

Cross-cultural School Leadership: Overcoming barriers

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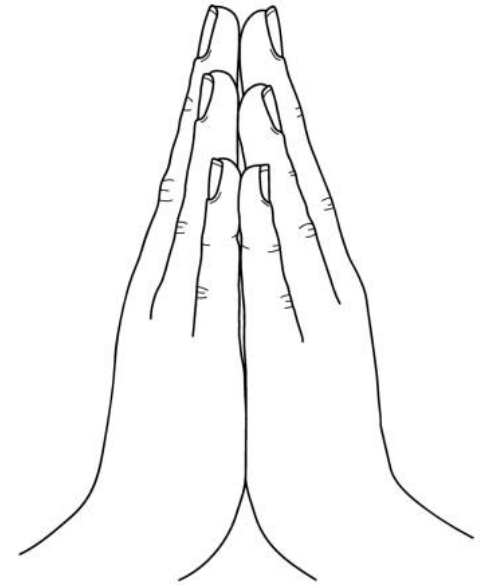


Aims

- ▶ To increase our awareness of our own cultural styles
- ▶ To share ways that we can ensure a harmonious working environment between people of differing cultural styles

Let's warm up

- ▶ Please stand up and seek a person you are not acquainted with.
- ▶ Greet each other in your native language (with any gestures if involved).
- ▶ Explain to each other the meaning and relevance of the greeting
- ▶ Repeat the exercise with one more person before taking your seat.



Scenario 1- Giving feedback - Pierre

I am a school leader and I have just observed one of my teachers' lessons.

The lesson didn't go well and I need to give the teacher some constructive feedback to help her improve.

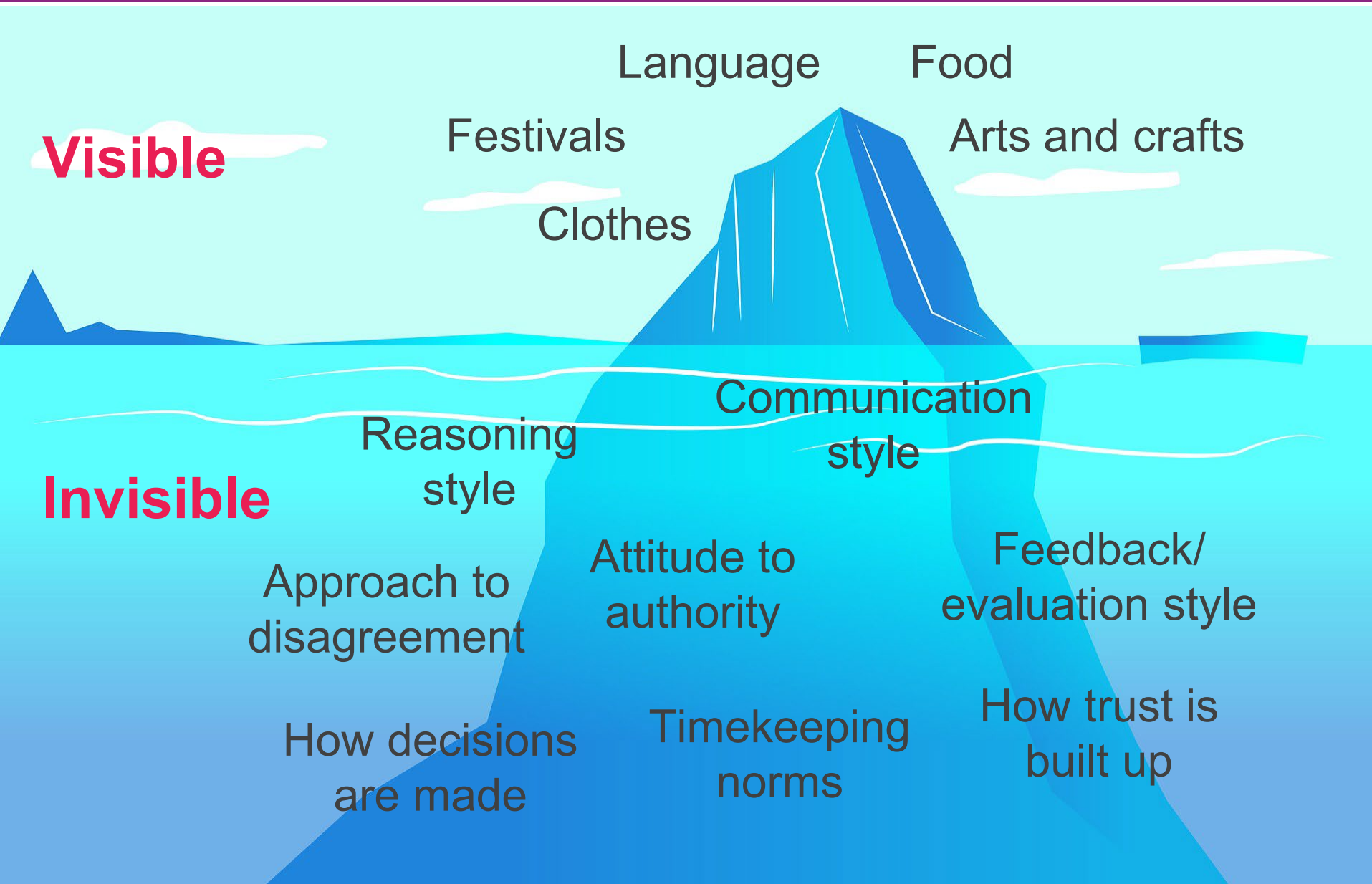
- ▶ What advice would you give Pierre for giving feedback to this teacher?
- ▶ Where would the feedback take place?
- ▶ How should Pierre start?
- ▶ How direct should his comments be?
- ▶ How should Pierre end the conversation?


