A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SELECTION SYSTEMS FOR MANAGERS IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN: THE ATTITUDES OF RECRUITERS IN MULTI-NATIONALS.

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MSc by Research in Business Management

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Following Shackleton and Newell's (1991) quantitative study of recruitment and selection practices in France and in Britain, this project focuses on the attitudes of personnel managers towards selection techniques in both countries. The aim is to answer the following general question: "why have the differences observed by Shackleton and Newell evolved?". The hypothesis is that the choice of selection techniques depends on national, cultural, historical and legal inheritance (country's factors) as well as corporate culture. Economic, technological, political and social pressures are now boosting the evolution towards scientific recruitment techniques, which would reduce risk (and the cost of failure) as well as enabling companies to focus on the future potential for development of the candidates. This project is based on interviews with professionals in the Personnel functions of major European companies operating in France and Britain and on a comparative study of the context surrounding recruitment and selection operations (education and legal systems, professional associations, etc.) in both countries. After an introduction and outline in Chapter One, Chapter Two gives an account of the on-going debate in Europe in the field of psychological assessment and selection, as well as the situation in both countries. Chapter Three discusses culture, which is an essential concept when conducting comparative research in European countries; Chapter Four highlights the making of managers in both countries. In Chapter Five the research strategy and the data collection techniques are described. Chapter Six and Seven provides an account and a discussion of the findings of the present piece of work; this thesis shows that the major differences observed by Shackleton and Newell (1991) are based on differences in cultural values, as well as historical factors such as differences in the connections between researchers in the field of HRM and psychology and practitioners: these countries are characterised by different philosophies and priorities.

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CONTENT:

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ACRONYMS

AFNOR: Association Française de Normalisation.

ANDCP: Association Nationale des Directeurs et Cadres de la Fonction Personnel.

AGRH: Association de Gestion des Ressources Humaines.

ARPE: Association Repère Pour l'Evaluation.

BPS: British Psychological Society.

EAP: Etablissements Applications Psychologiques.

ECPA: Les Editions du Centre de Psychologie Appliquée.

E.S.C.: Ecoles Supérieures de Commerces.

ESCP: Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris

ESSEC: Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Sociales et Commerciales.

HEC: Haute Ecole de Commerce.

IPD: Institute of Personnel and Development.

RATP: Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens.

SHL: Saville and Holdsworth Ltd.

SFP: Société Française de Psychologie.

SNCF: Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer.

CHAPTER 1) Introduction.

Jean Monnet before his death is reputed to have said that if he had known its significance earlier, he would have focused initially on the cultural rather than the economic aspect of creating European Unity. This highlights the difficulties in overcoming the important cultural differences that divide Europe in order to build closer economic and business integration. As Fons Trompenaars asserted (1993), there are no universal management methods and we cannot ignore the particularities of each culture when managing in an international context. Thus, cross cultural studies have expanded. The European Community will mean for most companies closer relationships with foreign organisations through mergers, acquisitions or business agreements; it will also means the opening of new markets, along with the opening of boundaries. These wider opportunities will force European organisations to deepen their awareness of these new markets and recruit and develop European managers. Hugh Scullion (1994) maintains that one of the HRM challenges of the European Community will be to recruit and develop a cadre of managers and executives who understand and can operate effectively in the new international environment.

In this context, there is a growing interest not only in Britain but all over Europe in comparative studies of management to develop a better understanding of management methods in each member country. Scullion (1992) highlights the fact that effective recruitment of "Pan-European" managers is heavily impeded by lack of knowledge of local labour markets, ignorance of the local education system and the status of qualifications, language and cultural problems at interviews and trying to transfer methods that work well in the home country to the foreign environment. Recruitment and selection in Europe has been analysed (Shackleton & Newell - 1991) and some major differences appeared through this study between Britain and France, two major European countries. A cross cultural study to understand different approaches and attitudes towards Recruitment and Selection will be the first step towards a further integration and creation of standardised Recruitment procedures. It is important to define what culture is and what makes France and Britain culturally special; in chapter 2, we will see the latest advancements in selection techniques; we will also focus on studies that highlight the types of techniques used in France and in Britain and the contextual

differences, which will illustrate the aims of this study. In Chapter 3, we will define the concept of culture and see its impact on management styles developed in both countries. Chapter 4 will focus on the specific making of managers and the role of the education system. Chapter 5 will highlight the methodology followed. Chapter 6 and 7 will give an account and a discussion of the findings of this research. Chapter 8 will conclude the present piece of work by highlighting the learning points and providing guidance for further research.

CHAPTER 2) Literature on recruitment and selection in Europe: an overview of the problem.

Introduction:

The European Union will mean closer relationships with foreign organisations for most European companies through mergers, acquisitions or business agreements. In this context, there is a growing interest not only in Britain but all over Europe in comparative studies of management methods developed in each member country. Recruitment and selection are not exceptions and we can find an abundance of studies on the use of recruitment and selection methods in European countries; these studies tend to be mainly quantitative; this chapter will be based on three recent projects conducted in France and in Britain on recruitment and selection practices: Shackleton and Newell (1991), Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) and a quantitative survey conducted by the British tests publisher Saville and Holdsworth (1992). A first section will give an insight in the importance of understanding the diversity in management methods in Europe; we will then shortly focus on the on-going debate in the field of recruitment and selection, before giving an account of the differences between France and Britain and how these two countries are positioned in a more international scope.

2-1) A general context.

Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994) have shown that European recruitment and selection are influenced by different factors: internationalisation of the work force, mergers and partnerships with foreign organisations, social and demographic pressures, national cultural differences and higher competition. It is crucial to understand the pressures operating on European organisations to develop more effective recruitment and selection procedures.

2-1-1) The social, economic and technological pressures.

Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994) have shown that companies in every European country have to deal with social shifts and technological changes that will force them to change their approach to Human Resources Management: low growth rate accompanied by high unemployment, social costs of employment, demographic changes (ageing of the population), increasing emergence of female participation (73.2% in France and 72.7% in Britain) have resulted in dramatic changes in the European labour market in the 1990s. European organisations have now to deal with skills shortages, low turnover (people are not ready to change jobs anymore and increasingly expect to stay in the company), rapid technological changes requiring rapid adaptation of the work force.

Increased international competition and slower growth are forcing organisations to reduce costs, improve the availability and deployment of resources and achieve dramatic improvements in productivity as well as ensuring flexibility and long term supply of people with the necessary skills and competencies. The challenges for European companies are enormous: they have to ensure a high quality and cost effective intake of flexible people. The international competition forbids any selection mistakes as this would jeopardise the productivity and viability of the company. Thus, European companies are under pressure to develop better and more adaptable recruitment and selection practices that would reduce error. The internationalisation of economies and mainly the creation of the European Unity will also force major companies to revise their approach to recruitment and selection.

2-1-2) International recruitment.

In recent years, one can observe a growing interest in the implications of the European integration on international management (Kirkbride 1994, Storey 1995, Cazal & Peretti 1992). In the context of further integration, research suggests that European companies are attempting to develop a global approach to Human Resources Management to cope with the challenges of presence in different European countries. European Unity will mean new business opportunities for a large number of companies (from small-sized to major multi-

nationals) due to the opening of new markets, the emergence of new competition styles, rise in the number of mergers, acquisitions or business agreements (Iles and Salaman 1995). European companies are increasingly aware that the consequences of the Single European Market (SEM) will be further confrontation of new cultures and creation of new roles for their managers.

To respond to these challenges, to benefit from all European opportunities, to create European networks of information and resources and to overcome shortages of local qualifications (Wajskop 1992), recruiting people with "Pan -European" competencies is vital (Scullion 1992, Coomb 1994, Barham and Berthoin-Anthal 1994). "L'Effet Delors" and the emergence of a "Generation Europe" (graduates educated in European schools -Insead, IMD, London Business School, EAP, etc.- or having benefited of European Exchange Programme -Erasmus, Comett, Lingua, etc.- and who see Europe as their natural recruitment scope) are factors that have accelerated this process of europeanisation.

This suggests that firms willing to respond to and exploit the removal of economic and political barriers will have to change their approach to recruitment to better attract, recruit and retain foreign candidates, who will bring a further understanding of local markets and languages. European companies need to develop a wide and balanced pool of international managers of different nationalities, from which will probably stem future executives and senior general managers.

Peretti (1991) explained that the recruitment and selection of foreign managers is more difficult, costly and uncertain compared to recruiting in the home country. Thus, European companies are under pressure to establish best practices through their European operations and are searching for a more internationally co-ordinated, standardised and justifiable approach to selection and assessment (Sparrow & Hilltrop 1994). As Tony Keenan (1991: 37) put it, *'if Europe is to become a single market, organisations should consider moving towards a single integrated graduate recruitment function in Europe.'* However, Hugh Scullion (1992) suggested that the recruitment, selection and development of non-national managers is heavily impeded by four different factors:

- lack of knowledge of the local labour market;

- ignorance of the local education system and of the status of qualifications;

- language and cultural problems at interviews;

- trying to transfer recruitment methods that work well in the home country to foreign environments; these methods might be illegal or unacceptable to local recruiters and candidates.

The discussion above suggests that there are a variety of factors that impact on the practices of European organisations in the domain of recruitment and selection and that force them to change these practices for more effective and valid methods. However, several studies (Shackleton and Newell 1991, Sparrow and Hilltrop 1994, Brewster and Hegewisch 1994, Scullion 1995) suggest that we cannot ignore the weight of cultural factors (law, education system, values, etc.) which heavily impact on the way recruitment and selection are approached by local organisations and which impede this move towards common and better practices; this becomes more obvious when one considers the major differences between the practices in France and Britain. The following section will give an account of the on-going debate in the field of recruitment and selection and will show the position of France and Britain.

2-2) The current debate.

The debate on selection and assessment has been focused during the last two decades on the questions of validity and reliability. This section will focus on different meta-analysis that has been conducted recently (Smith & Robertson 1993, Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991, Hunter & Hunter 1984, Schmitt, Gooding, Noe and Kirsch 1984).

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2-2-1) reliability and validity.

2-2-1-1) <u>Reliability</u>.

It is essential that a technique is reliable to provide an adequate evaluation of the candidates. We can relate reliability with consistency; a method is reliable when evaluation of a candidate is consistent throughout time (two evaluations of the candidate through the same procedures should provide similar results). Reliability in occupational psychology is often established using correlation coefficients: one assesses the candidates twice and results are correlated. Reliability should be a key criterion in the choice of selection methods.

2-2-1-2) <u>Validity</u>.

Validity of a selection technique consists of the quality of forecasts that the psychological evaluation of candidates enable to establish concerning their professional future (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991). Validity of recruitment techniques is measured by a correlation coefficient between predictors and criteria. Predictive validity (extent to which a measure can predict the scores of applicants on future assessments on the job) and content validity (the technique measures what it is supposed to measure) are the most common types of validity. Smith and Robertson (1993) have established a general scale of validity:

- over 0.5: excellent validity;
- from 0.40 to 0.49: good validity;
- from 0.30 to 0.39: acceptable validity;
- less than 0.30: poor validity.

As we have seen earlier, new technologies, new market and new competition make it essential to effectively recruit and retain the best talents. We will see in the next section the different selection methods available and their validity.

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2-2-2) Validity of methods available.

Smith, Gregg & Andrews (1989), Smith & Robertson (1993), Sparrow & Hilltrop (1994: 315-357) have fully described the different selection methods available. Table 1 shows the validity of these methods; this table is the synthesis of different meta-analysis conducted during the last 20 years (Hunter & Hunter 1984, Smith & Robertson 1993, Schmitt, Gooding, Noe and Kirsch 1984, etc.).

Table 1: *Validity scores of different selection methods.*

Recruitment Techniques (predictors)	Average validity Scores
* Tests of technical abilities	0.38 to 0.54
* Work-Samples	0.53
* Assessment Centres	0.41 to 0.43
* Peer Evaluation	0.43
* Mental ability tests	0.25 to 0.45
* Biographical Information	0.24 to 0.38
* References	0.17 to 0.26
* Interview(s)	0.14 to 0.23
* Personality tests [1]	0.15
* Interests and motivation tests	0.10
* Self Assessment	0.15
* Graphology	0.00

Source: Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991: 16).

2-2-2-1) Interviewing techniques.

Sparrow & Hiltrop (1994) show that interviews are the cornerstone of selection processes in Europe. Subject to sampling errors, unreliability, subjectivity and other subconscious biases, traditional unstructured interviews have been condemned by researchers as inadequate and non-valid for selection purposes. However, meta-analysis suggest that the validity rises with structured interviews (the candidates are asked job-related questions) and is

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[1] Group personality questionnaires and projective tests. As we have seen above only personality questionnaires are satisfying predictors, and their validity score can go up to 0.40.

excellent in the case of situational or behavioural interviews. In the recruitment process, interviews are important as they enable a mutual exchange of information between the candidates and the organisation and checking for a potential fit.

2-2-2-2) Analytical tests.

There are different types of tests: cognitive tests (tests of aptitudes and abilities), and personality tests (either projective techniques or personality questionnaires); these categories score differently on the validity scale and are not all adequate for recruitment purposes (projective tests are not valid) (Smith, Gregg & Andrews 1989). The use of tests is controversial as they are often seen as unethical (a theme most encountered in the French literature (Personnel n°320 - January 1991)) or not related to job-situations. As Sparrow & Hiltrop state (1994), social, economic, political and religious influences have resulted in marked differences in the uptake of psychological testing.

2-2-2-3) Analogous or sample tests.

These can be either work samples, situational exercises (intrays, role plays, simulations) or trainability tests, which provide sample of behaviours and enable a realistic job preview (the candidates get to know what the job consists of and is given feedback. These categories of tests enjoy high validity scores.

2-2-2-4) Assessment Centres.

Recruitment should not be based on a single predictor and should focus on the future oriented potential (Sparrow & Hiltrop 1994). For this reason, assessment centres have been developed: they generally combine a variety of tests structured interviews and work-sample exercises, which address key competencies and provide hard data. This fairly recent technique has a good validity score (0.41 to 0.43).

2-2-2-5) <u>Biographical information</u>.

Many companies use CVs complemented with hand-written letters, as the main source of information. Application forms are also commonly used in France and Britain; these techniques based on obtaining biographical information are founded on the philosophy that past experience is the best predictor of future performance. However, these documents are subject to falsification, memory errors or exaggeration and their analysis can be highly subjective and biased (against race, sex, age, etc.). Scored application questionnaires, combining hard and soft data about the candidates, are called bio-data: these types of forms ensure the avoidance of the type of drawbacks identified when using classical biographical information and have a very good validity (Smith and Robertson 1993).

In certain countries (such as Britain), companies complement this biographical information with reference checking; this technique appears to have a low validity (0.17 to 0.23) and is prone to bias, errors and may be difficult to obtain (Smith & Roberston 1993).

2-2-2-6) <u>More controversial techniques</u>.

Several countries and in particular France are marked by a high use of irrational techniques such as graphology, morpho-psychology (which consists of relating physical appearance with the personality), astrology, etc. These techniques are highly controversial (Smith and Robertson 1993, Personnel n°340 - mars/avril 1993; Personnel n°343 - Juillet 1993) mainly because they have never been scientifically validated.

Self assessment and peer evaluation are also controversial techniques, as they are prone to subjectivity and resistance of the interviewed people. Validity of these techniques is poor.

This section highlights the different selection methods available. Research suggests that better validity and reliability of techniques enable to identify the best talents and improve the cost-effectiveness of the recruitment process. However, the current debate tends to ignore the more pragmatic factors that operate in the choice of selection methods (Sparrow & Hiltrop

1994), which are the acceptability, administrative ease, time factors and cost. Research also suggests that cultural factors will impact on the choice of selection and assessment methods and will often take precedence over the objective validity and reliability.

2-3) Recruitment in France and Britain.

One can find in the recent French and British literature an increasing interest in comparative studies of recruitment procedures. Three studies appear to be highly interesting as they complement each other, and enable to gain a clear understanding of the way French and British companies approach recruitment. Shackleton and Newell (1991) conducted a quantitative study focusing on top companies in both countries; this study is now accepted as a clear reference when conducting research about recruitment in Europe. Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) report on studies conducted in different European countries; this report is certainly insufficiently informed about Britain but contains an extensive study conducted among 42 major French companies and 20 recruitment consultants in 1989, and provide a clear image of recruitment practices in France. Finally, Saville and Holdsworth (SHL), a major tests editor, has conducted a comparative study in 1992 including results of research conducted by SHL UK and SHL Europe. The results of these different studies are summarised in table 2.

One can note in table 2 major differences between Shackleton and Newell's results and other study's results concerning the use of Personality questionnaires; in Shackleton and Newell's report, one can find a classification from never to always in the frequency of use of these techniques and this table only reports the "always" answers, whereas other studies do not differentiate. We will see later that one of the strengths of Shackleton and Newell's study is that they differentiate in terms of frequency and type of interviews used in both countries.

Table 2: *Frequency of use of recruitment methods in France and in Britain.*

Recruitment Techniques	Shackleton & Newell (1991)		Bruchon Schweitzer (1991)		Saville & Holdsworth Ltd	
	France	Britain	France		France (1992)	Britain (1991)
Interviews	93.20%	94.30%	99.00%		100.00%	100.00%
Graphology	77.00%	2.60%	93.00%		78.00%	3.00%
Biogr. Inf..					100.00%	
Biodata	3.80%	19.10%				
references	11.30%	73.90%				
Abi. tests	48.90%	69.90%	63.00%		52.00%	70.00%
Pers. Tests	17.00%	9.60%	61.00%		43.00%	64.00%
Work-samp.			34.00%			
Ass. Cent.	18.80%	58.90%			30.00%	59.00%
Proj. tech.			20.50%		18.00%	
Astrology			8.00%			
Others [2]			7.00%			

2-3-1) Recruitment and selection practices in France and in Britain.

2-3-1-1) Interviews.

In both countries, interviews are the main method of selection used; however, the approaches of interviewing techniques observed in France and in Britain are quite diverse. Shackleton and Newell (1991) show that the most common type of interview in France is the one-to-one interview with candidates being seen by more than one person in the company: 92.4% of companies use more than one interview. On the other hand, British companies will conduct a smaller number of interviews and supplement interviews with additional techniques; also, panel interviews are more widespread in the UK. In both countries, representatives of the Personnel department and line managers are almost systematically

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[2] Including irrational techniques only used in France: morpho-psychology 12%; neurobiology 1.5%; analyse transactionnelle 1.5%. The fact that these techniques are found only in studies conducted in France highlights the trend observed towards non valid techniques.

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involved in the interviewing process; their respective roles however are not clear. It is also not clear what type of interviews are used (structured, job related or informal/unstructured interviews).

2-3-1-2) Graphology.

One of the typical and specific features of French practices is the almost systematic use of handwriting analysis, although this technique has a very low validity. As Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens explains (1991), this technique is often used alongside a reading of the CVs for a first sifting of applicants (49% of companies screen their candidates on a reading of the CVs and handwriting analysis); when used in the decision making process, graphology is used as a complement to information obtained through interviews. The French Association of Graphology has imposed specific qualifications and accreditation to claim the status of graphologist and is quite influential through publications and conferences.

On the other hand, graphology is used very little in Britain and research suggests that graphology is used in Britain only by subsidiaries of French companies (Robertson and Makin 1986).

2-3-1-3) Psychometrics.

Based on SHL study conducted in 1992, abilities/aptitudes tests are only used by 49% of French companies, against 70% of British organisations. In France, these techniques come only after graphology and interviews, although the validity of ability testing is recognised as being high. As Shackleton and Newell explain (1991), British organisations make greater use of cognitive (abilities) tests, which come third in the frequency of use, than do French companies (69.9% against 48.9%); on the other hand, the position of both countries for personality tests is not clear, as SHL and Shackleton & Newell's studies contradict each other; one can however note that projective tests appear in research on France and not in Britain, although these tools have been proven to be inadequate for recruitment purposes (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991).

2-3-1-4) <u>References</u>.

There has been a long tradition of selectors in Britain using references, whereas this technique is not extensively used in France (73.9% in Britain compared with only 11.3% in France).

2-3-1-5) <u>Biodata</u>.

Biographical information is very important in both countries and companies of both nationalities make extensive use of classical application forms or CVs (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991). However, Shackleton and Newell (1991) have shown that biodata technique (weighted application blanks) have expanded more rapidly in Britain than in France, with 19.1% of firms using it against only 3.8% in France.

2-3-1-6) <u>Assessment Centre type exercises</u>.

Once again, this technique has evolved more quickly in major British companies, which are highly interested in these tools and more and propose more job simulations to their applicants. On the other hand, these techniques do not enjoy a high popularity in France although 18.8% of companies report using them; it has to be noted that Saville and Holdsworth explain the relatively high score of Assessment Centres in their study by a lack of understanding of this technique among French interviewees.

Synthesis:

As Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) explains, it appears that the techniques used in Britain have generally a satisfying validity (with the exception of references). Furthermore Shackleton and Newell compared their results with a similar study conducted 5 years earlier and highlighted an increase in the use of better validated techniques such as tests of abilities and Assessment Centre type exercises, including job simulations. One can also notice a major trend towards competencies based recruitment procedures and behavioural

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techniques. On the other hand, preferred French recruitment methods are among the less valid techniques: interviews and handwriting analysis and methods enjoying good validity scores are not often mentioned by French recruitment practitioners (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991). Even more worrying is the sad record of French Recruitment practitioners in the use of irrational and not validated techniques, such as astrology, morpho-psychology, or "analyse transactionnelle" In France validity records do not greatly influence the choice of recruitment procedures, which are made more with respect to the practicality, cost and acceptance of the candidates (Sparrow & Hiltrop 1994).

2-3-2) France and Britain compared to other European countries and North America.

Shackleton and Newell (1994) extended their study of practices in France and Britain to other European countries (Belgium, Germany and Italy); Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) also report that local surveys conducted in Europe and the Price Waterhouse/Cranfield study (Brewster & Hegewisch 1994) give detailed information on practices in a wide range of European countries. Similar studies have been conducted in Northern America (Rowe, Williams and Day 1994, Gowing and Slivinski 1994) and Australia (Di Milia, Smith and Brown 1994). These different studies enable us to situate France and Britain in relation to other countries. However, these studies differ in terms of sample and methodology, which makes comparisons difficult.

It is difficult to identify common trends between countries, because the choice of selection methods depends a lot on social, political and legal specificity in each country. One can however assert that Britain shares some commonalties with the USA: the preference for scientifically validated techniques is a strong feature of English speaking countries (Di Milia, Smith and Brown, 1994 have shown that Britain and Australia are similar in the use of "respectable" techniques); Shackleton and Newell suggest that occupational psychology has been under more pressure to move towards a respectable scientificity in Anglo-Saxon countries than in Continental Europe (Shackleton and Newell 1994). In America and Canada, the legislation for Equal Opportunities and Human Rights is very strict and has pushed companies towards genuinely equal and valid techniques; this is also the case in Britain,

which has an explicit legislation on racial discrimination (Race Relations Act 1976). All these countries are sharing common cultural traits, history and language; one can also presume that the influences of Northern America are to be found in the management style of other English-speaking countries.

On the other hand, the Price Waterhouse/Cranfield survey (Brewster & Hegewisch 1994) has shown that we can find a common trend in Latin European countries towards more intuitive, interpretative and clinical selection models tending to base their decision mainly on interviews (Sparrow and Hiltrop 1994); these countries tend also to focus on the dignity of the individuals rather than equal opportunities so that preference goes for more "friendly" techniques. Also, Shackleton and Newell (1994) have shown that companies in the French speaking part of Belgium share the taste for handwriting analysis observed in France; this suggests a similarity of culture.

It is however difficult to generalise these assumptions as the historical inheritance specific to each country is very influential in the field of recruitment and selection. This suggests that France and Britain belong to two different cultural clusters and this explains the differences observed. However, as Shackleton and Newell (1994) explain there is a lack of research exploring the attitudes and beliefs of recruiters towards selection methods.

2-3-3) Research levels, Professional trainings and qualifications and legal systems.

2-3-3-1) <u>Research level in both countries</u>.

Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) included in their study a comparative analysis of the research conducted in the field of Selection and Recruitment in Europe. Research in applied psychology and more specifically in Personnel assessment is in general of an excellent level in Britain; some researchers are well recognised internationally and research centres are very dynamic in organising conferences and publishing quality articles. One counts six journals of applied psychology and several publications every year in the field of selection and assessment; furthermore, connections between these researchers and

practitioners are effective, mainly thanks to the major efforts of the British Psychology Society (Henley & Bawtree 1993).

On the other side of the channel the situation appears to be less glorious, as among all the registered teams of researchers in psychology, none is working on Selection of personnel and on the validation of recruitment procedures. Even if good quality research is conducted locally (often in nationalised organisations such as la SNCF, la RATP or the research services of the army or the police), selection and recruitment questions do not interest university researchers any more, who tend to focus on other subjects such as ergonomics or training. One can find an abundance of publications about graphology, psychometrics or morpho-psychology of a very bad quality, which do not deal with the question of validity and reliability. Furthermore, one has to notice a lack of connections between academics working in the field of recruitment and practitioners, due to the traditional mutual lack of trust and to the incapacity of researchers to communicate their results: academic and organisational worlds are traditionally two different worlds. Furthermore, Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens explains that practitioners do not have a sufficient knowledge and understanding of Applied Psychology, and are only interested in the short term cost effectiveness of the recruitment procedures.

2-3-3-2) Training and Qualifications of Recruitment practitioners.

* France:

It is interesting to see the differences in qualifications of those working in Personnel functions in both countries. Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) included a study about the qualifications of Personnel and recruitment managers in France. Only 36% of Personnel managers in companies have a degree in Psychology and university qualifications tend to vary a lot, focusing often on clinical psychology and not on applied psychology (to gain the status of psychologists, students need to take postgraduate courses). 52% of Personnel managers in companies have qualifications in law, economics, management or literature and 12% have a scientific degree; for recruitment managers, the trend is the same with only 23%

of practitioners having qualifications in psychology and up to 45% of them having a scientific background (Tyson & Wikander 1994). As Bournois (1992) puts it, recruitment functions are often assigned to young people with no practical experience of business relations and whose supposedly specialised training in personnel management gives only fifty hours to recruitment techniques.

Personnel functions are generally more open to general managers and recruitment functions are open to engineers at the end of their career, so that these functions are held in French organisations by people who do not have a clear understanding of psychology and recruitment procedures; this trend is even accentuated by the fact that up to 25.5% of French companies do not employ any psychologists at all. Furthermore there are no structured, formal and controlled training establishments in France (Engelhart 1993).

* Britain.

The trend in Britain appears to be different, with psychologists working in companies being given more important role. In spite of a lack of statistics comparable to the data available in Bruchon Schweitzer & Lievens' study, one notes a trend towards more formal training and a more professional approach to Human Resources functions, through the impact of professional training: 75% of senior personnel managers are recruited from within personnel specialists (Brewster 1992); personnel managers tend to develop their careers in these functions and gain an understanding of psychology and personnel practices. The Institute of Personnel Management which has 70,000 members across the country is the main qualification awarding body and also publishes codes of conduct for recruitment; these aim for a more professional use of selection techniques (The IPM recruitment code 1990). Finally, the British Psychological Society (BPS) has developed an initiative aimed at tightening controls and providing better guidance for psychologists working in the occupational field, firstly focusing on training and qualifications (Henley & Bawtree 1993).

We can presume that these aspects of training and qualifications do impact on the better awareness of recruitment practitioners observed in Britain in comparison with France.

2-3-3-3) <u>Legal context</u>.

As Engelhart (1993) explain, the recruitment profession is not subject to laws in France, which facilitates the emergence of pseudo-scientific methods, such as astrology or morpho-psychology. The Employment Code is silent in this area and only the Commission Nationale Informatique et Liberté (CNIL, National Commission on Computers and Civil Liberties) has confronted abusive practices which threaten individual liberties (Bournois 1992); this commission mainly deals with the use of computerised information in evaluation procedures in a report to the government (le Rapport Lyon Caen 1991) requiring legislation in the use of computerised techniques by non-psychologists. In the field of discrimination, France is one of the only countries with specific legislation for companies to control their in-take, but research suggests that this legislation is not followed by French employers so that France appears to be far behind Britain in that field (Brewster & Hegewisch 1994).

Indeed, we can find in British legislation a thorough legislation on Equal Opportunities, which apply to recruitment; the three main acts are the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Race Relations Act 1976 (Brewster 1992). Furthermore, the use of other techniques are controlled through codes of practice (e.g.. the IPM code of practice for testing). These codes of practice are not legally enforceable, but can be used as evidence in court.

Conclusion: the aims of this research.

In this chapter, is has been argued that European organisations are under tremendous pressure (legal, economical, social, technological, etc.) to change their recruitment and selection processes: as Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994: 357) put it, *'increasing competitive pressure and the high costs of recruitment will demand a more targeted and effective approach'*. As we have seen, there are major differences in the way selection is approached and in the way applied psychology has developed in France and in Britain. Every study available focuses on the frequency of use of certain methods or on the legal and professional environments of the recruitment and selection operations. No research has approached the

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question of attitudes of personnel managers towards Selection and Recruitment and tried to determine the expectations of practitioners of different nationalities when selecting candidates. Thus, one can note a lack of research explaining these differences in the ways British and French managers approach recruitment. A first step towards a better understanding of these differences has been taken by Shackleton and Newell (1991). This study shows that it is the nationality more than the company's characteristics that explain the way recruitment and selection are conducted in a given company: one of the conclusions of this study was that values, habits and traditions have a massive impact on the way these operations are conducted in companies of different nationalities (Shackleton and Newell 1991). However the qualitative aspect remains badly understood: we know now what the differences are but we still do not know why these differences have evolved. We have seen earlier some initial explanations related to the education of psychologists and research conducted in these two countries. These factors, however, do not highlight the values, beliefs and attitudes of managers towards recruitment. It is appealing that two countries as close as Britain and France have developed so different approaches to this question and one probably will have to find the explanations of these differences in deeper domains such as culture. One also can think that it is impossible to understand recruitment and selection in a country if one does not have a clear understanding of the education system. Thus this research will aim at identifying what are the expectations and assumptions of personnel managers towards different recruitment and selection procedures.

