Retention Strategies in France and Sweden

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ABSTRACT

Knowing how to retain employees, especially those who are well educated, experienced and contribute to company's competitive advantage, is important. However, with an increasing number of companies operating with subsidiaries outside the home country, retention also needs to be viewed from a cultural perspective. In this theoretical article, focus is on the interrelatedness between retention strategies and national culture in two countries with different cultures: France and Sweden. The GLOBE study framework is used, and national culture is measured in terms of *future orientation*, *assertiveness*, *institutional collectivism*, *power distance*, *humane orientation* and *uncertainty avoidance*. Retention is measured as *remuneration*, *career opportunities*, *training and development of skills*, *leadership style*, *physical working conditions* and *work–life balance*. As a result of the study, seven hypotheses, aiming to test the interrelatedness between the areas of retention and national culture in France and Sweden, are proposed.

Key Words: Retention Strategies; National Culture; GLOBE Study; France; Sweden.

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A STUDY OF RETENTION AND NATIONAL CULTURE

A paradox that can be found today in many countries is high unemployment combined with a huge demand for people with competence – the 'right' competence. Thus, the need to design good retention strategies becomes a strategic issue for companies. A number of studies deal with retention from various organisational perspectives. However, few studies using cross-national data when studying the interrelatedness between retention and national culture patterns are to be found.

Furthermore, in a situation where a growing number of companies have subsidiaries in one or several countries, it cannot be taken for granted that the home country retention policies will work abroad. Rather, one would expect that with more and more companies working on a European basis, retention strategies, in order to be effective, will have to be aligned with national cultures (Schuler and Rogovsky, 1998: 173). Consequently, the need for understanding the relationship between retention and national cultures increases. A good way to study retention will then be to compare how retention is handled in various European countries. As France and Sweden represent two different cultural clusters in Europe, they have been chosen for the study. France represents the Latin and North/West European, and Sweden the Nordic and North/West European (Brodbeck, 2000: 12). The two countries are different in as many as seven out of nine cultural dimensions (House et al., 2004). The general proposition of the study is that there is a need to apply different retention strategies in France and Sweden. Therefore the purpose of this study is to explore the effects national cultural patterns in France and Sweden might have on retention strategies.

RETENTION AND TURNOVER UNDER SCRUTINY

Why is retention important? Having a competent and qualified workforce is vital to both large and small firms (Deshpande and Golhar, 1994: 49). If managers do not pay attention to retention, high staff turnover can damage the business severely, especially if it hits factors that provide competitive advantage. This could, in turn, inhibit business growth or even cause a decline in the level of business (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 59). Similarly, Brazier (2005: 128)

found that hierarchical structures, high staff turnover and lack of resources are likely to stifle creativity and innovation.

Another reason for keeping retention high on the agenda is the difficulty in replacing talents. Cappelli (2000) argues that in a time of tight labour markets talent can be very hard to replace. Consequently, when an experienced and competent employee leaves the company the business 'takes a hit' (Cappelli, 2000: 104). The importance of this statement becomes even more evident when considering the fact that in the modern Western economy, most added value for companies, particularly in the service industry, is created through intellectual and information processes (Dess and Shaw, 2001: 447).

Additionally, the cost of replacing persons who leave can be high (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 59). According to Thornton (2001) the cost for recruiting key staff, such as managers, specialists or highly trained professionals, can be up to 150 per cent of the annual salary. For hourly paid workers, the corresponding cost is six months salary (Thornton, 2001: 24). As if this was not enough, there are costs that do not show up in the balance sheet (i.e. loss of skill, knowledge, experience and the investment in the training of the person who leaves). In addition work is disrupted and the effect on the staff may lead to a negative effect on staff morale (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 59).