What was your approach?

I will give honest direct feedback. I believe that by giving very clear messages it shows that I respect the teacher and that I care about them and want to help them improve.

I will give indirect, subtle feedback in a diplomatic way. I hope that the teacher will pick up on my message and make changes. I don't want to embarrass them or make them lose face by being too direct.

The culture iceberg

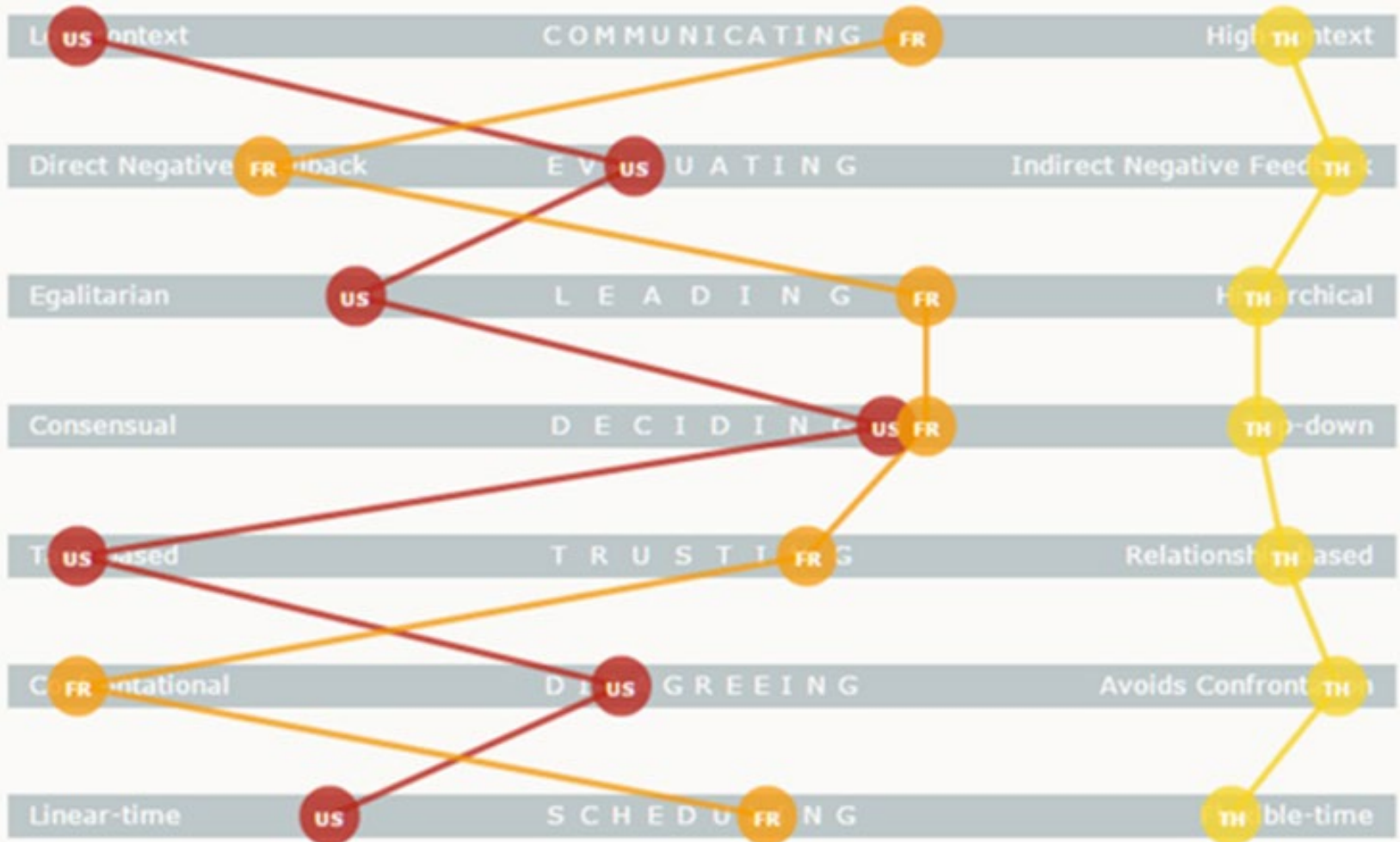


