

Communication in Multicultural Project Teams

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Essential human nature is similar at birth;
Different habits (customs) make us seem remote (different).

Ancient Chinese Saying

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Abstract

“When in Sweden do as the Swedish do” this hundreds years old proverb is still very actual today. Even more, now days you don’t even have to go to Sweden to see cultural differences. Today, human beings have to deal with culture whether they like it or not. The fast development of globalization has changed the world economy and forced us to think more global. Thus, thousands of people work now for multinational companies, interacting daily not just with their own culture (language), but possibly with as much as 3 to 6 different other cultures as well. Some teams even work in different geographical locations communicating exclusively by different communication systems. Generally, experts agree that personnel diversity can produce positive outcome such as novel and diverse ideas. However, research evidence shows that personnel diversity can lead to undesirable outcomes as well. For example, research indicates that performance of a sample of managers was lower when assigned to a group with diverse backgrounds. Another research finding suggests that, performance of some teams is higher in a culture mixed teams than in single culture teams. The main purpose of this paper is to put forward an analytical framework that can help to explain the impacts and benefits of cultural diversities during communication within a project team.

Keywords: Communication, cultural differences, multinational teams, cross-cultural management.

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Introduction

Chapter review

The idea of this chapter is to provide background knowledge of the research topic and work and thereby provide the reader with a path map of the thesis. It therefore includes all information that I deem necessary to offer the reader a sound understanding of the entire research work. Thus, I have organized this chapter into the background, which gives the readers a firm knowledge about the research area from which a research questions will be developed. I then go on to discuss the purpose and importance, the scope and limitations of the research work as well as the researcher's preconception and prior knowledge. The chapter will end by showing a figure of how the thesis is organized.

Background

Due to the globalization trends, people spend an enormous amount of time and energy to communicate across cultures with different people and organizations around the world. The development of today's world requires businesses to tap more divergent brainpower, knowledge and well designed communication skills from its employees (Wolfe, & Box, 1988). Expanding global trade and immigration brings us to a situation where more and more people with diverse cultural and ethnical backgrounds have to work together in the same team. A team, Strid (1999), is existed of human beings, has a structure and it is intended to achieve definite goals. Thus, communication within a team is an important instrument to keep team members together because it is communication which crates team and not opposite (Roger, 1976 and Strid, 1999). Traditional organizations with individual orientations that do not utilize the power of a diversity team approach can no longer be competitive in the complex and dynamic world of business (Ibbetson, & Newell, 1996). Multicultural teams have to be innovative and productive in order to be able to face fierce competition existing in business environment. Effective functioning in an international business environment depends on the ability of employees to deal with the complexity of other cultures and have good communication skills.

Effective communication is critical within any work team. Rogers (1976) goes as far as calling communication the blood steam of an organisation. The vitalizing part of the communication is the intercommunication. Within an international team it is often the communication that individuals have the most difficulty with. Communication is an integral part of globalization processes (Monge, 1998). Unfortunately, still less is known about the role of communication and the importance of communication in globalization than about globalization itself. Increasing understand the importance of communication on multicultural teams in the present workplace calls for growth understanding in communication processes necessary to develop high performance teams (Wheelan et al., 1998). Communication plays most important role in creating global awareness and in the spontaneous processes of creating and recreating human community. The more we learn about places, people and events around the world, the more global we become.

Purpose

The present study aims to investigate the importance of communication within cultural diversity project teams. The goals of the research are therefore focused towards determining positive as well as negative sides of multicultural teamwork as well as recognizing ways and methods through which team could overcome potential difficulties and make use of potential opportunities, arising from its cultural diversity. For achieving the above mentioned purpose, the following objectives are set to this study:

- Examine the importance of communication in the cultural difference team members work.
- Investigate the impact of cultural differences in the communicative process within project teams
- Investigate the benefits of multicultural project teams.

Research questions

The following research questions are posed in this study:

What role does communication play in multicultural project team?
Does cultural diversity affect the communication between team members?

The answer of the above questions would help the research to investigate and reach a deeper understanding in the subject.

Expected outcome

The expected outcomes of the present study will be to investigate the role of communication in multicultural project teams.

Delimitation

When it comes to the term multicultural project teams I define it, in this study, as a group of people who work in different companies or organizations with the same or different nationalities. I do not include differences in religion, gender, sexual preference etc. in the definition. When I discuss culture, I refer to the international culture and do not include other aspects.

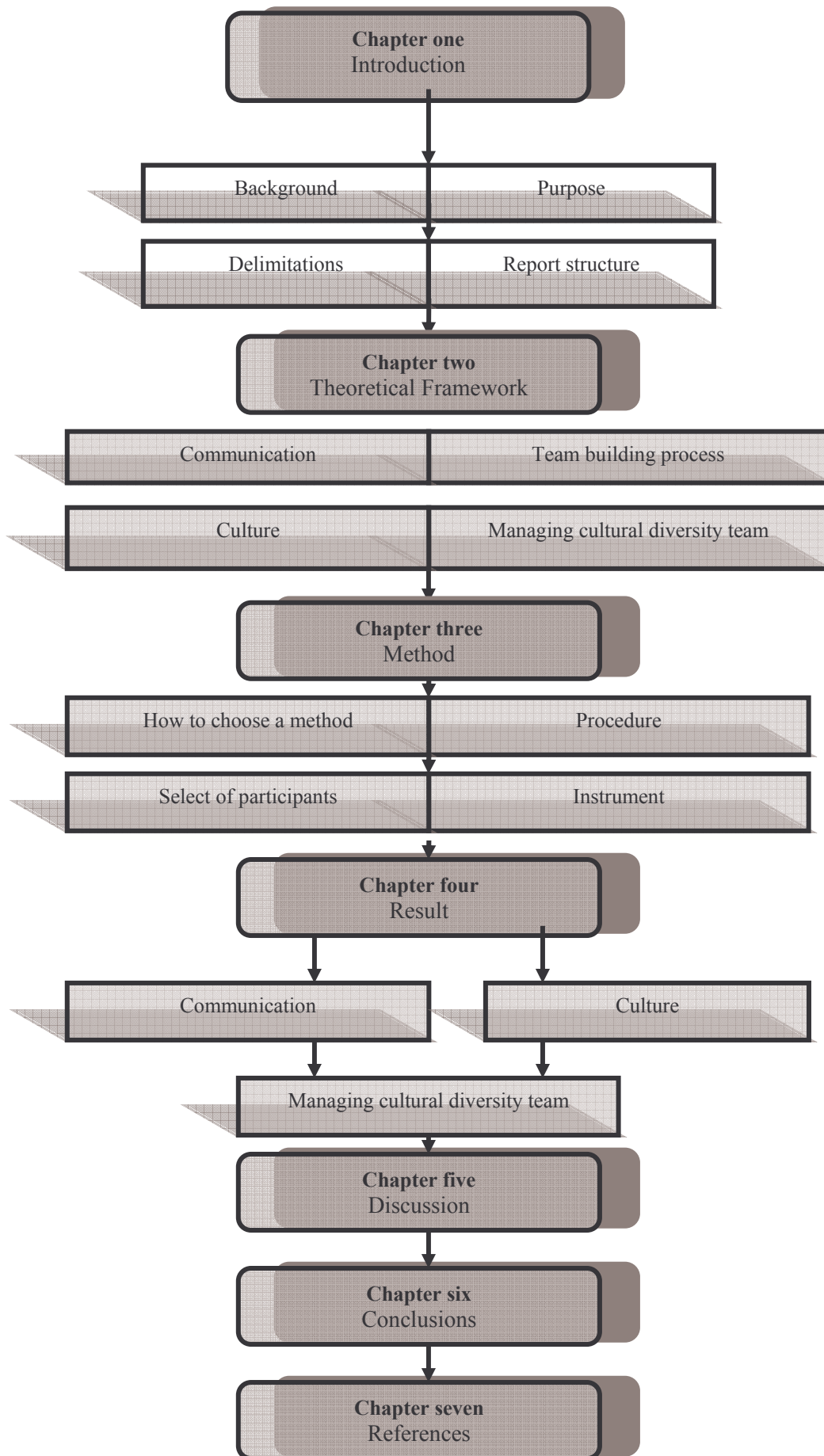


Figure 1: Report structure

Report structure

The research report is structured as figure 1 above. The presented chapter (chapter one) includes background knowledge of the research topic, definition of the problem, delimitation of the research and the structure of the report. The next chapters (chapter two) introduce the reader to the basic definitions and theories of communication studies domain, culture, team building process and managing cultural diversity team. It discusses the advantages as well as disadvantages of having culturally different people inside a team. Chapter three gives a closer look to the how to choose a method, selecting of participants, procedure and the instrument which used in this study to collect the material. Chapter four shows the result of the empirical study and displays it with help from the theoretical framework. Chapter five includes a discussion comparing the theoretical framework and the result as well as possible recommendations. Chapter six summarise the result of the thesis and provide the conclusions made. At the last chapter (chapter seven) the references will be listed.

Theoretical frame of references

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to bring awareness of the knowledge that research has brought to the field social sciences regarding the interaction between communication and culture diversity over the years. The main goal in this chapter is to provide deeper understanding of the role of communication in culture diversity teams in theory as well as in using knowledge generated by researchers in the field.

Communication

Section Overview

This section will start by an explanation of communication, discussing the types of communication, defining the communication model, the importance of effective communication and finally the importance of communication within team members will be also discussed.

What is communication? In the existing literature on communication, there are numerous definitions of the theory trying to describe and understand the communicative phenomena. We all have been using the word communication during our daily life, but it isn't all who can define it satisfactorily (Fiske, 1990). Continually, he defined it as it is a system processes in which people interact with through symbols to create and interpret meanings. According to Verzuh (1999) communication is one of the most important factors in the success or failure of a project, and it is essential to have constant and effective communication with everyone that is engaged in the project. With communication in focus, Susan (2000) stated that you can have great ideas, but if you can't communicate them effectively, they don't matter. Furthermore, Lawson and Tom (1997) stated that the exchange of information is best achieved by using direct communication, allow the members to find out each other's strengths and weaknesses. This information enables the team to understand its comparative advantages and to use them more creatively.

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) viewed communication as being of major importance since they refer to communication and information flows as the lifeblood of the organization. The exchange of information, the importance of communication and the transmission of meaning, is also discussed by Katz (1978) who referred to communication as the soul of an organization. The importance of communication can be explained by the fact that it is the tool that can both reveal and eliminate problems. Additionally, he pointed that the process of communication is to transfer the information from source to destination where the meaning of communication is to change the receiver's act in the sender's direction. Cutting sentences or skipping words will only cause misunderstanding and leave to the receiver to interpret and draw conclusions about the sender's meaning and intention. This is a very common way to create conflicts. Feedback is very important to avoid misunderstandings and create an open communication climate (Lenn er and Thylefors, 1996). But communication can be disturbed. Disturbances like inability for people to understand each other due to difference in culture or education. Interference could also be due to noise such as several contemporary commitments or badly working methods (Fiske, 1999).

Communication can be classified into two types; verbal and nonverbal.

Verbal communication

The first and most significant aspect of communication is language. Language is one of the greatest barriers between different cultures. Differences in language make intercultural interaction difficult. Argyle (1991) stated that visitors to another culture should be aware of the impression they are creating by the speech style which they use. A person can show a positive or negative attitude to another by shifting towards a more similar or less similar communication style as the respondent, he continued. Cross-cultural teams are often characterized by the absence of one common native language. In fact, not only language itself is an issue in culturally diverse settings, but also the use of language (Gudykunst, 1994). Additionally, he claimed that culturally-bound aspects of language include: the use of exaggeration, topic management and influence, the use of talk and silence, direct and indirect usage of language.

Nonverbal communication

The effective use of verbal communication without the use of nonverbal signs would be difficult to imagine. Nonverbal communication cannot be generally translated; one of its major forms is body language. Additionally, Miller (1988) synthesized the definition of several researchers when he stated, Non-verbal communication has been defined as communication without words. On a similar way, Knapp (1972) indicated that non-verbal communication perhaps considered as all of those human being responses which are not identified as openly spoken or written words. Miller (1988) also stated that nonverbal communication includes overt behaviours such as facial expressions, touching and tone of voice, eyes contact as well as less obvious messages such as posture, dress and spatial distance between two or more people. According to Laskowski (1999), eye contact is a significant feedback device that makes the speaking situation a two-ways communication process. Furthermore, he claimed that, when an individual speaks, his/her face most clearly communicates his/her attitudes, beliefs and emotions. The different muscles of the human face supply a great deal of information about a person's attitude and feelings, he continued. Signs must be interpreted within the proper context because two signs can mean the same thing when achieved by different people. The tone of voice is said to be one of the most influential nonverbal way of communication. People can hear one's personality and mannerisms through voice tone (Laskowski, 1997). Finally, Miller (1988) indicated that nonverbal communication is learned shortly after birth, is practiced and refined throughout a person's life.

The total message one receives in any face-to-face communication is divided into three components. The tonality used in delivering those words, the words themselves and the body language accompanying the other two. The elements of communication and its influence on the communication process have the following digits. The numbers indicate the relative weight or importance assigned to each of these three areas with tonality received the 38%, body language 55%, and the actual words themselves being tagged with a paltry 7% (Johnson, 1994).

