

Cross-Cultural Communication in IT project teams

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ABSTRACT

Problem: While the multinational teams consisting of members from different nationalities, backgrounds and cultures have advantages of diversity in the workplace, the differences between team members can also pose the challenges. Our study focuses on Information Technology (IT) project teams in organizations located in Sweden. The rapid growth of technology and IT sector, increasing demand in IT professionals, and the knowledge of writing universal code allow people to work internationally regardless of citizenship. Therefore, the workforce in the IT sector is rapidly growing and diversifying — it is characterized by teams consisting of different nationalities. However, these differences in cultures, languages and nationalities can complicate the communication processes between the team members. Therefore, efficient cross-cultural communication within a team is essential for team collaboration and performance.

Purpose: The study aims to find the significant issues in the process of adaptation to the new culturally diverse environment faced by immigrant professionals in IT project teams. The study mainly focuses on an individual level, consequently expanding it to a collective level, as the related challenges refer to collaboration among the team members.

Method: The study was conducted by interviewing immigrant professionals who have been working in IT project teams in the companies, located in Sweden. The participants belong to six different nationalities and have worked in Sweden for approximately 2-8 years. They are all male aged between 30-33 years old. After the interviews, we can present findings, which demonstrate the points of similarity and difference.

Conclusion: Technology, which is a significant factor in IT projects, constantly changes, and therefore, IT project teams that work with innovation require high adaptability to explore new opportunities. That makes effective coordination and communication essential. In the culturally diverse team, managers should manage global mindset and cultural intelligence for individuals to help team members in adaptation process. Cross-cultural training should be provided to the migrant professionals in the team to avoid miscommunication based on cultural differences, hence overcoming challenges.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, multinational teams, immigrant professionals, Swedish IT project teams, diversity, culture.

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1.Introduction

This chapter aims at familiarizing the reader with the topic. First, it describes the problem background, starting with the globalization and its consequences such as increasing diversity and immigration, including culture and acculturation. The introducing chapter also discusses the cultural intelligence, cross-cultural training, and workplace friendships and humor. It also reflects on the growth of the Swedish IT industry, which explains why the study focuses on this particular sector. Second, it presents the research objectives (Ch. 1.2), leading to the research questions (Ch. 1.3).

1.1 Problem background

Alexandros, a Greek engineer, has been working in an international company in Sweden for more than five years. He is rather adapted to the organization and doing a great job. He appreciates the company's friendly environment and responsiveness of his co-workers. However, he feels that there are some issues with communication within his team, where he is the only foreigner. The fact that everyone mostly speaks Swedish at the office makes him feel uncomfortable. Even though the main language of the company is English, some meetings are held in Swedish. Because of the lack of competence in Swedish, he thinks that the problem of miscommunication may be minimizing his working performance. Regarding the social aspect, Alexandros is not able to bond with his team members. The reason is that he does not feel related to the local culture nor able to fully express himself. As a consequence, he cannot relax around his teammates. Additionally, in the beginning, Alexandros experienced some cultural differences in communication with his team members. For example, he would prefer exaggeration in his expressions and reactions which did not fit with the rest of the team. He realizes that the problem of cross-cultural conflict may also lead to negative consequences in collaboration with the team.

Globalization

According to Gupta et al (2008), the worldwide economy is undergoing a process of globalization. They note that over the last 50 years, the world around us has undergone a significant transformation from a collection of economic islands connected by unreliable and expensive bridges or ferries into the world with an integrated system where people are interconnected. They write that globalization can relate to any of following levels of aggregation: the entire world, a specific country, a specific industry, a specific company, or a specific area of business or functional activity within the organization. The authors also claim that globalization refers to growing economic interdependence among countries as reflected in increasing cross-border flows of the following types of entities: goods and services, capital, and know-how (ibid).

Thomas and Inkson (2017) assume that today, people are coming to understand the importance of globalization and its effects on our lives. According to them, the globalization has been accelerated by many factors, including the increased international interconnectedness, the increased migration, both legal and illegal, particularly from less-

developed to more-developed countries, and the ability of information and communication technology. Moreover, due to globalization, the environment of organizations is now much more complex, dynamic, uncertain, and more competitive than before. Thus, it is clear that these trends are not going to reverse or decrease. In this regard, they assume that managers must learn to compete and work in a global world. The authors conclude that we are members of the global community, even if we are not conscious of it and even if we have never done business abroad or even traveled abroad, and that we may never have gone around the globe, but the globe has come to us. They explain it by claiming that any organization we work for will most likely buy or sell in another country, or will be influenced by global events, which means that we will have to interact with people from all parts of the globe much more (ibid).

Diversity and Culture

Maznevski (1994) writes that any group of individuals can be explained by its diversity since people in any group are composed of individuals that can differ on at least some dimensions. Diversity becomes prominent only when it increases or decreases from the group's ability to meet its goals. According to him, there are two basic types of member diversity. The first is role-related diversity, which includes occupation, position in organization, specialized knowledge and skills, and family role. He notes that role-related diversity is usually deliberate within decision-making teams in an organization, and diversity along these dimensions is evident, moreover, accepted well. Although conflicts among members with different roles are frequent, they are still well-accepted, and these individuals, in general, can see that the other's opinion is valuable or legitimate. The second type of diversity includes age, gender, nationality, cultural values, information processing style, and personality. Maznevski says that in contrast with the first type, diversity along these dimensions does not have to be public or obvious. These dimensions are inherent. Therefore, their effects are difficult for people to understand and accept. Conflicts among members that differ on inherent dimensions are difficult for the parties to understand, and usually, they remain unresolved (ibid). In our research, we are looking at the issues within the second type of diversity which is inherent.

Regarding culture, Henrie (2014) writes that the history of culture research begins with a start from the early 1800s and that it has evolved or extended to virtually every type of social organization. In the mid-1960, the project management culture research began, making it one of the newer culture research discipline areas. According to him, during 50 years of project management culture research, some common themes have developed, which include items such as 1. Project success is dependent on the project team's common culture. 2. The project team culture can be modified. 3. The project manager is essential to the establishment and implementation of a successful project team culture. 4. Project management culture is difficult to quantify and qualify as culture is not directly measurable (ibid).

Henrie (2014) also writes that communication is based on culture, and power distance culture attribute impacts how communications emerge. The author writes that an essential element in any project success is effective communication. It has been shown that poor communication prevents effective team interaction. On the one hand, the awareness of the project personnel

about cultures within the team and the level of education in the various cultures can benefit the work. However, on the other hand, observing, learning, and adapting how to communicate within the cross-culture team are required by all team members. The author adds that it is also one of the project manager's jobs to ensure that effective communication is there (ibid).

According to Earley and Ang (2003), the interaction between individuals of different cultures or shared bodies of knowledge called intercultural communication. It takes place when one person comes from one culture and the other from another. Usually, in intercultural communication, individuals encode and decode on their cultural background, framework, and therefore, if the cultures are not relatively similar, it can create great challenges. The authors write that interacting parties can experience difficulty in communicating when they are very diverse in language, values and belief systems (ibid).

Immigrants

Neault (2014) writes that within recent decades, in both counseling and human resource management literature, a new approach to careers – “boundaryless” career was reported. It was the opposite of an expectation of jobs for life, so instead, a new type of contract between individuals and their employers was created, that worked as long as both sides' needs are being met. The author adds that it is essential for the companies to understand emerging career patterns, and that there are also different groups of foreign workers, which include the expatriate workforce, immigrants, and global careerist that see the world as their workplace (ibid).

Lee and Westwood (1996) define professional workers as individuals with a technical certificate, trade designations, or university degree. They say that with changes in the economy, professional workers are in demand and make a large part of the immigrant flow. Immigrant professionals resettle to developed countries and compete with professional workers of the host country for jobs, career and opportunities. Regarding culture, it is well established and reported that moving to a foreign country include difficult life adjustments (ibid).

Regarding immigrants, Neault (2014) writes that in many developed countries, immigration continues to be an important source of skilled workers in a broad range of occupations, from tradespeople to professional and technical. Some of these foreign workers have the intention of making their host country a permanent home. The author mentions that career practitioners need to understand the variations within a global workforce and how to adjust their approach to meet the actual needs of the diverse individuals they serve (ibid).

Most of the qualified immigrants migrate to avoid difficult political and economic situations in their home countries. In search of better career and lifestyle opportunities, they are usually highly motivated to overcome barriers and challenges during these self-initiated international career transitions. They manage these transitions with the help of their proactiveness: they develop local know-how, build new social and cultural capital, and keep an eye on new

career opportunities. When they successfully secure a job in the new country, it is essential for them to continue to be proactive and take responsibility in their organizational socialization process instead of relying on their organizations to make their adjustment successful. Since effective cross-cultural interactions are important for expatriates, they usually receive cross-cultural training from their companies to avoid cultural misunderstandings and overcome challenges. While self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) and recently immigrated newcomers (RINs) start their own international career experiences and take the responsibility to overcome cross-cultural work challenges themselves. According to the research, even though SIEs are self-motivated to pursue international careers, they are more likely to engage themselves in the host country culture and interact with host country nationals often; they also usually have better knowledge of the local language and can be well prepared beforehand for their international career and their transition in the host country. They may also be more likely to be motivated to return home when they face adjustment issues (Malik et al, 2014).

An increasing number of immigration into Western Europe in recent years means a growing number of recent immigrant newcomers (RINs) for many organizations (Malik & Manroop, 2017). In this research, we are looking at the issues of immigrant professionals that work in IT project teams in the organizations located in Sweden. In 1995, Sweden joined the European Union, and in 2001, it joined the Schengen co-operation, which meant open borders between the country and other European Union (EU) member states. It also could mean increased interest in job opportunities. As a result, overall migration both to and from Sweden grew after 2000. In 2008, new labor migration policies made it easier to move to work in Sweden for non-EU/EEA and non-Nordic citizens (Sweden.se, 2019).

Acculturation

Malik et al (2014) write that the diversity among recently immigrated newcomers (RINs) arises from their different identity characteristics, countries of origin, cultural backgrounds, experiences, and also other demographic features such as age, gender, and education. The literature demonstrates that challenges faced by RINs trying to assimilate into a new country include language proficiency, cultural barriers, unclear workplace norms, discrimination and exploitation, loss of personal and occupational identity, social exclusion, weak social ties, lack of support systems, and financial uncertainties. The authors note that the research done since the early 1990s has shown an increasing trend for skilled RINs to perform jobs with low education requirements. It is a significant factor that hinders the representation of skilled immigrants in the upper segments of the labor market. They add that it resulted in over qualification for the level of jobs RINs hold. Another challenge that the authors mention is the assumptions host country nationals have about RINs. According to the research, many host country nationals think that ethnic minority workers provide employers with cost-effective but cheap labor that limits the host country nationals' employment prospects. This perception negatively affects the relationship between host country nationals and RINs. It is also noted that native-born employees do not understand cultural differences, so RINs have to adapt in order to gain acceptance from existing members of the organization. However, RINs themselves lack the understanding of the host country workplace culture, which complicates

their social integration. Altogether, these challenges complicate RINs' acculturation experiences at the workplace (ibid).

According to Berry (1997), acculturation is one of the big challenges facing immigrants. Acculturation includes those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures start having continuous first-hand contact with following changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. Here, as Berry, we also refer the term acculturation to the general processes and outcomes of intercultural contact. He claims that while immigrants' role in the workforce of developed countries is growing, research in organizational communication regarding immigrant employees' perspective towards the host culture is still limited.

Cross-cultural training

Hofstede et al (2010) write that intercultural communication training courses have two types, where the first type focuses on specific knowledge of the other culture, and the second type focuses on awareness of and general knowledge about cultural differences. They describe the first type as more traditional, which usually informs the future expatriates about the new country, including its geography, brief history, customs, hygiene, and other basic knowledge of how to live there. This type does not provide introspection into the expatriate's own culture, but the strongly motivated ones are expected to get this information from books, videos, and web resources. However, the institutes offering this type of intercultural training usually have adequate book and video libraries or websites for urgent individual preparation. The authors mention that learning the local language is even better preparation for expatriate-to-be. The second type of intercultural communication course – awareness training focuses on the person's own mental software and where it can differ from others. In contrast with the first type, the training does not deal with the question of how to live in a new country. Instead, it deals with the question of how to get a job done. The commitment of top management and the participation of company personnel are conditions for the success of awareness training (ibid).