CHAPTER 3) The concept of culture.

Introduction.

When conducting a project about Europe, one systematically thinks of the cultural differences that exist between the different European nations; culture is probably a very difficult concept to understand. However, different studies have revealed themselves to be very helpful in understanding what make Britain and France so different.

3-1) What is culture.

The concept of culture has probably been the source of a very large pool of literature. It turns out to be one of the hardest concept to understand since it groups a handful of factors that influence the behaviour, values and beliefs of individuals. One of the particularities of modern Europe is that it groups together several countries of different backgrounds and cultures. Several studies have attempted to cluster the countries in terms of cultural differences and similarities.

3-1-2) A definition.

We can follow Fons Trompenaars (1993: 6) when he asserts that *'culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems'*. The culture can be defined as the rules for interaction in different situations, and additionally as an instrument used for solving universal problems in a special way according to local needs (Kirkbride -1994). We can also describe culture as the shared ways groups of people understand and interpret the world (Trompenaars 1993). The basis of cultural differences is the different problems that different societies encounter in their everyday life. We can identify three main categories of universal problems:

- our relationships with other people;

- our perception of time;

- how we relate to the environment.

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In the way people will solve these problems, we can identify different orientations which have been described and formalised by different authors.

* **Relationship with people:**

    - <u>Universalism/particularism</u>: to what extent a member of the group will pay attention to the circumstances before acting?

    - <u>Individualism/collectivism</u>: do people act with respect to the group or as individuals?

    - <u>Neutral/emotional</u>: are objectivity and achievements or subjectivity and emotions valued.

    - <u>specific/diffuse</u>: is contact essential or not?

* **Attitudes to time:**

    - certain societies tend to value what has been achieved in the past.

    - other societies prefer plans for the future and present performance.

* **Attitudes to the environment:**

    - certain cultures see nature as more powerful than individuals who then have to live in harmony with it.

    - others see nature as controllable.

3-1-2) The layers of culture:

The way people solve problems trigger some symbols and expectations; people living in a certain environment are familiar with particular situations and attribute meaning to these events; they expect these meanings to be applicable in other environments. Trompenaars (1993) identified different layers of culture, which highlight the building of attitudes, behaviours and values.

3-1-2-1) The outer layer:

As Trompenaars (1993) explains, the first experience one has of a new culture is the concrete and explicit factors, which are the reality of language, food, buildings, art, etc. This is the symbolic and observable layer.

3-1-2-2) The middle layer:

Explicit culture is only the reflection of deeper layers of culture, which are the norms and values of individuals. Norms relate to what a group think is "right" or "wrong". Values, on the other hand link to the definition of "good and bad" and relate to the ideals shared by the group. Thus, norms say how one should behave, whereas values relate to the way one aspires or desires to behave. The combination of norms and values results in the development of cultural traditions. However, the core of culture is to be found in the reasons behind why groups of people have consciously or subconsciously chosen different definitions of good/bad, right/wrong.

3-1-2-3) The core: assumptions about existence.

'We see that a specific organisational culture or functional culture is nothing more than the way in which groups have organised themselves over the years to solve the problems and challenges presented to them' (Trompenaars 1993: 24) Groups of people have grown in different geographical environments, which presented specific daily problems to them: they are confronted with different weather conditions, which they have to face for their survival; the core of culture is the way people act upon nature. The solutions developed by the group of people become so obvious they become unconscious and become part of our system of assumptions about nature and existence. These assumptions differ depending on the geographical environment and nature.

3-1-3) The different levels of culture.

Culture is made by people interacting. Culture is the means by which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life. Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of how human beings interpret their experiences and guide

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their actions; these interactions result in what Trompenaars (1993: 25) calls *'the organisation of meanings'*: people attribute particular meanings to particular situations; this fosters communication difficulties between cultures, as meanings do not always coincide.

As we have seen, culture is the result of interaction and communication between people within a community, confronted by common problems and developing common solutions. The highest level of culture is national or regional: people living in the same nation are confronted by common problems and generate a national culture, that is observable; this first level heavily impacts on the way business is approached in this particular community. It also has to be noted that interactions within organisations result in the creation of particular values and norms; this level is the corporate level of culture. The nationality, location and activity interact and impact on the way management is approached in different companies.

3-2) The national culture

As we have seen, culture is observable through three different problems; these are the relationships with individuals, the approach to time and the approach to environment. Trompenaars (1993) identified seven possible orientations, resulting from these problems. These orientations are clarified by different studies that provide us with key dimensions. Hofstede's four dimensions are highly interesting in understanding the relationship between people in a given culture. They are however not sufficient and must be complemented by other studies such as Trompenaars, Hall, etc.

3-2-1) Hofstede's four dimensions.

3-2-1-1) The dimensions:

One of the major contributions to the study of culture has certainly been that of Hofstede. This classic study consisted of a thorough research in 40 IBM subsidiaries around the world. Through interviews and complex statistical procedures, Hofstede found that

countries could be classified along four dimensions, which define the key cultural differences between the countries. These four dimensions were as followed: .

* power distance: this corresponds to the amount of respect and deference between those in superior and subordinate positions.

* uncertainty avoidance: this dimension focuses on the importance of planning and stability as a way of dealing with life's uncertainties.

* individualism/collectivism: this deals with whether an individual identifies him/herself with respect to his/her own personal choices and achievements or with the character of the collective groups to which he/she is attached.

* masculinity/femininity: this refers to the relative emphasis on achievements and interpersonal harmony which characterises gender differences in some national cultures.

This study has been criticised on several perspectives, but remains an important reference for classifying countries. Hofstede defines culture as:

> the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group to another and which is reflected in particular assumptions, perceptions, thoughts, patterns, norms and values (Hofstede 1991: 5).

This collective programming will create general values, behaviours and attitudes observable in specific cultures. The main criticism of Hofstede's study is its sampling: it relates only to people within IBM, which has a distinctive culture on its own and the population was predominantly male. However, as Trompenaars (1993) explains, several cultural studies have followed Hofstede's work and similar dimensions emerged; Hofstede's conclusions have been sustained and amplified.

Table 3: *Scores on Hofstede's four dimensions.*

	France	Britain	Mean	
* Power Distance	68	35	51	
* Uncertainty				
Avoidance	86	35	64	
* Individualism/				
Collectivism	71	89	51	
*Masculine/				
Feminine	43	66	51	*Source: Hofstede 1980*

3-2-1-2) <u>The consequences on the management style</u>.

Hofstede found that countries rating high on the power distance scale tend to have bureaucratic, autocratic and hierarchic organisations; employees tend to depend on their superiors, whose decision is rarely contested. On the contrary, a lower power distance, as observed in Britain, results in a flattish hierarchy, delegation and autonomy of decision and tasks for the subordinates and a consultative management style (Hofstede - 1991).

Low uncertainty avoidance societies (like the UK) tend to be comfortable in ambiguous and unstructured situations, valuing tolerance of differing views, limited influence of experts, informality, few rules (Hofstede 1991). France, on the other hand, ranks high on the uncertainty avoidance scale, indicating a desire for minimising ambiguity and anxiety and to control the future (Leeds, Kirkbride & Durcan 1994). As Hofstede (1991) explained, high uncertainty avoidance societies emphasise rules and laws to cover all eventualities, safety and security measures and focus on formal procedures. It has to be noted that these rules are here only to relieve the members of the group, but are not necessarily followed.

In individualist societies ties are loose and emphasis is placed on individual achievements, identity and decision making. According to Hofstede (1991), collectivist societies are characterised by individual dependence on the group and an emphasis on contacts and relationships. It is very interesting to note that the UK is the second most individualist country world-wide after the USA. In masculine countries (UK), values are placed on typical male values, such as advancement, assertiveness and action-focused activities. In more feminine countries (France), co-operation, warm relationships and quality of life are more valued.

These studies have also led to the identification of other criteria and factors that impact on the values and behaviours of individuals of different nationalities. Hofstede focused on the relationship between individuals.

3-2-2) Context and time.

Hall drew attention to the difference between the nature of low context and high context societies. Context refers to the *'information that surrounds an event; this information is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event'* (Leeds, Kirkbride & Durcan: 12). In a high context communication, information is to be found as much (or more) in the attitudes of the activists as in the explicit and coded part of the message. Thus, people from a high context background would interpret a message both through what is actually said and expressed and less obvious and implicit signs, such as attitudes or face expressions. On the contrary, in a low context communication, the message lies in the explicit code: in low context societies information is explicitly expressed and people will not let place to their own subjective interpretation to grasp a message. It is interesting to note that Northern Europe tends to be composed of rather low context societies, whereas Southern Europe tends to be highly high context. Low context people enjoy written and numbered communication, whereas high context societies value informal and verbal, face to face information.

Hall (1976) also drew attention to the differences in the conception of time that are to be found cross-culturally. He differentiated between monochronic and polychronic conceptions of time; the monochronic approach prevails in low context Northern Europe where people tend to do one thing at a time, and plan clearly the organisation of their time. On the other hand high context people tend to be rather polychronic, doing several activities at the same time and being rather flexible in the use of their time. In business, high context people need to know and build rapport with their counterparts, to be able to effectively deal with them.

Hall "mapped" several countries according to this high/low context dimension and this mapping has been generally well accepted. France and Britain are in a mid position, being partly low and high context.

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As Trompenaars explains, the time orientation is also observable in the emphasis that groups of people put on past, present or future and in the way they perceive the overlap of these three dimensions; in certain cultures, it is more important to know what people have achieved in the past, whereas in others the future plans are the key to evaluate somebody. In Coddle's "circle test", British people tend to see that the present is strongly linked to their past, but see the past as relatively unimportant; past is used in Britain to predict future. French people tend to have an enormous sense of the past and relatively less focus on the present and future.

3-2-3) Universalism/particularism.

Fons Trompenaars (1993) conducted a study of cultural traits in Europe and drew a specific and original view of cultural factors. He based his distinctions on two well established concepts: universalism and particularism. Universalism implies that people generally apply the same rules, standards or acts in a similar manner towards other members of the society whatever the circumstances (Leeds, Kirkbride & Durcan 1994). Peabody (1985) identified the United States and the UK as good examples of countries where universalistic norms apply. On the contrary, particularist cultures tend to be more "exclusive" as people in these societies tend to operate different codes depending on the situation; such cultures are characterised by strong "in group/out group" distinctions. French people tends to be rather particularist in their relationships with people; this explains certainly why French society is characterised by a large number of rules (related to the high uncertainty avoidance), which can be ignored depending on the circumstances.

3-2-4) Specificity/diffuseness.

This dimension refers to the scope or extent of a person's involvement in a relationship. Societies valuing specificity in a relationship focus more on the goal than on the social part of a relationship. Specificity implies that the relationship will be based on objective achievements, whereas a diffuse society will value emotions and subjectivity in their relationship. In France, diffuseness tend to be very important. This relates to the high

context character of French culture: you circle around the stranger, getting to know him/her and come down to the specific only later when the relationship has been well established: relationships are around love and hate. British people tend to be more specific and neutral in their relationship with others: the goals and the achievements are more important and will condition the result of the relationship: relationships are more rational and are around approval/disapproval (Trompenaars 1993).

3-2-5) Achievement/Ascription.

This distinction is highly significant; it relates to the way status is accorded to people in a society. In an achievement focused society, (Britain), people are evaluated against what they have done and what they would bring to the community or achieve. On the contrary in France, people's status highly depend on their age, qualification (where you have studied) and their social class; in France, people are ascribed their status according to their educational background, whereas in Britain people tend to achieve their status.

These studies mentioned above are the main cross cultural studies; they appear to be also highly reliable in understanding the European cultural differences. These different dimensions enable us to understand French and British cultures better and see what makes them different.

3-3) a cultural mapping of France and Britain.

Although one can criticise the studies mentioned above for being based on exaggerated stereotypes, they make the approach to foreign cultures easier by grouping countries in clusters, presenting similar characteristics and features. The most obvious clusters are: Northern and Latin/Mediterranean Europe. Even if France and Britain tends to be average on each dimension, they clearly differ in line with this Northern/Southern Europe distinction. Relating observable characteristics to metaphors, Gannon's work (1994) turns out to be very interesting: French wine for France and the traditional British house for Britain. These metaphors are linked to the behaviours, attitudes and values of each country; thus,

Gannon, not only uses the existing cross cultural theory, he also tries to describe the ground for these cultural attributes. We can certainly criticise Gannon for being too stereotypical and with an American biased view, but stereotyping in cultural research is unavoidable.

3-3-1) France.

Gannon (1994) drew some analogies between French wine and the French society. French wine has certain attributes that accurately relate to the French way of life and of thinking; regulations and rules, classification, purity, maturation and quality of life are all attributes of the French culture. We will describe in the next section, each of these attributes and see how they relate to the values, attitudes and behaviours observed in France.

3-3-1-1) Regulations:

French people have inherited from the Roman culture a sense of Grandeur and Pageantry as well as an affinity for control and bureaucracy; French history has been characterised by a series of divisions (regional, religious) which are mainly due to the geographical heterogeneity of the country: regional cultures are very strong. Throughout history, efforts have been made to create rules and regulations that give certainty, definition and order to the French life and guarantee the preservation of a particular quality and tradition: French people, due to their animated history, need security and certainty; this can be perceived through Napoleon's effort to strictly codify civil law. This is reflected by the high score of France on Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance scale.

French people are not risk takers and need to know in which environments they are evolving, as uncertainty brings unease and implies a lack of control; this also implies that French people need to know how a person thinks and reacts in certain situations before trusting him/her and building a potential co-operation. Thus uncertainty is handled by becoming familiar with the person with whom one is doing business: communication is a key asset of French culture and building relationships can be a long process.

3-3-1-2) classification:

As with French wine, the French society is clearly stratified, classified and social mobility is not encouraged. This tends to be fairly well accepted. Relationships and conversations are highly regulated and the power of decision is constantly centralised: superiors take the decisions and the subordinates implement them. This strong power distance (Hofstede 1991) also relates to the necessity for centralised power to maintain unity in a very diversified country. This centralisation is also a result of the long lasting influence of the Romans; autocratic behaviours in business are very common, as managers display almost total control over their subordinates; few decision can be made without the approval of the top.

Strong classification results in a lack of social mobility: people's education and career opportunities depend on the social class in which they are born. This is reinforced by the education system: the business elite is always to be found among those who had the opportunity to be educated in the top institutions. Elitism is a very cherished aspect of French culture and is well accepted. In France, status tend to be ascribed according to the excellence of the academic background.

France is in a middle position in the low/high context dimension defined by Hall (1976); high context behaviours are to be found in the importance of informal communication (French people do not need written and explicit communication), whereas the bureaucratic, centralised and autocratic organisation make them rather low context. It has however to be noted that these rules only serve as a security guaranty and that they do not necessarily have to be followed: in that sense, French people are highly particularist and their reactions tend to differ according to the situations and settings.

3-3-1-3) The form and elegance.

As we saw before, Roman culture brought a strong sense of Grandeur and Pageantry; from the epic eras of Renaissance and French Revolution emerged the idea that France is the

guardian of universal values. This is to be found in the French notion of "savoir vivre", which fosters a preoccupation for form and elegance (for example French fashion).

This sense of elegance is also to be found in the French way of thinking. René Descartes has influenced French thinking: his desire to make man the master of nature led him to ponder a rational meaning of the universe; Descartes has been described as the intellectual father of the French preoccupation with form. His assumption "I think, therefore I am" lead him to seducing conclusions, which were not always accurate. French people tend to emphasise the form of action rather than the results. Savoir-vivre, related to the high rating on the femininity dimension (French people value the aesthetic and artistic aspect of things) combined with Cartesianism has led French people to be more preoccupied by form than by substance. This preoccupation for image over strict information is to be found in nearly every aspect of life in France, and particularly in the relationships between people, which tend to be regulated and formalised: the person in charge is very recognisable.

This preoccupation for form has a strong impact on the French management style. French people value the way someone speaks as much as what is actually said and they love to discuss abstract and complex ideas.

3-3-1-3) a strong sense of the group.

As we have seen, French people value the quality and pace of life; being a "bon vivant" is a typical French concept. We also have seen that French people tend to be particularist, which results in different behaviours depending on the situation. Also, French people tend to be individualistic in their approach to life: they value their quality of life and like to differ from each other. However, it is essential to bear in mind that French people tend to develop a strong loyalty and fidelity to the group that they belong to. This is linked with the strong hierarchy and elitism that we mentioned earlier. Family is a very important part of French life.

The importance of the group is linked with the high uncertainty avoidance tendency: French people dislike uncertainty and prefer to be in familiar situations; they like long lasting relationships as they feel more comfortable with a group of people they know well. This deep seated need for security makes the group very important.

Building the group is a long lasting maturation process. As we have seen above, French people like long lasting relationships; trust and friendship are slow to build and must be carefully cultivated, as communication depends highly on emotions. French are careful not to overexpose themselves before a solid relationship is established.

3-3-1-4) A quick view of French culture.

As we have seen, Hofstede's dimensions and the other identified dimensions are interesting to describe France. To be fully understood, French culture has to be linked to its history, which impacts greatly on the way that contemporary French people think and operate in the modern environment. Grandeur, prestige, friendship and the need for security are important aspects of this country. This is certainly linked to the glories of its past. Conversation is very important for people as this conveys implicit information on which to build judgement. French people are also characterised by a very strong need for security: the regional and social diversity of the country made it difficult to build unity, which has been maintained by a strong bureaucracy and centralisation; Even today, French people have a strong sense of identity and like to be different within the community, so that this centralisation is still needed.

3-3-2) Britain.

Gannon (1994) uses the metaphor of the traditional British house for British culture: the strong foundation, its rational and long lasting character, the rigidity with which it is built appears to apply to the British attributes, values and behaviours.

3-3-2-1) Traditions.

When speaking about Britain, people will immediately think of the monarchy, the pageantry and splendeur of the ceremonies and of the acknowledged power of the Queen. Britain's history is one of domination over the world from the 1500s to the second World War. British supremacy in every domain (military, economic, political) forms a strong foundation of British culture. British people tend to see the past as highly related to the present and the future: they need a solid basis on which to act, judge or communicate. As in the British house, foundations need to be long lasting, solid and oriented towards the future. British people are monochronic (Hall 1976): British people see time as a linear process and the past impacts heavily on the present and future achievements.

This importance of the past has fostered a certain conservatism and strong rules determining how to behave in particular settings. There is only one "right" way to do things and British people would resent breaking the rule. This strong sense of tradition aims also at maintaining the unity of the country. Past, Present and Future are united in the crown. Furthermore, it has to be noted that Britain has always had a very strong insular attitude (see the British resistance to European Unity). As Gannon (1994: 25) put it, *'Britain has always been a jealous guardian of its freedom of action, proud of its solitude'*. This relates to the high individualism as observed by Hofstede (1991): Britain is the second most individualistic country after the USA.

3-3-2-2) Reserve and privacy.

Britain is a small and populated country; people do not have a lot of room and have to live together. This certainly explains the need for privacy that makes British people cold and indifferent (psychological distance). British people tend to be very cautious when communicating with new people, as they are scared to intrude on individual privacy and to create an uncomfortable situation. The British communication style is characterised by subtlety, imprecision and vagueness; British people tend to deal well with uncertainty (Hofstede 1980); this also relates to the mid position of Britain on the low/high context

dimension: British people tend to be low context, as they value written and numbered communication (to avoid the imprecision of oral communication), but the context of the event is also very important to make up for the scarcity of information.

In addition, British people learn good manners at a very young age and are encouraged to control their spontaneity; spontaneity is not valued as it might embarrass the neighbours and cause uncomfortable situations. Politeness and modesty is a very strong asset of British culture. Respect for differences and fair judgement are two typical values. As we will see later, the British social system tends to be complex; this however does not result in a strong bureaucracy and hierarchy as in France. Britain has always been characterised by a multitude of communities (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), which respect and live with each other, but which keep a certain autonomy and maintain their specificity; this is also true of British people, whose individualism translates into a certain non-conformism and eccentricity that enables them to differ from the traditional way of life. Britain rates low on Hofstede's power distance scale (1980); British people respect the differences between them and do not hesitate to delegate decisions.

3-3-2-3) Orderliness and hierarchy.

Social differentiation is very strong in Britain: British people have developed a strong sense of belonging to a group. As Gannon (1994: 29) put it, *'British people are experts in classifying each other by tiny details of speech, manner and dress'*. The "U", "Non-U" (Upper/Non Upper class) is only one obvious distinction: differentiations are also made in terms of regions, interests, and are obvious through external signs, such as colours of the college where one studies or scarves of the football club one supports. One is born into a class and it is difficult to move from one class to another as these classes are characterised by tacit rules. Furthermore, the past education system tended to reinforce this lack of social mobility; this however is less true nowadays, since universities tend to be more open to lower classes.

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However, this strong sense of belonging to a particular social class does not imply a strong and complex hierarchy. On the contrary, British social and managerial systems tend to be flattish and social status is more attributed with respect to the past achievements and performance; as we have seen earlier British people tend to be individualistic and masculine: they are more action oriented; British managers do not resent delegating decision making as soon as the subordinates are regarded as competent.

3-3-2-4) A strong sense of the group.

As mentioned earlier, British people have developed a strong sense of belonging to a particular group. They value harmony in the group; this is certainly due to the necessity of unity within the territory in order to build a stable and prosperous country. As Hall highlighted, British people tend to be very universalist, which means they apply the same strict rules in every situation: they value fairness of judgement and objectivity. This relates to the specificity of British people: relationships are more about approval/disapproval with respect to the "right" way of doing things. People are judged with respect to what one brings to the group and people have to fit in to fully contribute. As Gannon (1994) explains, motivation comes when British people see work as useful to themselves and to the group, striving towards a common goal. British managers will value hard work, education, ambition and the ability to succeed in a particular group as the main basis on which to judge an individual.

3-3-2-5) A quick view of British culture.

The dimensions described earlier in this chapter turn out to be very useful in understanding British values and attitudes. Traditions, conservatism, tolerance and individualism are the main attributes of this culture. Traditions and history are very important as it presents a strong foundation for the present and the future. Communication is characterised by a strong respect for privacy and British people would resent asking for private information, fearing the creation of an embarrassing situation. Although strong, The social hierarchy is very simple and delegation is one of the keywords in understanding

British management style. British people value the group and people's status depends on their contribution to the group.

As Trompenaars (1993) maintains, these cultural attributes have a very strong impact on the way companies work and are organised; the choice of procedures, the communication style, the hierarchy and the priorities will be different. However the way a company is organised does not only depend on its nationality and on the nationality of the managers; other factors (e.g. the corporate culture) impact greatly on management practices.

3-4) The corporate culture.

As we have seen earlier culture is the result of interaction between people within a group responding to common problems. The results of these interactions is the building of common subconscious values and norms. As described above, the first most obvious level of culture is the national/regional level. However, corporations, by grouping people striving towards a common goal create their own sets of values and norms. In the words of Wilson and Rosenfeld (1990: 229):

> corporate culture is the basic values, ideologies and assumptions which guide and fashion individual and business behaviour. Values are evident in core tangible factors such as stories, ritual, language, jargon, office decoration, prevailing modes of dress among staff .

Corporate culture is about: values, norms and assumptions observable in the way organisations work. Organisational culture can be defined as *the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organisation from another'* (Hofstede 1991: 180). The question remains: what are the factors that impact on the development of a particular culture in a specific organisation, that will make it different from another?

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3-4-1) Differences between national and corporate cultures.

Hofstede (1991) conducted a study in the 80s on corporate cultures to complement his work within IBM on national culture; this study appears to be very valuable in understanding the differences between national and organisational cultures. Both concepts are characterised by different manifestations:

- national cultures, as we have seen earlier, are marked by fundamental differences in values, such as distinctions between "good" and "bad". These values will influence the more objective way people live and act within a particular culture. These values are acquired at a very early age and will be part of an individuals' programming.

- on the contrary, corporate culture resides in practices and far less in values. These practices are learned in the workplace and acquired at an adult age. Shared perceptions of daily practices can be seen as the core of an organisation's culture and these are observable through shared heroes, symbols and rituals.

3-4-2) The different factors.

In a study conducted by Hofstede in the 80s (Hosftede 1991) in 20 Dutch and Danish organisations, it appears that corporate cultures are heavily influenced by the environment and jobs of the organisation. Trompenaars (1993) also explained that cultural preferences operating across Hofstede's four dimensions influence the models people give to organisations and the meaning they attribute to them.

3-4-2-1) the influence of national culture.

Organisations are founded and administered by people who have specific cultural backgrounds, due to the way in which they have been educated and the country in which they are born. Thus it is consistent to maintain that these cultural specificities are to be found in the way companies are organised. Values of leaders will influence the meanings people will give to the organisation.

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Trompenaars (1993) highlighted in his book that companies in different countries are founded around major cultural traits: role ascription, power distance, individualism/collectivism, etc..

* Most common type of French companies:

French companies corresponds to what Trompenaars describes as the Family type organisations, with a strong hierarchy and face to face diffuse relationships; the relationships between members of the company will vary depending on the family links between them. The strong power distance, diffuseness, particularism and ascription according to age, experience and authority that we have highlighted in the previous paragraphs are certainly key explanations for these characteristics.

* Most common type of British companies:

On the contrary, British companies correspond more to the Trompenaars' guided missile type, where people have specific tasks and work with shared objectives . Status are ascribed according to the contribution of the individual to the group and professionalism is emphasised. This type of culture is more egalitarian and hierarchies are rather flat. British low power distance, high universalism and achievement orientation relate to these types of organisation.

When conducting his project on corporate cultures, Hofstede observed that values played a significant although small role on the way an organisation works (Hofstede 1991). As Hofstede explains, the national cultural aspects are to be found at the top level of the organisation: founders and senior managers work on organising, setting up procedures and imposing principles which constitute a general framework of values. However corporate culture also appears to be influenced by the organisations' environment, which influences the practices within the organisation.

3-4-2-2) <u>The impact of the environment</u>.

Organisations operate on different markets, use different technologies, employ different types of people with different backgrounds; this can be described as the business or industry background. Organisations also have specific histories that are made of different old and more recent events. These impact heavily on the rituals, heroes and symbols that people will develop within the organisation.; in the particular framework set up by senior managers, people are operating and developing everyday practices, heroes (model of people that they would obey and follow), rituals (activities that make the everyday life of the organisation) and symbols (Pictures on the wall, uniforms, logo) that show that they belong to the group. These features are the core of the corporate culture and depend on objective characteristics of the organisation.

* The business or industry background:

This dimension will influence whether a company is characterised by a large number of employees or, on the contrary, large technical investments. It will also determine whether the process or the results are important. This aspect will determine the type of administration of the company and the type of employees working in it. In companies where technical investment is very important, engineers tend to represent a major part of the staff, whereas in companies who are more service oriented, the staff tend to be more commercial or administrative.

This industry background will also heavily influence the type of market the organisation will be operating in: types and importance of relationships with customers will vary. This will also influence the difficulties the companies will encounter and the different types of solutions that will be developed. This will also influence the type of heroes identified by employees and also the objective signs (e.g. logo) developed to differentiate the company from its competitors.

* The history of the company.

Organisations often have a specific history, made of crisis, successes, mergers or acquisitions. These events, either recent or fairly old, will influence the way an organisation develops. A company will find solutions to different problematic situations, that might result in structural or process changes or in changes of personnel; these changes can be the result of the introduction of new technologies for example. This can also be due to a merger with another company which brings in its own practices.

The history of the company will also explain what type of events take place regularly and become traditions: meals, celebrations, etc. These corporate traditions are very strong factor for employees to identify with their company.

Conclusion.

This chapter aims to explain what culture really is and what are the differences between France and Britain. These two countries, although only separated by the Channel appear to differ heavily on the national cultural point of view: French people tend to value *grandeur*, prestige, security, bureaucracy and oral communication, whereas British people prefer more egalitarian relationships, traditions, privacy and tolerance. These features will impact on the way people will interact, communicate and assess each other. This will also impact on the type of information and organisation they set up. We have seen above that the socialisation processes are very important in explaining the cultural differences; part of this socialisation process operates through the education system.

CHAPTER 4) the making of managers in France and in Britain.

Introduction.

> Different countries train managers at different levels for different purposes. The scope and emphasis of any system are products of unique historical configurations. They are shaped by a country's economy, its management structure, its educational, social and cultural traditions ....(Barsoux & Lawrence)

We have seen in chapter 2 that the cultural factors impact heavily on the way organisations and business are driven. The socialising process plays a very important role in explaining the differences in thinking, organising and acting between countries. The education system is one of the main parts of this socialisation process, as it influences the values and beliefs of people. As David Grove (Personnel n°337 - Nov./Dec. 1992) explains, understanding the education system is very important as it explains the types of managers companies will be recruiting and thus the way they will approach the selection procedures. France and Britain differ in their education systems. We will analyse the making of managers in both countries and highlight the major differences.

4-1) The making of managers in Great Britain.

We can find in British literature a recent preoccupation with comparing the British making of managers with management education and training in other European countries. British companies have recently begun to recruit managers of other nationalities as they are faced with a shortage of people with adequate qualifications in their own country (William Archer, Andrew Crisp 1992).

4-1-1) The background.

Character, initiative, energy and imagination have always been more important than knowledge or intellect in Britain (Handy 1988). British culture values achievements of individuals and the glorious past of Britain shows that "Great Men" matter: British culture is characterised by a valorisation of the individual human qualities and talents. Furthermore, industrial occupations have long had a low status in British minds (Lawrence 1993); this can

be found in the different "industrial novels" of mid nineteenth century. British people have always given a negative connotation to the word "manager", which was used to describe low service functions. Business was in general badly regarded and Business Schools did not enjoy a good reputation. This situation began changing only after World War II, when organisations became aware of the importance of having professional managers, with formal managerial training and education.