Communication Model

The model of communication as figure 1 shows was developed during the 2nd World War in the Bell Telephone Laboratories in the US, and the reason for its development was to work out how different channels of communication could be used most efficiently (Fiske 1990). Even though Shannon and Weaver's model was developed for more than 56 years ago, it is still useful when studying communication due to the divisions of the communicative process into small parts that can be analyzed separately.

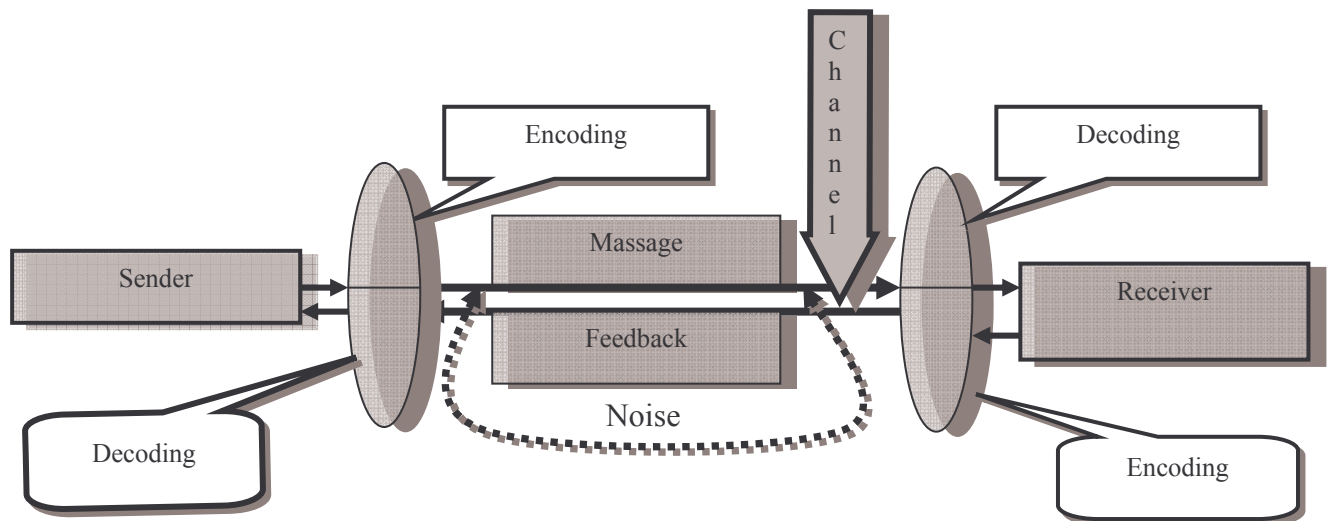


Figure 2. Shannon & Weavers communication model (source: Shannon & Weaver, 1949; modified by author)

The different parts of the communication model are explained in more detail below.

- Source is the person that has some kind of message that she or he wants to communicate. Source, as well as receiver, is influenced by their communication skills, social background, cultural belonging, and knowledge and/or by their attitudes toward different things.
- Encoding is the process of putting the data into a symbol that can be communicated. This symbol may take the form of words, but it is also possible to encode data into non-spoken symbols such as body language.
- Message is the result of the encoded information.
- Channel is the place where the encoded message is being sent, such as atmosphere, telephone, e-mail.
- Noise includes any obstacle that disturbs and distorts the message that is being transferred. Noise can accrue in different forms and misunderstandings are likely to happen, for example, where there are different knowledge levels, different culture, communication skills, experiences and intolerance.

- Decoding is the process of interpreting the message. Decoding can also include the interpretation of nonverbal communication.
- Receiver is the one who receive the message.
- Feedback is the response to the message. In essence, feedback is the reversal of the communication process, whereas the sender will be the receiver. Feedback is a direct indicator of how effective a message tale place. Feedback is needed in order for communication to be a two-way process.

Effective communication

Communication is considered to be successful when the receiver catches up with the same message that the source planned to send, during the communication process incidents may happen that confuse the meaning of the message being transmitted (Robock and Simmonds, 1989). Misunderstandings can arise when the message was encoded, transmitted, received or decoded incorrectly, they claimed. Engquist (1992) stated that there is only one method to measure the effectiveness of communication. And according to him, that is only the communicator can measure the effectiveness of communication according to her or his subjective opinion as to how well the message was received

Team effectiveness is the overall functional capability of a team including the ability to maximize use of human resources, produce better outputs, and continuously improve total performance (Kinlaw, 1991). Myers (2005) stated that teams are expected to produce results, but performance is hindered when team members do not communicate well together. Huszczo (1990) agreed that in order to be an effective team the team must understand the team's strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, he stated that a team should assess itself in seven areas, asking critical questions in each. The seven categories are: goals, roles, talent, procedures, reinforcement, interpersonal relations and external relations. Bolman and Deal (1992) suggested that effective teams had such characteristics as clear goals, shared leadership, a comfortable informal atmosphere and open communication. Additionally, they pointed out that open communication is the most important aspect to fulfil the other characters. Thus, the importance of open communication will be discussed below.

The importance of open communication

Hanson and Lubin (1995) agreed that a well succeed team building will give good results when it takes action in order to create a climate in which team members' energies are directed toward problem solving and maximizing the use of all members' resources in this process. Verzuh (1999) stated that project team members have the following communication needs: information is needed to organize the diverse team members in order to work efficiently, every member has to have knowledge of his/her area of responsibility, team members need to have knowledge regarding authorisation, members require to be up to date regarding progress to be able to meet the goals of the project and speed on the status, such as decisions made related to the project and the business environment and to be able keeping these decisions coordinated. Communication failures are an extremely common cause of inadvertent conflicts in a teamwork projects. Mayer and Schoorman (1992) stated that belief in and acceptance of

organisational values will lead to willingness to exert considerable effort on the part of the organization. Bringer, Geddes and Hasting (1990, p94) proposed that “*assembling the team is a design job*” thereby when you are building your team the most important is to design communication. Furthermore, they stated that building an open communication between every team member helps to create friendships among the team and can allow for better teamwork. Boddy (2002) stated that the importance of teamwork, communication and effective leadership will be stressed throughout the project. The condition of effective coordinated care requires the team to have an effective mechanism for the exchange of information. The big source of negative conflicts is bad communication. Effective worldwide function management responds to the challenge of developing and diffusing innovations on a worldwide basis, (Harzing and Ruysseveldt, 1995). Additionally, they claimed that knowledge is transferred by links between functional experts around the world. The lack of communication can lead to misunderstand and unnecessary conflicts, thereby it can affect the motivation of collaborative working. This might influence the duration of the project and at worst the project can fail.

Conflict

If you ask three different project members, what conflict means, you’ll probably get three different answers. But here is the most useful working definition:

“A situation where the goals, values, interests, and perceptions of one individual or group are incompatible with another individual or group. In general, conflict may range from mild disagreement to a complete breakdown in relationship”.

Hensey (1992, p. 68)

There is no such thing as teamwork without conflict. De Dreu’s and Weingart’s (2003) stated that where there is no conflict, inefficiencies will not be exposed and therefore not discussed. Conflict is a fundamental aspect of group dynamics (Levi, 2001; Forsyth, 1999; Putnam, 1986). Conflicts are inevitable in any interpersonal relationship or among members of any team and can be a very positive experience, if managed properly (Darling and Walker, 2001). Levi (2001, p. 116) described conflict as “*the process by which people or groups perceive that others have taken some action that has a negative effect on their interest*”. Any factor that creates separation among people in a team can raise conflict. On the other hand, any aspect that creates a positive bond can increase a team’s cohesion. In this line way of thinking similarity among members seems to increase a team’s cohesion by raising interpersonal attraction, but dissimilarity tends to increase disaffection and conflict (Forsyth, 1999). Because of that, cross-cultural teams tend to exhibit more conflict situations than homogeneous teams.

The ability to manage conflicts is probably one of the most important social skills an individual can possess specially managers. Meredith and Mantel (2000) emphasize that the project and the project manager operate in an environment characterized by continuous conflicts. They added that conflicts origin from that there are so many parties of interest competing with the project for the resources as well as wanting to influence the projects priorities. According to Lee (2000) about ¼ of managers time is spent on handling of conflict within and/or outside of the project team. Thus, he mentions that it is important to have good knowledge about what conflicts are and how they can be effectively manages. Moreover,

Erikson (1990) suggested that such issues as trust, initiative, identity and intimacy develop as a result of positive interactions with others, thereby decreasing the effect of negative conflicts.

Many researches in multicultural teams seem to agree that conflict can be both beneficial and detrimental for the team (Forsyth, 1999; Levi, 2001). Additionally, Jehn (1995) has shown that whether conflict was benefit depends on the kind of conflict, the structure of the group in teams of task type and group norms. Conflict is multidimensional (Pinkley, 1990; Pondy, 1969). According to Jehns (1995), the two types of conflicts are:

- Task-related
- Personal relationship

Task conflicts are disagreements between group members' ideas and pinions about work to be done, including issues such as the allocation of resource, regarding an organization's current strategic position, application of procedures, determining the correct data to include in a report and the development and implementations of policies. Task-oriented disagreements usually happen from diversities in perspective to achieve common objectives.

Personal relationship conflicts are difference and incompatibilities among group members about personal matters that are not task-related, such as social events, interest and world news. Relationship conflict usually has a negative effect on team performance. Relationship conflict generally decreases task performance of the team members by disturbing members' attention and reducing their skill to think clearly.

According to Forsyth (1999) and Levi (2001), some benefits which can come from conflict are:

- Higher ability to solve problems, and overcome obstacles to team progress
- Reduction of traditional values and unhealthy agreement
- Greater ability to use the team resources by allowing different perspectives and encouraging team creativity.

But conflict can also have a negative impact on a multicultural teamwork. It can be (Levi, 2001):

- Produce lack of communication and coordination problems
- Generate strong negative emotions and stress
- Threaten social relations among team members.
- Fail a team's ability to make decisions
- Distract from the task and goals at hand

Research on social networking and inter-personal attraction (Triandis, 2003), (Turati 1998) indicates that within a diverse team people are likely to form smaller sub-groups with people similar in social status, nationality, age, professional orientation, gender or other attributes. Possible classifications of such behaviour in multinational teams are that the team might be split in several one-culture groups or single gender with poor communication lines between each sub-groups or individual. Poor contacts between the sub-groups lead respectively to even poorer understanding, conflicts, which finally result in reduced performance (Triandis, 2003). Quite often these kinds of problems lead to bad motivated teamwork. Motivation is often seen

as the driving force that makes us perform some action. Boddy (2002) consider that understanding individual motivation is the basis for understanding team motivation. For a team to complete its goals and making the participation rewarding for its members, it's essential to maintain the member's motivation throughout the projects duration. Kossen (1993) stated that motivation is an important driving force within individual and group works. No fine work can be done without motivation (Maxwell, 1997).

Managing conflict within cultural diversity teams

Managing cultural differences and cross cultural conflicts has become the most common challenge of multicultural teams (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). Cultural differences among team members can cause misunderstanding, conflict and poor performance (Shenkar and Zeira, 1992). Marquardt and Horvath (2001) agreed that the following five points are the most typical challenges:

- Managing cultural differences and conflicts
- Handling geographic distances and dispersion of team members
- Dealing with coordination and control issues
- Maintaining communication richness
- Developing and maintaining team cohesiveness

Conflict resolution implies that negative conflict is dysfunctional to the team and should be reduced, eliminated or terminated (Rahim, 2002). Harris (1996) argued that cultures that are secure offer fertile ground for developing effective diversity teams. This is because diversity teams require time and stability to bear fruit. Effective communication is vital to the smooth functioning of any project work, specially, for cultural diversity team. Thus, it is important to be care a lot about team building process because it is at this level that the team members create their interaction to each other.

Team building process

Section Overview

The purpose of this section is to explain the team buildings process, describe the value of communication during team building, to explain the different stages of team building, the effectiveness of teamwork and finally to give a general model of team effectiveness model.

What is team building? Hanson and Lubin (1995, p. 24) explained that "*team building is usually, part of an organizational development effort; in which a team studies their own process*". Furthermore, they agreed that when team building is complete, the team takes action steps in order to create a climate in which team members' energies are directed toward problem solving and maximizing the use of all members' resources in this process. Lussier (1996 p. 398) has defined team building as "*an organizational development technique used to assist work groups operate more efficiently and effectively*". Similarly, Myers (2005) defines it as a process of enabling that group of people reaches the set goal, respectively. Liebowitz and De Meuse (1982, p. 2) define team building as "*a long-term, data-based intervention in which intact work groups experientially learn, by examining their structures, norms, values, purposes and interpersonal dynamics to increase their skills for effective teamwork. It is a*

direct attempt to assist the group in becoming more adept at identifying, diagnosing and solving its own problems, usually with the aid of a behavioural science consultant”.

Value of communication during team building

Communication has been described as a solid force during team building (Gudykunst, 1994). Continually, he claimed that communication by stereotyping which is the result of cognitive favouritisms stemming from not real links between team members psychological attributes. In addition, Hargie al et (1981) agreed that communication is important to unite the team to go from one to another step of team development to fulfil some common purpose. The resolution of interpersonal conflict within the team and the design and maintenance of harmonious relationship depends on effective communication, they continued.