Cultural intelligence

According to Thomas and Inkson (2017), cultural intelligence is a skill and flexibility about understanding a culture, an interaction with it to learn more about it, an ability to reshape our thinking to create more empathy for it and improving this skill when interacting with others from it. They write that cultural intelligence is about becoming flexible and being able to adapt to new cultural situations with knowledge and sensitivity. They also say that cultural intelligence consists of three parts. In the first part, the culturally intelligent person needs knowledge about culture, its varieties, and its effects on behavior. In the second part, the culturally intelligent person is required to practice mindfulness, to pay attention reflectively and creatively to hints in the situations and to others' knowledge and feelings. In the third one, based on knowledge and mindfulness, the culturally intelligent person gains cross-cultural skills and becomes competent across a variety of situations, choosing the suitable behavior from a range of behaviors that is right for a certain cross-cultural situation. The authors explain that each of these three elements is interrelated with the other, and the process

of becoming culturally intelligent includes a cycle of repetition, where a new challenge builds upon previous ones. The advantage of this approach is that while acquiring competence in one culture, one simultaneously acquires general cultural intelligence, which makes new challenge easier to deal with (ibid).

Workplace friendship and employee humor

Rumens (2017) writes that the study of workplace friendships is now well established, and most of this literature focuses on how workplace friendships can be connected to the improvement of organizational outcomes such as productivity and performance, reducing employee turnover, and helping employees subscribe to new organizational values. The author writes that as a result, other aspects of the lived experiences of work and friendship are left unnoticed, specifically, how these friendships are important in their own right and how they function as social and personal relationships. The author's study of workplace friendships provides insights into how the individuals involved in workplace friendships can gain instrumental and emotional support, share high-quality, improve individuals' experience of work, and protect employees from workplace bullying (ibid).

Regarding the workplace humor, Sierra (2013) writes that the majority of the research in studying the effects of employee humor at the workplace conducted in recent decades has focused on exploring the influence of an individual's humor on his or her own personal and work-related outcomes, such as employee's personal and work-related well-being. The personal well-being includes employee health and stress, coping and affective outcomes. Work-related well-being includes employee work-related cognitions, attitudes, social status, and indicators of employee effectiveness. As a result, the author claims that there is a big amount of evidence that supports the idea that humor is positively related to personal well-being and that it prevents employees from the harmful effects of job stressor. Additionally, the employee humor plays an essential role in supporting some positive job attitudes, including job satisfaction, work engagement, and also intentions to remain within the organization. Moreover, employee humor has also been found to strengthen their social well-being. According to the author, research shows that the members of the organization see employee high in humor as having an important role, which is valued by both coworkers and superiors. Moreover, employee humor is positively associated with employee popularity among coworkers (ibid).

Sweden — a global leader in the tech industry

Stretching far from north to south, Sweden is a vast country. A well-functioning infrastructure has been vital to the development of Sweden, and policies offering access to technology and the internet have contributed to making Sweden the innovative country it is now. In the 1990s, with the help of Swedish government that pushed out a widely developed broadband network and gave its citizens early access to fast internet together with subsidized computer lending programs, it cultivated a society of early adopters. In 2016, the Swedish government adopted a new broadband strategy, which aims to get the whole country connected to high-speed internet by 2025. Sweden is a global leader in innovation and the IT industry with a highly trained workforce, high-level consumers, effective business procedures

and a stable economy. It is one of the most competitive, productive and globalized countries in the world (Sweden.se, 2018).

The Swedish capital - Stockholm is the tech startup capital of Europe with the 2nd most unicorns per capita in the world, behind only Silicon Valley (Embassy of Sweden, 2017). Stockholm is the 13th most high-tech city in the world and home to a string of successful digital firms. According to Mikael Damberg, Sweden's minister of enterprise, programming is the only most common occupation in Stockholm today. The tech sector employs 18% of workers – much higher than 10%, which said to be typical in most European capitals (The Economist, 2016). The Swedish unicorns such as Skype, Spotify, Klarna, Mojang (Minecraft) and King (Candy Crush) were all founded there. Also, these billion dollar companies are five out of a total of around 8 000 startups that employ around 52 000 people in Sweden (Embassy of Sweden, 2017). Moreover, Stockholm has the most billion-dollar startups in Europe, and it also has the world's second-fastest-growing market for venture capital investments. It can explain why programmers are gathering there (World Economic Forum, 2017). Therefore, for this study, we have chosen to do research within the Swedish IT industry fascinated by its rapid growth.

1.2 Research objectives

Individuals working in multinational teams can face challenges of cross-cultural communication. Our research aim is to analyze the problems of IT development teams which consist of multinational cultures. The study can be useful for organizations within the IT industry that attempt to shift the company level from local to global. It can help them understand these significant issues and hence seek for solutions supporting their employees that would maximize their work performance.

1.3 Research questions

1. *How can the improvement of cross-cultural communication in culturally diverse teams help to achieve the positive consequences in organizational integration and minimize the negative consequences?*
2. *How does immigrant professionals' organizational integration influence their job satisfaction?*
3. *Does socialization at the workplace influence immigrant professionals' organizational integration?*

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background builds upon the problem background and research questions. This chapter first presents an overall understanding of multinational teams, which is subdivided into small parts about integration mechanisms in multinational teams, social aspect at the workplace, the challenges and advantages in multinational teams, global mindset, as well as job satisfaction. The second part presents fundamental of cross-cultural

communication with the details in national and multinational culture, language barrier as well as individualism/collectivism within multinational teams. Phases models of cultural adaptation are also reviewed in this part in order to provide a better picture of the different states of the individuals/participants. The last part discusses the IT project team, particularly in the project-based organization. The readers will have a better insight into communication and collectivism/individualism work in the IT project teams.

2.1 Multinational teams

The multinational team consists of team members from different national cultures, and they form the task-oriented group. One of the key factors of building organizational success is to have a successful performance of multicultural teams. It is beneficial to have a diversity of team members since it allows the variety of perspectives, ideas, skills, and personal contributes as well as creating homogeneity in the team in identifying problems and generating solutions. Besides, various cultures of the team members can enhance companies gaining significantly in productivity. Nevertheless, the problems of having diverse cultural team members can be the vulnerable of team cohesion because of differences in motives, intentions of behaviors, communication norm, stereotype, ethnocentrism, and perceptions of the environment, which consequently lead to lower performance (Matveev and Nelson, 2004). The important factors affecting multiculturalism on team performance are organizational contexts of the team, the nature of the team's diversity, the relationship among these factors, as well as the team's tasks. Organizational culture and national culture have a derivation from different factors — organizational culture derives from history and experiences shared by the members within organizations, while national culture is formed by individual behaviors. Team members can be homogenous because they have similarities in education, occupation, socioeconomic subgroups. Different age, religious, race, locality or other subgroups affiliations can also be seen among team members in the national culture. It explains that team members represent both national culture and identities (Halverson and Tirmizi, 2008).

2.1.1 Integration mechanism

Explaining Integration through Acculturation Strategies

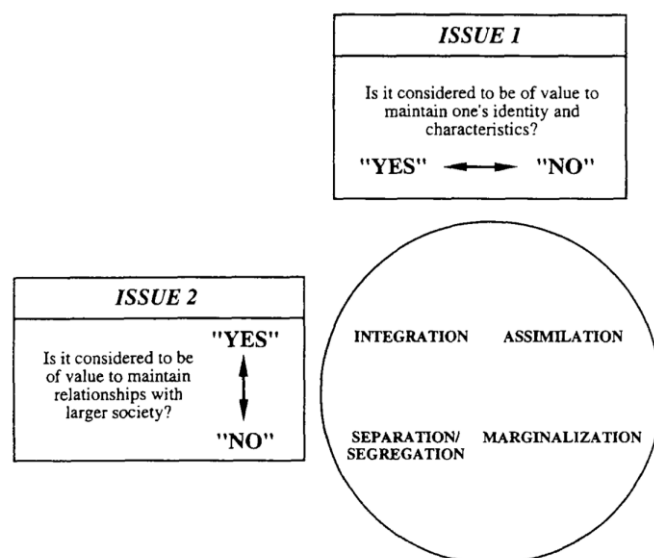


Figure 1. Acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997, p.10)

In diverse societies, cultural groups and their individual members, in either dominant or non-dominant situations, have to deal with the issue of the acculturation. Two issues that are usually worked out by groups and individuals in their daily interactions with each other are cultural maintenance, contact and participation. Cultural maintenance defines the extent to which cultural identity and characteristics are considered important, and their maintenance strived. By contact and participation we mean to what extent can they be involved in other cultural groups, or stay themselves primarily. Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework in which these two underlying issues are considered simultaneously, and which generate four acculturation strategies. Berry (1997, p. 9) explains: “These two issues can be responded to on attitudinal dimensions, represented by bipolar arrows. For purposes of presentation, generally positive or negative (“yes” or “no” responses) to these issues intersect to define four acculturation strategies. These strategies carry different names, depending on which group (the dominant or non-dominant) is being considered”. The Assimilation strategy can be understood from the non-dominant groups’ point of view when members do not wish to keep their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures. In contrast to that, the Separation strategy is when individuals prefer holding on to their original culture, while wishing to avoid interaction with others. When there is an interest in both maintaining one’s original culture in daily interactions with other groups, then the Integration strategy is defined. Here, some degree of cultural integrity is maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the bigger social network. The fourth strategy – Marginalisation is when there is a little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often as a result of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often as a result of exclusion or discrimination) (ibid).

2.1.2 Social aspect at the workplace

Social identification theories

There are two aspects of social theory, which are social cognition and social identity. Social cognition is related mainly to intercultural contact, primarily ethical and cultural

identification of individuals and the way they interact with themselves and others. The adaptation process can be affected by how the individual perceives their cultural identity and the relationship between co-nationals and host-nationals. It can conclude that the central notions of social cognition are mental and internal processes such as attitudes, perceptions, expectations and values (Shafaei and Nordin, 2016).

The workplace is fundamental to socialization. Since it is also a location where people engage in social actions and cultural practices, the workplace possesses cultural and linguistic norms and conventions for engaging in work- and non-work-related activities (Ladegaard and Jenks, 2015). For newcomers, organizational socialization helps to understand assumed norms and traditions in a new organization. Organizational socialization is a two-way stream, where both an organization and a newcomer have a vital role in the process. Organizations usually use various socialization tactics to help contribute to newcomer's socialization process. According to the multiple studies, newcomer adjustment strategies are considered to be positively connected to newcomer's learning, organizational commitments, and job satisfaction, and also negatively connected to role ambiguity and intention to quit. Socialization tactics also help newcomers achieve their adjustment goals, for example, role performance, social integration, team building, and eventually support their socialization process (Malik et al, 2014).

2.1.3 Challenges of Culturally Diverse Teams

A culturally diverse team can be a disadvantage in a way that it can create ineffective resources of collaborations' tasks, that enable the team to address issues and collaborative advantage. Heterogeneity within a team can be the causes of conflict and reduce productivity (Progoulaki and Theotokas, 2016). According to Haas and Nüesch (2013), multinational teams can be considered as a less-job related and more rational attribute which is complicated for the teams interacting and cooperating. Social identity and similarity/attraction theory are relevant mostly to the central issue of diversity perspectives. A team with a single nationality can easily lead to greater processes of social categorization; meanwhile, teams with different nationalities can affect individuals to be in-group/out-group distinctions. Moreover, stereotyping can influence this process, which is consequently detrimental to team performance. The authors write that dissimilarity in the team can lead to less positive team integration and communication since the impression of mutual attraction can be based on the similarity of characteristic. Dissimilarity can also cause ineffectiveness of team integration and communication. Describing the empirical study, the authors give an example of a hockey team with players from one European country that would have higher winning percentage compared to teams with players from several different countries (ibid).