Nowadays, the situation is highly different with companies developing their own management training centres, more professional institutes proposing qualifications of a very good quality and more universities offering business and management related courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, the recent literature in this field shows that more needs to be done, as a majority of people entering managerial roles are untouched by formal management education or training. In Britain, only 24% of top managers are educated at university degree level, whereas this percentage rises up to 85% in the USA and 65% in France (Handy 1988). We will see that this characteristic is linked to the specific education system and making of managers in Britain.

4-1-2) The education system and its evolution.

We will first deal with the evolution of the education system since World War II, as this period is marked by the emergence of management related education and managerial qualifications.

4-1-2-1) <u>The historical evolution</u>.

Following Handy's (1988) chronology, the British Institute of Management was founded in 1947 and introduced the Diploma in Management Studies. A specificity of the British employment market was initiated in the 1950s by Unilever, which first introduced the concept of a management development scheme, recruiting graduates from universities; this was the beginning of the annual "Milk-Round" and of the development of internal training centres in several leading companies. Most importantly, the creation of the Foundation for

Management Education in 1960 marked the beginning of a more formal approach to Management Training and Development. Two post-graduate courses in London and Manchester alongside undergraduates degrees were launched.

The 70s and 80s have been characterised by a proliferation of undergraduate and postgraduate courses relating to Business and Management. However there is still an insufficient number of people touched by these academic activities. In 1992, 13,600 individuals received undergraduates degrees in business and financial studies, which represents only 4.37% of the total population of graduates in 1992; this same year, 5,300 individuals obtained postgraduate business qualifications (53% of all postgraduate students) (University Statistics 1991-1992 Volume one). Although one can observe an increase of 15.6% in the number of graduates in business and finance related degrees between 1988 (year of Handy's report) and 1992, recent articles suggest that British companies are still faced with critical shortages of qualified people (Archer & Crisp 1992).

To make up for this lack of qualified graduates in Management, post experience short courses and in company management training have experienced important growth. Britain is characterised by a large number of professional institutes, which provide management training programmes and professional qualifications. Having drawn a quick picture of the development of management education and qualifications, we can now understand the key features of the British recruitment pool.

4-1-2-2) The recruitment pool for managerial positions.

One of the traditional cultural features of British people is their preference for learning while working: as Handy (1988: 173) puts it, *'the combination of experience and study makes intuitive sense within the pragmatic British tradition'*. It is quite common to meet senior managers who do not have a business related degree. As David Grove (Personnel n°337 - 1992) explains, the British conceptions of education does not primarily focus on the content of courses but on the ability to learn how to learn. One of the basic assumptions of British

recruiters is that an individual with a good university background will be able to adapt to all working environments.

Even if Business related courses take on more and more importance in Britain, one does not need to have studied marketing or finance to enter these positions. Furthermore, British companies do not necessarily recruit their managers among those educated at university level, who represented only 18% of a generation (Handy 1988), compared with 25% in France. Internal or external management training programmes are key features of the British Employment market and companies prefer to assess the trainability and personality of candidates when recruiting. However, more and more universities have recently introduced business related courses, which include one year of work experience or one year abroad. Although one can observe a more professional approach to management education, the overwhelming belief among British recruiters is that University Education is not a preparation for working life but provides graduates with values and attitudes favourable to learning and adapting to new situations.

Thus, the pool of recruitment in Britain is very peculiar: most companies recruit non specialised graduates, who will acquire qualifications and experience through professional or corporate training programmes. This makes the British making of managers highly different to the French approach.

4-2) The making of managers in France.

The situation in France as described by Barsoux & Lawrence (1990) or Gordon (1988) is highly different. First, as mentioned above, more French top managers are educated to university (or Grandes Ecoles) level than their British counterparts: 65% against 24% (Handy 1988). This, once again, is linked with the French education system, which is highly elitist with highly praised professional education establishments, called *les Grandes Ecoles*, separate from the universities. This system is grounded on French history and culture.

4-2-1) The historical and cultural foundations.

The two typical French concepts of *cadre* and *Grandes Ecoles* find their basis in French history.

4-2-1-1) The creation of *Grandes Ecoles.*

France has been characterised by an omnipresent and omniscient State since the days of Louis XIV. To provide engineers and administrators to run it and build it, the State created its own professional training establishments, the entry to which was highly competitive and led to the creation of an elite. Polytechnique, one of the first engineering schools to be created, was founded at the early beginning of the nineteenth century and, with the growth of the economy, the elite spread its wings and became potential managers for the private sector as well. However, business Graduate Schools have emerged after World War II, even if HEC and a few other Business Schools were created at the beginning of this century, to put a stop to the supremacy of the Engineering Schools.

These *Grandes Ecoles* (either Engineering or Business Schools) are a typical feature of the French education system and have no equivalent in any western country. As Gordon (1988) explains, particular intellectual qualities mark this elite based on the Cartesian tradition of France: rationality, synthesis, logical thinking and most importantly numeracy are the qualities most desired in the professional education and training dispensed in the Engineering and Business Schools. We will see later what consequences this preoccupation for mathematics has for the students aiming to enter these schools.

Thus, *Grandes Ecoles* were first created to respond to the specific needs of the French State; as it appears, these schools correspond to the French elitism and major companies turned towards them during the post war economic growth period (*les trente glorieuses*) to find bright, adaptable and well trained graduates. According to Barsoux & Lawrence (1990) it is hard to specify the exact number of Grandes Ecoles, though 160 establishments claim to the rank. Major engineering schools are Polytechnique, Centrale, les Mines, les Arts et

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Métiers and other provincial schools. The major Business Schools are HEC, ESSEC, ESCP and provincial E.S.C. (Ecoles Supérieures de Commerce) led by Lyon, Lille (EDHEC), Nantes and Grenoble. We will see later the specificity of Business related education provided by these establishments and by universities.

4-2-1-2) *Le cadre*.

Le Cadre is a key feature to keep in mind when one speaks of management in France. Created in the 30s, this word now describes a real, unique and distinct social class, with its own way of life, rules and culture. There are several possible definitions of what a *cadre* is; we can relate the term *cadre* to "manager", but the French concept of *cadre* has different sociological and legal connotations. As Barsoux & Lawrence (1990) explains, the origins of the term in the Business world are to be found in 1936: graduate engineers introduced this word to distinguish themselves from the employers on the one hand and the workers on the other hand. This socio-professional category is now composed of various groups of people who have gained a certain level of authority.

Defining a *cadre* is certainly as difficult as defining a *Grande Ecole*.. To highlight the specific missions of a cadre, one can quote the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Ingénieurs et Cadres (National Federation of Managers' Unions):

> Mere existence is not enough. We must live and have a reason for living. And the onus falls upon the cadres to provide these reasons, to implement them, to motivate others and show them the way, to communicate, and to take an active part in the society, so that progress and civilisation may become one in the hearts of men (Barsoux & Lawrence 1990: 22).

French people tend thus to see the cadres as the moral as well as economic saviours of the nation; a much broader view than the mere Anglo-Saxon managing conception. Furthermore, this socio-professional class is run by laws concerning salaries, collective bargaining agreements and status; the British system is much more informal.

4-2-2) Management education and development.

4-2-2-1) <u>A very selective path</u>.

Becoming a *cadre* in France means following a very selective path and this selection occurs at a very early age: when choosing options for the baccalauréat at the age of 18/19 students are asked to make a decision that will influence the whole of their future career. Although there are more than 20 possible options and one specifically in management and economics, the *voie royale* (best road) is the Bac C (mathematics and sciences), which opens all the gates for higher education. This is related to the French preoccupation for mathematics. When making the choice for higher education, students can either decide to go to universities, which do not benefit from a very good reputation among employers, or to *Grandes Ecoles*. (either engineering or business schools) The later choice is hyper selective, as before entering a *Grande Ecole*, students will have to attend a 2 years intensive preparatory class to prepare for the *concours* (competitive entrance exam) for different schools. Both in engineering and business fields, the competition is very harsh first to enter the best preparatory class and then to enter the best *Ecole*. As mentioned earlier, competition is based on mathematics and it is not rare to see students working up to 80 hours a week to prepare for this *concours*.

4-2-2-2) <u>The different roads to become a *cadre(* (Pre-entry education)</u>.

68.7% of *cadres d'entreprises* are qualified at baccalauréat level or higher (Gordon 1988); more significantly, 36.6% of *cadres* are qualified at "bac+5" level (baccalauréat + 5 years of higher education, which is the normal length of studies in a *Grande Ecole*). In major companies, this percentage will rise up to 90% of *cadres* being educated at bac+4/+5 level (Handy 1988). These educated people will stem from different types of establishments.

* Engineering Schools:

It might appear as paradoxical that engineers occupy the highest number of top management positions in France. Although Graduates Engineers gain a professional and technically oriented qualification, these students are in competition with other specialists (Lawyers or economists from universities, graduates from Business Schools) for positions in administration, finance, banking, or general management. The Graduate Engineers enjoy a high reputation due to their numeracy and mathematical abilities; to better respond to this trend, most engineering schools now include modules on management and economics in their courses.

* Business Schools:

Major Commercial Schools have existed since the late nineteenth century and have been created by the provincial Chambers of Commerce; these schools were first founded as a complement to the teaching provided by the Engineering Schools. With the American influence in Business and Management during the 60s, the approach to management education changed; during the 60s and 70s, different Chambers of Commerce sent members to the United States to study the way management was taught there. This vast enthusiasm for American Management methods deeply modified the approaches developed by major Business Schools; these establishments began playing a more important role in the making of managers in France.

As for Engineering Schools, the selection criteria are the mastery of quantitative techniques, rapid problem solving and abstract mathematical reasoning; this elitist selection has tended to change during the last few years and Graduate Business Schools tend to be more open to students in literature or economics from universities, rather than focusing on *prépa*. students (those who have attended a preparation class before taking the competitive entrance exam of Business Schools).

Indeed, the system of *Grandes Ecoles* (either Engineering or Business) has been subject to major criticism and denunciations in the 80's. Most critics claim that the teaching is too general, elitist and that Graduates do not have a deep knowledge and understanding of Management techniques. However, major companies appreciate these graduates as they are regarded as having strong personal qualities, which will make them successful managers: good and quick problem analysing and learning abilities, rigour, decision making, ability to cope with pressure and confidence are qualities that are often recognised in these *Grandes Ecoles* Graduates. Furthermore, Graduate Schools of management systematically include working periods in companies in their 3 years courses, which force students to apply their theoretical knowledge in real life situations.

Grandes Ecoles Graduates are targeted by major companies; but they still are very rare and expensive, so that smaller companies have to turn towards less renowned establishments such as universities to find their recruits.

* Universities.

Due to the volume gap between *Grandes Ecoles* graduates and the needs of companies (see table 4), university qualifications are as much an evidence of ability for non technical posts as Business School diplomas (Gordon 1988). Although traditionally non selective and more turned towards teaching, research and legal professions, universities began developing more professional oriented course in the 70s, following the model of Paris Dauphine. However, companies still are reluctant to recruit university graduates, as they do not know how to approach these diplomas and French universities still suffer from their traditionally bad reputations as they are seen as being too theoretical and not vocational enough.

4-2-2-3) <u>The managerial recruitment pool in France.</u>

One can notice an outstanding increase in the number of graduates (see Table 4). The major increase concerns the Business Schools graduate, who are increasingly in demand by French companies. As Françoise Dany (1991) puts it, French people are obsessed with studies

and diplomas and one cannot hope to reach a management position without a minimum of 4 years of higher education. The *diplome* will influence your whole career. Thus, *Grandes Ecoles* Graduates enjoy a very privileged position on the employment market even if that trend has tended to reverse due to the economic turmoil of the 90s. Since the nineteenth century, companies have trusted these institutions to provide them with the best talents and further partnerships between Grandes Ecoles and major companies have emerged during the last decade.

Table 4: *the evolution of graduates of higher education between 1983 and 1990 in France.*

	1983	1990	Increase Rate
Business School Graduates	6,285	12,423	95%
Engineering School Graduates	11,866	14,899	26%
University Graduates (Maitrise, DEA, DESS, Doctorat,...) excluding medical degrees.[3]	61,901	90,792	47%
Total	80,052	118,114	47%

Source Françoise Dany (1992).

This two-tier system specific to France is well regarded and appreciated by companies even if heavily criticised and undergoing major changes. As Nicole Bastrenttaz says (Fondation Nationale pour l'Enseignement de la Gestion des Entreprises), *'competition occurs just once, when students take the entrance exam which determines admission to the Grandes Ecoles, at about 20 years of age'* (Barsoux & Lawrence 1990: 47).

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[3] Maitrise is equivalent to the British first degree ; DEA is equivalent to an MSc by Research; DESS can be related to a specialised master; Doctorat can be compared with the British PhD

Conclusion:

The making of managers in France and in Britain appears to be very different; a successful manager in Britain will be able to prove his/her abilities through his/her experience and career; university education is important only as an entry gate to the managerial training centres of major companies. On the contrary, French people's destiny is heavily influenced by what they have done and more importantly where they have done it during their higher education; major French companies will prefer a Grande Ecole graduate because they will see him/her as professionally aware of the reality of a company and as having proved his/her abilities and talents. Major British companies will prefer trainable candidates. We can presume that these differences will impact on the way companies in both countries approach Recruitment and Selection of their would be managers.

CHAPTER 5) Research questions and methodology.

Introduction.

This research focuses on evaluating the attitudes and beliefs of recruitment practitioners towards the question of recruitment and selection in France and in Britain. As Bailey (1987: 4) puts it, there can be various approaches to social research, *'which depends on the nature of the phenomena one is researching and how they can best be understood'*. One can distinguish two opposite approaches to social science. First, one can follow Wilhelm Dilthey, a nineteenth century sociologist, who claimed that humans had free wills, and therefore their actions cannot be predicted and generalised; the second approach consists of approaching social science as physical or natural sciences, as Durkheim did. His viewpoint was based on the assumption that phenomena adhere to underlying social laws, just as physical phenomena follow physical laws. This scientific view, which has been labelled as positivistic, focuses on the exploration of cause-effect relationships in the social arena. Weber drew an intermediate approach, he asserted that social phenomena were not merely determined by social law but were the product of human volitional action; human actions are certainly not random and entirely unpredictable, but rather exercised in a rational fashion, so that human action can be predicted by understanding rational action.

The last 15 to 20 years have seen the emergence in social science of a certain disregard of quantification and the positivistic exploration of cause-effect relationships in the social arena. Weber argued that the use of the scientific methods followed in the physical and natural sciences is legitimate but inadequate for the study of all social phenomena; These scientific methods should be used when they seem valuable; social sciences enable a direct understanding of the phenomena due to the difference in relationships between the researcher and his/her data: in physical and natural sciences, the researcher has nothing in common with his/her data and needs indirect analysis through theoretical statements expressed in quantitative terms, whereas the social researcher will be able to understand the phenomena since he/she is part of the group he/she is observing. Researchers are still divided, particularly in the management field, between using quantitative and statistical analysis or

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more observational methods, avoiding rigorous hypotheses and quantification and relying heavily on subjective verbal analysis (i.e. a more qualitative approach). Researchers have questioned the use of scientific methods, as they doubted that one could statistically analyse and quantify human behaviours in a way which totally ignores the context within which the data was collected. Bailey (1987) asserts that both approaches are legitimate according to the subject of research. We will see in a following section, the implications, advantages and disadvantages of these different approaches, related to the subject of the present study.

In spite of this debate on the methodology to be adopted, different researchers have shown that all research projects share certain basic stages. These stages are as follows:

1- Choosing the research problem;

2- Formulating the research design;

3- Gathering and analysing the data;

4- Interpreting the results.

5-1) The Research question.

Different studies have emphasised the importance of previous research and of theory in research design. A theory should clarify and define the questions, propositions and units of analysis. Based on the first chapters of the present piece of work, we can identify major research questions.

5-1-1) The problem.

5-1-1-1) Previous research.

Several quantitative studies (Shackleton and Newell 1991; Saville and Holdsworth 1992; Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991) have highlighted the major differences in the way the question of recruitment and selection is approached both in France and in Britain. One still does not have a clear understanding of the foundations of these major differences; Shackleton and Newell (1994) have shown that it is the country factor not the company factor

that is more important in explaining these differences. Hofstede's and Trompenaars' studies have highlighted that France and Britain are two culturally different countries (see chapter 2) in their basic values and assumptions about life.

Barsoux and Lawrence (1990) showed that recruitment pools depend heavily on the types of talents available in the country. These pools of recruitment are obviously influenced by the national culture (see chapter 4), but also by the specificity of the candidates that will apply to companies in both countries and thus there are differences in the criteria that companies of both nationalities will use for assessment during the selection procedures.

Hofstede (1991) highlighted that the corporate culture has a very strong impact on the management style developed by different companies; he showed that the corporate culture is not only influenced by the national culture and environment but also by the corporate history, jobs, crisis, successes, which all impact on specific practices and habits. Although Shackleton and Newell have highlighted that it is the country particularities which first explain the way a company will recruit and select its staff, one can also presume that the corporate culture exerts an important influence, as it will explain the type of people the company will attract (in terms of education and qualifications most particularly). We can also presume that depending on the type of qualification the personnel managers have, the recruitment and selection approaches will vary.

We have seen in chapter 1 that more and more European companies are in contact with other cultures, through mergers, business agreements or acquisitions. We have also seen the increased need for European managers. This means that major companies are attempting to develop strategies to attract and select candidates of other nationalities; Wajskop (1992) leads us to believe that these recent trends will have an important impact on the recruitment and selection techniques used by companies.

5-1-1-2) <u>The influences on the choice of recruitment and selection techniques</u>.

Thus, one can identify different factors that may influence the choice of recruitment and selection techniques and procedures:

1- <u>Country's particularities</u>: this groups the national values, beliefs and assumptions, which form the national culture, and the education and legal systems. The education system will impact on the recruitment pool available, and the legal system will highlight what types of techniques companies are allowed to use in a given country. We can also include in this cluster the employment and economic situation, which will condition the need for recruitment.

2- <u>Company's particularities</u>: this is what is commonly described as the corporate culture; it also includes the recent changes that companies have been faced with.

These two inter-related environments will impact on the management styles and on the everyday running developed by companies in different countries. As we have seen, Human Resource Management differs heavily between both countries. Figure 1 summarises the theory, on which this research is based.

Figure 1: *Environmental and cultural impacts on recruitment and selection procedures..*
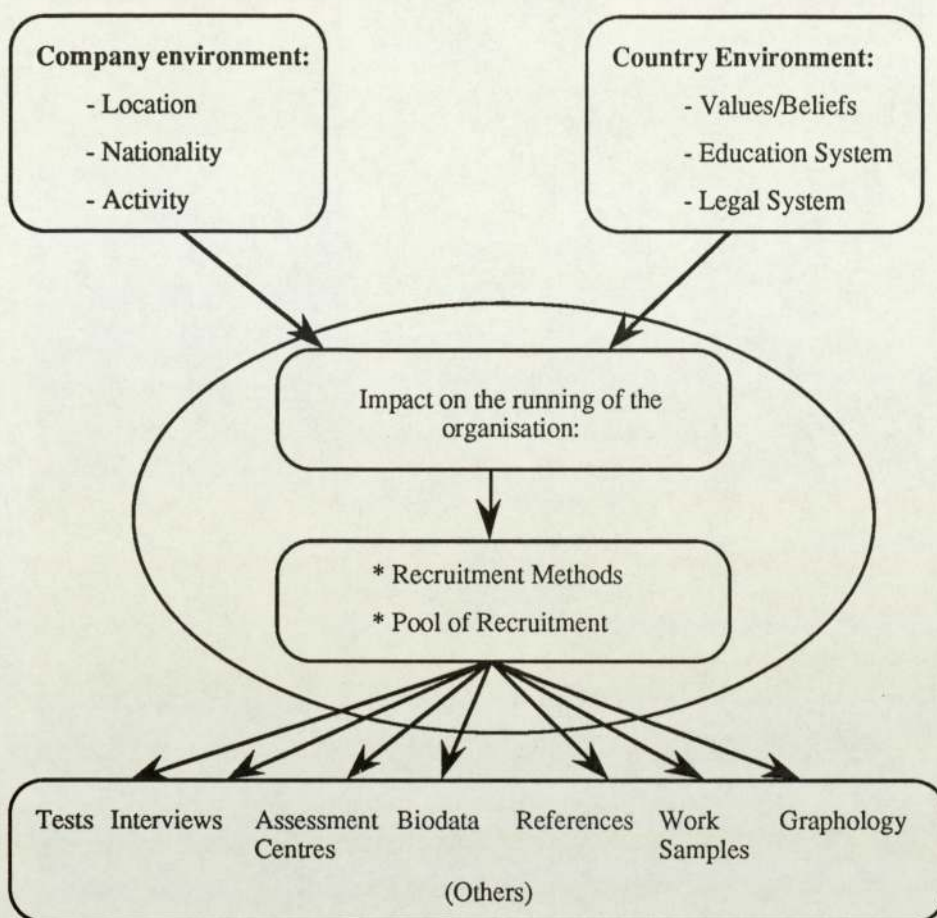
5-1-2) The objectives of this project.

Shackleton and Newell (1991) noted a lack of data explaining why these differences have evolved. This project will aim to understand the attitudes of recruitment managers towards recruitment and selection methods, their expectations when recruiting a candidate and also the legal, corporate and educational framework within which they are conducting their recruitment.

Previous research shows the great differences in the frequency of use of different methods of managerial selection in France and Britain. Thus the goal of this study is to qualitatively analyse the impact of cultural and environmental factors on the recruitment and selection procedures developed by major European companies. By analysing the attitudes of practitioners towards different methods, one will understand why these differences have evolved. One has to keep in mind that this research focuses on managerial recruitment.

The research questions are:

1- Why have these differences evolved?

This central question can be separated in four questions; this will enable the identification of some general themes:

2- What are the external factors impacting on the way French and British companies approach managerial recruitment and selection?

3- What are the attitudes of French and British recruiters towards different selection tools?

4- What are the expectations of recruiters and employers in both countries?

5- What are the main criteria they evaluate when selecting candidates for managerial positions?

5-2) Approaches to organisation studies.

Bailey (1987) proposes a distinction between different research paradigms; one can identify four common Social Research paradigms, that we can define as follows:

* "Scientific" or statistical research: this type of research makes use of Survey analysis and statistical Data-Analysis Techniques.

* Social Psychology and small group research: this type of research makes use of laboratory experiments or observation and the data is analysed in statistical terms.

* Ethnographic research: the techniques used are observation and field notes and the Data Analysis Technique relates more to verbal or qualitative analysis of these field notes.

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* Ethnomethodology: the research is conducted through observation and tape recording and data-analysis is more verbal and subjective.

Bryman (1989) shows that these distinctions are applicable to the specific field of Organisation Research. It is not the object of this chapter to give a comprehensive account of the ongoing debate concerning suitable methodological and philosophical viewpoints taken in understanding human behaviour. One can define two main approaches to Organisation Research; first, a "scientific", positivistic approach, which makes use of quantitative methods and, second, a "phenomenological" approach, adopting more qualitative techniques. The debate is much wider than simply distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, but this section will focus on this distinction and will highlight the different implications of both approaches.

5-2-1) Quantitative versus qualitative research.

5-2-1-1) <u>Quantitative research</u>.

The positivistic-quantitative approach is based on the assumption that there is an objective truth existing in the world which can be revealed through the scientific method where the focus is on measuring relationships between variables systematically and statistically (Cassell, C. & Symon, G. 1994: 2).

The starting point of this approach are very clear hypotheses that stem from a theory; these hypotheses are then tested through a systematic generation of data and statistical measurement between variables. The major concerns of this type of research are that measurement is reliable, valid and generalizable in its predictions of cause and effect. Another concern underlining quantitative methods is that it should be possible to replicate results (which means that a researcher should be able to generate the same data, using the same techniques, as those used in a former study).

Bryman (1989) shows that quantitative methods are particularly appropriate for different types of research:

- when the research is about validating or denying a theory;

- when the project tends to explore a field that has not been researched previously; this type of research, which can be described as experimental investigations, does not depart from explicit hypotheses.

The major techniques used for this kind of research are structured interviews, survey questionnaires and field or laboratory experiments, in which the data is numerically codified and statistically analysed. Bryman (1989) distinguished different research designs and related them to key methods of data collection:

- Experimental research: the researcher intervenes in his/her sample to manipulate the variables and highlight the results of these variations; the main techniques used in this case will be structured interviews, survey questionnaires and structured observations.

- Survey research: data is collected by structured interviews or questionnaires on a constellation of variables and the objective is to examine patterns of relationships between these variables.

5-2-1-2) Qualitative research.

Since the late 70's, one has observed a rise in the place taken by qualitative or interpretative approaches in social research, and particularly in the management field. This, however does not mean that the qualitative approach is broadly accepted yet. Cassell and Symon (1994) as well as Bryman (1989) have defined qualitative research. The most important feature of qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, is its emphasis on the perspective of the individual being studied. Thus, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is much deeper than only the presence or absence of numbers. As Cassell and Symon (1994) put it, qualitative research is concerned with emergent themes,

whereas quantitative research is driven by very specific hypotheses and categorical frameworks.

The key characteristics of the qualitative approach of organisation research is that it first focuses on interpretation rather than quantification, that it values subjectivity rather than objectivity and most importantly it is primarily concerned with context, regarding behaviour and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience (Cassell and Symon 1994); it also is far more flexible in its approach and enables the use of several unstructured techniques, such as observation of participants and unstructured or semi-structured interviews. This unstructured aspect is very important, as qualitative studies attempt to capture people's perspectives and interpretations. Researchers conducting qualitative studies tend to draw inferences about participants' perspectives on a particular issue from the data collected through unstructured interviews or questionnaires.

Qualitative research has been defined not only as a different method of collecting data, but also and most importantly as a different form of knowledge, in which people's understanding of the nature of their social environment form the focus of attention. As Nigel King (1994: 14) puts it, *'the goal of any qualitative research is to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why she comes to have this particular perspective'*. Qualitative research is essential when it comes to focusing on the meaning of particular phenomena to participants and where qualitative data is needed to illustrate and clarify the meaning of the findings of quantitative research conducted previously.

We have seen in this section the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to Organisation Research. More than the presence or absence of numbers, the distinction relates to different philosophies and different types of knowledge. As Cassell and Symon (1994) suggest quantitative and qualitative approaches are appropriate for different types of research problems, implying that researchers can adopt a pragmatic view and use tools when they seem appropriate. We will see in the next section the requirements of the

research questions; this will enable us to determine the appropriate approach to be adopted for this project.

5-2-2) The requirements of the research questions.

The questions that have been determined earlier in this chapter deal with the issue of attitudes and expectations of recruiters of different nationalities. These questions will focus on the meaning of recruitment and selection questions for French and British recruiters. Furthermore, this type of issue is certainly not calculable and quantifiable. This research is based on the findings of various quantitative studies that have shown the major differences in frequency of use of different recruitment methods in both countries; the clear purpose of the present piece of work is to illustrate and clarify the findings of these previous studies.

Hence, one needs flexible tools that will enable the identification of major themes related to the question of recruitment and selection in both countries, such as the expectations, key evaluated criteria, sequencing of procedures and the importance of different tools. It is also essential to see how the recruitment and selection procedures used by French and British companies correspond to their context and distinctive needs. The phenomenological-qualitative approach is certainly the most appropriate approach, as it will provide data from which one hopefully will be able to infer common and recurrent themes in both countries.

5-3) The methodology.

This project will be based on interviews with professionals from recruitment and personnel functions in both countries; these interviews will include a section devoted to the Repertory Grid technique.

5-3-1) The semi-structured interview.

King (1994: 14) describes the qualitative interviewing technique as aiming *'to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning*

of the described phenomena'. The purpose of these types of interviews is certainly not to obtain quantifiable responses, but rather to gain a view of the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and understand why he/she has developed this particular perspective. To achieve this, the qualitative research interview will be characterised by open questions and a relatively low level of structure. As Bailey (1989: 191) puts it: *'even though question wording is not fixed in advance, question content is'*. In order to ensure consistency of areas covered during the different interviews, this project will be based on semi-structured interviews, using a flexible schedule to address all the essential areas, but leaving room for departures if interesting themes emerge from what respondents say and in order to get their own version of things. The interview guide will include general questions and prompts (appendix 1).

This will enable the researcher to address quite focused questions on the approach and perception of selection techniques; this technique is also generally well understood and accepted by the participants; also, most people enjoy speaking about their work and are well prepared to share their experience when interested in the topic. The semi-structured interview schedule will focus on the view of the interviewee, related to his/her specific experience and context. The interviews will be more conversation types interviews, with the interviewer prompting and playing an active role encouraging the participants to speak of their recruitment experience.

There also are disadvantages in using qualitative interviews. First, most researchers, in the positivistic tradition, criticise such tools for not being valid and reliable. However, the subjective aspect of the relationship between the interviewer and the participant is an essential part of the research process (King 1994). One also has to be careful about the validity of interpretation, which can be ensured by using "feedback loops" - returning the results of the interviews to the participants with interpretation and new theories and asking for feedback. Another key disadvantage is the lack of time and the risk to obtain information that is not focused enough; to avoid this risk, the Repertory Grid technique will be used.

5-3-2) The Repertory Grid technique.