There are different theoretical models describing team development but most theorists agree that teams pass through several stages as they are formed and developed. The numbers and names of the different stages differ among theorists, even if the general assumptions are quite. Tuckman and Jensen (1977) identified five stages and labelled them: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Each stage identifies major processes that a team goes through and characteristics exhibited by the team and its members. Movement from one stage to another is based on successfully resolving thematic concerns within a particular stage. The steps of team buildings are illustrated in figure 3.

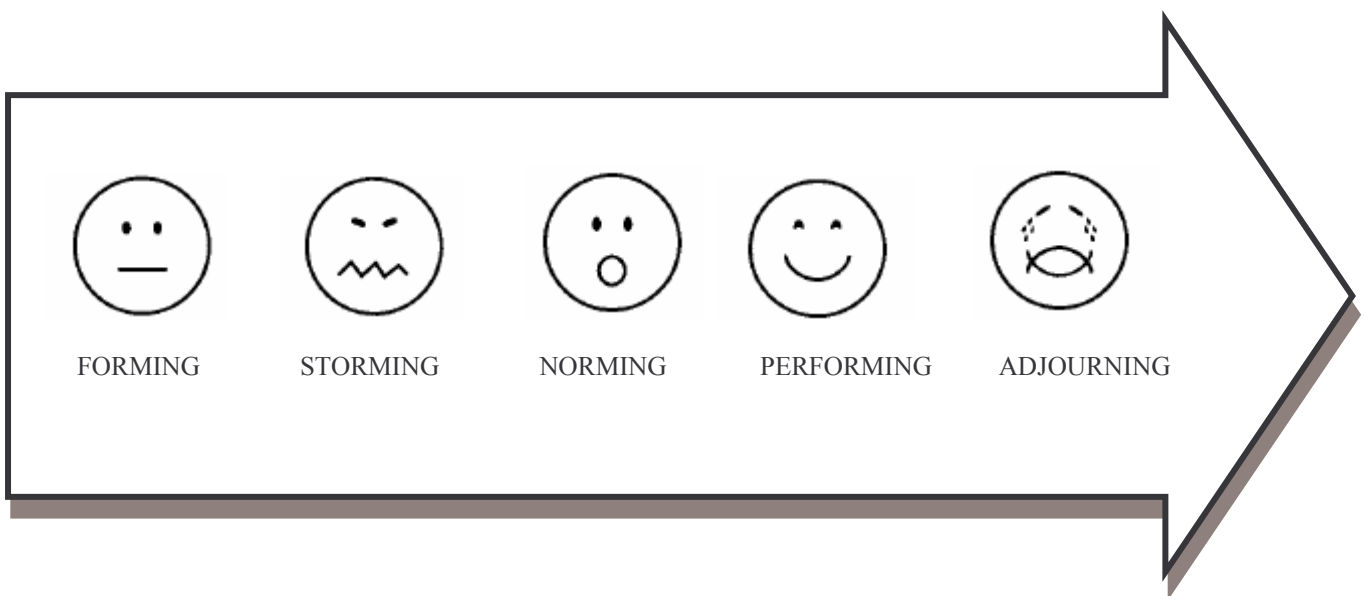


Figure 3. Stages of team development (source: Tuckman and Jensen, 1977; Designed by author)

As could be discerned in figure three above, the development of team has five stages and they will explain more detail below.

- The initial stage, forming, is characterized by processes of orientation, testing, and dependence. Group members seek to identify the limitations of both interpersonal and job behaviours. There are also efforts to establish dependency relationships with leaders, other group members, or pre-existing standards of the group or organizational culture.
- The second stage in the model, storming, is characterized by conflict and polarization around interpersonal issues, along with emotional responding in the task sphere. These behaviours serve as resistance to group influence and task requirements. It is here that the team is at its greatest risk for creating conflicts. So project managers have to have enough knowledge to manage and lead the team.
- In the third stage of norming, confrontation is overcome, group feeling and cohesiveness develop, new standards and new roles are adopted. Intimate, personal opinions may begin to be expressed. The group is establishing its unique identity with open and implied norms and operating procedures.
- The fourth stage in the model is performing. At this stage, the interdependence of the group is high. Members now work well together and have a high degree to achieve the goal of the project. High creativity and strong loyalty of members to each other characterize a group at this stage. To be successful in this stage the team must have succeeded the storming phase well.
- The final stage in the model is adjourning. At this stage the members have involves the termination of task behaviours and disengagement from relationships. The termination of the group is a regressive movement from giving up control to giving up inclusion in the group. The most effective involvements in this stage are those that facilitate task termination and the disengagement process.

Effectiveness of teamwork depends on the common team objectives and values that are understood and committed by all team members, good communication and clear roles. It is easy to create misunderstandings between team members before they have had a chance to establish any credibility with each other. Thus, it is important to give the team members enough time during its team building process.

Effectiveness of teamwork

According to Hanson and Lubin (1995), there are many factors to measure effective teams. One way to know if a team is effective is that it has a shared sense of purpose or common goals. Don not ignore the differences among team members. The differences should be grateful and utilized to advance the goals of the team (Fisher al et, 1995). But on the other hand, Boddy (2002) pointed out some of the disadvantages of teamwork such as slow decisions making, individual expertise, danger of groupthink and potential for conflict building. Additionally, he mentioned that unsolved conflicts are most critical and costly. Furthermore, he claimed that Organizations understand that team building is a difficult task. It is extremely significant for teams to recognize and accept their own needs, while being aware

to the needs of other team members. The difficult part is keeping some balance between the needs. When team members have high concerns of their own needs and the needs of others, the effective team rule of functioning is accomplished (Hanson and Lubin 1995). Hackman (1990) studied a large number of organizations using teams/groups, and found that both structural and human resource variables were critical to team success. Thus, characteristics such as clear deadlines, delineated criteria for success, clearly articulated purpose, adequate resources, suitable expertise and skills, a negative or positive history of performance, were added to the list. Furthermore, he claimed that yet working in a group to accomplish the task can often become frustrating because the team members' actually performance often falls below expectations.

Team effectiveness model

According to developing effective teams' workbook (2005), the model of team effectiveness is described as figure 4 shows. Teams can continuously improve their effectiveness by focusing on improving their functioning in five key areas: Goals, Roles Procedures, Relationships and Leadership:

Goals: What the team aspires to achieve

Roles: The part each member plays in achieving the team goals

Procedures: The methods that help the team conduct its work together

Relationships: How the team members "get along" with each other

Leadership: How the leader supports the team in achieving results.

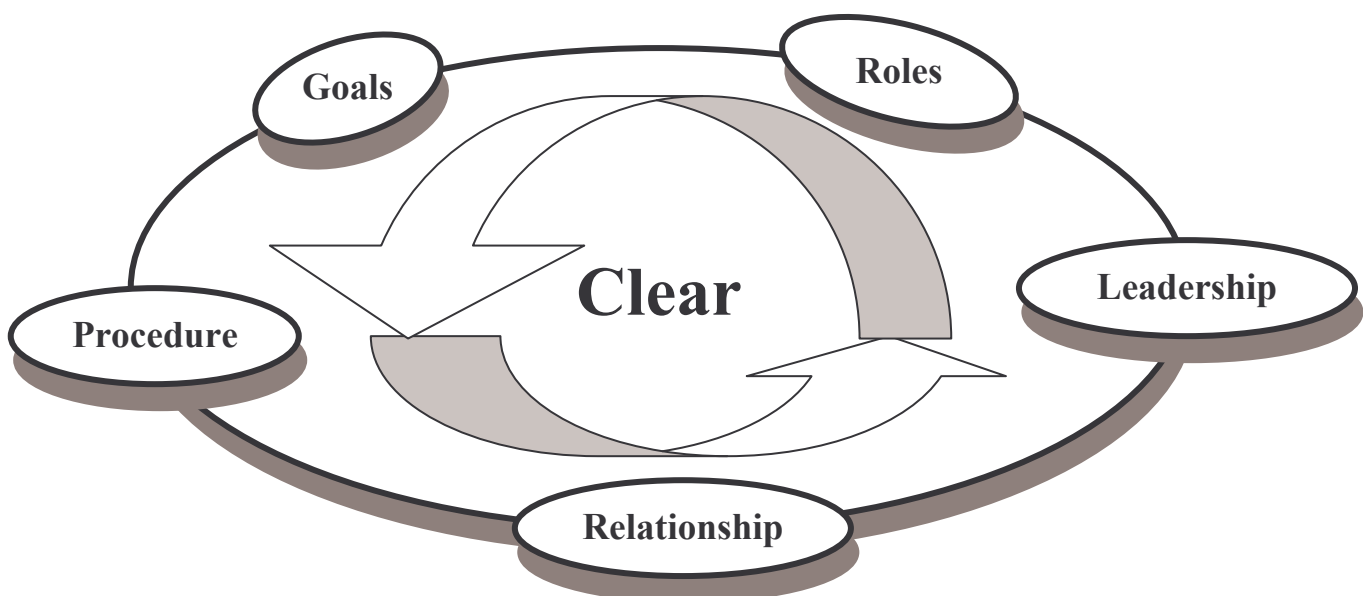


Figure 4. Model of team effectiveness (Source: University of Victoria, 2005; modified by author)

Effective communication is depending on listening, acknowledging, explaining perception, and discussing similarities and differences in views. In our increasingly diverse workplaces, cultural and language barriers understand the greater points in the intentions, meanings and reactions of other team members. Our cultural heritage influences our use of language and our perception of others. Some degree of cultural competency must be in place for team members to effectively communicate with each other. Thus, the next chapter will be deeply discussing the rule of culture during communication.

Culture

Section Overview

The purpose of this section is to explain the phenomenon of culture, the role of communication within cultural diversity project teams and the benefits and potential impacts of cultural diversity project teams.

The phenomenon of culture doesn't have a single definition. The definitions can vary depending on the field of study and personal views of the researcher. Hofstede (1980, p. 25) has defined culture as *"it is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another"*. Furthermore, he stated that culture consists in attractive ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, obtained and passed on mostly by constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, symbols, including their personification in objects; the basic core of culture consists of traditional and selected ideas and especially their attached values. On the other hand Herbig (1994) described culture as an all inclusive system of communications which includes the biological and technical behaviour of human beings with their verbal and nonverbal systems of expressive behaviour. Additionally, he claimed that culture is the sum total of a way of life, including such things as values, expected behaviour, beliefs, language, and living practices shared by members of a society. Winthrop (1991, p. 51) explained culture as *"the development of an explanation started from the early view of culture as cultivation, derived from the Latin word colere, to cultivate, meaning not only to cultivate the soil, but also to take care of something."* Hall (1990, p. 3) described culture as very difficult phenomenon for human being to understand *"Culture can be likened to a giant, extraordinary complex, subtle computer. Its programs guide the actions and responses of human beings in every walk of life"*. Archer (1991) claimed that cultural difference as the phenomenon which occurs when a person has expectations of a particular behaviour within a particular circumstance and encounters a different behaviour when interacting with a person from another culture.

Culture is created as a result of a variety of factors such as: geography, history, economy, urbanization, technology and so on. Being preserved by the organizations and societal norms of the community, culture is not a subject which fast changes. Changes that affect culture are usually coming from outside in form of forces of nature or forces of humans, example technology, (Hofstede, 2001).

Nolan (1999) stated that cultural competence is an important part of globalization and he defined it as:

“The ability to function in another culture doesn’t just require knowledge, but the development of a cross-cultural mindset. A cross-cultural mindset helps you look behind facts and figures to uncover meanings and patterns, learn in unfamiliar surroundings, and gain entrance into the cultural world of others.”

(Nolan, 1999, pp. 2)

Culture diversity project teams

As cultural diversity increases in work places and societies, it is important that we develop multicultural communication skills to work together, relate, and solve daily issues in a safe and respectful manner. The growing globalization of business requires increasing amounts of interaction between companies and business people of different countries and cultures (Black, 1988). Eisenberg and Goodall (1997, p. 138) stated that corporate culture is *“something that an organization possesses, manages, and exploits to enhance productivity”*. Every organization has its own unique culture. Haas (2005) supported Winston, claimed that to know another’s language and not his/her culture is a very good way to make a fluent fool of one’s self. Culture usually hides much more than it make known and strangely enough what it hides is most effectively from its own participants (Hall, 1959). Ruben (1976) pointed that competence in multicultural communication includes such as open mindedness, awareness of differences in communication, willingness to accommodate others’ needs, and skills in facilitating and managing different communication methods. Additionally, he stated that communicative sensitivity looks like to be the dimension most often emphasised in the literature as being critical for intercultural competence.

Many researches on the cultural diversity’s influence on productivity have come up with rather mixed results. There is evidence of positive, negative and insignificant diversity’s influence on performance. Much of the research studying interpersonal processes in the working groups finds that team similarity is positively associated with team effectiveness and interpersonal attraction (Earley & Gibson, 2002; Knight et al., 1999; Hamilton et al., 2003). Homogenous teams are usually more cohesive; they experience fewer conflicts; have a faster decision making process (Earley & Gibson, 2002).

