform of the education system is currently under discussion, including the present division into "Classical (or more academic)" and "Technical (or more vocational)" education and the language situation. To solve these issues, the Chamber of Commerce (2014) has made the following suggestions: 1) adapt the language teaching to the reality in Luxembourg; 2) increase the contact between pupils/and their teachers and companies (through internships, team-teaching, conferences, work experience).; 3) reform the education of teachers – and allow foreign teachers to teach in Luxembourg, and 5) reduce the costs in general of the education system.

2.2. Language Education

The linguistic situation in Luxembourg is unique in the world: there are three official languages: Luxembourgish, German and French (Chambre de Commerce, 2014). Three main reasons might be at the origin of this: first its history, second its geographical position in the middle of Europe with borders with Germany, France and Belgium, and third its economic situation. The three official languages are reality in the public education system: oral communication is in Luxembourgish. In Kindergarden, the language of instruction is Luxembourgish. In primary school, alphabetization at age 6 starts in German, and he learning of French starts at 7. The language of instruction in primary school is German. The language of instruction in the lower grades of the 'Lycee' (college) is French for Mathematics and German for the other matters. The language of instruction in the higher grades of the 'Lycee Classique' is French, in the 'Lycee Technique' it is mainly German for the professional and technical matters. There are other options and possibilities for children recently arrived depending on their age and language knowledge, such as the European School, the International School, international classes in some other schools. The University of Luxembourg, which was only recently created in 2004, performs research to improve the situation. Reforms are discussed and some new schools have been created, in particular to promote English, which was neglected before. At the same time, Lex Roth (Heintz, 2015), Fernand Fehlen (Ganser, 2015), Jean-Jacques Weber (2014a, 2014b) and Jean-Jacques Weber and Horner (2008), Maurer-Hetto (2008), STATEC (2014), and others are defending and promoting the Luxembourgish language. Spizzo (1995) states correctly that the Luxembourgish citizenship is exclusively awarded to people who speak the language, explaining herewith the identification via the Luxembourgish language. The common identifier of the population is the language (Schinzel, 2014a), origin of happiness (Schinzel, 2013).

2.3. Managerial Education

"One approach to solving multicultural issues of this sort is to educate each member about the norms of each of the cultures involved." (Schein, 2010, p. 387). Schein (2010), Earley and Ang (2003) and Thomas and Inkson (2003) praise the *'cultural intelligence'*, the Chamber of Commerce of Luxembourg (2014) as mentioned above. Schein identifies four categories of culture: 1) Macrocultures: Nations, ethnic and religious groups, occupations that exist globally; 2) Organizational cultures: Private, public, nonprofit, government organizations; 3) Subcultures: Occupational groups within organizations; 4) Microcultures: Microsystems within or outside organizations (Schein, 2010, p. 2). Accordingly, Geert Hofstede, Gert-Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov "found that organizational and national culture are very different phenomena and cannot even be measured with the same questions", criticizing Fons Trompenaars (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2010), for containing data from fifty-five thousand "managers" (Hofstede et al, 2010, p. 43) and the GLOBE (House et al, 2004) for having formulated the questions in researchers' jargon, producing just national stereotypes (Hofstede et al, 2010, p. 42).

"The basic problem in multicultural situations is that the members of each macro-culture may have opinions and biases about "the others," or may even have some level of understanding of the "the others" but operate by the premise that their own culture is the one that is "right." Getting multicultural organizations, projects, and teams to work together, therefore, poses a much larger cultural challenge than how to evolve or manage cultural change within a single macroculture" (Schein, 2010, p. 387). "The concept of *cultural intelligence* introduces the proposition that to develop understanding, empathy, and the ability to work with others from other cultures requires four capacities: (1) actual knowledge of some of the

essentials of the other cultures involved, (2) cultural sensitivity or mindfulness about culture, (3) motivation to learn about other cultures, and (4) behavioral skills and flexibility to learn new ways of doing things (Earley and Ang, 2003); Thomas and Inkson, 2003). For multicultural teams to work, therefore, implies that certain individual characteristics have to be present to enable cross-cultural learning" (Schein, 2010, pp. 387-388).