Another negative effect to the multinational team is a conflict. When it comes to decision making and corporation, different sub-groups can hinder these processes to the main groups and induce the negative team output (Haas and Nüesch, 2013). According to Shafaei and Nordin (2016, p.709), the definition of psychological stress is: "a particular relationship between a person and the environment that is appraised by the person as exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being". The authors write that adapting with the

new environment of an individual can be difficult and challenging. Hence it results in stress and, therefore, the authors suggest that people should engage in cross-cultural encounters to develop strategies and tactics for adaptation process (ibid).

2.1.4 Advantages of Culturally Diverse Teams

Progoulaki and Theotokas (2016) describe culture as a collective programming of the mind which based on human nature and individual personality, distinguishing one group from another. Four elements are comprising in culture theory: norms, values, beliefs, and expressive symbols. The latter refer to significant of culture that is not visible on the surface but represent a way how people understand and interpret the world. It is therefore essential for the people with cultural diversity to work and manage cross cultures. Managing cross-cultural diversity is to signify the presence of people in the group with different races, systems of beliefs/religion, languages, and so on. In the process of cross-national collaboration in international organizations, individuals bring in different knowledge, information and cognitive pattern, and thus, it can enhance communication and understanding to be encountered. Complementary knowledge can be positively used to maximize the creative outputs (ibid).

The team with national diversity can enhance team performance thanks to several reasons, such as a greater variety of task-relevant knowledge and expertise. Also, because of that, it can lead to a positive outcome of decision-making, and in addition to that, a task-relevant attribute in the multinational team. Such a variety of different nationalities can bring plenty of ideas, perspectives, skills, informational and knowledge bases that come from different social networks and educational backgrounds. Haas and Nüesch (2013) give an example of an empirical study where projects teams that contain diversity team members outperform homogenous team when it comes to the range of perspectives and alternative generated in the long run. Moreover, Progoulaki and Theotokas (2016) write that having multicultural diversity competency in an organization mean that the organization has the ability to demonstrate respect and understanding, communicate effectively as well as work collaboratively with people from different cultures. Successful multicultural diversity management reinforce organizations gain a competitive advantage in global competition (ibid).

2.1.5 Global mindset

According to Hitt et al (2015), the definition of global mindset can be described as a set of individual characters which is combined of people from different parts of the world to work together to achieve corporate objectives. Global mindset includes work on cultural perspective, strategic perspective, and multinational perspective. To be able to compete with the global market, it is necessary for managers to maintain global mindset effectively for winning in internationalization. Besides, focusing global mindset in an organization such as development, content and implementation is also essential. The more globalization has placed, the more important the managerial global mindset. Nowadays, the explanation of globalization is broader than before. It includes more than just communication among government or communication among organization, but it also includes the emergence of

new social, political as well as business models and global societies. Not only in the business world, the global mindset has also become increasingly important in academics and practitioners because it can create long term competitive advantage in the global market (ibid). Gupta et al (2008) write that every company that already operates in multiple countries or just planning to embark on building a global presence need a global mindset. The authors claim that it is relevant for both, the individuals responsible for managing activities abroad, and for those who interface routinely with customers, suppliers, or people from other countries. They also write that returns from investment in cultivating a global mindset would always be positive. And if the company's goal is to become a global market leader in its industry, then the company have to set the development of a global mindset as a goal that encompasses all units and all employees (ibid).

Global mindset in organization

Hitt et al (2015) explain that an effective global mindset helps managers to process critical information, so they can navigate the global market and that it allows them to access multiple information analyzing their global competitive landscape. However, the challenge of global mindset can be based on how one encounters a variety of cultural and institutional contexts, and that is because of alternative mindsets of different people based on a variety of cultural and institutional contexts. When the world has become flatter, the global market is very important as many countries and companies are more competitive in the global market. The challenges of international manager's job in working across cultures can, for example, it can be related to dealing with new cultures with constraints of time and people, lack of information about the culture that managers should adapt. As mentioned earlier, that global mindset nowadays can be defined broader than in the past, therefore to manage global mindset effectively can be more difficult. Therefore, it is important that managers focus on experiential theory presenting a model of how individuals can learn quickly about their new cultures, which can help managers in term of learning and adaptation in developing a global mindset. (ibid).

Cultural intelligence and global mindset

Thomas and Inkson (2017) write about how expecting others to adapt and understanding of cultural differences are not enough. Cultural difference can affect in many fields such as education, health and business. There is an approach called "laundry-list" which explains details of country's key cultural characteristics and regional variations, customs to be followed, speech inflections to use, expressions and actions as well as practical information on matters. Some companies use this type of method to prepare their employees for foreign assignments. The constraint of "laundry-list" is that it tends to be dry and formal. Since the essence of culture is hard to state in print, and it is expressed in the combination of the unique individuals, therefore it can be difficult to follow this laundry list. However, to be able to use this approach, it needs integration of experience of the culture and interactions with its people, in other words, merely learning a fact is not enough to understand cultural differences (ibid).

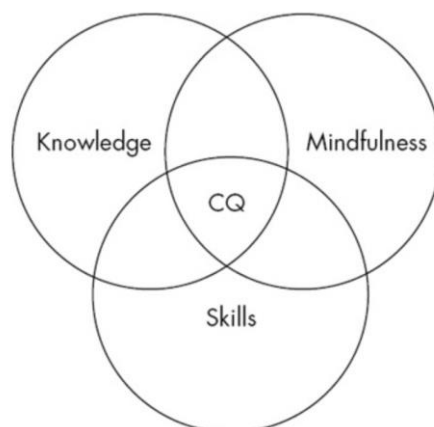


Figure 2. Components of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) (Thomas and Inkson, 2017, p. 8)

Another approach suggested by Thomas and Inkson (2017) is a gain of cultural intelligence (CQ). CQ consists of three components; (1) knowledge, (2) mindfulness, and (3) skills. Figure 2 shows these three components of cultural intelligence. The combination of these three components is an advantage in terms of intercultural flexibility and competence, meaning that CQ enables people to understand cross-cultural phenomena, observe people and interpret in particular situations, have skills to adapt behaviors acting appropriately in a range of situations. These three components are interconnected and relate to each other. The authors say that people who have CQ are people who have a good background in understanding, interpretation, and they are usually interested in novel learning and social interaction, have good communication skills. They also say that it is not difficult to understand CQ, but it is hard to put it into practice on an ongoing basis. It requires effort to develop and practice cultural intelligence (ibid).

Hitt et al (2015) write that CQ and a global mindset are an interplay, since CQ extends understanding of the global mindset. CQ represents the capability of people who adapt to new cultural contexts, and this includes three dimensions of; cognitive flexibility, acquired world knowledge, as well as motivation to apply the knowledge into a different cultural context. The key is to integrate CQ into the global mindset construct. Global mindset can also be defined as the cognitive ability of how individuals can understand and influence other individuals, groups, and organizations, in particular from diverse sociocultural systems. That is why it is essential that firms should be able to think and act globally in a new age of globalization. It means that global leadership is needed for companies, but most companies usually face leadership shortages. Global leadership competencies are almost endless, but the competencies can be categorized into six categories, which are traits, cognitive, business expertise, vision, relationship skills, and organizing expertise. The process of global leadership is focused on influencing individuals, groups, and organizations that come from diverse cultural/political/institutional systems in order to contribute toward achieving the goals of global organizations. Another definition of a global mindset can be described as the stock knowledge, cognitive, and psychological attribute of individuals that can influence other individual's groups, and organizations from diverse sociocultural systems (ibid).

2.1.6 Job satisfaction and co-worker support

Job satisfaction has a complex construction, which can be defined as a positive and favorable attitude or the experience of having pleasurable emotion result from the job. The differences between high and low job satisfaction are that high job satisfaction is associated with positive attitudes, while low job satisfaction reflects dissatisfaction and negative attitudes resulting from the job. The extent of job satisfaction can be seen from personal working experiences related to employees' functions such as a set of values, a belief system and assumptions and expectations. Therefore, job satisfaction can be subjective because it reflects intrinsic and extrinsic as well as likes and dislikes of employees (Mitonga-Monga et al, 2018).

According to Mitonga-Monga et al (2018), there are five relevant dimensions where job satisfaction can be measured. These dimensions include pay, promotion, supervisors, co-workers and work itself. Satisfaction related to "pay", refers to the congruence between compensation and the effort of employees they invest. Satisfaction with promotion refers to perceived expectations that match with actual expectations, satisfaction with supervisors refer to supervisory practices related to competent, fair, and trusting. Satisfaction with co-workers refer to the positive working relations between colleagues in honest work ethic. Lastly, satisfaction with work itself refers to the positive perception of employees himself/herself, such as working conditions and clear roles and task expectation (ibid).

Job satisfaction that relates to co-workers can support the environment in an organization and can be assisted by each other working tasks such as cooperation, support and respect. It is significantly important to have a clear connection among employees' conception, which can eventually lead to job satisfaction. Additionally, co-worker and supervisory are the two factors that lead to positive satisfaction through internal control (Attiq et al, 2017). The results of job satisfaction can be beneficial towards organizations as employees can demonstrate high loyalty and commitment to stay longer in organizations and to support organizational goals and objectives (Mitonga-Monga et al, 2018).

2.2 Cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural adaptation, in term of general systems perspective, means the adaptation of individuals towards a given environment and attempt to maintain equilibrium within the system with the help of various forms of communication. As an example of an immigrant trying to adapt to the new culture environment will face a cycle of stress adaptation (Lee, 2018). To live and work in another country than the home country can be difficult due to differences in cultures, language and so on. To be able to deal with a multinational context in a host country, it requires individuals to use interaction skills in an effective way to deal with others who have different cultures. There are three skills needed to help individuals to be successful in the new culture: skills related to the maintenance of self such as mental health, well-being, and feeling of self-confidence, skills related to the fostering with host nationals and the last skills are cognitive skills that promote a collection of host's cultures and social system (Black and Mendenhall, 1990). Matveev and Nelson (2004) write that it is essential for the global business environment to understand cultural diversity because workforce

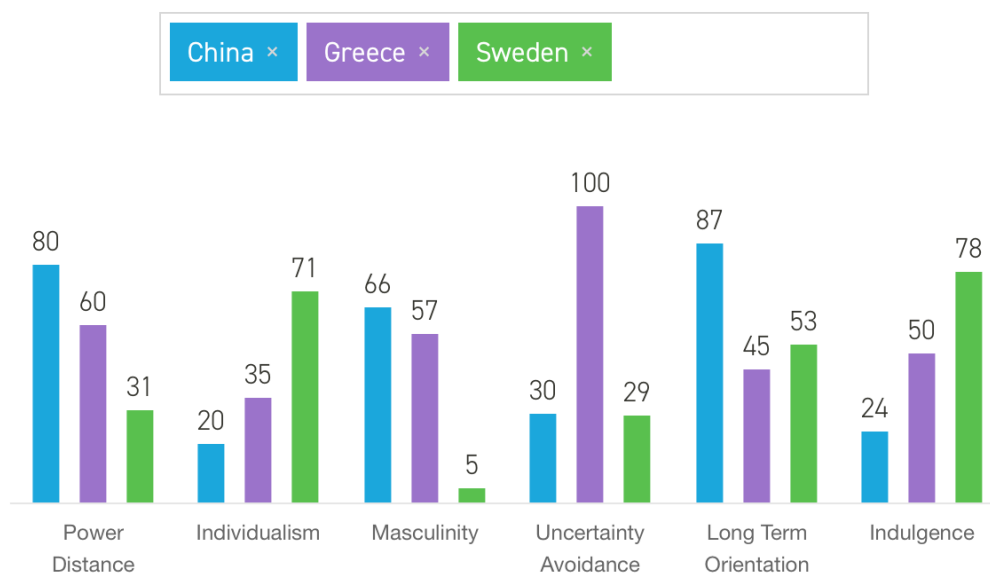
diversity can enhance effective team performance. In order to understand and achieve effective team performance with the diverse cultures, it requires team members to understand cultures they are interacting with, as well as appreciate personalities, conflict behaviors and life experiences of others within the team. Moreover, the authors add that communication of an individual can enhance team cohesion by binding team members into one cohesive unit (ibid).