One has seen that this research entails investigating the knowledge and viewpoint of Personnel managers about selection procedures developed in their companies. The repertory grid appears to be a very powerful tool to address this type of issue. One can find several guides to help the researcher to use this technique (Fransella & Bannister 1977, Gammack & Stephens 1994, Stewart & Stewart 1981). These different guides present the Repertory Grid technique as a powerful tool to identify individuals' constructs of the world; this technique, originating from clinical psychology, has been developed as a proper social research method in the academic field and is also applied in Personnel Management operations, such as job description. Many researchers have stressed the use of the Repertory Grid technique to supplement or even replace the interview, as it is characterised by a better comparative efficiency and flexibility and generates a better potential for objective validity and reproductibility (Gammack and Stephens 1994).

The repertory grid is a powerful and flexible method to investigate knowledge, opinions or beliefs of individuals. This technique is based on the constructivist assumption that humans are meaning-constructors. The first advantage of the repertory grid is that it enables the promotion of individual autonomy for participants to form representations in language sensible to them (Gammack and Stephens 1994); the elements are not provided by the researcher, as it is the interviewee who has to express his knowledge in his own terms. One thus makes sure that the study covers the areas familiar and seen as essential by the interviewee, who will give his/her own version. Furthermore, this technique can enable the researcher to save a large amount of time and effectively gain usable and valid data.

As Gammack and Stephens (1994) explain, the repertory grid should not be used as a simple quantitative analysis, but rather should be used alongside in-depth interviews, as this will enable a participative conversation between the interviewee and the social researcher, who will then gain a better understanding of the elicited constructs. The combination of semi-structured interviews and repertory grid will enable us to draw cognitive mappings of the participants.

5-3-3) sampling

Sampling is certainly one of the key stages of every research process; furthermore, the sample must be accessible and be of a reasonable size to be covered in terms of time and money. This research will be based on multinational companies, either French, British or of other nationalities. This choice can be justified for different reasons:

- first, the basis of this research is composed of the findings of Shackleton and Newell's survey, which focused on the top French and British companies.

- second, we have seen in chapter 4 that major European companies begin to be faced with the question of international recruitment; thus they are the most susceptible to participate in this project as they would understand the implications of the research questions.

- finally and most importantly, we have seen that in both countries these companies attract every year large numbers of applicants and are thus susceptible to develop structured recruitment procedures.

The companies will have subsidiaries in both countries and be active in recruiting managers in both countries. The sample will ideally be composed of manufacturing and service companies to cover a wider range of activities; it should also include Oil companies as this type of companies are most probably the only truly international companies and it would be interesting to view their approach of recruitment in different countries, given their needs for international managers. It has to be noted that, whenever possible, subsidiaries of the same company in both countries should be involved in the study as this will enable to draw some direct comparisons and will enable to measure the impact of the head-quarters on the choice of recruitment procedures. The personnel and/or recruitment managers will be contacted.

Given the short amount of time available the number of interviews will probably be between 10 and 15 interviews in both countries; thus we will have two obvious groups of companies (companies in France and companies in Britain, between which one will be able to draw some comparisons). It will probably not be possible to have every company participating in both countries. However, these companies would be very interesting case studies to illustrate the general results of the interviews. It is regrettable that the sample is of a

relatively small size and that the focus of this study is on multinationals. However, one has to keep in mind that the purpose of this study is not to gather statistical data about recruitment in Europe (which is already available) but rather to define general attitudes and trends in both countries to illustrate and clarify this quantitative information.

We have seen in this section the samples of companies that will be targeted for this study. The next stage of the research process is to gather data and analyse them; these themes will be found in the next sections.

5-3-4) Gathering data.

5-3-4-1) The interviews.

The interviews will be normally between one and two hours long, depending on the time the interviewees will be prepared to spare for this project. The following areas will be addressed:

1- Role of the head-quarters;

2- Strategic issue of recruitment;

3- Selection methods used, importance and justification of these methods;

4- Perception of the existing methods and of other methods, which are not necessarily used;

5- Future evolution;

6- Repertory grid.

These different areas have been defined with the help of the literature research and have been identified as being either essential for this project (areas 3 and 4) or peripheral (areas 1 and 2) but susceptible to raise current problems or domains of reflection, that will lead to a deepening of our understanding of the values of the interviewees towards recruitment.

The interview schedule (see appendix 1) gives only key areas to be covered. It might be modified through use adding probes or even whole topics that were not originally included but that have emerged in interviews and modifying certain questions that were either not clear enough or not adequate for the original purpose of the study. The interview schedule will be absolutely identical for all participants and will be translated in French and English, with both versions covering the same areas. However, there is a strong risk of misinterpretation, all the more because the interviewer is not an English native speaker. This risk will be limited by taping the discussions (when accepted), taking notes and most importantly sending the results of the interviews with interpretations and new theories to the participants for feedback.

5-3-4-2) Conducting the repertory grid technique.

The interviewees will be asked to list different element, which will be the different selection methods that they knows; they will then be asked in a set of three cards to explain "what do two cards have in common that makes them different from the third". The operation will be repeated until the participants does not see anything to add; this will enable to view some key constructs: these constructs will be transcribed in a scale with two opposite meanings at each end (e.g. nice/unpleasant or friendly/aggressive); these constructs thus form scales, on which the interviewees will be asked to score the different listed elements; this scoring is normally done on a 5 points scale. Finally, the participants will be asked to score the effectiveness of each elicited elements on a scale of one to five; this stage can be labelled the top-view question, which is "How effective is each element you have elicited?"; this question is based on the assumption that recruitment managers use a given technique because they estimate that this technique will provide them with useful information about the candidates; this assumption, according to the literature, seems reasonable. We will see in a following section how this data will be analysed.

5-3-5) Data analysis.

As we have seen the focus of this qualitative research is to see managerial recruitment and selection questions through the eyes of recruitment or personnel managers in both countries. As mentioned earlier, the interviews will be taped and the first step of the analysis will be to produce written transcripts of these interviews; this stage is essential, as listening and transcribing the interviews will enable the researcher to be familiar with the data. This section will explain the main methods that exist in order to explore the results of interviews and repertory grid and highlight the approach that will be used for this project.

5-3-5-1) <u>Analysing qualitative semi-structured interviews</u>.

King (1994) provides a quite detailed review of the main existing data-analysis methods, which are as follows:

* *Quasi-statistical approach*: this approach is related to the technique of content-analysis, which consists of selecting suitable units of measurement and categorising them ; the next stage will be to analyse the content of the interviews and code them according to the categories; this results in a quantification of the data. As King (1994) explains, this method should not be used to answer questions such as "What does X means to the interviewee and why?", and as such is inappropriate for the purpose of the present piece of work.

* *Template*: in the template approach, the data is analysed through the use of an analysis guide, consisting of a number of themes relevant to the question. The pattern of themes is revised, as one encounters new themes in the interviews transcript; these themes are interpreted qualitatively rather than statistically as in the previous method. The code book is thus derived from the literature and the content of the research, as well as from the initial analysis.

* *Editing*: the best-known example of the editing technique is the *grounded theory* developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. As Bailey (1987: 54) explains, the grounded theory is developed by *'1) entering the field work phase without a hypothesis; 2) describing what happens; and 3) formulating explanations as to what happens on the basis of observation'*. The main characteristic of the grounded theory is that researchers utilise observation as the basic data-gathering method, and that particular emerging themes are constantly compared with the original textual data to look further into the emerging theory.

* *Immersion/crystallisation*: this type of research requires the researchers to immerse themselves for a long period of time in the research subject and produce an account of their findings resulting of their own attribution of meaning to the subject (this process has often been labelled crystallisation).

5-3-5-2) <u>Analysing Repertory Grid data</u>.

Stewart & Stewart (1981) and Gammack & Stephens (1994) gives useful guidelines for the analysis of repertory grid data. As Gammack and Stephens assert, this analysis may take either or both of two forms: a statistical level using the mathematical properties of the grid and/or an interpretative level, which may define redundant themes.

* *Frequency counts*: this method simply consists of counting up the number of times particular elements or particular constructs are mentioned; this method is highly interesting when a sample of people have been interviewed and one is looking for common trends; when using free eliciting questions (i.e. the interviewee is free to determine his/her own element), this analysis method is particularly interesting to determine which are the main elements mentioned by the interviewees.

* *Content analysis*: this method consists of grouping the construct under pre-determined categories, with respect to content area. This does not appear as appropriate for the present piece of work as the repertory grid should help the researcher to identify these categories.

* *Principal components analysis*: a simple mathematical analysis of the results consists of calculating the correlation rates between the different constructs and the top-view question. This correlation-rate will highlight the main constructs seen as essential by the interviewee to evaluate the effectiveness of the technique.

5-3-5-3) <u>Data analysis method for this research</u>.

As we have seen earlier, this research is about seeing the question of recruitment and selection through the eyes of French and British recruitment managers. The data-analysis of the interviews will be of the *template-type* such as described by King (1994) and explained above. One will be looking for recurrent themes that can be found in both groups of interviews. As explained above, the template should result from the literature research (a priori) as well as from initial analysis. The first template is a very simple one and is composed of different themes:

1- Techniques used and importance.

2- Criteria looked for and evaluated when recruiting.

3- Influence of the head-quarters.

4- Influence of the education system.

5- Influence of the legal system.

These different themes have been suggested in the different literature review chapters. The initial analysis of the data will also enable the effective determination of recurrent themes that are found in the two sets of interviews (British and French), linked to the repetition of arguments and views; these themes could be labelled as sub-categories. The frequency with which one will find certain themes in the French or British sides will show the importance of these categories for both groups of managers. These different themes will be further illustrated and clarified, thanks to the textual data, at a deeper level of analysis.

The repertory grid technique will first be analysed through the Principal Components analysis * which will enable the determination of the major key constructs elicited by the interviewees; a frequency count analysis will then be conducted to determine the number of

times one encounters these constructs in the two groups of interviews. The repertory grid has two main advantages; first, it will provide an objective determination of the different themes that one encounters in the different groups; it will also enable a cross-checking of the interpretation of the textual data by bringing more objectivity.

One can describe the chosen data-analysis method as consisting of an investigation of the interesting and relevant recurrent themes that emerge in both groups of interviews. We have seen in this section the way we will approach the analysis of the qualitative data collected during this set of interviews in France and in Britain.

5-3-6) Other source of information.

Bryman (1989) also noted that gathering documents, such as brochures, practical guides, articles or other forms, is a very rich source of information providing a wide range of data. Such documents will be requested during the interviews but might be hard to obtain as companies are often not keen on disseminating this confidential information. However, it has to be noted that annual brochures edited by key companies often deal with the HRM issues and provide interesting information about the structure and importance of personnel management in the strategy; this data is very valuable for the purpose of the present piece of work.

It will also be very important for this research to evaluate the approach of recruitment developed in the country by tests publishers, professional associations (The IPD or its French equivalent l'ANDCP), as this might enable to draw some key explanations for the observed differences. This will be done through interviews and analysis of the major themes encountered in key professional publications (such as *Personnel Management* in Britain and *Personnel* in France).

5-3-7) An overview of the research design.

At this point, it seems appropriate to provide the reader with an overview of the general research design.

Research questions:

1- why do the differences exist between France and Britain?

2- What are the external factors impacting on the way French and British companies approach managerial recruitment and selection?

3- What are the attitudes of French and British recruiters towards different recruitment and selection tools?

4- What are the expectations of recruiters and employers in both countries? What are the main criteria they evaluate when selecting candidates for managerial positions?

Research methods:

1- semi-structured interviews: 1 to 2 hours long; covering the following areas:

* Role of the head-quarters;

* Strategic issue of recruitment;

* Recruitment methods used, importance and justification;

* Perception of the existing methods and of other tools;

2- repertory grid: included in the interview schedule.

3- secondary data (corporate brochures); interviews with representatives of professional associations and with test editors.

Data analysis:

Template analysis, looking for recurrent themes.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, we have first seen the overall debate that is linked with social research: the aim of this chapter was not to defend or deny either the positivistic or the phenomenological approaches but rather to explain the different types of knowledge they imply. The research questions have then been clarified; the next step of the research process was to design the methods to gather the data; after having described the implications of both quantitative and qualitative research, one has understood that the qualitative approach was the most appropriate approach to answer the research questions. Having explained the reason for using the repertory grid technique and the semi-structured interviews, we have then focused on the design of the interview schedule and on the conduction of the interviews, including the repertory grid section. We have then seen how the data will be analysed to finish with peripheral sources of data, such as papers and journals, which will illustrate and clarify the recruitment practices in both countries.

Chapter 6) Results.

Introduction:

This chapter will focus on highlighting the way the research has been conducted (i.e. the sample of companies participating in this project) and the results of the sets of interviews conducted in both countries. These results will then be discussed in a subsequent chapter. The data-gathering part of this research turned out to be quite rewarding, as it appeared that companies in both countries were interested in the subject and were ready to contribute; this however does not mean that it was an easy task. In the first section, we will see the sample of companies participating; then, we will focus on the conducting of the interviews and on the results.

6-1) The data-gathering.

When beginning this research, I was initially concerned by the difficulties in building a relevant sample of companies in terms of size, activities and nationalities. This project being based on interviews with Personnel managers in both countries, it was necessary to secure access to a sufficient number of companies to gather valuable and useful information. We will see in a first section the sample of companies which accepted to participate in this project.

6-1-1) The sample.

As we can see in table 5, 11 interviews were conducted in France and 10 in Britain. The "X" shows which company participated in which country. This table also includes interviews conducted with tests publishers (EAP and SHL), academics (one in each country) and consultants; the purpose of these interviews was clearly to develop a global understanding of the general context (legal, economic, educational, professional, etc.) surrounding the questions of recruitment and selection in both countries. It has been agreed that the names of the companies participating in the project would not appear in the present piece of work to ensure the confidentiality of the information provided.

Table 5: *Companies participating in the project.*

Companies	France	Britain	Nationality	Activities
* Company A	X	X (*3)	French	Cosmetics
* Company B	X	X	French	Pharmaceutics
* Company C	X	X	Franco-British	Manufacturing
* Company D	X	X	US/British	Financial services
* Company E	X	X	British	Oil
* Company F	X		Franco-British	Packaging
* Company G		X	British	Car components
* Company H	X		British	Car components
* Company I	X		American	Computers
* Company J	X		French	Oil
* Company K	X		Dutch	Electronics
* Company L		X	British	Pharmaceutics
Consultants/Tests publishers:				
* Consult.A	X			
* EAP	X		French	
* SHL Europe	X		British	
Academics	Mr Castro	Dr Neil White		
	(ESC Nantes)	(Stafford Uni.)		

6-1-1-1) <u>Strengths of the sample</u>.

In spite of the difficulties encountered in gaining access to multinational companies, a majority of companies I contacted agreed to participate. One can note that 5 companies agreed to be involved in this project in both countries; among these 2 are French (Companies A and B) and 2 are British (Companies D and E); the fifth one is Franco-British (Company C). Company F, a Franco-British company, is based in Paris and has centralised its recruitment for senior managers in France; this company appeared to be very interesting, as it has developed standardised selection procedures: all its subsidiaries are operating within the same framework of techniques and criteria.

This sample also appears to cover a wide range of activities: from services to manufacturing and engineering. It also includes two oil companies, one of which was involved in both countries. Among the five companies which participated in both countries, two will be used as case studies (companies A and E, see appendix 2) to illustrate and clarify the findings of this research and to see how two major companies, working in different fields, respond to the challenges of the Single European Market. Also, this sample groups companies of different nationalities (although the majority are either British or French), which will help

to illustrate the influence of nationality on the recruitment procedures developed by the subsidiaries.

6-1-1-2) Weaknesses of the sample.

The first obvious weakness is the relatively small size of this sample. However, the difficulties in gaining access to companies, the cost of and time spent on travelling and the time necessary to analyse properly the interviews have considerably limited the possibilities to expand this sample. Furthermore, it was difficult to go regularly to France, and the meetings with French managers had to be grouped on the same weeks (three weeks in Paris were necessary to complete the French side of this research).

Another weakness is probably the greater number of interviews conducted in France compared with Britain; this is due to the fact that I could gain an easier access to French companies with the help of friends and family. Furthermore, one can note that three interviews with different managers were conducted in company A/UK, against only one in all the other companies. This might create a bias towards company A, but one has to keep in mind that the purpose of this research is to assess the attitudes and beliefs of French and British managers towards recruitment and selection and not to understand how recruitment is handled in specific companies; the fact that these managers stem from the same company does not really matter, as they all appeared to have different experiences of managerial recruitment and are involved in the selection process at very different levels.

Due to the small size of the sample and the focus of this research on major companies in both countries, it is difficult to generalise the findings; more quantitative and qualitative research needs to be done but the present piece of work will provide general ideas on which to conduct further investigations.

6-1-2) The interviews.

6-1-2-1) <u>The interviewees</u>.

The majority of interviewed managers were in charge of recruitment or of management development and were, directly involved in the recruitment and selection process; as we will see later, it has to be noted that personnel managers in France and in Britain do not have the same role in the selection process. In Company A/UK, it was possible to meet people who were involved in the whole process at different levels; this was interesting to diversify the perceptions and points of view.

6-1-2-2) <u>Conducting the interviews</u>.

The interviews lasted on average one and a half hour, with a few lasting up to two hours; it was possible to cover all areas included in the interview schedule, with variations depending on the experience of the interviewees. As expected, the repertory grid technique appeared to be difficult to administer. The interviewees were often highly interested in the discussion and there was not enough time to conduct this part of the interview, which normally takes 30 to 45 minutes to be administered; to overcome this difficulty, the number of areas covered during the discussions were limited and more time was allowed for the Repertory Grid part. However, certain participants raised highly valuable points during the discussion and it appeared to be more interesting to continue the discussion than conducting the Repertory Grid.

Another difficulty in administering the Repertory Grid was more expected, as this technique requires that the interviewees be able to list several elements (in this case selection techniques); as suggested by Shackleton and Newell (1991), French companies tend to use a rather narrow range of selection techniques (interviews and graphology), which impede the use of this tool with French interviewees. It also appeared that French interviewees had difficulties in grasping the analytical logic of this technique; although one can presume that this is due to the Cartesian aspect of the French reasoning style, it would be interesting to

further investigate this attitude. However, this stage of the interview has been successfully conducted with 5 managers in France and 7 in Britain, which enabled to identify major themes in both countries, which will be discussed later in this chapter. This complemented the results of the qualitative semi-structured interviews to provide very rich and valuable data. As explained in chapter 5, the data has been analysed through means of a template that enabled the identification of attitudes and beliefs that are typical of both countries.

6-2) Similarities observed between French and British multinationals.

Shackleton and Newell's (1991) quantitative survey highlighted the major quantitative differences existing between France and Britain in the choice and frequency of use of selection techniques. In spite of these differences, multinationals in both countries share some common characteristics, which are mainly to be found in the role of the head-quarters and in the basic purposes of the selection process, as well as in the strategic question of selecting new entrants to respond to the economic challenges of the 90s.

6-2-1) The head-quarters and the strategic question of recruitment.

2-1-1) Role of the head-quarters.

6-2-1-1-1) *General framework.*

This part focuses mainly on the interviews conducted in the 5 companies involved in both countries. In both countries, the subsidiaries appear to be autonomous in their decision making and in the establishment of the recruitment and selection procedures. The selection process is tailored according to the perception of the national employment market. However, this does not mean that these companies are completely independent in the way they recruit their managers. As one British manager working for a French company put it: "international standards and principles need to be developed to effectively recruit an international managerial team"; it appears that in every company visited but one (Company C, where both sides are independent), the general framework and recruitment standards are developed at the

head-quarters level and result in a similarity of criteria against which the candidates are evaluated: increasingly, the groups have clear perspectives on the qualities and characteristics of the people they are looking for and design a general framework within which the subsidiaries operate and set up their own recruitment procedures. Hence, in Company A, the general framework of criteria against which every candidate will be assessed is set up for the whole group: "the principles of recruitment and selection are set up by the head-quarters in accordance with the HR managers of the world-wide divisions".

6-2-1-1-2) *Techniques*.

Although the impact on the choice of selection techniques is less obvious, it appears that three companies visited in France, all of them with British or American head-quarters (Companies D, E and I), did not use graphology and included in their selection process some classical Anglo-Saxon techniques such as psychological testing; on the same basis, Company A/UK (French headquarters) recruited its managers mainly after multiple one to one interviews (3 to 4 interviews) and did not extensively used testing. One can presume that the pressure of the group does influence the choice of such techniques. As well, the American head-quarters of company I/Fr. have imposed the testing of a computer-abilities in all their subsidiaries.

6-2-1-2) <u>Recruitment and selection: strategic issues</u>?

The strategic priorities tend to be very contrasted, as companies are at different stages of their development. Certain companies are more active in out-sourcing than in resourcing their personnel and tend to conduct recruitment at a very low level; however, it appears that attracting and developing young managers is a priority for most of the companies as they tend to develop their own recruitment managers (this is the case in both countries). French multinationals tend to have developed this awareness recently; as one French consultant said: "it is high time companies understood that recruiting is essential: new blood is needed in most French companies, which reacted to the economic turmoil of the 80s and early 90s by restricting their Human Resources spending and limiting their recruitment". In the same way,

British managers explained that graduate recruitment is an essential operation. Thus, managers in both countries maintained that it is essential that companies invest more time and money in the selection and integration of new members in the existing teams and develop reliable and effective recruitment procedures to attract the best candidates.

Further to the efforts in the recruitment of locals, most companies in this sample recognise now the strategic importance of international recruitment and try to recruit, retain and develop international managers; this can be seen through the design of general international frameworks (mentioned above). Thus, company F has developed standardised selection procedures and every candidate for senior positions go through the same procedures in Paris. The importance of international recruitment was recognised by many companies and we will see in appendix 2 the international approach of two different companies (A and E).

6-2-2) Purposes of the recruitment procedures.

It appears that the most striking similarity between France and Britain lies in the purposes of the recruiters; it is first quite obvious that companies of both nationalities are willing to attract the best candidates. Most significantly, it appeared that most companies, either French or British, are not recruiting for jobs but for careers: they tend to recruit managers at the earliest stage of their career to develop their own managers. In both countries, companies are recruiting on a general profile that specifies the general qualities identified as essential for success within the company; this relates to the growing importance of management by competencies: in every company, managers explained that it was essential to define the key personal qualities along with essential technical aptitudes, before launching the recruitment process. Thus, companies are mostly looking for a potential fit between the candidates and the recruiting company. They also now focus on creating teams and thus recruit not only individuals but active team players: thus the purpose of the whole selection process, as explained by the different managers, is the identification of a potential fit between people with key personal qualities, the group in general and the team. Managers of both nationalities also want the candidates to be active and to perform exercises (interviews or tests).

Furthermore, managers of both nationalities understand that recruitment is a PR operation and that the candidates must get to know the company as much as the company will know them; hence, the whole process in both countries aims at emphasising the exchange of information, although this is more developed in Britain.

6-3) Differences between French and British managers.

In this section we will highlight the major differences in perceptions, attitudes and techniques that influence the approach to recruitment and selection observed in each country.

6-3-1) Differences in people involved in the recruitment procedures.

As Shackleton and Newell (1991) identified in France, the whole hierarchic line is involved in the process: from line managers (who will directly manage the recruits) to senior managers (often directors of the branch the candidates will be joining). As one manager explained (Company F): "we should not take anyone until the Son, the Father and the Grandfather have approved them"; this illustrates the importance of the consensus and agreement of the whole hierarchic line. A French candidate will have to go through multiple one-to-one interviews, conducted by different people at different levels of the company:

- the HR representative will look for the attitudes and behaviours that are necessary to succeed in the company; his role will be to assess the candidates' motivation to join the company and to evaluate the potential fit.

- the line manager(s) will focus more on the technical abilities and competencies required for the specific job the candidate will have to hold.

- then, the candidate will be interviewed by a third person (often a senior manager), who will focus on the longer term commitment in the group; this stage aims at checking the potential for evolution of the candidates.

The decision will then most commonly be made by consensus between these different interviewing parties. When senior managers are involved, they have the pre-dominant say in the decision and line managers would resent recruiting without referring to their senior managers.

On the other hand, recruitment in Britain is very often left to the responsibilities and initiative of the line managers, who are trained on the different selection techniques. The role of the Personnel Department in British multinationals tend to be slightly different to that observed in France; whereas in France, the personnel managers are directly involved in the whole selection procedure by conducting some interviews, the personnel managers in Britain tend to have a more advisory and consultative role; it is not rare in Britain for the candidates not to meet a Personnel representative or for this person to form only part of a panel of interviewers; the role of the personnel department in Britain consists more of providing recruiting line managers involved in the process with a framework of criteria and a guide to procedures; this department is also in charge of the training of the recruiters, which is far more structured than in France: as the personnel manager of Company D/UK explained, the role of the personnel department is more a backing, advisory role rather than one of active participation.

This difference was clearly observed in Company E (appendix 2): in Britain, the role of the personnel department consists of providing the standards, training the assessors and monitoring the process, whereas in France, the first person the candidates will meet is the personnel manager in charge of recruitment and a senior personnel manager will also be part of the final panel interviews.

In France, most managers explained that the different recruiters were not necessarily trained on interviewing techniques and were only shortly briefed on the general criteria and qualities the company is looking for; on the other hand, 5 companies out of 7 (Companies C, D, E, G and L) in the United Kingdom have clearly reported to include (or to tend to include) in their recruitment policy a systematic training programme for those involved in the process; these programmes are regularly updated, to make sure that recruitment is done in the right way and that managers are well aware of behavioural interviewing techniques.

6-3-2) Differences in the techniques used.

We have seen in chapter 1 that French recruiters tend to focus their recruitment procedures on mainly two techniques: Interviews and graphology, whereas British managers tend to use a wider range of more "respectable" techniques (Shackleton and Newell 1991). As we will see in this section, these quantitative results were confirmed by this set of qualitative interviews. A frequency count of the number of times the managers with whom the Repertory Grid was conducted listed different selection techniques provides an initial view of the major differences between France and Britain.

Table 6: *Frequency of listing selection techniques during the Rep. Grid technique.*

BRITAIN		FRANCE	
Interviews:		Interviews:	
* 1 to 1	2	* No specification	5
* Panel	4	* Panel	1
* Criterion based	7		
Testing:		Testing:	
* Psychometrics	7	* Professional Tests	5
* Ability/Aptitudes	5	* Intelligence	2
* Verbal/Non Verbal	1	* Projective	1
* Situational	2		
Assessment Centres	4	Assessment Centre	1
Work Samples (stage)	1	Simulation	3
Biographical information:		Self Evaluation	1
* CV	1	Biographical Information	1
* Application forms	2	Graphology	3
References	4	Astrology	1
Graphology	2	Behaviours/Look	1

As we can see in table 6, French managers are far less specific than their British counterparts on interviewing and testing techniques and mention non valid techniques such as unstructured interviews or projective tests; every British manager questioned mentions criterion based interviews and psychometrics, which are among the most validated techniques. We can also note in France the appearance of irrational and subjective predictors (graphology, astrology and behaviours/look). The interviews and repertory grid techniques have facilitated an understanding of how and why these different techniques are used and viewed in both countries.

6-3-2-1) <u>Interviews</u>.

In both countries, interviews turned out to be the cornerstone of the recruitment procedures. However, one can observe major differences in the types of interviewing techniques used in both countries.

* France.

In every surveyed company in France, the candidates go through a minimum of 3 to 4 one-to-one interviews (often this can go up to 6 or 7 interviews) and will be recruited on the impressions they have given the different interviewers. Only one company (Company E, whose headquarters are British) reported using Panel interviews as the final stage of the process; panel interviews are often regarded as a trial that would jeopardise the spontaneity of the candidates: as the personnel manager of Company A/Fr. put it, "panel interviews are never used because they are not natural and are too impersonal". Also, most French managers explained that interviews are highly informal and unstructured, based on a discussion of the CVs: candidates are often asked to speak of their past experience and of issues of general interests; the purpose of these interviews consists of understanding individuals' personalities as well as the ways they organise their ideas - coherence and open-mindedness (which is an elegant definition of intellectual reasoning). This set of interviews aims to establish a potential fit between the candidate, the organisation and the team; this fit is seen as equally important as the technical competencies and abilities. These competencies, intellectual qualities and technical abilities are contained in a general grid resulting from a flexible job-description. Each manager explained that only people familiar with the corporate culture can evaluate the ability of the candidate to work with the existing team; although, all are aware that unstructured interviews are prone to subjectivity, they see this subjectivity as essential; furthermore, they all believe that the multiple interviews will cross-validate the impressions and evaluations. As the personnel manager in Company B explained: "subjectivity takes an important place in the selection procedures, as the candidate is primarily evaluated with respect to the existing team". One can also quote the manager in Company K: "as soon as 4 or 5 people have agreed on taking up an individual, the chance of mistakes is greatly reduced".

* Britain.

In Britain, interviews are also essential as every company in this sample reports recruiting after the candidates have been interviewed by 1 or 2 managers: "interviews are the best way to assess the communication skills and the motivation of the candidates". However, British managers appeared to have a better awareness of the limitations of the interviewing techniques and handle this technique very carefully. As opposed to the great number of interviews in France, British candidates tend to go through only two interviews: one 1-to-1 interview (as the first stage of the process) and one Panel (2-or-more-to-1 interview) interview (as observed in Company D, sometimes the panel is composed of an interviewer and an observer, whose role is to take notes and record information). Most significantly, most interviewed managers explained that they were using structured, criterion-referenced interviews, based on key competencies essential to succeed in the job and in the company. Interviews are prepared in advance and tailored to the position to be filled; the personnel manager of Company L summarised the main philosophy underlying this type of interviews: "past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour and performance". Thus, the job-description specifies key characteristics and attributes that the assessors are looking for when selecting a candidate. It is important to note that job descriptions are less likely to provide only a list of duties as this is seen as "inflexible and not adaptable to the rapidly changing environment of most companies". 6 companies out of 7 reported using criterion based interviews (or to be developing this interviewing technique) as this is seen as the only way to gain a clear and factual understanding of the individuals and to assess them on a similar basis in a context of limited time and resources.

