The Influence of French Higher Education in French-German Business-to-Business Relationships

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Abstract

A significant amount of literature has been written on the various aspects involved in and influencing buyer and seller relationships. In an international setting, many cultural influences in the buyer and seller interaction process have been identified and researched. In the case of France, the literature identifies a binary divide in the higher education system, with universities on one side and the *Grandes Écoles* (French private higher education institutes) on the other. While there is general advice for undertaking business in France, research that focuses on the influence of this education system for the international buyer and seller interaction process in a French-German context is rare.

Within the spirit of the IMP Interactions Model, this study explores those cultural values whose origins can be attributed to the French higher education system and that can influence communication and the creation of trust in a binational business relationship – the Franco-German dyad. The cultural differences present in this context, their origins, and the divergences between German and French business behaviour are the phenomena on which this study offers knowledge. This study's insight is not only based on how the phenomena present but also seeks to elucidate the roots of those values causing the phenomena, with the goal to enable German sellers to have a more successful approach to their French counterparts.

This study is based on a broadly ethnographic design encompassing historical, and educational research. The work follows the holistic perspective, analysing the social interaction of business partners in their daily environment, examining things in the broadest possible context, to understand their interconnections and interdependence. This is undertaken by means of semi-structured interviews among a social group within the goods road transportation industry. Twenty-one interviews were conducted in six selected companies. In each of these companies, three to four participants of different hierarchical

positions and in different job roles related to buying have been interviewed. In addition, five interviews with German managers involved in business interactions with French customers have been undertaken to offer perspective from the German business partner.

This research showed that cultural values can be related to the education system, creating behaviour patterns, preferences and expectations. Meeting and respecting these values influence communication and the formation of trust. The specific aspects that were examined could be traced back in their historical development of the respective educational systems: the vocational, generalist, and/or dualistic systems producing elites, specialists, and their effects in cross-cultural relations and interactions. The French participants of this study demonstrate that the different education systems do influence the respective French-German behaviours, cultures, and relations.

The research identified and helped to understand the origin of the different business partners values' in the binational dyad. The theoretical model developed represents the interrelation and reciprocal influence on the interaction of trust, communication and cultural values related to the education system. The analysis has shown that different philosophies on the approach to projects and the importance that is attributed to speaking the French language are specific aspects that demand cultural awareness. It could be shown that overcoming the cultural distance formed by the language barrier is even more critical for business interaction with Grandes Écoles graduates. The research offers practical recommendations and requirements for a German seller to position advantageously, control and manage a French-German binational business relationship successfully.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed: Date: 14th July 2021

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This thesis marks the end of a long journey that has not always been easy or straightforward. Writing this thesis required a lot of stamina and commitment. If I had been told how long this journey would take and with what strain this would be, not only for me but also for my loved ones, I would most likely not have set out. The fact that I have travelled all this distance is thanks to all those who have accompanied me during this time, who have shown their interest in my work, who have made this work possible through their participation and all those who have encouraged me to continue. I would like to thank all these people from the bottom of my heart.

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Chapter 1. Introduction, Aims, and Objectives

This thesis investigates the influence of French higher education in French-German binational business relationships and its relevance in business partner interactions. The research describes the different higher education system of both countries and the historically embedded elitist *Grandes Écoles* in France, which are perceived as an influential factor to any business exchange. The thesis seeks to provide knowledge and understanding of specific French cultural aspects and values that have their origin in the French educational systems and aims so to understand how these may shape communication and influence the building of trust in a business interaction, to enable a better preparation of a German seller for business in France. This chapter introduces the theoretical context and briefly presents some of the educational and cultural aspects that have been considered within this research. The research aims are presented, and an overview of the structure of the thesis is also given.

1.1 Empirical Foundation

The interaction model of the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group (1982) was chosen as the foundation to understand how education, and values related to education, shape communication and trust in the process of a business-to-business interaction between differing cultures. Culture was identified early on in the development of the interaction model as a relevant influencing factor for social exchange (Turnbull and Valla, 1986). This research elaborates how these cultural values shape the French-German interaction context.

The first research, from the mid-1970s, that can be considered an antecedent to the IMP Group and was conducted by Johanson (1966) in the Swedish export industries, which

was followed by the work by Ford (1976) about distribution systems in the United Kingdom, by Håkansson and Wootz (1975) on industrial purchasing and by several authors considering marketing in Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Cunningham and White, 1974; Håkansson and Östberg, 1975; Kutchker, 1975). Later and more recently published work on 'Business Marketing and Purchasing' has been offered by Ford (2002).

In 1982, when the IMP Group published the results of an empirical study (Cunningham and Turnbull, 1981) on the existence of lasting buyer and seller relationships (Håkansson, 1982), it showed that, aside from a purely economic exchange, social exchange is part of the interaction. This social exchange and, more specifically, the personal contact of business partners have since been regarded as an important and influential factor in the industrial interaction process (Easton, 1992; Forsgren et al., 1995; Halinen and Salmi, 2001; IMP Group, 1982b), especially where cultural distance exists between the two parties involved (Ford, 2002). This originates in the cause of the interaction that may be of a technical, social, or economic origin, leading to patterns of behaviour reflecting dependence and interdependence of the business partners (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2000, p. 75).

When building business relations Understanding the microcosmos of these relations and appreciating the factors involved in this phenomenon is an essential task for management (Williams, Han and Qualls, 1998). It is key for successful marketing and purchasing. This is even more crucial when the interaction is multicultural (Ivanova-Gongne, 2015).

The components involved in the social exchange are made of notions of culture, language, experience, and history. Language and communication skills are valuable assets, as they represent key elements to access different cultures and orientations (Cicourel, 1970). Language in this context needs to be understood apart from foreign or native

language as the 'language' of terms used in different functional areas of a customer's organisation and/or social surroundings. Speaking 'the language of customers' serves to build relations. Communication is the strategy of contemporary industry, enabling more favourable business negotiations and long-term partnerships (Graca, 2013; Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Morris, 1988; Zhu, Nel and Bhat 2006). In return, this suggest the need to develop an affinity for languages and cultures and to develop communication competence (Bush et al., 2001) to enable successful interaction (Griffith, 2002) in foreign markets. Even more so as communication, by transmitting a message to an individual and formulating an expectancy in a business context, becomes closely related to trust (Rotter, 1967).

The creation of trust in business-to-business interaction has been acknowledged to be a key element of the social relationship (Macalister, and Bies, 1998). Mutual trust is a necessary condition for smooth and efficient business interaction between partners (Usunier, 1996), reducing complexity (Luhmann, 2014), decreasing the potential of conflicts (Glaeser et al. 2000) and making a the outcomes of business exchange more positively predictable (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010; T. V. Nguyen and Rose, 2009). While a trustful business relationship is an anticipated goal, as much as it is difficult to create, it is as easy to lose.

Meetings with general managers in France, who, especially in larger companies, often graduated from Grandes Écoles, require negotiation and securing business while interacting with people that have been accorded a position based on where they graduated from. Interacting with these stakeholders is common since they are most often the decision-makers. Successful approach to these French business counterparts, especially in the highly hierarchically organized social and working environments as found in France (Gumbel, 2013), requires an understanding of the culture and educational system, the last being an

integral part of culture (Hofstede, 2001), so as to be successful in communication, to understand what business partners value, their expectations, to be able to interpret their behaviour and generate the necessary trust in the social interaction.

1.2 Understanding/Interpretation of Cultures

Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions is a helpful framework to grasp culture differences easily and to be able to get an initial overview of where differentiating features of a culture appear and where similarities become noticeable. Some cultural dimensions, namely the level of power distance in each country, the level of masculinity and the level of uncertainty avoidance show relevant differences that may be influential for interaction as these play an active role in how people work together. The difference in the level of power distance is the most striking. Generally, the power distance presumes the culturally embedded inequality of power distribution in organisations to be different in Germany compared to France. According to Hofstede, Germany has a smaller power distance value and is less comfortable with power differences, such as class distinction or organisational ranking. In contrast in France, there is less participation and decision making and often very rigid hierarchical levels. Hence, cultural dimensions provide an initial overview of what a culture values e.g., elevated level of participation in one country and sharply different hierarchy levels in organizations in the other country. These different cultural values and positions influence how each individual acts, how they work and how they treat other individuals in an interaction (Francesco and Gold, 2005).

Examining the buyer and seller relationship and the identification of the main factors influencing the negotiations between seller and buyer in Germany and France, it is important to review the kind of problems met during interactions. Supported by research and from my own experience, it can be perceived that, in France, business actors that do

not speak the French language and who are unfamiliar with the culture have terrible difficulties with French customers, particularly in larger companies (M. Fischer, 1996). Even though they may be excellent engineers to engage customers from a technical perspective, acting and behaving in France as one would do in Germany with the sole communication means in English is fighting a losing battle. In France, only some people in top management may be fluent in English, but as soon as one deals with middle management and lower management, knowledge of English rapidly decreases to a level that does not allow a dialogue and even less the possibility to build a positive and productive relationship (M. Fischer, 1996).

With increased globalisation, this pattern, while still prevalent in many French organisations, is beginning to change. In a 2002 interview, Christian Pierret, the French secretary of state for industry, observed that French industry is becoming more flexible and competitive and that, in smaller businesses, hierarchical structures are most profoundly ingrained and permanent, while larger companies are more participative (Deneire and Segalla, 2002). In other words, for many French companies, paternalistic, hierarchical relations remain central elements of leadership, but French multinational corporations are increasingly decentralising (Francesco and Gold, 2005).

If culture provides the basic assumptions for underlying behaviour, then it can be argued that complex relationships between national and organizational cultures exist (Trice and Beyer, 1993), and that national culture does, at least to some extent, influence organizational culture. Martin (1992) wrote: "It is misleading to deny the influence of the environment on the content of cultures in organizations. The implication, of course, is that we cannot understand what goes inside of organisational culture without understanding what exists outside the boundary" (p. 113). Hence, that whilst suggesting the two forms of culture are conceptually distinct, the above statement also implies that national culture

influences organizational culture, which in return is another argument to consider the cultural aspects of seller-buyer interactions more fully.

Globalisation and the awareness of society of social and cultural arrangements, (Waters, 1995) make geography and locations much less important and has increased the possibilities for cross-cultural communication given modern communication using the Internet and social media platforms like Facebook or LinkedIn. In return, this has visibly heightened the awareness and independence of nations (Kogut, 2003). National values, attitudes, traditions, customs, and ideologies form unparalleled structures that surround a person's value system that seem to be immune to corporate globalisation approaches. In this regard, studying a respective national culture and its influence on 'distinctive organisational arrangements' (Fligstein and Freeland, 1995) remains a requirement for managers to be successful despite all discussion of globalisation.

Hence, cultural knowledge and understanding of a business partner can eventually be advantageous on the path to a long-term relationship. Since education is an influential part of a culture, a more in-depth examination of the differences of various educational philosophies and eventually the values that emerge in the context of this research, seems appropriate to highlight were different mindsets may well, in some, or larger part, have their origin.

1.3 Different Education Systems

France and Germany have different philosophical approaches and goals in the organization of their educational systems (Hartmann, 2005; Joly, 2005). The initial levels of education and the lower levels of secondary schools - vocational education and training - are important regarding political, economic, and social aspects of societies.

The first regulations of the content of educational programmes for apprenticeships can be traced back to the first guild in the twelfth century in Germany (Black, 2003; Greif, Milgrom, and Weingast, 1994) and in France (Toubon, 2019). However, the activity is perceived and developed differently in both countries. Under the corporate effort of the German Federal Government, the Länder (the German federal states), the unions, and the chamber of commerce, installed the '*Duales System*' (dual system) (Nees, 2000) offering apprentices, usually for a three-year term, providing a mix of theoretical education at state vocational schools and practical job skill experience in companies. This concept is strongly linked to achieving product quality and forms an integral part of the education system (Booth, 1996; Deissinger, 1996). It is now the widespread system of apprenticeship within the industry.

The dual system offers hundreds of core occupational training programmes and develops future specialists can be perceived as a good 'example of the cooperation between state and industry and guarantees young Germans a first-rate occupational education' (Nees, 2000, p. 112) with excellent career prospects.

It is noteworthy that in Germany, it is not unusual to start with vocational training and after graduation, engage in studies at the '*Fachhochschule*' (University of Applied Sciences) or the University, putting Germany in the position to be able to access a number of both, practically and academically, trained specialists. Today, since the Bologna Process in 1999, with the harmonization of the architecture of the European Higher Education system, whether the Bachelor degree or Master degree is from a Fachhochschule or a University there is no perceivable superior 'award'. However, having undergone a vocational training or to HE study is beneficially perceived in the industry.

In France, the dual vocational education and training (VET) programmes play only a minor role. The higher education system is what attracts, but in contrast to Germany, the

two institutions of relevance, universities and Grandes Écoles are rated tremendously different and allow for very different careers. However, there is 'widespread evidence for the strong and lasting impact of social origin on educational transitions (Bergman, Joye, and Fux, 2002; Breen and Jonsson, 2005) and educational success' (Hupka-Brunner, Sacchi, and Stalder, 2010, p. 14) unlike in Germany where the social origin is of minor impact (Förster, Nozal and Thévenot, 2017). The interplay between social origin, institutional settings and selection procedures with its resulting inequality, is an always current social focus and a focus of work in Bourdieu's capital theory (1977, 1982).

Bourdieu is not alone in denouncing the situation, and other authors in more recent research have been even more explicit in their words. In his book *Réformer l'ENA, réformer l'élite* (*To Reform l'ENA, To Reform the Elite*) Pierre-Henri D'Argenson (2008) disclosed a very negative report regarding the effects of the education in Grandes Écoles on its graduates. Similar to Bourdieu (1989), he concluded that the French educational system, with its antique, nearly fossilised selection system, penalises France due to its output and influence on society compared to many other countries.

However, the Grandes Écoles and their graduates might be perceived by some as ambivalent, as in France this route is generally the only option through which to reach the highest positions in industry or government. The corporate executives in France are very different leaders compared to those in Germany, who have usually have risen through all the hierarchy levels in the company and industry. For instance, Jürgen Erich Schrempp, former CEO of Daimler-Benz, to name just one, who started on a vocational training programme for motor mechanics. This reinforces the sense of community (R. R. Locke, 1989), which is a crucial aspect in keeping relations intact in the workforce and intensifying their participation in management (something that cannot even be imagined in France). Au contraire, in France management is characterized by a more hierarchical

structure and a management style that distances the distinct levels from each other, especially from the positions held by graduates from Grandes Écoles.

Despite a French effort to make changes in the education system to overcome social inequalities in the past, the French and Germans have perceivable different approaches to education, which may, in result, lead to different psychological aspects, values and norms, and expectations that become of relevance within the exchange of goods or services in a business-to-business interaction. If so, the resulting different values and behaviours of counterparts in cross-cultural discussions and negotiations that seek a trustworthy business relationship between buyer and seller are complex to realise.

1.4 Research Problem Area and Research Aims

Given initial consideration of on the cultural and educational differences between France and Germany, this highlights the complexity of the different social elements that influence the outcome of an interaction. It is, therefore, no surprise that the IMP interaction model proposes that aspects of the interaction process are influenced by culture. However, given the numerous different aspects of culture and even though some work has been has been undertaken (Leek, Turnbull and Naudé, 2002; Ford and Håkansson, 2006; Ford, 2004) the research of the IMP group that focused on the concept of business networks and the refinement of the conceptual frame of business relationships (Ford, 2002; J. C. Anderson, Håkansson, and Johanson, 1994; Axelson and Easton, 1992; Håkansson and Snehota, 1995), leaves room for further research in the potential area of specific and influential aspects of culture on the business exchange process. Given that education is what frames and is to be found in culture, its influential role in the interaction process in a business relationship is relevant.

The theoretical interest of this research lies in the impact of cultural values induced by the according education system, the relation with communication and the building of trust in the interaction process and looks at how these aspects interact. Social exchange is a complex creation of social and cultural patterns and it consists of intangible actor bonds that develop in the relationships and are built on 'theories in use' or 'schema couplings' that exist in the minds of the actors about each other (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995; Hallén and Sandstrom, 1991). With the deeply anchored cultural traditions, educational systems, and the different mentalities present on both sides of the Rhine River, long-term business relationships will be challenging to achieve without enough knowledge of the respective values and appropriate interpretations of the national traditions of the 'other'. Airbus is an industry example in which different French and German cultures, even after years of a joint venture, still have tremendous difficulties to come together, possibly due, among other reasons, to education, values, and different management styles.

Accordingly, in a French-German business context, this research seeks to clarify the following research questions:

1. What are the cultural value perceptions that originate from differences in the educational systems?

2. How, if at all, do these values help to understand cross-cultural relational difficulties in communication and the creation of trust?

3. How can understanding the cultural value perceptions facilitate the development of a framework for trust development and successful communication in the interaction between buyers and sellers in cross-cultural selling environments?

The research aims to answer these questions to support and increase the knowledge of a German company doing business in France. The first research question draws on the factors and/or differences that originate in the Grande École and university system in France and how this may manifest in a dyadic French-German business relationship. The second research question is the attempt to suggest recommendations for specific requirements for someone from a German business engaging in a business partnership in France. The question also seeks to answer whether specific knowledge is a prerequisite for the creation of long-term business interaction in this relationship context.

1.5 The Structure of this Thesis

This thesis is structured into seven parts. The first part, Chapter 1, introduces the subject area, provides background information that enables the framing of the research area, and states the research questions to be answered in this study. Chapter 2 and 3 discuss the literature that forms the basis of this study and presents the conceptual frameworks that underpin this research. The literature review is broken in two parts, first a theoretical review of the Interaction Model (Håkansson, 1982) and of trust and communication. An initial research model is presented. The second part considers the cultural, historical, and educational contexts and then presents an elaborated model that this research follows. The fourth chapter explains the research design of the study to locate and justify the research methodology. Chapters 5 and 6 present and discuss the findings of the research. Finally, Chapter 7 draws conclusions based on these findings.

Chapter 2. Literature Review Part I: Theoretical Context

This chapter is divided into two parts: part one presents the theoretical context and literature related to interactions in business-to-business exchanges that form the foundation of this study. It aims to provide an overview of the relevant models and theories associated with the interaction process and extract relevant aspects to consider in the building of business relationships. The emphasis in this research and the specific French-German context is social exchange, the role and implication of psychic and cultural distance, trust, and language.

Part two, in some depth, explores the relevant aspect of culture and seeks to further our understanding of the differences in the historical development of the education system in France and Germany.

2.1 Buying Behaviour Models and Theories

While this research is not about the analysis of aspects, or parts, of one of the numerous models or theories about the industrial buyer and seller relationship, it does use such a theoretical framework to offer a platform to access a specific social aspect of this type of interaction.

The views of organisational buying have, in the traditional literature of economics and purchasing, emphasised variables related to the buying task itself and focused more on 'rational' economic factors (Robinson, Faris and Wind, 1967). One of the key assumptions in such models is that all purchasing activities converge to the super-ordinated goal of obtaining the minimum price or the lowest total cost (Haas, 1982). Research in the past four decades has seen the development of several models and theories attempting to explain purchasing in a broader context (Essien and Udo-Imeh, 2013) and that have

assessed the role of the relationship between buyer and seller in an industrial setting (Narayandas and Rangan, 2004). Knowledge about the dyadic relationship in industrial, or business, affairs have thus been considered of importance to reduce uncertainty in marketing strategies and to enable understanding of the decision process that occurs before, during, and after product purchase (Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim, and Nkamnebe, 2007). Conceptual and theoretical frameworks, referred to as models, seek to present all, or the most influential, variables involved in a buying decision and hence attempt to provide a fundamental understanding of the processes involved when individuals (or organisations) make purchasing decisions.

Eventually, these models evolved over time, and each one focuses on distinct aspects that are involved in an interaction. The Hobbesian organisational buyer model by Thomas Hobbes (1887) is an early example that focuses on organisational consumer behaviour in the purchases of goods for companies or institutions. The basic hypothesis is that the behaviour of the purchasing individual is determined by the predominance of rational issues related to the interests of the organisation and those of the person. Hence, in this setting, the buyer may ask such questions as: 'What is in this deal for me?' or 'What do I stand to gain?'. The model explains why the lowest price is not always key, as the buyer might evaluate that the total benefits of an offer with a higher price or slightly less quality may be better overall.

In 1967, the researchers Robinson, Faris, and Wind introduced a conceptual model that categorised and explained the buying processes of organisations. The model suggested that industrial buying behaviour needs to be accessed not as a single event but as a series of stages (buy phases) and specific buying situations (buying classes). The eight sequential, distinct, but interrelated buy phases depend on the buying situation (three classes) that the organisation faces. The model addresses the need of the seller in the interaction to be aware

that a buyer has not only functional needs but also psychological, social, knowledge, and situational needs, granting the individual a more involved role with their needs influencing the buying process more than previously identified.

The Nelson box model (Nelson, 1970) describes four levels of decision making in an organisation: general buying decisions, concrete buying decisions, suppliers/vendors and product buying decisions, and technical buying decisions. This model also captures the individual's social, organisational, and environmental factors and the task and non-task factors that influence organizational buying behaviour.

The Webster and Wind (1972) model fundamentally assert that organisational buying is a decision-making process conducted by individuals in interaction with other people and within the constraints given by a formal organisation. According to Webster and Wind, four classes of factors, individual, social, organisational, and environmental, determine buying behaviour. Each of these factors encompasses task-related factors and non-task-related factors. The task-related factors are those that are rational (e.g., secure the lowest price). Non-task-related factors introduce the individual and personal motives in the buying process so that personal experience and favourability may add to the outcome of the buying process, making the interaction an even more sophisticated experience over a simple exchange of goods for money.

Shortly after Webster and Wind (1972) developed their general model for organisational buying behaviour, Sheth (1973) developed a model for industrial buying behaviour. His model also accounts for the actors involved in the industrial buying process by acknowledging that the expectations of purchasing agents, engineers, users, and others can be caused by the following:

- the background of the individuals,

- their information sources,

- active search,

- perceptual distortion,

- satisfaction with past purchases, and

- their experience.

Hence, the model focuses on the mental states and decision processes of individual participants and highlights three distinctive aspects of buying behaviour:

1. The psychological aspect foregrounds that purchase decisions in an organisation are not made by single individuals but that the process involves several people, typically from a number of departments and that the psychological makeup of the decision-makers is critical (Iruika, 2001).

2. Buying decisions are not always jointly made by the actors involved. This second aspect concentrates on factors relevant to determining whether a specific buying decision will be joint or autonomous. Three of these factors are related to the characteristics of the product, and the other three are related to the characteristics of the buyer organization.

3. The third element examines the phases relevant to joint decision making and identifies four steps:

- Initiation of the decision to buy,

- Gathering of information,

- Evaluation of alternative suppliers, and

- Resolution of conflict among the parties who must jointly decide.

Hence, Sheth opened another interesting dimension in the buying process: that of multiple deciders and the different decision-makers involved in a buying interaction. To

make this even more complete, the Nelson box model is built around the following two additional assumptions:

- – Decisions at different levels of an organisation involve different people and processes.
- – Decisions taken at one level form the basis for all subsequent decisions.

Unlike previous models that used to focus on one actor of the interaction, the model by the IMP Group (1982a) goes a step further and perceives the business interaction as a reciprocal personal social exchange (Håkansson, 1982; Möller and Wilson, 1995), considering the mutual interaction of both, the buyer and the seller in business relationships (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995). From the different components of the social exchange – communication, experience, behaviour, and culture (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, Chen and Tetrick, 2009) – the encompassing of the persuasive influential aspects of culture makes the interaction model of value for this research, as a particular interest lies in how this element influences the whole interaction process.

The history of buying behaviour models and theories shows that incrementally the individual in the interaction has been recognized to be of higher importance in the process and hence increasingly social and psychological needs and their effects on the business interaction have been recognized to be of importance. The IMP model finally introduces culture as an influential factor in the interaction (Ford, 1980) and the following research on both culture and relations that has been performed has mostly been in developed countries (Fletcher, 2004; Fletcher and Fang, 2006). However, research on cultural-specific factors affecting relationship marketing has received limited consideration (Bianchi, 2006), while broader aspects of cultural distance and psychic distance have been given more attention (Sousa and Bradley, 2006). Furthermore, in this research context, literature has also identified influencing factors related to the different effects of French

and German educational systems on individuals (D. J. Hall, 1969; Hofstede, 1978; R. R. Locke, 1989; Mertens, 1971). The following literature review, therefore, uses the IMP Group framework as a platform for consideration, also encompassing its cultural and educational relevance to a French and German perspective.

2.2 The IMP Business Interaction Perspective

The IMP Group, founded in the late 1970s, was developed from a Swedish research cluster between the Uppsala University and the Stockholm School of Economics. The IMP Group developed two projects. The IMP1 project ran from 1976 to 1986 and concentrated on the social exchange and interaction across companies. It was conducted in a small number of European countries. Its outcomes provided the basis for a buyer-seller relationship model of business-to-business and industrial markets (Cunningham and Turnbull, 1981; Håkansson, 1982). This so-called interaction model (IMP Group, 1982a) encompasses not only economic exchanges but also social issues. Here, the personal contacts and (implicitly) the quality of these personal contacts were found to be critical in the interaction process and intercompany relationships in industrial markets (Easton, 1992; Forsgren et al., 1995; Halinen and Salmi, 2001; IMP Group, 1982a). These personal contacts influence the perceived psychic distance (Ford, 1980a) and the continually appearing, or reappearing, uncertainties (Ford et al., 1998; Forsgren et al., 1995) that occur between the parties over the course of the relationship.

From the intercompany relationship (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995), the notion of the 'industrial network' (that is supported by some researchers within the IMP tradition) also appears (Hägg and Johanson, 1983; Håkansson, 1987). With this view, factors such as resources, actors, and activities are complementary and interdependent (Håkansson and

Johanson, 1984; Håkansson and Snehota, 1995), leading to a programmed division of labour between the companies (Thorelli, 1986) and inter-firm relationships.

The second IMP2 project that began in 1986 was based on the findings of the first and led to the framework of industrial networks, the Actors-Resources-Activities (A-R-A) model (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995) that moved beyond the analysis of the dyads to interdependent actors, resources, and took an activity network approach. Easton (1992) suggested that such a network could be regarded as forming a specific mechanism of coordination driven by actors who play with the interdependence that exists between the necessity to undertake activities and the need for resources for these activities.

For this thesis, the findings of the IMP2 project are of less interest, as industrial networks and their implications are not the focus of this research. Instead, I will return to the findings of the IMP1 project to extract the parts that are relevant and influential in relation to the cultural aspects within social exchange in buying.

2.3 The Interaction Approach

The interaction approach (IMP Group, 1982a) suggests that the buyer and seller enter an active process of exchange characterized by mutual influence of the business partners involved. This was not always the case, as the traditional marketing literature suggested a passive and individually insignificant role for the buyer (Ford, 1997). The paradigm that is promoted with the interaction approach broadens buyer-seller interaction and suggests long-term relations, interdependence, and continuous purchases (IMP Group, 1982a). It contends that these long-term relations often "become institutionalised into a set of roles that each party expects the other to perform" (IMP Group, 1982a, p. 7). From an individual perspective, Håkansson and Snehota (1995) argued that routines are established that facilitate and simplify business exchange. The model presented by the IMP Group

considers this and suggests a group of four variables that influence buying and selling companies in industrial markets:

- the interaction process,

- the participants in the interaction process,

- the environment within which interaction takes place, and

- the atmosphere is affecting, and affected, by interaction.

Figure 1: Interaction model (Håkansson, 1982)
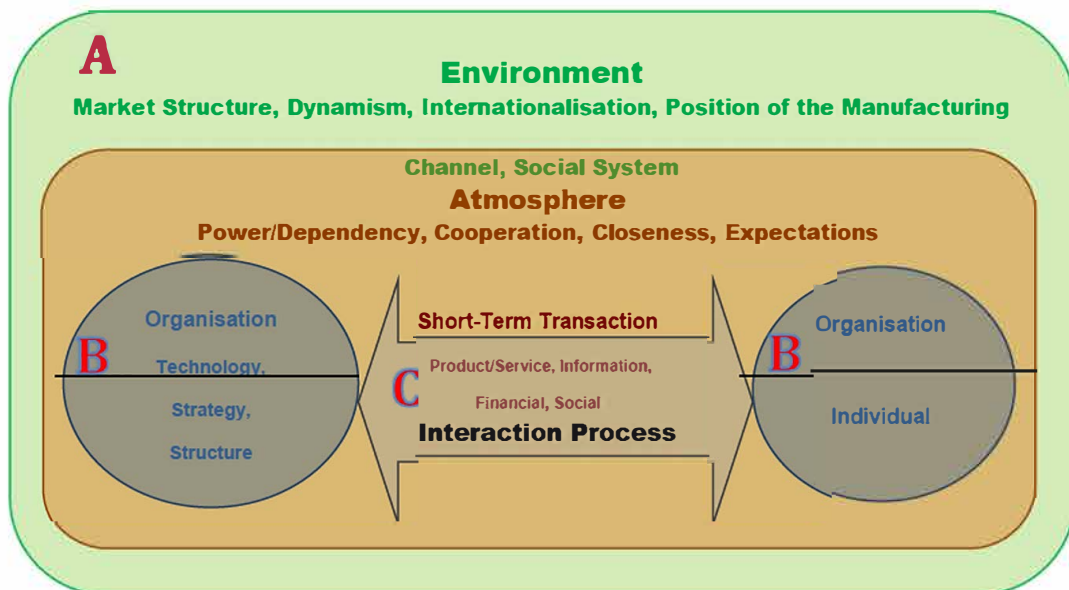
The figure above illustrates the interaction model and gives an overview of its variables and what specific aspects are included. Interestingly, culture touches all aspects but is not explicitly identified. The external factors (A) of the environment not only include aspects of market structure or specific aspects of the manufacturing channel and supply chain but also specifically address internationalisation. This implicitly means uncertainty arising from possible differences of language or culture, as well as aspects arising from the differences in social systems that may be reflected in different attitudes.

The characteristics of the interacting parties (B) focus on the organisational aspects of the interacting parties, leading to consideration of issues of technology, capability, structure, strategy, or experience in the field, while not denying that the individuals (here the salesperson) and all aspects related to their characteristics also play a role.

The interaction process (C) on its own is categorised by four types of exchanges: product or service, information, financial, and social. All aspects are influenced by culture, especially 'social' exchange (Ford, 1990), which encompasses individual aspects influenced by culture-related values. These social exchange episodes are significant instances to build long-term relationships. Considering the nature of relationships, Schwartz (1992) focused on universal aspects of the individual content and the structure of values. He argued that values reflect the underlying issues or problems that societies confront to regulate social activities (Schwartz, 1992). All these exchanges, as they involve people in the interaction, give rise to emotions (Hallén and Sandstrom, 1991). The emotional setting thus plays a vital role in the development of the relationship and is referred to as the 'relationship atmosphere'.

The relationship atmosphere is a product of the interaction and created by the party involved (Sutton-Brady, 2000). While the actors are, in part, the creators of the atmosphere, they in return also react to the atmosphere and are influenced by it (Hallén and Sandstrom, 1991); hence, the influence of the atmosphere works recursively. The atmosphere in an interaction setting is hence, something that evolves over time, and that was found to influence the way the relationship develops (IMP Group, 1982a).

Given that culture plays an important role when it comes to establishing a working relationship in an international setting, the ability to break down cultural barriers and achieve a working relationship is one of the success factors in industrial marketing (Ford, 1984; Harris and Wheeler, 2005). Achieving this requires overcoming cultural distance

(Toornroos, 1991) and developing cultural awareness, which, in return, requires cultural understanding. Researchers (Ahmed, Patterson, and Styles, 1999; Skarmeas, Katsikeas and Schlegelmilch, 2002; Shapiro, Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008) argue that cultural sensitivity can act as a moderating variable between the ingredients of their theory of relational exchange (communication, trust, shared norms, and reputation) and commitment to the relationship, which suggests the promotion of a certain level of cultural knowledge.

This argument is supported by research by Nguyen (2002) when examining the relationship between Vietnamese exporters and importers, showing that cultural differences not only influence the way information is transmitted between exporter and importer but also lead to differences in the interpretation of information. The work goes on to demonstrate that the greater the cultural differences between the interacting parties, the more likely misunderstanding will occur. In essence, cultural differences can act as barriers in communication and thus negatively influence the exchange process and therefore make intercultural knowledge necessary for a successful exchange.

The individuals, seller and buyer, that take part in an interaction are all influenced by their own personal traits (Lounsbury, Foster, Levy, and Gibson, 2014), formed by experiences, and perceived social, cultural, and technological distances, and this leads to the creation of a complex, inherent pattern. Exchange episodes need to adapt according to these situations and necessary alterations in the process of exchange need to be made to reflect the characteristics of the actors (Ford, 2002). The actors in this scene are individuals, in the simplest form, a buyer and a seller, building bonds and creating a relationship by means of information exchange. Given that these are individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences, the lived social exchange is potentially perceived and felt differently by each (Jukka, Andreeva, Blomqvist and Puumalainen, 2017; Waller, Huber and Glick, 1995). For these actors to achieve what seems to be the higher goal,

learning to understand and speak the 'language' of their counterpart is, aside from facilitating the social exchange itself, a prerequisite to building trust that is seen as a necessary precondition for cooperation (Axelrod, 1984), leading to a constructive exchange mode (Barnes, 1981; Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and facilitating the gradual interlock of two firm. It is in this regard that the importance of the personal idiosyncrasy of the actors in the development of a relationship has been recognized (Hallén, 1986; Turnbull, 1979; Wilson and Mummalaneni, 1986). Understanding some of the influencing factors that have engaged in forming the idiosyncrasy can help to have better control of the business interaction.

According to Max Weber (1980), 'action' results from one's intentions and beliefs; therefore, 'action' is an individual result. Drawing a parallel to the 'actor', the freedom to choose how to act is bounded to the capabilities and beliefs of the individual, that in return are "more or less unequivocally, related to their behaviours" (Håkansson, Ford, Gadde, Snehota, and Waluszewski, 2009, p. 138). During the phases of interaction, this becomes relevant as bonds are developed that consist of "mutual orientation, preferences and commitment" (Håkansson et al., 2009, p. 139). By forming these bonds, in this social exchange, actors become embedded in each other, and a form of interdependence arises that is specific to the actors involved and characterizes the behaviour of this specific relationship (Håkansson et al., 2009). Hence, the factors relevant to determining behaviour in a relationship are particular, to the individual and complex and hence include a matrix of multi-dimensional criteria that must be considered.

2.4 The Development of Relationships

The development of customer relationships was Ford's (1980a) focus when he suggested that, in business-to-business markets, the supplier-customer relationship evolves

over the time during that the business actors interact, providing better value the more prolonged the interaction and relation persists.

Ford determined that the experience gained from the supplier-customer relationship, interpreted by social distance or uncertainty within the business relationship, is a critical variable for the development process. Geographical and cultural aspects add additional perspectives under which the relationship evolves. Ford (1980a) summarised his findings of the evolution process of the relationship in a five-stage model, including a pre-relationship, early-relationship, development, long-term, and final stage.

Within these stages, the parameters responsible for moving to the next level are linked to the increased experience of the related business partners that in return reduce uncertainty (Gao, Sirgy and Bird, 2005; Kelly, Schaan and Joncas, 2002). Hence, in an ideal situation, the partners in the relationship become bonded, and the commitments intensify, leading to the formation of a win-win situation for both companies purely due to an increased level of trust (Ford, 1980a). However, there is no automatism, and the relationship can suffer a setback if, at some stage, the development deteriorates, e.g., inferior product quality supplied.

Close relationships are not always the foundation of industrial buying and selling between firms. Other key factors, such as the product itself and specific process technologies of the companies involved, can also be important in determining the nature of the buyer-seller relations (Ford, 1980a). Another, yet no less important factor, is the existing market structures and the availability of alternative business partners (Ford, 1980a). However, it is more attractive and secure for companies to develop close relationships rather than play the market (Galli and Nardin, 2003). Not only does this give the involved companies benefits in the form of cost reductions or increased revenues but also the advantage of higher predictability and less ambiguity (Galli and Nardin, 2003).

These benefits are achieved when the involved companies adjust their resources to specifically meet the requirements of the other by making 'durable transaction-specific investments' (Carter and Hodgson, 2006; Williamson, 1979) e.g., investment in machinery to produce a specific customer product. By doing this, the companies engage in a form of interdependence from a buyer-seller relationship perspective, which can be considered a crucial characteristic of industrial marketing (Gudziol-Vidal and Buenaventura-Vera, 2018; Webster, 1979).

Williamson (1996) argued that human adaptation due to alterations in procedures or provision of compatible and adequate business partners reduces the tendency towards opportunistic behaviour, therefore reduces the need for trust (while simultaneously increasing its presence) and leads to reduced cost. In contrast, Gudziol-Vidal et al. (2018) point to "the indirect effect of trust on the perceived value through the mediation of competitiveness and reputation" (p. 60), which leads to reduced cost. However, due to the complexity of the relationships in social exchange and to gain better insight, the norms and procedures affecting the relationship and the atmosphere in the relationship need to be considered. Ford (1980a) pointed out that only an incomplete picture can be gained by looking at the overall atmosphere. It is only by a partial analysis of the individual episodes (stages) of the buyer and seller exchanges and the recognition of mutual adaptations in the relationship (Ross Brennan, Turnbull and Wilson, 2003; Heide and John, 1988) added to the overall relationship that a full picture of the interaction is formed (Ford, 1980b). Ford (1990) argues: "Another important aspect of the relationship is the adaptations which one or other party may make in either the elements exchanged or the process of exchange." (p.14).

In the individual stages of Ford's (1980b) five-stages model on the establishment and development of buyer and seller relationships in the business market, specific distances

can be perceived between the buyer and seller that ought to be overcome, reduced, or accounted for in seeking the long-term and final stages. The variables that are considered (experience, uncertainty, distance, commitment and adaptation, work towards social distance, cultural distance, technological distance, time distance, and geographic distance) at the beginning of the interaction determine the course of action and identify the distances that are literally to be overcome to engage in a working relationship. It is a dynamic process where the involved parties operate within a given industry and expect mutual benefits from each other (Zineldin, 1995). Moreover, this interaction process includes both business and social exchange, where the quality of the relationship depends on the quality of the interaction process (Zineldin, 1995).

The research regarding business relationships shows that, despite certain similarities, considerable variation, resulting from the different distances mentioned above, exists in different relationships (Hausman, 2001). Indeed, the variation increases tremendously given global issues when going from a national to international business interaction. In a multinational business relationship, the factors involved and distances to overcome require cross-cultural knowledge (Voldnes and Grønhaug, 2015).

While there have been many studies on culture and relationships in the interactional marketing context (e.g., Rosenbloom and Larsen, 2003; illiams, Han and Qualls, 1998; Conway and Swift, 2000; Samaha, Beck and Palmatier, 2014; Mehta, Larsen, Rosenbloom and Ganitsky, 2006), little is known about the anthropological factors and their origin, that affect cross-cultural business relationships (Kaunonen, 2009). Indeed studies (Engelen and Brettel, 2011; Leung *et al.*, 2005; Yaprak, 2008) have predominantly favoured capturing a functionalist perspective on culture that can be defined by a set of variables. The tendency to apply these set of variables uniformly (Smircich, 1983; Fletcher and Fang, 2006) on other cultures is, as Schulz and Hatch (1996) argue, ignoring cultural instability and

ambiguity. Hence, a comprehensive and interpretive perspective, with the intention to understand and allow a more holist view on culture, can be beneficial (Alvesson, 2002). This matter reaches a higher level of importance once it is acknowledged that culture does indeed affect perception and decision making (Dzever, Quester and Chetty, 2001).

Another variable affecting interaction is the perception of the supplier. Bilkey and Nes (1982) have shown that the country of origin (COO) has various effects on the outcome of supplier and product evaluation. Andersen and Chao (2003) identified COO factors as being central to industrial buying situations in a global industrial sourcing context. It is the national characteristics of availability, quality, price, and resources that generate a specific picture of the confronted industrial environments. Hence, more profound knowledge about the business partner climbs in importance.

Aside from the national perception of a supplier, comes the problem of the different languages. Graham (1980) argued that, for sellers, entering a foreign market means adapting to different settings according to different rules and very often also communicating in a different language with which the seller might not be as familiar. Marschan, Welch and Welch (1997) summarise that multinationals "cannot allow language to become a peripheral, or forgotten, issue, given that it permeates virtually every aspect of their operations" (p. 597) and Andersen and Rasmussen (2004) point to the importance of language skills in corporate communication, especially in a French context as this can become to be a significant obstacle to interaction. Therefore, the assumption that influencing factors and behaviours of those purchasing in one country apply to those purchasing in other parts of the world lacks a solid foundation (Kaunonen, 2009). Different countries in a business interaction may lead to different results, and generalised approaches to business interaction may neglect cultural idiosyncrasy, reducing the chance of successful business interaction.

2.5 The Role of Trust in a Relationship

2.5.1 Defining trust

Trust has been mentioned several times in the previous sections. Numerous studies and conceptual work within the field of marketing that demonstrate interest in the phenomenon of trust have their origin in the 90s (Castaldo et al., 2010). Multiple research disciplines – psychology, sociology, economics, management and marketing (Zieliński, Sulimowska-Formowicz and Takemura, 2019) – have researched the phenomenon of trust, yet leaving the multidimensional construct of trust without agreed common meaning (Akrout and Akrout, 2011). According to Strong and Weber (1998), trust is culturally determined and differences in the perception and understanding of trust exist globally between cultures. However, theoretical literature suggest that trust is, among other things, influenced by education (Altwaian, 2019), which in return is shaped by its own cultural conditions.

While the theory on trust is still developing, trust has been acknowledged as an essential element in the business-to-business interaction context and, as Lewicki, Macalister, and Bies (1998) stipulated, it is particularly important in social relationships between individuals. Research and analysis by Luhmann (2014) lead to a wide consensus among researchers that trust has a function to play in reducing complexity. Rousseau et al. (1998) described trust as the positive expectations of another individual's words, actions, and decisions. According to So and Sculli (2002), trust is developed through the consistent and predictable acts of an exchange partner over an extended period. It is an essential factor to secure positive outcomes from an exchange (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010; T. V. Nguyen and Rose, 2009). So and Sculli (2002) suggested that, without some level of trust, the exchange would not take place at all. Usunier (1996) claims that trust is a necessary condition for smooth and efficient business between partners. This enhanced cooperative

behaviour decreases the potential of conflicts, leading to reduced transaction cost and making markets more efficient (Glaeser et al. 2000). However, trust is also a highly intangible, volatile asset. It is difficult to create trust with business partners, but easy to destroy. Although trust has many possible definitions, Moorman, Deshpande and Zaltman, (1993) define trust as: "…a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence…" (p. 82). This definition draws on Robert's (1967) classic view that "trust is a generalised expectancy held by an individual that the word of another… can be relied on" (p. 651). In the context of exchange of a firm's working relationship, Anderson and Narus (1986) have outlined trust to be "…the firm's belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes for the firm…" (p. 326). Mayer et al. (1995) point directly at the different situations of the involved parties:

> The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. (p. 712)

Hence trust can be gained in the dyad if the trustee lives up to the expectation of the vulnerable trustor. Considering the dyad to be a business relationship, then trust is developed and embedded within this relationship. Blois (1999) specifies: "Trust evolves through the process of a growth of knowledge and understanding of the people with whom we interact plus the actual experience of working with them" (p. 206). While trust in interaction develops over time by learning from each other to develop trust step by step (Håkansson and Snehota, 2000), McKnight et al. (1998) argued that at least some level of trust must exist before any interaction occur, as it would be rather unlikely that any form of exchange might be possible in a total absence of trust.

2.5.2 The dimensions of trust

Trust can rely on three pillars: disposition, instrumental calculus, and institutions. Disposition refers to the pre-existing and relatively constant personality traits that influence how the participants in exchanges conduct their interactions with others. Weiss and Adler (1984) argued that there are unobservable states, or traits, in an individual's personality or an organisation's cognitive system. As such, there are behavioural schemas that "represent a generalised pattern of sense-making that allows the participants to understand the behaviour of their partners and to respond appropriately" (Luomala, Kumar, Singh, and Jaakkola, 2015, p. 541) in different situations. These do differ representing mental schemas that are context-dependent (Liu et al., 2012).

Trust is related to the perception of the other actor's professional and individual abilities in different situations (Levin, et al., 2002; McCarter and White 2007). It may be, given specific, differing cultural characteristics, that trust is perceived and related to different aspects and based on cultural values, but trust is, as Rotter (1980) concluded, one of the most essential dispositions on the way to successful interaction and also commonly a measure and a "gateway to a successful relationship" (as cited in C. Möller and Wilson, 1995, p. 56).

The calculus base of trust takes two distinct forms, deterrence calculus, and instrumental calculus, where both are based on a cost-benefit analysis (Beukers, Bertolini and Te Brömmelstroet, 2014). In both cases, the calculus base of trust is driven by the intention to maintain the relationship relative to the cost, with the option of severing the interaction not being an anticipated outcome (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer, 1998). It is a fragile construct that grows over time but can be abruptly terminated if one of the interaction partners abuses the trust (Coleman, 1994; Deutsch, 1958, 1962; Eberl, 2004).