Why culture diversities is important

Ettorre (1993) stated that an organization’s success in the future depended directly on the team members’ understanding of multicultural factors. Additionally, Mowshowitz (1997) stated that companies expanding globally to tap the potential of foreign markets use multicultural teams because they understand the necessary of flexibility, responsiveness and improved resource utilization to meet the dynamic demands of a global business environment. But to get the best results, Rhinesmith (1996), in his review of training for global operations he pointed that the following trainings as fundamental significant: the cultural influences on the training design, the target population for global training, the types of training needed in

the global context and the key steps in developing a global strategy. Additionally, he agreed that people living internationally, headquarters personnel, expatriates and people involved in technology shift need cross-cultural training. Continually, he mentioned seven types of training needed for global operations; technology transfer training, expatriate adjustment training, multicultural team building, global mindset training, global functional training, cultural self-awareness training, and executive development. Of these types of training, he pointed that multicultural team building is increasingly becoming it is one of the cornerstones of global training. Moreover, Kealey and Protheroe (1996) analysed that the matter of effectiveness of cross-cultural training for expatriates; they found that effective cross-cultural training usually had four components such as: area studies of a particular country or a region, provision of practical information, cultural awareness information and acquisition of intercultural effectiveness skills. The necessary skills which were identified as effective intercultural communication included knowledge of subject matter, language, communication skills, and the ability to complete tasks, positive orientation to opportunities and the ability to use traits in a given culture (Brislin, 1981).

Many researchers who preferred cultural communication competence model viewed effective cultural interactions as a function of the success of the communication process between culturally different persons. They have also argued that workforce diversity can improve team performance, and hence advance organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Samovar and Porter (1991) described eight variables which they considered important in bringing about positive outcomes in cultural encounters, including such values as non-ethnocentrism and non-prejudice, roles and role prescriptions, social organization, thought patterns, nonverbal expression, language, and organization of space and concepts of time.

Cultural diversity team has many benefits such as the variety of perspectives, personal attributes and skills that multicultural team members contribute to an organization (Maznevski, 1994). Culturally diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams at identifying problems and generating solutions. By employing multicultural teams, companies make significant gains in productivity (Townsend et al., 1998). An effective multicultural team has a strong emergent culture as shared member expectations facilitate communication and team performance (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000). In addition Pearson and Nelson (2003) stated that an effective communication among team members facilitates formation of a strong emergent team culture. Cohesive teams react faster to changes and challenges, are more flexible, and therefore are more efficient (Elron, 1997). He added that communication skills of individual team members help to establish rapport within the team and to bind team members into one cohesive and high performing unit.

Team members, especially managers, from different cultures are likely to interpret and respond differently to the same strategic issues or team tasks because they have distinct perceptions of environmental opportunities and threats and internal strengths and weaknesses (Schneider and DeMeyer, 1991). Furthermore, they agreed that cross-cultural communication competence is therefore a vital component of team members' ability to address the common challenges faced by multicultural teams. Team members working on multicultural teams must be competent cross-cultural communicators in order to work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Team members of multicultural project team need to be aware of the diversity of perspectives, interests, cultures, and behaviours of the team members within the project team. Well selected interpersonal skills in the multicultural team environment allows team members to be more experienced communicators and to work more effectively on a multicultural team, as they are able to view different advances toward work

and decision making of people from other cultures and to support their communication based on their knowledge of other cultures (Wiseman et al., 1989).

Soderberg and Holden (2002) proposed that cultural differences should be viewed as a new source of opportunities and competitive advantage. In line with Schneider and Barsoux (1997), they argue that diversity should be treated as a resource rather than a threat, and emphasize the role of learning and cross-cultural knowledge in a dynamic cross-cultural environment. Multicultural teams allow developing a more international perspective on the product; they are not being bound to one single country's views, thereby help companies to enter a global market (Cox, 1993). Cross-cultural management may be compared to the management of "global knowledge networks" (Soderberg and Holden, 2002 p. 112). Watson et al., (1993) suggested that homogeneity is harmful because conformity prevents creativity by limiting the variety of viewpoints that generate synergy. Furthermore, they provided an explanation for the mixed findings in heterogeneous teams. In a ten-week developmental study, they found that homogeneous teams showed better performance on all measures when compared with the heterogeneous teams in the first few weeks of the experiment. As the teams developed, the differences disappeared until the final weeks when the heterogeneous teams outperformed homogeneous teams on two dependent variables. Homogeneity seems to have a more positive impact in teams that must regularly work on structured tasks. But, it seems to be less valuable for teams working on projects that require creative solutions (Jackson, 1992). On a similar implication, Wright (2005, p.5) referred to Watson et al., described the benefit of multicultural team as "*Initial performance differences between newly formed culturally homogeneous and culturally diverse groups disappeared and eventually "crossed-over," such that culturally heterogeneous groups that initially performed poorly relative to homogeneous groups later performed better than homogeneous groups on selected aspects of task performance*", see figure 5. Wright continued with his report and stated that heterogeneous groups produced better solutions and across the board range of improvements within their business sphere.

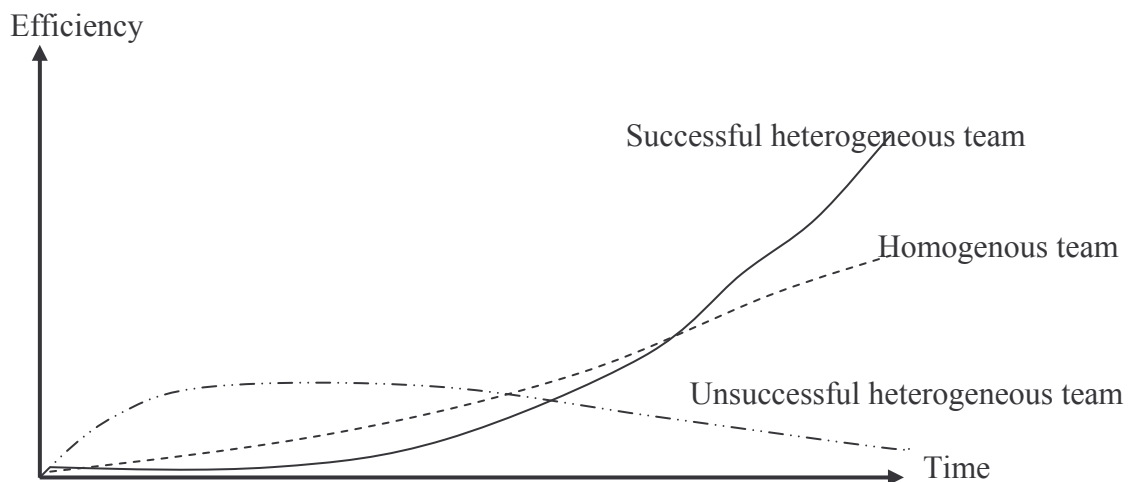


Figure 5. The development of team's efficiency over time (source: Laroche, 2003; modified by author)

Potential difficulty within multicultural project teams

A high variety of expectations and beliefs of the team members about the team processes is likely to lead to many misunderstandings and if not taken seriously even to the destructive conflicts in the team (Duarte & Snyder, 2001), (Laroche, 2003). Literature on international diversity describes a variety of difficulties that were encountered by multinational teams working in various environments. Stewart, Manz and Sims (1999) suggested that homogeneity in team composition is beneficial because it is easier to build constructive social relationships that produce cooperation. Ruben (1976) stated that communicative sensitivity looks to be the dimension most often underlined in the literature as being fundamental for intercultural competence. Still communication in focus, Brislin (1986) pointed out that communicative refers to two aspects of behaviour: the ability to cooperate effectively with those whose cultural rules are different from one's own and the ability to show the appropriate communicative behaviour. The researcher has analyzed the difficulties related to diverse teams that were commonly mentioned in the literature and decided to take the most potential two difficulties which are communication and leadership styles.

The impact of culture diversities during communication

Quite often the team members need to communicate in language which is non-native at least for one party. Such situation may often create misunderstandings if the meaning of the foreign word is understood differently by the team members (Johansson et al, 1999). Communication (language) in the form of codes, anecdotes, symbols and systems about appropriate statements plays a significant role in organizational culture, constituting a large part of the shared understanding held by organizational members (Schein, 1983). According to Hall (1976, p169), "*language is one of the extension systems that most characterizes human beings*", and is one of the main expressions of our own culture. In his conceptualization, he (1959, p. 186) stated that "*culture is communication and communication is culture*".

As globalization increases throughout the world, large numbers of people are exposed to cultures other than their own through work relationships, customers, suppliers, migration of workforce. Jandt (1995, p. 30) described cross cultural communication as "*comparing phenomena in diverse cultures*". Additionally he gave the illustration of associating the roles of women in different cultures to describe "*cross cultural communication*". Hietikko and Rajaniemi (2000) stated that product development and realization process could not be implemented by one person because the products become complex and the life cycle become shorter. Thus, the importance of communication will be more important than ever. These exposures bring people to face contrasting values, attitudes, and behavioural norms that ultimately raise questions of identity (Phinney, 2000). Arnett (2002) stated that globalization is influencing every part of the world and cultures are still differing greatly in how much they have been opened to other cultures. In multicultural organizations, a large portion of communication occurs between people with different cultural backgrounds. Effective communicating in an international business environment depends on the ability of employees to deal with the complexity of other cultures. To work effectively with diverse people, team members need to know about the culture of the person with whom they are communicating with (Triandis and Singelis, 1998). Since words are simply symbols, if their full meaning is not shared, they fast turn into misunderstandings that distort the information flow. Hence, the failure to understand correctly what a partner is saying, or trying to say, is a potential threat

for a successful collaboration. Obviously, this happens quite frequently in multicultural projects. Such cultural noise is almost inevitable, given that all group members handle their information based on a rather incommensurable background, (Boutellier et al, 2000). Understanding of message production and interaction that involves groups or individuals of people from different cultures is the main interest of intercultural communication (Korzenny and Griffis Korzenny, 1984). The meaning of symbols and body language are culturally depending and differently interpreted in different cultures. Thus, it is easy to bring about misunderstandings and so called cultural clashes (Forsyth, 1999)

Monge (1998) claimed that cultural communication deliver messages across borders and cultures, shapes the way people deal with change and revisit the fundamental properties of time and space. Once an organization crosses local borders, its employees need not only work and communicate with local colleagues at the same location, but they also have to work and achieve various projects with colleagues at distant locations, who differ from them in their language differences, work practices, cultural values, and behaviours. Many different researches have shown that such workings situations are hard to handle usually involve miscommunication and misunderstanding that often do not result in best outcomes (Erez and Earley, 1993; Earley and Gibson, 2002).

Multicultural teams “*often have little time to work face-to-face and in some cases never meet*” (O’Hara-Devereaux and Johansen, 1994, p.104). Employees of international corporations need to be aware of the diversity of interests, cultures, perspectives and behaviours of their communication partners across the world (Ruben, 1976). Additionally, He recognized seven dimensions of intercultural communication competence: the capacity to be non-judgemental, the capacity to display empathy, the capacity to communicate respect, the capacity to be flexible, the capacity to personalize one's knowledge and perceptions, tolerance for ambiguity and the capacity for turn taking. Different periods of silence that are acceptable during the dialogue in different cultures may lead to the situation when one person is dominating the entire discussion, while others don’t be given an opportunity to speak up (Laroche, 2003), (Lewis 2000). Poor relationship between the sub-groups leads respectively to even poorer understanding, conflicts, which finally result in reduced performance (Triandis, 2003). Another threat present in inter-cultural communication shows that the differences in feedback giving scales, thus a little negative feedback given by a member of one culture may be understood as an extremely negative one by a member of another culture (Laroche, 2003). The differences in body language when team members transferring information can also lead to misunderstandings among the team members (Laroche, 2003). Difficulties in expressing themselves in foreign language may lead to reason of switching to a native language whenever possible, which may later lead to bad communication and team being split into several parties (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000 and Laroche, 2003). It was proposes that the team members have to have a reasonable understanding of the technical issues involved, but the most important is that the team members have a good knowledge of multicultural teamwork and good social skills. Moreover, Communication between two cultures is as the process in which messages created in one culture must be processed and interpreted in another culture. Thereby a high degree of cognitive flexibility and tolerance is needed. In addition, as a team member, you have a full responsibility to understand, accept, and respond to cultural differences (Bucher, 1999).

Project manager is one of the most important coacher between team members during teamwork. Thus, a project manager has to have good leadership styles and a high level knowledge of culture differences. In the next chapter, the importance of leadership in multicultural project team will discuss.

Managing cultural diversity teams

Section Overview

The goal of this section is to illustrate the importance of good skills in cultural differences. Furthermore, the section will describe the value of communication to build trust and define goals and objectives between team members.

To manage a team is a difficult exercise at any time, but doubly so when the team members are separated by culture, language and geography. The study of literature and recent research on cultural diversity and performance management has provided us with a wide range of management models, from highly specialized one-case suggestions to general intercultural management models. Cross-cultural management, as a relatively new field still remains quite fragmented and nebulous populated with many conflicting theories, some being supported empirically and some not (Hofstede, 2001 and Triandis, 2001).