2.4. Propositions

Issues with the trilingual public education system are manifold (Schinzel, 2014b). The author formulates the following three propositions:

Proposition 1: Luxembourg Nationals (Lux.Nat.) will highly prefer trilingualism in education and defend the ideal of educating tricultural managers.

Proposition 2: All other categories of people (Lux.Foreigners, Cross-borderers, and the rest of the world) will be less euphoric, on the contrary they will be more critical of the trilingual system, contesting the transmission of the three cultures and/or the education of appropriate managers.

Proposition 3: Reforms are needed, requiring adaptation to the changing society and for cost reduction

The content of this research is the investigation in the three propositions above. The methods used are described below, where the results from the 46 interviews are given..

3. METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

The instruments used in this research were structured interviews. The interview questions were developed by the author in English and translated by mother tongue speakers into German and French. They were back translated to English for a validity check. The questions asked were: 1) Did you get your education from the trilingual Luxembourgish system? 2) If you didn't get your education from Luxembourg, how was the education system where you come from? 3) What do you think about the Luxembourgish education system and especially the language situation with its trilinguality? 4) Does the trilingual Luxembourgish education system prepare for tri(multi)cultural managers? 5) Does the trilingual Luxembourgish education system educate the future managers the country really needs? 6) Does this system transmit the 3 different cultures (L+F+D) or only the languages? 7) Would a person who had his/her own mother tongue and his/her well defined own culture, and who only later had learned other foreign languages with the objective to be able to communicate with others, and only then came to Luxembourg, would such a person have disadvantages in Luxembourg? 8) Does the fact to be able to communicate in 3 languages represent a real advantage or is it only a practical advantage in the life of a manager?

4. RESULTS

The **general questions** provided the following results: A total of 46 interviews were performed, 18 respondents were male and 28 were female.

The age curve of the articipants shows that age classes are equally distributed with a high at 40-49 and 50-59, 1 is age 0-19, 1 is age 20-24, 5 are age 25-29, 6 are age 30-34, 2 are age 35-39, 14 are age 40-49, 14 are age 50-59, and 3 are over 60.

The job distribution shows 33 managers, 3 researchers and 10 assistants coming from the following job sectors: sports (2), medicine (7), petrol (2), education (8), economy (2), state (6), banking/finance (6), import/export (2), law (2), journalism/print (2), HR (4), tourism (1), IT (1), church (1).

The education level shows the following distribution: no A-level (2), Bac+1 (7), Bac+2 (7), Bac+3 (4), Bac+4 (12), Bac+5 (6), Doctorate (6).

Concerning spoken languages: 4 respondents speak 6 languages, 12 respondents speak 5 languages, 23 respondents speak 4 languages and 5 respondents speak 3 languages. There are no respondents who only speak 2 or 1 languages.

French is native language for 17 respondents, 14 have Luxembourgish as mother tongue, 4 Italian, 4 German, 2 English, and 1 Spanish, Polish, Dutch, Hebrew, Bosnian, and Indonesian. 7 respondents have a second native language: German (2), French (2), English (2), and Portuguese (1).

The 46 respondents have 17 different nationalities. They come from 14 different birth places: France (14), Luxembourg (11), Italy (4), Belgium (4), Germany (4), UK (1), Portugal (1), Spain (1), Poland (1), NL (1), Israel (1), Bosnia (1), Indonesia (1), and Australia (1). Birth place does not always correspond to residency, as people are moving places for professional and private reasons. Interestingly, the graphs on 'birth place' and 'residency' show the migration tendency. Respondents from this batch moved from France, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands, Israel, Bosnia and Indonesia. And where did they move to? They moved to Luxembourg, to Germany, to Australia, to the USA, and to Egypt.

The 46 interviews provided the following results:

Each of the five questions was answered differently depending on the category of respondents. Details are given in table 1.

The category Luxembourg Nationals (Lux.Nat) answered **the first question** "Does the trilingual Luxembourgish education system prepare for tri(multi)cultural managers?" with 50%(7) Yes, 35%(5) No and 15%(2) Yes+No (means they answered both: Yes and No), which means mainly they agree that the trilingual education system prepares for tricultural managers. Looking at foreigners living in Luxembourg (Lux.Frgn), the answer is different, 55%(6) answer with Yes, 36%(4) with No and 9%(1) with Yes+No. The results change again when looking at the category of cross borderers where only 41%(5) say Yes, but 50%(6) say No, and 9%(1) Y+N. They have a more critical view of the efficiency of the system. The rest of the world (all the others) has difficulties answering this question, given the fact that they don't really know the system. 56%(5) say, they cannot answer, and 22%(2) say Yes, 22%(2) say No. This shows that the world is not aware of the Luxembourgish trilingual public education system, and they don't know how it functions and what its specificities are. When averaged across the entire pool, all respondents together answered quite equally between yes and no: Yes (43% (20)), No (37% (17)), 'Y+N' (9% ()), N/A (11% (5)).