A school of blue fish swimming in a deep blue ocean. The fish are the central focus, swimming in various directions. The background is dark blue with some coral and rocks visible at the bottom and right sides. The text is overlaid in the upper middle part of the image.

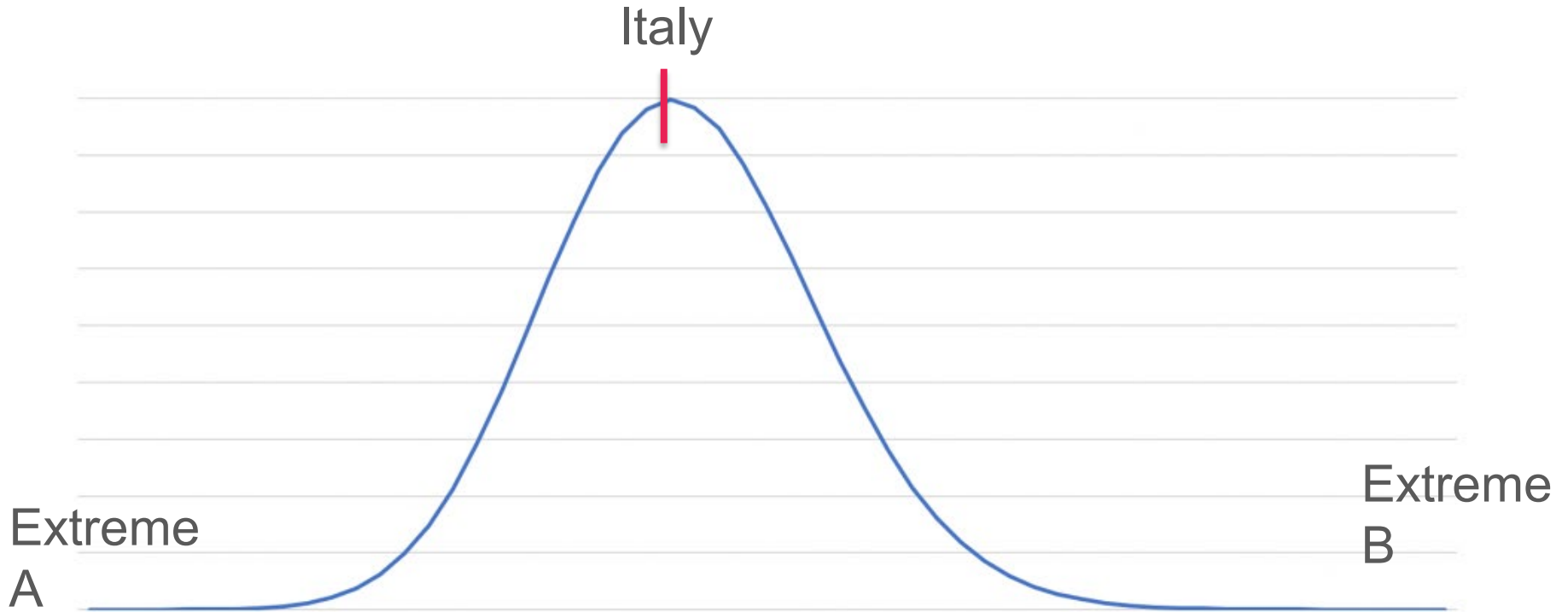
“Just as a fish doesn’t know it’s in water, people often find it difficult to see and recognise their own culture until they start comparing it with others.”