However, as one British manager (Company C/UK) put it, "interviews are always about face-to-face interaction and a certain level of subjectivity is unavoidable"; although it is seen as essential that the candidates have the opportunity to express and explain themselves, every manager explained that interviews cannot be sufficient to objectively assess individuals ("interviewers recruit in their own image") on hard and valid information: "I don't think that interviews enable you to know a candidate properly and to get as much information as you

could do; you can't assess behaviours and attitudes of individuals by only chatting with them" (personnel manager, Company C).

Thus in both countries, interviews are the cornerstone of the recruitment procedure. However, the differences in attitudes to this tool led British and French managers to have opposite attitudes towards techniques such as testing or assessment centres.

6-3-2-2) <u>Testing</u>.

* France.

Only one third of the companies (Companies D, F and I) visited in France reported using tests as part of the recruitment process (which is slightly less than found by Shackleton and Newell 1991); interestingly, these three companies have British or American head-quarters. Certain companies call on external consultants' services. Tests are then seen as a complementary source of information to deepen the evaluation developed through interviews with a dynamic and more prospective assessment and are then seen as the "*assurance- qualité* of the selection process" (consultant of Consult.A). The director of EAP (one of the two French tests publishers) and a consultant from SHL Europe presented the situation of the market for tests in France: the use and design of tests for selection purposes has not been legislated and the market has been invaded by charlatans who claimed to have developed miracle tools (mainly computerised tests). This, along with a low status of psychology (we will see later the reasons for this disregard of psychology in France) and poor qualifications for occupational psychologists (although highly qualified, a majority of consultants in France have clinical qualifications rather than occupational ones), has led to a certain disregard of testing and to the development of "wide-spread wrong assumptions and misuse of inadequate tests" (Managing Director - EAP): in this sample, two interviewees (Company D and Consult.A) reported using projective tests although these are invalid for recruitment purposes. This disregard of testing became clear when 8 out of 11 interviewees in this study explained that tests are unnatural, tedious and frustrating for the candidates; as one French manager put it (Company J/Fr.): "given the numbered objectivisation of the personality, tests risk taking

precedence over the qualitative aspect of the assessment as they provide data which is easily classifiable and reassuring but they are unsuccessful in identifying the originality of the candidate". It also appears that some surveyed managers think that candidates can cheat the tests by practising them. Psychological assessment is often described as an intrusion into privacy (Consult A). Finally, French interviewees tend to regard testing Graduates from *Grandes Ecoles* as useless: "if you are a graduate from a Grande Ecole, it is pointless to test you as you are already regarded as a valuable candidate with a good intellectual level and good aptitudes", as summarised by a consultant (SHL Europe). We will see in the following chapter that these perceptions of tests are the result of a combination of cultural assumptions (Latin attitudes) and the general context of the market in France which is not in favour of the use of testing.

* Britain.

On the other hand, one observed radically opposite attitudes towards testing in the British sample. Pure intelligence tests are used, but certain interviewees criticised this type of test for not being job-related and providing only an evaluation of pure and mathematical intelligence which does not prove that the candidates would perform well on the job. Aptitude/Abilities and Personality tests are used by most companies of this sample. Personality tests are often described as a valid and reliable technique to put more objectivity into the process, as they provide hard data on which to assess individuals' skills, abilities and attributes: "tests are a back-up of evidence for interviews". Whereas in France tests are regarded as a way to dilute responsibility (Company K: "multiplying the methods is only a way to avoid the responsibility for such an important decision as recruitment"), British managers tend to see psychometrics as a good way to reduce the chance of risks and as a sound basis on which to build discussions with the candidates. However, every interviewee seems to be aware of the limitations of personality testing. Company E used personality questionnaires but abandoned them a few years ago, because the personnel department did not feel tests provided any further information than that already gained through assessment centres and interviews. Another perceived difficulty is that tests are often detached from the job and candidates do not always see the relevance to the position they are applying for.

Finally, one British manager explained that the results of the tests are valuable additional information, but often line managers conducting recruitment do not know how to handle the results and do not use them in the proper way (Company C).

The prevailing feeling among British recruitment managers is that companies have to collect a complete set of information to judge the candidate's competencies, behaviours and attributes. Tests are not often seen as a panacea and major companies tend now to develop Assessment Centres type exercises and simulation exercises.

6-3-2-3) <u>Simulation exercises and Assessment Centres</u>.

* France.

As Mr Castro (lecturer at the E.S.C. Nantes) explained, these techniques are still badly understood in France. Simulation exercises are not used in France in a formalised way. Most managers, when questioned on this particular technique, described the interviews and the visits of the sites as a kind of simulation: the discussion is then focused on the technical aspects of the post and the individuals are evaluated against the quality of their questions and observations and against their attitudes. In spite of this misunderstanding of the meaning of assessment centres, it is interesting to note that a majority of managers include in the interviews a short presentation on a specific situations, which, they feel, enables to assess the open-mindedness, intellectual abilities and strategic view of the candidates (Companies A/Fr. and E/Fr.). When questioned on Assessment Centres, most interviewees did not understand what this technique involves (it seems that French managers think that an Assessment Centre is a place). Given the characteristics of the employment market in France, 3 managers (Company C, D and E) explained that using Assessment Centre as part of the recruitment process was unfeasible and unrealistic, but they reported that this technique was used for development purposes. As the personnel manager of Company E/Fr. explained, assessment centres are too time consuming, demanding and expensive compared with the level of recruitment done in France; traditionally, French candidates apply spontaneously to companies (who do not advertise) and the companies have to handle these applications

quickly and make a fast decision if they want to retain the best candidates (there is no "mass-recruitment" situation comparable with the British milk-round).

* Britain.

On the other hand, it appears that assessment centre type procedures are expanding in Britain: most interviewees reported using or developing these tools for recruitment purposes, as they ensure a "standard quality recruitment process" (Company C/UK). Due to its costs and length, companies use Assessment Centres only for Graduate Recruitment: it facilitates a factual and valid evaluation of individuals with no track-record and no possibility to be assessed on their past experience. As one manager (Company E/UK) explains, assessment centres bring a highly valuable improvement to the recruitment process, as they enable companies to assess individuals against the same consistent framework of criteria and to evaluate their competencies on observable and concrete facts, reducing the risk of subjectivity. It appeared that assessors feel they can gain a broader and more specific image of the individual's abilities and that candidates regarded these exercises as challenging and rewarding. Although most companies reported using this type of exercise, the content of the assessment centres varied massively between organisations, with some including tests and others not.

Although regarding this technique as highly valuable, Company E/UK recruiting through assessment centres encountered difficulties in exporting this technique to other cultures and specifically to Asiatic countries where people might be bad at raising their own view in competition with other candidates during group presentations or "in-basket" exercises. These exercises might need to be adapted to different cultures and values.

6-3-2-4) <u>More controversial techniques</u>.

As we have seen in chapter 1, France and Britain make use of more controversial techniques: graphology in France and reference checking in Britain.

6-3-2-4-1) *Graphology.*

It is not surprising that 9 out of 11 interviewees participating in this project reports using graphology as a selection technique: Shackleton and Newell (1991) showed that 77% of French major companies use this technique. Companies D and E, French subsidiaries of British and American groups, do not use handwriting analysis, probably due to pressures from the head-quarters. Among those using graphology, one can note major differences in terms of frequency and importance of this technique in the final decision making. Only one recruitment manager (Company J) claims to use this technique to operate the first sifting among the hand-written coverletters (this analysis is conducted along with a thorough reading of the CVs), which is regarded as providing a first appreciation of the personality of the candidates. More commonly, this technique is regarded as a valuable, flexible and cheap complement to confirm or invalidate the information gathered through interviews and is often used as a resort to select between the final candidates. Although most managers are aware that this technique has never been scientifically validated, managers explained that "it works out of experience": "it can reveal aspects that were not found during the interviews". However, all the managers report to be very cautious when using this technique: they all work with a recognised, qualified specialist (in France, a graphologist has to be trained and take qualifications certified by *la Société Française de Graphologie*) and do not handle and interpret the results at face-value: no company would discriminate and select candidates on the basis of their handwriting; graphology is only a secondary source of information.

On the other hand, graphology is never used by anyone in our British sample and each manager claimed to be sceptical since handwriting analysis has never been validated. This technique is often regarded at the same level as astrology. It is however worth noting that three managers explained that they were sceptical because they have never experienced and

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were not familiar with it (Companies C, D and G). Thus, it appeared throughout this set of interviews that the choice of technique also depends on the past experience of the personnel managers.

6-3-2-4-2) *References.*

Shackleton and Newell (1991) highlighted that French companies do not check references, whereas British companies almost systematically do. It appeared in the French sample that the surveyed managers strongly believe that "references are always average" and are subject to the phenomena of sympathy or jealousy.

On the other side of the Channel, checking references is described as a conventional stage of the selection process; every manager surveyed explained that it is essential to check what the candidates claim to have done. Although they are aware of the limitations of this tool ("they are always middle of the road" - Personnel manager, Company G), references are essential as a confirmation tool, but will not be used to dismiss a candidate (unless they are very negative); this has been clearly observed at Company B/UK.

6-3-2-4-3) *Other techniques.*

It is interesting to note that only French managers mentioned techniques such as astrology or projective tests during the interviews as valuable selection technique, whereas British managers spoke more about scientifically validated techniques. One French manager (Company C/Fr.) even explained that he was convinced of the use of astrology for selection purposes (!): "depending on the individual's astral influence, one can determine some predispositions to jobs by taking into account the sign and the ascendant".

6-4) Britain/France: the distinctive points.

The previous section highlighted the major differences in the techniques used, which illustrates Shackleton and Newell's (1991) findings. It appeared throughout these interviews that both countries are characterised by different assumptions and beliefs when selecting candidates.

6-4-1) Different expectations/attitudes/beliefs: the Repertory Grid.

These interviews and particularly the Repertory Grid technique have highlighted four major themes in both countries that highlight the major differences observed.

6-4-1-1) Major themes in France.

* The selection procedures must be natural/spontaneous: French managers traditionally prefer techniques that imply a certain freedom of speech for the candidates; the candidates have to be able to express themselves without any threats or constraints. The natural side and the spontaneity of the candidates must show throughout the process.

* A general view: it appears that French managers tend to prefer techniques that provide a general and wide view of the candidates rather than a fixed and precise evaluation of a specific aspect of the personality.

* The fit between the candidates and the company: the major criteria companies are recruiting against is the potential fit between the candidate, the team he/she would join and the general corporate culture, as recruitment is often seen as a life-long engagement.

* Education system (Grandes Ecoles) is regarded as preparing high calibre graduates, who have a good level of intelligence and key values (such as motivation and pugnacity), complemented with a good understanding of professional life.

6-4-1-2) <u>Major themes in Britain</u>.

* <u>Professional and validated methods</u>: it appeared throughout this set of interviews that British managers are highly aware of the question of reliability and validity in selection; they increasingly tend to prefer selection techniques that have been validated, monitored and structured. These methods must enable the application of consistent standards and the development of an objective, grounded and factual judgement.

* <u>Active candidates</u>: they prefer techniques that enable the candidates to express themselves and be active. Candidates are asked to perform structured exercises and are evaluated on **their achievements** and the results of these exercises.

* <u>A two sided process</u>: every British manager emphasised the importance of providing the candidates with feed-back; as one manager explained, the candidates must get as much as the company out of the whole process; for that purpose, British companies are tending to develop job-related techniques that enable the candidates to view what the job would be like: a realistic job preview.

* <u>The trainability of the candidates</u>: as several managers explained, the selection procedures in Britain aim at assessing the potential for development and training of the candidates. British companies are looking for factual information that will enable them to objectively understand the individuals' strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate their needs for training and development.

6-4-2) Different attitudes.

Throughout the interviews, it appeared clearly that French and British managers have opposite attitudes; most managers in Britain explained that they are not complacent and try to improve the reliability and validity of their selection process by systematically monitoring the techniques and the training of the people involved in the selection process: this explains the development of advanced and validated techniques such as criterion-based interviews or

assessment centres. On the other hand, it was striking to observe a more cynical approach in France where most surveyed managers explained that there were no magical selection techniques and that the value of a technique, no matter how sophisticated it is, depends a lot on the quality of the recruiters (Companies C, E, H, J and K), so that they thought it was pointless to multiply the number of techniques. As one manager (Company K) explained: ""recruiting has nothing to do with sociology and it is delirious to be willing to multiply the tools, as we will never reach a perfect technique"; the overwhelming feeling is not auto-satisfaction but rather resignation: "it is not sure that we could assess the candidates better and more objectively by adding other methods". This attitude is even more significant when the interviewee in Company C/Fr. asserts: *"recruitment is difficult, it is like negotiation, it is difficult to learn it, you have to feel it."*

Also, it appeared that French managers thought that the subjectivity was essential in the whole process: one of the strongest assumptions that prevails in France is that recruiting is about selecting people who will match the existing team; managers strongly believe that nobody else other than people familiar with the corporate culture can evaluate the potential of the candidates. Every British interviewee explained that the company was struggling to reduce this subjectivity by adding professional techniques involving scientific measures; they also would resent recruiting on impressions and want to evaluate the candidates on their achievements.

6-4-3) Different structures.

Major differences are to be noted in the way French and British managers are informed on the on-going debate on scientific issues of validity and reliability in selection and assessment. Whereas British managers tend to be highly aware of the latest advancements, French managers appear to have a low awareness of the new techniques. In France, the priorities are costs and rapidity of the decision making (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991), as well as enabling several people within the company to meet the candidates, whereas preference in Britain goes to techniques providing a standardised, complete, objective and

factual evaluation of the applicants. This can be explained by the major differences in training and information structures available in both countries.

6-4-3-1) The professional associations.

Professional associations of personnel managers exist in both France and Britain: the *IPD* (institute of Personnel and Development) in the United Kingdom and *l'ANDCP* (L'Association Nationale des Cadres et Directeurs de la Fonction Personnel) in France; other important associations in the field of recruitment and selection are the *BPS* (British Psychological Society) and the *SFP (la Société Française de Psychologie)*.

6-4-3-1-1) *The IPD*.

It is first interesting to note that The IPD has 70,000 members (since the merger between the IPM and the ITD in 1994) against only 4,000 in France (Lee and Limberg 1994); this massive difference in size already explains the different levels of influence that these two associations can assert on their members. The IPD has set up a system of professional qualifications which are necessary to gain membership; it also intervenes directly in the training of Human Resources professionals (Lee and Limberg 1994). The major aspect of its activities is the professional education scheme, which is well adapted to the current topics of HRM; this scheme includes internal qualifying courses as well as partnership with different universities. The association also set up some standards of professional conduct (see the IPD recruitment guide and the IPD code for psychometric testing), which emphasise principles to which the members are expected to adhere. Finally the IPD is now aiming to be recognised by the government and the media as the authoritative voice on personnel issues (Lee and Limberg 1994). Through publications, networking (conferences and local group work) and its training activities (vocational courses and accreditation of courses offered in universities), the IPD has considerable power to update knowledge and skills in particular areas of personnel management and influence everyday practices within personnel departments. This combined with the efforts of the BPS to set up more professional and validated recruitment procedures

through publications and training explains why British managers tend to be well aware of the latest advancements in different domains of HRM.

6-4-3-1-2) *l'ANDCP*.

On the other hand, it appears that *l'ANDCP* does not enjoy an equally influential role in France; its purpose appears to be more modest. Tyson and Wikander (1994: 37) describe the role of the ANDCP as providing facilitative information and sharing a broad educational role. This association groups practitioners and aims at building networks and improving the competencies of its members; as opposed to the IPD, it does not aim at setting up codes of behaviours and practices. L'ANDCP relies mainly on different professional publications ("Personnel" which is similar to "Personnel Management" published by the IPD) and on partnerships with vocational education establishments (as l'ENOES) and certain Grandes Ecoles and universities developing courses in Human Resources Management; it has however not sought to offer qualifications itself in the way of the British IPD. Thus, *l'ANDCP* is less influential and structured than the IPD. Whereas the IPD enjoys some very close links with academia, there is a distinct academic association in France (*l'AGRH,* created in 1990, focuses its activities on providing researchers in the field of HRM with structures such as a journal, conferences, etc.- Rojot 1992), whose interests are purely academic and tend to be detached from professional issues (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991). As one consultant working for a major test editor in France explained, the *SFP* did not have an important role in the field of occupational psychology. One academic explained that the misuse and misunderstanding of selection techniques was due to this obvious lack of structures which prevented the effective education and training of practitioners in the latest advances (we will see later that this situation tends to change under the pressure of the SFP). As Mr Brouard of the SFP explains, this body has a division working on psychology at work; however, this body has long been only an academic association and it began opening itself to practitioners only 10 years ago, so that it has difficulties in spreading information to a still sceptical audience; this explains why the modern methods of psychology at work are still mostly unknown and why incorrect assumptions are still dominant among practitioners.

Thus we can note major differences in the structures available for the information and the professional training of personnel managers in France and in Britain; this appears to be a major explanation for the differences observed by Shackleton and Newell (1991). Both the IPD and l'ANDCP publish professional journals ("Personnel Management" -whose title is now "People Management"- and "Personnel") which are their main communication channel; an analysis of the tables of contents provides an indication of the issues and the approaches adopted by both associations.

6-4-3-1-3) *A comparison of topics in Personnel and Personnel Management.*

Based on the index classification from 1987-1994, a quick brush comparison was conducted in terms of frequency (how often both journals deal with recruitment and equal opportunities related issues) and content (which issues?); during the interviews, it appeared that French personnel managers were not aware of the issue of equal opportunities; given the pressure operated by these questions to establish better practices of selection, it appeared to be interesting to include this topic in the study. The table of contents of both journals are very helpful and indicative of the interests in both countries; in both journals, the tables of contents are separated in sections: "Personnel Management" (IPD) has specific sections on recruitment and selection and equal opportunities, whereas in "Personnel" (ANDCP) recruitment and selection are included in a wider section ("recruitment, redundancy, out placement, remuneration, payment, pension and evaluation") and in other sections covering ethics and international questions; there is no section on equal opportunities. These differences are also significant of the major differences in information available for practitioners in both countries: l'ANDCP provides wider information on general issues, whereas articles published by the IPD focus on more specific issues.

As we can see in Table 8, Recruitment and Selection have been a very important issue in Personnel Management (IPD): 23% of articles published between 1987 and 1994 deal with these questions. On the other hand, only 3.68% of the articles published in Personnel (ANDCP) over the same period deal with these questions.

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Table 7: *A comparison of frequency of articles related to Recruitment/selection and Equal Opportunities issues between 1987 and 1994.*

	Personnel Management IPD 87-94		Personnel ANDCP 87-94	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total	530		726	
Recruitment/selection	121	23%	27	4%
Equal Opportunities	108	20%	0	0%

These differences in the information available for British and French managers are even more significant when one considers the content of these articles related to recruitment and selection in both journals, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: *Major topics related to recruitment and selection in Personnel Management (Journal of the IPD 1987-1994) and Personnel (journal of the ANDCP 1987/1994).*

	Britain		France	
	Number	%	Number	%
General issues	45	37%	6	22%
Graduates	19	16%	2	7%
Techniques	19	16%	3	11%
Testing	12	10%	1	4%
Advertising	12	10%		0%
International recruitment	5	4%	2	7%
Head-hunting/consultants	3	2%	2	7%
Equal Opportunities	3	2%	0	0%
Psychology	2	2%		0%
Irrational Techniques	1	1%	9	33%
Ethics		0%	2	7%
Total	121		27	

The articles have been classified in different categories depending on the type of issues they approach:

  * *General issues*: articles covering the employment market situation and the recruitment of specific categories of workers (Yuppies, part-timers, executives, etc.)

  * *Graduates*: graduate recruitment in general (employment situation, first job, etc.)

* *Techniques*: articles focusing on the use of particular techniques and the setting of specific procedures; these can be interviews, assessment centres or a review of selection techniques in general.

* *Testing*: articles focusing on psychometrics, personality questionnaires, projective tests, etc.

* *Advertising*: how to advertise for jobs.

* *International recruitment*: the question of expatriates and how to recruit and retain foreign applicants.

* *Head-hunting/Consulting*: articles covering the use of these services.

* *Equal Opportunities*: the impact of E.O. on recruitment and selection.

* *Psychology*: articles on occupational psychology.

* *Irrational techniques*: articles covering techniques such as graphology, morpho-psychology, astrology and other irrational techniques.

* *Ethics*: the ethical questions in recruitment.

The focus of both journals is quite clearly different: in Personnel Management, scientific techniques (16%), tests (10%), graduates recruitment (10%) and more general issues (such as dealing with applications of older people, etc.) are the major issues, whereas the French journal deals primarily with irrational techniques (33%), general issues (22%) and presentation of different selection techniques (11%). The content of the articles dealing with techniques is different, with very specific information in Britain (how to use assessment centre or targeted recruitment) and general interest in France (how to select candidates). Also, it is striking to see that the French journal does not deal with the question of Equal Opportunities but deals with the question of Ethics, whereas this question is not covered in Personnel Management. This major difference was also to be found during the interviews: surveyed French manager are more preoccupied with the question of dignity and respect of the personality than their British counterparts who focus on Equal Opportunities.

The structures for training and up-dating knowledge of personnel managers are different between both countries: the system is highly developed in Britain and the IPD journal (one of the major publication in the field of HRM) provides very good quality and up

to date information whereas France is characterised by a less professional approach of personnel management and practitioners tend to be less informed of the latest advancements in the areas of recruitment and selection. French and British practitioners have different priorities (reflected in these publications) which influence their approach to HRM issues and more specifically recruitment and selection questions.

6-4-3-2) Academia/Business.

These different priorities are also to be found in the level of research done in the field of HRM in both countries. Following Bruchon Schweitzer and Lievens (1991) study, the role of academic research in both countries tend to be highly different; this probably explains the poor information available for French managers as opposed to the rather well structured information service in Britain. Research in occupational psychology appears to be very dynamic in Britain, with a lot of quality research being conducted and published as well as some very strong links between the academic and professional worlds through the pressure of the BPS and the IPD.

On the contrary, France is characterised by a low interest in the field of recruitment and selection among university researchers and a lack of connections between academics working in the field on Human Resource Management and practitioners (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991); as noted by Jacques Rojot (1992), research in the field of HRM was poor until 1990 when the AGRH was created; it was only in 1992 that a journal was launched (Revue de Gestion des Ressources Humaines). This can be explained by the traditional distrust prevailing between both worlds: universities have traditionally been regarded as bastions of revolutionary movements by companies; business is traditionally seen as too matter of fact and materialistic to interest academics (not knowledge oriented enough); as the managing director of EAP explained, universities and businesses have always worked apart and despised each other. This mutual ignorance was further intensified after May 1968, as a result of student movements: students criticised businesses for exploiting the work force and rejected capitalism; the consequence was a complete distrust between both worlds which is still to be observed. HRM has always had a low status in France (compared with Britain, the

teaching of HRM in higher education is far behind in France) and it is significant that HRM does not even have a specific section in the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS, National Centre for Scientific Research) (Rojot 1992).

As opposed to Britain, HRM does not enjoy a very high status in France where one observes a major lack of research in the field of HRM and especially occupational psychology; furthermore, occupational psychologists have given up research on selection to focus more on subjects such as ergonomics (Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens 1991). This probably explains the lack of information observed among the surveyed managers in France.

Conclusion.

This chapter focused on the results of the interviews conducted with French and British managers. It highlights major differences in the attitudes, expectations and also understanding of selection techniques in both countries. Whereas recruitment procedures in France are characterised by a certain informality and spontaneity, British managers value more structured and validated techniques; French managers perceive all the techniques of testing, assessment centres, etc., as artificial, indiscreet and tactless setting. We have identified different priorities, reflected in the publications of the professional associations in both countries. To illustrate these findings, we can quote the two managers of company C.:

* the French interviewee asserts: "il faut que les candidats aient le plus de liberté possible pour pouvoir s'exprimer sans crainte. L'entretien y gagne en efficacité et en vérité; ceci ne signifie pas que le recruteur ne sache pas ce qu'il recherche durant l'entretien; cependant, moins l'entretien est pris dans des normes, plus le dialogue donne l'impression d'être convivial" (candidates have to be as free as possible to express themselves without threats. The interview gains in effectiveness and truth; this does not mean that the interviewer does not know what he/she is looking for during the interview; however, the less the interview is limited by norms, the more the dialogue appears convivial).

* the British interviewee explains: " I think it looks better if a candidate is asked to do a lot of different things: the candidate feels the company is recruiting properly and this is rewarding; interviews do not enable to get to know the person properly and to get as much information as the recruiter could do: you can not assess behaviours and attributes of people only by chatting with them. The degree alone does not prove anything and the communication and decision making abilities are to be assessed through different exercises".

Table 9 provides an overview of the major differences observed between France and Britain.

Table 9: *differences between France and Britain.*

FRANCE	BRITAIN
* Natural, spontaneous process.	* Rational, in depth analysis.
* Interviews as the main source of information.	* A wide range of tools.
* A general view of the candidates.	* A measured and specific evaluation.
* Subjectivity is essential.	* Objectivity and fairness.
* The whole hierarchic line involved.	* The line managers in charge of recruitment.
* A lack of information on occupational psychology.	* Good information on occupational psychology.
* A lack of professionalism in the approach to HRM.	* A professional approach to HRM.
* Cynicism in the attitudes to selection.	* Realism in the view of selection.
* Where candidates have studied.	* What candidates have achieved.

Based on these results, we can assert that the basic assumptions in both countries are as follows:

- France: "the more at ease the candidates are, the higher the quality of their answers".

- Britain: "the more information you get about an individual , the better you know him/her and the more valid and reliable your judgement is".

These two sentences are recurrent quote in the sets of interviews. We will see in the subsequent chapter how we can explain these major differences in attitudes and beliefs between France and Britain.

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CHAPTER 7) Discussion.

Introduction.

We have seen in the previous chapter how French and British perceptions of recruitment and selection issues are different or similar. The managing director of EAP explained, these different assumptions, beliefs and expectations are the results of a group of various impacts: cultural, historic, structural. Shackleton and Newell (1994) highlighted that the differences in recruitment and selection procedures between European countries are primarily due to national particularities; the present research enables the illustration and clarification of this assertion. Following Shackleton and Newell, we will see that national culture forms an essential context partly explaining these differences; we have seen above that national culture will influence the law, the education systems and other particularities of a country. It is also interesting to note that the choice of recruitment techniques depends heavily on the experience of the recruitment managers (corporate culture and qualifications). These different aspects will be developed in this chapter. This chapter will relate to the early chapters of the present piece of work as well as to the different interviews conducted in France and in Britain.

7-1) The experience of managers.

7-1-1) The qualifications and professional background.

The choice of recruitment procedures depends greatly on the assumptions and beliefs of those involved in the recruitment process: it is very hard to gain acceptance of new ways of doing things from managers who have always worked in a certain way. In both countries, we will see that personnel managers have different professional backgrounds, which explains their assumptions and beliefs and their sensitiveness towards certain techniques.

7-1-1-1) France.

We have noted earlier that the HR positions in most French companies are opened to successful engineers or managers at the end of their careers: only one manager in this sample is a qualified psychologist (Company D/Fr.) and uses tests as part of the selection process; furthermore, it appeared that only in one company the personnel manager was a qualified psychologist (Company I/Fr.); interestingly, this company is American. Tyson and Wikander (1994) noted that 10% of HR practitioners in France have Engineering degrees and 25% law degrees. Few companies resort to consultants and Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) highlighted that these consultants are not necessarily qualified occupational psychologists: they are either specialists in other fields or trained in clinical psychology; Mr Brouard of SFP explained that major companies still prefers graduates from Grandes Ecoles to fill their junior Personnel functions. Those people in charge of recruitment in France do not have a grasp of psychology and, being relatively old, they are not keen on making the existing procedures evolve (the executive manager of EAP noted a lack of curiosity and open-mindedness towards new techniques among the population of personnel managers in France). This factor, combined with the apparent lack of information, explains the reluctance to use advanced selection methods observed among the French interviewees.

7-1-1-2) Britain.

In Britain, 9 out of 10 interviewees are people with an educational background in management or psychology (first degree or postgraduate course), they have developed their career in personnel and they have been trained and qualified in that field either through the IPD courses or internally; thus we can observe a more professional approach to the Personnel function in Britain (chapter 1, pp. 33-34), which has been developed under the pressure of the IPD and the BPS. The role of the IPD is very important in the development of British personnel managers, as it provides a vocational education to non-degree holders (30% of British personnel managers against 15% in France) and to humanist and non-specialist graduates (24% in Britain against only 3% in France) (Brewster & Hegewisch 1994). British personnel managers of major companies, trained and qualified, are better aware of the latest

advancements in that field. According to the Price Warehouse/Cranfield project (Brewster and Hegewisch 1994), British personnel managers are better trained, with 91% of them following short courses or seminars (against 74% in France) and 59% working on job-related projects (against only 28% in France); however, more research is needed to determine the content of these training sessions.

7-1-1-3) <u>Teaching of HRM in higher education.</u>

Rojot (1992) noted that the education in HRM in France was behind that of other countries, with Business Schools and Universities only recently beginning to include modules and diplomas in HRM in their courses (this was a major change in the 80s), whereas British institutions developed such courses much earlier. Although, all French Business Schools now offer modules in HRM in their general management courses, only a few offer specific specialisation in this field. More significantly, a comparison between the course at ESC Nantes (France) and Management and Administration Studies, a similar course at Aston University (Britain), shows major differences in the approach to teaching recruitment and selection: the MAS course (3 years) offers a module on recruitment and selection of 6 hours in the first year, 15 hours in the second and 6 hours in the final year with an emphasis on the use of selection techniques from theoretical perspectives (validity questions), underlying the general principles. On the other hand, the ESC Nantes offers a 2h30 module on recruitment as part of the general common course plus an optional module in the second year (since 1991/1992), which is intended mainly to prepare the graduates for successful entry into professional life by providing them with some advice; this module does not mention the questions of reliability and validity. The ESC Nantes also offers a specialisation in HRM (3 months) which does not include a module on recruitment and selection. More research is needed to determine whether this pattern is generalisable.