Institution, the third general basis of trust, is the social pattern of activity, symbolic systems, control, and ways of ordering reality (Friedland and Alford, 1991). The institution acts as a guarantee or security for a particular type of behaviour and as a method of dealing with business, giving the buyer in the interaction the possibility to form and hold beliefs about the expectations of positive outcomes (Bachmann and Inkpen, 2011). McKnight et al. (1998) and Zucker (1986) formulated that trust derives from the threat of legal and social sanctions built-in by institutions.

Aside from these presented general trust bases, there is also a situational base of trust that is related to a particular exchange episode in a relationship (Nienaber, Hofeditz and Romeike, 2015). This includes deterrence calculus, experience, and referent reputation, where deterrence trust is derived through the presence of costly sanctions for opportunistic behaviour (Lewicki and Stevenson, 1997). In contrast to the instrumental calculus base, which comes into play across an array of exchange situations, deterrence calculus is situation-specific (Johnson and Cullen, 2002) and becomes relevant in situations of, e.g., compensation for breach of contract.

2.5.3 Drivers of trust

In addition to the dimensions of trust, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, (1995) have proposed three factors of trustworthiness, ability, benevolence and integrity. These conditions, if the content is addressed, contribute to the creation of trust, at least in relation to the specific aspect. Ability is thought to be the influence within a specific domain based on skills, competencies and characteristics of a trustee. Benevolence "is the perception of a positive orientation of the trustee towards the trustor" (Mayer et al.,1995, p. 719), and this means the trustor believes the trustee has good intentions. Integrity refers to the perception that the trustee acts on principles that are inherent to those of the trustor.

Lewicki and Bunker (1996) have addressed the question of how to develop, and maintain trust in a business relationship. Their model is based on an earlier work by Shapiro, Sheppard and Cheraskin (1992) who sketched trust-building as a dynamic process depending on the trust relationship achieved, an aspect that Lewicki and Bunker emphasize: Trust-building is a dynamic, and not a static, process.

The first level of trust to be achieved is called calculus-based trust. This level is based on deterrence. Consistent behaviour, based on the fear of negative consequences in the event of a deviation, the risk of loss of trust if this is divorced and the loss of reputation are the basis here (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). Correspondingly, the gain in trust is slow and small. In addition, trust can be ruined by a misconduct.

The second level is called knowledge-based trust and is based on the knowledge acquired by the other in order to be able to predict behaviour and to trust it. To reach this level, constant contact is necessary to understand how the other thinks and acts. In result, trust in plannable result of an interaction is created.

The third level is called identification-based trust and emerges when personal identification with the wishes and intentions of the of the business partners is alike. Trust is created here because mutual understanding is developed, which makes it possible to act in the interests of the other. Here, trust means the confidence that one's own interests are preserved and protected. Common values and goals are the basis for this long-term trust relation.

One other important basis of trust is reputation. Reputation is the general estimation in favour of a person or an organisation acknowledged by the interacting party (Rao, 1994; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988). Lahno (1995) argued that an actor's reputation could serve as a significant basis of trust. Hence, the sum of characteristics and traits ascribed in the

referent's reputation that may be joined to the right business conduct could support a buyer's belief of a credible seller, business partner, and interactor.

A review of the literature suggests several conditions for the evolution of trust in exchange relationships. These include motivational investment, risk, and interdependence (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987; D. M. Rousseau et al., 1998; Sheppard and Sherman, 1988; Ferrin, Bligh and Kohles, 2008; Vlaar, Van den Bosch and Volberda, 2007; Ybarra and Turk, 2009).

Motivational investment and the extent to which the parties align to each other is a key factor for increasing trust. Through this investment, trust has the potential to increase and reach an elevated level, facilitating interaction (Dasgupta, 1988; Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987; Wicks, Berman, and Jones, 1999). The alignment of interest follows the insight that the interacting parties see benefits and/or some enhancement of the business interaction that can be gained through trust (Beukers, Bertolini and Te Brömmelstroet, 2014; Weber, Malhotra and Murnighan, 2004). The motivation of the actors to build and increase trust is born from the will to strengthen their own beliefs in the partner's credibility (Johnson and Cullen, 2002). Coleman (1994) argued that risk is a second condition for trust augmentation. The requirement for actors' trust increases with the uncertainty of a business outcome. Bhattacharya, Devinney and Pillutla (1998) argued that trust-building is much less of an issue when the outcomes are of mirror importance to a business. Sheppard and Sherman (1998) summarised that the more profound the relation and the higher the risk, the higher the likelihood that trust will evolve either positively, or negatively, beyond its initial levels (Johnson and Cullen, 2002).

2.5.4 Trust and National Cultures

Globalization has led to a growing interest on the role culture plays in exchange, to multicultural workforce interactions and how the cultural differences impact organizational performance (Cox, 1991; Nemetz and Christensen, 1996). Working with other cultures in return, leads to the requirement "to understand how trust develops and the ways national culture impacts the trust-building process" (Doney, Cannon and Mullen, 1998). As detailed in more depth in chapter 3, "the collective mental programming of the people in an environment" Hofstede (1980b, p.43) results in norms and values inherent to these people and determines whom, and the circumstances under which, trust can be established. Accordingly, knowing and appreciating these norms and values, which determine behavioural standards and beliefs (Doney, Cannon and Mullen, 1998), should facilitate the trust building process. However, individuals from different backgrounds value different traditions, customs and religions that are deeply embedded in their national culture and form the norms and values that vary tremendously across cultures and are resistant to change. Hence, the multifaceted aspects of national cultures in the different countries around the globe will eventually influence the building of trust differently (Gefen and Heart, 2006). Therefore, different research (Gefen and Heart, 2006; Greenberg et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2014; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999) has discussed the interrelation of national culture and trust. Accordingly, the process of a trustor to establish trust will depend heavily according to their ability to adapt to the culture (Triandis, 1972).

Understanding the influence and resulting effects of different national dimensions on trust has been in the focus of diverse research (Yong, 2009; Capece et al., 2013; Shiu, Walsh, Hassan, and Parry, 2015) and some research seeks only to understand specific dimensions (Shiu et al., 2015; An and Kim, 2008; Chen et al., 2008). Doney, Cannon and Mullen (1998) have taken a wider approach and used a framework based on Hofstede's

original 4 dimensions in conjunction with Clark's (1990) conceptual domain and related taxonomies and proposed five different routes trustors may take to develop trust, based on the cognitive analysis of the trustors determination to place themselves at risk. These findings were questioned by Noorderhaven (1999), who highlighted that the use of cultural dimensions would lead to a generalized picture of the psychological state of trust over the world. He further supports the view that a more fundamental approach and more empirical data is needed to enable a holistic view on the different aspects in different cultures that enable and are related to the building of trust.

Despite, the value approach taken by Hofstede (1980), his ranking with score of the different cultural dimensions provides a useful comparative starting framework to identify and understand differences in trust building processes. Openness is required to appreciate that trust and the building of trust may be rooted differently in other cultures, especially since the knowledge acquired on the subject of trust has been researched to a large extent in Western countries (Gefen and Heart, 2006). So, the trust context in China may focus on emotional ties, and require the empathy of the other (Luo 2000; Nicholson et al. 2001), whereas in the Western this may be focused more on professionalism and competence (Wiersma, 2011), resulting in a different emphasis.

2.5.4 Trust and personal contact

A measure promoting trust is the frequency of personal contacts, which is an indicator of the amount of resources attributed to this specific social exchange (Ford, 1997) and a feature used to reduce cultural distance (Child, 2001). Even though the interface contacts can rarely be described as simple dyadic relationships, these influence the overall dyadic relationship that evolves. This is because of the involvement of all actors, especially in complex industry business affairs where a variety of persons from different departments

are in an interaction with a counterpart, contribute to the overall company relationship. However, it needs to be considered that the reciprocity between cultures in establishing a trustful relationship is not always equal. Willinger et al. (2003) have shown that between French and German partners, it is the Germans who show more trust in their French counterparts than vice versa.

This does not question that the investment in the relationships that are undertaken by the actors – the forming of bonds – leads to higher levels of commitment from each party. Dwyer et al. (1987) argue that commitment can be considered as the "highest stage of relational bonding" (p. 23). Relationship commitment facilitates business cooperation (Morgan and Hunt,1994) and enables performance enhancement (Ramaseshan, Yip and Pae, 2006), acting in a similar manner to trust as an influencing factor, despite the availability of alternative business actors (De Ruyter, Moorman and Lemmink, 2001; Han, 1992; Mummalanemi, 1987; Ruben and Paparoidamis, 2007). Some researchers speculate that there is a reciprocal effect (Seppänen, Blomqvist and Sundqvist, 2007) between trust and commitment and that commitment may influence the continuous building of trust positively (Fredendall, Hopkins and Bhonsle, 2005; Dyer and Chu, 2011).

Hence, salespersons feel that they need to develop personal relationships and actively work on social bonding with the buyer contact to achieve both a prospering business and working relationship, or as Mummalaneni and Wilson (1991) concluded, to ensure a major role of importance in the future development of the business relationship.

However, the success of this approach is not guaranteed, as the personal characteristics of the individual, in part, account for the success of the approach. Cunningham and Turnbull (1982) commented on the relevance of the actors' psychology that can be very individual in interaction style, while the IMP Group (1982a) emphasised motivation and experience as relevant factors. In this context, another factor, the

importance of communication within the building of trust (Dyer and Chu, 2011; Leszczynski, 2013) needs to be underlined and explored more deeply.

2.6 The Role of Communication in the Exchange Process and the Building of Trust

Francesco and Gold (2005) defined relational communication as the process of transmitting thoughts or ideas from one person to another or one group to another. These transmission between companies in industrial markets occurs through personal contacts, representing a social exchange within the business relationship, giving this aspect a vital role within the social exchange.

Effective communication across cultural boundaries is an essential skill in every business interaction (Szkudlarek, 2009). When coming from different countries and possibly having different languages, cultural differences cross-cultural communication may be affected (J. Jackson, 2014; Kartabayeva and Zhaitapova, 2016). Given these differences, the intend particular meaning in a specific message, may be received and understood to have a different meaning by the communication counterpart, resulting in misunderstandings and leading to possible conflicts (Krippendorff and Bermejo, 2009).

A pragmatic approach for many companies in Europe to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity in communication, was the adoption of English as their official language, both to establish their global image and to facilitate communication among managers and subsidiaries around the world. Airbus, the aircraft manufacturer with headquarters in France, has chosen this approach for over 30 years, and national companies in Britain, France, Spain, and Germany have accepted English as the 'official' language. While at meetings, other national languages may be spoken, the minutes are, however, always in English (Tagliabue, 2002).

Nonetheless, as Gilsdorf (2002) explained, English versions can vary from the standard Oxford English. A simple example is the comparison of United States English to British English, where some words not only have slightly different meanings but may mean completely different things (e.g., the word *football* or the word *chips*). Scott (2000) argued that United States English and British English share approximately 90% of their working vocabulary, leaving plenty of room for misunderstanding. To complicate matters, some terms from one language cannot be translated, as there is sometimes no equivalent word in another language, for instance, the word 'afterglow' with no direct translation in French or the expression 'no-brainer' with no equivalent in the German language.

Verbal communication styles are another way that cultures vary in their communication patterns. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) identify four different verbal communication styles: direct versus indirect, elaborate versus succinct, personal versus contextual, and instrumental versus effective. These verbal styles are learned within the cultural contexts of the users and reflect and embody the affective, moral, and aesthetic terms of culture (Oludaja, 2000). The four vocal styles can be associated with the cultural characteristics coined by Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of cultural value and Hall's high and low-context culture descriptions (E. T. Hall, 1976, 1983; Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer, 2000).

With the many verbal and non-verbal differences in communication, people from different cultures often misunderstand each other. Edward T. Hall (1994) observed that all human beings are captives of their cultures. People without intercultural knowledge tend to interpret the words and actions of those from other cultures just as they would those of individuals from their home culture (Kirst-Ashman and Hull, 2008). This is a significant barrier to cross-cultural understanding. With all the given nuances and variations of a culture, an outsider needs to learn to better understand and to be able to translate the

ethnographic meaning (Grimshaw, 2001) of it all. Still, even after studying an unfamiliar culture in advance, once there, an individual still confronts the totality of different communication approaches that can include a different language, a different verbal style, and numerous different non-verbal clues (Qili and Dong, 2016). Along with these different approaches, variations in culture, perception, and experience also make communication difficult (A. H. Bell, 1992). However, communication is a large part of every manager's job. By one estimate, a typical manager spends as much as 80% of the day in communication (Greenberg, 1996). As the worldwide trend towards increased international business continues and domestic labour forces in many countries become more diverse, the ability to communicate cross-culturally is critical. Researchers have remarked that the lack of affinity for foreign markets, respective foreign languages and cultures, represents an obstacle to understanding required adaptations towards foreign customers (Håkansson and Wootz, 1975; Hallén and Wiedersheim-Paul, 1979). Hence, the need to develop communication competence (Bush et al., 2001) to enable successful interaction (Griffith, 2002) is advisable. Closely related to communication are the aspects of trust, as trust can be defined as "an expectancy held by an individual or group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon" (Rotter, 1967, p. 651). Palmatier et al. (2007) argues that the role of communication in building trust is more important than other factors and can be perceived as the glue bonding the partners of a business activity together (Mohr and Nevin, 1990). While there are differing hypothesises whether trust causes communication (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh, 1987) or whether communication affects the development of trust (Anderson, Lodish, and Weitz, 1987; Wong, 2002; Thomas et. al, 2009). Anderson and Naurus (1990) suggest the relation to be an iterative one where communication is an antecedent to trust and acts as a predictor of trust (Wong and Sohal, 2002; Thomas et. al, 2009). But other studies have

found that trust can also have an effect within relationship communication (Gaines, 1980; van Vuuren, de Jong and Seydel, 2007), so that trust and communication influence each other reciprocally. However, once successful communication is established between business parties it can be seen as a result of the trust established between those parties (Akrout and Akrout 2011). It is a sign of established cognitive and relational proximity, strengthening the interaction (Thorgren and Wincent, 2011).

Hence, the complexity of building successful business interaction through communication and fostering trust is high (Zeffane et al., 2011). Perhaps, even more so in a multicultural context. Some researchers have described the approach towards business relationship, in reference to Lindblom (1959) - and is still today (Scott Jr., 2010) – at what can best be described as 'muddling through' with a continuous process of development, indicating the complexity and difficulties involved. Thus, knowledge and awareness of cultural differences are important in understanding variances in meaning, i.e., cognition. This allows for a better understanding of the communication partner (Lustig and Koester, 2013; Samovar et al. 2017).

2.7 The Model of this Research – Part 1

In the previous sections aspects of trust and communication have been suggested to individually, but also mutually, influence general business interaction and the social B2B interaction process. Yet, examination of their dynamics and relevance in a multicultural setting, particularly in a more focused examination of specific cultural aspects, has been less evident in research. While communication is reported as an important determinant of trust between companies in a vast body of literature (Dyer and Chu, 2011; Leszczynski, 2013), and reported to be stronger than other factors (Palmatier et al., 2013), the demand to consider the multicultural mechanisms affecting business

interaction is obvious alongside how trust plays a role in this specific context. The deeply embedded different norms and values resolve in in a multitude of different aspects that may influence the building of trust along different national cultures (Gefen and Heart, 2006). In an intercultural business setting, concentrating on the social aspects, becomes of major relevance and is supported by Harris and Wheeler (2005). They argue that the ability to break down cultural barriers and overcome cultural distance (Toornroos, 1991), by developing cultural awareness, is a more promising approach to successful interaction, rather than following the general, universal applicability of the relationship marketing concept (e.g., Grönroos, 1994) - that is likely to fail.

For this reason, the research model presented focusses on a specific area of Håkansson's (1982), interaction model (see p. 33). The social exchange that has been described in the model is examined with regards to the effect of the diverging established education systems in the different countries. It focuses on the influences of higher education in a French-German business-to-business context, and on factors that have been identified to be of importance in the interaction process: trust and communication. The model presented below centres on business interaction in its cultural environment and visualises the culturally influenced aspects of trust and communication as acts involved in this interaction.

Figure 2: Research model: initial building blocks.
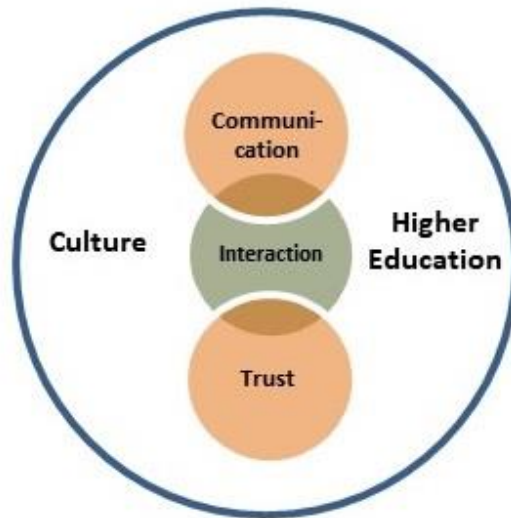
It is important to appreciate the possible interdependences between all the factors. Trust and communication are intricately linked to the quality of relationships experienced in interpersonal work relationships. Savolainen and Lopez-Fresno (2013) argue that trust can be regarded as an intangible relational asset in an interaction or an activity between individuals where communication acts as an antecedent of trust. While the influence of communication on trust has been clearly recognized by research (Zeffane et al., 2011, Butler and Cantrell, 1994) the nature of the interrelationship is not yet completely understood (Ruppel and Harrington, 2000, Welch and Jackson, 2007). Zieliński, Sulimowska-Formowicz and Takemura (2019) argue that "much more is known about the influence of trust on B2B relationships, than about the factors affecting the growth or decline of trust itself" (p. 4). Hence, the relationship between trust and communication is a complex process (Zeffane et al., 2011) and Anderson and Narus' (1990) suggestions may well still hold – that it is sensible to perceive the relationship as an iterative process where communication is seen as an antecedent to trust, reciprocally leading to better communication (Savolainen, Lopez-Fresno and Ikonen, 2014).

Trust and communication in business interaction, however their interactions and interconnections are construed, appear to be interdependent. These aspects interrelate on diverse levels and it is a perceivable process. The situation becomes even more complex when the interaction becomes an intercultural business relationship. The relationship that is built by the interaction is conditioned by the cultural context in which they take place (Palmer, 2000), and the significance of undertaking what is an adapted interaction, draws on a broader cultural understanding. Culture in this context is still a far-reaching entity and the educational system is a part of each culture. Influential aspects that have their origin in the educational system need to be defined more precisely to enable a better view on the aspects of this cultural area that are of relevance in this French-German context. Therefore, the next chapter reviews current knowledge of French culture, focusing on aspects related to higher education to provide a more detailed research model that further underscores the aspects that are relevant for this research. The research model presented here is then extended at the end of chapter 3 to encompass these aspects and present the completed initial conceptual model that frames this research.

Chapter 3. Literature Review Part II: The Cultural/Historical/Educational Context

This chapter focuses on the effects of culture on business interaction. Special attention is drawn to the education system of the *Grandes Ècoles* in France to understand further the role the higher education system may play in business interactions and the possible implications when dealing with graduates from these institutes for business exchange. After a review of standard literature on culture and cultural aspects for France and Germany, the history and development of education in France and Germany is traced and differentiating aspect of both countries, with relevance to social and business interaction, are highlighted.

3.1 Culture

One of the most illuminating concepts developed by modern scholarship in social science is summarised in the term *culture*. There is a wide array of definitions available for culture. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) had already identified more than 160 in the 1950s, and many have been added in recent times. Mathew Arnold's (1869) "Culture and Anarchy" was the first to refer to the term *culture* as what could be found in the products of intellectual or artistic endeavours. This view only encompasses those connected to the artistic, and this has limited scope.

Later Sir Edward Tylor (1871), an anthropologist, took a more holistic approach to define *culture*, including all people within a group in his definition to encompass the different views on and conceptualisations of the notion, which he describes as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by men as a member of society'. Hence, culture is described as being acquired by the individual as part of a group. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck

(1961) described culture as value orientation, and Schwartz (1992) argued that culture comprises the derivatives of the experience of the individual. Culture was also defined by Geert Hofstede (1980b) as "the collective mental programming of the people in an environment" (p. 43). He explained: "Culture is not a characteristic of individuals; it encompasses a number of people who were conditioned by the same education and life experience" (p. 43).

Hofstede (1980a) argued that culture is a reflection of the way people evaluate things, what they believe in, their values, the way they view the world, and the place they have in it. This argument implies that culture is cognitive, which means culture is made of what the people think. Hence, culture could be described as the thought and values of a group. This accords with Trompenaars (1993), who argued that culture is the way in which a group solves problems. Being a shared system of meanings, culture dictates what people pay attention to, how they act, and what they value. Haviland et al. (2016) asserted that culture not only refers to the behaviour that is observed but also rather to the values and beliefs that are at the core of one's behaviour. Hence over the years, the view of what culture is has become much more specific, to a view that acknowledges that culture is eventually formed by one's life experiences, finds codification in values and beliefs and is expressed as behaviour.

Harris and Moran (1996) stated: 'Culture is a concept like a diamond. Hold the jewel to the light, and get another perspective'. One of the newer definitions is presented by Spencer-Oatey (2008), who summarised a few of the previous findings by stating:

> Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the "meaning" of other people's behaviour (p. 4).

Studies in management values and behaviour were first undertaken the 1960s (Tayeb, 2001), but at that time, the effects of culture were not the research focus. Later, cross-cultural research concentrated on finding differences or similarities, or both, from one culture to another (Bond, Fu, and Pasa, 2001; Lawrence and Edwards, 2000). Usunier (1998) argued that cross-cultural studies generally assume nominal differences, "Countries are assigned codes, treated nominally as cultures and differences are observed, but neither explained nor interpreted; the causes behind observed differences remain largely unaddressed" (p. 36). The problem of clear criteria for comparison of cultures, the so-called cross-cultural equivalence (Van de Vijver and Leung, 1997), increases. Furthermore, what has been called the "Malinovskian dilemma" (Hofstede, 1998, p. 18) was identified, it foregrounds the possible choice researchers can make to concentrate on unique aspects of culture or the choice to focus on comparable aspects and hence the distinction of an idiographic or nomothetic style can be made. However, the tendency to generalise, to quantify to pursue a monothetic approach would deprive the researcher of the subtleties of culture.

Comparable to ethnocentrism, which can become an obstacle, according to McGrane (1989), this can be overcome by the stance of cultural relativism, considering the culture's uniqueness, hence basing the evaluation of another culture on its own standards and values (Bond et al., 2001). Usunier and Lee (2005) related Disneyland's France problems and near bankruptcy in its early years to American ethnocentric management, leaving out French cultural values.

The effect of history on culture is widely recognized in business and management (Garrison, 1998; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy, 2017; Usunier, 1990) and cultural differences can generally be related to historical developments. Particularly in France, values and behaviours are strongly influenced by history (Aron, 1975; Braudel, 1986;

Lecourt, et al.1997). Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) stressed the "rich historical context shared among French people.... the French see the past as more prominent than the present or the future.... the French tend to see everything through the historical lens of the past. The present and the future are integral to the past" (p. 346). Usunier and Lee (2005) supported this view by arguing that the French are oriented to the past, which means that tradition has a high value and importance (Hofstede, 2001).

While Collett (1998) found that international research in management focuses on the values of managers, or on their business partners values, the relationship that is represented by both is rarely uncovered and so is the relevant historical background from which these values are formed. In inter- and cross-cultural interaction, these different values come together, and consequently, Harris and Morran (1996) pointed to the need to consider what is happening 'in' the interaction. Shanahan (1996) further ascribed linguistic and cultural competence as an essential requirement for managers, going beyond the simple memorising of cultural facts towards the adaptation of cultural nuances and settled linguistic competences, recognizing the significance between culture and language. This favours perceiving management as culture-bound (T. Jackson and Aycan, 2001), whereas universalists, those emphasising common principles, would argue that management is culture free and transferable across cultures. There are also debates about the development of cultures, where researchers like Hofstede (1980a), Trompenaars (1998), and Adler (1997) argue towards the persistence of diverging national cultural values.

Regarding Germans and the French, the differences are significant (E. T. Hall and Hall, 1990; Leenhardt and Picht, 1989) and despite European integration, these differences persist in both countries' top management (M. Mayer and Whittington, 1999). Aside from Germany and France, there is the observation of the tendency to preserve cultural uniqueness throughout European countries forming the union (El Kahal, 1998) and current

political debates would suggest that this still remains an issue. National culture has a significant effect on the prevailing management style (Tayeb, 1996). Shanahan (1996) argued that the acceptance of cultural differences is essential to achieve business success. Even more, cultural awareness and knowledge (Joynt and Warner, 2002) is the key to successful management.

Furthermore, as various authors (El Kahal, 1998; E. T. Hall and Hall, 1990) have argued, the long-term aspects of culture and the effect of management to induce change show little effect. Hofstede (2002) argues: "Mental programmes do change, but slowly and not according to anyone's master plan. Changes take decades, if not centuries... In planning, we better take mental programmes as given facts" (p. 163), so that sales managers need to work within a given cultural context.

Therefore, it is necessary for sales managers to have, or acquire, a deeper understanding of the others' culture. Failing to do so may hinder business success (Ricks, 1996; Tayeb, 1996). Successful cross-cultural interaction involves skilful and sensitive managers (Deresky, 2000; Mercado, Welford, and Prescott, 2001) who adapt their strategy to the culture they want to enter in business relations with and do not expect it to be the other way round.

3.2 Cultural Analysis

Geert Hofstede's (1980a, 2001) classic study of dimensions of cultural value focuses particularly on work-related values.

> There is an ever-increasing need for cooperation across cultures. Most of the major and minor problems that beset our world can only be solved by the close cooperation of people from different national backgrounds. Policy-makers have largely been blind to the fact that if you and I come from different countries, we are likely to think differently. Our mental programming is at least partly a product of our national background, and it often gets in the way when we try to get a job done

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with somebody whose mental programming is slightly different. (Hofstede, 1984b, p. 27)

The referred to mental programming portrays Hofstede's belief that people carry mental programmes that are developed in the family in early childhood, which are then reinforced in schools and organisations and that these mental programmes contain components of the national culture. These components are most clearly expressed in the different values that predominate among people from different countries. The culture dimension approach uses broad cultural dimensions to make predictions about negation outcomes. Hofstede (1980a) initially identified four dimensions of values to explain the differences among cultures:

- individualism/collectivism,

- power distance,

- uncertainty avoidance, and

- masculinity/femininity.

Hofstede (1991) added the fifth dimension of 'long-term orientation vs short-term orientation' and following the work of, and coined by, Michael Minkov (2007) a sixth dimension, 'indulgence versus self-restraint' (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

In individualistic countries, people have concerns for themselves and their families rather than others. The needs, values and goals of the individual are rated higher than those of the group (Gudykunst, 1997). Individualistic cultures view the individual as the dominant focus. Given Hofstede's (1984a) evaluation, both France and Germany score close to each other with 71 and 67 points, being 65% and 56% above average (based on 93 countries to which the research has been extended thanks to the research of Michael Minkov, (2007)), respectively. In both societies, the individual is essential, and each person's rights are highly valued. Organisational systems honour individual preference and

choice, and an employee's evaluation and reward are based on individually agreed-upon objectives. In individualistic-oriented countries, individual initiative is important, and even when employees work as a team, they receive recognition for individual achievement (Francesco and Gold, 2005).

On the other hand, collectivistic cultures value the overall good of the group because the expectation is that people should subordinate their individual interests and needs for group benefit. Because being part of a group is so important, members have evident expectations of how people in the group should behave (Hornsey, 2008). In collectivistic countries, people look after each other in exchange for loyalty, emphasise belonging, and make group decisions (Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier, 2002).

Power distance reflects the extent to which less powerful members of organisations and institutions accept the unequal distribution of power. In contrast to France, Germany has a low score of 35, which is 36% below the world average, while France has a high score of 68 points that is 24% higher than average (Hofstede, 1984a). The lower power distance society is less comfortable with power differences, such as class distribution or organisational ranking than higher power distance cultures (Hofstede, 2011). Rank differences are ignored in lower power distance cultures in certain situations. It is possible for someone in a high-level position to treat those in lower-level positions as equals (Francesco and Gold, 2005). In higher power distance cultures, it is the individual's social, or organisational, position that influences his or her actions and the way others treat him or her (Farh, Hackett and Liang, 2007; Lam and Chan, 2012). The hierarchical structure and rank accorded to the individual are generally accepted with related competencies and not questioned (Hofstede and Hofstede, G. J., 2005; Lam and Chan, 2012). The differences in rank are always perceivably present. Since decision making relates to the competences of a manager's position, the delegation of decision making is not an option in such a broad

power distance culture, since it would imply incompetence (Francesco and Gold, 2005). It is not surprising in this context, given the relation of rank and position with fewer possibilities to act independently and responsibly, that to gain broader decision-making power, represents an extrinsic motivation factor (Ferreira, 2017), where people in cultures with a high-power distance have lower work-related motivation (Saadat, Mohsin, Khaliq Ur and Sehrish, 2014; Khatri, 2009; Helou and Viitala, 2007).

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which individuals feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance will have limited tolerance to ambiguity so that, in these cultures, people avoid change and risk. France and Germany are both countries with a high tendency to uncertainty avoidance. France's uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) score is 86% higher than the world UAI average and higher than that of Germany at 65%, which is just 2% above average (Hofstede, 1984a). The French seek a structured environment given that they do not like surprises (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Having all information at hand is appreciated and hence for meetings and negotiations the preference is to receive all necessary information beforehand. Emotions can run high with French people; the high-power distance and high individualism may be exhausting for everyone involved and can lead to emotional discussions (Hofstede Insights, n.d.), or as the French say: 'une engueulade' (dressing-down). They strongly resist changes to their traditional beliefs and institutions and there is a strong need for laws, rules and regulations to structure life. However, given the high-power distance, those higher up the hierarchical ladder do not always feel the need to follow these (d'Iribarne, 1989). Germans follows a similar path and take a deductive rather than inductive approach, be it in thinking, presenting or in planning. Order and systematic processes are highly valued. People in countries with a high levels

of uncertainty avoidance are concerned about doing things correctly and are unlikely to start a new venture without extensive research (Francesco and Gold, 2005).

In a masculine society, 'tough' values, including success, money, assertiveness, and competition, are dominant. Germany ranks as highly masculine with a score of 66 points, which is 32% higher than average. France, in contrast, has a relatively low score of 43 points, which is 14% below average (Hofstede, 1984a). Feminine cultures place more importance on 'tender' venues, such as personal relationships, care for others, the quality of life, and service. In these cultures, gender roles are less distinct and often equal. Time spent with family is generally of higher value and plays a higher role, so time for professional functions is balanced accordingly (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016).

France and Germany score 63 points, and 83 points, respectively, for 'long term orientation' indicating that both countries are pragmatic in their characteristic (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). This promotes that both countries can adapt traditions to situations, to context, to changed conditions and time much easier than normative societies with a lower score. However, France demonstrates a slightly lower endurance to sustain long term effort, which reflects a slightly lower motivation in this respect (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016). Germany clearly outranked France in this dimension.

The sixth describes indulgent societies in contrast to restrained societies were the first allow "relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires leading to enjoying life and having fun" (Hofstede, 2015, p. 3) in contrast to restrained societies where people feel less happy and healthy, have a more pessimistic view and, do not have the perception of a full life control, while needs are regulated by means of strict norms (Hofstede, 2015). Germany and France scored 40 points and 48 points respectively, coining both countries as restrained societies with France being slightly on the 'happier' side.

Using the average scores for each country, Hofstede (1984a, 2010) developed national profiles to explain the differences in work behaviour. The work-related picture that emerges from the power distance and long term/short term orientation dimensions can be translated to a lower level of work-related motivation (Saadat, Mohsin, Khaliq Ur and Sehrish, 2014; Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016) and also the lower values in the masculinity dimension reflect that the importance of professional obligations and requirements are subordinate to the needs of the family. Bjerke (1999) argues that in low masculinity cultures people work to live. Correspondingly, at lower masculinity levels, the importance of work is lower and factors such as quality of life become more prominent.

The scores of Hofstede's different dimensions have allowed an initial impression to form and it appears that to understand better the possible convergence, and divergence, of cultural values between France and Germany and the behaviour emanating from this, that these different dimensions must be considered to form a more complete picture of a business context.

Aside from Hofstede's (1980a, 2010) classification of values, Trompenaars (1993) developed a framework to examine cultural differences using Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) theory, Hampden-Turner's (1983) dilemma theory, and Parsons' (1951) pattern variables.

Trompenaars described national cultural diversity using seven dimensions: universalism versus particularism, individualism versus communitarianism, specificity versus outer direction, neutral versus affective, achievement vs ascription, internal versus external direction and sequential time versus asynchronous time. In particularistic orientations, rules may be in place and thoroughly reorganised, but exceptions can be made. Exceptions are not only tolerated and accepted but to some extent, expected. The focus is on situation-to-situation judgements and the exceptional nature of circumstances

as they change (Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). The neutral versus the emotional dimension of culture concerns the acceptability of expressing emotions. It emphasises achieving objectives without the 'messy' interference of emotions (Johnson and Cullen, 2002).

In contrast, with an emotional orientation, all forms of emotion are appropriate in almost all situations. The natural and preferred way is to find an immediate outlet for emotions (Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). 'Specific versus diffuse' addresses the extent to which an individual is involved in the business relationship as a person when the tendency is for an individual to have a very limited task and objectivity-focused relationship, the culture is considered to have a specific orientation (Johnson and Cullen, 2002).

A different approach to understanding culture is the use of metaphors. Gannon (2001) identified an important phenomenon, activity, or institution that members of a culture see as important as a metaphor for the culture. The metaphors are built upon the dimensions of Kluckhohn and Stodtbeek (1961), Hofstede (1980a), and Hall (1976) and include many other aspects of culture, such as religion, public behaviour, holidays and ceremonies, food and eating behaviour, and the rate of technological and cultural change. By understanding the metaphor, others can describe and understand the essential features of society.

Even though these approaches are all somewhat different, they are based on the same assumption and offer the advantage of being able to classify and predict possible outcomes of social exchanges based on general cultural dimensions and to possibly verify those with existing measures (McCusker, 1994). However, given the broadness of these dimensions, their use to understand and classify specific behaviour is not the best prediction tool (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

Mercado et al. (2001) argued that the attempt to break down culture in different dimensions might serve as a basis for cross-cultural management, but does not do justice to the demand of acquiring in-depth knowledge and understanding of the culture required in practice. This approach of breaking culture into universal dimensions fails to communicate the necessary understanding of the influence of history, to provide knowledge of why something is the way it is in a specific culture. The complex whole (Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, and Hjanssens, 1995) characterizing a culture is captured too indifferently by the dimension approaches. This inappropriate approach to cultures is what, as Tinsley (1998) noted, lead to variances in business interaction and negotiation and prescriptive tools for companies seeking cross-border business. Therefore, in the context of this research, cultural background information is also provided. Only then can culture be understood as being an integrated concept (Samovar et al., 2017).

3.3 Cultural Values in the French and German Relationship

Since 1959, literature regarding intercultural management has appeared. As generally understood, the culture of a society comprises shared values, understanding, assumptions, and goals that are learned from earlier generations, imposed by the present members of society and are passed on to succeeding generations (Hofstede et al., 2010). Values refer to what an individual or a group considers important (Gudykunst, 2004). "Values are the evaluative and judgmental facet of a culture's 'personal orientation system', helping its members determine what is right or wrong, good or bad, important or unimportant." (Ishii and Klopf, 1987, p. 1). Hence, values determine what is considered important and valuable (Teilanyo, 2015). Separate to these values are cultural norms, which function as a moral guideline providing specific behavioural patterns (Gudykunst, 2004), and are causally involved in the creation of values.

Values can have group or individual dimensions and can be related to specific aspects of life, like social values, professional values, doctrinal (religious) values, ideological (political) values, aesthetic values, ethical/moral values and more (Teilanyo, 2015). Personal values can be divided to intrinsic values, e.g., ethical, emotional, or spiritual values, hence values with no monetary value but rather their own inherent worth, and to extrinsic values, also known as utilitarian values (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2015).

According to Satoshi and Klopf (2014), values that are of primary importance in on country, can be of lower importance in another country, an aspect that may lead to problems in communication. Besides such differences, there may also be shared values that mainly results in common attitudes, codes of conduct, and expectations that subconsciously guide and control the norms of behaviour (Deresky, 2000). Hence, the behaviour of individuals from different countries will be strongly influenced by the different underlying cultural norms and different value orientations.

Such patterns are equally evident in the industrial marketing strategies deployed in different national environments and states; where adaptation to particular value dimensions (Ivanova-Gongne, 2015), the psychic distance (Conway and Swift, 2000; Graca, 2013) and cultural affinity (Swift, 1999; Conway and Swift, 2000; Leung et Al., 2005) characterize and influence the relations between the actors in the interaction process.

Hallén and Johanson (1985) argued that suppliers from culturally close countries are generally more inclined to adapt to the specific needs of the customer than those from culturally distant countries. Going a step further, the higher the cultural affinity between suppliers and purchasers, the more likely the suppliers are to adapt their offer to the requirements of the purchasers (Hallén and Johanson, 1985). Although this behaviour is slightly different between purchasers and customers from different countries, the overall picture is relatively homogeneous (Hallén and Johanson, 1985). However, French

purchasers are more consistent in their evaluation of suppliers from other cultural surroundings and are more sensitive to differences in cultural affinity than purchasers from other countries (Hallén and Johanson, 1985), as it is the case with France and Germany.

Ethnographic research regarding French and German buyers represents an alternative approach to the analysis of the different cultures (Ammon, 1988, 1994; Standecker, 1991; Steger, 1989; Mayrhofer, 2004; Pfeil, 2007). Crozier and Friedberg (1977) argued that, once we have accepted diversity, we must then investigate why certain rules, relational arrangements, and game constructs are in force rather than others. Cultural analysis is an answer to this question. However, in the framework of this research, a brief consideration of cultural anthropology, which is the branch of anthropology that focuses on human behaviour (Haviland et al., 2016; Eriksen and Nielsen, 2013) and symbols that form the core of all cultural anthropology reflections (Ammon, 1989), appears necessary.

The French tend to see the past more prominently than the present or future (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993), explaining the ethnocentrism (which applies in the case of the French-German relationship and therefore needs to be considered) and is the tendency to regard one's own culture as being better than all others (Haviland et al., 2016). Its origin is the history of society that is framed by all the occurrences and past heroes to form a symbolic dimension, a hidden history. Culture is the visible revelation of this hidden reality (Steger, 1990). In the case of France, the French expression: 'La Grande Nation' reflects this attitude perfectly.

El Kahal (1998) developed, particularly with respect to European management, a framework in which she distinguished the following elements of culture: language and communication, education, attitudes and moral values, and religion. It is the richness of these 'little differences' that can be enjoyable but also lead to disturbance. Such things, like the different perspectives accorded to the notion of time, can have a significant effect

on the development of intercultural interactions. According to E. T. Hall and Hall (1984), the notion of polychronic and monochronic time is a recognized issue. Monochronic time orientation assumes the adherence to fixed time schedules, whereas polychronic time orientation allows changes in behaviour. They argued that Germans are monochronic and 'The most important thing to know about the French is that they are high on the polychronic scale' (E. T. Hall and Hall, 1990). This can lead to misinterpretation when it comes to punctuality or schedules.

The different perception of time is just another example that demonstrates the importance of intercultural knowledge for business interactions and in research literature, there appears to be a consensus that culture is an essential source of competitive advantage (Schneider and Barsoux, 1997), particularly with respect to European management (Lavaty and Kleiner, 2001; Mercado et al., 2001). Considering the most important business development trends within the twenty-first century, achieving cross-cultural effectiveness implies managing diversity with the possibility for organisations to turn differences into a competitive advantage. If managers fail to do so, serious business blunders may result (Ricks, 1996; Tayeb, 1996). Cultural analysis is necessary for successful management (El Kahal, 1998; Mercado et al., 2001; Schein, 2010).

Given that culture is acquired by collective learning in society, educational institutions play an undeniably prominent role, where the learning is transmitted from one generation to the next. This requires an understanding of the primary social institutions that affect education and the underlying motivations and behaviours of the people with whom education deals (Butts, 1955).

3.4 The Influence of Religion on Education and Culture

French and German cultures cannot fully be understood without looking at the influence of the dominant religion in each country had on the development of the distinct cultural habitus and on the understanding of education. Even though France is a secular country based on the 1905 French law that separates church and state (Chadwick, 1997) that is rooted in the French revolution (1789-1799). French Catholics are estimated to represent 41% of the population (Eurobarometer 493, 2019). The numbers of Catholics are in decline, from 47.8% in 2015 (Eurobarometer 437, 2015) and having lost nearly half of its members since the 1990s, when Catholics represented around 75% of the population. Still, most French people are Roman Catholic Christians in background (Peri-Rotem, 2016) and even though many of them are secular, they still place high value on Catholicism.

In Germany, since the reformation, the population has been divided largely between Catholics and Protestant, with roughly similar numbers of each present in the population. Currently in Germany, around 23.5 million are Catholics and 21.1 million are Protestant (Topic Page: Religion, 2019). They spread across the German territory and while there are regions where one, or the other, religion is dominant, there are no areas where just one is present. Even Bavaria (as a whole), which is often seen as being 'wholly' Catholic, in 1840 already counted 27.4% of its population as being Protestant (Mayr, 1869).

In the context of this research, the influence that the religion had on the culture, and therefore on the education system, is of interest. According to Eichel (2015), Germany can be designated as being highly influenced by Protestantism. Nolte (in Becker, 2016) argued that its influence on society has even raised in the last 20 to 30 years: "The churches have great political influence, if only because they are the central actors in the welfare state

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system… And more importantly, those who leave often retain a Protestant self-image." (p. 140). Protestantism is not seen here so much as a belief, but as a mindset (Becker 2016). It is a way of feeling, thinking and living. Eichel (2015) argues that the Protestant ideal of a responsible, dutiful lifestyle, based on free, individual decisions, has shaped the Germans. What is now considered to be 'typically German' was formerly 'typically Protestant': diligence and hard work, a sense of duty, thriftiness, conscientiousness, determination and reliability. With the spread of Protestantism in Germany, its work ethic has spread between, and beyond, religions. Earlier, this was also referred to as 'Prussian virtues'. The north German region was highly Protestant and the Protestant virtues strongly shaped the character of the country and its people (Weber, 2012).

Not surprisingly therefore, it might be suggested that Germany has given the world the 'retail discounter' – supporting thriftiness and it is equally unsurprising that the Germans started to separate garbage in an exemplary manner decades before other countries followed suit, exemplifying conscientiousness (and notions of stewardship) (Becker, 2016).

Dorn. and Wagner (2011) write in their book "Die deutsche Seele" (The German Soul), that those ideas transferred within the Reformation have hence been more important for the German society than for the church. An analogy of this German soul can be created by considering many Protestant houses of God in the country: simple and tidy, no extravagances, no unnecessary ornamentation. No Catholic worship rituals and saint veneration, no colourful pictures and magnificent robes, no gold and no incense. And no Latin that only the clerics understand. Luther translated the Bible into German (and thanks to the just invented letterpress, the written word could now reach the citizens of the time) so that more could read it, and more importantly, make up their own mind. This led to education becoming a kind of profane religion. Luther, himself a university professor, was

persuaded that without a good education, it was not possible to grasp "the essential of the Christian faith" (Green, 2009, pp.13). Together with Melanchthon (1497-1560), an important reformer of the time especially regarding education, they saw education as an opportunity to serve God better (Androne, 2014). In his 'Large Catechism' (1529), Luther addressed the clergy in particular and claims: "If we wish to have worthy, capable persons for both temporal and spiritual leadership, we must indeed spare no diligence, time or cost in teaching and educating our children to serve God and mankind" (Luther, 1529, in Lenker, 1908, pp.77). Earlier, Luther had already appealed to the nobility in 1520 and to the councils of all cities in 1524 to found schools for children, including those from all social levels. This can be understood to serve his purposes by enabling the under-privileged classes to assess, on their own, the word of God. Hence, it is not surprising that Graf (2017) claims: "Self-images of the special closeness to education of Evangelical Christianity have a long tradition, especially in Germany" (p. 98).