Leadership and culture diversity teams

This category relates mainly to the differences in leadership styles that various cultures possess. Understanding the differences between cultural perspectives is the vital first step in improving communication (Hartley, 2000). If a manager and the team members have different cultural background, it is expected that their concept of what a good manager is varies significantly (Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, he explained that this may subsequently lead to a conflict of opinions, negative attitudes towards each other and respectively decrease in productivity later on. Whether managers and team members from different culture work together without being aware of culture differences, the manager may treat the team members who is constantly looking for directions as being professionally incompetent, unable to handle tasks independently. On the other hand the team members might see the manager uninterested in his work, subtle, or also technically incompetent as he/she seems to be unable to answer the simple questions (Laroche, 2003).

Management has a key role to promote and transmit vital information to team members. To get an effective communication within project members, project managers have to give some information directly to all team members in a project, not letting all information go through levels of managements before it reaches team members (Hartley, 2000). He stated that good communication is an essential skill for any manager and a basic requirement for successful project. With management in focus, Hofstede (2001) stated that management is the process of listening, openness and eliciting commitments, which includes concern for the expression and activation of the network of commitments.

With teams still in focus, Belbin (1981) generally celebrated work on management teams and team roles are based on research of group behaviour and observing group communication. Additionally, he proposes that a perfect team should represent at least one member who is

good at innovative ideas to solve problems. Furthermore, a good spread of mental abilities, cultural differences and a spread of personalities are beneficial for winning teams. Team leaders generally have to work closely with members of their team. Project manager will be able to gain respect from the team by demonstrating not only good management but also technical skills, he continued. Finally, in contrast to winning teams, Belbin found that poor management teams suffer from a lack of innovation and creativity with low mental ability (Belbin1981).

The value of communication to build trust

Researches on team management and cultural diversity have many times stressed the importance of development trust for the successful team building. Trusting relationships between the team members lead to an open and comfortable feeling inside the group, where ideas and thoughts can be discussed without any fright, hopeful diversity of opinion and development creativity (Holton, 2001 and Hurn, 1997). Successful teams are based on an establishment of trust. People come to trust others when they illustrate a pattern of reliability in making and keeping promises, share common concerns, and are open (Laroche, 2003). The main object to create the climate of trust is improved communication (Holton, 2001). The team must spend considerable amount of time communicating with each other in order to get a better understanding of individual and cultural behaviour of the team members, which could lead to building trusting relationships. The importance of mutual experiences should not also be underrated. The cooperative history of earlier dealings leads to a systematic development of trusting relationship (Triandis, 2003). Landera et al, (2000) in their study of trust building strategies within a large international company identify such mechanisms for developing trust as: good communication, successful initial interactions, sharing of control, predictability, trustworthiness and managerial support. It should be noted however, that different cultures have different expectations of how the trust should be developed and that trust building activity may itself turn to misunderstanding (Laroche, 2003 and Jenkins and Hurn, 2000).

The role of communication to define shared goals and objectives

To be able to create a well functioning project team it could be imperative that the group is provide with the information it needs to reach the goals that are put up. The most important part of efficient teamwork is to have well defined goals (Hartley, 2000). The work descriptions should be clear and available to those who need the information, he continued. The existence of goals and objectives shared by the entire team is very important for the team's climate (Pettigrew, 1998). According to his theory, the effective performance of a multinational team is dependant on the following several conditions: equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation and support of authorities. The existence of common goals involved the existence of shared understanding by all the team members of these goals and objectives. The equal status of the team members are achieved with an idea that every team member supplied equally to the accomplishment of these goals and thus earned equal respect (Jackson, Joshi and Erhardt, 2003). Undoubted, they stated that well designed communication between team members and good leader with high skilled cultural diversity project manager plays a significant role to understand goal and objectives of the project. On the opposite side ineffective communication causes loneliness thereby negative conflicts can accrue. Cultural differences with bad communication between project members often cause misunderstandings thereby it will a source for negative conflicts. To avoid these kinds of conflict within a project

team, communication needs to function effectively. A clear defined goal decreases the conflicts and promotes effectiveness (Hartley, 2000).

Research methodology

Chapter review

This chapter contains a description of the working procedure used in order to reach the result comprising how the study has been conducted together with a description of the techniques used. It will also discuss why and how the method is chosen and the tools which used during the research in order to achieve a good result.

How to choose method

When the choice has been made whether the researcher role in the result can be completely excluded (positivism) or somewhat included (non-positivism) a method of gathering data are to be chosen. In this section I will describe which kind of method I have chosen to use during my empirical study and why, as well as describe some of the techniques available to use.

Qualitative or quantitative

Research methods can be divided into two basic categories – qualitative and quantitative research. According to Blaxter (1996), the quantitative methods use samples large enough that there is statistics confidence in the results and on the opposite way the qualitative methods use very small samples with no statistical significance. Additionally he stated that a complete research plan includes both categories of research. The mix depends on the stage of development, the research objectives, available funds, and other variables. Often, qualitative research such as a focus group can be used to better identify what the issues are. Quantitative research is then employed to determine how prevalent the issue or need is. The following sections give very brief descriptions of the qualitative and quantitative research.

Quantitative

Quantitative research consists of those studies in which the data concerned can be analyzed in terms of number. A quantitative research is positivist in its outlook. The main tool using in quantitative research is the survey. “*Quantitative research is based more directly on its original plans and its results are more readily analyzed and interpreted*” (Best and Kahn, 2000, pp. 89-90).

According to Blaxter (1996), surveys (mail, telephone), usability studies, field testing, laboratory testing and conjoint analysis are the most common quantitative research methods.

Qualitative

The simplest definition of qualitative research is to say that it is a type of research which involves interpreting non-numerical data. Qualitative research is often called focus-group research due to the fact that its research samples are often very small (Palmerino, 1999). Qualitative research has a non-positivist perspective in its outlook.

Blexter (1996) mentioned such as review of secondary information, focus groups and related techniques (brainstorming, etc.), interviews and observations as most common qualitative research methods.

Choice of the method

The goal of this research is to obtain more in-depth information about how the multicultural project team members communicate each other. Qualitative method is the suitable research method to use in this research because it usually used to gain novel and fresh angles on things about which a bit is already known. Also, qualitative methods can give the complex details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods.

In order to achieve my goal I have chosen to perform qualitative study based on personal interviews using questions. I chose open questions because they permit unanticipated answers, giving me the possibility to learn more about the current state of practice in the area. I chose face to face interviews as my data collection method mainly because the potential respondents are more willing to participate in a face to face interview than to answer a self-administered questionnaire (Fowler, 2002). The choice of method depends on the purpose of the study and which information that is required. Furthermore it is not always necessary to distinguish and only use one of the methods because they in some studies have a complementary function.

Negative aspects with the interview method are, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), that it can be difficult to expect the provide data, and that the data can vary significantly in terms of quality and significance. Furthermore, it is good to keep in mind that the information the interviewees provide does not have to be true or more true than information they might provide with other methods. Other issues that can cause problems when using interviews is that the interviewer can influence the interviewee.

Alternative research method

The alternative research approach for this research could be mixed with a quantitative approach to get more reliable result. But in this study, it has not chosen due to the difficulties to gather statistically relevant data. In order to achieve a good result using a quantitative approach a sufficiently large number of equivalent projects must be found and the wide diversity found in this type of projects make an obvious source of error. An alternative approach could have been to sample data during a number of years in a few annually recurrent projects a quantitative approach to get more reliable result.

Potential weakness of the chosen method

The potential weaknesses of the chosen research method are:

- It is time exacting.
- The scope is limited due to the in-depth, comprehensive data gathering approaches required, thereby it might not be representative
- Can not distinguish small differences
- requires specialized training

Procedure

The reason why the qualitative research is suitable for these research questions are that the answer of these questions must be more in-depth and needs comprehensive information. In addition, it needs subjective information and participant observation to describe the role of communication in multicultural teams, as well as the interactions between communication, culture and conflicts.

The work procedure that I have followed working on this thesis can be visualised in the following model.

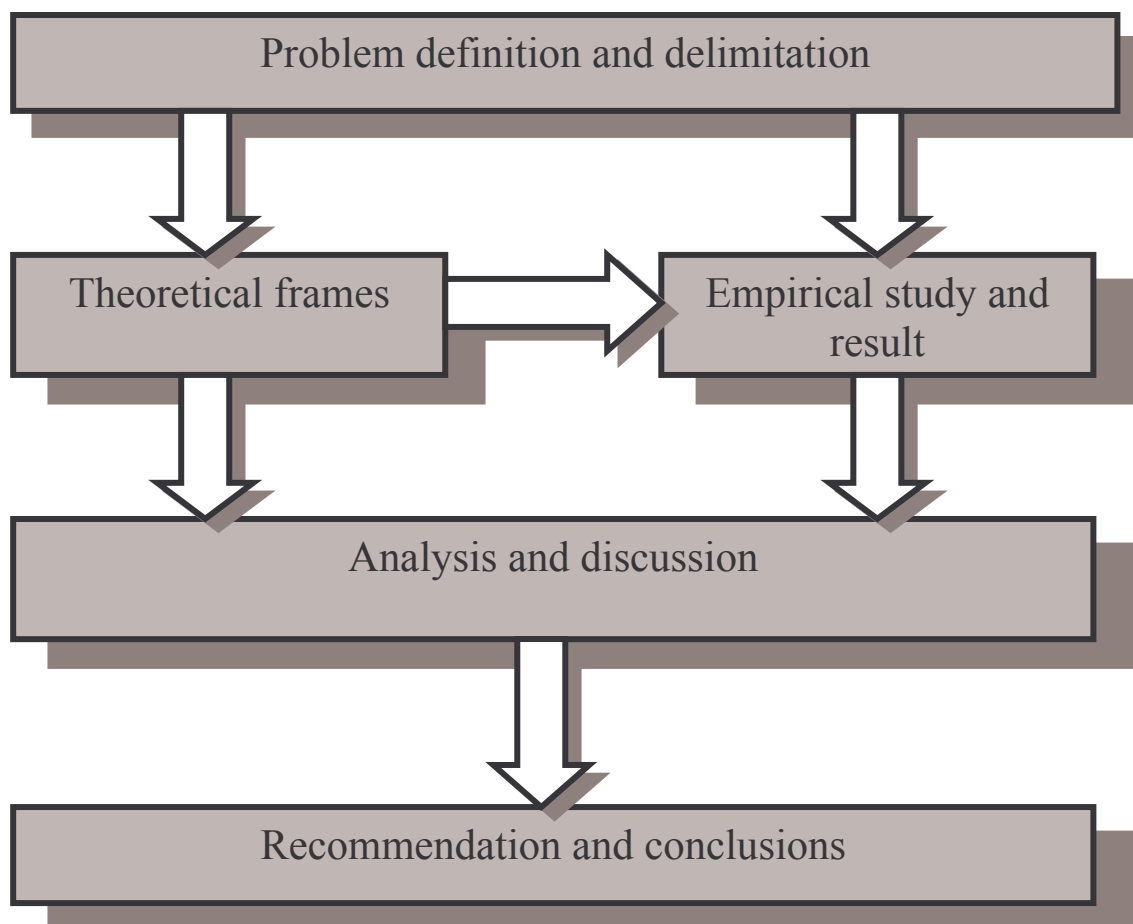


Figure 6: Procedure model

As figure 6 illustrates the first step in the work procedure towards the result where to define and delimit the problem. After this, literature where studied that I believed would guide and help me to solve the problems previously defined. The theoretical framework and problem definitions are used in the empirical study as a lens through which observations where conducted and the findings identified. By comparing the findings from the empirical study with the theory, I was able to analyse and discuss the result, as well as give recommendations and draw conclusions.

Interviewing procedures

All the interviews will be performed by the author of this master thesis. Prior to interview all the interviewees will be explained the purpose of the interviews and the goals of the research project. Interviewees also will be informed that they would get a translated transcript (Swedish to English) of the interview before it is included into master thesis report. In this way interviewees will be able to check if the author of this thesis interpreted their answers correctly. The length of each interview is estimated to be 60 minutes. The interviews will be performed in the respondent's work setting in the time suitable to a respondent.

Selection of participants

I plan to conduct a study as a series of interviews with people involved in the multicultural teams and to observe their reaction and follow them during their teamwork's. I also aim to find teams that have just chosen to build a new team or a team which has already worked for at least several months together, thus ensuring that the team hasn't passed over first team-building process or has reached some level of cohesiveness by this time and is now supposedly experiencing increase in team performance and cross-cultural interaction skills. But to find such teams were impossible. Thus, I chose to interview some managers fulfil my dissertation.

I interviewed six managers from six different companies, branches and of course from different teams. The interviews will be conducted with the manager of a team to find out his or her attitude to the importance of communication within cultural divers teamwork. Out of these six interviewees, four have a significant cross-cultural experience (i.e. lived in another culture region for several years). During my interviews I am interested to examine the role of communication, impacts and benefits of cultural diversities team members and compare my findings to the results of the previous studies found in the literature. For confidentiality reason, information regarding the interviewed persons is not disclosed, and all related names were changed.

Project manager I (PM I): He has been working as project manager for nearly ten years. He lived 2 years in USA and 3 years in Dubai. He has quite worked in different cultural diverse teams, at various times having Italians, German, Swedish, American and Arabic specialists working together. The company he is working today is a shipping business company which is specialized in fire alarm system.