Turnover and Retention
When studying turnover, variables such as satisfaction, commitment and intention to quit are generally accepted as important antecedents to turnover (Bigliardi et al., 2005: 428). Job satisfaction has been given a lot of attention within research and a large number of empirical studies confirm the correlation between low job satisfaction and high turnover motivation (Jamal, 1990: 727). Feeling commitment to an organisation means, according to Curtis and Wright (2001: 60), that the employee has a strong identification with it, values the sense of membership within it, agrees with its objectives and value systems, is likely to remain in it and, finally, is prepared to work hard on its behalf. There are also findings confirming a link between commitment and turnover. Kondratuk et al. (2004) found that affective commitment (i.e. emotional attachment

to, identification with and involvement in the organisation), as well as normative commitment (i.e. a feeling of obligation to continue employment), were significantly lower before the move for those who changed company in comparison to those who remained in the same position (see also Bishop and Scott, 1997; Kondratuk et al., 2004: 342).

Several authors show that, parallel to commitment, turnover is influenced by factors such as identification, loyalty and trust. Mak and Sockel (2001: 269) claim that both loyalty and organisational commitment may be defined as a relative strength of an individual's identification with the involvement in a particular organisation. Furthermore that waning loyalty is a prediction of turnover intentions. Van Dick et al. (2004: 351) found organisational identification feeding into job satisfaction, which in turn predicted turnover intentions. Mak and Sockel (2001) found that a high level of retention was associated with a high level of loyalty and low levels of burnout and turnover intent. Furthermore they found that motivating employees was important for retaining them, with a one unit increase in motivation leading to 1.34 units increase in retention (Mak and Sockel, 2001: 263).

Robinson (1996) found trust to be associated with a number of factors, such as pay (based on current level of performance), training, career development and responsibility. Actual turnover was associated with promotion and responsibility (Robinson, 1996: 584). Robinson and Rousseau (1994) found a negative relation between employee trust and satisfaction on the one hand and violations of the psychological contract on the other. Furthermore, violations of the psychological contract were positively correlated to actual turnover (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994: 253).

Commonly we ask employees to show commitment to their company. The outcome of this literature review indicates that employers need to show commitment to their employees. If an employer fails to build relationships with his or her employees they may begin to feel unimportant, unappreciated and might even leave the company (Michaud, 2005: 10). Therefore, building strong relationships with employees could be a necessary factor in a retention strategy. Shore and Barksdale (1998) reported that employees had higher levels of perceived organisational support, commitment, career future and

lower levels of turnover intentions when their employment relationships were characterised by mutually high obligations, that is, for both employee and employer (Shore and Barksdale, 1998: 741). Breaking your promises might well lead to increasingly lower commitment, lack of loyalty, lower identification with and lower attachment to the company and finally, greater intention to leave (Kickul, 2001: 323).

Rewarding loyalty often involves introducing a benefits package that improves with the increasing duration of service. Benefits such as company cars and company-paid private medical insurance are often expected features of benefits packages for senior staff. For non-senior staff, one way is to introduce flexible or 'cafeteria' benefits which involve employees choosing from a menu of benefits. This may also be the easiest and cheapest way for employers to satisfy the needs of the majority of their employees (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 61).

Sigler (1999: 2) suggests that, in order to try to retain employees with other measures than compensation (i.e. pay and stock ownership), management should work on improving the employees' job satisfaction. Again, managers might have to recognise that they themselves could be part of the problem. Cappelli (2000: 104) claims that it requires executives to 'take a hard-headed, analytical approach to what has long been viewed as a "soft" side of business – the management of people'.

Previous research indicates that a number of factors influence retention and are important features in a well-functioning retention strategy. Several factors, however, appear to influence retention in an indirect way. Other factors appear to influence in a direct way. Among those factors that have an indirect influence are job satisfaction, loyalty, trust, commitment, identification with the company and attachment to the company. The factors that appear to have a more direct influence are remuneration, leadership style, career opportunities, training and development of skills, physical working conditions and work–life balance. However, before dealing with the factors in detail it is necessary to take a deeper look into national culture.

NATIONAL CULTURE

National culture is a fascinating construct, so obvious 'to the eye' and yet so difficult to get hold of from a theoretical point of view.