A similar development took place in in France where the Huguenots, French Protestants or Calvinists, followed the doctrine of reformers and organized the teaching of reading and writing for various social groups, including artisans and merchants, and even the peasantry. Hence the value of Protestant education is the knowledge of reading and writing, in order to know the Scriptures and God for all: "Young and old alike who wish to learn to serve God through his Son Jesus Christ, this ABC will suit you to taken, invoking the help of the Holy Spirit…" (Filipczak, 1990, as cited in Brüssiere, 2008). For its part, the Catholic Church encouraged its clergy to keep Latin in their catechisms, in sermons and in conversion missions (Astoul, 1996), so that only the very few educated Catholics had access to the word of God and actually understand it. The two-tier ethics, with clerics charged with higher moral, stayed in place and the Catholic church maintained its images of saints and reliquaries, promoting the spirit for the magical power of art, for

the mysterious, enigmatic that cannot be reduced to a message, for the outwardly beautiful too or just for pure enjoyment, which deprived Catholics from critical examination of their beliefs (Becker, 2016). In Catholic countries like France and Italy, given such a base, it might be suggested that it is unsurprising that 'good food and chic fashion' are national cultural assets. In Germany the protestant ethic praises work and scourged laziness. Luther is famously to have said: "No one dies from work, but people die from their lives and idleness; because man was born to work like a bird to fly." (Luther, 1525).

Even though France is a secular country, the treatment by Catholic schools of the role of religion in education has been, and continues to be, very contested. According to the site of "Église catholique en France" (Catholic Church in France), the Church maintains 8300 educational units (schools, colleges, high schools), and through its 139,000 teachers, its 68,000 administrative and service staff and its 800,000 families, Catholic education supports more than 2,000,000 students from kindergarten to Higher Education ("L'enseignement catholique: Éduquer, une passion d'espérance - Église catholique en France", 2020).

In contrast, in Germany catholic schools educate only 310,000 children ("Über Katholische Schulen", 2020) and the Protestant schools 190,000 children ("Evangelische Schulen", 2020). However, it needs to be taken in account that Germany is not a secular country and religion is part of the curriculum.

It also needs to be acknowledged that religion has played a particular role in the development of Europe, and of education in particular, and therefore can be expected to drive values and attitudes that are reflected in the different cultures as we experience them today (Mättö and Niskanen, 2019). To stress Hofstede (1980b), again, the culture habitus reflected in the different education systems in France, and in Germany, have developed under different religious directions that have left their influence as part of a "collective

mental programming of the people in an environment" (p. 43). He goes on to argue that cultural values are reinforced by religion (Hofstede, 2001). And even though the absolute numbers of Catholics or Protestants may have reduced over time, the influential religious message of centuries is engraved in the culture – and therefore possible effects in the different educational systems need to be considered.

3.5 The Different Education System

3.5.1 The foundation of modern European education

Education empowers a person to understand the values and norms that are responsible for thinking and behaviour. Education represents, for Durkheim (1925), a social component. Education does not answer the needs of a single person but corresponds to the needs of society. In return, each society has a typical, culturally influenced educational system (M. Fischer, 1996). Through this system, the 'ideal' person is shaped, encompassing intellectual, physical, moral, and specifically culturally adapted traits (M. Fischer, 1996). Education forms the child according to this social ideal, and in this context, it is the nation that decides for its citizens what the principles, context, and content of education should be.

Much of the intellectual life as we know it today has its roots in the middle ages, where the reformation and invention of book printing were important cornerstones to reorganise the relation between the state and its citizens (Man, 2009). It is in this period that some of the fundamental discoveries in new science allowed a completely different view and interpretation of the universe. Sir Isaac Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* was published in 1687 and was an epoch-making revolutionary publication in natural science (Iliffe, 2007). Building on the immense advances made by science in the reformation period, Newton's (1642–1727) work on the laws of nature

remained a scientific gospel until the late nineteenth century (Iliffe, 2007). As a result of the elaboration of the law of gravitation and the law of cause and effect, the universe came to be described as an orderly system of atoms moving in infinite space and time, radically simple in structure, obeying fixed laws and operating causally and uniformly. The universe was looked upon as a great machine, not subject to caprice, novelty, or divine intervention, but operating naturally and according to mathematical laws (Butts, 1955). It was this and other significant advancements and their applications that separated the middle ages from the early modern age in the nineteenth century, giving birth to new types of national states that promoted secularisation (Chadwick, 2002), established modern educational systems (Müller, Ringer and Simon, 1989) and smoothed the way for industrialisation (Outram, 2013).

The following generation of the modern age developed the sense that knowledge was vital in improving personal wealth and society, a thesis that was supported by scholars and intellectuals of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Abel, 2011). The far-reaching advances in physical sciences acted as a driving force to pursue studies and research. Consequently, nearly all organised bodies of knowledge made significant improvements in the eighteenth century.

The enlightenment was described by Outram (2013) as:

A desire for human affairs to be guided by rationality rather than by faith, superstition, or revelation; a belief in the power of human reason to change society and liberate the individual from the restraints of custom or arbitrary authority; all backed up by a world view increasingly validated by science rather than by religion or tradition. (p. 3)

This also had a significant effect on education. It was a time of emerging educational theories, oriented towards a change in primary schools and secondary schools reflected in the traditional disciplinary assumptions, following a methodology oriented towards the acquisition of verbal symbols through unrelieved memory work (Butts, 1955).

3.5.2 Development of educational systems in Germany

In the nineteenth century, the French and Germans showed many similarities in their primary educational system (Hearder, 1988; Heywood, 2002). Both nations not only monitored what the other was doing in the educational domain but also displayed a tendency to copy from one another. While in Germany, the climate finally brought forward liberal forces, in France, the first developed liberal forces were converted in a more conservative educational model that prevailed (Ringer, 2000). However, both systems were aristocratic in their conception and practice (Sheppard and Sherman, 1998).

The contests of the different educational systems in Germany began and were influenced by the time of the reign of Frederick William III from 1797 to 1840. The liberalist approach was much in favour in the period after the Prussian defeat by Napoleon in 1807. The king saw the chance to regenerate and nationalise Prussian education in the liberal ideas influenced by men such as the natural scientist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859). In Prussia, a democratic system of education was established due to Karl von und zum Stein (1757–1831) and August von Hardenberg (1750–1822), both statesmen and reformers. This educational system was intended to allow every child to climb the educational ladder equally as far as talent would allow. The system softened the influence attributed to the social origin and was willing to promote based on personal achievement and performance (Butts, 1955). The reform of education was only part of the social reform starting after 1807, ending the system of serfdom, among other things. Humboldt was put in charge of education from 1809 on and was a supporter of the doctrine of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827). Pestalozzi was a Swiss pedagogue promoting national education with the goal to qualify the generation of today to educate better and serve the generation of tomorrow. Elementary education in Prussia profited from this development and became the most enlightened and advanced educational system in the world at the time, attracting

the attention of French and American educators in the 1820s and 1830s. Prussian education achieved the formation and setting among society of ideal values for religions, discipline, and military obedience. This led to loyalty to King Frederick William III and acceptance of individual's place in society. By 1830, the two-track system of education was firmly established. Over 90% of the population followed the track of elementary education, while only 10%, the social upper class, could follow the path of secondary education, leading an unequal distribution of knowledge and chances of social development.

Significant changes were applied during the reign of German Emperor William I (1797–1888). His Reich Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898), accelerated the 'Kulturkampf', which refers to when Germany revised its position concerning secularity and, against the strong opposition of the Roman Catholic church in Prussia, reduced their role and power in the state. A clear separation of the state and church was anticipated, which led to a period of dissonance from 1871 to 1878 under Pope Pius IX, followed by the 'Friedensgesetze' (Peace Laws) under Pope Leo XIII in 1887, ending the dispute. Given that, at that time in Germany, the population was about 36.5% Catholic and about 62% Protestant, reducing the political and social influence of the Catholic church was a popular move (Treitschke, 2012).

For the educational system in Germany, this period brought the removal of the control of school inspections from the clergy (Power, 1996). Furthermore, public schools could be constituted according to the dominant religion in a community, allowing Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Jewish schools. The importance of education beyond elementary school was recognized, and middle schools were proposed, opening the possibility for a whole social class to profit from more education. Vocational education gained much attention and became extremely popular, given that the value of skilled workers for the industrialisation of Germany was favoured. By the end of the century, a

major step ahead had been made, and education was highly centralised. Education followed conservative ideals with a high notion of nationalistic ideas, forming loyal citizens to the king and fatherland (Butts, 1955).

Secondary education in Germany profited during the eighteenth century from the influence of the emerging sense of realism. The theologian and pedagogue August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), one of the main supporters and promoters of the pietistic movement, followed a philosophy of education giving more room and attention to natural and physical sciences, like the study of mechanics and practical work with glass, copper, and wood. The theologian Johann Julius Hecker (1707-1768), a foreign student of Francke, founded the first '*Realschule*' 1747 in Berlin – a secondary school type that became more important in the nineteenth century with the industrial revolution because of its even higher focus on practical mathematics and science.

The new naturalism of the time increased the influence of the Greek language and literature. This effect quickly slowed French influence that was present up to then, as German intellectuals followed a new orientation and found inspiration in Greek literature and philosophers. The naming of the gymnasium, the higher secondary school in Germany, former Latin schools, arose from this time and is due to this influence (Butts, 1955).

The development of German universities suffered under ecclesiastical control in the seventeenth century. However, a more liberalistic air began in the second half of the century, weakening the despotic rules present and allowing for a new intellectual life, concentrating on science, philosophy, and literature to develop, leading to a period of enlightenment in the eighteenth century. The foundation of the university in Göttingen in 1734 was another significant step for the development of academic liberalism since the university was given a secularised distinctiveness in that the theological faculty was not in a superintendent role above other university faculty members. Given that freedom, the

University of Göttingen quickly developed to 600 matriculated students by 1745. The freedom given to appointed professors enforced innovative ideas and more liberal thinking. As a result of the enlightenment, the scholastic philosophy of Aristotle was superseded by a more modern philosophy founded upon the principles of physical sciences and mathematics and a curriculum based on the principle of freedom of research and instruction (Butts, 1955). The adoption of German as the language used for lectures and instruction, ousting Latin, enabled increased development of the university and increased the attractiveness of academia for applicants. The fast and considerable progress of science within German universities also led to the necessity for students to make choices on which fields of study to concentrate, leading to the early rise of the electoral system in Germany.

Moreover, the universities profited from the freedom provided to the faculty staff and students. A considerable contribution to this development is due to the Prussian geographer, naturalist, and explorer Wilhelm Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), founder of Berlin University in 1810, who is the eponym of the university today. He also developed the university concept as we know it (Hahn, 1998) and can furthermore be regarded as the father of the German gymnasium, leading to the 'abitur', which is an entrance qualification for the university that early on promoted a broad knowledge of a wide range of topics. This qualification then offers the unlimited choice of all cognitive disciplines to be studied, limited only by the '*Numerus clausus*', that is comparable to a minimum grade level requirement in some fields of studies and universities.

The university curriculum was not prescribed in the time of Humboldt and gave professors ample freedom to teach what they thought to be best, much as the students had the freedom to study what they wanted. German universities were reputed to be the best in the world up to the 1930s, and many countries, like the United States, took German universities as a model. In particular, the total freedom of the faculty, free of supervision

from theological influence, was a modern approach. The autonomy of the faculty of philosophy, arts, sciences, medicine, law, and theology and the resulting quality of the research and objectivity of science and knowledge were highly regarded (Butts, 1955). In addition, the scientific and technical institutions outside universities were often perceived as being of the same high standard for research and teaching. When the *National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) came to power, the situation changed dramatically for universities with the previously allowed and granted freedom perceived as 'decadent liberal notion'. Professors and students had, from then on, to submit to Nazi ideology, promoting the objectivity of knowledge and science under a national perspective (Schneider, 2000).

Today, higher education faculties in Germany diversify into different institutional forms where the most prominent are the university and the so-called '*Fachhochschule*' which represents a more practice-oriented form of studying, but leading to the degrees of bachelor and master just as does study at a university. The German higher degree educational system comprised 373 higher education institutions, of which 177 are universities, and 202 are *Fachhochschulen* and schools for higher education in administration (Hahlen, 2005).

3.5.3 Development of the education system in France

The increasing academic freedom that was experienced in Germany with the enlightenment period, giving room for advancement in new sciences and allowing new philosophical approaches, was a phenomenon not mirrored on the west side of the Rhine. The universities dominated by religious conservatism that was supported and backed by the French monarchy (Van Kley, 1996), closely monitored liberal and natural tendencies to suppress them with conforming social and political agendas and their religious teaching.

Books like Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* (1748/1994) and Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) that reflected the spirit of enlightenment were forbidden by the theology faculty of the University of Paris, which, given their collective power over the other faculty members, had a paralysing effect on the attempts undertaken by reformers. The French historian and educator, Charles Rollin (1661–1741), rector at the University of Paris and a supporter and defender of the Jansenist principles, was engaged in modernising the curriculum by introducing Cartesian science and philosophy and French history, language, and literature (Butts, 1955). His religious beliefs collided with the influential Jesuit groups of that time and deprived him of his rectorship later, forcing him into retirement and preventing his election to the *Académie Française* (Warnick, 2010).

The University of Paris went through a time of suspension from 1793 to 1796, where it practically ceased to exist. It was only when some of the faculty were combined by Napoleon that the University of Paris experienced its resurrection.

The educational system in France has been widely influenced by Napoleon, who, in 1808, formulated his views that the schools should teach the Roman Catholic religion, forming citizens loyal to the state and of course firmly standing behind the emperor. In 1802, a law gave control of the elementary school to the church. Napoleon was not particularly interested in elementary schools, as his attention was more on secondary schools, as he expected these educational institutions to feed his governmental body with adequate graduates. Another law also issued in 1802 provided the framework for the secondary school system that at this time, was put under public control. Secondary schools manifested as two institutions, the Lycée and the college, which were founded differently. The Lycée was intended for larger towns and received national funds, while the college was intended more for smaller communities and received support from local communities, becoming the standard road to university. Given its national grants and charging of fees,

Lycées were open mainly for the aristocratic classes. At the same time, under the laws of 1802, higher education faculties were established, mainly faculties of medicine, law, science, technology, theology, and other arts and sciences (Butts, 1955).

With the law in 1806, Napoleon brought the national system of education under his direct control. The whole country was then organised into 27 administrative subdivisions of education that were known as academies (Ellis, 2003). A hierarchical system of control headed by a master appointed directly by the emperor, subsequently the rector for all academies advised by a council and aided by inspectors, had the purpose of national surveillance and control of the educational system. The faculty was now regulated strictly by the ministry of education. The university rules applied to the faculties of letters, science, medicine, and law were much stricter and included a compulsory attendance of lectures and exercises, prescribed courses, and the requirement to pass state examinations to be promoted from one year to the next (Ellis, 2003). Much of the scientific research was performed outside of the faculty, which contrasted with the German research practice of the time. In addition to the universities, specialised higher schools developed, most built on the requirement of, or formed from, the Napoleon republic. The schools of polytechnics, military and naval science, and engineering and industry were technical or scientific schools that further developed, some from a military college under Napoleon, to the most selective and prestigious French Grandes Écoles today (Suleiman, 1978).

To offer even more control and establish an even more uniform level of quality in teaching, a superior school was established in 1810 to train teachers teaching at the Lycées. Aside from smaller developments that enlarged the curriculum of different educational levels and minor changes to the system, Napoleon was the father of the French national education system that lasts until the present.

In the nineteenth century, France saw a fast-changing and unstable period with changes from republic to empire and vice versa. In the years following, a restoration of the monarchy occurred from 1814 to 1830, where Roman Catholic schools regained influence on the educational system, and priests were appointed as principals and teachers. The brief return of Napoleon to power due to the unpopularity of the Bourbon Dynasty finally ended with the defeat of Waterloo, where the emperor was sent to exile afterwards, inducing a change that was followed by King Louis-Philippe (Dwyer, 2018). The prime minister of public instruction, Francois Guizot (1787-1874), retrieved information about the Prussian educational system that provided the framework for a new law reorganising the primary educational system in 1833 (Gutek, 1994). The school system was conservatively oriented, and the municipality had to meet the requirement to provide a primary school as a minimum. School was not free, neither was it compulsory; however, children could attend, even if the parent could not afford the fees, opening education to the poorest in society. The movement to make education compulsory until the age of 14 and free of charge was strongly supported by the liberal movement during the Second Republic from 1848 to 1850. The democratic ideas were however short-lived, and the monarchist and conservative forces regained power, leading to the second empire that saw a period when, again, clergy regained access to the teaching of primary and secondary schools. All liberal ideology was intensively and strongly hunted down as soon as Louis Napoleon (1808–1873) crowned himself emperor in 1852. The alignment of private and religious schools to compete with public schools was anticipated (Van Kley, 1996).

The back and forth in France continued until the French Third Republic in 1870, which led the French educational system to calmer waters and reinforced democratic and liberal principles on the educational system. A series of laws under Jules Ferry, minister of public instruction in 1881 and 1882, made schools free of fees and made primary school

from the age of six to 13 mandatory and laic (Gaillard, 1989). Ferry is responsible for the modern form of French education, and he is also accountable for the anti-clerical campaign in France at the educational level, an important piece in the concept of achieving the separation between religion and state (Gaillard, 1989).

In the brief period described above, France saw several changes in the orientation and mode of influence of the educational system. The aristocratic and conservative orientation in the era of the Bourbon Dynasty, the July monarchy, and the French Second Empire were the religious influences that were predominant and changed for a liberal, constitutional, and democratic approach under the Second and Third Republic. Nevertheless, the French educational system remained dualistic and class conscious. All attempts to open secondary schools to the lower classes showed limited success, and secondary education was maintained in the hands of the aristocracy. The French primary schools developed more effectively due to the demand generated by the industrial revolution for practical education, and technical trade schools received increasing attention and demand (Butts, 1955). There was political agitation after the First World War for a unified school system that would be free of tuition fees and available to all children. A document known as '*Le Manifest des Compagnons de l'Université Nouvelle*' (The manifesto of the companion of the new university) that appeared in 1918/1919 promoted an educational system that would be based on democracy (Seguy, 2007). The intention was to provide a system of selection that was not based on wealth but on personal merit and allowed students to climb the educational ladder as high as possible, up to the university level (Seguy, 2007). However, the strength of the conservative forces dominated, and the democratic ideas pursued through the manifesto failed.

The French Vichy administration in place during the German occupation of France from 1940–1944 under the leadership of Marshall Pétain (1856–1951) led to reinstating

religious elements in French schools. The ban of religious teaching was lifted in 1942, and the secular approach turned back, as the state gave funds to religious schools over state schools (Reed-Danahay, 1996). Tuition fees for secondary schools were reintroduced, and the transition from primary schools to secondary schools was hindered by special examinations that were to be passed.

First, changes to the system would raise the compulsory education from 13 to 15 with additional and compulsory part-time attendance until the age of 18 years. The numbers of secondary schools increased, and the field of natural science, technical, and vocational education was given greater attention. One goal of the reforms was seeking greater equality, and the educational system was organised as a ladder system, allowing students to climb as far as they could go. The division between primary and secondary education was unified to a system leading to the '*premier degré*', the so-called 'first level' that would lead from the stage of basic education to a stage of educational and vocational orientation from the age of 11 until 15 and a final period allowing the orientation towards practical, theoretical, or professional education. The '*deuxième degré*' (second level) was then the route to universities, institutions, and higher schools (Lewis, 2018).

Aside from the progress that reform brought, the Fourth Republic was under pressure from the Catholic church, which was seeking greater influence. In 1951, this led to a revision of secular policies. At the expense of public schools, Catholic schools received indirect aid by granting scholarships for Catholic students and by giving support and direct aid to families of Catholic students by granting allotments to the Catholic parents' association (Butts, 1955). This support by the state led to an increase in numbers of Catholic schools and had a remarkable influence on the quality of education that could be provided by the church, again, at the expense of public schools whose reputations suffered.

3.6 The development of vocation and craftmanship in Germany and France

The development of different vocations and artisanship in France and Germany followed similar routes until the 17th century – with similar professional groups organized in guilds. These have a long history, and the first in France refer to the time under the Roman Empire. In the heart of Roman France, Gallic shipowner-mariners had gathered in a brotherhood: The 'Nautae Parisiaci of Lutetia'. These were water merchants who were responsible for supplying the ancient city of Paris - Lutetia - by waterways (Toubon, 2019). In Germany, it is the "Frankfurter Fischer- und Schiffer Zunft", the guild of the fishermen and boatmen from 945, which is considered the oldest documented guild (Klein, 1951).

Since this tenth century start, craft guilds in Germany submitted standards for product quality and the qualification of journeymen and apprentices (Cantor, 1993). On a much larger scale, from the 12th century onwards, craftsmen of the same profession would voluntarily come together to defend their interests in Germany and in France. Gradually, these trades, 'Hanse' or guilds depending on the geographic location, were recognized by the regional lords and, in France, by the King himself. These guilds developed into strong economic powers (Toubon, 2019). First having only rudimentary by-laws, these later became richly detailed regulative devices for their members, defining the course of vocational education, training and the path and requirements to become a 'master' (Toubon, 2019). Equally, the guilds also acted as monopolies in their specific profession in a town or region, being accredited by the major and regional sovereigns (Vogt-Lüerssen, 2006). In return, they contributed to the stately treasury. The guilds defined regular contributions that were due for being a member and without being part of the guild and becoming a master, operating your own business was not possible.

Equally, in both countries, the apprentice, aged between 10 and 15 years, signed an apprenticeship contract and trained for several years. In addition to their training, the

apprentice was housed, fed and dressed by the master, they were treated as a member of the family. The guild community looked after the young person's protection and professional training (Reuter-Kumpmann, 2004).

After the apprenticeship period ended, the young person became a 'companion' (France) or 'Geselle' (Germany). Common in both countries in the middle age was that they became journeyman and began a 'tour of France' or the 'Wanderjahre' to perfect their techniques, their experience and thus, from site to site, discover new skills and aspire to become the working elite of the time (Icher and Goodman, 2000; Schulz, 1999). After some years as journeyman, they could become masters, however this involved high costs, so that many would remain companions/Gesellen.

However, religion had a strong impact on the craftmanship in France at the beginning of the 17th century, with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV. King Francis I of France, which had since 1515, established an enlightened and open-minded position, and was not averse to the theological aspects of the beginnings of the Reformation movement. The ideas communicated with the Reformation gained a foothold in France around 1520. They quickly found a way from the humanists to the upper -middle class (often the members of powerful guild organizations), where the existing, far-reaching trade relations not only helped to spread goods quickly, but also ideas. The Catholic Church fearing a loss of power was concerned, and this led to increasing reprisals and persecution against the new Protestant religious communities. Around 1533, Johannes Calvin joined Protestantism in Paris and between 1535 and 1560, Calvinism increasingly penetrated French Protestantism. The Huguenot Wars from 1562 to 1598 were a series of eight civil wars in France that eventually peaked with the massacre of the French Calvinists on Bartholomew Night, 23-24 August 1572.

The persecution of the Calvinists led to the escape of an efficient, talented and educated class from France. This was temporarily ended by the popular King Henry IV, who granted with the edict of Nates in 1598 that offered religious tolerance and full civil rights to the Calvinist Protestants in Catholic France. The revocation (Edict von Fontainebleau) of this Edict in 1685 by Louis XIV led, despite an emigration ban, to the escape of around 200,000 of the estimated 800,000 total number of Protestants (McManners, 1999) in France - many going into exile in the Swiss cantons in Germany, the Netherlands, the British Isles, North America, South Africa, Scandinavia and Russia (Yardeni, 1985). About 50,000 Huguenots came to Germany and 20,000 of them went to Brandenburg-Prussia, where the reformed Elector Friedrich Wilhelm granted them special privileges with the Edict of Potsdam (Fuhrich-Grubert, 2009). Almost 10,000 Huguenots went to Baden. 3,200 refugees came to Franconia, the Principality of Bayreuth and the Principality of Ansbach - which is now part of Bavaria. 7,500 refugees settled in Hessen-Kassel. Hence, they dispersed widely over the German territory. With them, France lost cultural and economic diversity and strength. The Huguenots often flourished in the countries to which they immigrated, particularly in work allied to agriculture. They also strengthened cultural and intellectual life.

The Huguenot escape from France represents a turning point in European history. France loses most of the forces that serve its economic and cultural progress, persons that the French historian Jules Michelet (1798-1974) will call the 'elite of France'. In this way, the Huguenots gave their host countries a new economic boost in all areas.

In France, the prohibition of the guilds in the second half of the eighteenth century, due to increasingly popularity of ideas surrounding the freedom of labour and commerce that spread through the writings of economists, started with a decree of the council of March 25, 1755 that ordered, with the exception of Paris, Lyon, Rouen and Lille, the cities

of the French kingdom would be open to any French subject who would like to settle there after having justified their apprenticeship and their companionship (Franklin, 1968). In the Napoleon Republic the privileges of the guild finally ended with the decree of Allarde on March 2 and 17, 1791, and the law Le Chapelier on June 14, 1791, which put an end to the old organization of work by liquidating all the communities of trades (Fritzsimmons, 1996).

The German guilds survived close to 80 years longer, but the increasing discussion about freedom of trade finally did put an end to this monopolistic system. On July 13, 1868, the law redefining the modes of operation of existing trades was announced, followed by the entry of the new trade regulations on June 21, 1869, which extended to the states of the North German Confederation. Finally, the law was extended in 1871 complete to the new Reich territory.

Both countries show a similar development in that the guilds established the basis for, and later a detailed, vocational education systems. However, in the contemporary context, it can be realized that vocational education is perceived differently in both countries. Already in the 16th century, the French elites developed a "lofty contempt for 'rude mechanicals', no matter whether they are masters or wage-labourers" (Garrisson and Haven, 1995, p. X), a view that has been documented by the lawyer Loyseau, who published a book 'Traité des ordres' in 1610, offering a view on society as it wished to see itself and a mirror of the Bourgeoisie, including a 'classification of the people in France by honour of birth (Garrisson and Haven, 1995). And this is evident today, except for vocations associated with specialist restoration that serve to maintain historic art and rebuild ancient buildings, such as the church Notre Dame de Paris, which burned down in 2019. - in essence, professions that serve to maintain the beauty of past centuries. Other than that, vocational training is not very well regarded. Evidence is provided by the Special

Eurobarometer No. 369 issued from the European Commission (2011), which underlines the perception that in France 35% of the people think that vocational education and training has a poor image, whereas, in contrast 84% in Germany say that is has a very good image. Russo, Serafini and Ranieri, (2019) also argue that the attitudes towards vocational education in the different European countries can be interpreted as stable, trait-like, constructs that influence behaviour.

The success of the vocational system and the appreciation of vocational training is therefore based on other pillars in Germany. Different authors have agreed that the German dual system of vocational training has many virtues, from an individual perspective as well as from an economic one: a closer connection to industry and its actual requirements allows for the production of a workforce that is highly skilled (Sorge, 1983; Brauns, 1998). The basis for this success has been the introduction of the "Fachhochschule", that emerged as a result of educational discussions in the 1960s in the Federal Republic of Germany. The cornerstone of this achievement is related to the times after the second World War when Germany was a destroyed country with the requirement to build up its national manufacturing base. The enormous economic upswing experienced in the 50s to 60s required more well-trained, technically-experienced and specific specialists (W. Mayer, 1997). Accordingly, this reoriented the course for education, making vocational training much more attractive, especially with the introduction of the Fachhochschule.

The Fachhochschule allowed graduates in a vocational discipline to access to higher education with their diploma. Forerunners of the Fachhochschule were the technical and engineering schools. However, for these, a clear progression path was absent, and this is exactly what the Fachhochschule offered. It is these continues development possibilities that encouraged many high school graduates to commence a vocational education, knowing they can pursue their professional education later in a Fachhochschule. The

Fachhochschule awarded a Diplom (today Bachelor or Master) as did universities, with the exception of the attachment of the suffix (FH), and for some time this Fachhochschule award was classified the as being of a level lower than that of the university. However, thanks to the Bologna process, the agreements between European countries to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications (Bonjean, 2018), this notion has practically disappeared and currently both forms of higher education institution are perceived equally. The possibility to start learning a vocation, but on a path that could very well lead in some instances to a Ph.D., this educational approach and personal choice does not already cement a person's career perspective at the age of 18.

In France, in contrast, the National Education system is particularly efficient and good at promoting those with a high-level of academic attainment. However, it demonstrates only limited ability to take care of students with a lower academic profile, to train them to the requirement of the nation's industry and help them to become skilled workers of value to employers and who can then make their way into the labour market with a clear path post their academic education and what is leaned through this (d'Iribarne and Jolivet, 2016).

Concluding this section, it can be seen that the guilds of Germany and France were equally successfully organized vocational education providers, both within their cultural context and influenced by its religious heritage (see section 3.4). The guilds have left their fingerprint on vocational education in general and within each specialty. The years of learning and time to perfect what is learned are aspects that have persisted. People's perception of vocational education in both countries is very distinct today. Where France has a clear separation between blue- and white-collar career prospects, Germany has managed to offer vocational professionals a path to higher education that equally has bettered the perception of vocational professions. This allowed for values established in

the vocational education arena to transit in the higher education system, as vocational graduates bring not only their practical knowledge and their learning with them, but also their inherent professional beliefs.

3.7 Philosophy of French Higher Education

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, technology in a higher sense was not taught at universities in what would become the Europe Union one day. The curriculum of universities offered the study of the arts, science, law, medicine, and of course, theology (Rüegg, 1996). However, technology in the sense of increasing industrial efficiency of commercial benefit had not yet reached a level of interest and demand for the methodology that made such knowledge domains interesting for higher education (Rüegg, 1996). The business organisation was simple in structure, and managerial hierarchies were not required.

In Germany, however, by the mid-nineteenth century, education had achieved a high level of formalisation, something clearly distinct in the German educational system of the time compared to its European neighbours (Rüegg, 1996). Scientific research garnered considerable attention, and in Germany, the PhD was already a research degree. All fields of knowledge taught at universities fell under the term of scientific research and followed the apparent path of systematic research. Even though the roots of German and French universities date back to the middle ages, as described earlier, the Napoleonic period had considerable influence on the development of modern universities on both sides of the Rhine (Suleiman, 1978). The educational focus of both systems differed. While scientific research and the sciences, in general, were of importance for Germany, this was of much less importance to the French system. Napoleon saw teaching as a function of the state because there was a requirement in the French nation for educated persons for the

French state (Dwyer, 2018). Hence, the existence of schools held their eligibility through the needs of the state. Napoleon directed the universities to train public servants rather than scientists, which was a consequence. Napoleon neglected scientific faculties in favour of the lycées and Grandes Écoles. The Grandes Écoles were to become of significant importance for further development in France. For Napoleon, they were a means to recruit senior civil servants and professors from a trustworthy and loyal source to the French state and political system for the state corporation (today the *Grands Corps de l'Etat* in France - supreme governing bodies and administrative control bodies). The neglect of research science did not stay without consequence. France gradually lost its prominence in science over the nineteenth century and gradually fell behind Germany and its universities (Archer, 1984).

The history of the Grande École began with the creation of specialised engineering schools during the eighteenth century. The first institutions for higher technical education were the foundation of the *École des Ponts et Chausses*, which translates to the School of Bridges and Roads, in 1747 by King Louis-Philippe. The *École des Mines* (School of the Mines) was founded in 1783 under the directive of King Louis XVI and responded to the need for specialised engineers in France. At the time of its foundation, mining was high technology, and a substantial amount of knowledge had already been acquired. However, many problems around safety and efficient management of mining were still faced (Moody, 1978).

Écoles Polytechniques was founded in 1794 under the name *École Centrale des Travaux Publics* (Central school of public works) (Lebègue and Walter, 2008) and was renamed in 1795. The dictatorship of Robespierre (1758–1794) in the years 1793 and 1794, when all persons suspected of not being in favour of the French Revolution were pursued, and greater parts of the upper, knowledgeable, and educated class were emigrating and

fleeing imprisonment (and often the guillotine) led to a strong need for and lack of engineers and natural scientists in France (Moody, 1978). These were missing in a time when Prussia and Austria declared war on France. Napoleon transformed the school into a high-level military engineering school, and later, it became the most prestigious engineering school of modern times (Suleiman, 1978). In 1829, the *École Central des Arts et Manufactures* was established based on a private initiative to train civil engineers for the industry (Lebègue and Walter, 2008). The school became public in 1857.

Several other timely important Grandes Écoles were established, often with a direct military intention, like the artillery school in 1720 and the military engineering school in 1848, but the four named above acquired enormous prestige in the nineteenth century. The recruitment for these universities came from the upper class. Aside from the different purpose, the schools were following the French philosophy of forming generalists, which can be perceived in a statement phrased by one of the founders of *École Centrale* who stipulated: "The engineer must not only know pure science, which is particularly useful in his career and the principal industrial sciences but have at least summary ideas about all specific applications while avoiding specialisation" (Day, 2001, p. 8). There was the belief that an encyclopaedic education would produce better engineers 'who could move easily from job to job and change his career with facility' (Blondel, 1916). While an encyclopaedic education approach would imply offering students a broader spectrum of knowledge, teaching continued in its traditional format, neglecting fields of industrial importance. The lack of study offers ahead of the first degree prohibited any research-oriented conception of education and hence did not offer any specialisation possibilities (Gutek, 1994; Rüegg, 1996). That also meant that the engineering faculty were not engineers and were recruited from disciplines such as physicist or chemistry, where they held a chair in science. The downside of this arrangement was that the professors were

missing any experience in industry, which meant that students gained little to no contact during their university development with what was supposed to be their future work environment. Given that no speciality was trained or educated, this made graduates nearly unemployable at entry-level (R. R. Locke, 1989).

The above reflects the School Central, a university that arose from the recognition of a need for engineers for industry. The described problem may serve to imagine what could be expected from the polytechnic school, whose foundation proceeded and whose original purpose had little to do with manufacturing (R. R. Locke, 1989).

3.8 Academic Education in Germany

While Germany did not face the same problem as France at that time, some parallels occurred. German university professors had a high social status in the nineteenth century and could well be attributed to a certain 'snobbism' (Berger, 2013). They were following a perception that areas dominated by commercial conception, like engineering or commerce that served a particular interest, had no place in science and successfully opposed the introduction of engineering as a university faculty. For them, non-practical research in a value-free environment preserved a special status that was not to blend with the collective needs found in industry (Lexis, 2010; Manegold, 1970).

In consequence, higher education in engineering developed outside the universities in so-called '*Technische Hochschulen*' or technical colleges. However, technical colleges aimed for the same level of academic recognition. Yet, they found that acceptance by the universities was only possible if the technical colleges conformed entirely to the existing scientific university model. Gaining scientific respect became the preoccupation of the time, and to achieve this, the colleges and technical institutes copied the universities to a point that, finally, by the end of the nineteenth century, they managed to integrate

themselves into the academic tradition, and students were granted academic degrees such as doctorates, for instance, the Dr. Dipl. in Germany (R. R. Locke, 1989).

Unlike in France, German industry developed a strong bond very early to technical institutes and understood the importance of taking advantage of their work and profiting from their scientific activities (Bode, Becker and Habbich, 1997). The industry not only followed their development but also consequently tried quite successfully to influence the form and content of knowledge lectured and provided to students in technical institutes and ensure the institutes focus their research on domains that are of practical interest for the industry (Bode, Becker and Habbich, 1997). To support this undertaking, the industry provided industrial machines and equipment and the financial means for the school laboratories to carry out desirable industrial research. The '*Technische Hochschule*' offered a curriculum of different faculties like architecture and construction, mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineering that all were strongly oriented to serve the requirements of the industry. High diversity and local specialisation were oriented toward local and regional specific needs (Rüegg, 1996). The RWTH Aachen University, for example, founded in 1870 as *Königlich Rheinisch-Westphälische Polytechnische Schule zu Aachen*, was renamed in 1880 to *Technische Hochschule* and was, and is, famous for metallurgy and engineering. The *Technische Hochschule Charlottenburg* (today the *Technische Hochschule Berlin*), founded in 1879 by merging the Berlin construction academy and Berlin industry institute, had a good reputation in marine engineering. The *Königliche Technische Hochschule zu Danzig*, founded 1904, had a reputation for naval construction. The *Polytechnikum Karlsruhe* was founded in 1825 and renamed *Technische Hochschule Karlsruhe* in 1865 and was known for high competence in hydraulics and forestry (Rüegg, 1996; Treitschke, 2012). Unlike in France, the specialisation in a specific field was programmed by the four years of study; the last two were devoted to the speciality

chosen by the student. In France, the generalist approach to engineering and the focus on mathematics instead of a realistic view of industrial needs harmed engineering education (Reed-Danahay, 1996). Eugene Grandmougin (1917) expressed his worries early about this approach by stating that mathematics is only a means and not an end, suggesting a more practically oriented approach of the university curriculum.

3.9 Business Education in France and Germany

The development and rise in recognition of business and commerce education followed a similar path to that of engineering education in Germany (Bode, Becker, and Habbich, 1997). The first *Handelshochschule* (commercial college) was founded based on a private initiative of the Leipzig Chamber of Industry and Commerce in 1898. The motivation to create a business school was again rejected for a more vocational and practical problem-solving approach to education to meet the needs in business and industry. Initially, studies lasted two years in which theoretical knowledge was instructed to meet a certain scientific level that was considered necessary for a degree holder, which was the *Diplom Kaufmann* (Rüegg, 1996). The study length was increased to three years by 1924, further increasing the scientific aspects of the study to mirror engineering education. The negative effect was the balance between a praxis-oriented education and the scientific aspects and knowledge that needed to be acquired, which was out of balance in favour of science. The desire of business colleges to gain full acceptance by universities and equal academic status, as had beforehand been reached engineering, was a driver for this development. The development of *Betriebswirtschaftslehre* (business studies) had to confute university complaints about the inadequate scientific content of business economics. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the subject was perceived by universities as an intellectually weak domain that would not be engaged enough in the

search for scientific truth and therefore was a better fit for vocational studies (R. R. Locke, 1989).

Despite the envisioned praxis, relevant educational parts have taken a back seat in *Betriebswirtschaftslehre*. The development of business studies went on to reach a level that, between the two world wars, allowed for academic recognition and a place in the academic community. Ironically, by the time the university faculties started to offer studies in business, the staff had to be recruited from business colleges that, long before, were not considered reputable enough to be admitted into academic circles (R. R. Locke, 1989).

In France, the development of an academic business education followed a comparable path as technical education had previously. Business and economic science education was not developed with the university faculty but first saw development in the Grandes Écoles (Müller, Ringer and Simon, 1989). Despite this, the state measured no higher value for business education and commercial graduates so that the prestige of the introduced engineering Grandes Écoles and their reputation at first was not reflected by business schools. Still, the development went on, and by 1900, two *Écoles Supérieures de Commerce* existed in Paris, and 11 existed in the provinces (Reed-Danahay, 1996). Unlike To reach academic recognition, German trade schools emphasised scientific discipline at the expense of practice, French schools were however not bound to any of these limitations (Moody, 1978). Instead, the Grandes Écoles strove early to educate the elite who would find their way to the top in banking and commerce positions that industry and the state could offer, just like the graduates of the Grandes Écoles of engineering did in manufacturing (R. R. Locke, 1989).

Business school history in France started early. France founded the first business school in the world, the *École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris*, which was established in 1819 (Reed-Danahay, 1996; Lebègue and Walter, 2008). Many other business schools

were founded towards the end of the nineteenth century, among them the *École des Hautes Études Commerciales de Paris* (HEC Paris) in 1881. The HEC wanted to become the best in the fields of management and trade and to attain a comparable prestige to the Central Paris school in engineering (Lewis, 2018). That was only achieved by higher selectivity, and in 1922, the HEC underwent reform that led to an entrance examination (*concour*), raising the bar for prospective students. One year before, in 1921, the case-based method of the Harvard Business School was introduced, but most lectures remained theoretical. Despite the measures undertaken, the quality of the studies was still not comparable to the level of *Betriebswirtschaftslehre* in Germany (Rüegg, 1996). A lack of demanding high-quality study programmes was a problem the commercial provincial Grandes Écoles suffered from even more, which educated its graduates to a level barely better than secondary schools. At that time, the quality and development in Germany in business education was better (R. R. Locke, 1989). It was only in 1950 that the case-based method was generalised, which can be considered a turning point for the quality of business education and the HEC. The entrance examination became increasingly difficult so that the *classe préparatoire* for the Grandes Écoles was created in France to prepare for the entrance examination (Moody, 1978). Sixty years later, the HEC is one of the most recognized business schools in the world and was ranked as the top business school in Europe seven times in the eight-year period between 2006 and 2013 in the *Financial Times* ranking. However, historically, the HEC, like all Grandes Écoles, has tried for some time to achieve an academic reputation, not by the excellence of their scientific work but by the selectivity of the entry requirements (Lebègue and Walter, 2008).

Higher education in France and Germany followed different trajectories based on its heritage, followed by a comparable national development in business (R. R. Locke, 1989). The main difference that currently remains is the selection of a tiny elite for

bureaucratic or non-business and non-manufacturing careers. Germany focusses more on the educational qualifications in that it matters much more what is studied than where it is studied (R. R. Locke, 1989). Industry in Germany is a high prestige occupation, much more so than in France, where the superstate bureaucrats, the '*hauts fonctionnaires*' dominate the nation's elite.

3.10 Differing Academic Institutional Choices Based on Diverging Motivations

Napoleon Bonaparte is reputed to have said that, in battle, 'morale is to the physical as three is to one'. Armies with the same number of men, the same organisational structure, the same strategy, and the same tactics can be unequal opponents because of their shared values, spiritual cohesion, and motivational forces differ. Indeed, the type of organisational structure and the hierarchical structures or the strategy of the organisation can hinge on the level of motivation (Ricard, 1910). In the framework of the international buyer and seller relationship in the interaction between the French and Germans, the question that is to be answered is how the respective academic tradition influences interactions.

The French higher education system is a dual system that emits graduates educated in universities and Grandes Écoles. The route to follow in France once the *baccalauréat* is finished is for the best in mathematics and science to prepare for the '*concour',* or the entrance examination, for the Grandes Écoles. Having achieved the *Écoles préparatoire,* the best performing of those passing '*concour'* will usually be able to enter the engineering Grandes Écoles, and with decreased mathematical accomplishment, the Grandes Écoles of commerce, and finally, the less important Grandes Écoles in the provinces (R. R. Locke, 1989). It needs to be noted, that in order to have a chance to pass the '*concour'*, a high level of knowledge is required, that is easier at the disposition of the better situated higher social classes that can afford better, sometimes prestigious, schools for their children rather

than the lower social classes can (R. R. Locke, 1989). The students' choice is directed towards the prestige of the schools and the career possibilities that are offered after attendance. And these are important as Rocher and Ouadia (2019) argue, generating secure job offers after graduation, significantly better salary than a university graduate and a graduate network that knows, promotes, and supports each other. These are the drivers or is the motivation. Personal interest plays a secondary role in the choice of study. The social status that is gained and that will be an attribute in the business world is of higher interest. For the vast majority, however, there remains only study careers in universities, which in turn reduce the professional career perspectives available to those progressing through this route.

In Germany, education also does not stay without differentiated appreciation and social classification but depending on what has been studied and not where. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a lack of recognition for engineers was perceivable (Gispen, 1988), despite the important realised technological advancement and the profound effect that it had on Germany. The technician was, at this time, attributed as having an inferior social position, compared to lawyers or medical doctors, for example (Kocka, 1969). Their work, just as their demanding technical studies, was perceivably much less honoured and considered inferior.

Despite some parallels that can be found, the French and German educational systems differed in more than just their philosophies for training engineers. The different educational systems "constituted different and opposed political worlds, work worlds and social worlds based on contrasting methods of training" (R. R. Locke, 1989, p. 85). In France, education is a tool for the formation of the ideal citizen (Baker, Furet and Nobile, 1988). Higher education not only aims to inform the mind but also the moral principles of a person. As such, higher education contains social and ethical aspects. Teaching people

means to educate them as to what their rights and obligations in society are and to show them the relations between personal interest and the general good (Cogan and Derricott, 2012).

At the turn of the century, it was recognized in France that the universities could serve industry much better, yet the position of the Grandes Écoles remained unaffected and so is the motivation factor for students choices. The universities and Grandes Écoles both played, and still play, their role in serving different social patronage. This dual system, in the end, allows for very different career opportunities and a symbol for class differentiation (Bernhard, 1904).

This needs to be of consideration when dealing with a French counterpart. In contrast, in Germany, the motivation for and choice of study are generally undertaken in relation to personal interest, ability, and capability. Graduates from university just as much as graduates from the *Fachhochschule* have an equal opportunity to climb to top hierarchical levels in industry or commerce, and they will find their peers diverse since people from all different kinds of educational backgrounds can reach these levels (Locke, 1989). Unlike in France, in Germany, a situation can be found reflecting qualification homogeneity in the top managerial positions (Whitley, Thomas and Marceau, 1981). Often PhDs can be found in functions on the board of directors, but a PhD is not an 'admission ticket' to these kinds of positions. What counts is '*Fachkompetenz*' (the ability in the field), hard work, and demonstrating *Leistung* (achievement) (Clarke and Winch, 2006; Brockmann, Clarke and Winch, 2011). This view is, according to Whitley et al. (1981), expressed consistently by German managers. This German way of thinking and making contrasts entirely with the French industrial and business philosophy (Abramson, Moran and Harris, 2018; Hofstede, 2001; Müller-Wodarg, 1993).