This discussion suggests that France is behind Britain in the profesionalisation process of the personnel function in terms of training of personnel managers, information available and university education of HRM.

7-1-2) The corporate culture.

7-1-2-1) <u>Activities</u>.

It appeared through these interviews that the fields of operations of the company does clearly impact on the way recruitment techniques will be welcome by those involved in the recruitment process. It appeared that in industrial companies (4 in this sample), either in France or in Britain, personnel managers maintained that they encounter difficulties in training technical managers on behavioural structured interviewing techniques and on psychometrics, as these assume that they are able to evaluate individuals only by speaking with them. Changing these mentalities is a long process: this type of company appeared, in both countries, to be the less advanced in the use of validated techniques. It appeared that personnel managers in Service companies encountered less difficulties with the line managers involved in the process, as these were more open to the use of more structured techniques; this research did not give any understanding of why this is observed, although we can assume that this is linked to the qualifications of people involved in the recruitment process. As one British manager explained, it also appears that young managers are more likely to accept new selection procedures than older ones. More research needs however to be done to generalise these observations.

7-1-2-2) <u>Nationality</u>.

Nationality also appears to play an important role; we have seen that the head-quarters often set up the framework of principles within which recruitment must be conducted in their foreign subsidiaries and this appears to influence the use of certain techniques within the companies. Whereas companies of French nationality in France recruit their managers only against multiple interviews and graphology, it appears that four companies in the French sample with British or American head-quarters (Companies D, E, F and I), under pressure of the central recruitment services, do not use graphology and use tests and structured or panel interviews, which are typical Anglo-Saxon techniques. On the same basis, Company A/UK with French head-quarters, recruit its managers through multiple one to one interviews and

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does not use tests as extensively as the other British companies. This influence can be explained by the information and the recruitment principles that the head-quarters provide to their subsidiaries. Companies of British or American nationality in France can benefit from the experience of their head-quarters in recruitment and selection. These are only examples out of a small sample of companies and more research is clearly needed to generalise these findings.

We have seen in this section the impact of factors internal to the organisations that influence the choice of selection methods: corporate culture, status of the personnel functions, qualifications of the personnel managers. Further to these factors and to the general context described above, deeper explanations emerged during the discussions with personnel managers in both countries; these factors are related to the culture and the general organisation of the society: cultural values, educational and legal systems, etc.

7-2) The legal framework of recruitment and selection.

We will see in this section that the legislation on recruitment and selection is not very different between the countries; however, the attitudes, adherence to the law and controlling bodies for the use of selection tools are very contrasted.

7-2-1) Publishing and using tests.

In France, psychometric testing seems to have lost credibility among personnel managers and has declined in popularity over the past twenty years (European Guide - Recruitment, IPD 1990); The managing director of EAP explained that this discreditation is due to the absence of a legal framework, determining the conditions for publishing and using tests in France; anybody can create their own selection techniques and claim the status of a consultant: this has resulted in the emergence of "magical", non valid and non reliable tools which had a negative impact on the image of testing among practitioners in the absence of pressures from the government or professional bodies such as the *SFP* or the *ANDCP*

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although these have recently begun to set up requirements and norms for the use of tests (see later).

The two French publishers (EAP and ECPA) have established the principle of selling their products to qualified psychologists only (this is one of the principle imposed by the *SFP*); this has limited the access to validated tests for companies which do not employ psychologists and heavily impeded the spreading of information. In Britain, this limit also exists but non-psychologist can also get accreditation through training. As opposed to Britain, the SFP lacks control over the use and interpretation of tests as well as over qualifications of psychologists; this situation is now changing under the pressure of the SFP, but France is still far behind Britain (see section on perspectives for the future).

In Britain, the legislation is silent on the use of tests, but the BPS and the IPD have exerted tremendous pressure to set up standard training and qualifications for tests users and have effectively spread information to practitioners through codes of conducts. These are not legally enforceable but are recognised as standards among practitioners (Henley & Bawtree 1993). In 1990, the BPS launched a new initiative aimed at tightening controls and providing better guidance for psychologists working in the occupational fields in the form of a new certification scheme establishing minimum standards for training in the use of psychological tests. This effort, combined with the codes of conduct set up by the IPD, enables these bodies to have a better control over the practices in the field of selection and assessment.

Although the legislation over the use of tests is not really different between both countries, the conditions for controlling the practices in the field of recruitment in Britain appear to be far ahead of those in France. The experience of Saville and Holdsworth in both countries is eloquent: 10 to 15 years ago, this British tests publishers launched short training programmes on specific tests in Britain for non-psychologists and this was successful; SHL France launched the same type of training in France a few years ago, but there are some doubts about the success of these initiatives because French people are not prone to follow a strict deontology and are flexible with rules (Engelhart 1993): being trained on the use of specific tests, practitioners might feel qualified for using other tests. This flexibility with rules

is a recognised cultural trait of French people (although there are a handful of rules regulating French society,, which people tend to interpret and distort according to circumstances, Gannon 1994).

7-2-2) Equal Opportunities legislation.

Both France and Britain have explicit legislation on Equal Opportunities. France is the only European country where the legislation against Gender, Age and Race discrimination includes statutory obligations for employers to produce annual equality audits, but Hegewisch and Mayne (1994) highlighted that this law is not enforced and that French companies tend to ignore national legislation. A law passed in France on the 1st January 1993 forbids practitioners to resort to selection methods that would not specifically aim to measure the professional aptitudes essential for holding the post (this law leaves to the candidate the initiative to prove that he/she had been discriminated against).

The situation in Britain is more virtuous: pressures on employers have raised the awareness among practitioners and have resulted in an effort towards more genuinely equal recruitment procedures, which still need to be improved. The British legislation includes the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), the Race Relations Act (1976) and the Equal Pay Act (1976). When questioned on the pressures on recruitment, British managers interviewed spontaneously raised the questions of Equal Opportunities, whereas no French manager even mentioned it.

The legal structures are not really different in both countries (they are both subject to European legislation), but the attitudes of practitioners are highly different. The better awareness among British practitioners and the differences in adherence to legislation observed in both countries certainly relates to cultural traits; in Britain, where people tend to value tolerance and fairness of judgement (Gannon 1994), practitioners are more sensitive to Equal Opportunities. In France, in absence of strict enforcement and social pressures of the law, people are more prone not to follow the laws (particularist attitude Trompenaars 1993); also, it appears throughout the literature and these interviews that French people value more

respect for the personality and individual dignity, which relates to the French feminine approach to life (Hofstede 1991). These cultural differences certainly explain the different awareness and sensitiveness observed in both countries and the conditions of controlling the practices in the field of recruitment and selection. France is less favourable to Equal Opportunities and controlling bodies establishing best practices are not followed (Brewster 1995).

7-3) How does the education system impact on the recruitment procedures?

We have seen in chapter 4 that the making of managers in both countries is different; this question of the education system and the qualifications of the candidates has been a recurrent theme throughout the interviews in both countries. We will determine in this section the impact of the education systems on the way recruitment is conducted in both countries.

7-3-1) The education system in France.

7-3-1-1) The selective path to become a *cadre*.

Most major multinationals recruit their managers among graduates of Graduate Schools of Management or Engineering Schools called *les Grandes Ecoles*. As it appeared during the interviews with French managers, graduates from these *Grandes Ecoles* are regarded as having strong personal qualities, being numerate, rigorous, able to handle pressure and being self-confident (Barsoux & Lawrence 1990); these qualities are highly praised among French recruiters, who, as one interviewee put it, tend to view the graduation from one of these establishments as a very competitive intelligence test, so that French recruiters tend to see intelligence testing as pointless. It appeared during the interviews that employers were already convinced of the qualities of their applicants and that they intended to get to know them rather than testing them on their personality; this explains why tests are not used in France: the education background is the main criteria with which candidates are selected.

7-3-1-2) The degrees.

Furthermore, it appears that all *Grandes Ecoles* include in their courses periods of work placement in companies and are professionally oriented: most institutions require their students to work in partnership with companies on specific projects; graduate from Engineering Schools now are often required to follow modules in Business Management and Universities graduates are most commonly students in economics and have completed work placements as part of their studies. We have seen earlier the importance of these placements for companies: candidates are often evaluated during these periods. Since the candidates have gained professionally oriented qualifications, it is often seen as useless to test the candidates on their abilities and aptitudes as they are supposed to have a knowledge of the field they will work in before entering the company.

Thus, candidates are seen as intelligent , open-minded and as having a clear idea of their professional career (ambition and confidence), so that the surveyed French managers often describe as useless and pointless tests of personality, intelligence or abilities. One has to note that the importance of the education background does not stop after the first job stage: your *diplôme* (where you have studied) will influence your whole career.

7-3-2) The education system in Britain.

7-3-2-1) University education.

As in France, the education system plays a very important role in the way British organisations approach recruitment and selection. It has first to be noted that British managers are not necessarily educated at University level and when they are, they do not necessarily have a specifically business and management related degree (although this is changing). For a long time experience was regarded as the only worthwhile school (learning while working). This explains the importance of training centres and professional associations which provide a wide range of professional qualifications in different field of management: candidates joining major companies are internally trained and gain professional qualifications alongside their

professional activities. As one interviewee put it, "the degree does not prepare candidates for working life, as few students gain experience during their studies: education in Britain has traditionally been purely theoretical and not adapted to the work-environment" (General and non managerial education - e.g. history, English, Politics, etc. - were and still are acceptable to enter managerial positions, although this is changing with the rapid emergence of Business Schools). Thus, British recruiters see this theoretical education background as an indication of a minimum level of intelligence which, however, does not prove the abilities and competencies of the candidates. As several interviewees explained, it is essential to assess the aptitudes to learn and the trainability of the candidates when recruiting, as they will have to go through very tough training periods which will last from 1 to 2 years after joining the company. Since the university level is not regarded as an indicative track record, British recruiters need to develop a selection process that will provide a wide range of information to gain a global understanding of the trainability of the candidates.

7-3-2-2) The "Milk-Round".

This is another interesting feature that appeared as essential in understanding the differences between France and Britain; as opposed to France, major British multinationals recruit a large number of graduates every year and launch massive recruitment programs; applications to multinationals in Britain are all done at the same time in response to advertisements, whereas in France this co-ordination does not exist: French candidates apply to companies speculatively, knowing that major companies have vacancies every year; the flow of applications in France is erratic and companies need to handle them quickly if they are to retain the best candidates. In Britain, these mass recruitment situations provide British recruiters with the opportunity to and certainly the necessity for developing consistent and standardised selection procedures: assessment centres are often developed as a result of the necessity to select would be managers out of hundreds of applications, as it permits the evaluation of several candidates at the same time.

Interestingly, it appeared through this set of interviews that British companies are more prone to recruit young managers and to inject new blood in their services than French organisations, where vacancies are filled through internal promotion, so that the requirements when recruiting are different.

We have seen in the previous sections the strong impact of the general framework within which recruitment is conducted in both countries: legal, corporate, structural contexts, qualifications available on the employment markets, etc..These interviews have provided information on typical beliefs, attitudes and values observable in both countries. We can relate this information to the extensive description of British and French cultures presented in chapter 2 of the present piece of work and explain the preferences for different techniques in both countries.

7-4) The cultural impact.

We have seen in chapter 2 the major cultural differences between France and Britain, these are summarised in Table 9. France and Britain are clearly opposite on key cultural dimensions. We have seen in the present piece of work that France and Britain have different attitudes towards Human Resources Management and more specifically towards recruitment procedures (see table 8). In Britain, the focus is more on the use of more valid and reliable selection techniques, whereas French attitudes to selection are more intuitive and interpretative. In comparison with Britain, France is clearly characterised by a less professional approach to personnel functions in general, an emphasis on human dignity rather than equal opportunity and a disregard of psychology. The managing director of EAP explained these differences through a mix of historical inheritance (education system, legislation), available structures (information and links between researchers and practitioners) and cultural values. Culture is a complex concept and it certainly cannot explain all the differences observed between both countries; however, this concept can clarify some key characteristics of both countries.

Table 9: *major cultural differences between France and Britain.*

France	Britain
High Power Distance: - A centralised power - No delegation of power - Strong Sense of the Group	**Low Power Distance:** - decentralised power - Delegation of power
High Uncertainty Avoidance: - Affinity for control and bureaucracy - Not Risk takers - Need to know the person	**Low Uncertainty Avoidance:** - Reserve and Privacy
Individualistic: - Quality of Life	**Individualistic** - Strong insularity - Non-conformism and eccentricity
Feminine: - Form and Elegance - Cartesianism	**Masculine** - Achievements - Performance
Medium position on the Low/High Context scale: - Informal Communication - bureaucratic, centralised and autocratic organisation	**Medium position on the Low/High Context scale:** - Written and numbered communication

Polychronic:
- Flexible conception of time
- Enormous sense of the past and less focus on present
  or future
	Monochronic:
	- Linear vision of time
	- The past as a strong foundation for present and
	  future action

Particularistic: - Actions differ according to situations. - Flexibility in the respect of laws	**Universalistic** - Only one right way to do things - Respect of the difference and tolerance - Fairness in judgement and objectivity
Diffuse Relationship: - Love/Hate	**Specific Relationship:** - Approval/Disapproval - Spontaneity is controlled
Ascription: - Where you have studied - Where you come from - Elitism - The Past	**Achievement** - What you can bring to the community - What you have achieved

Source: Trompenaars (1993), Hofstede (1991), Gannon (1994), Hall (1976).

7-4-1) France.

Building a relationship is a long lasting process in France (Gannon 1994); French people need to know an individual well before making a decision. Also, French people value informal communication and the context of the communication is as important (if not more important) as its content; it is thus understandable that French managers value natural and spontaneous discussions in the selection process. French relationships are around love and hate (Gannon 1994) and the typical selection process in France aims at establishing a

subjective fit between the employer and the candidate. This fit is then checked through multiple interviews.

Also, French people score high on Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance Scale: they are not risk takers. This is to be seen in the fact that the whole hierarchic line is involved in the managerial recruitment process and that most senior managers often have a say in the decision; this relates to the autocratic and bureaucratic organisation of French organisations: the power of decision lies with the senior managers.

Hampten-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) quotes the French economist Fayol: "union is strength....harmony is vital"; this illustrates the fact that the selection decision in France is made by a consensus and that the fit between the existing team and the candidate is clearly the main criteria for recruitment: the new comers have to live in harmony with the existing group.

As already seen through the education system, elitism is a key asset of French society: status is ascribed according to age, social class and most importantly the educational background; it appeared during the interviews with French managers that the decision was made on the basis of past experience: what the candidates have done, where they studied, etc.; in France the past is determining.

We have seen that French people value the respect of individual dignity and personality: the candidates must be natural and spontaneous. This might explain the relatively low use of tests which are seen as an intrusion in the privacy of candidates. Sparrow and Hiltrop (1994) also state that the catholic church condemned the use of psychometrics. Bournois (1993) also suggests that French selection systems are more preoccupied with the process of selection than its outcome: *'the idea is more important than hard confirmed evidence'* (Sparrow and Hilltrop 1994: 353). This is a typical Cartesian attitude (see chapter 3).

7-4-2) Britain.

British people learn to control their spontaneity at an early age and they fear, more than French do, creating embarrassing situations; this results in subtlety, imprecision and vagueness in the British communication style (Gannon 1994) so that recruiters have to make up for the scarcity of oral information by using numeric and written information; this may partly explain why British recruiters are more likely to welcome written and numerical techniques such as testing.

Relationships in Britain turn around approval/disapproval with respect for the "only right way to do things" (Gannon 1994); British people value fairness of judgement and objectivity, which partly explains why they are seeking techniques that would add objectivity to the selection and assessment process: recruiters would resent selecting only on the basis of their own feelings and perceptions; this also might partly explain the higher sensitivity to Equal Opportunities observed in Britain.

Also, British people are very pragmatic and logical in their decision making: they value consistency and scientificity; this combined with a preoccupation for fairness and tolerance certainly partly explains why the on-going debate on validity of selection procedures has been developed in Britain.

Furthermore, Hofstede (1991) showed that Britain, as with every masculine society, values achievements and performance: the surveyed British managers emphasised the importance of assessing the candidates on what they can actually demonstrate and bring to the existing group: assessment centres, simulation exercises and even tests are about performance; being future oriented, they also seek to determine the potential for evolution (the trainability) of the candidates.

Finally, the low power distance (Hofstede 1991) of Britain certainly explains why the responsibility of recruitment is left to the line managers, who, as opposed to their French counterparts, are able to deal effectively with uncertainty.

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7-4-3) Synthesis.

The discussion above suggests that culture can partly explain the differences observed between both countries; the case studies in appendix 2 illustrate this cultural impact in the selection processes developed by Company A (French) and Company E (British). However, some contradictions are still appealing: for instance, why is France characterised by such a disregard of scientific psychology and a strong use of irrational techniques, whereas France has produced some of the most prominent scientists and engineers? This disregard for psychology is certainly a typical Latin attitude; psychology has been better welcome by Anglo-Saxon societies. More research certainly needs to be done to determine the deep cultural impact on the attitudes towards selection but it has been clear through this discussion that the cultural context in Britain has been more favourable to the advancements in the field of selection than in France. However, the satisfaction observed in both countries (every manager said they were satisfied with the results of the recruitment process) suggests that the way recruitment is handled in both countries is well adapted to the national cultural contexts (see case studies).

7-5) Perspectives for the future.

Sparrow and Hilltrop (1994) identified two sides in the current debate on selection and assessment in Europe: first, the on-going debate on validity and reliability of the methods in the Anglo-Saxon tradition and second the importance of providing the candidates with feedback, developing a two sided process and focusing on the future oriented potential; this debate has been originated in Northern Europe (Germany, Sweden and Netherlands). Following this debate, we can classify the selection techniques as follows:

    1- Behavioural observation techniques:

        - Targeted selection interviews;

        -Assessment Centres;

        - Behavioural interviewing.

2- <u>Mechanical assessment methods</u>:

      - Psychometrics;

      - Aptitude tests.

3- <u>Personal opinions based techniques</u>:

      - Unstructured interviews - "gut feeling";

      - Networking;

      - Referrals.

Technological, social, political, economic and ethical pressures push towards the development of selection techniques comprised in category 1, as these validated methods enable feedback and facilitate a realistic job preview, as well as a targeted and effective selection. Also, it is now essential to recruit adaptable people in a fast changing environment. However this research suggests that major companies in France are far behind their British counterparts not only in the use of this type of technique but, more worrying, in the awareness of the existence of these methods.

7-5-1) France.

It appeared during interviews with tests publishers and representatives of the SFP that the situation is now changing in France: The SFP is currently working with *l'Association Française de Normalisation* (AFNOR, equivalent of the British Standard Institution) and *l'AGRH* to set up a code of best practices; these bodies have created an independent association specialised in psychological evaluation: *L'Association Repère pour l'Evaluation* (ARPE), whose purpose is to set up standards for psychological evaluation and to impose minimum requirements for publishing and using tests. We have also seen earlier that the main difficulty is a complete lack of communication between researchers and practitioners: the SFP is now making a further effort of information through publications towards personnel managers and is pushing towards the recognition of psychology at work as a scientific domain: it is only since 1985 that the status of psychologist has been acknowledged with the requirement of postgraduate qualifications to claim this status.

Interviewing techniques will remain the cornerstone of the selection process, but we could expect a trend towards structured interviews and situational exercises, as these techniques appear to be compatible with French culture. During these interviews, it has been noted that tests are now being introduced in France for development purposes, but testing has still a negative image among recruiters. As the interviewee at SHL explained: "in the field of selection, structured interviews and assessment centres are techniques with a future; personality questionnaires are essential for career development".

Thus, France is now catching up, but there is still a very strong trend towards irrational techniques and the image of psychology is still to be improved, if French companies are to use more validated techniques; the historical and cultural inheritance have pushed towards different priorities in France. Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991) called for different measures to improve the situation in France: creating codes of conduct, regulating the publishing and using of tests, improving the training of occupational psychologists, setting up some research programmes, combining academics and practitioners; a few years later, France is till at the launching stage of these measures.

7-5-2) Britain.

The Anglo-Saxon tradition has influenced the current evolution towards validated techniques and it is not surprising that Britain is ahead of every other European country in the use of scientific and respectable techniques (Sparrow and Hilltrop 1994). However, most surveyed British managers explained that recruitment and selection now needs to be better standardised and recruiters have to be better trained on the most advanced techniques to ensure a full understanding of techniques such as assessment centres and reduce the subjectivity during interviews. We can expect further efforts towards training, structured standards and frameworks to improve the co-ordination and consistence of the recruitment processes, as the efforts of the BPS suggest. Assessment Centres and Simulation exercises are techniques with a bright future, because they are democratic (a two sided process), future oriented (the trainability), valid and reduce the chance of errors (a cost effective process). British companies have benefited from a favourable cultural context (the Anglo-Saxon

sensitivity towards fairness and objectivity) and historical inheritance, that made this country one of the most advanced countries in the field of recruitment and selection.

7-5-3) International recruitment.

The case studies (Companies A and E) show examples of companies developing international (and European) structures of recruitment and selection; in this sample, few multi-nationals have begun to focus on this issue; although their approaches are different, they all have renounced testing, because of cross cultural problems encountered when using tests; tests have generally been developed in Anglo-Saxon countries; importing these tests (as many European companies have done) which were developed in a foreign language and based on Anglo-Saxon assumptions might foster many problems of linguistic inaccuracy, poor cultural relativity and uncontrolled application (Sparrow and Hilltrop 1994); Company E and F do not use tests anymore for their centralised senior managerial recruitment, as tests in English were not always welcome by non-English speakers. SHL has now developed different versions of translated tests and have modified certain tests for Latin Europe. On the other hand , interviews and assessment centres are more cross-culturally acceptable and are now included in the efforts towards a Pan-European standardisation of recruitment procedures. The two case studies show how two major companies (one British and one French) have responded to the challenge of international recruitment.

Conclusion:

We have seen in this chapter that the practices of selection in France and in Britain are the result of a mix of factors and are influenced by historical and cultural inheritance, as well as the experience of the surveyed personnel managers. The cultural differences can partly explain the differences in priorities and philosophies in both countries, but there are contradictions that make it difficult to generalise these cultural explanations. The learning points of this chapter are that major differences in the information, training structures for Personnel managers and importance of occupational psychology exist between both countries; one can also note that the practices appear to be adapted to the national general

context (the surveyed managers are satisfied with the results of their recruitment and selection operations).

CHAPTER 8) Conclusion.

8-1) The research.

Quantitative studies have highlighted the major differences in recruitment and selection systems between European countries. In Shackleton & Newell (1991) and Bruchon-Schweitzer & Lievens (1991), we can see that French and British companies have developed very different selection techniques, with a preference in France for subjective and intuitive selection techniques as well as irrational methods (interviews, graphology) and a strong trend in Britain towards more validated and scientific techniques. Shackleton and Newell (1991, 1994) have also determined that a country's factors are very significant in explaining these differences. The purpose of the present piece of work was to determine why these major differences have evolved in two countries as close as Britain and France. As Hofstede (1991), Trompenaars (1993), Gannon (1994) and other authors have shown, Europe is characterised by a diversity of cultures and histories that have heavily influenced the local management styles; France and Britain are opposite on almost every cultural concept. However, culture is not the only factor that makes France and Britain different; the making of managers (Barsoux and Lawrence 1990, Handy 1988) is also very different, as well as the existing structural and social contexts; these factors result from deep cultural and historical inheritance. Also, the corporate culture is a crucial factor to keep in mind when considering management operations. Thus, this research was based on the assumptions that the choice of recruitment and selection techniques was the result of the interaction of Country factors (culture, legal system, education system, etc.) and Company factors (Location, Nationality, Activities). To check these hypotheses, this project was based on qualitative interviews with Personnel managers of major European companies in both countries and with people of different bodies working on the questions of evaluation and assessment. This has helped to identify major differences between both countries in the attitudes of recruiters towards selection techniques.

8-2) France/Britain.

8-2-1) France.

French recruiters value natural and candidate friendly processes that respect the dignity and the personality of the candidates. The selection process is based on multiple one-to-one unstructured interviews, they provide the recruiters with a general view of the candidates. Subjectivity is often regarded as essential: a key selection criteria will be the fit of the candidates in the existing team. In spite of a less professional approach to HRM, the Personnel department has a crucial role in the whole process as it actively participates in the decision making; the whole hierarchic line is involved with the directors or senior managers having most influence. This research also notes a lack of information on occupational psychology and a lack of quality research in this field. French recruiters' priority goes often to cheap and quick decision making rather than validity and reliability. As well, although France is one of the only European countries with explicit Equal Opportunities legislation, it appears that companies do not follow these laws and that French recruiters are not always aware of these questions.

8-2-2) Britain.

The situation in Britain looks more virtuous, with a clear preference for using validated and more respectable techniques (Assessment Centres, structured interviews, psychometrics) and gaining a specific and in depth view of the candidates: British recruiters value fairness and objectivity and prefer to assess candidates on what they can actually achieve and display. The role of the Personnel department is more a backing and advisory action, with the initiative and responsibility of recruitment left to the line managers. Britain is also characterised by good quality research in the field of occupational psychology and powerful professional bodies (the IPD and BPS), which ensure that selection techniques are used and handled properly and which inform and train British recruiters. Finally, a good awareness of Equal Opportunities issues was observed among the British managers interviewed.

8-2-3) Discussion.

Recruitment has been described either as an art or as a science (Duyck 1992); the high cost of recruitment errors, the pressure of Equal Opportunities, the fast moving technology and the necessity for international recruitment have pressed European companies to adopt more scientific techniques which would reduce the risk of errors. These pressures have resulted in convergence between European countries around best practices. However, organisations have to cope with a strong national historical inheritance: the way recruitment is handled is a result of a mix of cultural values, structures and history, as well as corporate culture; the two case studies (see appendix 2) show how these different factors can interact to determine the choice of selection procedures. Anglo-Saxon countries are characterised by a strong scientific psychological tradition, which has led to the development of scientifically validated techniques; as one British academic put it, interviews were the only techniques used in Britain until the 70s, but the pressure for Equal Opportunities and the need to set up cost effective recruitment have boosted the evolution towards more respectable techniques; we can presume that this evolution has benefited from favourable cultural and structural contexts; professional associations existed to facilitate the exchange of information between researchers and professionals. This research suggests that Britain was a culturally fertile soil for the development of psychological evaluation.

France, where this fertile soil did not exist, is far behind Britain: psychology does not enjoy a high status among practitioners, culture gives more priority to human dignity (ethics) than to Equal Opportunities, irrational techniques are welcome (certainly because of their relatively low cost) and more importantly the communication structures between practitioners and researchers are still at their first stage of development. However, one has to keep in mind that the way recruitment is handled in France, although not in line with the Anglo-Saxon scientific tradition, works fairly well because it appeared to be well adapted to the French culture.

Culture is certainly a useful concept to discuss the choice of selection techniques observed in both countries but is certainly not sufficient. One can also note striking

contradictions: it is for example surprising that irrational techniques are so widespread in a country with an important scientific tradition such as France. In France, as in Britain, selection systems appeared to be inherent to the way the society is organised (the way status is accorded to individuals appears to impact heavily on the selection procedures) and making the situation evolve is a long process: France and less so Britain have still a long way to go to reach genuinely respectable techniques.

This research finally suggests two different conceptions of Human Resources Management: in France, Personnel Managers have experience in the management of people in operational teams (marketing, Finance, Manufacturing, etc.) and their contribution in personnel is based on this experience, whereas in Britain Personnel Managers will have more a advisory role based on their professional training in personnel. Both approaches have positive and negative aspects but both countries may learn from each other to create a balance between experience and training for their personnel managers.

8-3) Recommendations for further research.

This research has highlighted what is considered as acceptable in both countries and the differences in priorities. However, it is hard to generalise this data, given the small size of the sample and its focus on major multi-nationals. Clearly, more qualitative and quantitative research needs to be done to clarify and illustrate these findings: this research asks more questions than it answers; this project provides a first grid of data that needs to be developed with subsequent research; different domains of extensions can be proposed:

- why was the *Société Française de Psychologie* unable to develop as the British Psychological Society?

- Why is the personnel function not as professionally structured in France as it is in Britain?

- What is the deep cultural impact on the different attitudes observed in both countries?

- How can we reconcile both attitudes and the different attitudes in European countries to better standardise the recruitment process?

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The present piece of work hopefully provides a better view of the attitudes towards recruitment and selection in two major European countries and offers a sound basis on which to build further comparative research: the same comparative work should be conducted with other European countries to determine which of Britain or France is the odd country. Also, this research focuses on the cultural acceptability of selection techniques among recruiters and further research is needed to determine the attitudes of candidates of different nationalities to selection procedures.

This research, finally provides some information on the differences in involvement of personnel managers in recruitment and selection. Further research would be needed to determine whether this is a general trend. We can agree with Kirkbride (1994) or Brewster (1995) that some major common trends are emerging in Europe but the cultural impact will still foster major differences, which are essential to analyse in order to understand the concept of European management.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES.

INTERVIEW WITH PERSONNEL MANAGERS.

Company:
Interviewee:
Functions:
Date of Interview:
Academic and Professional background:

First Part: Managerial Recruitment Procedures.

Recruitment methods.
a) Nationality of your companies.
- Level of independence for the personnel policies.
- Influence of the head-quarters in the selection process.
b) What are the main tools used to recruit the managerial teams.
- If interviews: what type of interviews.
- If tests: what type.
- If assessment centre: what type.
c) Other methods used?
d) How does the recruitment procedures happen.
- steps.
- people involved.
- final decision.
e) Are the procedures fixed and standardised.
f) Who is in charge of recruitment.
- Role of the Personnel people.