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One of the most well known studies of national cultures is that of Hofstede (1980, 2001). A more recent study, equal in level of ambition, is the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). With the arrival of the GLOBE study, choosing which study to use as the basis for a comparison between national cultures becomes an interesting issue. Although based on a smaller sample, GLOBE is more recent. Furthermore, GLOBE has been a highly collaborative effort involving more than a hundred researchers all over the world. The collaborative design, which allows for a thorough study in all countries, together with a diverse sample as opposed to the one multi-national company in the Hofstede study, also speaks in favour of the GLOBE study.

The GLOBE study was conducted some twenty years after the Hofstede study. Consequently, the researchers of the GLOBE study could take twenty years of debate on the Hofstede findings (Søndergaard, 1994: 447), as well as further studies within the field (e.g. Gooderham and Nordhaug, 2002: 48), into account in their research. In this sense, the GLOBE study can be seen as a continuation of the work Hofstede undertook. The Hofstede study reported four dimensions for understanding national cultures: *power distance*, *masculinity–femininity*, *individualism–collectivism* and *uncertainty avoidance*, with a fifth dimension, *long-term orientation*, having been added later (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). The GLOBE study reported nine constructs or dimensions: *performance orientation*, *future orientation*, *gender egalitarianism*, *assertiveness*, *institutional collectivism*, *in-group collectivism*, *power distance*, *humane orientation* and *uncertainty avoidance* (House et al., 2004: 16).

Another important dimension of the GLOBE study is that it attempts to capture both societal cultural norms of shared values in society, that is the 'should be' values, as well as how they are practised in society, that is the 'as is' values (House et al., 2004: 17). In this study the 'as is' (practices) measures have been used, as they represent the theories in use (Argyris and Schön, 1996: 15).

The main argument for choosing the GLOBE study, however, is related to the findings of Spector et al. (2001). In an international study of the psychometric properties of a later version of the Hofstede survey, the Hofstede Values Survey Module 1994 (Hofstede, 1994),

the findings clearly did not speak in favour of the instrument. Lack of
internal consistency, as well as doubts about the internal validity of
the scales, prompted the authors to recommend caution when using
the VSM 94 (Spector et al., 2001: 280). In the GLOBE study, inter-
nal consistencies are reported at good and, in some cases, high levels.
This is valid for both the 'as is' as well as the 'should be' measures
(House et al., 2004: 134). Furthermore, the results from correlating
the GLOBE study scales with other scales, that is Hofstede (1984),
Schwartz (1994), Schwartz and Melech (2000) and other studies, also
indicate that results are on a good level. Thus, the scales of the
GLOBE study appear to have a satisfactory level of construct valid-
ity. This study therefore uses the GLOBE study as the basis for com-
parison of the national cultures of France and Sweden.

Looking at values for France and Sweden, there are differences
for all nine dimensions (Table 1).

**Table 1: Scores, Rank and Bands for France and Sweden ('As
Is'/Practices) in the GLOBE study**

		France	Sweden	Differences
Performance Orientation	score	4.11	3.72	0.39
	rank	30–31/61	48/61	17–18/61
	band	Band B	Band B	0
Future Orientation	score	3.48	4.39	0.91
	rank	47/61	9/61	38/61
	band	Band C	Band B	1
Gender Egalitarianism	score	3.64	3.84	0.20
	rank	17/61	8/61	9/61
	band	Band A	Band A	0
Assertiveness	score	4.13	3.38	0.75
	rank	30/61	61/61	31/61
	band	Band B	Band C	1

(*Continued*)

Table 1: (*Continued*)

		France	**Sweden**	**Differences**
Institutional Collectivism	score	3.93	5.52	1.59
	rank	46/61	1/61	45/61
	band	Band B	Band A	1
In-group Collectivism	score	4.37	3.66	0.71
	rank	49/61	60/61	11/61
	band	Band B	Band C	1
Power Distance	score	5.28	4.85	0.43
	rank	28/61	51/61	23/61
	band	Band A	Band B	1
Humane Orientation	score	3.40	4.10	0.70
	rank	57/61	28/61	29/61
	band	Band D	Band C	1
Uncertainty Avoidance	score	4.43	5.32	0.89
	rank	18/61	2/61	16/61
	band	Band B	Band A	1

Adapted from House et al. (2004).