Hence, it can be summarised that in France social background plays a higher role than in Germany in regards to the future personal career development (Förster, Nozal and Thévenot, 2017), and that there is a context with the chance of admission and graduation from a Grandes Écoles. In Germany a person's professional development is more significant than where someone graduated. This results from different motivation for choices, whereas in France, in contrast, career motivation may be with a more dominant interest factor as a motivation for choice in Germany. That is not to say these elements are not also present to some degree in Germany. Nevertheless, the incentives for admission to a Grandes Écoles exist only in France.

However, some more fundamental differences in regards to the aspect of work-related motivation have been initially identified in section 3.2, based on the different scores attributed to specific cultural dimensions. These different facets of the motivation aspects are a distinctive phenomenon, and it is essential also to know that around this phenomena, particular values have developed over time.

3.11 The Language Factor

Language as the ability to understand each other is a prerequisite to enable conversation. It is the most direct and commonly used method to transmit thoughts and ideas to another person (Kartabayeva and Zhaitapova, 2016). Language enables to communicate cross-culturally and has been found to be stronger than other means of communication (Palmatier et al., 2013). Speaking the language of the other is an initial mean to break down cultural barriers (Harris and Wheeler, 2005) and enables to establish trust. However, in France, there is, if not a lack of knowledge, then at least a reluctance to speak a foreign language (Garcia, 2017). This is the perceived heritage of the French enlightenment.

In the eighteenth century, in Catholic-influenced France, implemented by the culture of *salons,* showing and asserting oneself in society through sophisticated discussions and language was a method of belonging, and still is, as shown by the yearly regular competition of the Grandes Écoles of the '*concours d'éloquence'* and in daily life, in some cases, it is even a necessity in French higher society (Savatovsky, 1995).

On the contrary, in Germany, in public, the Lutheran Protestant religion requires the participation and fulfilment of duty from which individuals find their ideal in their own identity (Weber, 2012). Instead, the ideal must be found in the realisation of the human being in their devotion to God instead of asserting oneself in social life (Münch, 1986a). Protestantism did not promote a positive public appearance, and the necessity to be perceived as original, or skilful in the discussion was not considered essential to reach God's grace.

The difference of the respective mentalities and behaviours show that, in France, the value of the '*esprit*' is necessary to improve one's position in society and to emphasise one's personality due to the importance linked to appearance. This leads German intellectuals to consider the French culture to be inconsistent due to their perceived "superficiality of manners" compared to the "real and deep" German '*esprit'* and culture (Mah, 2003).

Mah explains:

In the mid-eighteenth century the French philosopher Voltaire proclaimed that, since Louis XIV, France had achieved a new level of refined society, a civilisation of elegant manners, language, and sensibility. Evident in the great cultural accomplishment of the French enlightenment, such a civilisation, Voltaire concluded, had surpassed even ancient Athens and Rome in the gracious 'Art of living'. Voltaire asserted that eighteenth-century French civilisation and its enlightenment offered the rest of Europe a universal standard of culture, language, conduct, and thought (2002, p.1).

At this time, all over Europe, French tastes, manners, and language were adopted by the higher classes, courts and aristocracies. Russia was no exception and French became

the language of the aristocracy (O'Connor and Schlapentokh, 2017). Frederick II of Prussia spoke and wrote better French than German. French philosophers of the enlightenment were highly regarded and travelled by invitation of monarchs to foreign capitals. French officials and intellectuals were considered by many to be ahead of their time and could fill leading positions in many European countries. In Germany, the dominance of the French culture was not embraced by all and especially young writers, and philosophers considered it as modifying and changing the most authentic and meaningful German culture (Baumann and Gingrich, 2005) and hence were opposed to the French enlightenment universalism (Mah, 2003).

In the late 18th century, Germans started to work on the recognition and appreciation of their identity. What happened is what the historian Frederick Meinecke (1963) described as a 'cultural nationalism' or a sense of belonging to a distinct and significant culture (Mah, 2003). An evident literary example of this process was found in Goethe's (1796) *'Wilhelm Meister's apprenticeship'* when Aurelia surprises Wilhelm with a fierce antipathy for French: "I hate the French language" she said, "with my entire soul". Indeed the literature clearly underlined through Goethe that: "French is rightly the language of the world, worthy of being the universal language with which people can lie and deceive one another" (as cited in Mah, 2003, p. 59). Herder (2004) said: "The French under the pretext of communication speak their language to construct a self-referential social situation that becomes the point of speaking". "Whoever knows French in this way (with all this sophistication) knows it in the depths of its nature, knows it as the art of shining and of pleasing" (Mah, 2003, p. 60).

In one of Hegel's lecture series on the 'Philosophy of spirit' given before an audience of students and civil servants at the University of Berlin in the 1920s, he pointed out that the French achievement of 'the highest delicacy of social cultivation' carries with

it a familiar danger: The French preoccupation with pleasing others easily degenerates into the 'striving to please at any price even at the cost of truth'. Later, he pointed out that "our spirit is generally more than any other European nations, turned inward. We live pre-eminently in the inwardness of the soul and thought" (Mah, 2003, p. 65). The eighteenth-century marked the evident beginning of the cultural difference between the French and German languages, the way and intention attributed to the use of language and the psychology behind the intention when language is used, so that language and its use is one aspect of the differentiation (Mah, 2003).

The diverging philosophical French and German tendencies of this time and the herewith connected intellectual and cultural development, has long influenced the cultural and intellectual history of Germany. The different philosophies above-mentioned above are still influential today, and as for graduates of a Grandes École, language serves as a means of distinction and differentiation to others where the 'grammar' of 'personal' stories and accounts, relates to this specific group of graduates (Labov, 1972) and is also a reflection of the bourgeoisie, the higher social class in France.

3.12 The French Educational System - Social Aspect

The changes brought by the managerial revolution in the new large-scale companies posed a problem to the French bourgeoisie as the role of the old *patronat* changed and to maintain their places in society, new structures had to be built. Bourdieu, Boltanski, and de Saint-Martin (1973) described that the French bourgeoisie could maintain their status by means of the Grandes Écoles and the educational system. This allowed them to maintain dominance over the French business and industry.

The admission to coveted Grandes Écoles is through a competitive examination (*concours*). To reach the required level, high-level general education and scientific,

mathematical ability is a necessity (Davis, Hatchuel, and Laufer, 2013). Mathematics was particularly stressed, making the test very demanding, which further explains the general superiority of the future French engineers in this domain. Although ultimately, only the results of the competitive examination are considered, it must be underlined that only the students coming out of well-known secondary schools or lycées in Paris or from the provinces, having been dedicated to preparation for years have a real chance to enter Grandes Écoles (Bourdieu, 1983). This was true, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, as all preparatory schools that are essential to successful candidates were located primarily in Paris (Locke, 1984). That meant that wealthy families could afford the financial outlay of Parisian boarding schools, but only rarely could the general French population do so, especially if coming from the provinces. Of course, only a certain bourgeoisie can afford the expensive preparation years, and this is why this kind of public is strongly represented in Grandes Écoles (Ammon, 1989; Bourdieu, 1989).

Statistical compilations from the nineteenth century until today reflect this information. It becomes clear that the students of Grandes Écoles have a higher social background. As for engineering, the higher social classes prefer a route allowing movement to positions of influence and power, either in industry or as civil servants in the French state.

Table 1: Social origin of students in France

Students according to their social origin Unit: %						
	Senior Technician Section (BTS)	University Institute of Technology (IUT)	University	Preparatory class for Grandes Écoles (CPGE)	University engineering schools	University business schools
Farmers, craftsmen, traders and entrepreneurs	12,9	11,2	9,7	11,4	12,8	19,5
Leading cadres and professionals with higher intellectual occupations	16,0	31.1	34,1	51,8	54,1	51,3
Intermediate professions	14,4	17,4	14,4	12.5	11,8	9,6
Employees	19,0	17,6	15,6	10,8	8,2	8,3
Workers	24,1	14,1	11,7	7,2	5,6	4,1
Retired and inactive	13,6	8,6	14,6	6.4	7,6	7,1

Source: Ministry of National Education - 2017-2018 New school year - © Observatory of inequalities, France métropolitaine and DOM

The table suggests that children from a lower social class are underrepresented in the first-class French education institutions. Since French society has a rigid hierarchical mind, the situation leads to political selection and a somewhat automatic reproduction of the elite, producing a new elite out of the circle of existing elites (Courtois, 1990). The following quotation shows the discrepancy between the word '*égalité*' and the real social hierarchy: 'The French are with words ultra-egalitarian and pretend to hate the word selection, elite, talents, intelligence, gifted, but they built tremendous hierarchy based on any justification' (Commission du Bilan, 1981).

To prevent endangering themselves and their privileges, the upper class and wealthy social groups try to limit the resources from the other classes to avoid the rise and social advancement of these others (Hartmann, 2018). The French educational system and its selection processes promote, as already mentioned, the tendency of reproduction of the new elite coming out of the traditional elitist class, supported by a programmed hierarchical society (Bourdieu, 1989).

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Prost (1968) mentioned that educational distinctions are not from a lack of demand but are due to a Malthusian protection barrier and accordingly supported by politics. According to Alain Mingat (1981), it appears that only 8.2% of workers are selected for higher education and that, if the selection were made accordingly to IQ, 23% would be chosen. Nearly 30 years later, Duru-Bellat and Kiefer (2008) show that access to higher education is still very unequal in relation to different social classes and Table 1 in this section demonstrates that another decade later, this situation persists.

3.13 French Career Favouritism – A Diverging Professional Focus

In as much as the schools in Germany do not send the elite to bureaucratic or non-business or non-manufacturing careers, as is the case in France with the grands corps – a feature of the French state that represents the 'who is who' of the French educational system – German education has an even less dysfunctional motivational effect on the entry into business and industrial management than the French (R. R. Locke, 1989). In contrast to France, entry or level of entry into business and industry does not depend on the schools attended (R. R. Locke, 1989). Germans put high stress on educational qualifications, but it matters more *what* is studied than *where* it is studied. Hence, the problem of elitist and privileged educational institutes, comparable to that of France, is not an issue, which does not imply that there are no universities that have a better reputation than others, like, e.g., RWTH Aachen for engineering studies.

Careers in Germany are often found to have their origin with people involved with new product developed or product performance, that has become a German focus. The product is at the centre of consideration, and it is a German conviction that superior craft performance means superior products (R.R. Locke, 1989). The second 'obsession' is based

on technique. Technique is the combination of the knowledge and know-how necessary to make the product (R. R. Locke, 1989).

That led to a German emphasis on specialist education. Only by this emphasis on education was it thought possible to satisfy the need for product development and incoming demand. Regarding the steady development of specialists in all hierarchical positions, Lawrence (2018) explained that technique is: 'a force for integration. The skilled worker, the supervisor, the superintendent, the technical director, are all participants in technique. Technique is something that transcends hierarchy' (p. 98).

Among German managers, even at the top, diverse qualifications coexist in conjunction. The technical focus led to a position where many product specialists are represented on the board of directors of German firms, which explains a certain tendency to find PhDs in these circles (that today, can also come from the *Fachhochschule*). The top management of companies, whether big or smaller, often has a membership where the range of qualifications is considerable. Similar variation at lower levels in the management hierarchy is found even though the average level, as well as the penetration of qualification, is high (Lawrence, 2018).

Such versatility in the top levels of French companies is rare. As such is the self-view of graduates formed in the Grandes Écoles. The French graduates see themselves as having an elitist position in society that outranks other (Draelants, 2010). This differentiation from others starts early with what Bourdieu (1989) mentioned in his book, *Noblesse d'Etat*, as the representation and unique aesthetic produced in the preparatory schools and Grandes Écoles and what he called '*l'habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1989). This habitus can be understood as a specific, reproducing order of conduct (e.g., scientists that use a special repertoire to account for scientific discoveries; Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984). This repertoire of devices is specific to a particular group, just as much as they can be locally

bounded to areas, cultures, and countries. To stay with the example of scientists, their presentation reflects both personal and local characteristics. An observation by Sacks (1995) underlines these findings.

The habitus is something that develops; it is by no means present by birth; instead, there is a development from birth onwards or a turning point in life (McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich, 2001) or a formative event (Denzin, 1989), forming what researchers address as 'life story'. This 'habitus' can best be perceived as a particular virtue in the use of the French language. What has been described in the previous section, the '*concours d'éloquence*' are an essential aspect of differentiation, and there is, for example, emphasis in the admission test for the Grandes Écoles the usage of an elegant French language. Hence all graduates from a Grandes Écoles can distinguish themselves from others through their use of language. This is subtle, but a form that is cultivated in elitist French circles and has been since the 17/18th century.

That is, in the context of this research, the experience of an education from a Grandes Écoles, dramatically changes personal, professional possibilities by being admitted to an elitist social circle. This is particularly true of the Grands Corps graduates (mines, bridges, and road) who move into top jobs in industry and banking (Draelants, 2010), furthermore the influence of the school on the students is strong, to the point that graduates strongly identify with their Grandes Écoles (Draelants, 2010).

Kumar and Usunier (2001) remark that while access to the Grande École is difficult, and the identification remains strong, the expertise for specific required knowledge in industry and business is less predominant than the career opportunities available. A member of the corps of the bridges and road described over 50 years ago how career opportunities and advancement work in the French elitist circles and noted:

I have the opportunity of changing posts every three or four years. Let's say that I am offered a post at the Caisse des Dépôts (French state bank) and this post would only be offered to a member of the Grands Corps (I don't have to explain why – friendship, corporatism, the telephone, etc.). I come to it, as to another post with the great merit of ignorance. This is what allows for a new view of things.
My great advantage as head of this bank is that I never had a modest job in a bank, so I knew nothing about banking before coming to this post. To be a good director of a firm or any organisation, it's good not to have been involved in any particular aspect (of the organisation). It allows you to arrive at an objective synthesis. (Mantes, 1967, p. 27)

The recruiting of the French Grand Corps and has not changed until now is still a matter of l'ENA, even though the French President Emmanuel Macron is seeking a change to answer the ongoing 'gilets jaunes' demonstrations in France deploring inequalities (press conference, 25.04.2019).

Suleiman (1978) noted that the French elites consider the ability to synthesise, to possess an *esprit de synthèse,* as a hallmark of the elite. General skills and the need for *polyvalance* have become an ideology and cult. This resulting lack of 'specific craft-based' knowledge is still perceivable today (Kumar and Usunier, 2001), by members of the Grands Corps following the above ideology and has to cope with a top-down topology, where the decision making is not questioned by other 'regular' organization members. Despite that, because they never got to work on the shop-floor level, their knowledge about the day-to-day operations and processes on the bottom line is reduced. Since the alumni of Grandes Écoles form an exclusive group, contact with other qualified members ***not*** from Grandes Écoles is reduced, and a possible valuable interchange within the hierarchy with those whom they have little interchange with is prevented (R. R. Locke, 1989). This affects not only work relations but also the social relations. Equals limit interactions to those 'within the group' and acknowledge their area of responsibilities. This is a French socio-cultural characteristic pattern where the hierarchically given, or obtainable rank, is a mirror that honours the achieved level of education (d'Iribarne, 1989, 1994). Hence, the elites

form a group of their own, apart from the mass and can set 'the rules of the game' according to their view.

As a result, in companies, this can lead to effects of a diminishing sense of belonging to the company community and, at worst, can lead to its destruction. Crozier (1964) observed that, along with the elitist group formation, an increase in French bureaucracies could be characterized by the development of interpersonal rules of this group and the clear boundaries between the operational groups that form an obstacle and prevent exchange and communication. Crozier (1964) further deplored the lack of autonomy that such a social and hierarchical construct brings with it, where the decision making for exceptional cases needs to rely on the input of a highly specific instance. This leads to uncertainty that is faced by parallel power relations (Mantes, 1967) that work autonomously, alongside the hierarchies and allows the single organisational groups to work on, despite these initiative of parallel power relations are grey areas.

Clark (1979) formulated his thoughts about the result of this educational system and its meaning for the students of Grandes Écoles from a psychological point of view to better understand its effect on others:

> From the moment you tell someone he will be a manager (dirigeant) that he is destined for responsibility, he behaves completely differently from someone to whom this has not been said. Someone who graduates from a French Grande École is quickly associated with positions of power and is promoted rapidly and develops quickly. There is in that a phenomenon which places everybody else in an inferior position. (p. 274)

In contrast to the French, the system of higher education in Germany supports community motivation (team spirit) that is embodied in the organisational culture (Birke and Kettenacker, 2012). The combination of science with the practical proposition of positiveness in German engineering education fosters the disappearance of the contradiction between thought and action at the operational level. It allows German

engineering managers to move back and forth between technical and line staff culture (Birke and Kettenacker, 2012) and render possible a task-oriented atmosphere, which is another strength of German operational management (Schmalenbach, 1959).

3.14 Research Model – a further elaboration

In this second part of the literature review related to culture, the relevant and influential aspects that issue from the complexities of higher education in France, and that may be seen in French-German business interaction, have been identified to allow the research model to be further elaborated. The rather broad theme of 'culture' can now be more firmly linked to specific aspects that form values and is analysed in relation to their role in French-German business interactions.

Education, as an integral part of culture, and its significance in a culture where values are born, like the love of one's own language that is intensely cultivated, is thought to have an influence on interaction, communication and building trust. That education creates specific (learned) values is well-established. However, the questions of how these learned values influence work with French business partners and what issues do these raises in the process remain unaddressed. And what do they mean for French-German business interaction? Practically, when working together, are there professional work-related values that need to be understood and respected?

To answer these questions, the entry-level model from chapter 2 (section 2.7, figure 2) has been expanded to incorporate how education many develop various aspects that are then evident in the values resulting from that specific education system. The French cultural arena, which defines the boundaries for this research and therefore "envelops" the rest of the model, is itself characterized by preferences, peculiarities and values, and is taken into account by Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Figure 3: The elaborated research model.
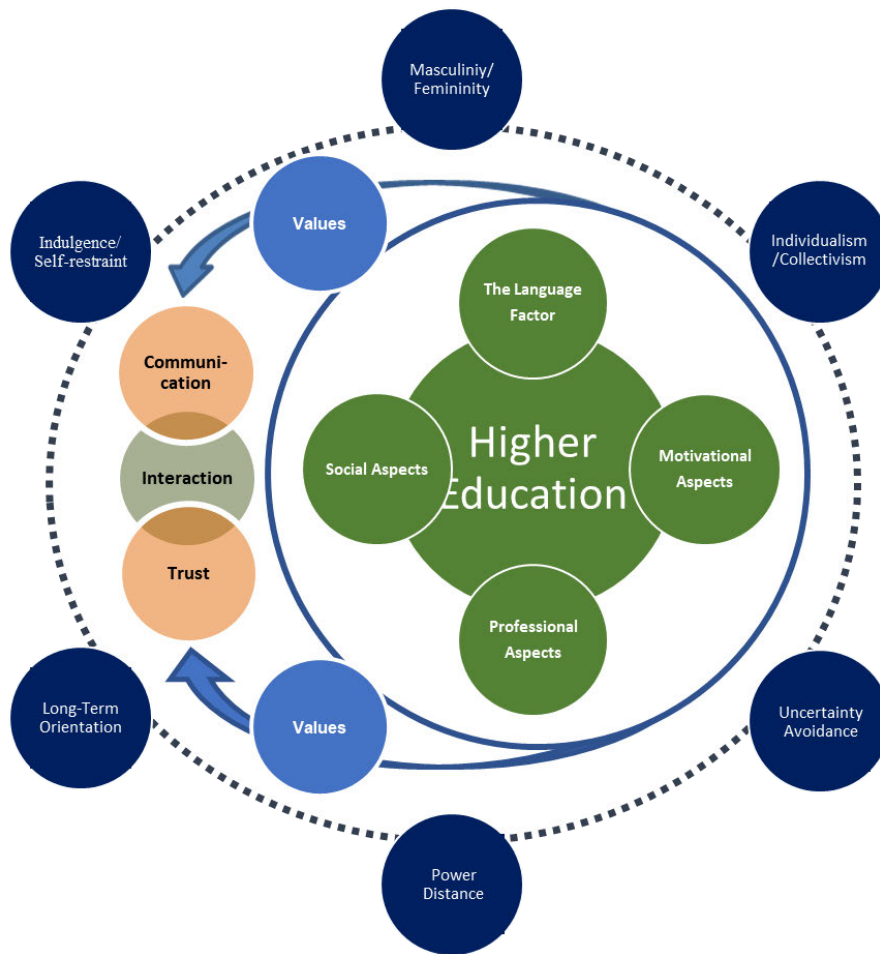
The research model above represents aspects that, supported by the literature review carried out in this chapter, were shaped to a substantial extent by the higher education system and demonstrates the perceived connection that these aspects, and the resulting values formed, may have in influencing the development of trust and communication, and hence the interaction process. These values refer to aspects corresponding to people's social background, to professional work-related aspects, to motivational aspects related to the cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980a, 2001) and the factor of language.

It has been argued in section 3.2 that some of these aspects are underpinned by the values of specific cultural dimensions, often represented as scores (Hofstede, 2016), that

are inherent in the culture. Therefore, the cultural space in which education, as well as interaction, takes place is omnipresent and is represented in the model by an outer circle and characterized by the cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede, some of which may be related to aspects inside this circle. For the following cultural dimensions - power distance, the dimensions of masculinity/femininity and the dimensions of long-term/short-term orientation - the different scores for France and Germany allow possible connections to be drawn, among other things, to the aspect of work motivation, as discussed in section 3.2. Nonetheless, the topic of motivation arises, in turn, from the overall system of education, which is based on inequality of opportunity, as discussed in section 3.10.

To speak the language of your business partner is always said to be a plus, easing not only communication, but also provides better access to those business partners. Section 3.11 identifies that the French language is, not only in France but also was within the aristocracy of Europe in the early modern age, the language that separated social classes. Considering the importance attributed to the French language, it is appropriate to assume that the language aspect is perceivable in contemporary business interaction and influential in the context of this research. Hence, clarifying the evident implications, if any, that higher education, where such language patterns are often honed, has on business interaction, communication and the building of trust is required to provide a better understanding of this aspect.

Section 3.12 has shown that a person's social origin is a factor that influences educational possibilities, which in result opens, or closes, specific career possibilities in France. It has been argued that the rise and social advancement of the lower social classes is consciously hindered by more influential and social groups (Hartmann, 2018), which enables an elite social circle to use the prevailing hierarchical structures to maintain the existing social structure (Bourdieu, 1989). It is therefore reasonable to assume that the

unequal opportunities of French managers arising, according to the institute one has graduated, is not without notice at a professional level in a binational cooperation and that it might, hence, influence French-German intercultural interactions.

Finally, as outlined in section 3.13, diverging approaches to professionalism exist, the French generalism vs. German specialism educational philosophies afford two opposite approaches that need to find a common ground in a business interaction.

Accordingly, the research model provides an overview of these aspects that emanate from the education system or where the education system can be partly held responsible, as well as those cultural dimensions that exist in a reciprocal relationship with these aspects. These all lead to specific behaviour patterns based on cultural values the French business partners follow. The research therefore seeks to find out whether the development of a relationship is influenced by values that emerge from the diverging French-German educational systems and whether they are significant in this specific cultural context. This knowledge highlights the potential importance of cultural values in general, and in particular of values that can be traced back to the educational systems, given their potential influence on building trust with the business partner and in showing communication skills.

In new markets, environmental and cultural specifics need to be considered when deciding where, when and how to develop or maintain successful business relationships (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Johnson and Cullen, 2002). Cultural values are created over time and are usually firmly anchored. As Brencic and Zabkar (2002) argue, knowing the past and the current cultural context of the business environment, and by this reflecting cultural knowledge and understanding, is advantageous for the development of a company entering a specific market. Not only can this ultimately facilitate market entry, cultural awareness and understanding of foreign markets can help

in building trust and establish a working relational communication, by demonstrating that you understand what is important to the customer and literally showing knowledge about what they value. Knowing these helps to eventually protect against wrong decisions and misjudgements in a specific cultural environment. Hence, the research seeks to develop a better approach to understanding the interplay of values based on the educational system, trust and communication.

3.15 Chapter Summary

Different relevant aspects that eventually require consideration in a French-German business interaction have been identified in this literature review. The research on interaction relationships between suppliers and customers in industrial markets (IMP Group, 1982a) as with the interaction model used as a cornerstone to refer to relevant aspects, encompasses not only economic exchange but also social aspects and conditions. Personal contacts and profiles of persons involved have been scrutinised (Bagozzi, 1979; Harris and Wheeler, 2005; Mitchell, 1978; Narayandas and Rangan, 2004; Walker, Churchill, and Ford, 1977), as well as the development of lasting intercompany relationships in industrial markets (Forsgren et al., 1995; Håkansson, 1982; IMP Group, 1982a). Here, psychic distance (Ford, 1980a) has been identified to hinders social exchange just as cultural distance (Toornroos, 1991) that needs to be overcome for successful relational exchange and enable the development of relationship atmosphere and actor bonds. Trust has been identified to be particularly important in social relationships between individuals (Lewicki, Macalister, and Bies, 1998). The development of trust in a business exchange is vital to secure positive outcomes from the exchange (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010; T. V. Nguyen and Rose, 2009). Based on the first part of the literature

review, a preliminary research model has been presented, drawing on the importance and interconnection of communication and trust in an interaction in this intercultural context.

The main cultural, historical, and anthropological, educational features (norms and values) and the importance and effects of language have been identified (Amabile, 1983; 1997; Andersen and Rasmussen, 2004; Ammon, 1989, 1994; Cook, 1998; Haviland et al., 2016; Hofstede, 1991; Kirst-Ashman and Hull, 2008; Kuper, 2000; Welch and Welch, 1997; Qili and Dong, 2016). A particular focus has been put on the historical development of the French education system as it seems that it is the specific cultural element that forms specific values, and they may have their origin here.

Language, the most direct and commonly used method to transmit thoughts and ideas to another person (Kartabayeva and Zhaitapova, 2016), is considered mainly in intercultural settings where different languages, different verbal styles, and numerous different non-verbal clues (Qili and Dong, 2016) come together and along with variations in culture, perception, and experience can make communication difficult (A. H. Bell, 1992). In the context of French-German business interaction, language could be identified as even more critical, as the 'habitus' of those graduates from the Grandes Ècoles is, in part, strongly linked to language.

Given the variety of microcosms established around the concept of culture and cultural differences, frameworks like the IMP's interaction model may give an overview of the specific aspects involved in the interaction process and the development of a long-lasting business relationship. Described elements, such as culture, within the framework, require a deeper situation- and regional-based involvement with the criteria found in specific business surroundings. That these different cultures and resulting values can differ on a wide array of issues or positions, is demonstrated in this literature review. Hence, personal selling, as with any personal interaction, is 'a negotiated social process whereby

people interact, explore their thoughts and feelings, exchange information and perhaps involved to new or novel positions and relationships' (Bonoma, Bagozzi, and Zaltmann, 1978, p. 62.), and is affected by the diverging values of the business counterpart. Salesperson knowledge about these play a crucial role in the formation of long-term buyer and seller relationships (Weitz and Bradford, 1999) and eventually in the building of trust and in establishing working relationship communications to facilitate business exchange to mutual advantage.

Hence, the literature review indicates that knowing which factors and/or differences in the respective educational systems have led to the development of different values and different mentalities responsible for the recurring problems encountered when dealing in the French market, is a prerequisite to find a way to bridge the cultural gap. It is a chance to better respond to the differing French values and for successful interaction and business operation in France. Such knowledge of the culture of the other makes it also more comfortable to establish the necessary profile and sales predisposition of the salesperson from one country to act in the other (Conway and Swift, 2000; Ford, 1978; E. A. Locke, 1976; Mitchell, 1978; Toornroos, 1991; Voldnes and Grønhaug, 2015; Swift, 1999), and may allow to interact with all kinds of French hierarchical business levels better.

With this added knowledge, the research model has been elaborated, identifying aspects that serve as a basis of considering specific values and to allow sensitization to what the interviewees may seek to identify and their importance in communication and the building of trust, to achieve successful business relations and interactions in this French-German context.

Chapter 4. Methodology

This chapter examines the methodological and philosophical stance taken in this research, which, due to the subject studied, involves an approach to social science. The focus lies on the French-German relational behaviour and more precisely on the cross-cultural buyer-seller relationship at the management level, as well as the lower hierarchical level in assorted sizes of corporations. The research strategy follows a qualitative case study approach and semi-structured interviews were used to identify cultural differences. Twenty-one interviews with French business partners have been undertaken. In addition, five interviews with German sales managers took place for data triangulation and to show that reliable data can be produced that can confirm the role and effects of different values, some of which issue from the respective education systems, and are at the origin of a number of French-German cross-cultural difficulties.

4.1 Introduction

To justify the research strategy and design of the key study parameters, it is necessary, and an integral part of this broadly ethnographic research, to consider the historical development of education and the formation of professions in Germany and France, as well as the influence and the interrelation of religion. The emphasis is on education and cultural anthropology, that is 'The branch of anthropology that focuses on human behaviour' (Whitley, Thomas, and Marceau, 1981, p. 138) and symbols, which form the core of cultural anthropology (Haviland et al., 2016).

The data for the present research has been generated through different departments of some of the French companies belonging to the geographical areas and customer circle

I oversee. This primarily involves the technical, managerial, economic, and commercial sectors, including the relation with suppliers and other partnerships.

In the frame of this job role and for the purposes of this research, I had discussions with the usual French business customers in charge of different activities, as mentioned above, and used these meetings for semi-structured interviews. Since I have already been working with these people for a couple of years and have particularly good relations based on confidence, trustworthiness, and mutual respect, it was quite natural to collect data reflecting the reality of situations and meanings. Being an insider to the sector of activity in which the research has been conducted and having a sense of knowledge about the way of thinking for this business area and for most of the interviewed customers was an advantage for this research. Patton (2002) underscored the balance needed between insiders and outsiders in qualitative research. While the access to participants as an insider may bring advantages in understanding the experienced, Patton points to the importance of the ability to communicate and describe the experienced so that it contributes to knowledge and value to those outside.

Since the automotive and trailer industry was not new to me, given my professional background, the empirical cultural context is familiar to me. Fischer (1996) underlined the importance of cross-cultural competence as a factor of success since the majority of conflicts in French-German cooperation have their origins in cultural differences. The necessity for the companies involved in international activities to consider foreign cultures is well known (Barlett and Goshal, 2002). Although it is recommended to prepare the people involved for activities in foreign cultures, companies ignore such recommendations due to the cost factor (M. Fischer, 1996). The willingness to accept cultural differences and accordingly adapt oneself to the cultural surroundings, as well as to try to use the

synergetic effect of cross-cultural differences (M. Fischer, 1996), is recommended. Hence, these specific recommendations in regard to knowledge about the culture are fulfilled by the researcher. All additional requirements, knowing the French educational, empirical historical, religious historical, and empirical, philosophical contexts, starting in the seventeenth century with a focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a timespan that has been strongly influenced by the French revolution (1789) and Napoleon (1769-1821) under whom the Grandes Écoles were brought to life are part of this research.

4.2 Positionality statement – My Background

Even though a researcher's beliefs should not influence the research, it is safe to say that no research is neutral (Halse and Honey, 2005; Lather, 1991; Mohanty, 1988) or the choice of methodology and the analytical decisions completely uncoloured by personal opinion, values and social background (Vanner, 2015). My positionality, my world view (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013; Rowe, 2014) or 'where I am coming from' has not only allowed me to conduct this study but also led to the specific position I have adopted unconsciously for this research (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) due to the inherent values and beliefs that have shaped me (Sikes, 2004).

It is therefore appropriate to disclose that I grew up in multicultural surroundings, and have had a very technical professional career, taking nearly all the possible educational steps, starting with an apprenticeship to a certified master craftsman, followed by university with a Master degree in engineering and later an MBA. Working in a technical field as a product manager and overseeing foreign countries, among which is France, the country I grew up for almost 10 years of my life, is a wonderful and lucky combination for me. Personally, I never felled to be only German or only French, I always felt very well in both countries despite the culture and habits of both are very distinct. My professional

activity allowed me to realize how profound cultural differences overall can be between countries and how important it is to know and cope with these differences. It does not matter if they are implicit or explicit. Different languages and cultures represent a new challenge in marketing in each country, as 'the rules of the game' between the seller and buyer are different in each other's country. This makes Europe an exciting place, but simultaneously sometimes quite a tricky environment in which to conduct business.

Having worked internationally for over 10 years with Europe's market leader for semi-trailers, the people involved in the transportation of goods, the customers of road semi-trailers, form the frame and boundary for this research. The purchase of these carriers represents a significant investment, so that discussions and negotiations take place at all hierarchical levels within the customer companies and are not only limited to the purchasing department. Indeed, in France, according to the level of the business negotiations taking place, people of varied social origins, with the corresponding education, can be encountered. This allowed me to have, and maintain, contact with customers at diverse levels of companies. Some of these customers have become interview partners for this research.

Regular contact to customers, by means of business meetings, telephone calls or technical discussions that took place on different occasions in their companies, occasionally outside the company, and on rare occasions at French fair grounds, this allowed to me to gradually increase my recognition, establish a working relationship and observe these business partners. With some, this business relationship became closer because of more frequent and prolonged contact, with others it stayed a looser business relationship. However, all the business partners chosen for the interviews were those with whom I had previous specific business interactions regarding a technical product and the associated consultative meetings. And several years later now, I can also confirm that these

contacts with whom a business interaction was maintained at that specific time, were purely professional and have not persisted after I left the business.

The experiences with customers in this context and industry allow me to suggest that the ability to analyse this activity successfully without sufficient knowledge that goes beyond the usual technical, commercial, and language issues and to build long-term relationships is difficult, if not impossible. Examining the various aspects of seller and buyer relationships also means, in the framework of French-German educational systems, encompassing this cross-cultural understanding, the respective histories, and philosophies. Hence, there is a requirement for a level of interdisciplinary knowledge of a country that enables the gaining of a 'big picture', to help know why things are the way they are in France.

What allowed me to pursue this research, and I profoundly believe that what has enabled me to gain access to French customers, and the interviewees, was that I am an insider not only to both cultures, but also having a priori knowledge of the industry in which the research has taken place (Gary and Holmes, 2020). While the insider perspective is questioned in terms of the ability to research without bias (Kusow, 2003), the advantages, particularly as this existing customer relationship was not to be jeopardized, was that the established trusted relationship allowed me to secure more honest answers, and so to get a more authentic and truthful interview (Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, to secure the objectivity of the data I generated, triangulation was applied as described in section 4.12.

Having limited problems with such cultural differences, having learned much about the diverging interpretations of the fundamental values of both French and German cultures, I feel at home with the different respective cultural subtleties. If I consider this kind of knowledge to be essential in international sales and marketing to interact easily and

bridge many cultural gaps, then I also consider that knowledge about cultures, in itself, is an exciting aspect of general education. This is because, apart from acting positively for a company in building business relationships, it allows for the development of a friendly mutual dynamic that is based on shared interests with customers.

I consider that understanding the microcosmos of these relations and the aspects involved in interactions when building business relations is an essential task for management, as it is vital for successful marketing and purchasing (Cann, 1998). That is even more so when the interaction is multicultural. My interest has developed over the course of the years from my activity as a product and marketing manager and is due to the diverse cultural environments my profession requires me to work within. The idea to specifically research the influence of different higher education finds its origin in discussions with my (French) father who often identified that the France education system, when compared to the German, does not offer the same chances to those that pass through it. While this did leave an impression on me, my primary concern, having French customers, was the impact these aspects might have on (my) business and (my) interaction with the different customers I look after. This led me to research the impact of the different higher education experiences in France to answer how the diversity of cultural aspects, history, sociology, and even philosophy involved in this international context affects the building of a business relationship.

My professional experience as a product manager in the company I was working in, overseeing the south-west Europe markets and customers, has guided me in how to approach this research. What has been particularly important, is that if I approach customers for my research, I need to make sure not to endanger the business relationship. In addition, my goal has been to retrieve data in a context that is as close as it can be to a natural working situation, so that the attention of the interviewee is not disturbed. Having

worked for considerable time in this business, I believe I have developed a sense for the situations in which the people I work with will feel comfortable and those in which in which they do not. It is due to this familiarity and my embeddedness in the culture, that I have managed to gain access to the interviewees, being regarded as 'one of us' (Sanghera and Bjokert, 2008), which might otherwise, as an outsider, have become more difficult.

This has led me to an emic approach and to research the phenomena based on a broadly ethnographic approach that profits from my insider experience and knowledge of my customers, the industry, and hence of my interviewees (Gary and Holmes, 2020). Using a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews represents another aspect that allowed to shape the interview and at the same time be flexible enough to react to the answers provided. Using a quantitative approach never appealed to me in this context and with this research task, as I always felt the necessity to engage with the interviewee in a, for them, natural situation that would allow me to adopt my questioning according to their answers. Understanding my customers and the factors influencing regarding buyer-seller relationships better, and being able to profit from possible additional knowledge, was the driving force for this study. Had there not already have been personal experience in international product management, with extensive involvement with customers from diverse cultures that I could build on, this research would not have taken place in this way.

4.3 An Ethnographic Research Endeavour

This study is based on ethnographic research, exploring the national, cultural influences of education in France on B2B interaction. Hammersley (2006) states that ethnography is usually seen as studying "at first hand what people say and do in particular contexts" (p. 4). Brewer (2000) defined Ethnography as "the study of people in a naturally occurring setting or 'field'…" (p. 171). While there are different variations of the

ethnography definition, a constant is the study of the human behaviour and everyday occurrences in its natural context. The study and observation follow the requirement of the appropriate context (Willis and Trondman, 2000). Understanding that ethnography is founded in culture, requires of the researcher an understanding and appreciation of the nature of culture (Willis and Trondman, 2000) so as to understand and acknowledge that the way people make meaning to their world and lives, is aside of being contextual, also locally different (LeCompte and Schensul, 2010).

This broadly ethnographic research of a single social group, managers (those involved in buying decisions) within the French semi-trailer related transportation business, makes use of participant interviews and incorporates reflection on my experiences within this professional area. Additional aspects such as the historical development of education, the influence of religion and the possible effects of social origin have been taken in account to allow a holistic understanding and to explore the nature of the phenomenon (Flick, 2002).

The term 'ethnology', in its most general meaning, refers to the interest to acquire knowledge about how aggregations of human beings are distinct from each other in terms of material culture, language, religion, moral ideas, or social institutions (Welz, 2001). Ethnology has long been perceived as a subfield of anthropology and was referred to as 'cultural anthropology' in the USA, and as 'social anthropology' in Great Britain and Commonwealth countries (Welz, 2001). The methods that have been developed by anthropologists to research social phenomena contrast ethnographic research and ethnological research (Berreman, 1968 as cited in Zaharlick, 1992). While ethnological research concentrates on testing hypothesis concerning relationships within social-cultural systems, ethnographic research, in contrast, concentrates on the generation and analysis of data within a specific social group to explain and understand phenomena. This data

collection is, so to say, 'ethnographic fieldwork' and aims to 'make direct contact with social agents in the normal courses and routine situations of their lives to try understand something of *how* and *why* these regularities take place' (Willis, 2000, p. XIII), which represents also the approach taken within this research.

However, accessing this information requires the creation of social relations with participants in the study (Zaharlick, 1992). Becoming intimately involved with participants of the social group enables the required trust with the participants involved to be built (Desalegn, 2019). This trust is a prerequisite to access the interviewees and build rapport with the participant – in essence a social relationship. The purpose of building rapport with the interviewee is to ensure mutual respect (Guillemin and Heggen, 2009). But it is also the basis on which better data can be accessed, based on trust and the understanding that a good working relationship engenders (Youell and Youell, 2011). Maintaining regular contact and anticipating the participant's need (Elliott and Martin, 2013), demonstrating interest in their actions (Churches and Terry, 2007), hence having common ground and being on the same wavelength (Zakaria and Musta'amal, 2014) eases the building of a good rapport. Being professionally involved with the interviewees through prior repeated business meetings and having a common language helps eliminate barriers, enabling relations and rapport at a level that allowed access to the participants and the undertaking of interviews.

Still, I have not been permanently embedded within the social groups, however, my experiences, and reflections on those experiences, gathered over several years in the professional area enriches the interviewing process and analysis. Hammersley's (2006) stipulated that *"Most ethnographers do not actually live with the people they study…instead, many social ethnographers focus on what happens in a particular work locale or social institution when it is in operation…* (p. 4), and accordingly, the data

collection has taken place at times when I have been visiting the customers in their locations and the duration for this this data collection is, in sum, all meetings and occasions that have led to exchange with this social group. This approach allowed the attempt to research a specific phenomenon related to cultural aspects and social contexts from a holistic perspective, which represents 'a fundamental principle of anthropology, that things must be viewed in the broadest possible context, in order to understand their interconnections and interdependence' (Haviland et al., 2016, p. 14).

4.4 The Philosophical Foundation of this Study

This research is based on my belief that perceived 'reality' is a product of the social, cultural, and educational experiences of an individual. My motivation for applying this research approach is best described by Remenyi et al. (1998) when they stated that the use of such an epistemological approach is 'to discover the details of the situation so as to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them' (p. 35). Following this, my ontology is, therefore, nominalist in nature and, from an epistemological perspective, is aligned with the theoretical commitments of interpretivism, which gives meaning and value to the observations about people (Schwandt, 1993). With this study, I seek not only to disclose a phenomenon but also to bring an understanding to why things are the way they are, to bring understanding to the essence of the phenomenon.

The research plunged me into the study of human society and ethnographic research in order to uncover 'the shared beliefs, practices, artefacts, folk knowledge and behaviours of some group people' (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p. 42). While a wide array of ethnographical techniques are available (Wolcott, 1980), it is not the role of an on-site observer that was initially considered in this ethnological research approach but that of an 'embedded reporter', which means an ethnographer culturally integrated with an

anthropological mind, realising that cultural variations in models of mind can be inferred with social actors in different social settings (Luhrmann, 2011).

Interpretive techniques and ethnography to study the belief system of a group and their social arrangement or language and rituals, forming essential parts of culture, have been widely used by anthropologists (Bonnel and Hunt, 1999). Gamst and Norbeck (1973) argued that the semiotic structures of these distinct parts forming culture are inaccessible by questionnaires, as these focus too much on the aspect of cognition. Some researchers, such as Geertz (1973), have argued that the view of culture as a cognitive expression disregards the central role that can be attributed to behaviours or actions in formulating, constituting, or expressing culture (as cited in Derne, 1994). This has just as widely been criticised as others have ignored it since it characterized social studies from the 1950s on. Not only does cognition provoke behaviour, but behaviour also leads to cognition. Harris (1999, p. 20) explained it in this regard:

> Yet when we define culture as pure idea, and describe ideas as guiding social behaviour, we actually advocating a popular paradigmatic principle whose scientific value is scarcely self-evident. Indeed, from my cultural materialist perspective, the emphasis on the proposition that ideas guide behaviour but not the reverse is the mother error of contemporary anthropological theories… Clearly behaviours and ideas must be seen as elements in feedback relationship. In the short run, ideas do guide behaviours but in the long run behaviour guides and shapes ideas. (p. 20)

While Harris seemed to indicate that cognition and behaviour have an equal part in forming culture, other researchers, such as Kaplan (1954) or Shweder (2000), have argued that what people do is more important than what they say; hence, the actions of a person are a reflection of culture. This suggests that surveys and questionnaires are not adequate tools to retrieve and get to the heart of what culture is; *au contraire*, these tools can be considered unproductive for this purpose.

While it is not disregarded that some specifics can be measured with surveys and questionnaires, as in the case of this research and following the above argument of Shweder (2000), the methodological approach chosen for this research is that the answers to the research questions will not be found solely using surveys. Instead, the answers to the research questions will be found in the method of expression and physical expressions of the interviewees.

Unlike the development in international business research in which an increased focus on the methodological approach with a concentration on a few methodological approaches (Sullivan, 1998a) can be observed, the presented research does not aim to follow a pre-set condition. Daniels (1991) observed a tendency to essentially relegate theory to the backwaters for the convenience of specific methodologies. Sullivan (1998b) has formulated his concerns as follows:

> The pitfalls of a narrow vision are dire. Scholars produce more studies, yet our cumulative findings may lead us to know more about less precisely because they obscure that these parts are of some whole. Many findings, while technically impressive and statistically significant, may stifle insight by collaring innovative perspectives. Furthermore, the tendency of some researchers to build consensus through interactive replication or trivial refinement may contribute to reports that prelude the creative process that prompt genuine shifts in intellectual directions by encouraging cognitive processes that precisely pinpoint the trees to the neglect of the forest. (p. 838)

4.5 Research Strategy – Qualitative Research

The analysis of the research problem leads to using a research method that seeks to understand the different realities born from the respective educational systems and the personal and national values that influence the establishment of international business-to-business relationships that are perceived as essential for successful selling and buying negotiations. In this study, the interview questions formulated have continuously been reshaped according to new knowledge, insight, and ideas. It seems more than evident to

me that the research aims, or research intention, chooses the method and not vice versa. I fully acknowledge that other researchers will see this differently, and I admire fully the passionate researchers that can shape a method around – what would seem to me – the most contradicting topics.