Erin Meyer: The Culture Map

● United States ● France ● Thailand

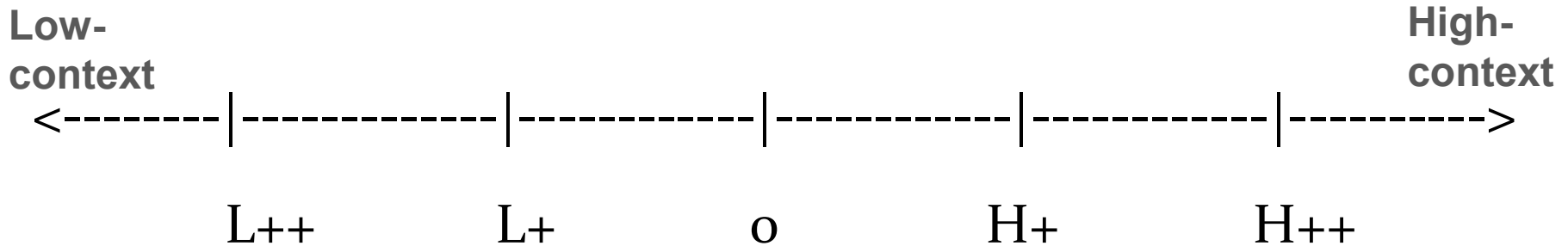


How is each country placed?



Low context/high context communication

US Netherlands Finland Spain Italy Singapore Iran China Japan
Australia Germany Denmark Poland Brazil Mexico France India Kenya Korea
Canada UK Argentina Peru Russia Saudi Arabia Indonesia



Low-context – Good communication is precise, simple and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face value. Repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication.

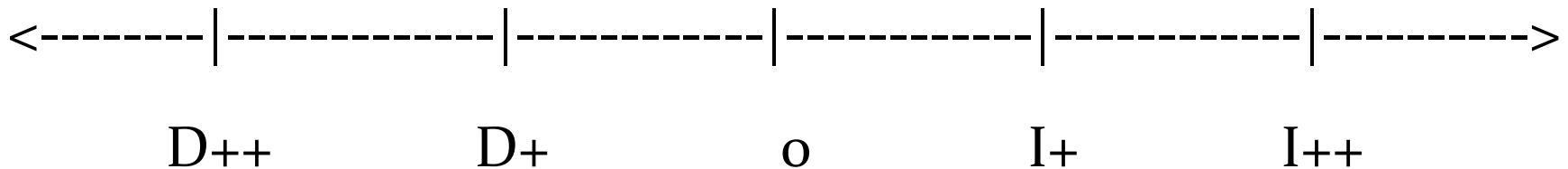
High context – Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced and layered. Messages are both spoken and read “between the lines”. Messages are often implied by not plainly expressed.