Performance orientation and *gender egalitarianism* will not be used in the study as France and Sweden are within the same band. Band refers to a technique known as *test banding*. Test scores are grouped into bands, and, although ending up with different scores, the conceptual differences within a certain band are not large enough to be meaningfully different (House et al., 2004: 220). A band becomes like a cluster. For the remaining seven dimensions, France and Sweden end up in different bands. However, *in-group collectivism* deals with the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and interdependence in their families. As the focus is exclusively on families, children and parents, this dimension is not relevant for the study.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO INCREASE RETENTION
IN FRANCE AND SWEDEN

Remuneration

At first sight pay would appear to be a straightforward issue. Fong and Shaffer (2003: 559) however, argue that satisfaction with pay has become a multi-dimensional construct consisting of four factors: pay level, pay raises, benefits, and structure and administration. Other studies, for example Carraher and Buckley (1996: 102), confirm this. Thus the focus moves from the pay itself to the process for deciding on pay as well as the pay structure. Mulvey et al. (2002) found that satisfaction with the process used to determine pay was more important in determining employee retention than was satisfaction with the amount of pay received (Mulvey et al., 2002: 38). Furthermore, pay levels should be reviewed and compared with other employers regularly, jobs should be evaluated to provide for equitable grading decisions, clear explanations should be provided concerning the link between performance and reward, performance-related pay schemes should be regularly reviewed, and employees should be involved in developing and operating job evaluation and performance-related pay schemes (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 61). Therefore, pay satisfaction can also be said to hold notions of transparency and perceived distribution justice. Some even claim that justice is at the heart of pay satisfaction. Workers who felt they were paid fairly in relation to others in their organisation exhibited higher levels of commitment (O'Connell, 2001: 8).

Remuneration also carries other opportunities for instilling loyalty and commitment among employees in the company. Cappelli (2000) argues for the need for a new goal of HR management: that compensation can help in influencing who leaves and when. There are companies who pay special 'hot skills' premiums to employees whose expertise is crucial and difficult to get hold of (Cappelli, 2000: 106). Sigler (1999: 3) instead argues that incentive pay may consist of cash bonuses when employees reach predetermined goals. The bonus will normally be tied to accounting measures and often specifically to the employee's job area. Another type of pay incentive is to offer the employee stock ownership, which in

essence aligns the interests of the employee with the interests of the owners.

Now turning to the cultural dimensions, *future orientation* is the degree to which a collectivity encourages and rewards future-oriented behaviour such as planning and delaying gratification. So, the lower a culture scores on *future orientation*, the greater the focus is on money (and other immediate rewards) here and now. Inversely, a higher score indicates a more future-oriented behaviour with, for example, higher acceptance for a delay of gratifications (House et al., 2004: 282).

Another cultural dimension, *assertiveness*, is defined as reflecting 'beliefs as to whether people are or should be encouraged to be assertive, aggressive, and tough, or non-assertive, non-aggressive, and tender in social relationships' (House et al., 2004: 395). The higher the level of *assertiveness*, the more equity, competition and performance are stressed. There is furthermore a strong link between performance and rewards. Scoring lower on *assertiveness* means there is a greater stress on equality, solidarity and quality of life. 'Merit pay' is viewed as potentially destructive to harmony (House et al., 2004: 405).

A third cultural dimension is *institutional collectivism*. It aims to show the degree to which institutional practices at the societal level encourage and reward collective action. Individuals in an individualistic culture expect, for example, rewards to be contingent on performance (i.e. that they will be rewarded in direct relationship to their contribution to success). In a collectivistic society, compensation and promotions are based on what is equitable for the group and on considerations of seniority and personal needs (House et al., 2004: 459).