Culture can be viewed as a part of the communication process in theories and at the same time, communication can be viewed as creating culture. Each culture has a unique way of communication, and there are systematic similarities and differences in different cultures, which can be explained in different level of individualism-collectivism. Individualistic culture refers to person-based, while collective culture refers to group-based information in order to predict other's communication. Culture information, therefore, is a key factor in understanding communication in any culture (Gudykunst, 2003). The challenges of managing culturally diverse teams include: to manage differences, and conflicts, to handle with geographic distances and dispersion of team members, to deal with the issues of coordination and control, to maintain communication richness, and to develop and maintain team cohesiveness. Management of culture diversity, differences and conflict are the most common ones (Matveev and Nelson, 2004).

2.2.1 National culture vs Multinational culture

The Hofstede's model

One of the studies made in the culture at the national level was by Hofstede, where he conducted how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. His dimensions represent how individuals and society interact. Hofstede identified six dimensions: Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Long term orientation versus short term normative orientation (LTO), and Indulgence versus Restraint (IND). Each dimension shows differences between cultures and contrasts such as: acceptance or rejection of hierarchical order in PDI, preference for loosely-knit or tightly-knit ("I" or "we") social framework in IDV, competitive or consensus-oriented society ("tough versus tender" culture) in MAS, high or low levels of comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity in UAI, prioritization of the long or short term goals in LTO, allowance or restriction of gratification in IND (Hofstede-insights.com, 2019). Figure 3 shows an example of the Hofstede's lens of the 6-D Model — the differences in all six dimensions within the chosen three countries — Sweden, China and Greece.



*Figure 3. An example of three countries used for Hofstede's 6-D Model
(Hofstede-insights.com, 2019)*

Through the Hofstede's lens of the 6-D Model, one can explore the Swedish culture and can get an overview of the deep drivers of Swedish culture relative to other cultures. Figure 3 demonstrates that Sweden scores low on the following dimensions: Power Distance, Masculinity, Uncertainty avoidance. The characteristics that describe Swedish style are: being independent, a hierarchy for convenience only, equal rights, superiors accessible, coaching leader, management facilities, and empowers. It means that power is decentralized, and managers count on the members' experiences, employees expect to be consulted. Control is unwelcomed, attitude towards managers are informal: people are called by their first name, and communication is direct and participative. Sweden is a Feminine society. In this type of society, dominant values are caring for others which means that their quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not appreciated. Sweden finds importance in keeping the life/work balanced and making sure that all are included. Decision making is reached through involvement, and effective managers are supportive, they strive for consensus. People value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Swedes resolve conflicts by compromise and negotiation. Free time and flexible work hours are favoured as incentives. Sweden has a very low preference for avoiding uncertainty, which means that people there have a more relaxed attitude. In the same figure, one can see that Sweden scores high in Individualism and Indulgence dimensions. Sweden is an Individualistic society, where individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. The indulgence dimension is defined as "the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised". The high score in this dimension makes Swedish culture Indulgence, Swedes possess a positive attitude and tend towards optimism, they place increased importance on leisure time and also act as they please and spend money as they wish. The only average score, in the figure, is seen in the Long term orientation dimension, which means that Sweden is seen not to express a clear

preference on it. We can conclude that, the Swedish culture based around “lagom” - something like not too much, not too little, not too noticeable, all in moderation (Hofstede-insights.com 2019).

2.2.2 Language barriers within multinational teams (MNTs)

In the 21st century, English became a common business language, regardless of company origin or location. Many global companies have set English-only policies. According to Neeley et al (2012), these companies are adopting English due to the pressure from outside global players, diversification of company tasks among countries, and mergers and acquisitions of companies worldwide. Although this intends to enlarge efficiencies and strengthen coordination of global work, it can generate emotions and behaviors that can lead to losses in productivity and performance. Loss of information and learning opportunities, added work, disruption of the collaborative process are forms of the language-related inefficiencies. While companies focus on linguistic integration's potential benefits, many of language-related inefficiencies remain unknown or overlooked. The authors say that implementation of language mandates, working in another language or working with a non-native speaker, sometimes can cause difficulties (ibid).

Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) write that only recently has management research put attention to the complexity of language in multinational companies (MNCs). Studies published within the past years recognized language barriers to create power-authority distortions, impede knowledge sharing and the formation of trust in multinational work environments, and moreover, they found language to have particularly disruptive effects on MNTs. Since MNTs rely on the interaction of members from different national backgrounds, they depend on the efficiency of communication between team members speaking different native languages (ibid).

2.2.3 Individualism-collectivism

Individualism and collectivism are one of the most researched areas of organizational culture. According to McMillan-Capehart (2005), organizations with a culture that emphasizes individualism promote employees to pursue individual goals and objectives and offer incentives based on individual achievement. Among many individualistic organizations, competition is the focus. Employees are unlikely to adapt to different experiences and situations, because of their low flexibility in the responses to others' behaviors and the focus on competition. As a contrast, collectivistic cultures focus on shared objectives and cooperation. Employees are rewarded based on the group or organizational performance. It is appreciated to sacrifice one's personal interests in order to achieve organizational goals. It is common when employees in collectivistic cultures adjust their behavior when it comes to differences in coworkers' behavior. The author writes that the country of origin can influence performance through the moderating influence of individualism and collectivism. For example, Asian, Black, and Hispanic individuals found to be more collectivistic than Anglo individuals and ethnically diverse groups composed of Asians, Blacks, Hispanics and Anglos were more cooperative than groups of all Anglos. Based on this, cooperation among members

is higher in culturally diverse groups compared to homogeneous groups that emphasize competition (ibid).

McMillian-Capehart (2005) writes that organizational culture can positively moderate the effects of diversity. Employees within collectivistic organizational culture exhibit more cooperative behaviors than ones in individualistic cultures. Organizations that have collectivistic cultures encourage members to maintain group norms and to be responsive in case other members will need help. Due to the flexibility, collectivistic individuals are more responsive to others' behavior and can adapt to differences in cultures. While individualistic employees focus more on themselves and their own abilities, therefore, they are unlikely to accept differences in opinions and viewpoints.

According to McMillian-Capehart (2005), social categorization is the process by which individuals define themselves based on their membership in various social groups. Individuals often use demographic attributes for categorization. However, it is sufficient to qualify an individual as a member of the in-group, which is important, because it increases the extent to which members cooperate and focus on accomplishing organizational goals. Collectivistic organizations are less likely to categorize themselves on the basis of cultural diversity, but more likely to do so based on their membership in the organization (ibid).

Encouraging employees to maintain their independence and individuality is common in individualistic organizations. Social categorization within this type is more likely to involve demographic attributes like ethnicity, gender or age. These attributes are also more likely to cause individuals within the organization to be categorized as out-group members due to dissimilarity to the majority of members. Since employees interact with and trust in-group members more than out-group members, the challenge would be to increase the benefits of diversity through the encouragement of the employees to recategorize culturally diverse individuals as in-group members (McMillian-Capehart, 2005).

2.2.4 Phase models of culture adaptation

Model of cultural adjustment

The term of culture shock gives the negative overtone referring to experiences abroad. It can be defined as a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcement from one's culture that creates misunderstanding of new and diverse cultures (Lyon, 2002). The process of cultural adaptation consists of two components which are individual's predisposition component and environmental component. The environmental component is mainly focused on ethnic group and its institutional completeness, which impacts cross-cultural adaptation (Shafaei and Nordin, 2016). Culture shock is a multifaceted experience that can be seen in different situation such as in the immigration group, employees that work on foreign assignment, and a population that have difficulties in adapting to the social and technological changes. Culture shock can result in interpersonal stress and conflict, and the consequence of it can affect on both individual and collective level. Strain, anxiety resulting from having contact with new people and culture. The feeling of loss, confusion and impotence resulting

from cultural cues and social rules. Dealing with cultural shock is not easy since it requires recognition of its occurrence and implements behaviors in order to adapt to cultural shock (Winkelman, 1994).

Culture shock can be described in four different stages: the honeymoon or tourist phase, the crises or cultural shock phase, the adjustment, reorientation, and gradual recovery phase, the adaptation, resolution, or acculturation phase (Winkelman, 1994). The U-Curve model of cultural adaptation is described by the stages of cultural adjustment process of employees from different cultural communities with the host country (see Figure 4). The first stage is Honeymoon period, which presents the period of how people are fascinated and infatuated with new environments such as language, people and food and people are optimal with cultural differences. The second stage is Culture Shock, which refers to the period of frustration and rejection. In this stage, communication is the most significant change and, consequently, it makes people feel psychological depression caused by the misunderstanding of the new culture. Similarities of their culture and a new culture can create anxiety or anger as well as attitude toward new culture can be perceived as offensive. The difficulties of language barriers and style of nonverbal communication can pose the obstacle in building a new relationship in the new environment and thereby it can make people feel lonely. After the stage of Culture Shock period with extreme stress in adapting to the new culture, people start to have a better understanding and coping with the differences and this stage is called Recovery. In this stage, people feel more emotionally comfortable than in the previous period. At last, the stage of Adjustment is the period where the people are satisfied and can integrate into the host culture. In the figure 4, horizontal-axis defines the time and vertical-axis defines the levels of cross-cultural adjustment (Yanagihara, 2017).

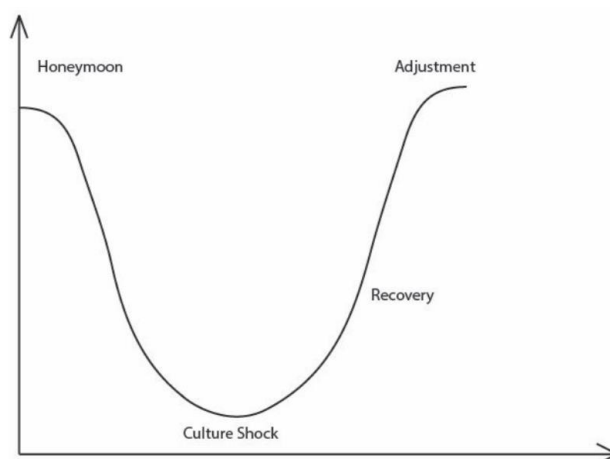


Figure 4. The U-curve of cross-cultural adjustment (Yanagihara, 2017 p.8)

2.3 IT project teams

Information technology (IT) is one of the essential parts of business processes since it enhances the capabilities of firms achieving competitive advantage. Besides, IT also offers divers technological capabilities and functionalities to the process capabilities. The goal of

the IT teams is to attempt improving process ambidexterity for adapting and aligning of the process. Innovation requires high adaptability to be able to explore new opportunities, and therefore, team innovation requires effective coordination and communication as an alignment activity (Kwak et al, 2016).

2.3.1 Communication in IT project teams

It is challenging to manage multinationals in IT project teams due to the differences in cultures and behaviors. Understanding the problems can help organizations to manage actions of the team members as well as mitigate the problems that might occur. The most influence that happened in multinational IT project teams is cultural differences, which is caused by miscommunication, conflict and mistrust (Von Stetten et al, 2012). Agile software development is suited for highly innovative projects, and the routines are easy to be observed for instance the time or duration of occurrence, the numbers of participants roles as well as the outcomes of their products. However, in software management teams, members pursue dynamic goals in creating novelty and innovation, and at the same time, it requires them to conduct with the circumstances of high uncertainty and low continuity, in order to deliver a steady flux. It can conclude that both a high degree of flexibility and stable development process are essential for managing IT development team (Dönmez et al, 2016).

In IT projects, decisions can be different depending on a variety of external conditions and internal conditions. External conditions can be clients, work requirement, or budget and internal conditions can be an experience or availability of resources. Decision-making process in IT project can be concerned of a number of sociotechnical decision such as selecting tools or project team members, which is based on the experience and intuition of a decision maker or a project manager (Orłowski et al, 2015). Besides, technology is a significant factor in IT projects because the technology constantly changes and therefore, it requires expertise which includes a range of IT professionals. In particular, modern IT projects require even more integration in their information functions since the scope of the projects can be broader. Moreover, system thinking (input, output, feedback, and control) is the main tool of the process to present and analyze conflicts in the IT projects. Figure 5 is presented a system framework of IT projects related to conflict solution. Power and culture are the elements of conflict solution, and they are difficult to control (Johnstone et al, 2006).