Feedback Scale

Russia France Italy US UK Brazil India Saudi Japan
Israel Germany Norway Australia Canada Mexico China Korea Thailand
Netherlands Denmark Spain Argentina Kenya Ghana Indonesia

**Direct negative
feedback**

**Indirect negative
feedback**



So what?

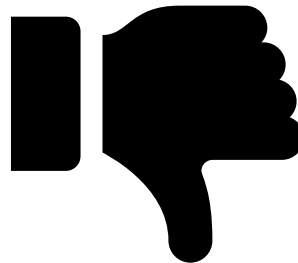
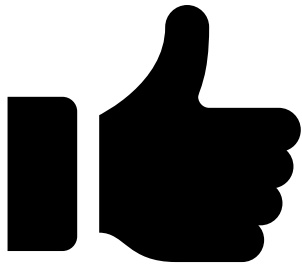
- ▶ **Scenario 1:** Pierre is from France, the teacher he is observing is from Thailand.
- ▶ Referring to the evaluating/feedback scale, what do you notice and how would this affect the advice you give Pierre?

- ▶ **Scenario 2:** Adamu is from Kenya, the teacher in the meeting is from China.
- ▶ Referring to the evaluating/feedback scale, what do you notice and how would this affect the advice you give Adamu?



Advantages/disadvantages

1. What might the advantages and disadvantages of an indirect feedback style be?
2. What might the advantages and disadvantages of a direct feedback style be?



Scenario 2: Decisions

Geert, who is Dutch is a school leader in China. He has been notified of an upcoming inspection of his school by a regulating body.

He needs to plan the day of inspection with her team.

- ▶ Take 2 minutes to think and write how you would advise Geert to approach this with his team.
- ▶ How should he start?
- ▶ Who should he involve?
- ▶ How should he organise this?

What was your approach?

I will take responsibility for the decision making as I am a decisive leader. I expect my team to follow my decisions without questioning. I may change my mind if new information emerges.

I will consult all members of my team extensively before making a decision. This may take some time but I believe that it's important to be consensual in decision making to make sure everyone is in agreement. Once we have decided we stick to our decisions.

Consensual or top-down decision making?

Consensual:

- ▶ Decision making may take a long time
- ▶ Everyone is consulted and partly responsible for the decision
- ▶ Once the decision has been made, it is fixed
- ▶ Implementation may be quick

Top-down

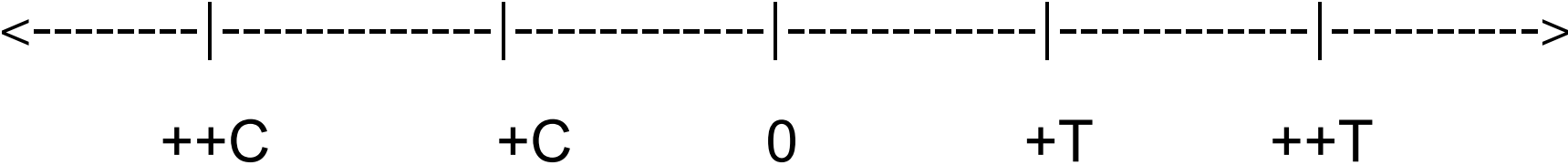
- ▶ Decision making can happen quickly
- ▶ Responsibility is invested in the leader
- ▶ Decision may be revisited as new information emerges
- ▶ Implementation may take a long time

The Deciding Scale

Sweden Germany US France India Nigeria
Japan Netherlands UK Brazil Italy Russia China

Consensual

Top down



Review

Connect

How does this session connect with what you already know?