Perception.
g) Is recruitment a strategic issue.
h) Are the methods effective and useful.
i) What is expected: purpose of the process.
j) What are the main problems encountered.
k) Other techniques:
- Paper and Pencil Intelligence Tests.
- Psychometrics.
- Personality questionnaires.
- Interviews:
* 1 to 1.
* Panel.
* situational.
- Work samples.
- Situational exercises.
- Biographical Information.
- Peer Assessment.
- Self Assessment.
- Letters of Reference.
- Graphology.
- Astrology.
l) Evolution.
m) International recruitment.
Second Part: Repertory Grid.

INTERVIEW WITH TESTS PUBLISHERS:

Occupational Psychology.
Use of tests in France/Britain.
Attitudes of French/British managers to tests
Explanations.

INTERVIEW WITH ACADEMIC:

Managerial Recruitment.
selection Techniques
Why these types of techniques
Perception of these techniques.
Factors impacting on the recruitment process:
Education System.
Professional Associations.
Legislation.
Teaching of HRM and more specifically of recruitment and selection.
Repertory Grid.

APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDIES.

INTRODUCTION:

Companies A (French) and E (British) have appeared as interesting cases to illustrate and clarify the findings of the present piece of work; both companies agreed to participate in both countries, which produced some invaluable cross-boundaries comparisons. The purpose of these two short studies is not to give an in-depth account of the way these two companies operate recruitment and selection but rather to show how the findings of this research apply in reality: Company A and E's selection processes result from a mix of cultural, corporate and environmental factors. These two companies appeared as interesting also because they both have now developed different strategies to respond to the necessary internationalisation of the managerial team; these companies are thus two illustrations of the way companies are now building international (European) teams.

CASE STUDY 1: Company A.

Introduction:

Company A is a French company, world leader in cosmetics, with subsidiaries all over the world and particularly in European countries. Four people from Company A were interviewed: the General Manager in charge of Development and Permanent Training in France and, in Britain, the General manager in charge of Human Resource Management and two personnel managers involved in the recruitment process at different levels. These interviews have enabled cross boundaries comparisons to be drown, these appear to be very rich data for this study. This case study will include the results of the 3 interviews conducted in Britain and the one conducted in France (translated); these results will then be discussed.

1) Interview with French General Manager in charge of Managerial development.

This manager is in charge of managerial development in France; as such, he intervenes quite often in managerial recruitment.

1-1) Role of the French head-quarters.

The head-quarters do not have a say in the recruitment conducted by the different foreign subsidiaries; however recruitment is regarded as a major aspect of the strategy so that the head-quarters have set up principles and rules with the Personnel directors of the different subsidiaries to co-ordinate recruitment and to standardise key criteria to assess the candidates. These principles are followed by each subsidiary; however, the head-quarters do not have a direct say in the decision making (unless the recruitment is conducted at a very high level).

Differences remain in the use of graphology or tests, but the interviewing technique is the cornerstone of the recruitment processes in each subsidiary.

1-2) The techniques used in France.

In France only one method is used: the interviewing technique, which is the cornerstone of the selection process. The technique of "entretiens croisés et multiples" (crossed and multiple interviews) aims:
* to know if the candidate is susceptible to bring a long term contribution to the company;
* to determine whether he/she can adapt to Company A and develop his/her potential.

This set of interviews enables the assessment of the FIT between the company and the candidates and results in a "co-optation" between the different interviewers who have met the candidates.

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1-2-1) <u>Type of interviews</u>.

These interviews are very informal, open and enable the interviewer to perceive the personality of the candidates by allowing them to express themselves. The starting point is often the CV but the interviews rapidly turn into a very informal discussion depending on the interests and motives of the candidates. The number of interviews (from 1 to 3 or 4) depends mainly on the level of certainty on the quality of the candidates. The different interviewers are:
- a personnel manager who operates the first selection;
- operational managers, with whom the candidates will be working;
- a third party who is not directly related to the job but who knows about it: this is often the case when applications are atypical (university graduates or graduates in literature).

All interviewers are trained on the selection interviewing technique; this training session provides them with the basic rules and reinforces the recruitment and selection principles of Company A. There is no written interview schedule and the balance between job knowledge and personal competencies vary depending on the type of jobs to be filled: personality criteria are much more important for marketing managers than for scientific or financial managers. However, the personality criteria remain constant: creativity, communication skills, involvement, open mindedness, etc.

This very flexible selection process is linked with the flexible structure of the organisation: there are no formal job descriptions; jobs are set up in terms of missions but functions are not fixed and standardised; Company A wants to attract people who have strong personalities and diverse potentials and to give them the essential space for them to develop their talents. The interviewee explains that Company A is the opposite of a rigid and precise organisation. This flexible organisation is essential to effectively respond to the fast changing market on which Company A is operating. Products Managers must be able to bring new ideas, bring about the evolution of their products and motivate the sales representatives: the real richness of Company A is its People, who must be Creative and Active.

Products and People are strongly linked at Company A; this is the reason why the company is investing a lot in selection and recruitment.

1-2-2) <u>Perception of these techniques</u>.

Two types of failure have been identified:
- the first one consists of the inability of Company A to identify the talents of people who could have revealed worthwhile; it is however impossible to measure this type of failure;
- the second one resides in the mistakes that the company might make when recruiting somebody. This failure rate is known but does not worry the Personnel department to the extent of changing the recruitment methods.

The present methods are rather satisfying as they correspond to the human aspect of the company. Although interviewing a candidate is a really hard and engaging exercise, this manager regards this technique as the most human and effective way to gain a quick and consistent view of the personality of the candidates. However, giving feedback to the rejected candidates is really difficult as it might be dangerous and devastating for them if it is not done properly (furthermore, Company A always operate a subjective judgement with respect to the company).

The company is not complacent about its selection procedures but the plurality of interviews produces several different views on the candidates in different settings, so that a consistent and constructive judgement is developed. Conducting several interviews also enables to guarantee a certain security in the judgement: the interviewers are familiar with Company A and know what qualities a manager must have to be successful.

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1-3) The other selection techniques.

A list of different techniques either used in France (Graphology) or in Britain (testing) was submitted to this interviewee and he was asked to explain what he thought of these techniques.

* *Panel Interviews*: are never used because they are not natural and are too impersonal.

* *Situational interviews*: these are conducted as part of the interviews, during which candidates are asked to react to a product of Company A.

* *Situational exercises*: presentations or group simulations are never used in their formalised aspect but are often included in interviews. However, this interviewee seemed interested in the introduction of such exercises.

* *Assessment Centres*: used in different foreign subsidiaries (UK, Germany) but there is no project to generalise the use of this technique.

* *Biographical information*: the applications are done through cover letters and CVs, which are important for the screening process and these data are used and commented on during the different interviews.

* *Paper and Pencil tests of intelligence*: these are not used because the French education system is highly selective and entering a Grande Ecole is already regarded as an intelligence test.

* *Psychometrics*: these are not used because they are seen as being not flexible enough; through testing one tends to recruit people with similar qualities and personalities, whereas Company A values diversity and originality.

One of the specificities of the French employment market is the importance of graduate Business Schools, which require the students to have mandatory sandwich work placements: these working sessions are good opportunities to evaluate the working ability and potential fit of candidates. Company A uses these periods as situational exercises that may result in the selection of students who had the opportunity to work with Company A as part of their studies.

1-4) Discussion.

This interview with the French General Manager in charge of Managerial development was the only interview conducted in Company A/Fr.. It appears that Company A France refuses to use stressful methods: candidates must be at ease, as it is seen as the best conditions for them to provide good information and to express themselves better. When selecting people, Company A is looking for managers who have a "savoir-être" which is compatible with the organisational culture. Interviews and personal contacts will always be a principle for Company A France, as oral communication is an essential characteristic of the corporate culture. The interviewing techniques could be developed and improved, in order to develop a better understanding of individual's personality.

2) Interviews with the British General Manager in charge of Human Resources Management.

As the Human Resources Manager of Company A/UK, the interviewee is in charge of managerial recruitment in Britain.

2-1) The framework.

Concerning the role of the head-quarters, the interviewee explained that Company A, as a group, has a very clear perspective on the quality and characteristics of people it wants to recruit. The long term objective is to input international general managers; as the French interviewee explained, the head-quarters have a clear set of criteria and framework in which the subsidiaries operate, although the Head-Quarters are not directly involved in the process.

This framework helps to define general criteria that Company A expects from recruits to be successful in the organisation; we can summarise these criteria as follows
* recruits have to be robust thinkers;
* entrepreneurial qualities are very important;
* people must be creative, innovative, open-minded, with good listening and communication skills;
* successful candidates will think coherently and analyse effectively and be sensitive to the beauty products industry.

These different criteria form the general framework of criteria that the different subsidiaries must apply when evaluating the candidates. Company A/UK has developed a specific set of techniques to assess these different criteria.

2-2) The techniques used in the UK.

As in France, interviews are the cornerstone of the selection process; these interviews are open discussions to find evidence of those qualities Company A is looking for. However, the British subsidiary also uses psychometrics (Personality inventories) and numerical/verbal reasoning tests for certain positions to complement and validate the interviews. For graduate trainees, Assessment Centres are used because students do not have a track record on which to build a judgement (we will see the Assessment Centres in depth in the report of the interview I conducted with the third personnel manager).

2-2-1) The techniques.

* Interviews:

For most positions, there are at least 3 to 4 interviews; this allows a large number of people from Company A to meet candidates: only people from within the company can assess the potential FIT. This process is divided into eliminatory stages.

Furthermore, candidates have a good opportunity to understand who Company A is; this enables a good matching process. As we will see later, mutual benefit through the recruitment process is a key preoccupation of the Personnel Department.

The interviews are structured and are behaviour based, since people are asked to relate to certain past situations and explain how they reacted or behaved in these settings. The approach of the different interviewers will differ; all of them have an understanding of what will make a good interview, but there is no formal training to interviewing technique; this is one thing that the British Personnel Department is looking at to tailor the process to Company A's culture.

* Testing.

Tests generally occur in the first stage before the prior decision is made. Tests are seen as providing additional information in areas where sometimes it is difficult to be precise. Personality inventories gives a certain profile which helps to corroborate things already known and bring new areas to light. Interviews cannot cover all angles; the results of the tests are used to discuss further with the candidates and to get their input during the interviews.

The decision is made by the line manager who is recruiting; the personnel manager has an advisory and facilitating role. It is important that the line manager makes the decision, as he/she is the only one who can judge the potential adaptation of the candidate in the team he/she will join.

2-2-2) Perception of these techniques.

The One to One Interview is seen as the best way to understand how individuals function without creating other artificial contrivances; the interviews are structured prior the meeting with the candidates so that the same areas will be covered several times over.

Recruitment is fundamental for Company A and is one of the strategic focuses of the group; Company A's strategy is to recruit the best people at the earliest possible age, as the recruits should be able to develop a career, which may become international. In the UK context, this interviewee explained that these techniques are effective and satisfying; the process is good and well adapted to the local culture. However, the recruitment process is growing international (particularly for young people) and it is difficult to apply this model to every culture; this question is currently addressed through meetings between the Human Resources directors responsible for each world-wide division. Company A is evolving towards a world-wide Human Resources network, which will develop a common code and level of understanding of the recruitment question and which will use the available technology to speed up the transfer of the international applications.

2-3) Other techniques.

As with the French interviewee, I asked this manager to discuss different selection techniques.

* *Intelligence tests*: these are used as they test different facets of intelligence; these are important in defining different levels of competence in key areas of management abilities.

* *Aptitude tests*: these look only at skills clusters; they are not used.

* *Ability tests*: these are more broadly based and are often linked to abilities required in the organisation itself, such as the ability to appreciate design characteristics and relate them to a consumer profile. This is used.

* *Panel Interviews*: they are good when a quick decision is to be made by a group of individuals. However, they put individuals under considerable pressure and the quality of questioning can be affected by the large number of interviewers; they do not correspond to Company A's culture.

* *Work Samples*: getting people to work on projects or "stages" (work placement) is seen as a very valuable way to assess them; for graduates, work placement periods enable to develop a wide picture of the potential of people in real life situations. This is regarded as highly valuable but is not applicable in every situation.

* *Situational exercises*: these are used as part of the Assessment Centres for Graduates trainees.

* *Biographical information*: the individual biography is interesting for discussion during the interviews.

* *Peer Assessment*: this is used informally in a work situation; this can be very helpful in testing out certain performance but is false and anecdotal.

* *Self assessment*: this is seen as very interesting during a one to one interview as it tells how mature, reflective and to what extent the individual is realistic about his/her achievements and potentials.

* *Letters of reference*: this is used only as a checking mechanism.

* Graphology: it is not used in the UK but there is a good correlation between the profile and the impression developed during the interviews; however, the predictive value of graphology is bad.

2-4) Repertory Grid results and discussion.

2-4-1) <u>Repertory Grid results</u>.

The Repertory Grid technique is a powerful technique for drawing cognitive mapping; the interviewee was asked to construct different selection techniques; this gives an understanding of what he felt was most important for a technique to be effective. The grid were analysed in terms of correlation with a "top-view" question (How effective is each element you have determined?) and in terms of frequency (How many times did the interviewees mention this construct?).

This interviewee identified 4 elements:
- 1 to 1 interviews;
- situational exercises;
- work samples: "le stage";
- psychometrics.

The main constructs, correlated to the question of effectiveness are as following; an effective selection method should:
- be contributive and provide a mutual benefit: a two sided process;
- enable the candidates to be active and express themselves;
- be organisation specific; it must apply to the company standards, which are not necessarily linked to norms;
- provide a high degree of universal validity and not be subject to external circumstances;
- not be too driven by a time constraint;- be relatively well accepted and not frustrate candidates;
- permit a constructive feedback.

2-4-2) <u>Discussion</u>.

This interviewee values procedures that provide general and broad information; the contribution must be mutual as the companies should ideally get as much information about the candidates as the candidates do about the company. The techniques must be adapted to the needs of the organisation, providing a high validity and reducing the subjectivity: the room for interpretation of the interviewers must be reduced; in that respect, the selection techniques ideally involve several assessors and information should be recorded for further discussion. Also, his preference goes for more natural techniques that do not put unnecessary pressure on the candidates. Finally, being able to feedback information is seen as a key issue. Objective and validated information is what this manager tries to get when assessing candidates. We will see later how this relates or differs from the French way of conducting selection.

3) Interview with the Personnel Manager in charge of "non-cadres" recruitment.

The interviewee is Personnel manager, in charge of recruitment and selection of "non-cadres", which are sales representatives, sectorail and administrative staff and field based managers. He is also involved in the recruitment of graduates. As he explains, the headquarters do not have a say whatsoever in the way the British subsidiary approaches "non-cadres" recruitment; this is entirely tailored to Company A's perception of the British employment market, as those in these jobs are more likely to stay in Britain.

3-1) The techniques used.

This type of recruitment is primarily done through usually two or three interviews: one with the Personnel manager and the others with 2 different line managers; for clerical and secretarial positions, computer aptitude and French language skills are tested. The selection process also includes a Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) and occasionally work simulations for sales representatives (sales presentation to the personnel manager and sales manager).

3-1-1) The interviews.

The most common type of interview is a one to one interview and in some occasions a one to one plus an observer, whose role simply consists of taking notes and listen. These interviews are rather unstructured but specific questions are prepared for specific pieces of information: the behavioural type of interview is used at this level. The Personnel Manager addresses personal strengths and motivations; he tries to assess what the individuals' goals are in life and how appropriate they are to the job that is offered; the line manager will focus more on the skills applicable to the job.

This process is not formalised, but, prior to the interviews, the jobs are subject to a job description to assist the interviewer; this job description specifies the level of skills needed and the essential competencies. However, the interviewee emphasises that Company A recruits more for the personality than for specific jobs. He asserts that interviews are the best way to assess and get to know the personality of the candidates.

Also, this manager emphasises the mutual benefit that makes the selection process valuable: "if the candidate knows exactly what the job is, he will choose to take it or not". Realistic recruitment is one of the preoccupations of this personnel manager, who always tries to explain clearly what the job really involves, so that candidates can make their own mind about the job and the company. This will avoid frustration and reduce the risk of failure.

The power of decision lies with the line manager, who makes the recruitment decision; he is however heavily influenced by the Personnel Manager.

3-1-2) Testing.

Psychometrics is regarded as a valuable tool as it enables to have a deeper understanding of the personality of the candidates: the attributes and attitudes of candidates will determine success in a role to an equal extent as their aptitudes and technical skills. Personality tests are also very conventional.

3-2) The perception of these methods:

The interviewee sees this procedure as relatively valid and reliable to determine the right candidate; however errors are still made, as sales recruits might appear unsuited to their role only 3 or 6 months after they joined the company. Nonetheless, he is not aware of any other process that would be better to select people. More training is needed to improve the awareness of line managers of behavioural interviewing technique: improving the selection interviewing skills is certainly one of the improvements needed, as it would avoid the subjectivity of line managers, who tend to select people more according to their feelings than according to the real skills of the applicants.

The first goal of the interviews is to assess individuals' behavioural fit into the organisation. Tests and biographical information (previous work experience and performance) are used to look at the technical and interpersonal skills. The interviewee feels that if people familiar with the organisation recruit somebody they like, there is more chance that this individual will be successful.

3-3) Other selection methods.

* *Intelligence tests*: they are not used, as Company A is looking for applied intelligence rather than pure, fundamental intelligence.

* *Panel interviews*: panel interviews as such are rarely used as they are seen as confusing for the candidates; furthermore, panel interviews often result in taking the least offensive candidates and this encourages mediocrity rather than meritocracy.

* *Situational exercises*: all sales representatives candidates will spend a day out with a sales representatives: they will be assessed on the way the customers will react to them and the sales representatives will be asked whether they would like to work with the candidates;

the advantages of this process is that it provides a precise view of the candidates in a real life situation, and the applicants will be able to understand what the job is really like.

* *Work samples*: sales representatives will always try to present examples of their past achievements, but this is rarely reliable and valid.

* *Biographical information*: the selection decision is based on an analysis of candidates' previous work and achievements; certain biographical information might be the basis for systematic discrimination. Furthermore, the interviewee sees a good, formal education as valuable and determining for the future success of the recruits in the organisation.

* *Letters of Reference*: are used to confirm and clarify the CV.

* *Graphology*: the interviewee appeared to be biased against handwriting analysis but he never experienced it. Graphology is seen as providing information that is more accurately collected through psychometric testing.

3-4) Repertory Grid and discussion.

3-4-1) <u>Repertory Grid</u>.

As with the first interviewee, this stage of the interview was successfully conducted with this personnel manager. This part of the interview turned out to be quite easy to conduct as this manager was familiar with the technique. 9 elements were identified:

- OPQ and 16 PF, which I will group under the term Psychometrics;
- 1 to 1 interview;
- 1 to 1 plus observer;
- Situational Exercises;
- Aptitude testing;
- Biographical Information;
- Self Assessment
- Peer Assessment.

The criteria to judge the efficiency of a technique have been clearly identified; this manager's preference goes for techniques which:
- have a high level of validity and integrity, because this will enhance the accuracy in identifying individuals' behaviours.
- provide precise and focused information about individual's behaviours and attributes.
- allow recording of information for further discussion with the candidates; the candidates will have the opportunity to express themselves.
- avoid subjectivity; techniques that bring factual information that can be verified and which do not leave room for emotional judgements are preferred.
- enable a two sided process, in which the candidate can get as much information as the company.
- provide with valuable information related to the job that makes up for the fact that interviews are not related to it.

3-4-2) <u>Discussion</u>.

This interviewee prefers techniques that avoid subjectivity and provide factual and valid information; a mix of testing and 1 to 1 interviews (if possible plus observer) are seen as valuable techniques as reduces the emotional aspect of selection. This turns out to be a very British view: in Shackleton and Newell's study (1991, 1994), it appears that, although interviews are still the cornerstone of the selection process in British organisations, this technique is nearly systematically complemented with techniques such as psychometrics that have a better validity and reliability.

4) Interview with Personnel manager in charge of Graduate Recruitment.

This interview differed from the one reported above for several reasons; first, the interviewee is fairly new in this position and was still "learning" when interviewed; second, for the time being, she primarily works on the Graduate Recruitment Program, which is very specific. However, this interview turned out to be highly interesting as mass recruitment situation such as Graduate Selection is a specificity of the British employment market; second, this interviewee spoke about her experience as a line manager involved in the interviewing process. The Repertory Grid technique was not conducted during that interview.

4-1) The techniques.

This personnel manager is in charge of Management resourcing, focusing now on Graduate Recruitment but being involved later any Management Recruitment of the "Cadres". For Graduate recruitment, the British subsidiary is left to its own devices and the French head-quarters do not influence the choice of techniques used. The approach developed by Company A/UK is evolving: the company has targeted 15 universities with which the company wants to improve the relationships; These universities run appropriate types of courses and have the kind of students susceptible to be successful at Company A.

4-1-1) The process.

* after having received the application forms, an initial screening is conducted based on the reading of these forms.
* a first 1 to 1 informal interview, which aims at getting to know the candidates better and understanding their motives to join the company.
* for those selected, Assessment Centres including formal and structured interviews are conducted.
* the successful candidates will go through a further set of interviews with a line manager, a general manager and, if possible, a managing director; these interviews are one to one, short and separate discussions, whose purpose is to have candidates assessed by the people with whom he/she will be working.

4-1-2) The Assessment Centre.

The Assessment Centre technique, as it has been conducted this year, took place on one day and included the following exercises:
- numerical/verbal reasoning tests;
- personality tests: OPQ;
- 2 Group exercises to look at the way people interact with each other;
- a structured, behavioural based interview;
- a product exercise: judge the design of various products.

This structured process allows the judgement to be based on hard evidence. At the end of the Assessment Centre, the behaviours, reactions of each candidate are discussed and analysed by the different observers. There is a list of competencies that the different assessors have to look at and the candidates reactions are rated against these competencies. The assessment of the candidates is a result of the combination of each exercise, which provide factual information.

Psychometrics are seen as valuable as they provide supplementary data to complement what has been learnt during the interviews and the group exercises; it is also seen as very interesting to explore further areas, that can be discussed during the interviews.

4-1-3) The fit.

Recruitment is described as a two way process in which the candidates will have the opportunity to meet the people with whom they will be working. Candidates, as well as Company A, must be able to determine whether they want to work with each other. Part of the process is to test of the fit between Company A and the candidates (assessed during the

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first interview) and between the candidates and the division in which they will be working (general managers or line managers have to see the candidate).

As the interviewee explained, it is important to know the candidates well as a career with Company A is a long term involvement. The final decision is made in collaboration between the Personnel department and the managers who will meet the candidates at the final stage.

4-2) Perception.

Recruitment is a strategic issue in the UK. Company A wants to attract the best people, and thus has to be seen as active in recruiting graduates and providing good training and good long term opportunities. If Company A wants to develop truly international managers, it is important to get them at an early age and to provide them with an attractive career path; recruitment must be seen as a strategic long term issue.

This year the design of the Assessment Centre has changed in terms of exercises that the candidates are asked to perform; it seems to work, but one can never assess the quality of the recruitment straight away. For the candidates, the only difficulty is the pressure of time. However, the majority of candidates seem to enjoy the process as they got something out of it themselves: candidates often know their performance and are not too frustrated if rejected.

4-3) Discussion.

Graduate recruitment and training, as we will see later in this report is one of the specificities of the British employment market and probably explains why it has been necessary for British companies to develop structured selection procedures to handle the large number of applications. As this personnel manager explained, to enter a company as a graduate trainee, it is important to be educated to a degree standard but the precise content does not have to be business related. However, Company A is focusing more and more on business degrees as more and more institutions develop this type of course.

In this set of interviews, we can see that both sides have different approaches to the selection question; however, similarities are also to be found between both subsidiaries.

5) Discussion: Company A as a case study.

This section will focus on the differences and similarities to be observed between Company A France and Company A UK. This case study is interesting as it enables to illustrate and clarify the general findings of this research (see chapter 6 and 7); also, we can see how this major company is now responding to the challenges of international recruitment.

5-1) Similarities and differences within Company A.

5-1-1) Similarities.

As mentioned during the first two interviews, Company A is increasingly willing to create a world class team, which means developing truly international managers. This implies that the organisation has to create a framework of criteria against which future managers will be assessed. Company A now knows what type of candidates the company is looking for: the head-quarters work along with the different subsidiaries to set up a common framework of criteria; the first similarity is thus to be found in the principles of recruitment that are set up by the head-quarters in accordance with the Human Resource managers of the different world-wide divisions.

Second, one to one interviews are the key cornerstone of the selection procedures of both subsidiaries; although different in their methodology (informal and unstructured in France versus structured and more criteria based in the UK), the candidates have to go through a minimum of 3 to 4 interviews, meeting HR representatives and line managers. This similarity is very important, as this technique of *entretiens multiples et croisés* (multiple-

crossed interviews) is a key characteristic of recruitment and selection in France(Shackleton and Newell 1991).

The third similarity is to be found in the importance of a long term commitment within the company: Company A wants to recruit dynamic and creative managers at the earliest stage of their career to develop them and make them aware of the specific corporate culture: as we have seen, all the four managers mentioned the importance of the FIT between the candidates and the company: Company A is primarily recruiting personalities for life-long careers rather than people for jobs. The coherence between Company A and the motives of the candidates is one of the first criteria to be evaluated; this is the reason why the candidates will systematically meet several people from the organisation, who are more likely to judge candidates with respect to what the group really is. In both countries, candidates are asked to react to products: sensitivity to the beauty products market is seen as essential in both countries.

5-1-2) Differences.

This case study clearly illustrates the main differences observed between France and Britain identified in this project (see chapter 6). Even if interviews are used in both countries, the approach of the interviewing techniques differ widely: interviews in France are very informal, open and enable the interviewer to perceive the personality of the candidates by placing emphasis on spontaneity; these interviews are the only basis on which candidates are assessed and the judgement is very emotional and subjective (it turns around love/hate). The French interviewee resents psychometric testing as he thinks that they would impede the flexibility and variety of recruits.

On the other side, all three British managers are aware of the importance of judging candidates on hard evidence and are looking for factual information; interviews are systematically structured and behaviour based: the candidate is assessed against their past experience (this is based on the philosophy that "past behaviours are the best predictors of future performance". Interviews are also systematically complemented with tests: numerical and verbal reasoning and personality questionnaires, which provide hard data and explore new areas that can be discussed with the candidates.

Differences are also to be found in less important techniques: British managers tend to use references, which are seen as a good way to check and validate the CVs, whereas the French interviewee described references as biased and systematically average. Concerning handwriting analysis, the French manager trusted it and explained that handwriting analysis would probably be used if an agreement on a candidate could not be reached; on the other hand, all three British managers explained that they were biased and sceptical about graphology ("sceptical out of experience") even if the first British interviewee acknowledged a correlation between handwriting profile and the personality of the candidates as perceived during the interviews.

Furthermore, the role of the Personnel department is highly different, with a very active role in the interviewing process in France, as opposed to a backing and advisory role in Britain, with the decision making staying mainly with the line-managers.

To summarise, within Company A, British managers prefer contributive, validated and structured techniques, whereas the French interviewee values more subjective and emotional techniques, which put the candidates at ease. We have seen in the present piece of work that these are the differences observed in the whole set of interviews conducted in France and Britain, so that one can assert that Company A is in line with the general findings of this research.

5-2) Discussion: a broader perspective.

These interviews not only provided an insight in the attitudes of personnel managers; they also provided an explanation for these attitudes. During these interviews, we not only discuss the way recruitment is conducted in both subsidiaries, we also discussed the different factors impacting on the recruitment process.

5-2-1) The corporate culture.

Barsoux and Lawrence (1990) provides an interesting insight into Company A's corporate culture and the impact on its management style. The first striking characteristic of this company is its focus on marketing (and research) activities: the whole strategy of the company is based on very active and innovative marketing, which explains the different personal qualities described by the different interviewees: Company A is seeking creative and active persons, rather than professionals.

The company prides itself as being a trend setter and not a follower, which is why the company is looking for people with a real potential for evolution. Barsoux and Lawrence (1990) highlights the importance of life-long commitment, which was one of the recurrent themes in the present set of interviews: Company A underlines the quality and motivation of the management of the company, which is clearly attributed to being picked early and trained internally. It appears, as the managing director explains, that "working for Company A is clearly an identity, not a label" (Barsoux & Lawrence 1990).

Also, Company A/UK makes extensive use of multiple one to one interviews, which makes it distinguishable from the other British companies in this sample. The oral tradition of Company A (Barsoux and Lawrence 1990) probably influences this choice of techniques in Britain (see interview with French Development Manager). In this sense, the corporate culture certainly influences the choice of selection tools.

Thus, the corporate culture of Company A is very strong and impacts greatly on the way recruitment is handled in both countries, where recruiters are looking for active, innovative people, with the right motivation to commit themselves in the company in the long-term. This corporate culture certainly explains the similarities between both countries; however, we noted earlier some major differences. As the managers in both countries explained, the way recruitment and selection are handled must be tailored to the corporate culture as well as adapted to the national context.

5-2-2) The recruitment pool in both countries.

Company A, as explained by the different interviewees, is willing to recruit potential general managers, so that the aim in both countries is to attract the candidates at the earliest stage of their career. In line with the findings of this research, it however appears that both countries are recruiting from different pools of candidates.

* *France*.