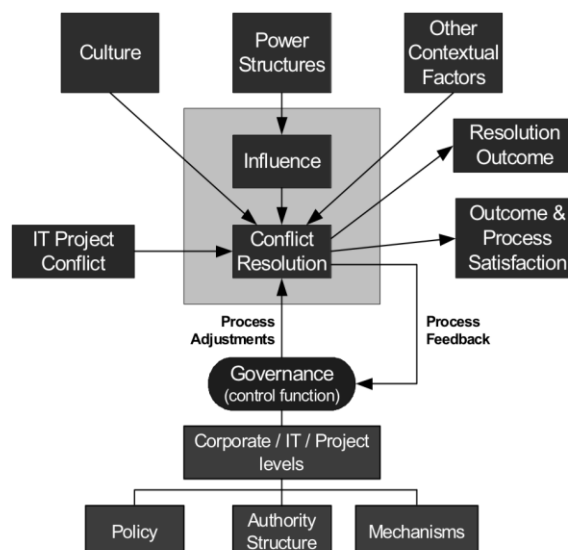


Figure 5. A system framework of IT project related conflict solution (Johnstone et al, 2006, p.5)

2.3.2 Project based organizations

The project team culture

The group's culture changes due to the social groups' interactions where new members join, others leave. The new groups develop their own culture. Because within these groups, what defines success changes and people's interactions with each other also changes. At any point in time, every organization, team, or team's culture change over time, and they become unique in their interactions. The culture can be defined as an interaction among the group members having an individual's beliefs, values, and shared philosophies as they make decisions, resolve issues and also learn to work with each other. Team culture is obtained when the individual works within the project team environment. Team culture can differ from the work organization's culture as well as from the national culture. Since this culture is usually temporary and may exist within the project's time frame. When the project ends, probably a new project team will be formed, resulting in a different culture, or the individual will return to the broader organization and its unique culture will dominate (Henrie, 2014).

The hybrid project team culture

The concept of think globally – act locally implies that each team member maintains the essence of two cultures. While they have their own national culture through which they have a global view that is normally used to interact with the external to the project team such as their friends and families, or others they deal with external to the project environment. The second culture is the hybrid project team culture – the integration of the project team member's cultures into a functional project team culture, which is, think locally. In this part, by merging or cross-pollinating their individual communication styles, values, norms, ethics, the members create the project team culture, which has a new form – a hybrid between each of the interacting cultures (Henrie, 2014).

Collectivism/Individualism role in a project team

Identifying if the project team members come from an individualistic or collective society is vital for several reasons. First, it is essential for a proper job assignment. For instance, assigning a set of individualistic-based team members to an activity that requires a collaborative and cooperative group effort would probably not have the best results. Since, the individuals, same as in their culture, would not be providing the collective solution, but rather working toward their own interest, and therefore, might become a roadblock for a successful outcome of the collective team. It would also be valid when assigning a culturally based collective person to a highly individualized work, that requires to take full responsibility to produce the result in a singular mode. It may not produce a successful solution regarding the time and personal satisfaction. The essential skill and knowledge in this situation set would understand each team member's individual versus collective culture attribute that provides assistance in job assignment, and it also helps the project manager in identifying how he or she should approach oversight of the team member's work (Henrie, 2014).

3. Method

This chapter presents how the data were collected (Ch. 3.1) and how interviewees were chosen (Ch. 3.2) as well as overall information about companies where the interviewees work (Ch. 3.3).

3.1 Data collection

This thesis is an abductive approach and followed by qualitative process study. The thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the challenges in cross-cultural communication in the IT project teams, which consists of multinational team members. The approach is conducted through interviews with 8 people from different companies. In order to acquire relevant information congruent to the thesis purpose, we have limited the area group of interviewees, who are chosen from IT-related organizations, located in Sweden. All interviewees are males, their age is between 30-33, and they come from different countries (non-Swedish). They all work in different companies and have lived/worked in Sweden from 2-8 years.

In this study, we do not reveal the interviewees' names, since all interviewees want their names to stay anonymous. Therefore, we named them as Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2 and so on, as reflected in the Table 1. The information in the Table 1 also includes the medium of an interview, date of interview and duration of interview record.

Name of Interviewee	Medium of interview	Date of interview	Duration of interview record
Interviewee 1	Skype	2019-04-02	0:27:50
Interviewee 2	Skype	2019-04-02	0:33:55

Interviewee 3	In a personal visit	2019-04-01	0:59:10
Interviewee 4	Skype	2019-04-02	0:36:47
Interviewee 5	Skype	2019-04-03	0:28:17
Interviewee 6	In a personal visit	2019-04-04	0:36:57
Interviewee 7	In a personal visit	2019-04-19	0:31:48
Interviewee 8	WhatsApp	2019-04-19	0:24:33

Table 1. How the interviews are conducted and collected

3.2 Participants selection

The interviewees of the study are immigrant professionals who work with software development within IT-industry in Sweden. Moreover, all of them work in IT project teams. All participants come from different countries, and they work in different companies. In the Table 2, there is information regarding interviewees, including their age, country of origin, position at work, number of years working in the current company, number of people in the team, number of foreigners in the team, and their level of Swedish language.

Interviewee	Age/Origin	Position/nr. of years in the current company	Nr. of people in the team/nr. of foreigners in the team	Level of Swedish language
Interviewee 1	32/India	System engineer/2 yrs	2 ppl/1 ppl	Intermediate
Interviewee 2	32/Russia	Senior designer/3 yrs	20 ppl/5 ppl	Beginner
Interviewee 3	30/Greece	Test manager/3 yrs	9 ppl/1 ppl	Intermediate
Interviewee 4	32/Greece	Project manager/7 yrs	5 ppl/1ppl	Intermediate
Interviewee 5	33/Pakistan	Software tester/5.5 yrs	9 ppl/1ppl	Intermediate
Interviewee 6	30/Spain	Software developer/5 months	10 ppl/2 ppl	Intermediate
Interviewee 7	32/China	Electrical engineer/3	7 ppl/2 ppl	Intermediate

		years		
Interviewee 8	33/Pakistan	IT development specialist	9 ppl/7 ppl	Beginner

Table 2. Interviewees' information from the interviews

3.3 Information about organizations

Table 3 describes companies where the interviewees work. It includes overall information, international presence, number of employees, and main language. All interviewees are from different companies (Interviewee 1 work in Company 1, Interviewee 2 work in Company 2, and so on), which are companies within IT industry (or software development).

Company	Company's overview	International presence	Nr. of employees	Main language
Company 1	Developed machines, production and quality systems for customers who maintain very high standards for their production	The company is located in Sweden and consists of 14 employees (1 foreigner and the rest is Swedish)	Less than 50 persons	Swedish
Company 2	A company provides a service of browser mobile and PC for Android and Mac.	The head office is located in Oslo, and they have several offices located in Sweden, Poland, and China.	More than 50 and less than 249 persons	English
Company 3	Develops IT solutions and services for storing, viewing and working with medical images, as well as increasing cybersecurity.	The company has offices in 19 countries across Europe, North America and Oceania.	More than 250 persons	English
Company 4	Develops software platforms that enable hardware independence, and IP components — consulting in digital video client software.	The company has offices in Sweden, the USA and Ireland.	More than 50 and less than 249 persons	English

Company 5	A Swedish telematics company which is a subsidiary of the French group. The Swedish office is a tech center that develops products in cross-functional teams, based on agile principles.	The group has offices in 16 different countries.	More than 50 and less than 249 persons	English
Company 6	Delivers products and services to the e-healthcare market within the computer software industry. The main purpose of the company is to create an IT support system for the healthcare system.	The company is a supplier in Scandinavia and the European market and has offices in Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom and Sri Lanka.	More than 250 persons	English
Company 7	The company provides services in designing, developing and delivering automation solutions for hospitals, warehouses and distribution centers.	The company's headquarter is in Germany and have several offices in different countries including Sweden	More than 250 persons	Swedish
Company 8	The company provides service for a mobile network operator.	Headquarter is located in Stockholm, Sweden and several offices in other countries such as Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia	More than 250 persons	English

Table 3. Information of the companies where the interviewees work

4. Findings

In this part, the information from 8 interviewees is presented. In particular, the most important perspectives of the participants in both negative and positive experiences. To make the information clear and easy to understand for the reader, we divided them into five

different parts: cultural differences (Ch. 4.1), language (Ch. 4.2), mindset (Ch. 4.3), good relationships and humor (Ch. 4.4), and organizational structure and culture (Ch. 4.5). In each part, we describe the relevant findings from interviews.

Summary of findings

Findings	Summary
Cultural differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee 3 from Greece experienced the difference in cultural communication being more emotional than his Swedish co-workers. He eventually adopted their communication style, which was calmer in terms of self-expression. • Interviewee 4 from Greece learned in an adaptation process that it was not appropriate to use informal language at the Swedish workplace while it was acceptable in his country. He eventually stopped using swearing words and expressions to avoid misunderstanding. • Interviewee 6 from Spain faced problems with the communication not only at his previous job where he felt like an outsider but also at current. He does not feel adapted nor integrated due to the nature of his relationships with co-workers. He thinks that social activities do not happen frequently enough as he is used to Spanish way.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee 1 worked in the company that used Swedish as the main language, but his co-worker used only English to avoid miscommunication. It made him feel very comfortable and accelerated the process of adaptation to the new environment. • Interviewees 2 and 7 did not experience language barrier issues since they worked in international companies where they had English as the main language. • Interviewee 3 faced the language barrier problem because the majority of his co-workers were Swedish native speakers. Even though the official language in the company was English, they spoke mostly Swedish and sometimes held meetings in it too, which created an uncomfortable situation for him. As well as Interviewee 4, he worked for the company with English as the main language, but

	<p>recently his co-workers suddenly switched to Swedish so he and other foreign employees could practice it. It resulted in extra work for him on top of his usual workload.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewee 5 had the same problem as Interviewees 3 and 4 where he had to switch from English to Swedish. Fortunately, he could manage to communicate in Swedish and eventually improved it. He had the same situation as Interviewee 6 who chose to speak Swedish at the workplace in order to feel included in the team. The succeed made way for proper socialisation, which consequently made it easier to perform the work tasks. • The company where Interviewee 8 worked had English as the main language. The team of Interviewee 8 consisted of nine members, while seven of them were from different countries. Everyone communicated both oral and written English. Even though he was a beginner in the Swedish, he did not see any problems regarding the language at the workplace.
Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open mindset is very important for new employees, especially entering new cultures at the workplace. • Despite that, Interviewee 6 is good at work, very open-minded and social, these qualities have not helped him to integrate at his current job.
Good relationships and humor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All interviewees think that having good relationships with the team is vital at work. • Interviewees 3,4,5,6 think that ability to joke with teammates is important at work. • All companies where the interviewees worked created events when employees could spend time outside and work together. It included Swedish Fika at the workplace, after work dinners for employees and other social/sport activities together. These activities could help towards building good relationships among employees on different levels.
Organizational structure and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organizational structure could be a factor influencing the working processes such as decision

	<p>making and problem-solving.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All interviewees seemed to appreciate the companies' organizational culture, including open door policies, family feeling, instant trust, and friendliness.
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Table 4. Summary of findings

4.1 Cultural differences

Interviewee 3 felt some cultural differences between him and his team members from the very beginning. For example, when they had meetings, Swedish co-workers tended to speak calmly with no body language. However, he tended to speak louder, in a more emotional way and with an exaggeration, like as he says most of the people in Greece do, in order to make others understand his point better. But, soon he realized that his way of speaking scared his Swedish co-workers, he eventually started controlling it and speaking calmer and with no body language. Another cultural difference that Interviewee 3 mentions is an absence of common cultural references. Sometimes during social occasions like so-called "Fika" - a Swedish style of a coffee break or activities outside of work, people speak about things that as a foreigner he isn't able to refer to, and that makes him feel left out, and he thinks that because of this he isn't able to create a bond with his team members. One more difference between Greek and Swedish cultures that Interviewee 3 sees is that he feels that in Sweden people avoid conflicts: *"In Greece people tell you directly that they disagree with you. In Greece, you would get yelled, which actually wouldn't help to solve the problem. In Sweden, I would never get yelled and wouldn't get blamed, but instead, we would try to find a solution without creating a conflict. In Greece, on the other hand, I had to listen to the orders"*.