However, in this research, the initial approach has immediately tended strongly towards a qualitative approach. Cross-cultural knowledge, the respective mentalities, and the necessity in business-to-business markets to build relationships in both countries lead to accepting, respecting, and coping with the other organization, which means knowing the differences and specific values of the other. To identify most of these cultural differences, in my industrial world, a qualitative research methodology appears most suitable.

Qualitative research focuses on how social reality is constructed. The word qualitative implies that the research object or objective cannot be experimentally examined or measured so that useful quantitative data that provide insight into social aspects can be gained. Qualitative research is about the 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone' (Sherman and Webb, 1988, p. 7). The situations, or the atmosphere in which I and my interviewee are in, are part of the inquiry. All these parts form a whole, and this social qualitative research seeks to answer the questions regarding the social experiment of relationships. Patton (1985) explained:

> Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meaning are, what the world looks like in that particular setting and the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting… The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 14)

To access this deep understanding, researchers use very detailed interviews and observation of the reaction, mimicry, and gesticulation of the interviewee, seeking the big

picture and a rich description of the social world they examine (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) — a world that becomes even more colourful when intercultural relations are involved.

A qualitative case study approach facilitates an in-depth investigation of the given empirical phenomena (Dubois and Gadde, 2002) and provides the opportunity to examine a real-life context. Merriam (1998) defined the case study in terms of its end product: 'A qualitative case study is an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit' (p. 27). However, more than that, case studies have been widely used to analyse interaction processes, which requires a more in-depth study and allows researching a phenomenon that is bounded in a broader context (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Patton (2002) remarked:

> Qualitative inquiry is highly appropriate for studying process because 1. depicting process requires detailed descriptions of how people engage with each other, 2. the experience of process typically varies for different people so their experiences need to be captured in their own words, 3. process is fluid and dynamic so it can't be fairly summarized on a single rating scale at one point in time, and 4. participants' perceptions are a key process consideration. (p. 159)

It is the interpretive characteristic of the research design that differentiates this research approach from others (Cronbach, 1975). The approach seeks to attempt an explanation of the phenomenon studied, providing a holistic description.

In particular, this study attempts to clarify three primary research questions:

1. What are the cultural value perceptions that originate from differences in the educational systems?

2. How, if at all, do these values help to understand cross-cultural relational difficulties in communication and the creation of trust?

3. How can understanding the cultural value perceptions facilitate the development of a framework for trust development and successful

communication in the interaction between buyers and sellers in cross-cultural selling environments?

The participants for this qualitative approach have been chosen according to the questions to be answered and their felt contribution they could offer or reveal about this phenomenon and knowledge I could not otherwise access. The social group has also been chosen for its endured established connection with me, meaning that my professional life has provided me access to the interviewees to a level that a relation had the opportunity to form. The insight gained deepens knowledge and delivers a piece of the broad picture (Abramson, 1992). All those pieces 'are essential for understanding the range or variety of human experience' (Abramson, 1992, p. 190), sharpening the view for the multiplicity of individualistic areas and social arrangements the world has to offer.

To reduce uncertainty, I chose to hold the interviews during regular business visits of my customers and in their familiar surrounding (mostly the company of the business partners) so that the interviewees were the less affected by disturbances as possible, and the previously established pleasant working atmosphere would lead to the most authentic impressions as possible.

If the research can demonstrate that there are effects of cultural influence on education or the influence of education (especially in France) on culture, through the heuristic quality of the case study, this might help explain the reason for perceived cross-cultural difficulties in interaction, the background of the situation, what happened, and why. Hence, the study will research the influence that the French higher education system has on the French-German cross-cultural interactions and the relationships in the framework of mutual business in the buyer-seller context.

4.6 Research Design

An excellent qualitative design needs to address three main specific purposes. First, the chosen research method is required to enable the answering of the research questions. Second, the data that are generated during the research need to be valid and reliable. Additionally, the research design needs to be 'fit' for purpose, which is not less important and covers practical aspects such as feasibility, time requirements, or respecting budgetary boundaries. Hence, a good research design must consider several aspects that need to be highlighted and investigated beforehand so that the research design is an 'informed compromise' (Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000, p. 71).

However, the research design cannot be carved in stone. A certain flexibility to react to the unforeseen is a requirement. Maxwell (1996) argued that the relationship between key components of the research design could influence each other, and their interrelationship allows for wider interdependency. This is especially true for the field of social research, where the participants can, at any moment, react in a wholly unforeseen or unexpected way (Pole and Lampart, 2002). However, this does provide the opportunity to explore relations and contexts against expectations. Lewis and McNaughton-Nicholls (2013) concluded that research design underlies a continuous evolvement along with the progress of the research. It is not something that can be set at the start of the research but something that needs to react to the given circumstances.

Qualitative research usually does not follow a research design where data are researched to test a priori models or hypotheses. The qualitative approach is more engaged with assembling data to enhance existing knowledge. Bonding the research too closely to an existing model preconceives theories and ideas and is not helpful (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Layder (1993) argued that the researcher needs to stay open-minded to emerging concepts, despite the ideas that the researcher might have formulated at the start

of the research. Building on existing knowledge and a conceptual framework is therefore considered necessary for a good start, but the requirements and room for flexibility are characteristics of good research design. This portrays my approach to this research, where I bring to this research, what I would call a foundation of specific knowledge of the cultures yet staying open-minded to discover what is not entirely undisclosed or yet reflected.

Another aspect of the research design is the selection of research locale and populations. The comparison of these variables and the choice that lies within the responsibility of the researcher should have the quality required to aid theory building and provide reliable data (Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000; Bryman, 1998; Pole and Lampart, 2002). This comparison and selection of samples are general features of social inquiry. Bechhofer and Paterson (2000) considered comparison and control to be of utmost importance within a research design and formulated that:

> Designing a piece of empirical research requires the researcher to decide on the best ways to collecting data in research locales which will permit meaningful and insightful comparisons. At the same time, the research design much achieves the control which gives some degree of certainty that the explanations offered are indeed superior to competing explanations… The need to achieve control applies as much to the most natural and participatory fieldwork situations as to experimental ones. (p. 2)

Hence, the presentation of data according to the for this research chosen qualitative research design, consists of 'direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge' (Patton, 2002, p. 10). These were collected during interviews or though descriptions from the interviewees and observations of behaviours, gestures, or mimicry (Patton, 2002, p. 10), which was valuable data serving this research. Categorising some of these data can be difficult, just as it is challenging to comprehend feelings. The data are not always concrete, which makes the selection of researched data and the technique of data generation difficult (Dey, 1993).

Using interviews to research the required data allowed access to elements that cannot directly be observed. It enabled access to thoughts and feelings. And it facilitated access to the past and eventually to what is important and has meaning to the interviewee. According to Patton (2002), all this information can be accessed by interviews and 'allows us to enter into the other person's perspective' (p. 341). This allows for a more complete inquiry of a phenomenon. However, the interviews offered more. It offered the above-mentioned and additionally the required flexibility to react during an interview when new aspects are uncovered, or circumstances present an opportunity for more, or richer, data collection.

4.7 The Interviewees

In this research, six companies have been selected as sites from which to draw interview participants. As mentioned in section 4.5, the choice of the companies was made due to the amount of business interaction I had previously had with them, the number of times I could visit the customers and the level of professional trust, I believed, has been established to enable me to approach the customer and business partner with my research and interview request. To have established a rapport with the customer, is perceived as especially important, as during the interviews, the personal and private views of the interviewee are sought, which demands a relationship to be established to generate such data (Ryan and Dundon, 2008; Prior, 2017). Hence, the centrality of the perceived level of 'embeddedness' that had been achieved beforehand in the professional and social group is key to this research, allowing access and providing a level of knowledge about the organization that was decisive. However, if the attained closeness has allowed access to the interviewees, I need to also be clear that there was no intention related to develop an

understanding of the companies for which participants worked. Rather the companies acted as vehicles to access individuals at different hierarchical levels, but not did they represent unit of analysis.

In each of these companies, three to four persons from different hierarchical levels and departments have been interviewed in a semi-structured manner. A semi-structured approach was chosen as the interviews took place in the frame of my routine and professional marketing activities in France. The people for the interviews have been identified according to the virtue of their relationship with the research aims and whether they could provide relevant, comprehensive, and rich information to satisfy the research. To do so, some of the interviewee and respective business partners needed to have a Grande École background to enable this research. However, there was also the requirement to have graduates from universities and interviewees with a practical educational background to enable comparison.

In all 21 interviews were conducted for this research.

Table 2: Educational background of French interviewees

Interviewee	Duration	Position of Interviewee in the Organization	Educational Background
1	30 min	Managing Director	Grande École
2	20 min.	Purchasing Manager	University
3	25 min.	Managing Director	Grande École
4	20 min	Purchasing Manager	University
5	5 min.	Fleet Manager	BTS
6	20 min.	Workshop Manager	University
7	20 min.	Operations Manager	BTS
8	10 min.	Purchasing Manager	University
9	15 min.	Operations Manager	Licence professionnelle
10	15 min.	Fleet Manager	DUT
11	25 min.	Managing Director	Grande École
12	15 min.	Purchasing Manager	University
13	30 min.	Founder, Manging Director	University
14	25 min.	Fleet Team Manager	University
15	30 min.	Managing Director	Grande École
16	10 min.	Purchasing Manager	University
17	15 min.	Workshop/Repair shop Supervisor	BM
18	25 min.	Founder, Managing Director	Self-taught
19	25 min.	Fleet Manager	DUT
20	15 min.	Purchasing Manager	DUT
21	20 min.	Workshop Manager	BM

(BTS: Brevet de technicien supérieur; DUT: Diplôme universitaire de technologie; BM: Brevêt de Maîtrise; University: Bachelor or Master; Licence professionnelle: One year further specialization after BTS or DUT)

In addition, five German managers from my company involved in business interaction with French business partners were interviewed for triangulation purposes. Details of this approach are presented in the section 'Triangulation' on pages 113-115.

Just as with the French interviewees and for the same reasons previously mentioned, the German interviewees have been interviewed in German.

Table 3: Educational background of German interviewees for triangulation purpose

Interviewee	Duration	Position of Interviewee in the Organization	Educational Background
22	15 min.	Sales Director	Fachhochschule
23	20 min.	Purchasing Manager	University
24	15 min.	Sales Manager	Fachhochschule
25	15 min.	Sales Manager	Fachhochschule
26	20 min.	Product Manager	University

I knew all the interviewees beforehand for at least a few years. Knowing the people, they would not have answered my questions in a structured interview, probably because, in the case of the French interviewees who come from a quite conservative society, it would be considered as interference from a foreign culture or in a national established system. However, this problem was not faced as an ethnographer using a culturally integrated (embedded) researcher approach, in this case being known by the interviewees and working in the same professional field reduces the level of uncertainty with the interviewees (Heath, 2004). A common language and a common culture have also allowed for questions without negative feeling with the interviewees. Moreover, all of this also applies to the German interviewees used for triangulation purposes.

All interviewees were directly involved in the seller-buyer relationship in the researcher's professional activity and engaged explicitly in different scenarios of French-German interaction. This means they all had/have an opinion based on real-life business encounter. The interviews were conducted at three hierarchical levels and included:

- The decider, in our case, the managing director and the person giving agreement for the investment at the end of the process;

- The engineer in charge of the purchasing department;

- The supervisor who can also be an engineer in charge of the maintenance of the equipment.

The interviewees all come from medium-sized companies, where the key persons are both the persons being interviewed and those I was involved with in my daily business. These are mainly the manager of maintenance, the manager of the buying department, and a decider who is usually, as mentioned, the managing director of the unit. For this research, the managing directors in five of the six considered companies for interviews have run through higher education, four of them on a Grandes Écoles. The influencer and gatekeeper are included in our activity, since maintenance sometimes plays an unofficial role as gatekeeper and/or internal consultant (Sturdy and Wright, 2011; Haas, 2015), depending on the company and context. These persons are important in the activity represented by the study case since the quality of delivered equipment is taken as a reference for future investment and business. In France, there is little to no relationship between the shop floor and management — the level differentiating the management and maintenance levels, especially if management or part of management, is from a Grande École. However, to be informed about the quality and reliability of the equipment and to apply pressure on the suppliers, top management is required to maintain an indirect connection to the shop floor. My experience in this business has been that the verdict of the shop floor that is involved directly with the service and repair of the trailers plays a role. This is the reason all hierarchical levels have been considered and included in the interviews, to provide a more holistic view of the context.

4.8 The Interviews

Gaining data by mean of interviews that could be classified as speaking for itself, without contradiction and bound perfectly with other collected 'evidence', retrieved by an incontrovertible neutral and unbiased person, free of whatever possible and imaginable mistakes that might arise in the collection process, is desirable but far from reality. I believe it is very important for all researchers to acknowledge that even the most organized researcher will, under the weight of an enormous amount of data, notes, or transcripts, fall into the trap of inaccuracy, may it be to present a coherent and conclusive summary of the research work (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 713). Using semi-structured (or unstructured) interviews to retrieve the data will not prevent having to make decisions that might support inaccuracy. This is a circumstance that has been recognized by ethnologists highlighting the problem of the contradictory nature of data and the influence of the researcher as an author in deciding how to deal with the data.

Another source of inaccuracy may have its origin in the above described amounts of data leading to a hermeneutic circle, which means understanding all the single parts that build on each other to form the whole picture (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987; Warren, 2002). Hence, the researcher may be involved more than it would appear. While the researcher may be a distant unapproachable and unaffected interviewer, he or she may invest feelings in the attempt to understand those studied, himself or herself, and the relation between both (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). While in this research, for reasons of neutrality and data reliability, I opted for a role that I can best be described as neutral, the strictness of this approach is not easily maintainable when having previously worked or interacted with the interviewees. An investment of feelings in some instances has allowed for more content simply by providing a level of understanding for the interviewee and their communicated 'story'.

Gubrium and Holstein (2001) spoke of the interview as being a collaborative work between the interviewer and interviewee based on and influenced by, the given context. The way the interactions and negotiations are led affects the situation. As such, interactions and situations are not static but must be understood as dynamic, where the one reacts to the other. Ellis and Berger (2002) formulated that the interaction is not solely a one-to-one interaction but is an interaction between the researcher and the whole community, which in this research context reflects the dynamic where one aspect leads to the other and slowly the data pieces are put together, like a puzzle, resolving into a bigger picture.

As mentioned in section 4.3, the established relations and rapports with the interviewees was the precondition that made this ethnographic approach and these interviews possible. And the social business bond that have been built have allowed, in this intercultural setting, to eventually come much closer to the interviewee than it would have been with a more lose connection. Based on Cicourel's (1964) classic work *Method and Measurement in Sociology* that described interviews as being social encounters, Dingwall (1997) argued that the social encounter demands to be analysed accordingly. Hence, the given and present socially situated activity at the moment of the interview is influenced by the role the interviewee is playing, vis-à-vis the question and under the impression of the interviewer (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Based on Martin Buber's (1923/1995) 'I and Thou' relation, Seidman (1991) analysed the answers of interviews where the interviewee and interviewer shared reciprocity of perspective so that the relation came to be a 'we' relation, with the result that the distance between interviewee and interviewer vanished. The interviewee as 'object' in the research becomes lost and with it 'objectivity' since the interviewee becomes an equal participant in the interaction. Dingwall (1997), a proponent of the ethno-methodologically informed interview, took the view that coming closer to the interviewee, which is causal in the 'we' relation, would open a view on the 'real self' of

the interviewee. That is what I intended and what happened in several cases. The circumstance to share to some parts a common culture, allowed for that '*we*' relation with the interviewees.

Accordingly, all the interviews with French interviewees have been conducted in the French language. This draws on the cultural common "we" perspective but also responds to a practical consideration: It made sure that all interviewees could understand the questions and could express themselves in their native language without fear that due to the very different levels of English among the interviewees (some of them would not even speak English), that content, opinions and the standpoint of the interviewees becomes obscured.

Three areas where the focus of the semi-structured interview. The areas inquired after the interviewees general perception towards Germany by formulating a question that would concentrate on the product rather than on the people:

1. Compared to our French competitors, what do you like/dislike in the German approach – in the quality of the product, maintenance, behaviour towards problems, in general behaviour, or in daily work?

The next area involved their perception of German managers:

2. What is your view of German managers?

Finally, the last area directly asked for an evaluation of the perceived differences concerning the educational system:

3. In terms of working behaviours, management systems and possibly the generally culture, for what differences is the educational system responsible?

There are two important things related to the questions. The first is that the questions have been formulated in this way because they take advantage of what has been researched with the literature review and of my personal knowledge. National, as well as

personal, values and culture, are likely to make up an important part in the answer. Further, it is also vital to notice that the above questions reflect the content that has been asked of the interviewees, but the questions were not asked in full as formulated above. All questions have been formulated as 'open' questions (Foddy, 1993). to give room for answers. Apart from the second listed question, which was asked very directly whenever it seemed to fit into the developing situation, the need to be able to react to the interviewees during the interviews allowed for the asking of parts of the questions, to also add more content, and to develop the interview in a flexible and responsive manner. It is this freedom and latitude (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). in responding to the individual interviewees that provided room for sometimes unexpected directions, developing the interview towards a new course, and that provided new data.

The research strategy followed for the interviews was to guide the conversation loosely around the interview questions. The atmosphere was very natural and stress free - if an external viewer watched the scene from, they may not have noticed an interview was taking place. This approach meant that the interview was more of a conversation (within an established relationship) adding to the development of a sense of empathy and the readiness to share personal thoughts and opinions.

The interviews took place following the top-down hierarchy, starting with the managing directors, the managers of buying departments who are generally engineers or economists, and the managers of the maintenance departments, who are engineers or technicians. All questions posed were similar at each level of the six companies.

To respect the confidentiality of the interviewees, I decided not to use a tape recorder during the interviews. While tape recording has benefits, it also has disadvantages. The presence of a tape recorder changes the interview situation since the interviewee is fully conscious that their exact words are recorded, and this may lead to them being

uncomfortable or reluctant to express their feelings (Gall et. al., 1996). Brewer (2000) also highlights that interviewees might be anxious about issues of confidentiality and that retrieving data in the form of non "obtrusive" note taking during an interview might be more sensible than tape-recording. He suggests that in some situations it might seem more appropriate to write up notes retrospectively to prevent participants having their "guard up" (O'Reilly, 2012) and not engaging with the researcher. While audio and video recording may offer much, Al-Yateem, (2012) also argues that it can affect the quality of data and that it is therefore imperative to also consider alternative methods – such as note-taking.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) also note the 'subject desirability' effect. This effect may manifest when participants are talking about sensitive, highly personal or illegal issues and generally would tend not to disclose much information or do not answer honestly because they want to present themselves favourably (Davis et al., 2010). The participants in such a situation seem to choose to protect their social semblance, and consequently are less willing to disclose information that might alter this picture (Al-Yateem, 2012). Given that my main intention in the interviews was to preserve a good level of interaction and communication with the interviewees and that the disadvantages discussed above may have an effect in this research context, I employed the use of written notes during and after the interview to enable unstressed and flexible conversations. This procedure also aligned with a prominent request not to tape the interviews, a point that is addressed in the next section more fully.

Thus, the received information was noted and structured, and the transcript of these data captured the form of notes. While taking notes was required, there was a strong desire from my side to lead the interview in the most natural fashion and to make the interviews as indistinguishable as possible from a typical business meeting to gain the most out of the

situation. I went over the notes after the interviews and added data and thoughts from memory, augmenting what had already been successfully captured during the interviews.

The organization of the interview was linked to regular business meetings. During my stay, I could sometimes organize one or two interviews. Generally, the schedule and time reserved when travelling abroad to visit customers are one or, at maximum, two days for each company, according to the job to be done. As a marketing manager and a former product manager, many times I had to cope during my visits with problems of a technical nature, which influenced the duration of stay on site.

Due to both activities, it was easy to interview managers from the maintenance and buying departments and the general managers since, at the end of my mission in the company, I always invited the concerned persons for lunch or dinner since it is part of the culture and normal 'public relations' in France. The company's customers, who are at the same time my respondents for this research study, facilitated the job. Indeed, it seems to me that research in a known field of activity, with knowledge of episodes (IMP Group, 1982a), people, atmosphere, and environment increases the quality, reliability and validity of the data and eases the access to interview partners. Not having such knowledge and access and, or established business interactions with proven commitment in order to maintain a long-term business relationship (De Ruyter, Moorman and Lemmink, 2001; Han, 1992) in which trust (So and Sculli, 2002) had the chance to grow, would make it considerably more difficult to access the information retrieved.

An example interview transcript (Interviewee no. 15) is presented in the original language in appendix 1 (as well as translated into English in appendix 2). The coding tree for this interview is provided in appendix 3 (French language) and in appendix 4 (English translation).

The data gained from an interviewee is evidence that they were willing to share a narrative coloured by multiple aspects of their lived experience. It is not a uniquely biographical or autobiographical report. The private experiences, memories, emotions, and other apparently personal states enact a particular and individual narrative of an interviewee and reflect a cultural milieu (Caplan, 1997; Cortazzi, 1991; Gardner, 2002; Lara, 1998; Myerhoff, 1978; Voysey, 1975), including the constraints set by cultural conventions (Holstein, 2000). Riessman (1993, 2002) characterized the narrative as an important genre of spoken action that can offer insight in everyday life and many specific contexts, including cultural aspect and differences to be analysed, and summarises the thoughts for the methodological choice for this research, keeping its limitations in mind.

4.9 The Interview Environment

The reliability of the data is not only essential for the results of research but also for the consequences of the research. I have therefore not limited consideration of influential aspects to intercultural interaction to ontology culture or behaviours, but also to the hierarchical habits and norms that influence the respondents of the same company but who work within different hierarchical levels. In the methodology section, it was stated that 'assessing the isomorphism between data collected and the 'reality' from which they were derived, is thus an inappropriate determinant of validity' (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). As Merriam pointed out, the aspect of reliability in social science is problematic because human behaviour is never static. However, the problem of reliability in this research is further exacerbated by cultural differences, language, values and other aspects. Hence, there is a requirement for specific skills to work in this research environment, and these requirements are compulsory for an interviewer just as much as for a business negotiator.

The matter not only consists of asking questions to generate data or negotiate financial deals but also to hold discussions on a wide range of everyday issues.

There is no doubt that many factors can influence the interviews. The surroundings, the place and environment where the interviews take place can negatively or positively influence the respondent and thus affect the results of the interview. It is in this context that Darby (2000) noted that, of many sociological and anthropological accounts, very few had been attributed to the descriptions of the environment within which social events and encounters took place, so that it may seem, that these factors are only valued to a minimum despite its possible effects on the interviewee. This requirement accounts as much for the more specific ethnographic accounts from which we know that the architecture that defines the spaces and style of living is of significant importance in the analysis (Dodds and Taverner, 2001), as for the more general ethnographic accounts where the importance and necessity to picture the surroundings are often overstated. Researchers speak of symbolic boundaries that space and surrounds provide (Borden, 2002; Butler, 2003; Crowley and Reid, 2002). It is the emotional value in the surroundings – the homes, expression of specific tastes, and history, as well as the perceived culturally bounded expression (P. Jackson, Lowe, Miller, and Mort, 2000) that form an important additional source of data to be retrieved in ethnological accounts.

Therefore, to reduce the influence on the results of the interviews through the setting, two environments were chosen: as mentioned briefly in the previous section, companies where the respondents work, or local restaurants were used, both familiar surroundings. Since their usual workplace is an environment that is known, safe, and culturally their 'own', it is improbable that the environment would affect the form of modifying the respondents' behaviour. The social spaces chosen were always locations that were very well known by the interviewees and where they usually went with business

partners or members of their company and were all close geographically to the companies. Hence, given a known and culturally intact environment, location influence, if any, is considered negligible.

4.10 The Analysis Approach

Among the variety of at least 50 distinct types of analysis to choose from (Wolcott, 1994), thematic analysis has been chosen as it is widely used in social sciences (Swain, 2018). Thematic analysis enables the identification of patterns of meaning in the interviews by encoding the data into categories, organizing and regrouping these to form specific areas (themes) that are perceived as important for the research (Clarke and Braun, 2016). The themes become of central interest as these collections of unified ideas should enable the research questions to be answered (Ryan and Bernard, 2003), and hence provide a connection to the research model. Therefore, the framework for the analysis that has been followed, is essentially guided by sensitization through the literature to specific issues. However, to allow emerging unexpected themes, or unconsidered factors, to be taken in account while going through the notes, I have also used an inductive, data-driven analysis.

While other qualitative analyses approach also provide features to interpret the interviewees' perspective, thematic analysis focuses on the explicit description of the content of the interviews, while the implicit meaning is less of a concern (Ayres, Kavanaugh and Knafl, 2003; Sandelowski, 2010). This approach was thought appropriate for this research given that the rapport between researcher and interviewee is good and an appropriate level of trust is established – hence the interviewees were not guarded and often spoke at length and in detail.

The analysis of the interviews was performed in their native language. Khan and Manderson (1992) noted that maintaining accuracy when qualitative research is conducted

in one language and analysed in another is particularly difficult. Smith, Chen and Liu (2008) also suggest that interviews should be conducted in the local language to ensure that accurate meaning is captured during data generation. Even though I am a bilingual researcher, fluent in the local languages and dialect, translation also encompasses a certain risk to the quality of the original meaning. Brislin (1970, 1980) suggests, making use of bilingual people for translation purposes at this stage as well. Choi, Kushner, Mill, and Lai, (2012) also argue that "a translator who fully understands the participants' culture and language will reduce potential threats to the validity of the data" (p. 654). Furthermore, several researchers have expressed that having the same cultural background as the research participants is believed to have an important impact on the quality of the transcript (Lee, Tripp-Reimer, Miller, Sadler, and Lee, 2007; Temple, 2002). Therefore, to further ensure that the phenomenon is captured appropriately, the interview transcripts have been analysed in the native language of the interviewees (Smith, Chen and Liu,2008) and translation has occurred as a last step.

The analysis was based on the 6 steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) – 1st familiarisation, 2nd coding, 3rd generating themes, 4th reviewing themes, 5th defining and naming themes and 6th writing up After familiarization with the data and getting an overview of all notes (1st step), coding the data was next (2nd step), this meant highlighting sections of the text that stand out as relevant or are potentially interesting in relation to the research model. The issues that have been uncovered in the literature review serve to sensitize, however, given the broad concern of these topics, initial codes have not been constituted from these issues. Instead, the approach taken was guided by the literature review and severed to support, without being prescriptive, initial coding emerged from the data in all cases. With this framework, the codes developed could, where appropriate, be linked to particularities that emerged from the macro themes in the literature review, yet

allow a level of flexibility to pursue emerging themes on a microlevel. I found this approach to be intuitive and the data-driven codes that emerged during transcript analysis, or even started to form during the interviews, contribute to the holistic view sought for this phenomenon and furthermore leave room for nuances that might emerge from the data.

The generated codes with similar patterns have then been summarised to form initial themes (3rd step). These were constantly reviewed (4rd step) as individual interviews were analysed to ensure nothing has been overlooked. I used the 5th step to relate the themes to aspects of the research model, so that a connection between themes and the model becomes recognizable. The writing up (6th step) is represented by the summary of the analysis of the interviews in chapter 5. To offer an example of aspects of coding, interview Nr. 15 with the performed coding and themes developed is provided in the appendixes 1 and 3 in the French original language and translated to English in the appendixes 2 and 4.

4.11 Validity and Reliability of the Study

The validity and reliability of research results are two of the biggest concerns for a researcher. Merriam (1998) pointed out that, to assess the validity and reliability of a qualitative study, a very close examination of the associated components of the study is required. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), the reliability of instrumentation and appropriateness of the data analysis techniques and compliance between the data retrieved and the conclusion drawn from them can be examined. Unlike quantitative research that 'portrays a world of variables and static states' (Firestone, 1987, p. 19), a qualitative study must provide enough details of the work and all of the steps in between to demonstrate that good practice has been followed and that the conclusion drawn in the research makes sense (Firestone, 1987).

For this research, I very much support the view offered by Wolcott (1994), who sought, instead of absolute validity, 'something else, a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and wringing plausible interpretations from the something one can pursue without becoming obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer, the correct version, the truth' (pp. 366-367). The importance of internal validity indicates how the research findings match reality and are bound on one side by the interpretive virtuosity of the researcher and on the other side by 'what we choose not to question', as Becker (1993, p. 201) pointed out. This reality is, in qualitative research, considered 'holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing' (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). It is a mental construction (Guba and Lincoln, 1985) accessible to humans but measurable through quantitative research.

Ratcliffe (1983) suggested that to assess the validity of data, an interpreter of the data is always required, as the data cannot speak for themselves. The phenomenon that is researched always underlies a change though the view of the researcher. Reality is not what numbers or words describe; they are only a representation of reality but can never match reality itself (Ratcliffe, 1983).

Acknowledging this, an interpretation of reality can be formed by the analysis of data from observation and interviews. It is crucial in this matter to understand the contextual framework of those involved in the phenomenon and to identify the different behaviours and reactions of humans for a specific situation. Doing so may permit recognition of how frankly someone is speaking and how honest an answer to a question is. Personally, I had the feeling that during the interviews, the answers were all valid. The few from the general directors and graduates from a Grandes Écoles were more diplomatic in their tone but valid to me.

Aside from internal validity, the question is how the findings of the study can be applied to other situations. This requires internal validity as a prerequisite to start searching for situations for eternal validity (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

However, claiming external validity and the generalisability of the findings is not comfortably answered. Donmoyer (1990) argued that even large random samples are not very helpful to find generalisations for individuals. At best, it may help by providing a certain orientation, but no more.

Given the difficulty of approaches to generalisation in qualitative research, the ambition to reach generalisation has been scrutinised. Cronbach (1975) pointed out that generalisation should not be the aim of social science. The priority in the social sciences should be placed on bringing the particular observed situation and the effects arising from that context into focus. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) advanced a similar position and noted that the question whether the results of a study can be generalised should perhaps be replaced with a question of relativity. This perspective on qualitative research is shared by Patton (2002), who claims that seeking for generalisation should not be solely at the core of all research strategies. In this research, it is the empirical assessment of specific and local decision making that may serve as a guide for understanding similar situations, but that cannot serve for generalisation of a phenomenon. Donmoyer (1990) added that the research findings of a single case study provide tacit knowledge. According to him, it is problematic to try to translate these findings in a working hypothesis that could be eligible for proof of generalisation. The search for generalised knowledge should not be the primary ambition of interpretive research (F. Erickson, 1986). According to F. Erickson (1986), generalisation or universalism, cannot be achieved by researchers of the abstract with statistical generalisation, 'but for the concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail and then comparing it with other cases studied in equally great

detail' (p. 130). To explain his view, F. Erickson used teaching as an example of how a standard action, but in different surroundings, opposes generalisation:

> When we see a particular instance of a teacher teaching, some aspects of what occurs are absolutely generic, that is, they apply cross-culturally and across human history, to all teaching situations. This would be true despite tremendous variation in those situations – teaching that occurs outside school teaching in other societies, teaching in which the teacher is much younger than the learner, teaching in Urdu, in Finnish or in a mathematical language, teaching narrowly construed cognitive skills and broadly construed social attitudes and beliefs... Each instance of a classroom is seen as its own unique system, which nonetheless displays universal properties of teaching. These properties are manifested in the concrete, however not in the abstract. (p. 130)

The wish to be able to explain the world can widely be observed with people using their personal experience and accumulated tacit knowledge to try to explain what makes the world turn. However, the above example provides an idea of how 'general' a specific concrete situation can be and its limited potential for generalisation to the abstract.

Another instance of generalisation is user or reader generalisation. It is a simple evaluation of the findings and whether they find their application in another situation. Firestone (1993) called this a case-to-case transfer, where the reader can decide what applies to a situation and what does not. This does encompass that the researcher has provided as much detail as required to enable users of the study to compare the findings with their specific situation (Merriam, 1998).

The question of whether the findings of a study are reliable is therefore not quickly answered in social science. If reliability is defined as the extent to which the research findings can be replicated, then the mentioned unpredictability of human behaviour and acknowledgement that there is no single reality will prohibit the view of generality and the universalism of findings based on the qualitative approach within social science.

The research design as presented allows the comparison of the differences between the content of the answers in the specific context which of course vary in terms of

underlying epistemological assumptions about the nature of enquiry and the status of the researcher's account. The methodological approach seeks the validity and reliability of the research findings for the specific case presented. It is acknowledged and underlined that this case study cannot provide a universal answer to the first research question other than within the specifics of the described case and within these boundaries.

4.12 Triangulation

The cross-checking of findings or the 'between-method' triangulation of findings to validate and confirm the findings and to establish trustworthiness is a method increasingly used by researchers (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). Since all researchers bring in their positionality (J. E. Jackson, 1990), every research method has a different focus on specific aspects of empirical reality. However, it is imperative in qualitative research, as it is in cultural anthropology, that the interpretations represent those of the participants and not of the researcher (Fields and Kafai, 2009). In ethnographic research in particular, triangulation is used to explore a variety of similar and/or dissimilar viewpoints (Tiainen and Koivunen, 2006). The multiple perspective approach to confirm data is one that claims to provide a more complete picture of a researched phenomenon (Denzin, 1978). Denzin argued that "triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, is a plan of action that will raise sociologists above the personalistic biases that stem from single methodologies" (1978, p. 294). Triangulation can be characterized by different forms, which Denzin (2009) clustered as follows:

> Data triangulation where you use multiple data sources such a collecting data from different groups, settings or at different times.
> Investor triangulation when you are involved with more than one expert researcher in the same study.
> Theoretical triangulation when you employ several possible theoretical interpretations of the study developing and testing competing propositions against each other.

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Methodological triangulation, when you use two or more methods in the same study such as observations, interviews, documents and questionnaires. (Daymon and Holloway, 2011, p. 92)

Brewer and Hunter (1989) argued that "studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method than studies that use multiple methods in which different type of data provide cross-data validity checks" (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 248). Patton (2002) stated that 'it is in data analysis that the strategy of triangulation pays off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are dawn' (p. 556). Hence, for this research, I have adopted the use of multiple methods to overcome the weakness of a single method in a specific area, leading to a richer and higher quality of data.

In the framework of this research, two forms of triangulation have been used. The data triangulation consists of enquiry made in each of the chosen companies at various levels of responsibility in the buying process, where different actors are involved and have been interviewed. Comparing the retrieved data with collected data from actors having the same job at the same hierarchical level (e.g., CEO to CEO, supervisor to supervisor, fleet manager to fleet manager, etc.) from another company allowed me to gain corroboration of the validity and to underpin the reliability of the data. Aspects of methodological triangulation have been used as well as an observation on how interviewees behave to the questions, also in regard to the earlier mentioned 'habitus'.

Additionally, a perspective change has been included as an instrument of triangulation, and I triangulated the data with a group of people in German companies, who work with French suppliers and are involved in French buyer-seller relationships with my own data. However, this was done with fewer interviewees, see table 3, page 132. The intention behind this approach was to identify if there is a common perception, a common

view point of some aspects of the cross-cultural interaction and if convergence (Mathison, 1988) is perceivable. Therefore, the questions asked to the French interviewees were asked to the German interviewees, but this time asking for a German perspective of the work with French customers. The questions to the German participants were, for example: 'What do you appreciate from the French in your cross-cultural interaction regarding your activity and daily job, and what do you dislike?' The question regarding education was, however, not asked on the German side as it is my knowledge that the construction of Grandes Écoles is rarely known, neither understood on a larger scale in Germany.

4.13 Ethics – Researcher Dilemmas

During this research work, I had mixed feelings that can best be described by 'divided loyalties' that L. Bell and Nutt (2002) explained as being the role as a researcher versus the setting of professional and occupational commitments. Both pull in various directions and sometimes in very distinct directions, leading to an ethical dilemma. The ethical considerations when people offer to share their valuable knowledge revolve around the topics of 'informed consent', 'right of privacy', and 'protection from harm'. These three ethical principles are widely recognized among social scientists, yet there are other lesser-known principles that are also important, especially in the given context where business partners are the interviewees, and there is a degree of professional involvement of the researcher within this group under study. An important aspect in this regard for this research is the inclusion of data gained from what could be described as reflection on the extended professional experience I have in the area and interview participant observation from this time. This refers to that, given my knowledge about the interviewees, I had to deal with on former occasions, this automatically led to a picture of the person and situation, followed by a subconscious sympathy classification that made it difficult to

impossible to fade out the impressions gained on numerous occasions in the research surrounding. While Warwick (1973) and Douglas (1985) argued in favour of the use of covert methods because they reflect an unaltered picture of real everyday life, using this approach makes it difficult at times to access the interviewees or to stay masked. A completely contradictory position is taken by Erickson (1967), who is vehemently opposed to the study of uninformed participants.

While knowing each other facilitates access to the interviewees, it is evident that, by nature, each partner in the given situation brings personal likes and dislikes. Accordingly, the person sitting in front of the researcher might not always be sending out the right 'vibes' to appear *simpatico* and vice versa. However, given that the researcher has taken the initiative for the interview, an ethical obligation and a particular behaviour to lead the research and generation of data to success arises from this situation towards the interviewee. The interviewee is entitled to a fair and respectful face-to-face encounter and even more to the opportunity to offer the researcher to participate, use, and profit from the knowledge and insight he or she is willing to share. The obligation to consider the ethical perspective of research work is therefore high. However, these encounters can be of very different aspects and sorts so that a simple red line to follow is not an available approach for all of the possible research designs and approaches (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006). While there are guidelines available, they cannot encounter for all possible ethical dilemmas that may arise. Rubin and Rubin (1995) noted in this context:

> You cannot achieve ethical research by following a set of pre-established procedures that will always be correct. Yet the requirement to behave ethically is just as strong in qualitative interviewing as in other forms of research on humans or may even be stronger. You must build ethical routines into your work. You should carefully study codes of ethics and cases of unethical behaviour to sensitize yourself to situations in which ethical commitments become particularly salient. Throughout your research keep thinking and judging what are your ethical obligations. (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 411)

Contrary to what I intended at first and due to long considerations regarding ethics and the reliability of the collected data, the conditions given by some of the interviewees that no recorder should be used led to a situation in which the researcher had to rely on memory for the data and the notes taken during and after the interviews. The reason for this approach from the perspective of the interviewees is understandable and respects the given ethical standards that the research follows. To justify their position, some of the participants mentioned that a comparison of situations about the positive or negative aspects of one system or the other could probably be considered in certain circles as quite a political denigration with negative consequences in this regard. The official friendship between France and Germany is only one aspect of this reality. The reality indeed consists of economic rivalry in all sectors of activities and even in deep collaborations, for instance Airbus, which is a rivalry that is so important and intense at all levels that, without the intervention of the head of the respective states, a project like Airbus would have disappeared long ago, at least in relation to its German participants (M. Fischer, 1996). While I do not doubt the truthfulness of the interviewees and the accuracy of the collected data, all encountered national sensibilities that support a more in-depth review of some aspects found in the literature regarding ethics, especially empathetic interviewing, which emphasises taking a stance contrary to the scientific image of interviewing on the concept of neutralism. The interpretation of the interviews always needs to consider the situation according to which the data was collected. In this case, the interviewees were all business contact and to maintain this business contact need for me to be rated at the same level than the ethical implication coming with this methodologic qualitative approach. It is rarely possible to claim absolute objectivity and no strings attached so that the collected data can be considered a negotiated accomplishment (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

4.14 Chapter Summary

This study was based on 21 semi-structured interviews in France in six different companies. Each interview was face-to-face. All interviewees had different educational backgrounds. In addition to the French interviews, five discussions took place in Germany with managers who oversaw customers relations in France, as was described in the section on triangulation. This approach is consistent with Easterby-Smith et al. (1991/2008), who argued that 'Interviews are an appropriate method to use when you wish to understand the constructs that interviewees use as a basis for their opinions and beliefs about a particular situation, product or issue' (p. 144). Easterby-Smith et al. (1991/2008) summarised further reasons for such an approach among which the aspects of confidentially and commercially sensitive subjects can be found. These aspects are relevant in this study, as even though the researcher's relation may be close to the interviewees (and customers), the relationship in its core remains a buyer and seller business relationship. Since the research findings may allow gaining a better understanding and view on the values and cultural specifics of a French business partner, this deeper insight as the potential to be advantageous for sellers and increase considerably their influential business power.

The interviews aimed to capture the full aspects of the research topic and gather the empirical data built around the influence of the respective educational system and culture. The interviews took place during breaks, lunch, or dinner with already well-known business partners in the framework of a typical work discussion. In this context, Gubrium and Holstein (1995, 1997), point out that researchers must be aware that the answers from a respondent can come from their experiences or as actively constructed narratives. However, the data collected during the interviews can be considered valid, given the degree of answer consistency among the hierarchical levels observed. Equally, during many years of activity in this professional field, previous discussions have touched cultural and

educational features of the French and German national systems, lending evidence to the content of the interviews. Hence, the data for this research and the possibility of constructed narratives is unlikely due to my mutual experiences in this industrial activity and my cultural background. The validity and reliability of these findings have furthermore been underpinned and confirmed by different forms of triangulation. The interview responses have also not been influenced by the interview situation and the 'directing role' of the interviewer, such as the researcher influencing the respondent to gain stories not based on empirical facts and data, which means that the interviews have been performed according to scientific rules, as laid down in writing in this research.

In the next chapter, the results of the interviews are analysed with complementary considerations concerning the participants and their environments, social origins, educations, personalities, and hierarchical positions in the companies to support, the reliability and validity of collected data. This encompasses the analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures, in particular, the approach to enquiry according to the methodology used for this research.

Chapter 5. Synopsis of Findings

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of a synopsis of the findings from the analysis of the interviews. The outcome of the interviews is presented according to the interview question in individual sections, relating the findings to aspects discussed in the literature review. A conclusion summarises the findings and paves the way for the following discussion of influential aspects that are linked to these findings.

5.1 The Research Environment

Before presenting and examining the findings of the case study, it is advantageous to have a clear picture of how consistent the knowledge of the French is from a German perspective, and vice versa, particularly at the manager level, the level the interviews primarily occurred. Hence, in the framework of this research, the process of analysis resides in the reconstruction of the perceived world as expressed by the interviewees with enough key features to form an authentic picture. To form the picture, the actual and influential state of the countries and inhabitant's situation as much as the knowledge developed in the second part of the literature review served to give a context to the data gained by the interviewees. The picture that appears is 'framed' by the interaction model (Håkansson, 1982) to underpin distinct aspects of the findings. In the following, the questions asked, and the interview data retrieved is analysed and explained to these contexts.

Looking at the 'environment', the starting and contextual situation of both countries today, it is primarily due to the development and historical approaches of both countries after the Second World War with the intention to form a trustful and peaceful

European partnership through important reciprocal trading, joint venture, and cooperation, France and Germany had the opportunity to learn to know each other quite well. Moreover, for a few decades, especially since the financial and economic crisis of 2007/2008, the French, with a national current account deficit, trade balance deficit, public debt, unemployment, etc. (Tagnani and Ünal, 2017), have been eager to understand why the situation in Germany was better than in France (Dustmann, Fitzenberger, Schönberg and Spitz-Oener, 2014). This interest is evidenced almost daily in many TV interviews and round table discussions in France. The topic was also addressed in the context the French President François Hollande's (2012-2017) inability to bring forward reforms required in many sectors in France. These discussions between politicians and experts of all kinds began the day the rating agency Standard, and Poor's started to menace the French triple-A classification. Due to this, specific subjects, comparisons, and advantages and disadvantages of past political orientations in France and the results of an encouraging German industrial politic with reforms like the so-called 'Agenda 2010' who allowed for more flexibility with employment contracts have been analysed with passion (Lorenzini, Hutter and Kriesi, 2016). In France, comparisons have examined the working world in Germany, particularly aspects like co-determination, co-participation, decisions per consensus, and apprenticeship, along with top-down managerial decisions, and many other economic and industrial aspects of both countries.

These discussions that were present in France highlighted the differences of the German and French systems to the French population, especially issues concerning the working, industrial, and economic worlds of each country, so that the topic addressed with this thesis was one that the French participants were able to engage with readily and the selected interviewees were all able to contribute with their view on the situation.

One aspect related to the atmosphere, the power/dependency is of greater validity for this business case in the trailer industry: The competition is high and the product, the trailers, offer only minimal features that would allow engaging in dependency of some sort. There are in this business companies that, at the time of renewal their fleet, buy purely based on the best (cheapest) offer, especially those who renew their fleet after one or two years already.

However, in this context, closeness is an aspect that I have often encountered in that some companies stick with one trailer provider because of the formed bond with the sale representative and the over the time established and anchored mutual trust.

