

**Social Sciences**

**Heinz Bachmann**

## **Psychological Aspects of Development Co-operation**

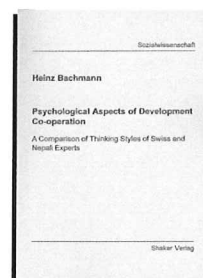
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### **Psychological Aspects of Development Co-operation**

Development co-operation is a huge business with an estimated turnover of over 50 billion US\$ a year affecting around three quarters of the world's population. The need in development co-operation to improve its effectiveness is widely acknowledged. One of the reasons for the low effectiveness is the often neglected human factor. Technological solutions are favored not because they are regarded as more important but because of the perceived difficulties with the human factor. The focus of this dissertation was on the human aspect of development co-operation. It was assumed that misunderstandings based on different ways of thinking between foreign and local experts can hamper effective development co-operation. An attempt was made to show a link between the culture of upbringing and the way a person thinks. A survey was conducted among 49 Swiss experts working in development co-operation and 83 Nepali experts working in development co-operation using Sternberg-Wagner's Thinking Style Inventory. In addition, a contrast group of 76 Nepali students was interviewed. As a theoretical framework, the ecological systems approach was chosen with a special focus on the concept of the developmental niche and Sternberg's thinking styles theory. The result of the study supported the hypothesized assumption that culture moulds the preferred way of thinking. In 8 out of 13 thinking styles proposed by Sternberg, significant differences were found between Swiss and Nepali experts compared to only 4 between Nepali experts and Nepali students. The detected differences and similarities explained convincingly many of the problems that can be encountered in intercultural learning and communication. Although the survey was set within the context of development co-operation, the implications of the findings are regarded as relevant for other areas where intercultural learning and communication should take place. For example, managers and other professionals working in an international surrounding can benefit from the findings as well as teachers who have to deal with students of foreign cultures.

**Keywords:** Development Co-operation / Thinking Styles / Learning Styles / Intercultural Learning / Intercultural Communication



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