One big difference that Interviewee 4 noticed at the beginning of his work was, quote: *"One big difference that I noticed, it took me a while to notice it. In Greece, we use many curse words, right. Not to offend someone, but it is a part of a vocabulary. The thing is that I was overusing curse words (at work) and at some point, I realized that, especially, Swedish people, they were very shocked. They weren't annoyed but shocked. That was a major cultural difference that I noticed"*. So eventually Interviewee 4 adjusted his way of speaking. He started to be more polite and conscious about it so that he will not offend anyone by mistake. He also mentions that when he started to work at this company, seven years ago, they were around 25% foreigners, so English was used by everyone and he never felt awkward nor excluded, so no one did not make him feel different. However, now it is only 10% foreigners, and the company became more "Swedish" in his opinion. Since he is fully adapted, he does not feel any differences, but he thinks maybe newcomers would feel challenged.

Interviewee 6 says that the social part was shocking for him at the beginning of his work. People were not social, did not talk to him. He says that at his previous work in Spain, where he comes from, it was totally different: more social activities with the workmates, more

interactions with the teammates, and he was friends with them. They were fun and easy going people. He also adds that Sweden has many red days/holidays and he still does not fully understand these holidays and the meaning of them. He does not feel adapted to the Swedish culture, even after living in Sweden for seven years.

4.2 Language

Interviewee 1 works in a company where they have Swedish as a main language, but everyone speaks English with him, which makes it easier for him to adapt and collaborate with co-workers. However, since the company is a Swedish company and have customers based in Sweden, it requires him sometimes to use Swedish, and once it comes to the more complex requirement from customers, he will need support from his colleague or switch the language to English in order to avoid miscommunication. Interviewee 2 works in a company where they have English as the main language. His responsibilities at work apart from designing the mobile application, also include receiving customer feedback, which occur in English. The languages barrier for the interviewee 2 is therefore not an issue for working in an international company where the main language is only English.

The company, where Interviewee 3 works, has English as an official language. But, in the headquarters, where he works, people often speak in Swedish. In the beginning, the company asked him if it is okay if they hold a meeting in Swedish. Since he was the only foreigner, he felt pressured and did not want them to hold it in English just because of him. Therefore, he approved the meetings in Swedish. He regretted it, that he was fast saying okay to Swedish and then it became too late, as a result, he still does not understand some part during meetings. During those meetings sometimes, they would switch to English because of him but then get back to Swedish. In documentation, on the other hand, the tests that he writes are in English and it has always been in English. So only communication at work is in Swedish.

Despite that company 4 has English as a company's main language, Interviewee 4 says that recently, everyone started talking Swedish to him. He suspects that it was a collective decision to make an effort to help foreigners at his work to get to practice their Swedish. He also thinks that all Swedish native speakers at work were informed about these changes, possibly by email, but not him. However, he feels like it added some extra work for him during these interactions. Before that, 100% of the time, everyone at work used English with him. The meetings used to be held in English, but recently the co-workers started asking him to choose between English and Swedish, by which they created pressure for him and therefore, he would let them hold it in Swedish because he would be the only foreigner at these meetings. As a result, he admits that now, he sometimes does not fully understand all information that is presented during these meetings. Documentations, on the other hand, are in English. During break time as well, people started speaking to him in Swedish, which used to be English before.

The company where Interviewee 5 works has English as a main language. Interviewee 5 is the only foreigner in his team, and for the past 5,5 years, he was speaking only English at work.

He says that all meetings used to be in English, but a few months ago he requested to keep them in Swedish, so he can practice his Swedish. It was hard in the beginning, but now it is getting better. During his work, he also started to speak Swedish sometimes, but when he sees that co-workers seem not to understand him he switches back to English. Co-workers never commented on his Swedish, so he follows his feelings and switches between these two languages when it is needed. However, sometimes they help him with his Swedish, suggesting some variation of how to say things. All documentation, on the other hand, is in English.

Interviewee 6 was hired to work in English, but he chose to speak Swedish and asked his workmates, teammates to speak Swedish to him. Only when another teammate who is a foreigner is present, then they all switch to English. He sometimes regrets that he made this choice, but he sees that this is the only way for him to learn the Swedish language. He did not speak Swedish at the previous job and regretted it later on. Because at the previous work he did not feel included and he thinks that the reason was in Swedish. He was never invited to the meetings at his previous job, only to the important meetings that were held in English. That made him feel excluded from the team and the company. However, now at the current job, he feels more included: he is always invited to the meetings, and he gets to be a part of it. He eventually became more initiative, more social, which is good for him, since he wants to build a good relationship with teammates.

Interviewee 7 works in a company where Swedish is the main language. Even though the company is international and have many offices located in a different country, the local office still uses the local language. His Swedish level is an intermediate level, so it makes a lot easier for him when it comes to job relation. However, he has to spend extra time on focusing on the meetings and summarizes after meeting to ensure he does not miss any important information in the meetings because of the language barrier.

Interviewee 8 has an educational background from both Pakistan and Sweden. He has been living in Sweden for eight years. Even though his Swedish level is at the beginner level, that does not make it difficult since the company he works for has English as the main language. His team consists of 9 people where 7 of them are international from different countries, and everyone communicates both oral and written in English.

4.3 Mindset

The common things of interviewee 1 and interviewee 2 are that they are open for the new culture and new environment. It is a significant factor in helping them adapt to the new working environment, which took them about six months to one year in order to feel comfortable and adapted. Comparing with the backgrounds where they from, the experience at the workplace in Sweden seems to be more effective and productive than what they had from their home countries. The satisfaction of working for companies in Sweden is therefore very high. Interviewee 7 does not feel strange in the new working environment in his current job and feel adapted almost immediately once he started. He has studied Master program at

Swedish university and have experience working one year before his current job. Once he started the first job, he rarely recalls how the feeling of culture shock was like, but there were more complicated than the second job. Due to his educational background from Swedish university, that can be a reason making his adaptation process more comfortable.

Interviewee 6 says that the most challenging thing at work is building a good relationship with teammates, getting accepted by them. Despite that he is good at work, very open-minded and social, these qualities have not helped him to integrate at his current job. He feels that he has to try hard that people will trust him and will want to get to know him as a person. At the moment, he has a problem with one teammate, the interaction with this person is unpleasant because she seems to mistreat him. He thinks it is personal, so he wants to talk to her first directly to know why she seems annoyed by him.

4.4 Good relationships and humor

Interviewees 3,4,5,6 think that having good relationships with the team and ability to joke are vital at work. A good relationship with a colleague is necessary because it enhances the process of collaboration easier.

Whenever Interviewee 3 interacts with his teammates at work, it feels very formal. Because he thinks that the bond is missing; otherwise, the bond would have done work to feel less formal and therefore more relaxed, due to the connection with the teammates. If the bond was there, in his opinion, they could have sometimes joke during work, and it would ease the tension. He is a little bit sad that he cannot joke with his teammates.

Interviewee 4 thinks that humor helped him to connect with 3 of his team members. With these teammates he has a good relationship, because of the common hobbies (they all are musicians) and also humor, he says that they are funny guys that like to joke as well as him. He says it is important for him to be friends (have a good relationship) with the people in his team. It is more fun for him to work with the people that he connects well since they understand each other better.

Interviewee 5 is in a good relationship with his two teammates. One of them started to work at the same time as him, so that is why they became friends. Another one became his friend due to the common interests. They invite each other for dinners, know each other's families, they like to socialize and spend time together time after time. The friendship with teammates and coworkers are important for him because it makes the work easier, relaxed. Humor is also important because it connects them all; he likes when he and his teammates make jokes and laugh together.

Interviewee 6 says that Spain where he comes from, coworkers are like family and close friends to each other, they like to spend time together outside of work and they are doing it daily. Therefore, having a good relationship with the people at the company/the team is the most important for him. He enjoys it, and he believes that collectivistic approach benefits the

work. After moving to Sweden, he seeks to do other activities outside of work with the workmates, as he used to do in Spain. However, he says that the amount and quality of the social activities that are acceptable for Sweden are much less than what is acceptable in Spain. Interviewee 6 says that he is closer to one teammate because they both live in another city than the city where their work is located, so they travel together and also hang out outside of work, play cards and talk. With two other teammates, he is also in a good relationship because they share similar interests. With the teammates, they have lunch together. In the beginning, the relationship was not good, but now it is getting better.

Interviewee 7 has a good relationship with his colleagues and his boss, but everyone keeps it as a professional level. It makes his work more manageable and he thinks that it facilitates the working process. He is satisfied with the information and feedback he received from his manager, and it helps to increase his performance.

4.5 Organizational structure and culture

As interviewee 1 mentions that the most impressive of working in the company is about organizational structure. The company he works for has a flat structure with less hierarchy, so it is easy for him to collaborate. The process of problem-solving is quicker because once he has problems with the tasks, he can directly talk to the person involved, which makes the working process a lot easier and quicker.

Company 1 and company 2 have created events where employees can spend time outside work together. It includes taking employees to dinner or the park and do activities together. These activities can help towards building good relationships among employees on different levels.

Interviewee 3 appreciated that he was treated as equal from the first day at work. From the first month, he would get invited to all meetings and would get the same amount of information as everyone else. He liked an instant trust and freedom. His team trusted him and said that he could try to do these tasks. But it did not feel like they pressured him, and therefore, he did not feel overwhelmed with many responsibilities that would cause him stress. Also, the fact that he could talk to anyone and to ask for help (from the new people like him and up to senior developers, experienced programmers and managers within the team). It is very important for interviewee 3 to be able to address the others. There is no strict hierarchy; for example, he does not need to get permission to ask someone a question. When he needs help from someone, he asks without hesitation. Except for the necessary things to do, they do not force each other to do things. Instead, they have discussions about how they are going to do the work and who is going to perform it. They have good communication and distribution of work.

Company 3 has been organizing the lunches outside once every two months where everyone can join. Events like eating dinner/having drinks (“After work”) happens once every 3-4 months. They recently did curling (sport), which interviewee 3 found entertaining. The

company also holds parties once or twice a year, which are more mandatory for everyone, so he always attends them.

Regarding Company 4, the Interviewee 4 is satisfied with both the people and the company, assessing the overall experience as above the average. He thinks that people are great, very open, friendly and nice. In the beginning, the company itself and everything else was new for him, so it was exciting. Interviewee 4 attends big parties like Christmas and Midsummer that Company 4 creates. They have different traditions at work, currently it is “After work”, which happens monthly. He does not attend them, because he says that he is usually busy with other things. Friday “Fika”, on the other hand, has always been, and he attends it.

Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 6 say that at the beginning of their work, their mentors were incredibly supportive, which was very appreciated.

Company 5 is organizing different activities for the employees, such as golf, “After work”, volleyball, bowling. Every Friday they play innebandy, but Interviewee 5 quit it recently due to the lack of free time. He says that before there were fewer activities organized by the company, but now there are much more of them.

Interviewee 6 had a kick off recently, so they traveled to Vadstena. He is excited about the activity called “Motion race” in which his and other teams in his company (Company 6) are about to participate. In this race, participants need to complete tasks like eating healthy, run, say compliments to the colleague during a month. He says that in Mjärdevi, a science park where his company is located, this race is popular. Interviewee 6 says that it will be a good opportunity to get close to his teammates. Also, company 6 organizes occasional “After Work” and weekly “Fika”.

The common thing between Interviewees 1, 2, 3 and 4 is that they work individually more than in collaboration. They work approximately 70% for the individual part and 30% for the collaborating part. They also mentioned that in Swedish companies, it is more flexible and effective in term of collaboration and meeting compare to where they worked before. However, interviewees 5, 6, 7 and 8 explain the work responsibilities is both individual and collective and the collective level is more effective because it is faster in the process when they have to solve the problems together.

5. Discussion

This chapter presents the contribution of the theory and findings from the interviews. The chapter is divided into five parts, which are related to the findings in the previous chapter (Ch.4).