Humane orientation is defined as the degree to which an organisation or society encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring and kind to others (House et al., 2004: 569). In a culture that scores low on this dimension, people are motivated by power and material possessions. Inversely, at the other end of the continuum, people are motivated by a need for belonging and affiliation.

With France scoring lower than Sweden on *future orientation*, higher on *assertiveness*, lower on *institutional collectivism* and

lower on *humane orientation* (Table 1), it can be expected that remuneration and related issues will be of greater importance for retention in France than in Sweden.

Hypothesis H1: Remuneration and remuneration-related issues are of greater importance for retention in France than in Sweden.

The Management of Careers and the Training and Development of Skills

Undoubtedly, dissatisfaction with career prospects is a major cause of turnover (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 61). Subsequently, some authors suggest that promotion has the best retention potential. Nalbantian and Szostak (2004: 118) wrote about a bank where it was decided to focus on career opportunities, management stability and more selective recruiting. These factors, not pay, were expected to reduce turnover the most. The factor that scored the lowest in reduction in turnover was a 10 per cent market pay adjustment.

Several authors report of companies trying to achieve loyalty through career development programmes. In an attempt to stop people from leaving, many companies are reported to have fallen back on traditional retention programmes. By designing and promoting new long-term career paths and investing heavily in employee development, one of the companies (DuPont) hoped to win back the loyalty of its workforce (Cappelli, 2000: 104).

The findings of Mak and Sockel (2001) suggest that the perception of how career development is managed is a more important indicator for motivation than job satisfaction. They also suggest that a company, in order to improve retention, should align career development policies with the needs of the employees (Mak and Sockel, 2001: 268). Gaffney (2005: 9) suggests the crafting of individual career plans that are parallel to the company business plan (see also Cappelli, 2000: 105).

Turning to training and the development of skills, we find this to be equally important for companies. Gagg (2005) notes that the availability of skilled workers is a concern for many British companies, both now and for the future. An increasing number of

companies are also mentioning skill shortage as a major issue. At the same time, paradoxically enough, companies seems to be increasingly reluctant to spend money on training (see also Lyons, 2003: 398; Gagg, 2005: 28).

Rawson (2000: 225) suggests going even further, and argues that meta-learning (i.e. 'learning to learn') should also be considered a skill to be acquired. To be effective, however, this requires a far greater depth of personal learning than skill development alone (i.e. it involves a self-reflexive process of learning that otherwise would not necessarily be present).

Opinions differ when it comes to the question of what sort of training is the most effective. There is, for example, a debate concerning how much learning should be provided by the education system, versus how much should come through workplace learning, skill development and life-long learning (Hager, 2004: 523). Interestingly enough, Gelderen et al. (2005: 104), studying the learning behaviours of small business starters, concluded that, contrary to their hypotheses, not all learning opportunities contributed positively to skill development. Only planned learning, and within this, only task-related characteristics, correlated positively with skill development.

From a cultural point of view, *future orientation* helps us in understanding the willingness to delay gratification: the higher the score, the higher the willingness to push gratification to the future, and the better and stronger the sense of self-identity and career orientation (House et al., 2004: 299).

Power distance is defined as reflecting 'the extent to which a community accepts and endorses authority, power differences, and status privileges' (House et al., 2004: 513). In cultures with lower *power distance*, skills and knowledge are important power bases (House et al., 2004: 536). Subsequently, training and development will be interesting as a way of acquiring a power base within an organisation.

Sweden scores higher than France on *future orientation* and France scores higher than Sweden on *power distance*. It is therefore hypothesised that retention in France is related to a preference for specialist knowledge and positions, whereas retention in Sweden is

related to a preference for advancement and the acquiring of man-
agement positions.

Hypothesis H2: Training and developing skills are more important
        for retention in France than in Sweden.

Hypothesis H3: Making a career is more important for retention in
        Sweden than in France.