Company A/Fr. places the emphasis on ideas and initiative, so that it is not recruiting from a single source: the French interviewee explained that the company is recruiting graduates from Grandes Ecoles as well as *des universitaires* (graduates from Universities), because it is primarily seeking originality and variety of views and ideas to continue innovating. As Barsoux and Lawrence (1990) explains, "it must cast its net wide so as to avoid the problem of too many like-minded individuals stifling creativity". Company A stands out from other French companies in that it is recruiting from both tiers of higher education: universities and Grandes Ecoles. However, one can notice a very strong insistence in the discussion with the French interviewee, as well as various articles in France, on the fact that Company A/Fr. is not scared of university people; this shows that University education does not enjoy such high status as Grandes Ecoles in France.

It appears that the leaders of Company A have a University background (Barsoux and Lawrence 1990) - as did the manager I met in France, and that they criticise Grandes Ecoles graduates for having a superiority complex. However, the fact that Company A is well known in France as being one of the only major companies offering opportunities to University graduates is quite eloquent of the dominance of Grandes Ecoles graduates on the managerial employment market.

* Britain.

Company A, as with most major British companies, participates in the annual Milk-Round, recruiting a relatively high number of graduates every year. As the third British interviewee (in charge of graduate recruitment) explains, it is important that the recruits be educated to degree standard; however, the whole selection process aims at assessing the motivation, the potential for evolution and the trainability of the candidates: in Britain (as in France), it is clearly motivation rather than qualifications which is the main selection criterion. For graduate recruitment, Company A has developed a very structured assessment centre, which, as the Human Resources Manager explained, is essential to assess people who do not have a track record on which to build a valuable judgement.

It is interesting to note that Company A/UK is now changing its strategy and trying to target specific universities, offering courses that are in line with the requirements of the company: it is now increasingly focusing on recruiting people with business related degrees, which is a recent evolution observed in Britain (see chapter 4).

5-2-3) The cultural impact.

These interviews have provided some data on the cultural impact on the recruitment and selection practices; Company A has an atypical corporate culture for a French organisation in that it is "fervently anti-bureaucratic" and unstructured, as the French interviewee explains. However, the selection decision in France is still seen as a "co-option": the decision is made with participation of all levels of the organisation and based on a consensus. This relates to the High score of France on the Uncertainty Avoidance Scale (Sparrow & Hilltrop 1994).

We have also seen in chapter 3 (cultural mapping of France and Britain) that British people tend to value fairness and objectivity in their relationships, as opposed to the French subjectivity and intuition. This difference is to be found in the way recruitment and selection is approached in both countries: in France, the decision making is very emotional and subjective, as opposed to the objectivity and factual evaluation operated in Britain.

Thus, the observed attitudes towards recruitment and selection are influenced by certain cultural traits. Although Company A has a peculiar corporate culture for a French organisation, it appears that French cultural traits are to be found in the way recruitment is approached in France.

5-3) International recruitment.

This case study illustrates the findings of the present piece of work in terms of the influence of the education system, the national culture and the corporate culture on the recruitment and selection practices developed in France and Britain. Company A is also an interesting case study, as it appears that this is one of the only companies in this sample which has developed an advanced international approach to recruitment. We have seen that international recruitment is now vital for European companies, but this is still heavily impeded by cultural problems, differences in the expectations and national context, etc. Company A has developed a widespread international presence with subsidiaries all around the world. As the British Human Resources Manager explains, the long term objective of Company A is to input international general managers.

As we have seen, the way that recruitment and selection is currently handled in France and Britain (and supposedly in the rest of Europe) is well adapted to the national context and local culture but it is difficult to apply these national models to every culture; to respond to

this challenge, Company A has created a general framework of criteria within which every world-wide subsidiary operates (so that every candidate is evaluated on the same basis), as well as a world-wide Human Resources network. This network is developing a common code and common levels of understanding of the recruitment questions and aims at speeding up the transfer of the international applications. Thus, the response of Company A to the challenge of international recruitment is the creation of a selection process that will be operated locally but within an international framework of criteria and a world-wide network. the answer is not a standardised recruitment process (with the same techniques being used world-wide) but a global framework, within which every world-wide division would conduct its own recruitment.

CASE STUDY 2: Company E.

Company E *'can only maintain its position as one of the most successful companies in the world by recruiting, retaining, training, motivating and developing individuals of the highest calibre. This makes the role of Human Resources vitally important'* (Graduate Recruitment Brochure 1994 - Company E). Company E is a major British oil company and, as the British interviewee put it, one of the only truly international companies, with subsidiaries in over 120 countries. Company E has now developed international standards of recruitment to respond to the crucial necessity of building an international team. Thus, this company provides a valuable clarification and illustration of the findings of the present project, as well as a second example of a strategy of internationalising the recruitment and selection operations. This case study is based on two interviews (with a British Human Resources Manager in charge of recruitment information at the British head-quarters and the French Human Resource Director in charge of recruitment in Paris), documents from the Central Recruitment Office and general brochures for graduates.

I) Interview with British Recruitment Manager (UK).

This manager of Company E UK is in charge of managerial recruitment information at the head-quarters; this interview lasted 1h30 and different areas relating to managerial recruitment and selection at Company E were discussed.

1-1) Recruitment at Company E.

Recruitment at Company E is conducted at 2 different levels:
- in the country of the subsidiary for national and local staff who will not immediately have any international opportunities.
- at the head-quarters, for those managers willing to develop an international career: the international recruitment is centralised in these countries.

The recruitment systems at these two levels are different due to major differences in education systems and national cultures. The head-quarters participate in the recruitment processes in that they normally advise the different subsidiaries in the way they conduct recruitment, but France appears to be an exception, as the French subsidiary uses its own traditional procedures.

1-1-1) The methods used.

In London, the recruitment process is very straight forward. The majority of candidates apply when they are leaving university and participate in the traditional "Milk-Round". The selection process is as follows:
1- First interview with a specialist in the area the candidate is applying for. If candidates pass this stage:
2- Assessment Centre in London. This Assessment Centre includes:
- group discussion;
- in-tray exercise;
- interview with a panel of 2 people.
3- Engineer candidates are asked to make a technical proposal. Managers candidates are asked to prepare a discussion on a given topic.
4- Decision.

The interviews are structured and aim to put the candidate at ease, in order to find out about their background and get them to "think on their feet"; the main purpose is to see how candidates can argue and analyse in response to general questions. There is no Job-description, because Company E is not recruiting for jobs but for careers. We can summarise the recruitment process as follows: Company E targets a certain number of graduates, every year straight from university, from any country, any nationality; all candidates go through the same procedures and they all have to prove that they have the potential to become senior managers. Company E do not implement job-recruitment as such.

A standard Assessment Centre is the only technique being used. Testing is not used because tests "only reinforce the decision that would have been made anyway". Company E used tests a few years ago, but did not find any added value in the results of the tests; furthermore, tests are expensive to use. Graphology is not, in the British tradition, a widely used tool; it is not correlated and valid.

1-1-2) Final decision and role of the personnel department.

The final decision is taken by the department which is recruiting; this department is conducting the whole recruitment process. During the assessment centre, there is usually no personnel manager acting as assessor - no personnel specialist is involved. The personnel department provides the standards; people from the Personnel functions of each division come into the central recruitment department for 2 or 3 years to work as a recruiter and to be trained on different recruitment techniques (Structured Interview Techniques and Recruitment Assessment Centre) and on Company E standards.

1-1-3) Purpose of the process.

Company E is looking for ten general qualities when recruiting; these are the classic standards (Achievement, leadership, creativity, planning and organising abilities, commercial sense, etc.); analytical abilities and " feet on the ground" are also important qualities. These qualities are strictly defined and written down; each exercise is built for individuals to display these qualities which are evaluated against specific criteria. When recruiting, Company E knows what kind of people have done well in the past and proved to achieve high levels in the company. However, there is room for change and Company E takes risks with certain candidates.

The interviewee explains that recruitment is always subjective ("because it is impossible to be totally objective"), but the process is not as subjective as it used to be. Recruitment is always "face to face interaction" between people, and this creates subjectivity. This subjectivity is necessary, because Company E has a particular corporate culture: individuals have to fit into this culture to avoid difficulties; candidates are to be assessed with respect to the group and not to a job.

1-2) Recruitment in the strategy.

For Company E world-wide recruitment is a strategic issue. Company E has always had the policy to train and develop their own senior managers (every senior manager joined the company in his/her late 20s/early 30s). Recruitment is very strategic, and Company E invests a lot of time and money; however, this interviewee feels there should be more local recruitment done in the countries.

1-3) Perception of recruitment.

1-3-1) The current methods.

"Based on experience, this process is valid". The interviewee explained that analysis has been done, comparing perceived potential of individuals recruited 15 years ago with straight interviews and their potential now and perceived potential of individuals recruited through Assessment Centres; it appears that there is a higher correlation now for people recruited through Assessment Centres (which were introduced 6 or 7 years ago) between what Company E identified and what they are doing now. Assessment Centres have improved the

recruitment process. This technique is appreciated by candidates, who feel they have a chance to show more of what they can do; also, managers feel they know the candidate more and see more than they would have perceived through an interview; as we can read in Company's E brochure on Assessment Centres: "line managers find them stimulating and have more confidence in the final selection decisions; acceptances by those receiving offers have increased and those who are not made offers are more easily able to appreciate why.

1-3-2) Cultural problems encountered when recruiting.

Analysis has been done on the assessment of Foreign people by British people, of British people by Foreign people (etc.) and no significant differences have been found. However, more research needs to be done to try to see if Assessment Centres could also be used in the Far-East: it is not sure yet that assessment centres can be applied to any culture. Company E tries not to put native English speakers with non-native English speakers: none of the candidates should be able to have an advantage because of his/her fluency in English.

Generally, during Assessment Centres for non-native English speakers, the assessors will also be non-native English speakers, but working in English, so that they can appreciate the difficulties that candidates are having. Also, the interviewee explained that during Assessment Centres for non-native speakers, group-discussions may be avoided and replaced by written exercises; As the British interviewee puts it British students appreciate group-discussions because they are very good at airing their views but it is not necessary true for every culture; there is however no evidence to prove this: Company E came to this conclusion only out of experience.

1-3-3) General issues.

Those involved in the recruitment process are provided with a standard training procedure, to get-up-to-date every so often; managers are not allowed to be assessors unless they have been assessors at least once every three months; this is strictly controlled.

There is a low rate of failure; but failure is hard to evaluate, as people do not necessarily fail because of a bad recruitment decision (they also could fail because they have been put in the wrong environment for their first job). However, the turn-over rate is low, as Company E looses 1 in 5 graduates within the 5 first years: the majority leave because they used Company E to gain experience.

The system works sactifactorily.

1-3-4) Other recruitment methods.

During this interview, the interviewee has been asked to describe and explain the advantages and disadvantages of using different recruitment techniques that were included on a list.

1- *Tests of intelligence*: this manager assumes that the university record tells whether the candidate is intelligent or not.

2- *Aptitude tests*: there are no aptitudes or abilities tests which tells whether one can become a good manager in Company E's environment.

3- *Psychometrics*: this technique was used but Company E did not judge that it added any new or useful information.

4- *interviews*: Company E uses both one to one and panel interviews (with a maximum of two assessors); situational interviews are also sometimes used. Interviews are always structured; communication skills and other qualities such as commercial sense can be addressed through an interview and candidates can raise their thinking about a subject in a sort of high-level discussion.

5- *Work-samples*: since there is no job description and no strict career path, there are no valid work samples applicable to Company E's environment.

6- *Intray Exercise*: this is a situational exercise, which is used as part of the assessment centre.

7- *Biographical Information*: this is part of the paper-screening process: the university record is very important. Company E uses its own application form with standard and open-ended questions mainly about non-academic achievements. Biodata is not used as such, as there is no computer-rated forms; however, Company E has a list of criteria, which enables to justify why a candidate has been turned down on paper.

8- *Peer Assessment*: it has never been used, as it does not fit in the British culture.

9- *Self Assessment*: it is in a sense included in the application form but this is not standardised and formalised; when appropriate, it also takes place during interviews.

10- *References*: academic references are generally followed up, but this depends on the circumstances.
　　　　No Graphology nor Astrology is used.

1-4) Evolution.

The process should be monitored regularly. As the interviewee puts it: "I don't think we can ever afford to be complacent". New ideas and techniques are considered (with care about the establishment of their validity). Recruitment procedures always need to be developed and updated. The interviewee explains that the present existing process is quite good but needs to be improved. Company E is particularly interested in studying how the process can be exported to other cultures and specifically to non-European cultures. The international aspect of Company E's activities will always evolve: new exploration sites, new factories, new markets are appearing and Company E will have to move with it.

The main difficulty consists of being able to offer long terms prospects to people other than the British. Foreign managers have few opportunities in their own countries and it is often difficult to judge the future mobility of foreign managers. However, the process and techniques used are sound and good.

Conclusion:

To conclude this interview, this manager was asked to define her perceptions of an effective process.

Given the stage of knowledge in the recruitment area, Company E has developed its own technique: 3 or 4 people in Company E monitor selection procedures, analyse new emerging techniques and make sure that recruitment does achieve the results that the group is expecting; Company E is, however, non complacent. The way interviews are conducted is very powerful to assess people who do not have a track-record. It seems to work, as Company E got a lot of very good people and the company is successful; however, recruitment is a long-term investment and its effectiveness is very hard to judge straight away.

2) Interview with French Human Resources Management in charge of recruitment.

The French interviewee is a Human Resource Manager, in charge of managerial recruitment for Company E France; this interview lasted 1h30 and we discussed different issues related to the way recruitment and selection are handled in France.

2-1) The interviewee's background.

This manager has moved to his current position 18 months ago. Graduate of the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Lyon, he worked for 10 years as a commercial manager; he was then in charge of the training of commercial managers, of designing an information system and then Commercial Director of a subsidiary. Thus, this manager had no real experience in the field of HRM before moving to this position; this is a recurrent characteristic of the French management style.

2-2) The recruitment process.

2-2-1) The influence of the head-quarters.

The head-quarters do not have any say in the way national recruitment is handled; however, the international standards set up in London are applied when international recruitment is conducted. In spite of this low impact, the French manager thinks that the approach in France is very similar to the one developed at the head-quarters; as he puts it: "we do not use the same form but the criteria and requirements are the same".

2-2-2) The techniques used in France.

The selection process is described as follows:

1- *first interview*: conducted by the recruitment manager; this first interview is a structured interview, as conducted in Britain.

2- *Professional interviews* (entretiens de fonction): after the first interview, 3 candidates are selected and their applications are transmitted to the branch they will join; the branch manager goes through these applications and decide to select the 3 candidates, or 2 or 1. One to one interviews will then be conducted internally to the division with people who have different responsibilities within the branch. Without consulting each other, they will meet the candidates and will build their judgement, the rule being, that one veto will stop the whole process.

3- *Ranking*: after having met the candidates, the interviewers will discuss the results and rank the candidates; they will make their decision with respect to the situation and their current needs.

4- *Panel Interviews* (*Le comité de recruitment*): the successful candidates will finally be asked to perform an interview with what is called a *comité de recrutement*, composed of 4 senior managers, among which one can find the director of the recruiting division and a representative of the HR department.

This panel interview will focus on the middle term: having passed the level of the functions they will join, the candidates' potential for evolution within Company E has to be assessed. The final decision is made within one hour by the panel and directly transmitted to the candidates.

As we will see later, Company E France does not use any test and very rarely graphology (This has been used only once since 1993).

2-2-3) Purpose of this process.

There is an evaluation grid which states the intellectual and personal qualities required; as managerial recruitment is centralised, this grid is a Company E France standard and these qualities globally match the requirements set up by the head-quarters. As the interviewee explains: "at Company E, we are looking for a profile, we are not recruiting for a post"; two dimensions are assessed: the knowledge/experience and the personality of the candidates with some specifications for the position the candidates are applying for.

The one to one interview is interesting as it enables the company to measure the professional abilities related to the job and also the inter-personal abilities of the candidates. The recruitment panel focuses more on the person and his/her potential for evolution within the group. During the structured interviews, the intellectual qualities are assessed through questions of general interest that enable the interviewer to see the level of reflection and the open-mindedness of the candidates.

The process described above is used for managerial recruitment: "les cadres" (baccalaureate + 4 years of higher studies); for the "non-cadre", the divisions are in charge of their own recruitment. Company E France recruits primarily among Grandes Ecoles graduates but one third of the recruits in 1994 came from the most renowned Universities (as Dauphine).

2-3) Perception of recruitment at Company E France.

2-3-1) <u>Recruitment and strategy</u>.

The involvement of several people from Company E in the selection process is the best proof of the strategic importance of recruitment for Company E. As the interviewee explains, the managers involved in the process must have a good experience of managing people at different levels of their career. The Recruitment department intervenes in the choice of interviewers and is very strict on the essential qualities to be a recruiter.

60 managers are currently trained but more training needs to be done to better match the standards of the group and to follow the internationalisation of the activities. This is a common trend for every subsidiary in the world.

2-3-2) <u>Perception of the current process</u>.

These methods are described as effective and valid in identifying good candidates, as the applicants are seen by at least 8 different people who do not consult each other before having defined their own evaluation. Certain assessors might be rejected by the Recruitment Department because they might be biased, not mature enough or have not enough experience of management. As the interviewee explains: "the process is good as long as the different recruiters are good".

2-3-3) <u>Difficulties</u>.

The candidates appear to appreciate the process, mainly because Company E gives systematic feedback; candidates are always evaluated with respect to the group and there is no value judgement. The main difficulty is certainly the time that it takes to organise the whole process: the professional interviews are fast but setting up a panel demands a lot of time and it can be difficult to have several senior managers available on the same day (the whole process can last from 1 week up to 5 weeks).

When speaking about the attitudes of the candidates, the interviewee added that they are often impressed by what they call the "Grand Oral" and surprised that a company such as Company E does not use tests; they are also surprised that Company E does not recruit for a post but on a general profile: the philosophy of Company E is to enable the candidates and the company to work together as long as this is profitable for both sides. This common profitability is essential during the first 15 years, during which the candidates are regularly assessed on their performance, this will be compared with the initial expectations.

2-3-4) <u>Different recruitment methods</u>.

As with all interviewees, I submitted a list of different recruitment techniques to this manager and asked him to clarify his perception of these different tools.

1- *Tests of intelligence*: "we think that we are able to assess the intelligence of candidates through structured interviews (which means that the recruiters are able to estimate whether the individual is below average, has good opportunities or is exceptional)"; this level of

measure is enough; "we refuse to judge potential for development of a recruit, as long as we have not seen him work for a while"; the real potential of the recruits will thus be assessed in their third year with Company E.

2- *Aptitude and psychometrics tests*: these tests have been replaced by a more professional approach with the "Entretiens de Fonctions".

3- *Interviews*: we have seen above the importance of the interviewing techniques.

4- *Situational exercises*: This type of exercises is used as part of the interviews; the candidate is asked to solve a problem in a real life situation, which enables to see his/her open-mindedness, his/her inter-personal skills (team work ability) and his/her strategic view.

5- *Application forms and Cover letters*: according to this manager, it is the cover letter which will encourage the recruiters to read the CV; if the impression is positive, the candidate will be sent an application form, which will enable him/her to deepen his/her CV, as this form focuses on the importance of the candidate's experience (e.g. what did the candidate get out of his/her experience?).

> => first sifting on CVs
> => second sifting on application forms.

6- *Peer Assessment*: this is done through the "entretiens de fonction".

7- *References*: it does not have a lot of importance; however, the interviewee is very keen on recruiting students who have completed a work-placement with Company E; in that case, he systematically asks for an evaluation of this placement.

8- *Graphology*: It has never been used for managerial recruitment, perhaps under pressure of the head-quarters; however, certain subsidiaries use this technique and the result can prove to be very interesting as this can reveal things that have not been seen during the interviews. The interviewee's opinion is still doubtful but not negative.

This discussion led us to discuss this manager's expectations for recruitment and selection in the future.

2-4) Evolution.

The methods should not be modified but will have to be more rigorous and strict; with more precision and rigour, the evaluation can be improved and give results closer to real facts; this implies further training.

There are several reasons why Assessment Centres are not used in France:
* This technique implies that several assessors and observers are grouped for one whole day.
* Quantitatively, Company E France is not recruiting at the same level as the British Head-quarters: 250 recruits each year in Britain and only 25 in France.
* Most significantly, there is no Milk Round in France and companies need to make their decision quickly if they want to keep the best candidates.

Conclusion:.

The techniques used in France, although different to the British approach, are structured and give some factual information. Importantly, the relationships between Company E and the "Grandes Ecoles" form the main basis for managerial recruitment of Company E and the group recruits people at the early stages of their career (unless the post requires experience).

Further information.
Recruitment in France in 1994:
    7,000 CVs
         915 Application Forms.
            300 interviews.
                100 Entretiens Fonction.
                    36 Panel Interviews.
                      27 recruits.

3) Company E as a case study.

This section will focus on the differences and similarities to be observed between Company E UK and Company E France.

3-1) The similarities between both countries.

3-1-1) The framework.

As the British interviewee explains, the head-quarters advise on the way recruitment will be conducted in its different subsidiaries; although France has kept its traditional recruitment process, it appears that the framework of criteria within which the French side is operating is tailored to the standards imposed by the head-quarters: as the French interviewee put it: "we do not use the same form but the criteria and requirements are the same".

Thus, the expectations when recruiting candidates are very similar: Company E is looking for people with the right qualities and the right motivation to join the company for a long term commitment

3-1-2) Techniques.

Another similarity lies in that both sides do not use testing of any kind; the reasons for these are pretty similar: tests are not seen as bringing any further information. Also, graphology is not used in France nor in Britain; however, one has to notice major differences in the attitudes of both interviewees towards handwriting analysis: The British interviewee rejects this technique as being non correlated and non valid whereas in France, the interviewee explained that graphology could be used as a complementary source of information, even if this has happened only once since 1993.

Structured interviews are used in both countries, but both sides differ in the importance given to this technique: in France, interviews are the cornerstone of the process and the interviewee will go through 3 to 4 one to one interviews and one panel interview whereas the British candidate will only have one interview at the first stage of the process and an interview as part of the Assessment Centre. Indeed, both sides appear to be very careful about the validity of the information they get: they are looking for factual information that enables an evaluation based on facts.

3-1-3) The purpose.

The most striking similarity lies certainly in the purpose of both sides when recruiting. Company E is not recruiting for jobs but for careers with the group: recruitment is a middle if not long term commitment for the candidates and the company. Both interviewees explain that the most important criteria is the fit between the candidates and the company and the potential for evolution of the candidate. Thus, Company E is selecting on a global profile including intellectual and personal qualities.

3-2) Differences between both countries.

3-2-1) Different techniques.

We have seen earlier that the recruiters in both countries have more or less the same expectations; however, the techniques used are different: Company E UK prefers using the Assessment Centre whereas Company E France prefers multiple structured interviews. This clearly relates to the differences observed by Shackleton and Newell (1991): interviews are the only technique used in France (with graphology), whereas British recruiters tend to use a wider source of information; Company E is in line with these findings.

Furthermore, the whole hierarchic line is involved in France, with the Recruitment Committee being composed of senior managers (and if possible the director of the recruiting branch). On the other side of the Channel, the recruitment responsibility is left to the recruiting branch and the line managers have the power of decision. This, again, illustrates well the findings of the present research: these are clearly two characteristics that have been observed in both countries (see Chapter 6 and 7).

3-2-2) Role of the Personnel department.

The example of Company E illustrates also the major differences observed between Britain and France in the role of the Personnel department. In France, the Recruitment Manager must operate the first sifting (this is the first interview) and participate in the final decision making, with one representative of the personnel department taking part in the *Comité de Recrutement* to insure the rigour of the whole process.

In Britain, the Personnel Department has more a support and advisory role: the Central Recruitment Department provides the general framework of criteria, sets up the recruitment process (by tailoring the techniques) and ensures the training of the recruiting line managers and other intervening parties in the recruitment process.

The training is essential in both countries and Company E France differs heavily from the rest of the surveyed French companies in that it is the only one which has a formalised and strict training of the people involved in the process; as the French interviewee put it: training is essential to better match the standards of the group and to follow the internationalisation of the activities.

3-2-3) Different attitudes towards recruitment and selection.

One can notice differences between both interviewees in their general approach to recruitment: The French interviewee, as most French managers, trusts the French education system to provide high calibre candidates: their educational background and their past experience form a sound basis on which to evaluate the candidates; on the other hand, the British manager explains that it is essential to evaluate candidates who do not have a track record through a wide source of valid information: their degrees are regarded as an entry gate to managerial positions but their potential has to be assessed through different simulation exercises.

In France, the process clearly consists of discussing what the candidates have done in the past and what they got from it; one can note that the French interviewee insisted on the importance of the intellectual qualities of the candidates; this certainly relates to the French elitism. On the other hand, the assessment centre as used in Britain focuses more on skills currently displayed by the candidate.

Also, the British insisted on the ability of Company E to justify their decision through facts whereas the selection system as used in France relies more on discussion and perceptions, although Company E France is more and more careful about the training of the interviewers and of the quality of the information they get.

3-3) Discussion.

3-3-1) Company E related to the general findings of the research.

* France.

We have already seen above some differences and similarities between Company E France and the general findings of the present research. Company E France is similar to the rest of the surveyed companies in that it bases its recruitment on interviews and that it mainly relies on the Grandes Ecoles (even if the company is now opened to graduates from the best universities - which are often very close to the Grandes Ecoles system in their selection of students).

Also, as in the rest of French companies, the whole hierarchic line is involved and the Personnel Department has very strong power in the recruitment process; it also appears that the French interviewee, as the other surveyed French interviewee, is more interested in having a general view of the candidates rather than a specific measure of different aspects of the personality of the applicants.

However, Company E France differs from the rest of the French sample in that it is using rational and more validated methods (Structured interviews) and that it is not extensively using graphology (even if subsidiaries do use this technique). Also, the recruitment department is very careful about the training of the recruiters, which is highly monitored and tailored. These are characteristics, which makes Company E France closer to the British side of the study and one can suppose that these efforts are influenced by the pressure of the Head-quarters towards better validated techniques.

* Britain.

Company E UK is a classical example of British companies, using validated and scientific techniques, decentralising its recruitment to line managers, valuing objectivity and looking for factual information through a wide range of tools. The recruitment brochure suggests that the head-quarters are now proposing the assessment centre to the rest of the European subsidiaries. Although assessment centres are not used in France, the head-quarters set up the general framework within which the subsidiaries conduct their recruitment and this framework urges the use of validated techniques.

3-3-2) Cultural impact.

The importance of multiple interviews and of the judgement of senior managers in France can certainly be explained through the strong importance of the hierarchy in France: the management decision traditionally lies with the superior and its subordinates would resent making a decision before consulting him/her. This relates to what Hofstede has described as Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance: French people tend to have difficulties with dealing with uncertainty and rely a lot on the hierarchy to make the decisions. Also, the plurality of interviews in France illustrates the long process of building relationships in France: Before making a decision, Company E needs to develop a general, in-depth knowledge of the candidates.

British people tend to be very pragmatic and value fairness and rigour of judgements; this certainly explains the importance of the Assessment Centre type exercises in Britain. Also, these exercises facilitate the assessment of what candidates can actually perform; in Britain, status tend to be based on individuals' achievement whereas in France this tends to be based on the excellence of their educational background and past experience.

3-3-3) Employment Market.

We have seen above the importance of Grandes Ecoles in France; as in Company A, the Recruitment manager of Company E explained that the *stage* (Work placement) is very important in the recruitment of graduates: Grandes Ecoles graduates (and more and more universities graduates) have to complement a final year placement, which often is the entry

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gate to major companies. Also, the discussion with the French interviewee gave an invaluable understanding of the contextual reasons why assessment centres are not used in France: mass recruitment situation (as existing in Britain with the "Milk Round") does not exist: French graduates apply through speculative applications and companies have to make their decision quickly if they want to recruit the best candidates; this suggests that pragmatic factors impact on the use of assessment centres as much as cultural traits.

4) International Recruitment.

As in the first case study, Company E is now fairly advanced in internationalising its work force; this company appeared to be interesting as it has adopted another internationalisation strategy; Company E responded to the diversity of recruitment techniques used in its European subsidiaries with a very straight forward strategy: centralising in the head-quarters the recruitment of the candidates with an international profile; as the British interviewee explains, this enables the company to recruit them on the same, consistent basis and to create a pool of truly European managers.

As highlighted during the interview, this also creates some cultural and language difficulties which Company E has pragmatically learnt to overcome by adapting the content of the exercises according to the nationality and the languages (English speakers/non English speakers) spoken by the candidates. As explained in the recruitment brochure and during both interviews, Company E is now imposing the use of common techniques and framework in its different European subsidiaries, which is relatively successful but there are some questions about the transferability of assessment centre to Far Eastern countries.

CONCLUSION:

As we have seen, Companies A and E are two typical examples of respectively French and British companies, but they both differ from the national trends in different ways; this tends to prove that the country's factors, although determinant, are not the only on the recruitment process: the head-quarters and the corporate culture are key influencing factors in the choice of selection techniques, as major companies have developed different expectations and ethics throughout their history. These case studies offer an invaluable illustration of the findings of the present piece of work as they provide an insight into the differences in attitudes and contexts observed in France and Britain. Furthermore, these two cases offer examples of the way major companies can respond to the challenges of international recruitment; although the strategies developed by both companies are different, both show that cultural questions in the setting of international selection methods cannot be ignored: both companies have had to adapt their processes for them to be acceptable to candidates of different nationalities, as well as for them to be adapted to the specific employment markets on which they are operating. Selection methods have to be culturally acceptable not only to recruiters but also to candidates.

The different findings related in chapter 6 and 7 of the present research are illustrated in these case studies, with the French companies valuing more subjective and unstructured techniques, involving the whole hierarchic line and British companies preferring validated and scientific techniques providing a measured and specific assessment of the competencies of the candidates. These two examples show how companies in France and Britain have to cope with strong cultural and historical as well as corporate inheritance when setting up their recruitment and selection procedures.

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