All interviewees are from different origins both within and outside Europe. They have lived and worked in Sweden for less than eight years. All of them have faced different stages in the adaptation process while working with people with different cultural and language

backgrounds. Yanagihara (2017) writes that cultural adaptation process consists of four stages, which include Honeymoon, Culture Shock, Recover, and Adjustment stages. Table 4 presents the summary of findings derived from the conversations with the interviewees who have been through these stages of the cross-cultural adaptation process. These significant findings are categorized into five different areas: cultural difference, language, mindset, good relationships and humor, and organizational culture and structure. Some of the interviewees have passed the stage of culture shock and adjustment since they already feel fully adapted to the new culture and environment. In Figure 4, the U curve of cross-cultural adjustment shows that it takes a certain period for one to be able to feel fully adapted. Some of the interviewees could quickly achieve adjustment stage, meanwhile some of them are still facing the problem of culture shock and recovery period.

5.1 Cultural differences

It is challenging to manage multinationals in IT project teams due to the differences in cultures and behaviors. Understanding the problems can help organizations to manage actions of the team members as well as mitigate the problems that might occur. The most influence that happened in multinational IT project teams is cultural differences, which is caused by miscommunication, conflict and mistrust (Von Stetten et al, 2012).

The research acknowledges that immigrants differ significantly from each other in terms of such characteristics as human capital and other capabilities. Therefore, it is likely that immigrants will also differ in their cultural intelligence (CQ) and, thus, their ability to accommodate and adapt themselves in a new environment. CQ helps individuals better integrate into a unique and culturally diverse environment and can be developed and improved through social interactions. CQ is beneficial for those who work in a diverse setting. However, it is likely to be specifically crucial for immigrants. Immigrants bring with them different norms and experience from their home countries and are expected to adapt and adjust to a different work culture of the host country. McMillian-Capehart (2005) writes that the country of origin can influence performance through the moderating influence of individualism and collectivism. Identifying if the project team members come from an individualistic or collective society is vital for several reasons (Henrie, 2014). It is essential for a proper job assignment, it would also be valid when assigning a culturally based collective person to a highly individualized work, that requires to take full responsibility to produce the result in a singular mode. Further, it may not produce a successful solution regarding the time and personal satisfaction (ibid). For example, how would an immigrant from a collectivistic country with previous work experience in a collectivistic organizational culture cope and adjust to individualistic organizational culture typical for many Western companies? In such situations, it is expected that CQ would not only allow a recent immigrant to obtain content knowledge, which is learning about the individualistic culture, but it would also allow one to collect process knowledge on how the individualistic culture affects employees' behavior, for example, focus on personal achievement or reward for individual performance. Understanding these differences would then allow them to compare

it with a familiar situation in their home countries and understand how to further adapt to the new environment (Malik et al, 2014).

According to Hofstede (Hofstede-insights.com, 2019) if immigrants come from Pakistan, Russia, or China, countries high on collectivism, they would have been expected in these countries—as employees—to participate in group activities relating to social and performance outcomes and to be rewarded for this. It creates a gap between them and more individualistic Western work cultures like in Sweden, where employees focus more on independent activities to demonstrate their performance and obtain desired rewards. RINs with higher CQ would be able to understand and accept these cultural differences and put a focus on activities that help them to adapt and perform their jobs effectively and according to the rules and expectations of the new work culture of the host country (Malik et al, 2014). It is what, for instance, interviewees 3 and 4 did: their awareness of others started with their self-awareness. Peterson (2004) writes that cultural awareness of others relates to the knowledge of the various components of differences among individuals from different countries and cultures. The author assumes that knowing about something does not mean that one will be able to do it, but it is an important step in deciding how one can change one's behavior to become more efficient. The author adds that cultural awareness and sensitivity to other cultures supports cultural self-awareness and vice versa (ibid).

5.2 Language

In the business world, English has become the main language of communication for both companies' internally and externally. Even for the companies located in non-English speaking countries, English may be adopted as the main/official language, especially if they are international companies operating in different countries. For international companies, the advantages of adopting English as the main language can strengthen their positions in a harsh competitive environment, but in the meantime, it can affect employees to adjust and adapt to the new language (Neeley et al, 2012).

Swedish is the official language of Sweden and the companies located in Sweden use mostly Swedish as a main language even though they are multinational companies. Our study involves 8 participants working in different companies in Sweden. Some of them have English as a main language, and some have Swedish. Another interesting point that we found is that in company 4 where they have English as a main language, all the employees are Swedish except one foreigner, so most of the workers switch from English to Swedish. We found this situation complicated because it pressures the migrant professionals who do not have a sufficient level of Swedish. It may cause the lower performance of those employees and consequently force them to leave the company. On the contrary, interviewee 1, who works in the company with Swedish as the main language but where everyone uses English to communicate with him, feels more comfortable. He feels less pressure and thus more satisfied with his role. As Nelly et al (2012) mention, a new language can cause difficulties such as losing information and opportunities, disrupting collaboration among members as well as extra work. Tenzer and Pudenko (2015) also claim that the complexity of language in

multinational companies have disruptive effect for the team members since multinational companies consist of members with various native languages. The interviews demonstrate that interviewees 2 and 8 who work in the multinational companies have the teams consisting of different nationalities. The main language of these companies is English, so they also feel that it is more manageable when it comes to collaboration with coworkers.

5.3 Mindset

Hitt et al (2015) point out how important it is for a manager to manage a global mindset for the benefit of organization maximize capacity to compete with a rival in the global market. It is complicated and challenging to manage a global mindset since the definition of a global mindset has developed broader, more complex meanings. Communication in the organization also includes the managerial global mindset on a variety of cultural and institutional contexts that one can encounter. The common thing between interviewees 1, 2, 7 and 8 is their readiness and openness to the new environment and new cultures. It is an important point where they felt quickly adapted to the coworkers and their work. It took about six months to one year to feel adapted to the workplaces, while interviewees 7 and 8 felt satisfied with their work in a few months. The factor that facilitated the adaptation process of the interviewees 7 and 8 might be that they did their Master studies in Sweden and had some previous job experience in Sweden before taking up their current positions. It took more time and effort for the interviewee 6 in order to build trust between with his coworkers. Eventually, he managed to be accepted and adapted to a new working culture.

5.4 Good relationships and humor

In term of organizational environment, coworker's support is their readiness to assist each other in their tasks, such as cooperation, support, or respect, and also managing offensive and intimidating conditions to have work-environment fit. According to Attiq et al (2017), there is a clear and significant connection between perception of an employee about co-worker support and commitment that eventually lead to job satisfaction. Employee's Job Satisfaction is employee's perception about their job as fulfilling their material, and psychological needs, influenced by his/her central motivation. As the research shows, a lower level of job satisfaction is closely related to poor performance, less retention, poor relations with coworkers and other organizational obstacles (ibid). Rumens (2017) writes that the individuals involved in workplace friendships can gain instrumental and emotional support, share high-quality, improve individuals' experience of work, and protect employees from workplace bullying. Sierra (2013) claims that there is a big amount of evidence that supports the idea that humor is positively related to personal well-being and that it prevents employees from the harmful effects of job stressor. Moreover, the author writes that the employee humor plays an essential role in supporting some positive job attitudes, including job satisfaction, work engagement, and also intentions to remain within the organization (ibid). It links good relations with coworkers with the employee's job satisfaction. Therefore, it shows the importance of its impact. Our findings show that all our interviewees find good relationships with their coworkers highly important. They think that their work collaborations benefit from the friendly atmosphere in their teams.

According to Neves and Pina e Cunha (2018), humor in horizontal relationships, such as between coworkers, is central for bonding because it shows a kind of invisible instinctive sympathy, real or imagined. The previous study on the role of humor in coworker relationships demonstrated the benefits of the use of humor that encourages group cohesiveness, even if it is put down. Another study shows that the use of humor is a means of not only voicing an individual's feelings but also enhances social support from colleagues. The authors note that humor also reduces the social distance by recognizing similarities between individuals and helps ease workplace tension (ibid). According to interviewees 4 and 5, humor makes interactions with their teammates easier as jokes at the workplace reduce tensions and makes the work environment more relaxed. Since interviewees 3 and 6 could not build the same bond as interviewees 4 and 5, they describe their interactions with the teammates feel more formalized, so they wish that they could create closer relationships with the teammates. Neves and Pina e Cunha (2018) write that humorous events help develop positive effect at the individual level. This positive effect, via emotional contagion, spreads to the social group and creates an atmosphere that supports the use of humor, and it helps start and reserve a cycle of positive affect. The Wheel Model that authors mention, is the ability of humor to influence group dynamics and to help shape a positive environment. In this process, emotional contagion plays an important role, since the use of humor is a particularly intense event that can be easily mimicked and identified by others. This emotional contagion effect is enriched in situations where the parties are friends or have high levels of familiarity with one another, such as in the case of workgroups (ibid).

5.5 Organizational structure and culture

A workplace is a place where people socialize and engage in work and non-work-related activities (Ladegaard and Jenks, 2015). The organizations use different socialization tactics to help contribute to newcomers' adjustment process, such as social integration, team building. (Malik et al, 2014). As the results of the interviews show, all eight companies helped to contribute to each of the interviewees' adjustment goals: all these companies regularly create social activities and events, which usually take place outside of the office. For example, Interviewee 3 says: *"At the social activities, when you get to know people, to know them as people, not just as workers, then you start to trust them even more"*. On the other hand, for Interviewee 6, who is relatively new for his company, the frequency of the activities and events that his company creates, is not enough. According to Hofstede's model (Hofstede-insights.com, 2019), Spain is Collectivist, teamwork is considered natural, and employees tend to work in this way without any need for strong motivation from Management. Interviewee 6 struggles with these differences because in Spain the company where he worked had more frequent activities. He thinks that Sweden and Swedish people prefer individualism, where people have a strong separation between private and work life, while he does not.

The new groups develop their own culture. Because within these groups, what defines success changes and people's interactions with each other also changes. At any point in time,

every organization, team, or team's culture change over time, and they become unique in their interactions. Team culture can differ from the work organization's culture as well as from the national culture. Since this culture is usually temporary and may exist within the project's time frame. When the project ends, probably a new project team will be formed, resulting in a different culture, or the individual will return to the broader organization and its unique culture will dominate (Henrie, 2014). All interviewees mentioned that they appreciate their team and company's culture. For example, interviewee 3 says that open door policy of the company makes it easier to approach people and furthermore create a trust. They do not have "blaming others" policy, so people would support each other instead and try to find a solution together. He says that this builds trust. For Interviewee 6 and his team, the company created a team building trip, which was very appreciated by Interviewee 6, because it is important for him to get to know his new team. As all of the interviewees say, the atmosphere and people at work are friendly and open, which are essential for their well-being.

6. Conclusion

This chapter presents a general conclusion (Ch. 6.1) with answers to the research questions. Afterwards, the limitations of the study and further research (Ch. 6.2) are presented.

6.1 General conclusion

Sweden is a global leader in innovation and the IT industry with a highly trained workforce, high-level consumers, effective business procedures and a stable economy. It is one of the most competitive, productive and globalized countries in the world (Sweden.se, 2018). Moreover, the Swedish capital - Stockholm is the tech startup capital of Europe with the 2nd most unicorns per capita in the world, behind only Silicon Valley (Embassy of Sweden, 2017). Additionally, Stockholm has the most billion-dollar startups in Europe, and it also has the world's second-fastest-growing market for venture capital investments. It can explain why programmers are gathering there (World Economic Forum, 2017). Therefore, for this study, we see importance in research within the Swedish IT industry due to its rapid growth.

Technology is a significant factor in IT projects because the technology constantly changes and therefore, it requires expertise which includes a range of IT professionals (Johnstone et al, 2006). Innovation requires high adaptability to be able to explore new opportunities, and therefore, team innovation requires effective coordination and communication as an alignment activity (Kwak et al, 2016). Agile software development works with highly innovative projects, where software management team members have dynamic goals in creating novelty and innovation. Both a high degree of flexibility and stable development process are essential for managing IT development team (Dönmez et al, 2016).