Project manager II (PM II): She is a French woman who has worked as a project manager for 3 years. She works in a public sector. She has worked with people who come from different cultures such as North Africa, southern part of Europe and Asia.

Project manager III (PM III): He has been working as project manager for nearly 5 years. He has quite worked in different cultural diverse teams. He lived in South Africa and America and worked at various times having Africans, Italians, German, Swedish, Americans. The company he is working today is a software development company. It develops applications for Linux and Windows with the same code that give the user a cross-platform development and deployment strategy.

Project manager IV (PM IV): He has worked with different multicultural teams during the last 10 years and of course in different projects. He lives in Sweden and spends most of his time in Sweden. He has only high school education and has worked in different branches.

Project manager V (PM V): He is born and lives all his time in Sweden. Sweden is the only country he has worked in but participants in different projects and their end users are spread around the world. In the present project he represents one Business Area (BA) and his team members are from Poland, Mexico and Brazil. That's about 10 people. He is a PM for his BA and the others are for each factory in each country. He will inform them about tools and system changes and they will inform me about time plan and budget and special requirements. The outcome is that a new tool will be implemented in the production 2008.

Project manager VI (PM VI): She is born and grows up in Sweden. She lived one year in Australia and three years in New Zealand and she is married with New Zealander. She has been working as project manager for nearly 8 years. She has worked in different projects with much cultural diversity teams. She has worked at various times having Japanese, Italians, Polish, Chinese, Americans. The company she is working today is a consultant company in software and management.

Instrument

MP3 recorder was used during the interviews to increase the focus on the interview. All of the interviews were tape recorded with the information's consent. All of the interviews were written down on paper afterwards.

Result

Chapter review

All informants thought that globalization was not a new way of competition but it demanded a well designed communication process. Thus, this chapter aims at summarizing of the results which were obtained during the interviews in order to obtain the answers to the research questions. The results are divided into a number of main areas that follow the interviews guide that were used in the interviews. The complete questionnaires used were included in the appendix A and the detailed transcripts of the interviews have been documented. The intention of the author is to present the result as objectively as possible. An analysis of the result will be made first in the next chapter of this thesis: Discussion.

Communication

Section review

This section describes how the interviewees explained the role of communication within the multicultural project teams, the importance of nonverbal communication, the value of communication during teamwork, the effect of conflict and the importance of good skills in communication.

Project manager I (PM I)

PM I compared the importance of communication with the function of heart for human beings. Additionally, he claimed that the lack of communication in any organization, independently of cultural diversity, is the most harmful issue and thereby it must be eliminated. Furthermore, he stated that *“as a matter of fact the cultural differences have some characters with communication methods to do, but it is not as difficult as to communicate with people with different backgrounds within the same culture”*. Sometime when some members of the team come from the same country so they have a tendency to switch to their language when talking to each other. This may in some cases create a gap between them and the rest of the team. PM I said that the cultural aspect of a team is not as important as the individual qualities of people who belong to the team. PM I supposed that he had been working with people from different countries and cultures and some of them were able to familiarize themselves very well to the ways of working in the team and others could not. On the other hand foreigners had to deal with many additional issues to the usual working routine, such as new culture, weather, language and different lifestyle. In this respect he considered it to be the task of manager and other local team members to provide support and guidance in helping them adjust to this new environment. Thus, PM I also thought that having a well mixed multicultural team is very good, since they can find support and understanding among each other, as all of them have to deal with the same problems. Furthermore, it is much easier for them to understand each other and build friendships between each other.

Regarding to body language, PM I pointed that body language is a powerful communication system in all cultures. But body language can signal very different things in different cultures. Thereby, he considered that it is important to keep this in mind when working with persons of different cultures. Furthermore, he pointed that to work in project means to encounter various problems. But it is quite hard to separate these problems from individuals. However, to some degree PM I could assume that cultural diversities played some role there. For instance, when he worked in Italy they had a problem in their team in his opinion happened because of cultural differences. For an Italian it was difficult to keep an appointment and when they said “Yes” it did not mean the “Yes” according to the Swedes. PM I stated that a well designed team building process can help the team members and managers to build trust each other and have motivated team members in order to work effectively. They use some methods during their team buildings process such as kick-off, bowling and other sport activities; the methods usually depend into the country where the project is stationed. PM I referred that most of them have been trained to perceive conflicts as negative. It may be particularly difficult to accept it as beneficial rather than detrimental. But teamwork without conflict is not teamwork. He preferred to divide the types of conflict into two parts. *Task conflict*: disagreements over the content of tasks being carried out; for example, differences of view among members of a project team on how to solve the problem. He stated that these kinds of conflicts are beneficial. And *personal conflict*: are conflicts that arise when two or more personalities clash each other. This happens for many reasons for example politics, religion, and it most avoid completely.

Project manager II (PM II)

PM II, when she described the importance of communication she emphasized that communication is the foundation for all team functioning. It requires that all team members cooperate to create ongoing communication with each other. Cultural diversities can generate personal conflicts if the members of the team don't have enough knowledge of cultural differences, she continued. PM II pointed out that to say “Yes” in some cultures means not a series “Yes” at all-time and in some cultures people acts by feeling and for that reason PM I thought that cultural differences may require more time to learn each other at the beginning. However, this is not an impact. Additionally, she said that “*What I want to say is even if you have the same educational backgrounds it doesn't be the same work communication*”.

From her point of views, nonverbal communication plays an essential role during communication and body language is an important part of nonverbal communication. PM II suggested that body language usually occurs automatically thereby the body language we use decides to a large extent the quality of our communication. Thus, it would be good to become aware of our own and others' body language, she added. It is important to note that body language has different meanings in different cultures. How we can understand body language depends on the situation, the culture, the relationship we have with the other person. She pointed out that conflicts and problems usually don't occur because of multiculturalism. On the contrary, to work in project means to solve problems and to work in multicultural team mean to fit problems by means of discussing different ideas from different view of points. PM II did not think it is a problem unless good opportunities if we use the conflicts in a right way. She asserted that more conflicts can occur between cultural diversities team, however it isn't because of cultural differences. She claimed that

“it is better to say that the main problem in many cases is communication. As I already mentioned many of us had to communicate in other language than ours and that could be a very challenging task especially in such a stressful environment as projects. Of course we also had other problems”. Additionally, PM II said that the communication style in cultural differences can have some problems. She mentioned an example that in some cultures it will be more speaking than writing and it can be completely opposite on the other culture. However, team members had to decide how they wanted to communicate to each other.

Project manager III (PM III)

PM III stated that to work in team is all about communication whether the team is culturally differentiated or not. To put an attention on cultural diversity is not necessary but one has some additional issues that must be addressed to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. He claimed that more conflicts do not occur because of cultural differences; however, there are differences in how to communicate and what response you expect that is culturally dependent. For example what is considered to be polite, the use of negations (especially when used for emphasize), the use of irony, the relationships between within a hierarchy. PM III continued that culture diversity is an opportunity, so he did not think that problems can turn up because of cultural diversity. However, bad communication can turn up many different problems within project team. PM III stated that differences in communication styles can affect teamwork, for example, people from US are generally pretty straightforward compared to for example people from Japan that you can see completely different in communication styles. PM III affirmed that nonverbal-communication plays an essential role during communication. It will be more significant in cultural divers' team members because many non-verbal messages are 'culture specific'; they can cause a lot of misunderstanding between people from different backgrounds

Project manager IV (PM IV)

PM IV said that communication is a dynamic process that all human being used to communicate with others during daily life. He continued that to work within a team means to work with other people thereby communication is an important instrument. PM IV stated that to work with culturally diversified teams require special communications skills because of the cultural differences and local laws. PM III stated that problems and conflicts can occur because of cultural differences, in his opinion, misunderstanding through language, different holidays, different days of payment are some of them. However, he wanted to say that some of the problems can occur even in local project teams. When it comes to nonverbal communication and communication styles, PM IV stated that nonverbal communication is a communication process which is important to communicate with carefully. As an example, he mentioned that *“to show your feeling in Asia is a bad thing to do, it looks like that you have no control of yourself”*. However, it has not the same manner of matter in Sweden. PM IV suggested that to have good skills in communication styles is a start point to be successful in your communication with others.

Project manager V (PM V)

PM V supposed that information technology age and the increasing contact between people of different cultures make communication more important than ever before. Separately from improved performance, increases in cooperation and morale multicultural teams can also produce more creative, successful results because different people view situations from different perspectives.

PM V agreed that teams also provide a broader base of abilities and skills meaning a larger amount of work can be completed in a shorter amount of time. If the team spends enough time during its team building process, it can also improve support and trust levels in the workplace, increase efficiency and reduce employee stress. PM V stated that conflicts usually appear because of work hierarchical issues than culture differences. By trying to have good eye contact, get feedback from all team members and inform them in a way that satisfies all cultures, you can avoid misunderstandings and personal conflicts. When it come to communication styles and body language, he pointed out that it can be completely different, for example, the Asian members are very polite in their contact and the European countries except Great Britain are much straighter forward. The English speaking countries and Australia can be very aggressive in their communication. Additionally, he stated that language and culture have some points in common and body language is something that we have to think when we are communicating with people from different cultures. One body sign can be mean different things in different cultures thus it is important to keep yourself as neutral as possible, he concluded.

Project manager VI (PM VI)

PM VI stated that international projects are increasingly as a common form of managing in international business. Every company and every organization today, in every branch of job and in every line of business, is aware of the need for communication, internal and external, national and international. With a growing demand, he continued, the importance of communication and cultural mixed work forces has grown explosively over the last ten to fifteen years. We are working in different way and take responsibility completely in different levels. Thus, she agreed that project teams have to have a good knowledge of cultural difference; otherwise it can be misunderstanding of each other. She asserted that conflicts and problems can turn up because of cultural differences, for example, to say no to people from some cultures are very difficult. She suggested that communication is the most important tool during teamwork especially when you work with multicultural teams. Thus, every team member has to have good communication skills. However, she ignored completely the importance of body language.

Culture

Section review

This section describes how the interviewees explained the role of cultural diversity within multicultural project teams, the benefits and impacts of cultural diversity, the importance of knowledge about cultural differences and the costs and revenues which can happen because of culture diversities.

Project manager I (PM I)

PM I said that many international projects have certainly been carried through without anyone ever noticing that cultural differences may have caused unanticipated problems. Additionally, he pointed that cultural difference teams can get many benefits such as skilful, productive and fun. However, to get these all benefits the team members have to accept the diversity of cultures and have a good knowledge of it. Furthermore, PM I mentioned some disadvantages of culture diversity teams too such as expensive and more time consuming. PM I confirmed that multicultural team members spend additional time to learn each other's cultures, values and other different characters. He thought that to spend time during team building would be a useful thing to do. In his opinion, it also is good for every foreigner to be familiar with local language, cultural differences, local customs and history. However, most companies do not want to spend both money and time at this level.

Project manager II (PM II)

PM II asserted that there are real benefits to groups of people from different cultural backgrounds working together. She affirmed that the specific nature of those benefits varies from one individual or team to the next, depending on personal situation, the organisation you work for, the duration of the project and the size of the project. Some of the benefits are generating different views, more task conflicts and easy to get global market. However, she mentioned some impacts to work in cultural different teams such as more costs, slower process and increased time consumption. But those impacts can be eliminated completely if the team members have a good knowledge of cultural differences and use well designed communication methods, she continued. In her point of view, to get these knowledge companies have to spend enough time during the team process, however, most companies do not want to spend both money and time at this level. Additionally, in her opinion it also would be good for every foreigner to be familiar with local language, cultural differences, local customs and history.

Project manager III (PM III)

PM III considered that to work in multicultural teams have huge many benefits such as extended points of views, a better understanding of the wide diversity of needs and problems that occur when the project face different cultures in real life and easy to globalize. Whilst there are huge benefits to international teamwork, working with people from different backgrounds is not always straightforward, she added. It can often be the source of those

difficulties that make those experiences so valuable, but that does not necessarily make it any easier. She also claimed that some of the key areas that international teams often experience problems in are different value system, different attitudes and different communications methods and styles are also some of them. PM III asserted that it is always important to understand as much as possible from cultural differences in order to understand the viewpoint of other people in any kind of project. This understanding can help the project manager and project members to bridge between each other when they can't reach a resolution as well as understand the base of conflicts, she concluded.

Project manager IV (PM IV)

PM IV said that cultural different is not necessarily a bad thing. It might take a little extra effort, but you can still be successful in communication and by making that extra effort, you might just learn and gain a lot. Most important is to be patient and don't be afraid to ask for their patience too. To compare attitudes and values in different cultures, PM IV stated that project managers are more likely as a member of the team rather than a manager in Sweden but that is not the same in some other countries, for example, in Denmark and USA. PM IV stated that to have knowledge of other cultures is an important skill, and he exemplified it as "*if you don't offend any member of your team in any way, you will get the work done*". PM IV also affirmed that to work in cultural diver's team has not any impacts unless you have a communication weakness. Moreover, it has many benefits such as different ways to see a solution of a problem and important experience. PM IV continued that to gain up the benefits it is important to spend enough time during team building process, especially, if it's the first time the team members meet each other.