TABLE 1. RESULTS

Question	Answer	All N=46		Lux.Nat. N=14		Lux.Frgn. N=11		Cross-Borderers N=12		World N=9	
1) Does the trilingual Luxembourgish education system prepare for tri(multi)cultural managers?	Yes No Yes+No N/A	43% 37% 9% 11%	20 17 4 5	50% 35% 15%	7 5 2 0	55% 36% 9%	6 4 1 0	41% 50% 9%	5 6 1 0	22% 22% 0 56%	2 2 0 5
2) Does the trilingual Luxembourgish education system educate the future managers the country really needs?	Yes No Yes+No N/A	28% 40% 17% 15%	13 18 8 7	44% 28% 28%	6 4 4 0	18% 64% 18%	2 7 2 0	33% 50% 17%	4 6 2 0	22% 44% 0 33%	2 4 0 3
3) Does this system transmit the 3 different cultures (L+F+D) (- or only the languages)?	Yes No Yes+No N/A	26% 59% 9% 7%	12 27 4 3	36% 57% 7%	5 8 1 0	27% 73%	3 8 0 0	17% 58% 25%	2 7 3 0	22% 44% 33%	2 4 0 3
4) Would a person who had his/her own defined culture, and who only later came to Luxembourg have disadvantages in Luxembourg?	Yes No Yes+No N/A	35% 63% 2%	16 29 1 0	50% 43% 7%	7 6 1 0	27% 73%	3 8 0 0	25% 75%	3 9 0 0	33% 67%	3 6 0 0
5) Does the fact to be able to communicate in	Yes No Yes+No	91% 9%	42 4 0	85% 5%	12 2 0	91% 9%	10 1 0	100%	12 0 0	89% 11%	8 1 0

3 languages represent a real advantage?	N/A		0		0		0		0		0

The second question "Does the trilingual Luxembourgish education system educate the future managers the country really needs?" was answered by the Luxembourg Nationals positively: Yes, it does educate the future managers the country needs: Yes: 44% (6), against No: 28%(4), and 28%(4) 'Yes+No'. This result reverses when looking at the foreigners living in Luxembourg, who contest this: 64%(7) say No it doesn't educate the managers the country needs, whereas 18%(2) confirm the positive outcome, and 18%(2) say 'Yes+No'. Interestingly, the cross-borderers confirm the tendency of the foreigners living in Luxembourg and their critical view, 33%(4) say Yes, 50%(6) say No, and 17%(2) Y+N. The World, as far as they can judge about the efficiency of the system seen their ignorance of it, confirms this critical view with 44%(4) No and 22%(2) Yes; 33%(3) cannot answer because they don't know the system. It could be useful to make this system known to the world. When averaged, all respondents answered: 28%(13) Yes, 40%(18) No, 17%(8) 'Yes+No', 15%(7) couldn't answer.

The third question "Does this system transmit the 3 different cultures (L+F+D)?" was answered astonishingly equally in all 4 categories. Luxembourg Nationals said critically: 36%(5) Yes, 57%(8) No and 7%(1) Y+N, the foreigners, cross-borderers and the rest of the world are as skeptical as the Luxembourg Nationals about the positive outcome of the transmission of the 3 different cultures through the transmission of the 3 languages: While the foreigners living in Luxembourg answer with 73%(8) No, and only 27%(3) Yes, the cross-borderers are even more negative with 58%(7) No and only 17%(2) Yes, and 25%(3) Yes+No. The world, besides the 33%(3) who couldn't answer by lack of knowledge of the system, 44%(4) answer No, and only 22%(2) answer Yes. Generally seen, Lux.Nat. are half/half, and all the others are negative about the transmission of the cultures through the instruction of the languages. When averaged, all respondents answered: 26%(12) Yes, 59%(27) No, 9%(4) 'Yes+No', 7%(3) couldn't answer.

