A MOST WELCOME BOOK. It is high time that we have a book like this one. It combines the two areas of cross-cultural management and human resource management. To cross-cultural management researchers it is inconceivable to talk about HRM in universalistic terms, meaning pertaining to any organisation anywhere irrespective of the context (time, place, and actors), since the importance of culture has been proven time and again over the past decades. Only parochial North American authors can be excused to take such a stance out of ignorance of reality outside their own continent.

Terence Jackson is a European who has lived in an international and intercultural laboratory for years, since he was professor at the EAP European School of Management, a graduate management school based in Paris, with integrated campuses in Paris, Oxford, Madrid and Berlin where students are drawn from all over the European Union and beyond. In 1999 it merged with another Paris based school the ESCP, one of the major French ‘grandes écoles’, to become ESCP-EAP, where he is now professor and director of the Centre for Cross-Management Research.

The book is very complete, yet succinct in its 230 pages of text, in contrast to redundant US textbooks. It is well researched on each of the topics treated, drawing on the classical texts as well as up to date texts, except for the Hofstede 2001 second edition that goes unnoticed. This is the more surprising since the author makes extensive use of the Hofstede dimensions in all of the ten chapters. Another omission is that of the US anthropologist Edward T. Hall in chapter one, where a number of culture theories are presented. Hall’s theory of monochronic and polychronic time systems is one of the most predictive theories that we have in culture studies, and these systems do have important implications for people management.

The book is structured in ten chapters, each under the heading of a type of organisation: the cross-cultural, the strategic, the competent, the missionary, etcetera, along with a second title: the multicultural, the supranational, the American Model, etcetera. This second part of the title is referring to the case that is used in the chapter. The first part containing the metaphor might be somewhat misleading for the inexperienced reader in suggesting for instance ‘The American Model’ to represent The Competent Organization or ‘the Dutch Model’ to represent The Missionary Organization, when in fact the last one deals with expatriation, and the first one with the problem of parochialism and universality. This is unnecessarily blurring the important messages conveyed in each chapter.

Each chapter opens with a short presentation of the topic to be treated, followed by a case description that takes us to a large number of places over many continents, even to Africa, which is so seldom included in the cross cultural literature. Next the author reviews the literature on the topic, highlighting problems in models and their use in practice. In this light the case is revisited, and cases treated in earlier chapters are drawn upon again, to further illustrate the issue at hand. The cases used are well chosen, well informed, and they contain just the information necessary to understand the important points. The analyses of the cases have the merit of still leaving room for the teacher with specialist knowledge to add more points of explanation.

Each chapter ends with a section called ‘Implications for managers’ followed by ‘Questions for managers’- managers in this connection being human resource managers - and ‘Agenda for research’ followed by ‘Questions for researchers’. These questions may be of inspiration to the readers as may be the models of variables contained in the individual chapters.
The author treats a large number of concepts common to cross-cultural management research and HRM. Most of them come in contrastive pairs in the Western tradition of opposites, like universalism-particularism, instrumentalism-humanism, ascription-achievement, integration-differentiation. The last pair mentioned is thoroughly treated in chapter 3, in which the author questions the applicability of the competence approach that is widely used in the Western world.

This chapter is a good illustration of the need for marrying the two hitherto separate areas. It challenges the habitual answers as to what may be effective management and the traditional behavioural-instrumental approach to the issue. It is a brilliant example of the shortcomings of applying universalistic approaches to international management.

It also brings to the fore the problematic use of broad categories such as Western and European. We are taken through cases like Swedish IKEA’s difficulties in Spain, the French bank Crédit Lyonnais problems in operating in the US, and the US based Andersen Consulting’s problems of recruiting in a diversified Europe, etc., where upon they are all lumped into ‘European’ and even ‘Western’, this last term including Europe, whatever that may be. This is not logical. On the other hand it is only fair to say that is an inconsistency that most of us have to address. We all need to be more precise or more relative.

Fortunately, the author makes no reference to the myth of globalisation so often cited that it has become a mantra, since he recognized the impact of culture and context from the outset. All in all, it is a well-conceived book, and henceforward no student of HRM may ignore the impact of cultural values on the management of people.