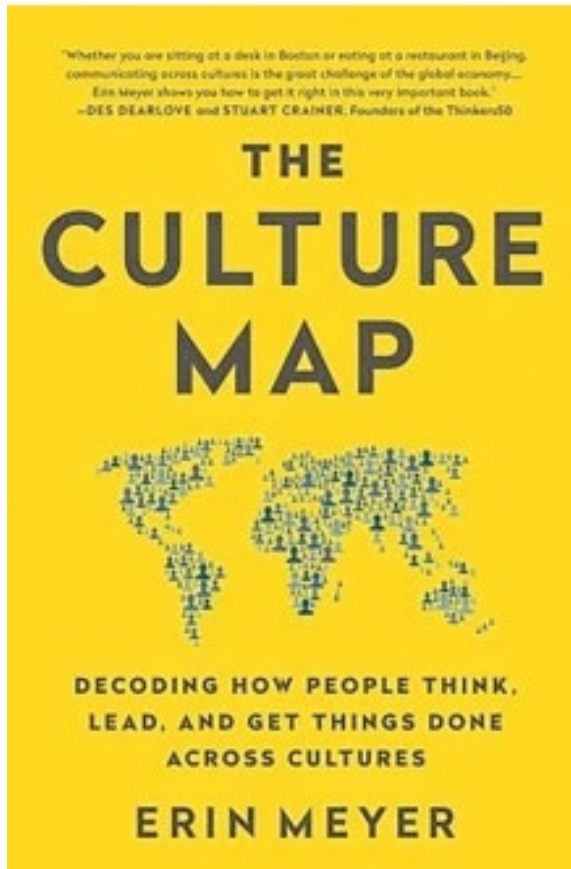
Extend

What have you learnt that's new?

Challenge

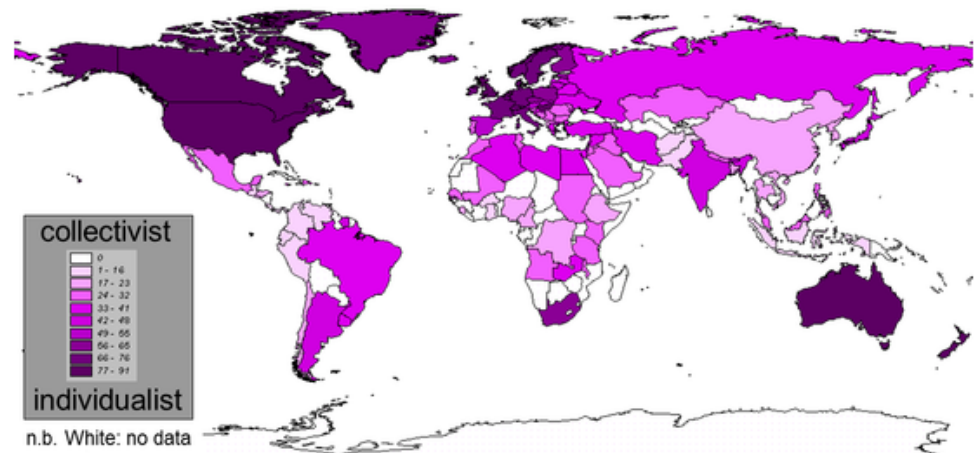
What questions do you have now? What is still confusing for you?

Further information



Geert Hofstede:

Collectivism – Individualism World map



THANK YOU



Tips for giving feedback – to someone with a more indirect style than you

- Build a relationship with the person before giving them feedback, show that you care about them and follow up afterwards to help them implement what you suggested.
- Before giving feedback, explain that your approach might be more direct than they are used to, and ask them if that is OK.
- Use the passive voice e.g.: “there was an issue with behaviour in this lesson” rather than “you didn’t manage behaviour well in this lesson”.
- Give feedback subtly and slowly and give indirect hints to suggest what the problem is. E.g.: “tell me about your use of questioning in this lesson”.
- Limit negative feedback to the most important areas, there should be more positives than negatives.
- Use “down graders” in your language e.g.: “perhaps you could think about....”, “I was a bit disappointed about...”, “Could you consider some other options?”
- Use positive non-verbal communication to show that you are supportive, e.g.: eye contact, expressions.
- Phrase feedback as a question, e.g.: “I wonder if...?”

Tips for giving feedback to someone with a more direct style than you:

- Even in direct feedback cultures it is still possible to be too direct and offend people. Don't try to be like them in your own style of feedback if you are not used to it.
- People who are used to a direct style may not understand subtle and indirect comments. When communicating cross-culturally it is important to check their understanding at the end of a conversation (Erin Meyers calls this “Low Context communication”). For example ask the other person to summarise what they are taking away from the conversation, and send an email afterwards to confirm the key points.