Progoulaki and Theotokas (2016) explain several advantages of a culturally diverse team. First, it maximizes positive outputs since knowledge can be gathered from people from different backgrounds and experiences. Such a variety of knowledge and expertise enhances the decision-making process and brings in positive results. Different social network and educational background bring plenty of ideas, skills and perspectives (ibid). However, culturally diverse teams may also experience negative effect of such diversity, which is

conflict. The problems of dissimilarities within the team may reduce team integration and communication (Hass and Nüesch, 2013). Therefore, people should involve in the cross-cultural encounter to develop strategies and tactics improving adaptation process (Shafaei and Nordin, 2016). Hitt et al (2015) describe the importance of global mindset essential for international companies which compete on the global market. Managers play an important role in effectively maintaining the global mindset. A related challenge is that they have to manage and communicate with people in different cultural situations. Moreover, they have to deal with the new cultures while experiencing a shortage of time and people. It is essential that the managers focus on experiential theory to be able to help individuals achieve success in the adaptation process.

According to Gupta et al (2008), every company that already operates in multiple countries or just planning to embark on building a global presence need a global mindset. It is relevant not only for the individuals responsible for managing activities abroad but also for those who interface routinely with customers, suppliers, or peers from other countries. The authors claim that returns from investment in cultivating a global mindset would always be positive. Moreover, if the company's goal is to become a global market leader in its industry, then it has to set the development of a global mindset as a goal that encompasses all units and all employees (ibid).

Thomas and Inkson (2017) also claim that it is not enough to merely understand cultures to be able to manage a global mindset. The authors introduce a method called "laundry list" which is used in some companies to train and prepare their employees for international assignments. The strength of this method can be explained by its focus on details of cultural characteristics specific to each particular country, including speech, as well as expressions and actions. In order to achieve success using this method, it is required to integrate various experiences, as well as encourage interaction between team members. Also, the authors suggest another approach, which is gaining cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence consists of three relevant components: knowledge, mindfulness and skill. When combined, they help people achieve a better understanding of cross-cultural phenomena, improve their communication and behavioural adaptation skills (ibid).

A manager should strive for efficient management of a global mindset in order to achieve positive results. The "laundry list" approach can be considered in cases when there is a need to develop necessary skills for better understanding of others, for instance, understanding the country's key characteristics, expressions and actions (Thomas and Inkson, 2017). The interviews with Interviewees 1, 2, 7 and 8 suggest that they had fewer issues with adapting to a new environment since it took them about less than six months to feel fully adapted. The cases of these participants convey that they were already open and ready for a new environment. Besides, their team members were also open to new cultures and languages. It helped people with different cultural and linguistic background adapt to a new environment. Unlike these cases, at the beginning, Interviewee 3 faced a problem of cross-cultural communication. It could reduce the effectiveness in the communication, as well as the

relationship with other people in the team, which, in turn, would consequently reduce performance.

The common thing between Interviewees 1, 2, 7 and 8 is their readiness and openness to the new environment and new cultures. It is an important point where they felt quickly adapted to the coworkers and their work. It took about six months to one year to feel adapted to the workplaces, while Interviewees 7 and 8 felt satisfied with their work in a few months. The factor that facilitated the adaptation process of the Interviewees 7 and 8 might be that they did their Master studies in Sweden and had some previous job experience in Sweden before taking up their current positions. It took more time and effort for the interviewee 6 in order to build trust between with his coworkers. Eventually, he managed to be accepted and adapted to a new working culture. The size of the company, as well as the higher amount of foreign team members can also be factors helping individuals adapt to the new cultures at the workplace. Interviewee 1 is working in the small company, which consist of only fourteen employees. Everyone knows each other very well, therefore, the company itself creates a family feeling. This can be the reason why Interviewee 1 could adapt quickly. Interviewees 2 and 8 are working in international companies, where they have English as the main language. Moreover, their teams consist of several nationalities, which means that the level of global presence is high, therefore, they could quickly adapt.

Communication is based on culture, and power distance culture attribute impacts how communication emerge. Effective communication is an essential element in any project success. Poor communication prevents effective team interaction. The awareness of the project members about cultures within the team, as well as the level of communication in the various cultures can benefit the work. Observing, learning, and adapting how to communicate within the multicultural team are required by all team members. It is also the project manager's job to ensure that effective communication is there (Henrie, 2014).

The workplace is fundamental to socialization. Because it is a location where employees engage in social actions and cultural practices. The workplace possesses cultural and linguistic norms and conventions for engaging in work- and non-work-related activities (Ladegaard and Jenks, 2015). For newcomers, organizational socialization helps to understand assumed norms and traditions in a new workplace. Socialization at the workplace also helps newcomers achieve their adjustment goals, such as role performance, social integration, team building, and further support their socialization process (Malik et al, 2014).

Effective cross-cultural interactions are important for expatriates, therefore, they usually receive cross-cultural training from their companies to avoid cultural misunderstandings and overcome challenges (Malik et al, 2014). None of our interviewees received any cross-cultural training at their companies. Also, based on the interviews, we find out that all of them were responsible for overcoming challenges and barriers during their transitions into the companies. Self-initiated expatriates and RINs usually start their own international career experiences and take responsibility to overcome cross-cultural work challenges themselves. They are more likely to engage themselves in the host country culture and interact with host

country nationals often, moreover, they usually have better knowledge of the local language and can be well prepared beforehand for their international career and their transition in the host country (Malik et al, 2014). All of our interviewees are self-initiated Swedish language learners. The knowledge of the Swedish language for the majority of our Interviewees is a leading tool of integration not only into an organization but also into Swedish society. Of course, we mentioned that all companies helped to contribute to Interviewees' socialization processes, through social activities and events which were already described.

The results of job satisfaction can be beneficial towards organizations. Employees that satisfied with their job can demonstrate high loyalty and commitment to stay longer in organization and to support organizational goals and objectives (Mitonga-Monga et al, 2018). Co-worker and supervisory are the two factors that lead to job satisfaction. It is important to have a clear connection among employees' conception, which can further lead to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction that relates to co-workers can support the environment in an organization and can be assisted by each other working tasks, for example, cooperation, support and respect (Attiaq et al, 2017). The analysis of the findings shows that seven interviewees are fully integrated into their organizations. According to Berry (1997), in integration, some degree of cultural integrity is maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the bigger social network. Moreover, all of these seven interviewees are satisfied with their jobs. One interviewee is in the process of his integration into his organization, so far, the social part with the coworkers is the only concern that can affect his decision whether to stay at his company or not. We can see the connection between socialization at the workplace and immigrant professionals' organizational integration. All interviewees demonstrated the importance of the good relationship with the coworkers and active participation in social events arranged by the companies.

The research shows that improvement of the cross-cultural communication in culturally diverse teams can start with awareness. Depending on who we are both individually and culturally, it affects what we say and how we say it. As individuals, one can be extroverted or introverted, defensive or empathetic, and so on. Communication may become very unpredictable, based on these factors. Though national cultural differences affect communication, it does not mean that anyone can predict an individual's communication style based on one's particular cultural background. Not everyone is aware of the variety of cultural and communication styles. One might think that culture makes no difference. Also, one might claim that culture is just a "soft skill" and that intuitive judgements are enough for efficient communication in an international environment. Indeed, the "hard skills" such as the "numbers" in accounting, or the "hard sciences" in engineering are undoubtedly crucial to business and are necessary for business success. However, "soft skills" of human interaction that lead to the ability to build trust are equally relevant. Cultural intelligence is a soft skill that makes possible to sign the deals, form lasting partnerships, and so on. Therefore, face-to-face cultural skills should be considered important (Peterson, 2004).

6.2 Limitations and further research

The limitation of the study can be the number of interviewees from the same team. In this study, only one member in every team was interviewed. Other team members could give the information which would have been used to compare the perspectives, opinions, and findings if they experienced cross-cultural communication in the same teams in different ways. Another limitation can be the gender. The participants of this study are only males, which is determined by the higher share of male workers in the IT industry. If this study included female participants, the findings would be different. However, we are aware of this limitation, and therefore we specify that interviewees have similarities such as age, the timing of staying/working in Sweden, and gender. Some participants we interviewed are working in international companies, where the main language is English, and some are working in Swedish companies, where the main language is Swedish. The comparison of these two different categories is presented in the findings.

This study focuses on an individual level at the migrant professionals' views. We can present the significant issues of international team members who work in companies in Sweden. We hope that this research will contribute to a better understanding of immigrants' cross-cultural communication, and their acculturation processes into an organization. We suggest that in further research, it can be interesting to study the problems of team members with the origin of the host country. That would be able to present another perspective and create awareness of the challenges in adapting and adjusting to multinational team members. It can be seen essential since it may enhance greater collaboration for both sides of team members from the host country and team members with foreign origin, in order to achieve greater performance.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

We, Natalia Fedorova and Yata Onkhaw, are master students in Business Administration with the specialization “Strategy and Management in International Organizations” at Linköping university. These interview questions are the part of our master thesis in the subject of the challenges of cross-cultural communication in IT project teams which consist of individuals with different nationalities/cultures. All provided information will be anonymous, which means that the company and participant’s names will not be disclosed.

Interview Questions (*Mandatory)

1. General questions:

*Age:

*Gender:

*Country of origin:

*University background (country):

*When did move to Sweden/Linköping:

What kind of educational background do you have (which countries and which program did you study?).

*In which countries have you worked and for how long (what is your work experience)?

2. Company:

*How long have you been working for the current company?

*Have you gotten any training in dealing with cross-cultural challenges? Please describe the training program if the answer is yes.

3. IT development team:

*Position at work, responsibilities:

*How long have you been having the current position?

*How many teams are you in and for how long have you been working with them?

*How many team members are there?

*Does the work mostly require individual or collective level?

*Do you produce more while having individual tasks or while working collaborative/collectively (considering your satisfaction and time - you are happy with the result and the amount of time used).

What your team culture is like? Has it changed since you joined it?

4. Cross cultural adaptation:

*How do you know or understand about the process of your adaptation in the new environment?

*Do people express disagreement openly?

*Can you remember any specific situations in which cultural differences have complicated your job?

*Were there anything that you appreciated immediately once you started this job (in people/environment)?

*Are there strategies or personal attitudes that helped you to turn feeling of culture shock into positive learning experiences?

*Were there anything that shocked you in the beginning or later on (in people/environment)?

Were there differences that you could feel in people/environment (in the team/ at the company itself) compare to your previous workplace? What kind?

Are there differences in decision-making process and handling uncertainty if you compare your current and previous teams?

*Have you changed the way you work and how interact with people since you joined this job?

*How long do you think it took you to get used to a new team/workplace?

*Do you feel fully adapted to your team and the company?

5. Multinational team:

*How many international people are in your team? (maybe in %, approx.)

*Are people in the team from different countries? If yes, from which countries are team members?

*Can you feel difference in team members with the different national culture than yours?

*What are the most difficult to work with someone with different background (regarding language, national culture, education, work experience)?

*What are the most challenges in communicating within the team?

How do people build trust among team members?

6. Social part:

What are the differences in the social part between the current job and your previous job (if you have worked in your own country/other than sweden based company)? Maybe regarding activities, socialization, friendships.

*What kind of activities are there created for your team outside of work? Do you attend any?

Do you interact/socialize with the team members outside of the work? (organized or not organized by the company/leader) If yes, who are these people?

*Are you in a good relationship with anyone at the company/the team? If yes, what connects you? (only work related or personal)

*How important is it for you to be friends (have a good relationship) with the people at the company/the team?

7. Linguistic:

*What is your level of Swedish language (beginner, intermediate, fluent or maybe using it for work):

*What is the company's (and your team's) main language? Were there work situations (meetings/emails) when your colleagues used another language? How did it make you feel?

Which language do you use during work (meeting, documentation etc.)?

Which language(s) do you use during the teamwork and while interacting with other people outside of your team during work?

*Which language(s) do you use while interacting with the team members/other people outside of your team during break? How do you feel about it?

8. Job satisfaction

*What do you enjoy about your job, team and the company's culture/atmosphere?

*Is your compensation, reward, and bonus based on group or individual performance? Are you satisfied with it? If yes/no, then why?

*Regarding your manager(s), do you think you receive enough feedback/praise/encouragement?

*How do you get updated on company's news and access to information? Is it effective in your opinion?

*Do you see yourself working for the same organization in the next few years?

Other information that you think is important regarding diversity and cross-cultural communication at your workplace?

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