Leadership Style as a Way to Motivate
Several studies report good leadership as a reason for staying. Chen
and Silverthorne (2005) found that the higher the leader's leader-
ship score, the higher the employee's willingness to perform a task,
the higher the employee's job satisfaction, the lower the employee's
job stress and the lower the employee's turnover intention (Chen
and Silverthorne, 2005: 280). What the manager actually does can
influence the environment positively or negatively, directly impact-
ing job satisfaction, because the manager's behaviour can be seen
and felt by the staff (Ribelin, 2003: 18). One company found that 80
per cent of the turnover was within one department. The high
turnover rate was related to the engineers' feeling that they did not
have an impact on the organisation. Furthermore, they did not per-
ceive that they were valued (Shaffer, 2004: 22).

    What kind of leadership is good then from a retention point of
view? Curtis and Wright (2001: 60) suggest looking at employee
involvement and participation. The involvement of staff reflects the
extent to which they are valued. Organisations that use many staff
suggestions benefit not only financially, but also help to foster their
employees' self-esteem and commitment to the organisation.

    Giving feedback on performance seems to be equally important.
The 'feel good factor' concerning one's job is very important for
committed employees. Individuals should be clear about their respon-
sibilities and performance standards, and be given positive feedback
on how well they are doing. They should also feel that performance
assessments and appraisals are fair (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 61).

    Another important factor appears to be to really listen to
employee feedback. Michaud (2005) states that most employees
will gladly talk about their needs and job-related issues. However,

listening to the employees involves so much more than simply being quiet while they are talking. They should have the employer's complete attention, so that they feel important (Michaud, 2005: 10). Thornton (2001: 26) suggests a more systematic approach. He states that without a feedback programme the employer can only guess how the employees view their work environment and whether they feel that there is adequate communication. If you as an employer do not listen to your employees and if you do not respect their expertise and opinions, you run the risk of ending up with a demoralised workforce and the consequences that would entail.

Another approach to motivate employees is through autonomy. Sigler (1999: 3) urges management to ensure that talented employees are given autonomy in their job functions and are given meaningful assignments that allow them to be involved in the decision-making for their areas of expertise.

Leadership is about exercising power and how this is done. Consequently, *power distance* is an important construct for understanding leadership in different cultures. In a culture that scores high on *power distance*, there is an expectation that power will provide social order, relational harmony and role stability (House et al., 2004: 536). Furthermore, the *assertiveness* dimension tells us that the higher the score, the higher the importance of equity, competition and performance, as well as the rewarding of performance. In terms of leadership styles, this turns into a style with focus on achievements.

Looking instead at the *humane orientation*, we can see that the higher the score, the greater the need for belonging and affiliation. In terms of leadership style, this indicates the need for a style with focus on relationships.

France scores higher than Sweden on *assertiveness* and *power distance*, whereas Sweden scores higher on *humane orientation* (Table 1). It is thus hypothesised that a leadership style that focuses on relationships will be more important for retention in Sweden than in France. Furthermore, it is also hypothesised that a leadership style that focuses on achievements will be more important for retention in France than in Sweden.

Hypothesis H4: A leadership style that focuses on relationships will be more important for retention in Sweden than in France.

Hypothesis H5: A leadership style that focuses on achievements
will be more important for retention in France than in Sweden.

Physical Working Conditions and Work–Life Balance
Judging from the literature, the area of working conditions appears
to cover most things from physical and psycho-social work environ-
ment, job stress and work–family conflict, to needs for fairness,
transparency and flexible work arrangements. It is thus, without
doubt, an important area in relation to retention. Pleasant working
conditions can entice productive workers to stay (Sigler, 1999: 3).
Abraham (1999) found company inequity (the comparison with oth-
ers performing different tasks in the same organisation) with regard
to working conditions was a clear predictor of turnover intention
(Abraham, 1999: 205). Furthermore, job stress has been found to be
positively correlated with turnover intention, as in the results of
Chen and Silverthorne (2005: 280). Jamal (1999: 153) came to a
similar conclusion when studying the relationship between job
stress and employee well-being among teachers in Canada and
Pakistan. In both countries job stress was significantly correlated to
a number of well-being variables, such as overall burnout, emo-
tional exhaustion, lack of accomplishment, depersonalisation and
intrinsic motivation. Job stress was also clearly correlated with
turnover intentions in both countries.