The forth question "Would a person who had his/her own mother tongue and his/her well defined own culture, and who only later had learned other foreign languages with the objective to be able to communicate with others, and only then came to Luxembourg, would such a person have disadvantages in Luxembourg?" was answered as follows: While Luxembourg Nationals answer half/half: 50%(7) Yes, 43%(6) No, 7%(1) Y+N, respondents from the other categories answered in a positive way. No, they mainly don't see disadvantages for a person coming later to Luxembourg. Foreigners living in Luxembourg, who experience this phenomenon in their everyday life, answered with 73%(8) No and only 27%(3) Yes. Cross-borderers who live this also every day in their profession in Luxembourg answered with 75%(9) No and only 25%(3)Yes. The rest of the world, even though their lack of experience with the system, was sure about that there are no disadvantages with 67%(6) No and 33%(3) Yes. When averaged, all respondents answered: 35%(16) Yes, 63%(29) No, 2%(1) 'Yes+No', all were able to answer this question, as 0%(0) couldn't answer.

The fifth question "Does the fact to be able to communicate in 3 languages represent a real advantage - or is it only a practical advantage in the life of a manager?" was answered by all 5 categories equally: Yes, it is an advantage to be able to communicate in 3 different languages: Luxembourg Nationals are most critical about this with 85%(12) Yes and 5%(2) No, Foreigners say 91%(10) Yes, 9%(1) No, and the Cross-borderers with unanimity: 100%(12) Yes, 0 No, the rest of the world 89%(8) Yes, 11%(1) No. When averaged, all respondents answered: 91%(42) Yes, 9%(4) No, there were no 'Yes+No', and all were able to answer this question.

5. RESULTS – INTERVIEWS

By keeping the four categories, 1) Lux.Nat., 2) Lux. Foreigners, 3) Cross Borderers, and 4) World, the comments made during the 46 interviews provided a deep insight into the opinion of people. Responses from the main themes already mentioned above re-appeared. Other themes were discussed. Here is a selection of what the participants said:

Respondents from the category Lux.Nat. who say YES the trilingual Luxembourgish education system prepares for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"A Manager has to be able to speak at least the 3 languages of the country. This is essential. He has to be able to communicate with the employees, the clients and all other people."

Respondents from the category Lux.Nat. who say NO the trilingual Luxembourgish education system does not prepare for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"Although, in my opinion it is an advantage for managers to having had a trilingual school education, I do disagree with saying that our school system prepares tri/multicultural managers. To be able to understand a culture, it requires more than only learning the language. You need a high interest and knowledge of the different cultures, to discover the country, the people living in this country, via i.e. school/student exchanges."

Respondents from the category Lux. Foreigners who say YES the trilingual Luxembourgish education system prepares for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"I don't have any experience, so I cannot really answer. All I can image is that it does prepare well, because if you acquire the language at the same time it makes you acquire cultural competences, so it translates later that you can access the culture. If you acquire the 3 languages at the school, you will acquire the 3 cultures for your future work and life. This relates to everybody. I can only imagine this. I never worked in a Luxembourgish company, and I don't know too many people, maybe 1-2, who went through the Luxembourgish school system. Where I work, I do get a lot of bi-cultural people, but not tri-culturals."

Respondents from the category Lux. Foreigners who say NO the trilingual Luxembourgish education system does not prepare for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"I think that we cannot talk about tri-lingual-cultural managers, as all national cultures are in danger. This is the particularity of small countries. Because they use the tri-lingual concept, the idea exists that the Luxembourgish system is special. Nevertheless, I doubt the system's capacities to be able to keep the cultural origins and also to transmit them.

I believe that the Luxembourgish culture was transmitted in the past by the people. In the past, this was clear but for many years, the country didn't have a university or any other institution of higher education. The newly founded university will help to find new ways for transmitting the Luxembourgish values and cultural system.

In my opinion, the Luxembourgish government holds a real opportunity to develop a cultural industry, to make the French and German language interesting for children and adolescents. This can be realized by using the film and comics industry for cultural objectives. They could create special books and comics for pupils concerning cultural subjects and sciences, in form of comics."