Project manager V (PM V)

PM V regarded that cultural diversities teams are claimed as the root of many well designed solutions. Thus, he thought that is important to have a good knowledge in cultural differences when you belong to a multicultural team because different cultures may perceive information in different ways. Furthermore, he claimed that multicultural teams have a lot of benefits, to mention some; different views of solutions, covers more end users and time shift globally. However, he said that to be a member of cultural diverse team has also some difficulties such as time shift for work to be done, more views and angels to the scope and avoid solutions that would not work in the field due to culture differences. Additionally, PM V mentioned some challenges which he has difficult to accept like different views in gender and personal appearances. To work internationally is time consuming at the beginning but if you manage it correctly you can gain a lot of benefits in all moments, he concluded.

Project manager VI (PM VI)

PM VI stated that it is the universal view to cross the culture barrier to have global visions on products and services. She claimed that cross-cultural teams should be "*culture proofed*" and cultural diversities' knowledge should be included as key measure of succeed or fail of the project. PM VI stated that if the team members do not have enough cultural skills of each other it can be easy misunderstanding between them. Some of the key areas that cross-cultural teams often experience problems are: lacks of knowledge in religion, holidays, do not ask

yes/no questions, discussion about any politics etc. PM VI agreed that the benefits of cultural differences team is a lot and she mentioned some of them such as generating different views within the project, different views to solve the problem and to look the cultural difference already in the development phase. However, she said that to work with cultural difference project teams also have its impact such as different languages, culture crash and spend a lot of time specially when the project period is short.

Managing multicultural teams

Section review

This section describes how the team members especially project managers have to work to achieve the goal of the project. The section will also illustrate the important of trust and motivation because respondents mentioned them as an important matter.

Project manager I (PM I)

PM I stated that the main task of a PM is to create a team in order to achieve a well-defined goal. People are expected to be motivated by their role in achieving the goal. Task therefore comes before relationships, which are considered of secondary importance and fluctuating. He agreed that to motivate the team members are the significant part of PM's task that gives the team members high trust between each other. PM I pointed out that "*Trust is an important thing to have within any relationship and a teamwork is an interaction of different people*". Furthermore, he claimed that it is not easy to define some methods or forms to build trust between people. But to some extent, PM I believed that clear communication can build trust between members. PM I proposed that to have a well defined roles and responsibilities can augment the trust between PM and project teams. Moreover, he stated that a skilled manager usually gives people on all levels a clear understanding of the project's goals and objectives.

Project manager II (PM II)

PM II stated that it is high relationship between communication and trust. Good and clear communication usually leads to good trust between members. She thought that trust is something that can build only with time; PM II did not see any other artificial ways of building it. However, good structure and knowledge of the current subject and clear rules within members can help people to develop their trust. In her opinion it was very important to know yours and others rules and responsibilities otherwise it can generate a personal conflicts between members of the team. PM II asserted that good trust between members motivates the members and the project will be successes. It does not matter if the team is locally or globally, good communication between members usually builds high trust within the team, she suggested. She concludes that project managers must see the whole picture to manage the team and other stockholders around.

Project manager III (PM III)

PM III believed that trust is very vital for the team efficiency. Especially this relates to the multicultural project team. It is important that managers trust their team members, as in such case the team members tend to respond with the same. He pointed out that trust and communication have a deep relationship to each other. Thus, to get high trust within the team members have to have good communication among each other. Clear communication and well defined goals can help team members to make trust with each other, he continued. Additionally, PM III stated that each of us may have his/her own realism, very different views generate very different realities. These differences often cause misunderstandings and conflicts. However, she stated that they could reduce these kinds of misunderstandings and conflicts by making clear roles and well defined responsibilities between team members.

Project manager IV (PM IV)

PM IV affirmed that trust within the team is very important; however he did not know any methods that could help building this trust. However he stated that, to some extent, by giving the team members their own responsibility they can build trust to each other. To describe the importance of understanding each other's roles and responsibilities, PM IV said that "*the members of the project will spent a lot of time on searching of information and it can happen two members are doing the same work over and over*". PM IV pointed out that it is very important that the team has a shared vision of the project's goals and objectives. Thus, communication and trust are the most important tools to get high motivation within the team. Furthermore, he mentioned that a skilled manager is usually a good listener and she/he also has to learn not react on an instant when managing a multinational team you have to think twice all the time and learn not to rely heavily on your local standards of behaviour and values.

Project manager V (PM V)

PM V considered that the main skill a multicultural manager should possess is flexibility. A manager should allow that people are different and should accept this fact. He was raised in multicultural environment, so this flexibility came naturally in his case and it helped him a lot in his multicultural teamwork. PM V stated that trust is of course very important for the efficiency of a team, since it is not possible to work with a person you cannot trust. He thought that the best way to know whether you can trust the person or not is to go with him/her through some real working situations, see how she/he acts when being under stress, see how knowledgeable he/she is. Moreover, PM V thought that good understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities is generally important and such knowledge comes quite naturally if you work in a small team. Finally, PM V pointed out that it is important to be able to use administrable tools (to work) with project members on different locations and it probably make it more personally if other members can see the picture next to each member's area.

Project manager VI (PM VI)

PM VI asserted that working in a project is something that any company does today to compete in the market. One important thing to think about here is just having the tasks and responsibilities clearly defined, written on a paper and made available to the whole team, she added. This method also helps seeing clearly the progress of each and every worker, and finding out early if a person has any problems with the task, she continued. She thought that trust is of course important, and it is something that you have to develop. You normally start to trust other people when you get to know them better, when you talk to them. The same thing happens in the team, trust is developed over time and she did not see any way to build it but if the team has well designed communication methods and clear defined rules it can help to gain high trust within the members. Finally, PM VI recommended that the manager of the project has to have a shared vision, she/he has to see the whole picture and able to be a good communicator.

The result of scores

In this section, the results of the rate part of the interview are summarized, where interviewees were asked to rate the importance of different skills that were considered to be useful in the multicultural project team. The rates are between 1 and 10 where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest score. In table 1 the answers of each 6 interviewees are presented along with the average rating value for each skill.

The importance of	PM I	PM II	PM III	PM IV	PM V	PM VI	Average
Communication in general	10	10	10+	10	9	8	9.5
Body language	10	8	10	8	8	4	8.0
Trust	10	10	10	9	6	6	8.5
Clear defined roles and responsibilities	7	8	6	8	4	8	6.83
Knowledge of cultural differences	7	8	8	8	7	8	7.67

Table 1: The result of scores from interviews

As table 1 above shows the value of the average rating for each skill is considered to indicate the importance of the skill/knowledge/practice that rated by the interviewee's. According to the results, communication skills were considered the most useful by the interviewees, followed by trust between members, body language, knowledge of culture differences and clear roles and responsibilities within members to be considered the least useful skill of all five.

Learning

Section review

This section describes how the interviewees' career affected by working in multicultural teams. Because all interviewees do not have too much to say about learning the author has decided to summarize the result of career affect for all interviewees during their cross cultural teamwork.

All interviews said that to work as a member of multicultural team gives them a lot of human resource development. They agreed that to work with multicultural team means learning other people's culture, language, thinking and more other concepts. Thus, their personal career will be developed continually.

Summary of the result

PM	Communication	Culture	Managing
I	Lack of communication in any organization, independent of cultural diversity, is the most harmful issue and thereby it must be eliminated.	Cultural difference can get many benefits such as different skills and productivities. But to get all these benefits the team members have to accept the diversity of cultures and have a good knowledge of it	Main task of a PM is to create a team in order to achieve a well-defined goal. To build trust between members the PM must be clear in his objectives.
II	Communication is the foundation for all team functioning and body language decides to a large extent the quality of our communication. A team with bad communication is not a team.	The impact of cultural differences can be eliminated completely if the team members have a good knowledge of cultural differences and use well designed communication methods.	It does not matter if the team is locally or globally, good communication between members usually builds high trust within the team. Clear communication leads to high trust.
III	To work in team is all about communication whether the team is culturally divers or not. More conflicts do not occur because of cultural differences, however, bad communication can turn up many different problems within project team	Understanding of cultural differences can help the project manager and project members to bridge between each other when they can't reach a resolution as well as understand the base of conflicts.	Trust and communication have a deep relationship to each other and trust is very vital for the team efficiency. Especially this relates to the multicultural project team. So a good manager has to have good communication skill.

IV	Communication is a dynamic process, thus to work with culture diversity team requires special communications skills. Good skills in communication are a start point to be success in your teamwork.	To work in cultural diverse team has not any impact unless you have a communication weakness. Additionally, it has many benefits such as different ways to se a solution of a problem and important experience.	A manager of multinational team must be a good listener and has to learn not react on an instant. He must think twice all the time and learn not to rely heavily on his/her local standards of behaviour and values.
V	IT age and the increasing contact between people of different cultures make communication more important than ever before. Conflicts usually appear because of work hierarchical issues rather than culture differences.	Cultural diverse teams are claimed as the root of many well designed solutions. Thus, to have a good knowledge in cultural differences can generate different solutions. To work internationally is time consuming at the beginning but beneficially in long term.	The main skill that a multicultural manager should possess is flexibility. And trust is of course very important for the efficiency of a team, since it is not possible to work with a person you cannot trust.
VI	Team members have to have good communication skills. However, ignored completely the importance of body language and conflicts and problems can turn up because of cultural differences.	Cross-cultural teams should be “ <i>culture proofed</i> ” and cultural diversities’ knowledge should be included as key measure of succeed or fail of the project.	To have a shared vision, managers have to see the whole picture and able to be a good communicator. Additionally, trust is of course important, and it is something that you have to develop.

Table 2: Summary of results

In the above table (table 2), the most important and useful objectives are summarized, where the interviewees were more interested and emphasized during the interview.

The importance of communication within a multicultural team was very important for all interviewees. All interviewees are also agreed that good communication skills are significant tool during teamwork. Furthermore, five of them supposed that body language is an important part of nonverbal communication. Additionally, they suggested that body language that we usually use decides to a large extent the quality of our communication. Thus, it is important to note that body language has different meanings in different cultures. Additionally, they agreed that cultural diverse teams are claimed as the root of many well designed solutions. Cultural difference can get many benefits such as skilful and productive. But to get these all benefits all interviewees agreed that the team members have to have good communication skills and good knowledge of cultural differences. When it comes to trust and trust building, all interviewees agreed that trust and communication have deep relationship to each other. They stated that a good communication and well defined roles and responsibilities usually lead to deep trust building. Additionally, they affirmed that trust is something which can build up on time. Lastly, they claimed that good trust between members will usually make the team more motivated.

Discussion

Chapter review

The previous chapter presented the major findings of the empirical part of the study. This chapter contains the analysis of the empirical data based on the theory and according to the aim of the research that were presented earlier in the report. The discussion will be divided into three parts; communication, culture and managing multicultural team.

Communication

Section review

This section discusses the role of communication which was founded from the empirical data and previous researches described in the literature review.

Communication is the most important part of our daily life. As seen from the results, table 1; the importance of communication is rated 9.5 out of 10. Thus, effective communication is essential for the delivery of high quality, safe product that is low in costs, efficiency that saves cultural time in the process of production. In multicultural project teams, a large portion of communication occurs between people from different backgrounds and cultural. Effective teams produce exceptional results and achieve access despite difficulties. This is not by luck or coincidence, this exceptional results and success are accomplished due to all members of the team working together as one. Thus, all interviewees described communication as a cohesive force which supports the research results and theoretical frames that are founded by (Verzuh, 1999; Susan, 2000; Lawson and Tom, 1997; Katz, 1978 and Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989). Both the results of this research and the previous study from literatures and researches describe communication as the most important tool to unite the team to fulfil some common goals. As PM I put it, bad communication within a project team is the most harmful issue and thereby it must be eliminated. This conception supported the view of communication which presented by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989). Since they refer to communication and information flows as the life blood of the organization.

The interviewed people, except one, thought body language is an important part of communication and we should care a lot about it. Additionally, they suggest our body language to a large extent plays a big part to the quality of our communication. Moreover, the results from the research show that body language is culture specific, thus it is important to be neutral and have good understanding and knowledge of other cultures. This point of view is very similar to the view of body language presented by Laskowski (1999) which described an eye contact as a significant feedback device that makes the speaking situation a two-ways communication process. In addition, Forsyth (1999) supported it that body language is culturally specific and interpreted in differently in various cultures. Thereby, it may be easy to create misunderstandings.

Still with teamwork in focus, interviewees stated that communication is expected to have a positive relationship with novelty acceptance as it facilitates dispersion of ideas and increases their quality and quantity of ideas created, thereby enhancing team performance. This is supported by the theories of Myers (2005) which stated that teams are expected to produce results, but performance is hindered when team members do not communicate well together. All interviewees have agreed that to spend enough time during team building process can give the team members an opportunity to develop their relationship, knowledge of each other's cultural, develop a trusting relationship and to have a clear roles, goals and responsibilities. This argument is supported by Hanson and Lubin (1995) as they stated that a well succeed team building will give good results when it takes action in order to create a climate in which team members' energies are directed toward problem solving. Bringer, Geddes and Hasting (1990, p94) proposed that "*assembling the team is a design job*" thereby when you are building your team the most important is to design communication. This argument is supported by PM III, as he said that to work within a team is all about communication.