Given that the applied methodology is that of using a semi-structured interview to retrieve relevant data for this research, a section purely dedicated to the presentation of the raw results of the three defined interview questions is not perceived as providing a sufficiently framed picture of the phenomena, as the gestures, the facial expressions of the interviewee, and the atmosphere at the time of the discourse are aspects of equal importance that can better be perceived and understood when material is presented with supporting information. The analysis resulted in a complex of four themes that deserve increased attention. These are: language, culturally different motivational focuses, professional aspects and educational aspects. The theme of language and the theme of professional aspects correspond to the aspects refined in the research model (figure 3) presented in section 3.14. What is labelled under the bulky description of "culturally different motivational focuses" is addressed as another level of motivation and dedication in terms of to work in itself and is an aspect that has been described as motivation in the research model. This is, however, not to be understood as a rating. The French have a higher motivation to do specific things in their culturally coined way than for example Germans would do. Furthermore, as explained with Hofstede's masculinity/femininity

dimension scores, the French put more emphasis on family than on their professional life, which in return could also been seen has having a higher motivation for family matters. So, when speaking of a diverging motivation, it is not per se 'better' or 'less good', it is simply different from one's own culturally endorsed liking. As a theme, it is referred to as "motivational aspects".

The educational aspects mentioned above, which were a topic in the interviews with the managers of the Grandes Écoles in particular, underpin the statements based on the literature research in section 3.12, that the higher education system is one of unequal opportunities. However, when talking with graduates from these institutions, rather than bringing the notion of 'social inequalities' into the conversation, it seemed more appropriate to maintain a productive and successful interaction based on the established mutual trust by not using such terms explicitly. While the research model in Section 3.14 states that all the named aspects have their origin in parts of the education system, the education system is also the origin of the perceived inequality of opportunity where the privileged and less privileged young aspirants must prevail. Therefore, the educational aspects mentioned here, correspond to the social aspects shown in the model.

5.2 Comparing French and German Core Values

In the book *Deutsch-Französische Geschäftsbeziehungen erfolgreich managen* [Successfully managing French-German business relationships], Jochen Peter Breuer and Pierre de Bartha (2005) wrote in the preface that 'although French-German relations have improved in the last years mainly through the European Community, the old concept of the enemy still exists in an implicit way, as well as in foreign policy as inside the community'(p. 13). This implies that the relationship is not rational but emotional. However, the result of the interviews demonstrates that, once the historic taboo subjects

are dismissed, French and Germans discover that they may work together very effectively and can complement each other profitably. Regarding the interviews, it was enjoyable from the very beginning to hear answers with shared content from nearly all participants. To the question to the French managers in charge of the purchasing departments 'What do you like or dislike in the German approach?', the general answer was that they liked the straightforward approach of the Germans to go directly to the core of a problem and that the trustworthiness of the anticipated results could be assumed. 'The way Germans approach a problem is very much like everything else in Germany: It is focused, it is structured, and it is reliable' (Interviewee 2). The interviews, therefore, quickly identified themes central to the research model: Trust as a central factor for a positive outcome of interaction (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010; T. V. Nguyen and Rose, 2009), the language factor and cultural peculiarities in the approach and implementation of work and tasks are equally reflected by claims that highlight the different approaches 'to doing things'.

Since the business context is often related to technical problems, the answers mostly turned towards the aspect of technical requirements. The interviews reflect what can be described as a qualified notion of understanding of the German business partner; this means that what the French asked for and wanted (while keeping in mind that the way of thinking is different) has been recognized, realised and is appreciated.

> The solution you presented for our charging requirements with our customer XY is what we expected. What we didn't expect is that you have put thoughts in areas [where] we were not aware of an existing shortcoming. In return to your question, it is the thoroughness of the solution that you present that I like. (Interviewee 14)

> The reason why I buy your products is that your solutions are reliable, and this is key to keep my business running. (Interviewee 13)

In essence, the thoroughness of the solution and the reliability of the products but also the consistency of the promised and delivered results play an essential role for the

interviewees. These 'expectations' contribute to the forming of the interaction atmosphere. Meeting those expectations paves the way for trust and collaboration.

What seems evident in this context is not a straightforward approach to a project and of thinking for the French, but something that influences the method of working. For example, it seems that, in Germany, once a project has been discussed and started, generally afterwards little to no attempts have been made to modify it. It is my experience that this is not a result of pragmatism or stubbornness to follow a planned project path, but because considerable time is invested before the start of a project and most obvious problems have been resolved beforehand.

In France, in contrast, the degree of freedom allowed by originality and flexibility (while from a German perspective this might also appear as being ill-defined) make it possible that, until the very last minute, modifications and improvements may take place, disturbing the foreseen schedules and deadlines, which is something that Germans have difficulty understanding. Breuer and Bartha (2005) indeed confirmed that, in France, the planning stage of a project is much shorter than in Germany since the (visionary) outcome is more important than the process details.

Understanding what is behind the request (or the origin of the request) and that this might not always be clearly articulated so that 'If the Germans understand our questions' appears to make sense. The final aim of what should be the target to be reached, to improve an existing project, or to participate and work on something that sometimes cannot be much more than a vision. Breuer and Bartha (2005) confirmed that, according to their research, many times, the French make an extended speech or organize an extensive discussion before coming to the point and clearly saying what they want.

> I cannot answer directly what I like about working with Germans. It is for sure so that working with a French person is naturally easier, not only because of the common language but because in some sense there is a certain ease and self-concept

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in doing so. There is a little uncertainty with me if when we discuss a project, that what we anticipate is understood. That is of course bias because as we know and as has been shown in past projects, you, in fact, lived up to your promises. Eventually, it is this surprising perfectionism of how Germans do things that I very much appreciate (Interviewee 9).

The expression 'Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner' [to understand everything is to forgive everything] 'often indicate[s] the colloquial nature of the notion and problems of understanding' (Dambska, 2016, p.331). Hence, understanding the requirement expressed in another culture is key (Shin, Morgeson, and Campion, 2007). Shin et al. go on to argue, that it is not always a straightforward accomplishment to understand what the real expectation behind a request expressed from another culture and so it is in this French-German context. Through triangulation (section 4.12) I gained the perception that the result of experiences made by some purchasing department colleagues and other engineers involved with French suppliers, confirm the traits and features regarding French flexibility. This approach to projects demonstrates a different way of working, or as one interviewee put it: 'The comparison of the way French people work and organize in contrast to Germans is a bit like trying to mix oil with water. That does not work. The philosophies are much too different' (Interviewee 10).

Regarding what the French managers of the maintenance departments like about the German approach, as also mentioned by buying department managers, it is the straightforward attitude. There is also an appreciation for the quality of 'Made in Germany' products, not without and I might say 'of course' speaking of advantages of French products. 'Your material is durable (*C'est du costaud*), but have you seen how XY does this. Have a look. But anyway, your material is very durable' (interviewee 17). This behaviour is, I would suggest, related to national pride and could be perceived in several instances in my professional work with French customers in different situations. This does not change that, in the case of problems with material, it is often the maintenance area that

I had to contact. The capability of the people in charge to solve problems is generally considered very good, and the qualification of the staff is excellent.

Regarding the question asked to the managers of the different departments about what they like/dislike from the Germans, the answers can be summarised as trustworthiness in people and the reliability of products. These findings underline the significance of trust as being of particular importance for the relationship (Lewicki, Macalister and Bies, 1998). It has also been described that to gain this trust, it requires time (McKnight et al.; 1998), commitment and the will to adapt to the customer's need. This is not managed overnight, and I might say that it took some a longer time, speaking of years, to establish such good rapport and mutual respect (Guillemin and Heggen, 2009) with most of our French customers. As a business partner, we could provide solutions that: "in fact lived up to your promises" (Interviewee 9), reducing uncertainty and lowering the cultural distance by meeting the expectations of the client, creating a mutual benefit for all involved (Zineldin, 1995). The other aspect of trust that is confirmed by these interviews is linked to the situational basis of trust that is reputation, a reputation that has grown and saw an evolution of trust in the exchange relationship over the years. Also, regarding the reliability of products, even if this appears to confirm stereotypes, of course, 'Made in Germany' is a cliché but one that has a history. For a few centuries, the Germans have followed a path seeking perfection, something that has become inherent to the culture. This is reflected in product development, product production and in the educational approach. Perfection belongs to the German mentality. Psychologically, it is in line with the German need for security. The German spirit of perfection can be found everywhere, in all fields, whether in industry or daily life. Important or not, Germans strive for (perceived) perfection. This was reflected during the interviews in several remarks from French participants in relation to the technical details of the products, with the remarks '*C'est bien fait*' (it is well

engineered) or even '*C'est du sérieux*' (seriously good) that express the approval of technical solutions.

To produce something functional, for the German mentality, is not enough. A look back at the 'Literature Review' chapter that reviewed the history of education for France and Germany, showed that early the guild system in German played an important role and that today, the vocational system is a major factor in the 'Made in Germany' quality chain. Eventually, from a management and industrial perspective, the goal of this approach is to achieve an elevated level of reliability, which, for responsible managers, is seeking conformability, sometimes at the expense of originality (generally criticised by the French). A reliable product, not just one that will do the job, but one that 'means having produced a great product that is considered useful and worthwhile by society' (Scarborough, 1998, p. 209) is the key characteristic followed.

As an inherent aspect, creativity in France includes the so-called system 'D' from '*se débrouiller*', which means 'to find a way through something'. The success of system 'D' in France is supported by that, with little energy, money, and time but with imagination, it is possible to fulfil a requirement and reach a goal, which consists of making something as good as is necessary, while the approach taken to a solution is sometimes unexpected. The system 'D' is omnipresent in France; it does not matter for what or at which level and concerns general labourers as much as top managers. The philosophy behind it is to always find a way out of a situation, even in the worst case. A French joke explains that system 'D' does not apply in Germany since they do not have the working instructions for its use (Breuer and Bartha de, 2005). Germans, as shown in the previous section, follow a more elaborated, some would say linear approach to a technical solution. That there is a perceived surprise when, indeed, Germans come up with an unexpected solution can best be seen by the reaction of an interviewee, a fleet manager, working for

an important French customer whom my company has dealt with for many years and has had a long-term relationship. The time I interviewed him was when I also obtained an opinion on a recently presented new shock-absorbing system to prevent damage when trailers dock at the ramp. We had to adapt our product considerably to the specific needs of this customer, and his expectations were that we find solutions on the level of one of the French competitors who, thanks to its creativity, had already found a surprising solution to the problem and has previously, already often really surprised with new solutions to existing problems.

> I have tested and compared your solution for the rear shock absorbers. When you presented your solution, I will admit that I was not sure if that is really was what we looked for since, by the look, I couldn't imagine that would work. That said, I am surprised; the shock absorbers are very effective. Well done (*Vous vous êtes bien d'ébrouiez*). (Interviewee 5)

Creativeness is therefore not an asset subscribed solely to the French, but what differs, is the approach to solve problems that eventually is more structured and administrative in Germany. It is a more technical approach to creativity, whereas in France, it is present intuitively and naturally in everyday work. However, results are comparable and valued in the same way.

In France, the essence of approaches to product solutions or problem solving can be found in the slogans of automotive manufacturers that describe well the focus: Renault claimed for many, many years to be '*Créateur d'Automobiles*', highlighting the creative part in its approach to car building while Audi stipulated '*Vorsprung durch Technik*', which means 'advanced through technology' pointing directly to the technological focus and the will to be ahead of others.

Due to the existing culturally differing working preferences, the German attitude maybe sometimes qualified as a narrow-minded behaviour by the French. For the Germans, the French attitude may be interpreted as superficial (Meyer, 2016). A lack of knowledge

about these cultural specifics and how to work with these would eventually endanger successful interaction between the French and Germans. Without cross-cultural education or some mediator helping find a consensus, it can become difficult, to impossible, for bilateral projects or group ventures to find common approaches, bringing the different valuation of values and expectations in line.

The answers to the first question have shown a positive attitude towards business with German companies. Several factors that play a role in forming the atmosphere, as described in the interaction model (Håkansson, 1982), have contributed to this positive relationship atmosphere. It can be remarked that the trust that evolved in these long-term business relations over the time where the French customer had the chance to experience the will of adaptation and commitment towards him increased the closeness and demonstrate a sense for cooperation. The theme of values has surfaced mainly as a notion required to adapt to French (cultural) norms regarding, e.g., the approach to projects and problem solving. Zhao, Han and Zhang (2020) have suggested that the process of understanding and analysing problems is affected by values. Furthermore, they go on an argue that cultural values influence decision-making methods. The perceived differences that have been expressed belong to the fundamental shared 'values and basic assumptions' of a society (Hofstede, 1980; Lundberg, 1985; Schein, 2010). These values originate from individual's learning since childhood and are an unconsciously inherent behaviour. This 'software of their minds' (Hofstede, 2010) is resistant to change (Schein, 2010), so the ability to recognize the different values followed by individuals in a foreign society, enables those operating in that culture to attune themselves to the differing motivation factors. Hence the knowledge of specific gaps and to demonstrate a culturally sensitive approach will serve to overcome these and work towards augmenting the notion of closeness.

5.3 The View on German Managers

Regarding the second question asked to the interviewees: 'What is your view on German managers?', it could be supposed from the answers that the interviewees predominantly characterized the differences based on perceivable motivational aspects. The theme of professional aspects manifested itself through work-related motivational comparison, in this specific business content referring to the enlarged framework of maintenance, product modifications that are desired or required or simply to problem solving. The French interview partners say that Germans react differently to their expectations, or perhaps better said, out with their experiences in their own country. The situation described by the French interview partners when it comes to problem solving is presented as consistently positive: 'What I like about working with your company is that there is always someone there who approaches the situation without saying much when we are asking for something' (Interviewee 21). 'I cannot say that for me it makes a difference to work with German or French managers, except perhaps for the result orientation. Germans come straight to the point, and their statements are binding (Interviewee 3). In this regard there is one German saying: 'Ärmeln hochkrempeln [rolling up one's sleeves]' expressing this German work attitude or characteristic. In Swabia, a region in south middle Germany, the saying is even: 'Schaffe, schaffe, Häusle baue [working, working, building a house] describing evident motivation and work ethic.

The understandings and interpretations of perceived working behaviours are based on different premises, of which work related values form the main factor (Guth and Tagiuri, 1965; England, 1975). It is this respective cultural valuation that produces the divergences, making it challenging to balance the motivation – born out of different cultural values and that exert their individual influence on behaviour and motivation (Erez, 2008) – of both partners in joint ventures, projects, and all kinds of other activities.

Motivation comes down to the individual effort someone is willing to invest for something or the individual effort someone puts into achieving something. One interviewee characterized this as follows: 'It is very obvious to me that when I look at the managers from your French competitors that come here, they all do their work. However, Germans seem to be more passionate about their work' (Interviewee 21).

Kanungo and Mendoca (1994) described motivation as 'a basic psychological process which explains why employees behave the way they do at the workplace' (p. 16). Another view of motivation is 'the willingness to exert high levels of effort towards organizational goals conditioned by the effort's ability to satisfy some individual need' (p. 212). This confirms the motivations and attitude of the French towards projects that are sometimes analysed by Germans as an immature challenge with unforeseen risks.

However, the view on German managers was not addressed solely from an impersonal perspective. Since the business relationships build have persisted some time already, development and long-term stage (Ford, 1980b), with regular personal contacts and social exchange, the distance has been reduced over time (Ford, 1997). This has led to the forming of bonds, which have been identified to be important as they lead to a higher level of commitment (Ruben and Paparoidamis, 2007) and interdependence (Håkansson et al., 2009) with each other.

It seems evident to me that even though the interview question is asking for a general perspective, some answers may have been coloured by the ongoing good working relationship that I have with the companies interviewed. While this influential aspect (Ruben and Paparoidamis, 2007) may have played a role for some, it will do less for others of the interviewees where the distance is greater. However, the overall positive reaction to the question values the, in the literature review documented, relevance of the development of personal relationship with the customers (Mummalaneni and Wilson (1991).

Mummalaneni and Wilson (1991) have argued on the relevance of the actor, and I believe that a positive outcome of this research is due to the characteristic of the researcher, hence, e.g., the ability to speak in the native language of the interviewees and to understand the cultural values. These are aspects that facilitate the information exchange, the transfer of information, of technical and commercial data. Of course, this has to also be supported the social exchange, e.g., easier communication among the interaction parties. Campbell (1983) concluded that marketing and purchasing behaviour are influenced among others by the characteristics of the seller. The interviews seem to support this view, and there were several remarks from interviewees with similar statements from which this one is exemplary: *'Vous-savez, Oliver, je n'ai pas à faire avec beaucoup de manager Allemand. Mais je peux vous confirmer que j'apprécie de travailler avec vous'* [You know, Oliver, I do not have to deal with a lot of German managers. But I can confirm that I enjoy working with you'] (Interviewee 14).

Even though the interview analysis has given some indication for different perceived work-related motivation and commitment, it is unlikely that this arises solely as the result of culturally differing educational systems. However, based on Hofstede's (2010) cultural dimensions, research has linked work related motivation to the level of power distance in cultures, and studies provide evidence that countries with a low level of power distance increase work related motivation (Saadat, Mohsin, Khaliq Ur and Sehrish, 2014; Khatri, 2009; Helou and Viitala, 2007). Furthermore, the French are turned towards the feminine dimension and thus dedicate themselves above all to what they really like, and are less influenced by the masculine dimension and feel the urge to be the best, professionally wise (Hofstede, 2001). Correspondingly, the time available, in France, is distributed between work and family (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016). In addition, France is less long-term oriented, which can affect motivation, especially as there a lower

preference to sustain long term effort and attention is lower in comparison to Germany (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016).

Taking the research results related to cultural dimensions as a basis, the outcomes of the interviews with regard to the theme of motivation can be associated with the cultural circumstances found, but in this step, and with regard to the interview question asked, it may not be directly related to the education system. Furthermore, it is important to remark that the positive attitude toward German work-related motivation has not been made in a manner that derides or diminishes French work-motivation, so that its eventual importance attributed to this finding may not be seen as very significant.

5.4 The Educational Aspect

In the interviews, there was one question that was asked solely to the managers with a degree from a university or Grandes Écoles: "For what differences is the educational systems responsible, regarding the working behaviours and management systems and/or generally possibly the culture?" The aspects of central concern to this question were related to the language factor and educational aspects. The reason for concentrating on managers with either degree was that I wanted on one side to eliminate the blue-collar influence, and on the other to concentrate on those interviewees that had at least a university degree and /or where a business owner or general managers.

From the 13 respondents, six were positioned as general managers, and out of these four were educated in Grandes Écoles, one came from a university, and one was self-taught. The latter is the exception, having built up his own company by starting years ago as a driver on his own account and having successfully grown his business over the years. The way the interviews took place was the same for all interviewees, the way of expressing themselves indicated that the habitus was indeed relatively similar for all managers who

graduated from Grandes Écoles. The atmosphere, the feelings, the intention, will and interests (Hallén and Sandstrom, 2013) that are summarised under this term were felt to be slightly different. It could be described as slightly aloofness compared to the rest of the interviewees who seemed more approachable. Also, distinguishable was their way of oral expression that differentiates them from the others. As mentioned in the literature review, the habitus, in parts, is about the usage of well-spoken French. It is difficult to describe, but best understood as if you were reading a well-formulated book. Or listening to the speech of a politician. It is as much intimidating as it is a joy to listen. It is not so much about what was said, more *how* they said it. Not surprisingly, this can also be perceived as a form of creativeness. As presented in the literature review, its origin can be found in the salons where *l'Esprit* was required, and the French higher education also promotes this mentality. Therefore, the oral presentation in the '*concours'* for the Grandes Écoles is very demanding and asks for excellent knowledge of the French language. 'The French take great pride in the application of inductive reasoning and reliance on first principles, to build logical argument, a skill perfected by their countryman René Descartes' (Scarborough, 1998, p. 209).

The interviews also revealed the importance of being able to speak 'good' French in France. It has been claimed that the French are not reluctant to speak foreign languages (Garcia, 2017), a heritage of the enlightenment. Even more there is the expectancy that foreign business interactors demonstrate cultural adaptivity and speaks French in France: "… if a supplier speaking only the language of Shakespeare visited me, my expectations would not been met." (Interviewee 15). If others were not so direct, then they remarked that they much favour speaking with business partners in French and greatly appreciate to have the ability to speak in French to me, a statement that I have encountered along my

professional journey numberless times. Hence, different remarks related to the theme of language could be coded accordingly, demonstrating the value attributed to language.

What was perceivably different was also the way the general managers who issued from Grandes Écoles answered the questions, which could perhaps most easily be described as 'diplomatic'. It can also be argued that their communication style is different, tending more to the indirect (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988) in contrast to the typical German direct style. This is to say that they hesitated to take a clear position but rather that they implicitly explained that, according to them, their education was probably one of the major factors of the differences to be found in the cultures. The following interviewee said in this regard:

> It is obvious that the behaviours and the way of approaching a task by a person are strongly influenced by how he/she was taught to do so. But can we speak of differences and say that one is better than the other? No! Eventually, the French make things differently because of the culture in which we grow up – and yes, education is a part of it – it has taught us to do so but making something different to come to the same result or approximately same result, does not justify a rating. (Interviewee 11)

The aspect of rating in this answer may surprise since the question asked to the interviewee did not address the need for such an assessment. However, this possibly reflects a personal ambiguity that this French-German comparison as manifested with this interviewee from a Grande École. The other 3 interviewed Grandes Écoles graduates almost unanimously agreed that both systems present advantages and disadvantages, but it was perceivable that there was not something 'better than the other'. However, there was one thing that two of the general managers agreed on, which was, at the lower level for skill workers, the German system of apprenticeship is probably better than that of the French.

> I get to know the German system of apprenticeship and the steady development possibilities, and I have to say that I feel that there is room for improvement in

France in this regard. Germany has an extremely professional education system of apprenticeship. (Interviewee 17)

Regarding the higher-level education, the French system was not questioned, and none of the interviewees from the Grandes Écoles engaging to discuss the differences between universities and Grandes Écoles. It was perceivable that they were pleased with the French system as it is.

While the education in the Grandes Écoles is oriented towards a high capability of mathematical thinking and analysis (Breuer and Bartha de, 2005) it appeared along one interview, questioning the above-mentioned focus, that a manager did not need to be a specialist to take decisions, but that mathematical or logical thinking was the best way to reach the right decisions. 'Taking decisions is an analytical process' (Interviewee 3). This reflects the criterion of the French selection, based on '*concours*' for the Grandes Écoles, is conceived for '*Abitur*' students – those who are excellent in mathematics and sciences.

The interviews of the two remaining general managers started with the one having a degree from a university. The discussion with him was quite different in his behaviour, way of thinking, and gestures. The whole language was less sophisticated '*grand seigneur*', and the answers accordingly were more direct, the '*langue de bois*' as it is called in France, which aims to avoid answering questions that could be politically (in a broader sense) negative for oneself was less apparent. For these two interviewees, the education system was eventually seen as the origin of the cultural differences between the French and the Germans.

As for the self-made manager, the interview was also different. From the very beginning, he condemned French education regardless of the educational level, declaring that if France were to educate people as the Germans do, the general situation would be much better. He pointed out that the schools need to produce people who have specialist

knowledge that is of practical use rather than academic theoretical knowledge. During the interview on several occasions, he criticised the educational system and Grandes Écoles in particular as institutions for the French elite, of which he did not hide his negative opinion.

This is a reaction that is not surprising if all the aforementioned are considered, and it is assumed that the levels of difference and inequality that the French educational system produces are perceived by those concerned. It became apparent that, while the managers from the Grandes Écoles might be influenced by their education, the last reported interview may have been under the influence of it though in a very different way – it was seen as a negative system that appeared to cause a certain bitterness.

The German interviewees that served to underpin the findings all had an opinion on the German educational system vs the French one. Even though all were knowledgeable about the system of the Grandes Écoles, their insight was not deep enough to be considered informed. While the knowledge that the Grandes Écoles were very influential regarding career objectives was present and that higher management positions in the industry were more often taken by Grandes Écoles graduates, the system behind the arrangement of a self-reproducing elite that has extensively been presented in the literature review chapters, and its implication on chances and career opportunities for the graduates of other schools and universities, was not known enough to be considered in their responses.

The other seven French managers who all were in the middle to higher management positions within the buying department all had a very similar view regarding the educational system in France. Interestingly, they recognized the effort necessary to be accepted and pass the 'concour', which positioned graduates from Grandes Écoles above graduates from universities. It seemed to me, during the interviews, that the acceptance of this hierarchy is also a resignation with nature of the system. 'Vous savez, juste ou pas, de toute façon, nous ne pouvons rien y changer. C'est comme ca'. (Interviewee 19), which

translates to the following 'You know, fair or not, we cannot change it. It is the way it is', which is something that other interviewees mentioned in a more roundabout fashion when we spoke about the differences of the French national educational system. I have perceived in this interaction environment this aspect of the social system not to be a situation that expressed a level of frustration by the interviewees. To me this was more like accepting, and respecting, that Grandes Écoles graduates find their place in professional life higher on the hierarchical ladder due to their achievement, which came up to be a surprise to me. In result, the social inequality that the French educational system - with its high selection criterions – represents, is not reflected to this level and not as dramatic as the literature review had suggested for those living within the culture or having grown up in the system.

5.5 Interviewing Germans with Experience with French Partners

For reasons of triangulation, I asked five Germans managers with activities in the buying department or/and whom have regular contact with French customers about what they like and dislike when they are involved with French companies. This comparison was interesting since the answers and collected data from this perspective converged with perspectives from the French interviewees, underlining reliability and validity. The comparison leads to the observation of consistency with the French interviewees in that what was criticised by the French was considered positive by the Germans (and vice versa). The first positive aspect of the French attitude regarding business from the German perspective was that of flexibility, which was indeed something the French saw a slacking in their German business counterparts. The Germans also appreciate the creativity of French suppliers, which sometimes appears as a risky technical challenge from the German perspective. Conversely, a lack of such creativity was an argument made from the French perspective when complaining about some perceived rigidity in the German attitude. On

the other hand, the Germans complained about a lack of personal reliability, e.g., the level of personal preparation for meetings or punctuality, behavioural values that are more of a focus in Germany than in France. This is a recognized issue that was briefly discussed in the literature review, the notion of polychronic and monochronic time (Hall and Hall; 1984) but was not approached in the interviews.

Regarding the difference of interpretation of basic French and German peculiarities, it is interesting to focus on the French challenge and German risk. As mentioned, for the French, the challenge is nearly inborn and gave birth to the proverb that is ascribed to Napoleon I: '*Impossible n'est pas Francais*' which means 'impossible is not French'. In the French mentality, being challenged means being confronted with a significant problem that requires personal attention to solve it, this challenge almost belongs to some necessity and is a factor of the quality of life. To reach the 'impossible' (engaging with the problematic and solving the problem) requires many times, a superlative effort. This behaviour, or trait, is confirmed by the German managers and given the culturally anchored, different approaches to problem-solving of the two countries, does sometimes lead to a lack of understanding of each other in relation to the way of dealing with such tasks. It might be interesting that up to a certain education and social level, French people consider the challenge to be a necessity that helps to raise the quality of life. As one of the many examples, it is not unusual that French avant-gardism design loves to underline this tendency (Breuer and Bartha de, 2005). Aside from the five German managers involved in the comparison of the retrieved key interview aspects, I had the opportunity during the meetings with the French interviewees to discuss impressions gathered during other interviews, in other French companies. This kind of feedback was interesting regarding two points: The first concerned the confirmation, or not, of data collected in one company and discussed in another. The discussion in both cases was useful

since it was a motivation for the respondent to bring new arguments for, or against, a position and simultaneously provided me with an increase in the quality of the data already collected and, parallel to it, an enrichment due to the elicitation of new details. Second, for the respondents who are in charge of business and responsible to some extent for the quality of the business relationship, as well as for me, it was an opportunity to improve the relationship by reinforcing the social exchange by reducing uncertainties between the two parties (Ford, 1997; Håkansson and Östberg, 1975). This is particularly significant as in this case spatial distance (Germany to France) exist and where constant work on the relationship is necessary to reduce the cultural distance between two parties by gradually increasing mutual experiences (Ford, 1997).

For me, the summary of such discussions, or the retrospective feedback of meetings were, aside from an additional source of empirical data, a source of inspiration and consideration regarding behaviour and feedback in cross-cultural relationships. It was interesting to observe that each interviewee answered with a slightly different vocabulary, with what I would describe to be, a different level of eloquence with the practical application of the French language. Answers from the lower hierarchical position seem to be less reflective and more direct than those higher up the hierarchy where eventually prudency can be at the heart of the words chosen and more reflection on a more holistic perspective was given voice.

5.6 Additional Considerations

The great variety of interviewees in terms of social origin and professional levels does not allow for the analysing of the data independent of this knowledge, for instance knowing that, for some, answering this type of question is relatively straightforward and easy, but that is ambiguous for others.

A critical component of the interviewing approach, aside from gathering data for this research, was to respect the rules of ethics, which means respecting the respondent and his or her environment. It has been noted by different authors (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Fontana, 2003; Hertz, 1997; Gubrium and Holstein, 1995; Scheurich, 1995) that an interview involves much more than the obvious and visible action of asking questions and receiving answers. It is an active process (Gubrium and Holstein, 1995) that involves at least two people in the collaborative effort, where one or more people are trying to retrieve information from others. Based on this procedure, Atkinson and Silverman (1997) pointed to that the picture drawn from the interview data is not more than an emulation created following the necessity of the researchers. This is a typical behaviour since the interviewer is, as Scheurich (1995) observed, a natural person that is mentally influenced by surroundings, culture, and history and is biased and always contextually bounded and guided with full consciousness or subconsciousness. Hence, even if the interviewer endeavours to be neutral, full and true neutrality is an unreachable aim. Scheurich (1995) asserted that 'the conventional positivist view of interviewing vastly underestimates the complexity, uniqueness and indeterminateness of each one human interaction' (p. 241).

As with the present research, which was undertaken with the best intention to be neutral, research in a familiar environment may cause, in an unconscious way, the researcher to leave this neutrality in some way or another. It seems, according to the literature, that leaving neutrality and sliding towards an empathetic interview is unavoidable, and more interestingly, it also seems to be profitable, given that an increasing number of academics have realised that they need to interact as a person with the interviewees and acknowledge that they are doing so. It is noticed that there is a tendency towards empathy (Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer, 2002), which is a result of changed

general perspectives or a change in atmosphere in interviewing where the interviewer becomes a partner of the interviewee.

My experience throughout the research (and it must be noted that, to some extent, this is due to the business and cultural environment I know and am active in due to my professional activity) was that, if not at the beginning of the interview at least in the course of it, the answers from nearly all the respondents made it possible to establish an atmosphere of confidence that allowed the interviewees to avoid a 'question and answer' paradigm. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) prefer to see an interview as storytelling, and I perceived that, while storytelling in this context is the sum of the 'what's' and 'how's', the 'how's' are more revealing if it is possible to create a relaxed atmosphere. Dingwall (1997) noted that the closer the interviewer has access to the interviewee or the better the actors know each other and the more they trust each other, the more the interviewer is able to access and experience the 'real self' of the interviewee, and I do actively support this view. It is not evident to get access to all the people interviewed, especially those interviewees from the Grandes Écoles are commonly only found in more prominent companies in France. It is only due to the, in the interaction model (Håkansson, 1982) described long-time of cooperation and attained closeness that the access has been possible without too much asking. Therefore I am sceptical in regards to some critical voices that have claimed that the above-mentioned view of Dingwall (1977) 'neglects the fact that the self is a process that is ever negotiated and accomplished in the interaction' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 718).

A better understanding of the difficulties in the establishment of long-term relationships within the cross-cultural relations between French and Germans together with a more profound knowledge of the culturally based values of the business partner, would from the very first step taken towards the building of a business relationship, enable to

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adopt the behavioural rhetoric that are usual and expected in the country where the business interaction should take place. The empirical aspects of the French and German behaviours and mentalities in different social fields in modern France and Germany influencing today's cultures and people from the sociology of knowledge with all its implications on the respective actual traditions.

The familiar environment during the interviews and that the interviewees were not unknown to me have made the process of data acquisition easier, although this kind of interview is quite delicate since it concerns national feelings. Indeed, the comparison and consequences of two different educational systems are connected indirectly to a political direction and, at least for some of the interviewees, to their national feelings. Considering the historical heritage for both countries of many decades with political and economic rivalry, this may modify the results of the interviews through resentments, which are still present in France (especially concerning older people and sometimes younger generations, even if most of these people were born long after the Second World War).

5.7 Chapter Summary

From the interaction model perspective, the business environment is characterized by, according to whom someone seeks to engage in an interaction with, the French higher education system. The elite educational system that is represented by the graduates from Grandes Écoles and the selection system that runs along with it, is not questioned by those formed by this system. This speaks for a high-power distance, as suggested by Hofstede (2001). This educational system differentiates those graduating from it not only by the chances and opportunities it offers in society, but also by their distinguishable eloquence and sophisticated use of the French language. That said, it is not evidently apparent but is still perceivable for those who 'know' about the differences. A non-native would not notice

any difference at all, except perhaps for a slightly higher difficulty they have in understanding what is said due to the use of a more 'sophisticated' grammar.

The importance of maintaining eloquence in the use of the French language is even now most apparent in the '*concours d'éloquence*' (Section 3.11 - The Language Factor), which is the challenge to find the most eloquent presentation of a subject in the French language, something so popular that there is even a contemporary programme based on this notion. Furthermore, and in accord with the research identified in the literature review and corresponding to my extensive personal experience, the overall tendency of the interviewees was to demonstrate that in France, speaking French with customers is very likely to be expected, regardless of hierarchical levels in contrast. In contrast in Germany whether it is English, French or German, does not have the same importance as the national language holds in France. Hence knowledge about language and culture is necessary.

Social equality has also been addressed during the interviews. Reflected by those in France who do not belong and are not part of the elite system, there is, to some extent, individual recognition for those who secured their place in the elite circle, by achieving the 'concour'. Moreover, it is very apparent that, for those from the regular universities, some professional possibilities will probably never be realized, as the 'admission ticket' is reserved to graduates with the names of 'the right institutes' on their paperwork. This seems to lead to, not less satisfaction, but as I would suggest, a sort of personal indifference to aspects of their work, which could well be related to the high-power distance as suggested by Hofstede (2001) and result in lower work-related motivation (Saadat, Mohsin, Khaliq Ur and Sehrish, 2014; Khatri, 2009; Helou and Viitala, 2007).

The interviews uncovered some culturally diverging work-related values in this French-German business context and confirmed other clichés. These confirm the importance of a well-prepared social exchange. And while mutual trust is identified as a

higher goal in an intercultural business exchange, it must be mentioned that the interviews that were conducted were only possible because the specific mutual trust that *already* existed. I feel that this trust enabled many of my interviewees to feel more comfortable about the interviews as, from several prior encounters, a connection to each interviewee had already been established.

A common aspect established over most of the interviewees that could be identified is that reliability is an aspect that promotes dealing with German partners. That is, in this regard not directly and only attributed to the products, but more importantly to the German business partner, hence the people, the persons and is to be understood in the sense of 'holding one's promise' and 'living up to what is said'. Again, this refers much to the aspect of trust (Lewicki, Macalister, and Bies, 1998), which is a vital aspect in a relationship and secures the positive outcome of an exchange (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010; T. V. Nguyen and Rose, 2009). While the part bonded to the persons in the interaction may relate to simple things like delivering something at the agreed time, there has also been evidence that German products have some reputation and that the seal of quality of 'Made in Germany' is a reason to engage in a business relationship, based again, on trust to meet the customers' expectations.

At no time did the interviewees go as far as to draw a black-and-white picture or position on either side to any of the related and discussed themes. At times, it was agreed that differences persist and that German managers can offer excellent solutions to a French business, which does per se not mean that the French could not also do so. Eventually, what I would call the '*Grande Nation*' thinking naturally forbids such thinking.

The different mentalities within the relationship regarding the business solution and task solving have been confirmed to find its origin in the cultural differences of the French 'creative' and the German 'analytic' approach to projects. Despite many culturally

motivated differences in project approaches, it has become apparent that, from a French standpoint, neither approach is better than the other, so that despite all appraisals for German orderliness and diligence, there is an inborn preference for the French creativeness that is personally 'closer' and represents better the cultural internalised values.

To summarise, the interviews manifest differences between the French and German in the way they approach the work with a business partner, the building of relationships, their expectations, the work on projects and how they value the outcomes in a business interaction. Eventually, it is what the French value, and meeting these values, that has a powerful influence on creating trust and promotes and creates an atmosphere enabling successful communication and interaction.

The interaction model (Håkansson, 1982) can indeed support to cluster various aspects encountered during interviews and supports with an overview of aspect relevant to form a bigger picture of the interaction process. However, especially the social interaction aspects that involve culture are so dense and complex that cultural knowledge and being familiar with the specific values becomes a requirement. Knowing about the history of a country facilitates an understanding of the culture, the resulting values and how they emerged. It will provide an advantage in social exchanges and minimising the risk to jeopardise the initiation of a new business relationship.

Chapter 6. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings that have surfaced in the analysis of the interviews, their implicit meaning perpetuated by practices, institutions, and social relations that assert an influence on the explicit elements of business interaction in France. The chapter further returns to the initial research model to considers the thematic finding with the intention to rank their role in the context of business interaction in this French-German setting and demonstrate its potential influence interaction. Professional aspects, such as professional or work-related commitment, that according to analysis perceivably differs and the influence of the differing French values identified are further highlighted. The role of the social origin and related educational aspects is also given further attention. The discussion will also address implicit aspects of the interviews that played a role in enabling all the findings presented. Finally, attention is brought to the limitations of findings of this research and a conclusion closes this chapter.

6.1 The Learned from the Analysis

In multicultural interaction, the knowledge about the others, including an understanding of cultural characteristics, can help to make cross-cultural involvement more pleasant for all involved and reduce possible frustration, such as the one encountered by a German member of staff at Airbus Industries, sent to work in Toulouse, France, at Airbus:

> I really confirm that I came at the beginning to France as a real European. However, I became with the time a real German as I saw how French people were fighting in this multinational project only for their national interests. (cited in M. Fischer, 1996)

In that context, a better culturally involved preparation might have helped to get to know the future working party better and manage expectancies. So how can these interviews help and what have we learned? Several peculiarities and likings that are bound to the aspects related in the research model in section 3.14 have surfaced several times during the interviews that I have summarized as follows:

- The French interviewees attested that their German counterparts have a high commitment towards their professional life

This first insight from the interviews has been labelled under the theme of motivational aspects. Motivation is reflected the diverging scores in Hofstede's cultural dimensions, mainly masculinity/femininity, as well as power distance, and the dimensions of long-term / short-term orientation (section 3.2) and is discussed further in section 6.2.

- This is the way we do things around here… Not a short-sighted management philosophy but a positive remarked cultural way of approaching things and with distinct perspectives.

A separate way of doing, as mentioned in section 5.2, it is not to be understood as an assessment, but rather identified as a culturally coined working focus and agenda. Section 3.13 has cited literature that clarifies the different aims and orientations of French, as well as the German, education, and accordingly makes the different ways of working a little more tangible. Labelled as "professional aspects" in the initial research model (figure 3), the subject area is nourished in a variety of aspects and further discussed in chapter 6.3.

- The language issue – is not an issue as long as you speak French. An expectation

The value attributed to the French languages has been discussed in depth in section 3.11 and is reflected in the research model in section 3.14. Section 6.4 discusses this aspect further.

- The old seal of quality, *Made in Germany*, still works

Trust in German products cannot simply be traced back to a single aspect. If one looks at the differences in the education systems, which emphasize the importance and the different appreciation of vocational training in France, documented in Section 3.6, and Section 3.13, which describes the French system as a generalist producing system, in contrast to specialists in Germany, one might be tempted to seek an origin here. However, the cultural diverging characteristic of the French, as documented by Hofstede's cultural dimensions in section 3.2, will play a role as well. The quintessence is, that because interviewees report having had good experiences with German engineering, or in other words, their expectations have been met (section 6.6), a level of trust is there to build on, simplifying communication and supporting further cooperation.

- The French have a clear view of their given professional possibilities according to the higher educational path they have undergone
- They value the educational success of those graduates from the Grandes Ècoles, despite the inequality it causes
- Being a graduate from a Grandes Écoles makes you a little 'different' on several levels

These three points all address the social aspects named in the research model that are a result, as much as a cause, of the selective educational system and inequalities it produces. This "French reality" is further discussed in section 6.5.

- Having a sense of, and meeting the differing cultural norms and values of the business partner, enables to meet expectations which support the building of trust. This trust has the potential to increase and facilitate the interaction (Wicks, Berman, and Jones, 1999)

This point resonates and reinforces all others above. Knowing and respecting the culturally different peculiarities, norms and values, is a demonstration of respect and facilitates trust and the interaction (section 6.6). It has, within all my French business encounters, played a positive role to support interaction, and, while being a German, I am knowledgeable about the French culture to a point that the national boundaries become blurred, in a positive sense.

While the peculiarities that are related to aspects of the research model presented in section 3.14 with the potential to influence and play a role in interaction, alter communication and influence trust, they are not presented in a differentiated manner in regard to their potential influence (and hence illustrated as being equal large shapes in the model). The interviews, and the analysis, however, indicate that some aspects play a more vital role than others in this specific cultural situation. The next section therefore discusses the findings in relation to the level of importance these aspects have in terms of the creation of trust and enabling communication in the context researched.

Starting with the first point raised above, in the attempt to explain the origin of this culturally embedded issue, the different perceptions of the interviewees regarding French

and German mentalities towards profession and work in general, can be classified by considering the information participants supplied through their very different approaches.

6.2 Differing work-related commitment? Different focus and orientation

In section 2.5.2, building trust has been said to be related to the perception of the business actor's professional and individual abilities (Levin, et al., 2002; McCarter and White 2007), as well as their commitment to the task, the project or more generally to their work. The interview analysis has indicated that different work-related French-German motivation and commitment can be perceived. Given that German craftmanship has a good reputation worldwide, this was not a major surprise. And, most important in this context, the remarks made during the interviews were in favour of the good working and professional approach of Germans, but did not disfavour the attributes inherent in the French workforce, which gave an initial indication of relevance.

In the presentation of these findings, the theme of work-related commitment differences could be related, in parts, to the distinct nature of some of Hofstede's (2010) cultural dimensions. Most easy to decipher in this context is the differing level of power distance that is given high value in France. Some researchers have linked work related motivation to the level of power distance in cultures, and studies provide evidence that countries with a low level of power distance profit from increased work-related motivation (Saadat, Mohsin, Khaliq Ur and Sehrish, 2014; Khatri, 2009; Helou and Viitala, 2007).

France is a country that, in contrast to Germany, has a higher level of power distance. Chapter 3, described the development of the higher education system in France, the differences in opportunities that universities and Grandes Écoles provide to the individual graduates as an element that enforces the rigid and top-down topology that continues to be present in the country. In section 3.13 it was reported that Grandes Écoles

graduates form an exclusive group and that the contact with other qualified members not from Grandes Écoles is reduced, leading to a reduced interchange within the hierarchy (R. R. Locke, 1989). This behaviour can lead to a diminishing sense of belonging to a group, company or community. Hence organizational commitment, a motivation component, is likely to fall and so is motivation.

However, the intrinsic factors of motivation are linked to skills acquired (Ferreira, 2017) whereas with extrinsic motivation factors the relation with superiors play a role (Ferreira, 2017). Hence the socio-cultural construct in France with, in part, its origin in the educational system, seems to promote lower work-related motivation in contrast to Germany – with is concomitant effect on perceived professionalism.

The building of trust in return, has been linked to the demonstration of competence and professionalism so that when comparing the French and German cultural dimensions, differentiation occurs. The aspects of professionalism eventually to be perceived, take into account the lower popularity and value attributed to vocational training in France (section 3.6), as well as the aspect of a differentiated focus in the higher education systems, i.e., the generalist or specialist orientation of France and Germany (section 3.13). But if that is one side of the coin, the aspect of motivation is very closely related to that of professionalism in that the demonstration of professionalism may also be affected by the level of motivation demonstrated. This is also supported by the differing levels of masculinity in France and Germany. France's much lower level of masculinity in contrast to Germany, results in a preference for motivation towards liking what you do (feminine) in contrast to wanting to be the best (masculine) (Hofstede, 2001). According to this, in France, the focus is towards balancing the time dedicated to the professional functions and the one dedicated to family (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016). France is also slightly more short term oriented than Germany, which can affect work related motivation. Concomitantly, the preference to

sustain long term effort and attention is lower than in Germany (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016).

Taking the research results related to cultural dimensions as a basis, the result of the interviews with regard to the theme of work-related motivation can be associated with the cultural circumstances found, and given this, the educational system is in part responsible for the hierarchical organizational structures that can be found in France, the influence that these induce in the establishment of trust is to the advantage of a German sales representative.