In recent years, achieving a better work–life balance has become
increasingly important for many employees. Some organisations
have improved retention by offering staff more flexible working
options and by implementing other family-friendly policies.
Initiatives might include workshops aimed at achieving a better
work–life balance, access to a range of domestic services, gradual
return to work programmes for those who have been on maternity
leave, advisory service on childcare, unpaid career breaks and
extended parental leave (Curtis and Wright, 2001: 61). Looking into
work–family conflict and turnover, Batt and Valcour (2003: 208)
found work design characteristics explained the most variance in
employees' control over managing work and family demands,
whereas human resources incentives explained the most variance in
work–family conflict and turnover intentions. The result of their
study suggests that the most effective organisational responses to

work–family conflict and turnover are those that combine work–family policies with other human resource practices, including work redesign and commitment-enhancing incentives.

Boyar et al. (2003) found that role conflict and role overload was significantly correlated with WFC (work–family conflict). The hypothesis that family responsibility would be positively related to FWC (family–work conflict) was not supported. However, the authors found support for the hypothesis that WFC and FWC would be positively related to turnover intentions (Boyar et al., 2003: 187).

On an overall level, working conditions are related to *assertiveness* and *institutional collectivism*. In a culture that scores low on *assertiveness*, issues concerning quality of life will be stressed, whereas in a culture that scores high on *assertiveness*, it will be performance that is stressed instead. In a culture that scores high on *institutional collectivism*, organisations are expected to take responsibility for the welfare of the employee. Furthermore, such cultures are expected to show more pro-social, organisational citizenship behaviour than in low-scoring cultures.

France scores higher than Sweden on *assertiveness*, while Sweden scores higher than France on *institutional collectivism* (Table 1). It can therefore be hypothesised that physical working conditions as well as harmony between work and family are more important for retention in Sweden than in France.

Hypothesis H6: Physical working conditions will be more important for retention in Sweden than in France.

Hypothesis H7: Finding harmony between work and family will be more important for retention in Sweden than in France.

CONCLUSIONS

The study's purpose was to explore the effects French and Swedish national cultural patterns might have on retention strategies. The purpose has been fulfilled through the formulation of seven hypotheses (Figure 1).

Study of the literature has shown that a retention strategy in France needs to take into consideration a national culture that is fairly materialistic, where rewards are expected 'here and now'.

**Figure 1: Retention Strategies for France and Sweden, Based on the
Study's Hypotheses**

France

Hypothesis H1: Remuneration and remuneration-related issues are of
greater importance for retention in France than in Sweden.
Hypothesis H2: Training and developing skills are more important for
retention in France than in Sweden.
Hypothesis H5: A leadership style that focuses on achievements will be
more important for retention in France than in Sweden.

Sweden

Hypothesis H3: Making a career is more important for retention in
Sweden than in France.
Hypothesis H4: A leadership style that focuses on relationships will be
more important for retention in Sweden than in France.
Hypothesis H6: Physical working conditions will be more important
for retention in Sweden than in France.
Hypothesis H7: Finding harmony between work and family will be
more important for retention in Sweden than in France.

Furthermore that performance should be clearly rewarded and in
relation to each employees' contribution to task success. A retention
strategy in Sweden needs to take into consideration a subordinate's
need for belonging and affiliation, and that long-term career is
viewed as more important than immediate rewards. Furthermore,
quality of life issues are stressed and the organisation takes on
responsibility for the employees' welfare. The study has thus ren-
dered support for the general proposition that there is a need to
apply different retention strategies in France and Sweden.

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