Respondents from the category Cross-Borderers who say YES the trilingual Luxembourgish education system prepares for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"My personal experience is that Luxembourgers (like my niece) assimilate all languages, but none well. She speaks like a Luxembourger, this means she speaks all the languages, but all with errors, none correctly.

I am Belgian, my mother tongue is French. I do not speak all these languages, but I hold the competences necessary for my job. My competences are better than most other people, who maybe speak the languages. In Luxembourg, most people get their education outside of the country, because Luxembourg doesn't provide the necessary training, just the languages. This is the reason why Luxembourgers call for cross borderers to come to work, because we – the cross borderers – hold the skills they need in Luxembourg and they don't have themselves. They need us for our skills, and even if we don't speak the language, they make us come every day. The fact is that we are qualified for the jobs. Luxembourgers only speak 3 languages but don't have the necessary qualifications."

Respondents from the category Cross borderers who say NO the trilingual Luxembourgish education system does not prepare for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"I don't think so, because it does not mean that they are proficient equally in all 3 languages.

No, absolutely not. They need an additional education in another country to compensate for the general lack in education they have."

Respondents from the category World who say YES the trilingual Luxembourgish education system prepares for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"I am not familiar with the system. I am not in a position to comment."

Respondents from the category World who say NO the trilingual Luxembourgish education system does not prepare for tri(multi)cultural managers argue:

"In my view, the 3 language system teaches people how to speak 3 languages. However, it does not prepare one to be tri-cultural. To be truly multicultural, one has to have cultural knowledge, to identify, internalize and be committed to all three cultures. Speaking a language does not mean one is competent in that culture."

6. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Edgar Schein discusses the "multi-culture problem" when cultures meet (Schein, 2009, p. 189-213), stating that "getting cross-cultural organizations, projects.... to work together ... poses a much larger cultural challenge ...." He claims: "A further problem in these multicultural enterprises is that culture is typically not considered in their initial formation" (p. 190). This is exactly what Luxembourg's trilingual education system tries to cope with. In the opinion of the Luxembourg Government and Ministry of Education it is a challenge worth fighting for, despite the size of the challenge. Cultural intelligence is one of the aims to be obtained by the trilingual education, together with tolerance for the other, integration of the different, open-mindedness for diversity in culture, language, color, music, meals, clothing, the typical artifacts of culture (Hofstede, 2001; Schein, 2009; Schein, 2010). Stereotypes continue to survive, see the following examples: "Americans always expect budgets and targets to be cut by higher management."... "Germans are always too conservative in their projections." (Schein, 2009, p. 197). In order to highlight the cultural differences, Schein suggests to ask individuals in multicultural groups the following question: "In your country (organization) what do you do when the boss asks you to do something that you strongly disagree with?" (Schein, 2009, P. 213).

The results of this research show that only Lux.Nats. are in favor of their own system. This is probably a complex combination of identity (being Luxembourgish) and pride at linguistic ability. This goes beyond the actual practical use of the various languages. Hence, Luxembourgers project advantages on the system as a reinforcement of this identity. They often believe being in a position of power with respect to workers coming to the country for employment. Conversely, cross-border workers are more aware that true cross-cultural behavior does not stop at the language. They may feel some exclusion from employment in more senior jobs, leading to resentment against the Luxembourg language. Thus, language may act to distinguish population groups rather than to support genuine multiculturalism. Respondents of the other categories judge the system without knowing it and Schein's theories about "cultural intelligence".

Further research could focus on the question as whether the Luxembourgish education system really educates the managers the country needs. As cultures shifts (Schinzel, 2015), what could be done, to increase the cultural intelligence in Luxembourg's education system? Is training in cultural openness needed independently of language skills? Could the solution be found by selecting one *lingua franca* in the tertiary education system, and/or by creating more universities in Luxembourg? Among the suggested ideas from this study were a comics cartoon in Luxembourgish, 'intercultural communication classes', and a google/yahoo site, in Luxembourgish.

Following the aim of acquiring the lacking competencies, Luxembourg could boost its own education system by creating new schools and universities, by educating their teachers, by attracting foreign teachers to the system, by intensifying contacts between pupils and companies, by keeping trilingualism and by reinforcing English. In this context, the role of English as an alternative vehicular language could be investigated by future research.

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