Introduced in the literature review section 3.4, the influence of the church and of religion in relation to the development of education in France and Germany was highlighted. According to Hofstede (2001), cultural values are reinforced by religion, so that, even though a secular country, there are a large number of private Catholic education institutions in France (schools, colleges, high schools) that enjoy a better reputation than state institutions, and their continuing influence on the culture remains, even though the numbers of Catholics are in rapid decline. Catholicism places interpersonal relations at an elevated level of importance in life (Ammon, 1989). In Catholicism, the human being is only obliged to serve God. There are no obligations towards the state; church and state are strictly separated. There is also no obligation towards profession, and Trouvè (1994) argued that this passive attitude towards work has led to the lack of a managerial spirit in business. Even today, the norm and values of Catholicism and Cartesianism are present in daily life. A kind of indifference is perceivable in the individual in terms of what is felt as the assigned rank in society by God, which is taken for granted (Münch, 1986a). As a result, an economic passivity of the population is perceived, and a higher power group that is represented in France by the elite takes the initiative in the state according to the 'raison'

which can best be translated to the sense of 'reason'. Given this reinforced hierarchical structure found in France, rationalism is favoured.

In contrast the reformation, which led to the rejection of the pope's authority, replaced the hierarchy of the church by a personal internal church in the personal self of believers. This point can be considered central in this context. This personal (internal and self-reliant) way of thinking and believing leads to externalisation with consequences for the individual. The individual is responsible for his or her actions alone in front of God, without help either from tradition or institution. The conflict the reformation introduced led to the complete rejection of the Roman Catholic church and to the loss of dependency, which was a burden because it represented security (Pateau, 1999). The individual became separated from the protective church institution. That meant a change for individuals away from God so that, from now on, the ideal education consisted of realising one's full potential alone. That brought new responsibilities to Protestants. Courage was required to take decisions now, as an independent, responsible individual. Pateau (1999) stipulated that this responsibility is a root of German 'seriousness'. Weber (2012) argued that the new responsibility transferred by Luther to individuals is synonymous with isolation and leads to pessimism. The logical consequence is restlessness since the relief the Catholic church offers does not existent for Protestants. Nipperday (1992) emphasised that the Protestant seriousness and permanent self-reflection has a negative effect on qualities, such as imaginativeness, impartially, naturalness, and joie de vivre. Protestants feel life to be more of a burden compared to Catholics (Nipperday, 1992). The Protestant seriousness and independency of the Roman Catholic hierarchies is a fundamental element of the Protestant culture, which is still strongly reflected and present in the behaviour of people and in the companies in which they are working today (Pateau, 1999).

However, today, there is no evidence that contemporary Catholicism behaves any differently to contemporary Protestantism and that either has a more positive, or negative, effect on job related motivation or commitment over the other (Kirchmaier, Prüfer and Trautmann, 2018). As discussed in section 3.4, historical Protestantism, and its quest for education for everyone, had a strong influence on the economic development at that time. But just as much as the magnitude of Protestantism's traditional influence on secondary schooling has diminished over time (Feldmann, 2018) (today none of the three branches of Christianity – Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism – have a statistically significant effect on secondary schooling (Feldmann, 2016)) so, at a general level therefore neither has the Christian religion in both countries.

Looking at the influential parameters of religion alone does not do justice to regional economic development in the sense of possible work-related motivation differences. Bavaria is a good example, being predominantly Roman Catholic but standing as one of the strongest economic regions in Germany. This is thanks to the reformer Maximilian Graf von Montgelas (1759-1838), who modernized Bavaria and formed from the fragmented principality, with its many princely, ecclesiastical and urban small areas, a closed state with an administrative structure that still exists today (Götschmann, 2010). King Maximilian II Joseph (1811-1864), a pioneer of the knowledge society, gathered the intellectual elite around him. He brought scholars to the state university as professors, some of whom were ridiculed as "Northern Lights". The concentrated expertise he managed to bring to Bavarian development had an impact on the economy and the expansion of higher education, where industrial schools gradually became polytechnic universities. This is a good example that demonstrates the influence that a religious denomination may eventually have on a general state and how it may suffuse into the general culture, but this does not mean that the influence collectively affects everyone on a micro-individual level.

The example of Bavaria underlines the findings of Moon, Youn, Hur, and Kim (2018) who state that "self-determination-based motivation are key underlying mechanisms of job performance" (p. 1631).

Hence if there is a different commitment to work-tasks or professional obligations or perhaps even passion for professional activities as remarked by some interviewees, then it is more likely that research performed in relation to work performance and the differing cultural dimensions of both countries is likely to address this phenomenon. Yet, as remarked above, centuries of lived Catholicism may have left a fingerprint in the cultural genes.

Where in the research model the professional aspects were thought to play a more substantial role is toward the establishment of trust or communication, the findings do confirm a role to some extent. So, professionalism appears to promote the development of trust and can accordingly be seen as a 'door opener' or a 'primer'.

6.3 Recognizing Different Working Values

Referred to as professional aspects in the research model, the different working values play a role in working together in this French-German setting in everyday business. The interviews revealed that doing business with each other, and working on joint projects is influenced by different values, which in turn can be decisive for the understanding and expectations of the other party. The philosophies and mentalities in doing (action) and taking decisions (thinking) are different in some respects. This may be perceived as a paradox, as just like Germany, France's cultural uncertainty avoidance dimension is high, and thus it might be assumed that a structured planned and systematic approach, without of surprises, is preferred. Eventually, the high level of power distance in combination with a feminine cultural dimension tendency, the later preferring an orientation towards liking

what is done in contrast to being the best and a perfectionist, led to differing approaches and focusses. The approach to challenges, which might also be described as problem-solving in the broader sense, is one such an example. Germans, like the French, enjoy a challenge, but they also like and need, to perceive that they have all processes entirely under their control and to recognize and assess the risks, something that could be perceived as a cultural 'reflex'. In France, the underestimated and/or uncontrolled risk represents a challenge that needs to be overcome, adding excitement for the French, while it represents uncertainty for Germans and can finally lead to a refusal to participate and anger after a struggle (Breuer and Bartha de, 2005). In a mutually shared project between French and Germans, the risks involved, if not reduced to a minimum, could, probably, be a source of dissonance.

The German proverb '*Der Teufel liegt im Detail*', which translates idiomatically in English to 'The devil is in the detail', describes the problem in which there is always a source of risk if the details of a project are not well considered. For Germans, in any planning, uncertainty avoidance has priority over any enthusiastic challenging projects (and the French might suggest creativity and innovation).

Hence, while the French have a keen sense for projects that allow the pursuit of their cultural approach based on originality and creativity, the Germans emphasize structure, planning and order not because they fear risk, but to avoid it and look for a plannable outcome. Due to their different focuses, these two different sets of approaches can lead to potential misunderstanding during the interaction processes, and this needs to be addressed.

An aspect of the originality considered by the French is the spoken word. As mentioned, the origins of this can be found in the history of the French enlightenment. Being a distinguishing aesthetic feature, it is still a necessity today to be original and

eloquent in communication with others, no matter in what context and this remains a crucial factor in France for assessing people. It also underlines the grade of education of an individual, and the best education in France is perceived as been taught in the Grandes Écoles.

This illustrates how the manifestation of enlightenment still influences today's French behaviour. In interpersonal relations, many of the French attach a particular value at playing on words or playing with hidden insinuations. As a result, if a business partner does not seem to be at the expected intellectual level, mistrust will appear in the French counterpart, destroying all possibilities of success from the very beginning. In this context, it is not surprising that Germans are often accused of '*lourdeur*' [dullness] (L'express, 16 March 2006) by the French, criticising a German inwardness, being 'too fact-oriented' and 'too down-to-earth' in their approach to new things, where the French could appear to be superficiality although it is the pleasure of an ornate language taking their time to come to the point.

But there is another aspect regarding French values that is of considerable importance, especially regarding the approach of business partners coming from the Grandes Écoles: The '*logic of honour*' and rank as detailed by d'Iribarne (1989, 1994). This specifically French value determines social relations as well as the work relations. Having already spoken about the French bourgeoisie (Bourdieu, 1989) in the literature review, this value has the same historical foundation and matches the elitist position that French Grandes Écoles graduates claim for themselves.

In this context, d'Iribarne (1989) states:

France remains the fatherland of honour, rank, the opposition of noble and vulgar, of orders and of the states, which are characterised as much by their duties as by their privileges. Nobody is willing to yield to the common law, but everyone will have the heart to meet the responsibilities, which are determined by the tradition of

its rank. And the sense of honour prohibits those who claim to defend their interests in the petty way, which belongs to the vulgar. (p.258)

Hence, it appears that, under these circumstances, French-German cooperation on projects may be difficult. The fundamental values are so deeply ingrained on both sides that struggles can occur when acting together. However, someone involved in a business interaction in a French-German context needs to be aware of this possible issue, as having knowledge of the cultural aspects that are involved and that require intuition and tact to manage them with care is central to being willing to find a 'compromise' between the culturally tinted French call for originality and versus that of the German need for profitability. Otherwise, misunderstanding between a German manager and their French counterpart is essentially programmed into the relationship (Breuer and Bartha de, 2005), which may, or may not, leave either or both sides unsatisfied. Knowing the values of the other, understanding and acknowledging them, become a central element of success towards building trust and enabling communication. This element shapes the atmosphere of the interaction and is of particular interest when engaging in French interaction. The knowledge about the other reduces the cultural distance as it also lowers the psychic distance that the actors of the interaction may otherwise perceive.

6.4 Implicit Aspects of the Interviews – The Language Theme

This study shows that the importance of language, the most frequently used method to convey ideas and thoughts (Kartabayeva and Zhaitapova, 2016), should be given a wider attention. However, in the past, there has been a distinct tendency for approaches to spoken language to become narrowly restricted specialities, with the analysis tightly bounded and self-referential in some cases (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). However, there is no need to restrict such analyses of the spoken word in the social sciences exclusively to the case or

phenomena susceptible to recording (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). As mentioned above, the method of expressing oneself or to argue is not solely dependent on the level of education or knowledge. It is in part also due to the way that people of a particular social level or social origin are in the habit of doing, with the aim to differentiate themselves from normal individuals or to be identified by their kind. Cultivating and bringing this to excellence is as much a '*concour*' as it is a challenge. To achieve this, this kind of identification can demand a native speaker of the language with appropriate education and sociological knowledge of the culture.

As I remarked earlier, the language used by the interviewees with Grandes Écoles backgrounds was slightly distinctive from other French interviewees. Indeed, Labov's (1972) work on language in society and especially his work on spoken narratives supports and underlines the importance of perceiving and understanding such differences. According to him, several underlying structural elements exist that are part of a 'grammar' of personal stories and accounts, where the 'personal' relates to the group of graduates in question in this case. To be able to recognize, or in this case to hear, the difference in the spoken language, the grammar, the expression used, certain proximity and knowledge of the language is required, making the option to choose a native speaker as the conversation partner compulsory.

Especially for the interviews with the graduates from Grandes Écoles, the data in terms of the subtle differentiated oral presentation is a phenomenon that can and should be analysed according to its appearance. The literature mentioned this on a general basis, and Bourdieu (1989) pointed to these characteristics in an even more detailed manner in his book *Noblesse d'Etat*, stating that appearance is not separable from social settings in which such phenomena are generated and interpreted. This oral phenomena, the mundane and self-conscious aesthetics, have intrinsic modes of organization (Crouch and Lübbren,

2003). The forms of representation and expression follow a learned and specified line. Integrated into a culture, the social members of this culture will understand its nuances and colouration, something that an outsider of the culture will need to learn in order to understand the ethnographical meaning (Grimshaw, 2001). Without this kind of knowledge and the capability to recognize among 'normal society' those people belonging who to another group, it is difficult (if not impossible) to have a real discussion, or even more demanding, a valuable interview. This is because, from the very beginning, the researcher, interviewer, or discussion partner is not in the position to recognize and demonstrate that he or she is informed and, even more importantly, can tackle a subject in the way it would be expected, with the vocabulary those in the group use to express themselves. In doing so, the interviewer may be considered somebody worth spending some time within this kind of society and who may usually feel 'at home' in the private environment and circles.

Realising that the French culture, although known to me, still is inexhaustibly rich in facets and hidden meaning that can be discovered, so that even with the thickest data accrued, there is a point where it needs to be realised how much more there is to know and discover. Business interaction with this elite requires knowledge to, as Bourdieu (1989) explained, correctly interpret the answers that can be encountered by graduates from the Grandes Écoles. For instance, it may very well be that what I referred to earlier in the literature review, as the notion of 'eloquence' does play a role with chosen wording that may mantle the real opinion. However, my feeling was that from overall interviewees, the collected answered seem to come right from the heart. The vastly different socio-cultural and educational levels of the interviewees have affected their verbal declarations in terms of what is over- or underestimated, masked, or hidden according to the milieu to which they belong. So, taking a look behind the stories and behind the narratives is therefore

important to understand what is happening and especially why, which in return, does require a little knowledge of the history of a country and of the culture, so that a more complete picture can be drawn and better sense-making can occur. It appears that, over the centuries, France developed into a civilisation with a claim towards universalism that has been integrated into the culture. The French educational system, with its norms, selections, and hierarchies reflects this existing reality (Pateau, 1999). The differences between the French hierarchy and German hierarchy can be interpreted in relation to the complexity of the diverse socialisation and organizational processes taking place that interact with the identity of the actors and are seen in relation to the nature of their social commitment. That per se does not suggest it is simpler in Germany to engage in a business interaction or a social exchange, but it is different. This difference may sometimes be closer to one or the other foreign culture so that indeed, it may appear simpler to engage in a social exchange, but viewed from a French perspective, it may be that things appear to be just as much complicated and that more in-depth knowledge from the other culture would be a plus to facilitate the interaction.

A look at the implications that the literature review together with the interviews and analysis suggest that it is important to acknowledge that speaking foreign languages is not the first nature of French people (Garcia, 2017) and that in France, the French language is an aspect of differentiation (Mah, 2003), especially in higher levels of society (Savatovsky, 1995). Therefore, only an interactor's affinity for this foreign market, the language and culture, will serve to make the required adaptations towards French customers (Håkansson and Wootz, 1975; Hallén and Wiedersheim-Paul, 1979). Hence, and this also draws on my personal experience, speaking the French language to interact in a business interaction in France is an aspect that, in contrast to speaking German to

interact on a business level in Germany, is of higher importance, making this aspect more prominent.

6.5 French Exception – French Reality

Considering the results of the interviews with French managers at different hierarchical levels and in different fields of occupation, it clearly appears that, in France in this market sector and in the companies chosen for this study, different types of individuals can be found and recognized due to their mentalities depending on their social origins and education. The elitist French Grandes Écoles contribute to perpetuating those secular attitudes and behaviours derived from former nobilities (Gumbel, 2014). The centralised French super-elite, in a top-down hierarchy, set the rules. Therefore, the usual top-down method of decision making (Kumar and Usunier, 2001; R. R. Locke, 1989) in which the claim of the brilliant '*Chef de file*' is vaunted against those of the 'regular' organizational members, whose opinions are disregarded, belongs to the typical organizational communication of the French management system, in-line with the French penchant for bureaucratic formalism in organizational culture (Grindle, 2012).

This is a situation that international managers seeking to do business in France must be aware of and know how to cope with, particularly when they intend to initiate business relations with French companies. It is understandable that, when coming from Germany where hierarchies tend to be much flatter and where to flaunt an implicit aspect of differentiation is a behaviour that can be misinterpreted (M. Fischer, 1996), all groups of different hierarchical strata work together and where teamwork is highlighted and promoted, a German marketing manager who is not culturally sensitive to the French norms will have difficulty to get along in the French system (Boesch, 1971). This kind of deeply anchored cultural difference within a nation or society must be considered before

starting an interview involving distinct kinds of entities. Without knowing these social differences and antagonisms within the social group forming around the table, the data generated may be interpreted inappropriately and it may create negative consequences for some respondents within the hierarchical level of the same company due to a lack of respect for the norms, culture, and traditions of society and might even come to provoke an ethical dilemma.

Apart from the well-known usual cultural differences between both nations, it must be remembered that the history of the past century, with its First and Second World Wars, has left, if not a resentment for the French, a deeply anchored fear of the Germans even if this is slowly fading and is not as strong as it was just a few years ago. Simultaneously, the necessity to work together and that both nations have been in a competitive situation on the world market continues to reproduce this well-known ancestral rivalry. This kind of rivalry can be found in all kinds of cross-cultural projects, joint or ventures. The managers of companies of all kinds of fields of activities underline the unique relations existing between the French and Germans: 'A relationship marked by differences and oppositions, by fascination and frustration, by misunderstandings and surprises, which makes the collaboration so exciting, so rewarding and sometimes even stressful due to the energy lost in the tensions.' (Joly, 2005, p. 183).

Again, it is interesting to try to understand the origins of the diverging expectations. To analyse the situation, it is not enough to describe the visible behaviour and concept of different actors, but it is necessary to focus on their origins. It is the reason that values orientation plays a vital role in the research regarding intellectual management (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000). Hofstede (1987) provided a compelling explanation with his orientation of values concerning 'hierarchical distance' (or as mentioned beforehand: honour and rank): 'The hierarchical distance is exactly the perception of grade of inequality

of the power between the person having it and the person subject to submission' (Bollinger and Hofstede, 1987, p.83).

Elias (1974) claimed that France is a court society (*société de cour*), reflecting the pre-revolutionary social structuration of the *ancien régime* where according to d'Iribarne (1989, 1994) society is clustered in nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie and farmer, supporting the value claim of honour and rank. It was perceivable that all interviewees from a Grandes Ècoles answered in that sought to maintain 'politically correctness', with a "Grande Nation" rhetoric; whereas other interviewees would be more open to address issues in France with no fear of naming them. Bourdieu (1989) saw the provenance of such behaviours in that the different institutions or Grandes Écoles form and programme each individual entering the school to an elitist represent of the French nation (Baker, Furet, and Nobile, 1988), as mentioned in Chapter 3.8 'Social Origin – Social Status and Resulting Expectations', so that expressing critic of the own system to others, which would correspond to question the education system of Grandes Écoles (Cogan and Derricott, 2012), is unlikely.

It is through methods of cooperation and with teaching professors issued from the same system and institutions, each Grande École selects and produces a homogeneous elitist class, making them different from others, no matter whether the difference is social or educational (Bourdieu, 1989).

There are two opposing worlds in the French-German context: on one side, German higher education with a PhD at the end and, on the other side, French Grandes Écoles, which, according to Durkheim (1912), is almost a religious authority: 'At building a border separating the elected of the big academic test from the common people, the authority establish an elite endowed, due to some kind of segregation, with all properties granted to sacred beings' (cited in Bourdieu, 1989, p. 164). Given this system in France, the

separation process through which educational institutions are responsible for forming and producing the state nobility, creating the right to positions of power and privileges, is perceivable, and its origin is located (Bourdieu, 1989).

Table one in the section 3.12 of this thesis indicates the social origin of students in France in relation to the institute they studied at. In that table, the *classes préparatoire aux Grandes Écoles* (CPGE), preparing those attempting to be admitted to one of the prestigious Grandes Écoles, shows that the children of professionals in high and higher management positions are overly represented. The picture that is reflected by those finally admitted to the Grandes Écoles, as depicted in the table below, to the *École National d'Administration* is even more apparent. In 2009, from 139 students admitted, only four had working-class parents, while 84 had parents with higher intellectual, professional duties.
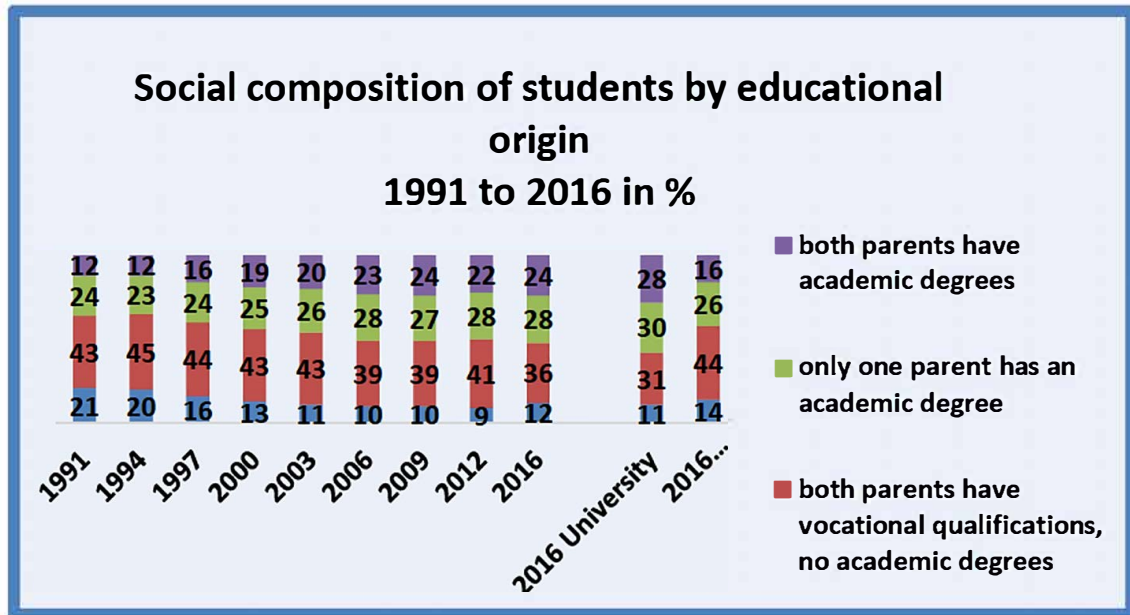
Table 4: Social origin of students of the École National d'Administration.

Representation rate at ENA according to the professional category of parents				
	Number of parents	Promotion 2009/2011 in%	Actively occupied in%	Representation index out of 100
Farmers, agriculturist	1	0.7	2.1	33.3
Craftsmen, tradesmen, entrepreneurs	13	9.4	6.2	151.6
Leading cadres and professionals with higher intellectual occupations	84	60.4	15.5	389.7
Intermediate professions	24	17.3	23.6	73.3
Employees	13	9.4	29.8	31.5
Workers	4	2.9	22.8	12.7
Source: Economic Alternatives calculations based on data from the National School of Administration				

In Germany, the social origin (see figure 2, next page) of graduates from universities or the *Fachhochschule*, does not influence the path or possibility for a career if we consider, for example, politics, justice, and sciences.

Figure 4: Social composition of students by educational origin 1991 to 2016 in %

Social composition of students by educational origin 1991 to 2016 in %

- both parents have academic degrees
- only one parent has an academic degree
- both parents have vocational qualifications, no academic degrees

Source: DZHW (Deutsche Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung) 21. Sozialerhebung [Social Survey]

Figure 2 shows that the educational background of the parents does play a much lesser role than, e.g., France. In Germany, it is easier for a child from a lower socio-economic class to reach a top position (Middendorff, et al., 2016), whereas Table 4 shows it is much harder in France. But why is it so hard to reach the highest positions in France? Distinguishing between economic, social, and cultural capital can answer this question.

While the economic capital is mostly self-explanatory, social capital is mainly the capital that is issued from belonging to a specific group, like the higher bourgeoisie or/and an elitist circle and the profit that can be drawn from these aspects (Ringer, 2000). Cultural capital is defined by Bourdieu (1989) as the cultural background of a person, the roots, and the cultural imprint that is shaped and passed along the family. This capital is generally bound to social status and is only recreated by education but not distributed to those lacking it. These three capitals are not fully and equally available within society. Those generally poor of economic capital also often have deficits in cultural and social capital, despite that

others might have more resources for their economic capital but lack cultural or social capital (or vice versa).

Despite this, the distribution of educational advantages is not always a mirror of economic power and does not coercively reflect social status or hierarchy. The social space that is formed by relations subsisting with other individuals and which may have their origin in social capital is also responsible for incongruities. As a result, this endangers the absolute comparative advantages and disadvantages of the single individual. Bourdieu, Boltanski and de Saint-Martin (1973) recognized the importance of the elements forming a social position and the effect of their alternation which in return has led to analytical concepts that are far more discriminating than those encountered in discussions of social structure and social mobility (Ringer, 2000).

Hence, if a sort of indifference is observable with some interviewees, then the knowledge of reduced possibilities and perspective regarding professional career development due to unequal distribution between economic, social, and cultural capital in France (Bourdieu, 1977) eventually is the cause. Even more, as it is the "capital" that determines the accessibility to the elite education institutes, not solely the individual's intellect itself. However, most surprising in this contest is that there is also a certain appreciation for the work done by those who were able to assert themselves in the 'concours'. I would even say that there is an acceptance. Furthermore, while the model of a 'thrice-blessed bourgeoisie' maintained their composition until around 1880 in France, it has since then become, even though very slowly, permeable to other social classes, who can now climb up the social ladder. While the initial problems of social 'heritage' persists, and contemporary studies have shown that pupils from lower social classes remain disadvantaged and have little to no opportunity to enter a Grande École (Attali and Brandys, 1998), it is perceivable that the aspect of 'equality' from the French motto

"liberty, equality, and fraternity" is pursuit, and recent discussions in France in 2019, where the French president (Macron) mooted closing l'ENA (one of the country's most prestigious Grande Écoles), indicate that social equality is still a vibrant idea.

While this research has put effort into providing an explanation of the differing situation of the higher education systems in France and in Germany, and has highlighted differences in requirements and their accessibility, the research does not supply evidence that the related social inequalities, that have developed by this educational system, play an overly important role for business interaction and these have not been perceived as being substantially influential for the creation of trust. Rather it is the knowledge provided to understand the French education system remains important, as it enables a German supplier to recognize with whom they are going to interact in France and will allow an indication of their values and likings. Hence, the other values that have been discussed previously and the language factor are perceived as more important in this specific cultural context.

6.6 Respecting values: The keystone building trust and enabling communication

In section 3.14, when describing the research model, I introduced the idea that the education system has a central part to play in forming values and basic assumptions (Hofstede, 1980; Lundberg, 1985; Schein, 2010) and leads to an inherent behaviour plan (Hofstede, 2010) that influences each individuum, which in turn leads to patterns that influence the way trust can be built and has a relevance for preferences and requirements for successful interaction and communication. This section recaps the different aspects that have been highlighted during this research and presented in the previous sections of chapter 6, that have shown to have a strong connection to the French education system and its historical development over the centuries. All these aspects come together to form culture specific values.

In this ethnological research that examines a single social group within the French semi-trailer related transportation business, not all the identified values appear to have the same level of importance. Cultural bounded professional aspects and the language factor appear to be of more importance to the interviewees than related social and motivational aspects. While both of latter aspects have their origin in education, with the highly selective system that favours a social class that possesses a better foundation for educational success and as such has a higher level of general education. This leads to a society with a high-power distance and a much lower level of masculinity in contrast to Germany. These peculiarities have become a fixed and inseparable part of the culture and, if you will, give rise to values that characterize the country and that that the population general see as 'normal' from their internal, in-culture, perspective. That said, the social aspect, while playing a significant role in the national social equality context in France, is of lower relevance when considering in a whatso ever developed business intercultural communicative matter the French social inequality may play a role for the evolving of mutual 'trust'. The motivational aspects can be attributed to small trust building capabilities, in form of communicated recognition. The interviews have shown that this recognition is present for e.g., quality of product or timely delivery, and that this works towards meeting the expectations of the customers and so helps generate trust. However, meeting the expectation of the customers is a prerequisite and one aspect of creating an atmosphere that supports the enabling interaction.

Of greater interest is the value attributed to language, and more specifically the tendency of the elites to demonstrate superiority through an erudite presentation of the use of the French language itself, which reflect the attention and demanding requirements made during the '*concour*' to serve the requirement of the Grandes Écoles for an excellent and eloquent use of French. Adding to this, given the disinterest, and sometimes the refusal,

of many of the French population to speak any other language but French, it is not surprising that there is a certain expectation from a French business partner that those seeking to work with them speak the French language. And there is more: a language can be a common ground if both interactors feel at home with it (Krawczyk-Bryłka, 2016). This can ease the interaction for a foreign business partner, and it demonstrates respect towards their values and an interest in the French more broadly, which provides a strong means to overcome cultural barriers.

Therefore, speaking the language is a plus. But being able to adapt one's level of communication to what the French partner values – the demonstration of an eloquent and erudite form of address – a helps identify the non-French sales representative as 'one of them' and generates trust that positively effects interaction, irrespective of the hierarchical level at which that interaction takes place.

Another interesting aspect that needs consideration and to be respected are professional aspects. The first value in this respect is the rank of honour, which is derived from the whole construct of elite graduates, their resulting differentiation in hierarchies and professional possibilities. A sales representative knowing and valuing this, will adopt their communication, knowing with whom they can talk about specifics and given their communication approach from whom they can expect a decision. This knowledge enables the sales representative to build a relationship of trust with the people in this specific French business environment and to present themselves as trustworthy.

The second value is honouring a culturally different business partner who may have a diverging focus and work philosophy to problem solving and projects. While the binational work experience considered in this research has promoted a positive working and interaction atmosphere, the ability to adapt one's communication modus with respect to perceptions of a diverging level of creativity and originality in the approaches to problem

solving and projects, eases interaction by facilitating the development of increased mutual trust based on mutual understanding. To be familiar with these ways of working and to know the differing values attributed in this respect helps a non-French business partner seeking to work in France to better prepare themselves for communicative interaction.

That education is the origin of some influential values that influence professional areas is not itself surprising. In France, however, the elitist education system is a peculiarity that reinforces certain values, or produces them in a specific form. The analysis of the findings enables the trilateral relationship between values, communication and trust to be redrawn to illustrate their interaction and mutual influence. Figure 10 in section 7.3 is a visualization of the interrelation of values, communication and the building of trust in a business interaction and a depiction of the findings of this research work.

The model (figure 10, section 7.3) expands the understanding of the effect of cultural values in the Interaction Model (IMP Group, 1982a), that while it has recognized the importance of social exchange and the importance of culture in this process, the original model has not elaborated the complexity, national singularities and influence of culturally induced values on communication and respectively on the building of trust in the interaction process. Identifying what customers value in an intercultural encounter and understanding these values, and why they persist, will enable the expectations of the buyer to be identified and therefore can be used to influence the salesperson's communicative approach.

6.7 Shaping communication, reaping trust

The third research question addresses how to deal with different cultural values in an intercultural business-to-business environment, in order to enable a framework for successful communication and establish trustworthy interaction between buyers and

sellers. Within the exchanges of industrial goods and services, the dyadic approach, as an element of the marketing mix where two persons or parties interact, demonstrates its strength and usefulness (Ford, 1980a, 1980b, 2002; Håkansson and Snehota, 1995; IMP Group, 1982a). The interaction process itself is influenced mutually by the interaction participants e and the cultural environment and the atmosphere which both affect, and are themselves affected, by the interaction. The ability to operate, adapt or handle different aspects issued from these dimensions, whether through innate seller qualities, a natural flair for business relationships, or the ability to overcome culturally-induced gaps, is a prerequisite for successful interaction.

However, it is difficult to imagine that this is possible if there is limited knowledge about the values of the business partners, of the company involved in the dyad, the culture of the company and more generally speaking the culture and cultural values of the country the seller is supposed to deal with. The implication of my findings highlights the necessity of a seller who can adapt their behaviour (Ford, 1980b; Ford, 1990; Spiro and Weitz, 1990; Weitz, Sujan and Sujan, 1986) to the situation, and support the view of Khalil, Larina and Suryanarayan (2018), who point out that to acquire a socio-pragmatic, pragma-linguistic and sociocultural competence of a foreign culture, as well as to be knowledgeable and conscious about their values, is very important to meet the norms of interpersonal communication in another culture to enable a trustworthy relationship.

To manage the interaction and increase the level of trust, the necessity of at least a basic, but better a substantial, knowledge about the values of the counterpart is a requirement. This allows the seller to better perceive and understand the expectation of their counterpart within the business interaction, but also beyond the pure transfer of goods. It permits the seller to align communication in such a way that their business partner can trust that they have been fully understood, not only in terms of technical specifications, but

also as a person, with their own personal preferences and requirements, and furthermore, in a culturally appreciative encounter. Hence, the level of adaptation invested may define the achievable characteristics of buyer-seller relationship (Brennan and Turnbull, 1995).

For a salesperson, the main lever to increase trust in the interaction is to understand the buyer's values and modify communication accordingly. This a reciprocal movement. For instance, taking the language factor that is of importance in France, an initial action is to acknowledge that there is a requirement, or at least an expectation, that foreign companies coming to France must engage in the language or are represented by native speakers. Accordingly, this communicative requirement will need to be met.

This alone is a first step to augment trustworthiness, but an important one. An increased cultural and historical knowledge of the country will help a salesperson understand that, in French companies, especially in more prominent companies, higher management positions are usually occupied by graduates from a Grandes Écoles. Since a means of distinction for graduates is an erudite and eloquent form of expression, the development of intercultural communication competence (Bush et al., 2001; Vetrinskaya and Dmitrenko, 2017), pragma-linguistic and sociocultural competence (Khosh, Khalil, and Alhaded, 2020) becomes even more important and can become key to the development of mutual trust and a long-term business interaction relationship. These cognitive-communication competencies and the ability to adapt one's own communication patterns and behavioural communication competencies to those of the business partner, enable the growth of trust in the business partner and allows successful interaction (Griffith, 2002).

Additionally, examining how working together is manifest is important. For example, there is a diverging focus to the masculine society in Germany that values toughness, and in France the feminine culture places more importance on 'tender' venues, valuing family, personal relationships, the care for others, and the quality of life. Knowing

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and respecting these values and behavioural patterns will allow a salesperson to engage a in a communication form that takes this into account and demonstrate respect of the other, easing much the interaction and the social encounter. Trust can therefore be generated by accepting that others have a different focus and instead of trying to force one's own inherent work values, accept and relate to those of the business partner to overcome the cultural gap. Respecting others' values, be they personal or national, smooths and facilitates the relationship. This is the core of the model presented in section 6.6: 'Understand the values and take action on the approach to communication'. Communication influences interaction and influences the building of trust.

To learn about the foreign national cultural values of a potential business partner is something that can be undertaken without being in the relationship yet. It is a necessary prerequisite for the relational activity. Engaging deeper in the particularity of a complex social system, such as that of France with its very distinct education system differences, supports understanding the values that can then help a salesperson to better communicate, by responding to whom they are interacting with. This knowledge provides the ability to fully perceive the required dimensions of adaptiveness and not fall short or rely on standardised conceptual settings, so to build a successful business interaction where mutual trust is grown.

6.8 Chapter Summary

The objective of this chapter was to discuss cultural values induced by education and defined in the research model as well as those that have surfaced during the interviews and could not entirely be addressed by the knowledge provided within the literature review, aspects that asked for further details or a look from another perspective to complete the

picture. Links of the findings to the different sections have been made to demonstrate these connections.

The different values to work commitment, issued in part from the inequality of the education system and related to Hofstede's (2010) cultural dimensions, the higher power distance leading to a rigid hierarchy in companies, and the lower level of masculinity in France that gives preference to time dedicated to dedicated to family over that devoted to professional functions e (Dumitraşcu and Dumitraşcu, 2016), have not been found to be of higher influence in the practical interaction examined in this research.

While there has initially be some thoughts on an influence of the long-anchored Roman Catholic church in France on the passion for professional life in contrast to protestant Germany and resulting motivational divergence, this idea does not appear plausible in the contemporary context. It seems fair to suggest that in the last millennium the influence of religion on people was stronger and that an influence on education and the education system could be seen more clearly, but recent studies have evidenced that there is no noticeable difference today (Kirchmaier, Prüfer and Trautmann, 2018).

Recognizing the values of the other when working on a joint project appears to be of importance in the approach taken to problems, to creativity and to finding solutions. Here, the way of doing things and the associated values highlighted those specific aspects can be divergent in a French-German dyad. The French partner is likely to expect understanding for theses deeply embedded cultural values and doing so demonstrates an understanding that facilitates the generation of trust.

The French language is a factor of high interest as it is in France a highly cultivated 'good' and a means of differentiation. To speak erudite and eloquent French offers a means of distinguishing the social classes and is essential (through oral examination) to enter some of the most prestigious French Grandes Écoles. Not surprisingly, the expectancy of

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French companies is that a salesperson who enter into business with them speak French – but the level of fluency and eloquence demonstrated also become critical. It is therefore more than language just being a means of communication: If one follows the historically grown and cultivated importance that is has assigned to the eloquent and erudite use of the French language, it be recognized that mastering it is a means of building trust.

The French culture brings with it some preferences and weighty values that influence business interaction. The elitist French education system is a peculiarity that reinforces certain values or has produced them in this form. The interrelation and mutual influence between values, communication and trust were shown. The practical implications have been taken in account and the recommendation to adapt the communication according to the values encountered eases the building of trust in the interaction.

This ranks the important to perceive and understand the implication of cultural values in business interaction on a level that is equal to other aspects influencing the interaction atmosphere and demands the theme of cultural values is considered from a new, more appreciative, perspective.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This chapter presents the quintessence of this research. The approach that has been taken with this research and the underlying idea is revisited. The research questions and the corresponding findings are briefly summarised. Results of the interview analysis, taking into account the literature, are presented. The implications arising from the analysis are highlighted and the most important, influential aspects with a connection to the French education system, which shape the cultural context in Franco-German business relations, are uncovered. The contribution to practice and knowledge is demonstrated by the importance of salespeople making appropriate preparations for sales tasks in France and crucial aspects of this are pinpointed. After some final reflection on the specific educational situation in France, a suggestion for further and different multicultural business ethnography research is proposed.

7.1 The Approach and Underlying Idea of this Research

This research started with an overview of different buying behaviour models and theories, realising, along with the development of these models, an increasing attributed importance to the individual in business interaction. The social and psychological needs of these actors in the interaction have been identified to play a vital role and affect the interaction. Staying within the spirit of the IMP Model, I have elaborated and developed some of the relationships that were discussed within the model itself, identifying the role of communication, the role of trust, aspects of business partners expectations based on personal and cultural values in a French-German B2B interaction setting, to provide a framework to which the findings could be aligned.

It is Ford (1980) who introduced culture to the IMP model and acknowledged the influential aspects that culture introduces to interaction. To factor culture in an appropriate measure in the model, demands more considerable attention to cultural-specific values. In the IMP model, the aspect of values was implicit, being of the cultural context within relationship. However, it has not been elaborated how the values shape the cultural context and their influence on communication and building trust.

In the context of the case studied here, despite the difficulty that the aspect of culturally different environment added with diverging values and languages, a level of closeness with the interviewees could be achieved. This was mainly due to the parties' willingness to overcome these cultural differences and learn from one another to allow for better interaction results. What those in the company that I represented learned, sometimes the hard way, is that what is embedded in the culture cannot be changed. It is, for example, very unlikely that the French will enjoy being deprived of bread to accompany the meal just as it might be difficult to take away from the British their full English breakfast or perhaps their afternoon tea. These are real values for those within these cultures. So, to engage deeply with other cultures is a promising approach when intercultural business relations are sought, even though, as it stands, culture is such a broad term with many facets that can vary between, e.g., state, province, or town and demands more in-depth analysis. An historical-cultural anthropological method (Steger, 1992), together with interviews conducted with French and German respondents provided an holistic assessment of the culture-specific aspects and data collection.

Moreover, apart from the interviewing phase, aspects related to the individual - ethnology, history, sociology, and educational systems - were reviewed and considered. The literature review has provided the necessary theoretical background and an overview of various aspects of deeply rooted mentalities, behaviours, and their origins. According

to the formulated research aims, the origin of certain behaviours has been brought to attention, provide explanations where these culture specifics aspects have their origin to help in creating a more detailed understanding. Something that from my viewpoint, is often missed in anthropological intercultural business research.

Research on culture may be difficult due to important rarely perceived explicit and implicit aspects. Francesco and Gold (2005) explained these factors using the analogy of an onion or an iceberg. The outer layers, in this case of culture, are more apparent and represent what one sees or hears, such as the visible consumables like architecture, food, and the way people dress, gesture, talk, etc., just like the outer layers of an onion or the tip of an iceberg. Sarthe (1985) addressed these observable elements as the 'manifest' of a culture. Despite offering easy access to culture, these outer layers permit only a much-reduced view of the components and ingredients that form the culture. They do not provide a complete enough picture of the culture and do not provide enough information for a deeper understanding. Only by peeling the onion to its core or examining the iceberg below the waterline can the full picture that is required for a deeper understanding of the culture be made accessible. This is where the core values forming the foundation of culture are found: 'Shared ideas and beliefs about the world and society as a whole that guide people's thought and actions. Knowing the basic assumptions of culture provides an understanding of the principles on which the other levels rest' (Francesco and Gold, 2005, p. 19). This quotation summarizes the importance of a more reflective knowledge of the culture, of cultural values, and is the reason this research has taken an approach that includes a multiple perspective to present a more unobstructed view on specific cultural values, as I firmly believe that only with enough background knowledge, can the French business partner be understood and their communication (primarily spoken but also written) be interpreted. Hence, the contribution of this research is not solely in understanding that

values demand adaptation of the communication approach to enable trust, but what I have been able to elucidate in my thesis is the roots of those values. The intention is, apart from responding to the defined research aims, to sensitise sellers to a more holistic approach to the cultural implications inherent in a binational business relationship.

7.2 Research Aims and Interview Questions Revisited

The result of this research aims to support and increase the knowledge of a German company doing business in France and sought to identify the influence that French higher education may have on business-to-business interaction. Accordingly, the research aims to answer the following questions in the French-German business context:

1. What are the cultural value perceptions that originate from differences in the educational systems?

2. How, if at all, do these values help to understand cross-cultural relational difficulties in communication and the creation of trust?

3. How can understanding the cultural value perceptions facilitate the development of a framework for trust development and successful communication in the interaction between buyers and sellers in cross-cultural selling environments?

In regard to the first and second research questions, in addition, section 6.6 gave a brief summary of the values to be derived from the education system, and section 7.3 deepens the central understanding of the interplay between values, trust and communication. To answer the third research question, section 7.3 further provides and overview of the development of the revisited model based on the initial model and explains the individual steps taken. The revisited model created is the keystone to the understanding

of the connection between the creation of trust in the context of a French-German business interaction, the role of respect for the values of the other and the role that communication or language plays.

Section 7.4 goes into practical detail on the third research aim of this work and provides an overview of necessary to establish a successful and trusting interaction in France.

For this research, the questions formulated for the interviews sought to identify the French thoughts about German product and the business exchange relationship with German sellers. Finally, thoughts on education have been in the centre of the interviews.

1. Compared to our French competitors, what do you like/dislike in the German approach – in the quality of the product, maintenance, behaviour towards problems, in general behaviour, or in daily work?

2. What is your view of German managers?

3. In terms of working behaviours, management systems and possibly the generally culture, for what differences is the educational system responsible?

The answers of the interviewees to the interview questions have been summarized in the synopsis of findings in Chapter 5, and the following discussion in Chapter 6 has offered additional perspectives relevant to form a complete picture of aspects relevant in French-German business to business interaction, enabling to satisfy the aims formulated for this research.

7.2.1 Interview question one

Compared to our French competitors, what do you like/dislike in the German approach – in the quality of the product, maintenance, behaviour towards problems, in general behaviour, or in daily work?

The first question has uncovered a positive attitude towards the work with a German company due to aspects related to the people as well as aspect related to products. What can be ascribed on the positive side is the perception things are taken in hand and done. The straightforward approach of the Germans to go directly to the core of a problem has been perceived as just as much as the trustworthiness of the expected result. The anticipated results, and the, by the French business partner recognized, reliability of products (Made in Germany) acts towards meeting the customer's expectation, hence the forming of trust and is an active element forming the atmosphere of the business interaction. An adapted communication must demonstrate a qualified notion of understanding customers, which is not evident considering the different modes of thinking of both cultures, has allowed to connect to the customer and slowly establish the necessary trust.

Understanding the expectations of the customer refers also on the expectation to speak the French language and in an initial mean to overcome the cultural gap, establish basic notions of trust, demonstrate interest in the culture and herewith the customer and coming closer towards him.

Further, France as a country of higher power distance, values what is of considerable importance, especially regarding the approach of business partners coming from the Grandes Écoles: The '*logic of honour*' and rank as detailed by d'Iribarne (1989, 1994). It is a value that determines social relations as well as the work relations and awareness of this notion facilitates the approach and communication with the wright business partner.

7.2.2 Interview question two.

What is your view of German managers?

Perceived motivational aspects have been in the centre of answers retrieved from the interviewees. A certain 'readiness' and a pragmatical approach to tasks and a focused, result-oriented attitude have been mentioned. In essence, the French interviewees have attributed the German managers a differing passion and attitude towards work.

It has been remarked that, because the researcher had already established the business contact some time ago, the perception of German managers might be associated to a larger scale with the researcher's specific characteristic. However, the cultural dimensions influenced by educational system led to a culture with stiffer hierarchies, with a high-power distance that can be related to a lower level of motivation, compared to smaller cultures with a smaller power distance. Furthermore, the lower level of masculinity eventually leads to a prioritisation of personal aspect and a family focus so that in some part, this provides an explanation to the different perceived professional enthusiasm.