Most of the interviewees mentioned that cutting sentences and using different verbal and body languages will only cause misunderstanding and destroy the communication between sender and receiver. This is a common problem and can create conflicts. Thus, it is important to have a two way communication. This finding is, as stated before, in accordance with Lennér and Thylefors (1996) that feedback is very important to avoid misunderstandings and create an open communication climate. The results from the empirical study, especially PM II, confirmed that the communication style and cultural differences can be problematic. For example; some cultures communicate verbally more than by writing and in other cultures it could be complete opposite. This point of view is similar to Laroche (2003) and Lewis (2000) which discuss the effect of silent communication during dialogue in different cultures.

Conflicts

As seen in the results, all interviewees agreed that many of us were raised to believe that conflict is something to be avoided which is seen as failure of communication. However, they stated that, conflicts don't have to lead to failure, defeat, separation or termination of individual relationships. We all see the world in different ways; we have different ideas and opinions about what's best for us and what's best for our group. It is actually a sign that change is needed and possible. This point of view is very similar to that of theory presented by De Dreu's and Weingart's (2003), Levi (2001), Forsyth (1999) and Putnam (1986) which all have stated that where there is no conflict, inefficiencies will not be exposed and therefore not discussed. Furthermore, Meredith and Mantel (2000) stated that the project and project members usually survive in an environment characterized by continuous conflicts.

Many researches in multicultural teams seem to agree that conflict can be both beneficial and detrimental for the teamwork (Forsyth, 1999; Levi, 2001) which is very similar to what the results of this research showed. The constant issues about benefits and impacts of conflict during teamwork are discussed at length in the literature and the results founded during this research seem very real. A concrete example is that the benefits and impacts which presented by Forsyth (1999) and Levi (2001) are similar to what the results of this current research showed.

According to the results, most of the interviewees stated that conflicts do not occur because of cultural differences; however, poor communication can create up many problems within a

project team such as negative conflicts. PM V emphasized that some conflicts usually appear because of work hierarchical issues rather than culture differences. This point of views is similar to Triandis's (2003) research results which showed that poor communication between project teams usually produce negative conflicts. Both the literature research and the empirical study support that communication failures are an extremely common cause of inadvertent conflicts in a teamwork projects.

“The biggest source of conflicts is bad communication.”

PM III (2006)

Culture

Section review

This section discusses the interaction between culture and communication during teamwork which is founded from the empirical data and previous researches and literature reviews.

The result of this research shows that culture and communication have much in common. They are two indivisible concepts, joined together by language. Every language is linked to a culture, resting at its very core. As pointed out above, communication is an essential intermediary for cultures. Conversely, each culture tends to develop a common communication manner as a way of integrating its members. This point of view is consistent to Hall (1976) which stated that culture is communication and communication is culture. Moreover, culture plays an important role in communication since it considerably influences the method people transmit messages. Similarly, communication can be considered as the main cause of culture. Therefore, communication and culture are closely intertwined concepts. This argument is similar to Haas (2005) which supported Winston and stated that to have a knowledge of another's language and not his/her culture is a very good way to make a fluent fool of one's self.

Benefits of cultural diversities

The findings from the results show all respondents have agreed that a multicultural team has great amounts of benefits. Some of them have better skills, higher productivity, generate different views and their comprehension can be better. This argument is supported by (Wiseman et al. (1989), Elron (1997), Earley and Mosakowski (2000), Townsend et al. (1998), Maznevski (1994) and Samovar and Porter (1991). However, most of the respondents have agreed that to get all these benefits the team members have to have good understanding and communication skills, tolerance and acceptance of diverse cultures. This finding is similar to Schneider and DeMeyer (1991) and Brislin (1981) who stated that culture knowledge and

communication skills are the most important skills which multicultural project team members need in order to get all the benefits it can provide.

Enhanced creativity

The findings from this research stated that multinational teams are actually more creative than homogenous teams, since they have more differentiated views on the same problem and can therefore come up with many different approaches to different solutions, which would not be that obvious for a homogenous team. This finding is supported by Laroche (2003) and Cox (1993). By creating heterogeneous teams, companies make significant gains in productivity Townsend et al. (1998) which is supported by all respondents of this research. Schneider and DeMeyer (1991) agreed that cross-cultural communication competence is an essential skill of team members' ability to address the common challenges faced by multicultural teams. This point of view is agrees to this research. PM II stated that the degree of benefits of cultural difference team varies from one team to the next, depending on the communication skills of the members, the size of the team and the duration of the project. On a similar implication Wright (2005) claimed that culturally heterogeneous groups that initially performed poorly relative to homogeneous groups later performed better than homogeneous groups on selected aspects of task performance. Additionally, this argument is supported by all respondents who thought that multicultural teams usually spend more time in team building processes, especially, if it's the first time the team members meet each other. Moreover, Harris (1996) stated that cultural diversity teams require time and stability to bear fruit.

Disadvantages of cultural diversities

The findings from this research show that more than 80% of interviewees stated that multicultural teams have some disadvantages such as being more expensive, higher time consumption (members spend additional time to learn each other's cultures, values etc.). These point of view is supported by Earley and Gibson (2002) which claimed that homogenous teams are usually more cohesive; they experience fewer conflicts; have a faster decision making process. In addition, Erez and Earley (1993) and Earley and Gibson (2002) agreed that to work in a multicultural team can prove to be difficult as it can create miscommunication and misunderstandings that often do not result in the best outcomes. However, the result from the empirical study shows that these disadvantages can be eliminated completely if the team members have a good knowledge of cultural differences and use well designed communication methods. PM IV also affirmed that being a part of cultural diverse team does not create problems unless you have lack of communication skills.

“Culture is communication and communication is culture”

Hall (1976)

Managing multicultural teams

Section review

This section discusses the importance of different leadership styles which are recognized by the interviewees and data from previous researches and literature reviews.

The results from this research show that all respondents agreed that leadership is a process of getting things done through people. Thus, being a leader demands good skills in handling different behaviours, relationships, conflicts and of course managing people. Consequently, they stated that project managers have to have a leadership style and have good leadership skills. Furthermore, they agreed that project managers must have the ability to manage the project and lead the team. These findings are supported by Hartley (2000), Hofstede (2001) and Holton (2001). The results from the empirical study agreed with Jackson et al (2003) which stated that as projects are being bigger and more international, the size of project members will grow accordingly, thereby it is significant that the project manager has excellent knowledge of different cultures, ethnic differences and religions. Poor or lack of leadership skills can lead to irresolvable conflicts.

All interviewees stated that as a project manager, the most important aspect is to think before, during and after all type of projects are communication, motivation, trust and understanding each other. Since the importance of communication was most commonly mentioned by the interviewees (see table 1). For the same reasons the importance of trust building also received next to the highest ratings, as these two tools are quite closely linked to each other. All interviewees have agreed that the development of a trusting atmosphere inside the team is only assisted by good communication and good communication can be only assessed if there is high trust between members. This point of view is similar to Hartley (2000) theory which stated that good communication is an essential skill for any manager. And in the same way Landera et al, (2000), in their study of trust building strategies, supported that to develop trust one needs to have good communication skills, successful initial interactions, sharing of control, predictability and managerial support. Interviewees also agreed that trust is something which can build only with time and this point of view is similar to Laroche (2003) and Erikson (1990) which suggested that trust can develop as a result of positive interactions with others, keeping promises, sharing common concerns and open communication between members.

Interviewees have also agreed that well defined roles and responsibilities between team members can augment the trust between members. Moreover, they stated that a skilled manager usually has a shared vision of the project's goals and objectives and usually shares her/his knowledge to all members. Thus, communication skills have an important role here. In addition all interviewees have stated that clear defined goal and responsibilities increases the trust between members. Thereby decrease personal conflicts and promotes effectiveness. And this point of view is supported by Pettigrew (1998) which claimed that clear goals and objectives within teamwork gives the team a warm atmosphere to work.

“Clear defined goal decreases the conflicts and promotes effectiveness”

(Hartley, 2000).

Conclusion

Chapter review

The previous chapter has discussed the result of the empirical and theoretical studies which are presented in a form answers to the research questions and in this chapter the author will describe some general recommendations derived from the study findings, some criticisms of the present study and final suggestions for future research is provided.

Findings

The findings of this mini research lead to the conclusion that communication is an important tool to work in team independent to cultural differences. Communication between two cultures is the process in which messages created in one culture must be processed and interpreted in another culture. Thereby a high degree of cognitive flexibility and tolerance is needed. However, the complexities of cultural difference can be eliminated completely if the team members have good communication skills and enough knowledge in general culture differences. Undoubtedly, well designed communication and enough knowledge in cultural diversity between team members play a significant role to understand the attitude, behaviours and other human characteristics. The finding of this research also presented that communication failures are very common cause of inadvertent conflicts in a teamwork projects. Furthermore, the lack of communication can lead to misunderstandings and unnecessary conflict; thereby it can affect the motivation of collaborative working. This might influence the duration of the project and at worst the project can fail

Criticisms

There are many issues that may effect and misdirect the result of this research. The researcher has to be aware that there are huge differences in politics, attitude, work systems and religions (in many countries religion has a big effect in culture). So it is important to study many different teams from different continents and different branches to get high validity.

The other hurdle that may cause unwanted results, is that this research is based on only six participants with completely different educational levels, age and experiences which might give a result in wrong picture of the reality. Additionally, the managers have worked in different size of teams with completely different amount of cultural diversities.

Future work

The most interesting extension of my work would certainly be to use a different research method to show if the results of this study is right or not. I would suggest conducting a thorough case study in the course of a large project performed by multicultural team, preferably when the researcher herself/himself is a part of the team. Such a case study would allow observing the natural day-to-day activity of the team, making it possible to investigate cultural problems/opportunities deeply, in the same time reducing researcher's and interviewee's bias.

This could also be done by studying heterogeneous continents teams instead of just teams like my case (Europeans only).

Finally, very promising research topics are:

- The role of communication to motivate cross-cultural team members.
- What impact do culture and cross-cultural communication have on trust building?
- The importance of verbal and non verbal language during communication

Good luck with development of your communication skills

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Appendix A

The interview guide

The present study aims to investigate the importance of communication within cultural diversity project teams. The goals of the research are therefore focused towards determining positive as well as negative sides of multicultural teamwork as well as recognizing ways and methods through which team could overcome potential difficulties and make use of potential opportunities, arising from its cultural diversity. For achieving the above mentioned purpose, the following objectives are set to this study:

- Examine the importance of communication in the cultural difference team members work.
- Investigate the impact of cultural differences in the communicative process within project teams
- Investigate the benefits of multicultural project teams.

Research questions

The following research questions are posed in this study:

What role does communication play in multicultural project team?
Does cultural diversity affect the communication between team members?

The answer of the above questions would help the research to investigate and reach a deeper understanding in the subject.

Part one.

Introduction → General Information about the interviewee

This first part of the interview is included the basic characteristics of the interviewee, such as professional experience, cultural background, his/her responsibilities within the team and to get a general understanding of him/her as a person.

1. Could you please tell me about yourself? Educational background; Country of origin; in how many countries did you live; in which country did you spend most of your time, to what culture/nation do you attribute yourself?
2. Could you describe me the cross-cultural team you worked/work with? Number of members in the team, what is/was the function of the team/what output the team provide, when was the team created/closed, how many PM does it have/has?

Part twoResearch Equations

This part of the interview aims at discovering culture-related misunderstandings. The main and well discussed subject will be communication.

Communication

1. Do you think that managing/be a member of cross-cultural team requires more effort (communication skills) than managing a usual/local one? If yes → Why?
2. How important is good communication within a project team? (On a scale 1-10)
3. Do you think nonverbal (specially, body language) communication has more effect in multicultural team than local? If yes → why? please rate (On a scale 1-10)
4. Do problems and conflicts occur, because of multiculturalism, if so of what kind are they?
5. Do problems and conflicts occur, because of lack communication in multicultural team than a local one?
6. Could you give me example of some problematic situations you experienced while working in international team that in your opinion happened because of cultural differences?
7. Could you see any difference in the communication style of the /culturally different team member(s)?
8. What methods do/did you use during the team building for increasing communication, trust, positive conflict and motivation efficiency?

Culture

9. What differences could you note in the attitude, of culturally different member(s), towards you as a leader?
10. Do you think that is important for a project manager (project members) to have knowledge of cultural differences, and in that case why? And please rate the importance of skills in cultural differences (On a scale 1-10)
11. Could you list up the most three benefits of Multicultural teams?
12. Could you list up the most three impacts of Multicultural teams?
13. Do you think that the multicultural team members spend additional time to learn each other's cultures, values, and/or other differences during team buildings period?

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14. How essential is the trust for the development of your team? (On a scale 1-10)?
15. What do you do to make people trust each other more?
16. How important is for the team to have a good understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities? (On a scale 1-10)
17. How do you perceive conflict in teamwork? Beneficial? Detrimental? Why?
18. Anything else? Are there any other issues that have not been covered by the interview?

Learning

19. How is the personal career affected by working in multicultural teams?