What also became apparent, is that the establishment of trust in the business partnership that is relevant for the overall interaction atmosphere, cooperation and closeness (power/dependency is not distinctive in this business) have been much influenced by the characteristic, and manner of the interaction business partner.

7.2.3 Interview question three.

In terms of working behaviours, management systems and possibly the generally culture, for what differences is the educational system responsible?

The findings to this interview question were, in the case of the graduates of the Grandes Ècoles, perceived slightly different, and can best be described as a perceived slightly aloofness compared to the rest of the interviewees. A perceived distinct oral expression is, according to the literature, a habitus that can be followed back to the

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historical period of enlightenment and found in the salons where *l'Esprit* was an essential aspect of self-presentation. This differentiation is valued and this perceived erudite and eloquent use to speech is apparent and resembles much of what can be perceived when French politicians talk (most French politicians being graduates from Grandes Écoles). The answers of the Grandes Écoles graduates have been diplomatic, and it was felt that there was no intention to value the different education system. Even so in regard to the differing higher-level education systems of France and Germany where the differences were not questioned or regarded as not relevant. It was perceivable that they were pleased with the French system as it is. Also, the strong focus on mathematic seems to fit in their conception were taking decisions is perceived as an analytical process. While the one managing director that graduated from a regular university did not add any relevant information except for aspects regarding the oral expression, the self-made managing director provided a much clearer and more critical view on the French education system, criticising the educational system and Grandes Écoles in particular as institutions for the French elites.

This reaction is assumed to be related to the levels of difference and inequality that the French educational system produces and that have been presented in the literature review and backed up with additional information and statistics in the discussion chapter. A surprising aspect uncovered during the interview of the middle to higher management positions with a university degree was a perceived recognition of the effort of those that have successfully pasted the '*concour'*. This comes close to accept the lived inequality of the French education system, even though a sense resignation to the implication that this does imply could be perceived. However, despite that social inequality has a strong implication for French society, in regard to its impact for communication and the building of trust in a business interaction in a French-German setting on which this research focuses, the relevance is minor.

7.3 The Contribution of this Research

Business-to-business interaction represents a complex encounter for those involved, for which the original IMP interaction model has offered a framework that helps grasp the different aspect of importance that are needed for the successful exchange of products and services. Culture, being a complex construct itself, is a recognized element forming the environment, influencing the atmosphere and by this, having an influence on the interaction itself. According to Hofstede (1980b) education plays a key role in cultures by conditioning people's values and beliefs that are then at the core of their behaviour. However, even though the treatment of culture in the original IMP model was scattered in many ways across the model and was almost implicit in the environmental context and in the national context within the which the relationship is being acted, the mechanism of how national culture, cultural and personal values, which are influenced by education, shape the interaction, offer implications for communication and influence the building trust has not been elaborated.

The contribution of this research is to offer a detailed examination of these elements through an ethnographic study. This enables how the education system influences the interrelation of values, communication, and trust, and shape the interaction process in a French-German Business context to be elaborated. Staying within the spirit of the IMP model, I have provided more depth and developed some of the relationships that are discussed within the model itself. This relationship has been illustrated in the revisited research model, figure 10 in section 7.3, to show the trilateral relationship of values, communication and the building of trust in business interaction.

The model considers the influence of education, but of course there are also other influences on the creation of values, such as e.g., a person's upbringing, which in turn can

also influence communication and the building of trust, so education is shown with a dashed line to denote that it is one of several elements.

However, the research and the contribution are not only about understanding that values interact and influence trust and communication in business interaction. What I have been able to elucidate is the roots of those values and an understanding of how education related values influence communication and trust and shape the process of interaction. Hence, for instance, the origin of the erudite and eloquent French, that dates to the salon of Louis XI and the rise of the Grandes Écoles, specialised higher schools established by the requirement of the French Republic under Napoleon Bonaparte and with it the origin of the different focuses of the French and German education systems. It is this kind of 'additional' knowledge that will bring understanding to why a phenomenon is the way it is and enhance the appreciation of culture and the counterpart in an intercultural interaction.

The revised research model (figure 10) is the result of the interviews analysis and the recurring peculiarities and preferences that represent interviewees values and that were summarized in section 6.1 and then discussed in sections 6.2 - 6.6. These relate to aspects that were introduced into the research model (Figure 3) in section 3.14, some of which are inherent to the French cultural context and supported by the different scores of Hofstede's Franco-German cultural dimensions comparison.

Values, and their interplay with the aspects of trust and communication, are shown using the research example in the chosen French-German industry sector. This research provided evidence that, at their core, these aspects are based on an underlying a cultural value. This allows the research model to be refined to offer a clear model. Starting with the aspects identified in section 3.14, figure 5 is the point of departure when reconfiguring

the model given the research findings. Hofstede's cultural dimensions were referred to in the text for individual aspects to underpin the resulting picture.

Figure 5: The aspects of research model
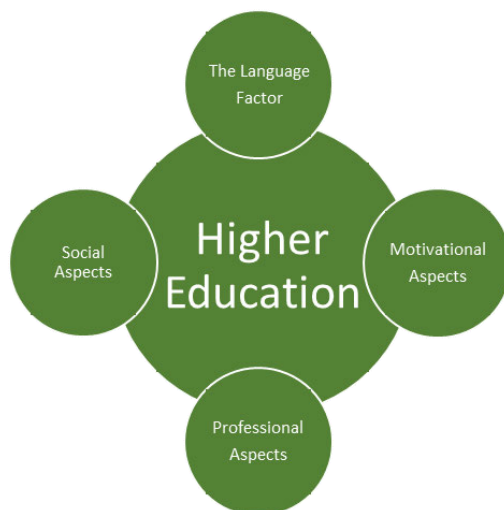
The motivational aspects (see sections 6.1 and 6.2), receive a different culturally inherent weighting by the French. The same applies for the diverse professional aspects of doing/working that have been further discussed in section 6.3. Accordingly, these aspects are given a different value than e.g., in Germany. The French preferences focus on other areas, be it because their work is more strongly characterized by creativity and originality, or their life is more strongly geared towards the family rather than professional matters. Hofstede's cultural dimensions of masculinity/femininity and the scores for long-term orientation (section 3.2) gave an indication of these differing preferences and behaviours. Furthermore, the highly diverging scores on power distance, with high hierarchical structures in France and a predominant top-down philosophy, have been discussed as influencing working motivation. Therefore, these other behaviours can also be assigned a different value pattern. Recognizing, respecting and understanding these values in an interaction enables easier access to the person you are speaking to and, as discussed in

Section 6.6, ultimately facilitates the interaction and possibly leads to increasing, or enabling, mutual trust. Therefore, professional and motivational aspects are clearly related to values.

Figure 6: Aspects related to values
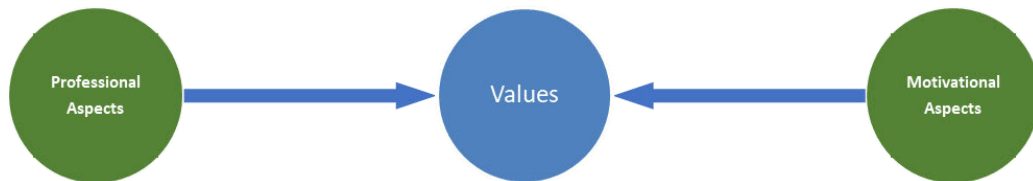
Another confirmation from the interviews is the appreciation shown for German mechanical engineering. The preference for technology that is "Made in Germany" is mentioned in section 6.1, and results from the fulfilment of customer expectations (section 6.6). These elements generate trust and ultimately positively influence communication and interaction. The interview findings further reflect that the respect for cultural conditions and the appreciation of values that are important to the customer are recognized and foster trust (section 6.1). In this way, an interdependency between trust and values, or the fulfilment and adherence to these values, can be proposed.

Figure 7: Interrelation of trust and values

As noted in section 6.1, one of the peculiarities that has surfaced several times during the interviews is the expectation of the French to be addressed in their native language. There is a level of appreciation from the French business partners when a foreign seller speaks the French language. This has allowed for some closeness, influencing the level of trust received. It has been remarked in section 2.5.4., that trust can be rooted differently in different cultures. In France, speaking the language demonstrates respect and interest in French culture, and is a lever to overcome cultural barriers and an initial mean towards enabling the building of trust. Adapting to the partners expectation causes a level of initial trust, adapting to the business partner's level of communication – to what the French partner values – shapes the interaction even more. Section 6.4 discusses this aspect and the ability to speak the French language in an erudite and eloquent manner and its potential to influence interaction, in more detail. Language is also a means of differentiation in France and an eloquent, erudite level of speaking is a distinguishing feature of the elites, so that improving one's own speech, as well as acquiring socio-pragmatic, pragma-linguistic competence, may help level the path towards mutual trust, with a concomitant effect on interaction, at all hierarchical levels.

The values that are associated with the steep hierarchies in France should not be overlooked, and what is called the rank of honour by d'Iribane (1989), 'La Logique de l'honneur', is an important value that must be internalized to achieve business in France. This necessitates the adaption of communication usage to the customs of the French elite, and to understand who actually makes the decisions and with whom it is essential to build a relationship of trust. Hence, the communication can be perceived as influential forming trust and the French language represents a value for the French people.

Figure 8:The relationship of communication, trust and values
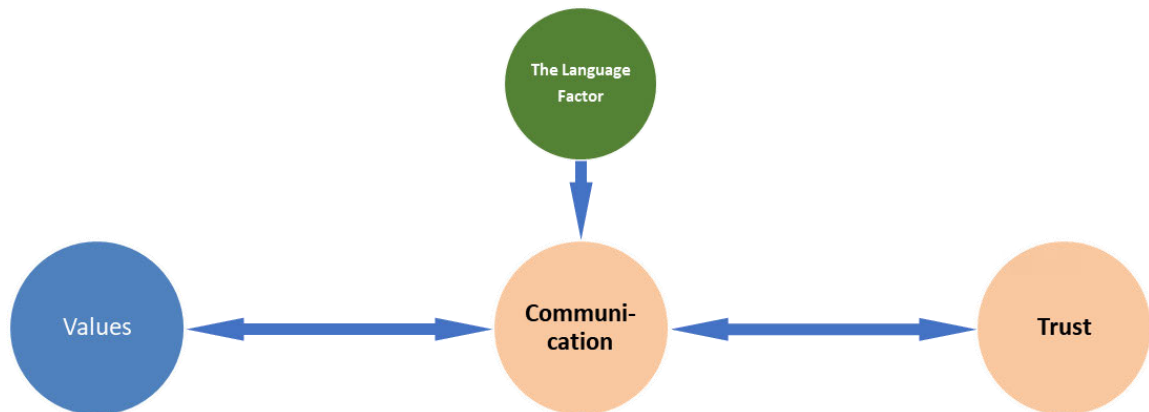
Section 6.1 also summarizes findings that are related to social aspects, discussed further in section 6.4, and while these have an impact on the social peace and the perceived inequalities in France, surprisingly an effect on business interaction is difficult to identify. However, it is obvious that the educational system is at the root of some of the values that affect the interaction as a whole.

Figure 9: The influence of education on the building of values
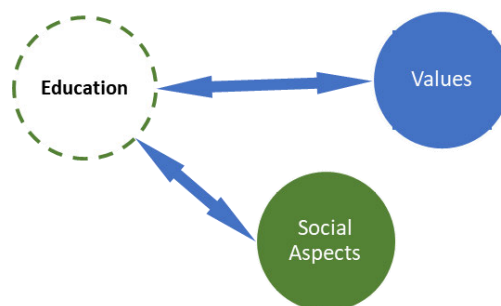
Starting from the original research model in section 3.14, and having loaded the values with all aspects that have identified during the interview analysis, figures 5 through9 can be reconstituted to form a revisited model (see figure 10), visualizing the interrelation of these different elements: National values, in parts influenced by education, the

communication, influenced by respect for the values and the language, trust nurtured by respect for the values of the other speaking the French language to facilitate the communication and all having their part in affecting interaction.

In the following model, the aspects that work through the individual points of trust, values and communication are hidden. They are effective in the form of the values or the communication that adhere to the culture and that have been influenced by the educational system. These three major core elements and their interactions, can influence business interaction.

Figure 10: The revisited research model
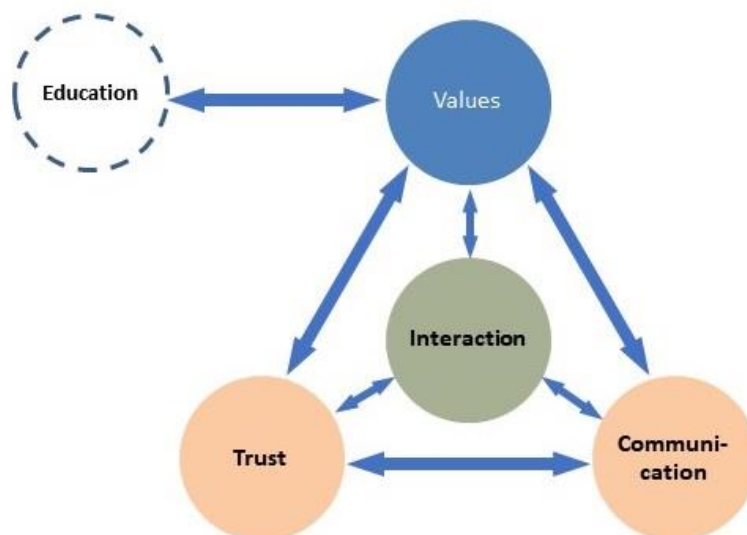
By acknowledging the mutual influence of these elements, the assertions presented could apply to other cultures, though it is likely that, depending the national or local culture analysed, that the mix of specific values to may diverge from those identified in this ethnologic research and that it is not necessary the case that these manifest aspects will be related to education. This is supported by the model; the values remain decisive, but they

may also have been shaped by others or another influence. Accordingly, can a western trust generating context be vastly different from a Chinese or a Far-Eastern context. The culture-inherent values will define that context and whether family, religion or education or other elements have a strong influence and determine how communication builds around these values.

By considering trust, the revisited model addresses the third research question and shows what is important to create trust. In addition to the aspects that were mentioned in section 2.5 and that do their part to build trust, respect for customs, peculiarities and preferences for the foreign cultural area is primary. The respect for the values of the other are to be to known and internalized, and should be supplemented by a communication geared towards this knowledge (section 6.7). Mutual trust is the keystone that enables successful business interaction and it is the respect of the other's values and the ability to induce this expression to be the mortar that holds everything together.

Identifying what customers value in an intercultural encounter and understanding these values, and why they persist, will enable the expectations of the buyer to be identified and therefore can be used to influence the salesperson's communicative approach.

This required sociocultural competence in terms of a foreign culture, as well as to being knowledgeable, conscious, respectful and adaptive to the others' values, underpins the finding of this research to eventually enable a trustworthy relationship.

With this acquired knowledge, it is now possible to perceive necessary implications to the situation as it presents in France that may contribute towards more sustainable business interaction in a German seller French buyer context. Section 7.4 offers practical suggestions platformed on the revisited model to achieve a state of mutual business trust in a Franco-German interaction.

7.4 The Implications of this Research

While the research has shown (in the context in which it took place) that, generally speaking, business for Germans in France is well received based on the appreciation of solutions, services, the personal commitment and high dedication for the customer, building a relationship in a German seller French buyer business-to-business context still demands knowledge about French cultural specific values and accordingly adapting communication to overcome cultural distance (Toornroos, 1991) to enable an interaction in which trust can be built and prosper. To develop cultural awareness and sociocultural competence to understand the differences between French business partners that have graduated from the different higher education institutional forms in the country allows for a better communicative approach and herewith control of the resulting interaction. An active and personal engagement, learning about the country, the people, and of course the history of the country is a first step that each person that seeks to conduct business in a country can do on their own to raise their personal knowledge about their future business partners. Addressing history in particular enables the acquiring of knowledge that allows an answer to why something is valued the way it is within a particular country to be found. There is, in this context, the ubiquitous travel guide and the much more appropriate business literature that contrasts cultural differences, values and expectation of business partners that can serve as a starting point. However, eventually none of these will explain, as thoroughly as will do a literature review of national history books, where these diverging values have their origin - so that personal motivation to do so is required to fill this gap. Companies, especially bigger ones, offer training for salespeople who work interculturally, but from my own experience, I have not perceived that such training provides the kind of deeper, historical background knowledge. Equally, according to an evaluation of intercultural training for managers in Germany (Finanztest, 2004), only a few programmes

achieve beyond average quality. Furthermore, and mistakenly, it is often not realised that such training would be good for those who will work in France because France is not recognized as being that "much" of a cultural difference from other European countries, and the tendency is that such training is offered for Asia or Arabic countries. To overcome the psychic distance (Mayrhofer, 2004), such as that evident between Germany and France, therefore, starts with the acknowledgement that when you enter a geographical new business environment, with ethnic and language differences, it is likely to have its own culture and follow its own values, no matter how close it may be physically to one's own home country. It does not need to be on the other side of the planet.

Hence companies can support sales managers on their new duty, but much depends on the personal motivation of the manager themselves. A personal investment to reduce the linguistic distance (Wong 2002), often means training to increase language skills can be a first step that will help not only to understand better and interpret the business partner but also help to demonstrate an interest in the business partner's culture. Companies can support such endeavours by offering language courses. Obviously, the proficiency attained depends on how far the company will support such an endeavour and on personal motivation. Training in the country of choice to get to know the people and their language would be of particular benefit before starting the actual customer acquisition.

There is also the French peculiarity of graduates coming from the Grandes Ècoles who are likely to be in senior management positions in larger organizations. Here a native language speaker in a foreign country can act as a trailblazer, helping in the interaction (Brannen and Mughan, 2016; Schroedler, 2016). However, the substantial value differences and the distinction of the Grandes Écoles graduates eventually requires much more besides speaking the language and providing reasonable solutions to problems to establish a long-term trustworthy relationship. The challenge to achieve mutual trust and

form bonds will be tremendous, and the hope of success will be small if the salesperson does not have a significant degree of general education, cultural knowledge, and language skill. These aspects are factors, among others, forming the psychic distance, among which the linguistic aspect (Maryhofer, 2004), in this French-German business constellation, needs to be considered accordingly. In return, all efforts that are made to overcome this psychic distance, to meet the expectations and the cultural conditions expected by the customer, have a positive effect on the performance outcomes of a company involved in international business (O'Grady and Lane, 1999), reducing uncertainty and ambiguity in the interaction with the business partner.

In the framework of the present research and considering the diversity of the challenge represented for a German salesperson acting in France, distinct levels of competencies must be considered in the selection process. For low-value goods or services, where the final decision will not be discussed with top management who come mainly from Grandes Écoles, the common level of knowledge and skills described below are generally enough. Since the buying decisions are usually made at lower hierarchical levels, the decisions are made by people whose education and behaviour are not too distant from that of the German seller, who has developed a competent degree of cross-cultural knowledge and foreign language skill.

The factor bringing all this together in business interactions with French companies with managers who are graduates from a Grande École is 'interpersonal communication skill': the ability to establish a functioning rapport with members of a customer decision-making unit at high hierarchical levels. What does this imply? Firstly, respecting the hierarchical structure based on the honour of rank value. The closer a salesperson can meet the values and norms of the business partner, including speaking the French language in, or close to, an eloquent and erudite manner, the more cultural distance is reduced, and the

higher the acceptance will be. And in turn, the more likely a trustworthy business relationship will emerge, and that successful interaction will take place. Furthermore, the larger the company, the steeper the hierarchical levels and the greater the pressure on a salesperson to establish a business relationship, the more critical these aspects become in business ventures in France. Hence, this is not the standard foreign language requirement that is usually valued in international business, but rather the requirement of a specific 'quality' of attainment and sophistication of use. However, this is only one requirement. Deeper cultural, political and historical knowledge will be an opportunity to demonstrate a higher level of intellectual awareness that will forge the trail to interpersonal communication. Hence, it is more than being a brilliant 'small talker'. The requirement is to have the ability to talk on the same level as the French business partner from the Grande École.

The requirements mentioned within this section eventually point to the necessity to select and recruit sales staff accordingly that meet all of the requirements that are in demand to serve and work in the French market to build a trusting business relationship based on lived values. This may have to be done in individual cases, based on the hierarchy level of the relationship partner in the French business company that is sought, using appropriate native speakers and graduates of the relevant educational institutions.

Sustainable success also means that the cultural values of the individual countries are considered and that appropriate strategies are anchored in companies that want to do business with these countries, which in the long term ensure that everyone knows about the positive benefits emerging from respecting the values of others in an intercultural business relationship. In particular, policies and guidelines in companies can help to give employees orientation and direction in cooperation with their foreign customers and, last

but not least, these principles can be consolidated and permanently anchored through incentives and reward in successful intercultural cooperation with other foreign companies.

The reward for all this effort is a long-lasting French-German business relationship with established mutual trust, like the many I have had the chance to work in. The speed with which this trust is established is vastly different from person to person, and it does not happen immediately. It requires a long-term positive exchange that leads to this stage and eventually to the forming of strong bonds and personal closeness. The indicators of established trust are again very individual, but when the feeling of being trusted is established, you sense the positivity in the established business atmosphere. And when seeking a long-term business relationship in a competitive market it is principal route for action in France.

7.5 Limitations and Relevance

As with all studies, this one also has its limitations. Since the data was gained by means of 21 interviews with French B2B business partners and 5 German interviewees of the road semi-trailer industry, I must note what is most apparent, the specific findings are a mirror of this French industry in the first place and regarding educational and cultural values, to a French phenomenon.

The findings demonstrate how powerful values are and what influence they have in the interaction process, on the development of an appropriate communicative approach and for the creation of trust. However, these findings have been based on aspects related to education, and more specific, to the influence of the higher education. It is possible that research that concentrates on non-university level education in France and Germany would have come across other, additional, or even diverging findings for some aspects of what has been presented. Equally, the ethnographic nature of this work with its focus on a

specific context creates a deeper understanding of a particular binational business context in France, this is though unlikely to hold for other countries in the same way. Therefore, the circumstances surrounding the buyers in a specific binational context would require further research to identify if the outcomes found here correlate to other cultural settings.

The contribution of this research, therefore, stays within the spirit of the IMP Model, which is to represent the buyer and seller as a dynamic interaction relationship. Using the model as a foundation, contribution is provided by developing depth and understanding of how values are related to education in France, and how this ought to influence the adaptation of communication to enable trust to be built through the process of interaction. Elucidating the roots and historical origins of these values promotes the relevance of interdisciplinary research approaches to merge knowledge of history, education, culture and marketing into an overall picture to better understanding the phenomena presented here. Understanding the values of the buyer and being able respond to them appropriately, makes an important contribution to the choice of a suitable and target-oriented communication approach and the creation of trust in the interaction.

In working towards a possible seller strategy in how to approach French customers, the results of this research provide practical managerial implication for a successful business interaction in France. The strategic elements involved relate to the amount of effort that the salesperson is required to demonstrate adapting to specific requirements, not only those of the customer but also to the specifics of the culture. Organizations willing to engage in business in France are therefore advised to learn about the values of their business partner, to invest in knowledge concerning culture and history, communication and language training for sales managers, or, to directly locate French sales staff, to enable the development of higher quality relations in France. In particular, effective communication across cultural boundaries is recognized as being an essential skill in every

business interaction (Szkudlarek, 2009). In France this demands, being comparable with the graduates from the Grandes Écoles, to come close to meeting the habitus that is evident for this group and conserved by tradition. What is specifically important is to be able to effectively engage with the art of erudite and eloquent French expression, and it needs to be remembered that this is challenging even for native speakers. The communicative adaptation to French preferences, can serve to smooth the path to a trustful relationship and interaction.

7.6 Final Reflections and Further Research

The significant differences between Germany and France in values and attitudes may appear only skin deep, but from a business standpoint, this may represent a significant gap that needs to be overcome. Following the key aspects of this research, there is the indication that culturally induced educational values have an influence on business interaction outcomes and can endanger the anticipated success of internationalization programmes and attempts. Accordingly, an adaptation of the communicative approach is needed to establish a trustworthy relationship, hence taking account and respecting these values seems an appropriate step.

This research demonstrates as well that, for a German seller or business, learning about the culture of the other is the way to overcome the existing gap, not only the cultural distance but also all other factors contributing to the challenge of cross-cultural encounters in interaction relationships. Due to their cultural characteristics, France and Germany have strongly been influenced in the last centuries by the evolution of their respective educational systems, and the feasibility of working together and establishing long-term business relationships leads to requirements that need to be understood and complied with. Distinct characteristics and features of both educational systems with their origins, whether

historical, political, or religious, and their long-term social evolution have left marks. Jacques Pateau (1999), who researched French and German behaviours when working together in multinational teams and the possible advantage due to the different positive features of each culture, wrote: "The necessary mutual enrichment when working together is doubtless just a pipe dream" (p. 20). He stated that his ten years of research in this field confirmed his assumption that the weight of the German tribal or community culture and that of the French king and emperor culture is still powerful and continues to make joint work problematic. Through the different elements analysed in the course of this research, whether concerning people or cultural aspects, especially when focusing on behaviours that have been confirmed through the interviews, there is evidence that the respective educational systems play a major role in forming the values that we encounter such interactive situations. The social origin of the French players, the nature of their higher education, especially the kind of institution at which they studied for their degree, form their behaviour and values.

Learning about the others is the only solution to cope with all kinds of challenges and to reduce the psychic distance, keeping in mind that this is only one of many aspects in international business, especially in French-German cross-cultural interactions. Hofstede (1980a) defined culture as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another' (p. 21). Learning to know the differences better, allows a better understanding of others values and norms and facilitates to smooth the interaction by respecting these them and simplify cross-cultural interaction by demonstrating knowledge and respect for these differences, and contribute to more productive and sustainable business relationships.

France will not be the only country with very culture-specific values and implication that that have an origin in the education and demand for a piece of more

profound knowledge to be able to build long-term relationships. I propose that future studies could investigate what culture-specific values and rules may demand to be considered in customer communication and the influenceable on the establishment of trust in a business interaction in other countries and research the drivers and origin of these values. I believe it would be precious if multicultural business ethnography research comes to take a more holistic approach on cultural implications for business relationship and do also engage in answering the 'why' of the 'what' matters.

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Appendixes

The appendixes cover the transcript from notes of one of the interviews (part strictly dedicated to the theme of the dissertation) that I made according to methodology described the chapter "Methodology".

Person: The French director of one of the companies in France among our customers.

The interview takes place in the office of this person during one of my visits to this French company. We know each other for several years already.

The coding seeks to find text segments that reflects the categories that have been identified to have their origin in in education and find their roots in the culture of France. The categories have been identified in the research model.

Appendixes overview:

Appendix 1: The interview in its original French language,

Appendix 2: The translation of the interview to English language

Appendix 3: Coding tree and summary in French language

Appendix 4: Coding tree and interview summary in English

Appendix 1

Numéro	Nom	Entreprise	Date	Durée de l'interview
15			16.04.2014	30 min
Remarque	L'entretien a lieu au restaurant ou j'ai invité P. B. à déjeuner. L'ayant rencontré plusieurs fois dans le cadre de nos activités, l'atmosphère est détendue.			

Interview	Coding
Moi : *Par rapport à nos concurrents français, qu'est-ce que vous aimez / n'aimez pas dans l'approche allemande - dans la qualité du produit, la maintenance, le comportement face aux problèmes, dans le comportement général, ou dans le travail quotidien ?* Interviewée : Comme déjà mentionné mis à part parfois ==des problèmes de langue==, je ne peux que louer l'efficacité des intervenants allemand. Quant à la manière et les résultats. J'ai cependant toujours ou très souvent été témoin de ==divergence entre la manière de faire== des allemands et français.	problèmes de langues divergence entre la manière de faire
Moi : *Les problèmes de langue sont-elles un problème pour le travail quotidien ?* Interviewée : A l'encontre je ne pense ==pas== que tous les français sont spécialement ==amis des langues étrangères==. Surtout le travail ensemble entre français et allemands au niveau ouvrier n'est toujours idéal a causé premièrement de problèmes de communication. La langue à ce niveau n'étant ==pas la force de ces gens==... Bien sûr, les jeunes générations sont plus ouvertes, néanmoins... Ceci ne facilite pas nos activités... Pour moi, l'anglais, c'est sans mal... Mais pour mon compte, si un fournisseur ne parlant que la langue de Shakespeare me rendait visites, ==mes attentes n'auraient pas été satisfaites==.	pas amis des langues étrangères pas la force de ces gens mes attentes pas été satisfaites
Moi : *Dons une certaine attente ?* Interviewée : C'est une ==attente bien Française==.	attente Française !
Moi : *Vous palliez de divergence de dans la manière de faire... ?* Interviewée : J'aperçois, et j'en suis témoin, que les allemands ==plus rigides== dans le choix des ==déroulements des opérations== que les	plus rigides déroulements des opérations

français, ceci sans nul doute dû est un reflet des cultures différentes.	
Moi : *Pourriez-vous expliquer ce que vous entendez par « reflet des différentes cultures » ?*	
Interviewée : Ce que j'entends par « reflet des ==cultures différentes== » ce sont bien les ==habitudes du quotidien==, une manière de faire ou d'aimée une chose qui est implanter au cœur de chaque citoyen d'un pays. Par exemple, et je vais sens doute utiliser un clichée : En France le vin, en Allemagne la bière… Ceci dit, la préparation des projets auxquelles j'ai participé à toujours, à mon avis ==été bien préparée==. Ceci est une distinction personnelle que j'ai faite.	habitudes différentes de culture expérience positive
Moi : *J'aimerai revenir à ma première question. Sur le plan qualité du produit, la maintenance, le comportement face aux problèmes, que voyiez-vous pour la coopération avec des entreprise allemandes ?*	
Interviewée : En ce qui concerne les opérations de maintenance, garanties etc. effectuées par des spécialistes, je ne peux que voir la capabilité des gens que vous nous envoyé et ==mon expérience est positive==, tout comme également avec ==d'autres société allemande== avec qui nous travaillions.	expérience est positive tout comme avec d'autres société allemande
Moi : *Que pensez-vous des managers et commerciaux allemands ?*	
Interviewée : Il est difficile de répondre à cette question qui comporte un grand nombre de niveaux si l'on commence par le management et descendons-en passent entre autres par vente et marketing. Sur le plan de vente et Marketing, j'apprécie ==la professionnalité allemande==…	la professionnalité allemande…
Moi : Pouvez-vous clarifier ce point ?	
Interviewée : Ce que je constate, étant impliqué depuis quelque année dans le métier de la logistique et le transport de marchandises et ayant eu des échanges avec de diffèrent fournisseurs allemands, est que les personnels impliqués dans ces relations sont en général qualifiés ou ==très qualifier==. Ils ==parlent bien ou très bien le français== et en général ont une bonne ==connaissance de la culture française==, mentalités et éventuellement manière de faire.	très qualifier parlent bien le français connaissance de la culture française

Moi : Encore une fois, la langue est au centre de votre réflexion. Et la connaissance de la culture, à quel point est-ce important pour vous ? Interviewée : Pour moi c'est toujours un plaisir de négocier et travailler avec vous car vous maitriser votre métier, notre langue, connaissez bien la culture française. Est-ce important ? Cela est ==surtout agréable==, pas vitale, mais facilite nos rencontres.	expérience agréable
Moi : Entrons dans les détails si vous le permettez ? En ce qui concerne les différences de systèmes éducatifs en France et en Allemagne, où est leur responsabilité concernant les comportements de travail et les systèmes de gestion ? Eventuellement même pour la culture ? Interviewée : Alors, le système éducative Allemands, je le connais un peu… …pas assez bien pour pouvoir en juger, mais d'expérience, une différence est assez apparente : L'engament professionnelles ==des ouvriers.== Comme nous avons de temps en temps des travaux ou projets ou nous recevons des professionnelle Allemand, j'ai bien remarqué une ==préparation et exécution qui ne laisse rien au par hasard.==	engagement des ouvriers bonne préparation et exécution
Moi : *A l'origine d'un autre système de formation professionnelle ?* Interviewée : Pas autre mais mieux. Je m'aperçois personnellement que le système d'apprentissage en Allemagne conçu ==produit de meilleurs spécialistes.== Les gens leurs apprentissages fini ont acquis une pratique industriel réelle que les français sortant de l'école n'ont pas.	produit de meilleurs spécialistes
Moi : *Et la voie par l'apprentissage en France ?* Interviewée : Ce système a dans l'opinion publique ==mauvaise réputation== dû au fait qu'il n'a pas jamais été bien encadré et contrôlé donc est resté trop longtemps ==le refuge des classes sociales déshéritées== et de ce fait n'a jamais vraiment fonctionné. Les professionnels en France sont formés dans les écoles et ==manque très souvent de pratique==, donc ont besoin de plus longtemps en entreprises avant d'être opérationnel.	mauvaise réputation le refuge des classes sociales déshéritées manque très souvent de pratique
Moi : *En Allemagne l'apprentissages conduit à tout y compris les études supérieures.*	

Interviewée : En France il ne conduit en général à rien.	conduit a rien
Moi : *Et les études supérieures en France ?*	
Interviewée : Vous savez que le système se partage en un système éducative financé par le gouvernement et privé ?	
Moi : *Grandes écoles et universités ?*	
Interviewée : Oui, mais pas seulement à ce niveau. Il y a un grand nombre de lycées privé aussi.	
Moi : *Accessible à tout le monde ?*	
Interviewée : Oui et non. Il y a certaines conditions auxquelles il faut répondre pour rentrer dans un lycée privé, comme atteindre une certaine moyenne pondérée cumulative. Et puis cela a aussi un prix… Par contre, le niveau est perçu beaucoup mieux.	Lycées privés certaine moyenne pondérée cumulative le niveau est perçu beaucoup mieux
Moi : *Et pour les grandes écoles et universités ?*	
Interviewée : Une situation très comparable à celle que je viens de mentionner pour les lycées. Les grandes écoles, héritage napoléonien en France, représente aujourd'hui surtout la différence entre une éducation collective aménager par l'état ou, plus ou moins privatisé, permettant de recueillir les meilleurs étudiants et de choisir à qui offrir des places.	privatisé, les meilleurs étudiants
Moi : *Donc il y a une très grande sélectivité ?*	
Interviewée : Absolument ! Contrairement à l'Allemagne ou les universités et les universités avec orientation pratiques sont nettement apprécié, en France l'élitisme ne provient en général que de l'esprit des gens de la grande école et non de l'université… Beaucoup d'étudiants veulent aller sur une grande école, peux y sont accepter.	beaucoup d'étudiants veulent aller sur une grande école, peux y sont accepter (concours !)
Moi : *Voyez-vous un effet de l'éducation sur la manière de travaillé au niveau du management ?*	

Interviewée :	
Je ne pense pas que l'éducation est au cœur de la manière de travailler en France mais qu'il faut voir cela sur un plan plus vaste ou l'éducation joue son rôle…	L'éducation joue un rôle
Les hiérarchies dans les entreprises française sont assez raides et, à ma connaissance, avec un moins de cogestion comparer à l'Allemagne, bien que j'avoue ne pas avoir de comparaisons pratique. Donc, c'est plus comme entendre dire…	hiérarchies raides
Par contre, que pense pouvoir affirmer que l'enseignement des enfants en France est plus strict. C'est un historique qui commence dans la famille pour le respect de l'enfant des parents et de l'adulte qui continue plus tard avec les hiérarchies dans les entreprises.	enseignement strict
Moi :	
Comme il y a une hiérarchie des diplômés grandes écoles aux diplômés des universités ?	
Interviewée :	
Il y a certainement une reconnaissance de la réussite scolaire.	reconnaissance
Moi : Et cela est part de la culture française ?	
Interviewée :	
Comme partout ailleurs.	comme ailleurs

Appendix 2

No.	Name	Company	Date	Time
15			16.04.2014	30 min
Note	The interview takes place at the restaurant where I invited P. B. to lunch. Having met him several times as part of our activities, the atmosphere is relaxed.			

Interview	Coding
Me: *Compared to our French competitors, what do you like / dislike about the German approach - in product quality, maintenance, behaviour towards problems, in general behaviour, or at work daily?* Interviewee: As already mentioned apart from sometimes language problems, I can only praise the efficiency of the German business partners and professionals. As much as for the procedures and the results. However, I have always or very often witnessed a divergence between the way of doing between German and French. *Me:* *Are language problems a problem for daily work?* Interviewee: I don't think that most French people are overly friends of foreign languages. Especially the working together between French and Germans at the blue-collar level is not always ideal, mainly due to communication problems. Language at this level is not the strength of these people ... Of course, the younger generations are more open, however ... This does not facilitate our activities ... For me, speaking English is not a problem ... But for my part, if a supplier speaking only the language of Shakespeare visited me, my expectations would will not been met. *Me:* *So, you have specific expectations?* Interviewee: I would like to suppose that I have very French expectations.	language issues divergence between the way of doing not overly friends of foreign languages not the strength of these people my expectations are not met French expectations.

Me: *You suggested divergence in the way of doing ...?*	
Interviewee: I see, and I witness it, that the Germans are more rigid in the choice of the operations than the French, this undoubtedly due is a reflection of the different cultures.	more rigid in the choice of the operations
Me: *Could you explain what you mean by "reflection of the different cultures"?*	
Interviewee: What I mean by "reflecting of the different cultures" are everyday habits, and a way of doing or loving something that is implanted in the heart of every citizen of a country. For example, and I will doubtless use a cliché: In France wine, in Germany beer ... That said, the preparation of the projects in which I have always participated, in my opinion was well prepared. This is a personal distinction that I have made.	do things different by culture positive experience
Me: *I would like to go back to my first question. In terms of product quality, maintenance, behaviour in the face of problems, what did you see for cooperation with German companies?*	
Interviewee: Regarding maintenance operations, warranty etc. done by specialists, I can only see the capability of the people you sent us and my experience is positive, as also with other German companies with whom we worked.	experience is positive just like with other German companies
Me: *What do you think of German managers and salespeople?*	
Interviewee: It is difficult to answer this question, as there are different levels involved, starting from the management and go through the level of responsibilities, among other things, through sales and marketing. In terms of sales and marketing, I appreciate the German professionalism ...	German professionalism…
Me: *Can you clarify this point?*	
Interviewee: What I note, having been involved for some years in the business of logistics and the transport of goods, and having had exchanges with different German suppliers, is that the personnel involved in these relationships are generally qualified or very qualified…They speak French well or very	very qualify speak French well

well and in general have a good knowledge of French culture, mentalities and possibly way of doing things.	knowledge of French culture
Me: *Again, language is at the centre of your thinking. And the knowledge of culture, how important is it to you?*	
Interviewed: For me it is always a pleasure to negotiate and work with you because you master your job, our language, know French culture well. Is it important? This is especially pleasant, not vital, but facilitates our meetings.	
Me: *If you allow, let's get into the details. Regarding the differences of the education systems in France and Germany, where is their responsibility regarding work behaviour and management systems? Possibly even for culture?*	pleasant experience
Interviewee: So, the German education system, I know little ... ...not well enough to be able to judge, but from my experience, a difference is quite apparent: The commitment of the workers… As we have from time-to-time projects or we receive professionals from Germany, I have noticed that their project preparation and execution leaves nothing to chance.	worker commitment good preparation and execution
Me: *The origin of another vocational training system?*	
Interviewee: No other but better. I personally see that the apprenticeship system in Germany enables to produce better specialists. People who have finished their studies have acquired a real industrial practice that the French, who leave school do not have.	produces better specialists
Me: *What about the apprenticeship path in France?*	
Interviewee: This system has a bad reputation in public opinion due to the fact that it has never been well supervised and controlled, therefore has remained for too long the refuge of the underprivileged social classes and therefore never really worked. Professionals in France are trained in schools and very often lack practice so they need longer in companies to be operational.	bad reputation refuge for underprivileged social classes very often lack of practice

Me: *In Germany vocational training leads to everything, including higher education.* Interviewee: In France it generally does not lead to anything. *Me:* *What about higher education in France?* Interviewee: You know that the system is divided into an education system financed by the government and private? *Me:* *Grandes Écoles and Universities?* Interviewee: Yes, but not only at this level. There are a large number of private high schools too. *Me:* *Accessible to everyone?* Interviewee: Yes and no. There are certain conditions that must be met to enter a private high school, such as reaching a certain cumulative weighted average. And then there are also fees… On the other hand, the level is perceived to be much better. *Me:* *What about the grandes écoles and universities?* Interviewee: A situation very comparable to that which I have just mentioned for high schools. The grandes écoles, a Napoleonic heritage in France, today mainly represents the difference between collective education provided by the state or, more or less private institutions, allowing the best students to be recruited and choosing whom to offer a place. *Me:* *So, there is a very high selection taking place?* Interviewee: Absolutely! Unlike in Germany where universities and universities of applied science are clearly appreciated, in France elitism generally comes only from the minds of the people of the grandes écoles and not from the university ... Many students want go to a grande école, but only few are accepted.	leads to nothing. private high schools demand for better grade point average the level is perceived much better private schools take only the best students many students want to go to a grande école, but there is high competition!

Me: *Do you see an effect of education on the way of working at the management level?*	
Interviewee: I don't think that education is at the heart of the way of working in France but that we have to see this on a broader level where education plays its role… The hierarchies in French companies are quite stiff and, to my knowledge, with less co-management compare to Germany, although I admit I have no practical comparisons. So, it's more like hear say ... On the other hand, I eventually can say that the education of children in France is stricter. It is a history that begins in the family for the respect of the parents' child and the adult, which continues later with the hierarchies in the companies.	education plays a role steep hierarchies strict teaching
Me: *As there is a hierarchy of graduates from grandes écoles to university graduates?*	
Interviewee: There is certainly a recognition of academic success.	recognition of success
Me: *And this is part of French culture?*	
Interviewee: Like everywhere else.	accept to be normal

Appendix 3

Regroupement des codes par thèmes.

Codes	Catégories	Thèmes
- problèmes de langue - pas amis des langues étrangères - pas la force de ces gens - mes attentes pas été satisfaites - attente Française !	Manque d'affinité linguistique Attentes concernant la langue	Langage
- engagement des ouvriers - plus rigides déroulements des opérations - habitudes différentes de culture - expérience positive - expérience est positive - tout comme avec d'autres société allemande	Expérience positive avec le travail allemand	Aspects motivationnels
- la professionnalité allemande… - très qualifier - parlent bien le français - connaissance de la culture française - expérience agréable - bonne préparation et exécution - divergence entre la manière de faire	Faire une bonne impression Différents points focaux	Aspects professionnels
- produit de meilleurs spécialistes - mauvaise réputation - le refuge des classes sociales déshéritées - manque très souvent de pratique - lycées privés certaine moyenne pondérée cumulative le niveau est perçu beaucoup mieux - privatisé, les meilleurs étudiants - beaucoup d'étudiants veulent aller sur une grande école, peux y sont accepter (concours) - l'éducation joue un rôle - hiérarchies raides - enseignement strict - reconnaissance - comme ailleurs	Qualité de l'éducation Désir de faire partie de l'élite Rang et honneur	Aspects éducatifs

Résumer :

- La problématique de la langue – une attente française au-delà de parler la langue seulement
- La différence en la manière de faire – aspect remarquer positive – expérience professionnel positive sur plusieurs plans
- Une expérience à plusieurs niveaux, un niveau de motivation différent
- Aspect sociale mentionner, « Classes sociales déshéritées » en regard de l'apprentissage Français, donc seulement pour les déprivés
- Différentiation entre écoles et université public et institut privé. Clairement les écoles publiques n'ont pas de bonnes réputations - Ceci est-t 'il associer à la classe sociale ?
- L'enseignement joue un rôle. Hiérarchies raides sont signe de classe sociale ? Surement y a-t-il signe de reconnaissance de réussite éducative.

Appendix 4

Grouping of codes by themes.

Codes	Categories	Themes
- language problems - not friends of foreign languages - not the strength of these people - my expectations were not met - French expectation!	Lack of language affinity Expectations regarding language	Language
- worker engagement - more rigid workflow - different culture habits - positive experience - experience is positive - just like with other German companies	Expérience positive avec le travail allemand	Motivational aspects
- German professionalism ... - highly qualified - speak French well - knowledge of French culture - pleasant experience - good preparation and execution - divergence between the way of doing	Make a good impression Different focal points	Professional aspects
- produces better specialists - poor reputation - the refuge of deprived social classes - very often lack of practice - private high schools certain cumulative grade point average the level is perceived much better - privatized, the best students - many students want to go to a Grandes Ècoles, only few achieve it (concours) - education plays a role - stiff hierarchies - teaching is strict - recognition of achievement - like elsewhere	Quality of education Desire to be part of the elite Rank and honor	Educational aspect

Summary:

- The language issue – There is a French expectation beyond speaking the language only
- The difference in the way of doing things - positive remarked aspect - positive professional
- Experience on several levels, a different level of motivation
- Social aspect to mention, "Disadvantaged social classes" with regard to French learning, so only for the deprived
- Differentiation between state schools and universities and private institutions. Clearly public schools don't have good reputations - does this associate with social class?
- Education plays a role. Are stiff hierarchies a sign of social class? Surely there is sign of recognition of educational success.