“How is decision making in project teams influenced by national cultures?”

Masters in Strategic Project Management

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The last decade has seen the huge impact of globalization on the way organizations perform their routine activities with a greater than before extent of focus on project management in order to be in sync with the fast changing environment. Therefore the companies are required to understand a national culture’s impact on decision making in project teams in different countries. This thesis investigates the national cultures influence on decision making in project teams in Thailand and India by focusing on IT industry based on Hofstede’s (1980) five cultural dimensional framework. The researchers intend to identify similarities and differences in decision making styles of both countries. Throughout the study, useful lessons for project team on national cultures impact on decision making can be drawn for IT companies in Thailand and India and future mixed-culture teams. It also provides the insight for the project teams to have concern for and understand why people from different cultures act or respond to various situations differently giving high emphasis to decision making process.

An empirical qualitative research using semi-structured interviews was conducted from a total of 12 IT project team members in Thailand and India based on their experiences on cultural influence on decision making when working in project teams. The research revealed that there are significant differences in decision making styles of Thai and Indian IT teams, and the differences have strong links with cultural aspects. The results also addressed number of similarities in the decision making styles of Thailand and India. The major implication is that the knowledge of the cultural differences and similarities would facilitate better management of mixed Thai-Indian project teams. Therefore, by keeping in mind the importance as well as the impact of various national cultures and presenting each member with social working knowledge of peers within the mixed-culture team, arguments and conflicts due to misconception and pre-judgment can be minimized. Hence it will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the working process and environment in the project teams.

**Keywords:**

National culture, cultural influence, project management, decision making, project team, IT industry, Thailand and India.
DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

We, Waragarn Pannavalee and Ghazal Rafique hereby declare this thesis submitted exemplifies the result of our work and have been composed by ourselves as collaborated partners. We wish to proclaim however that, the views expressed are exclusively ours, and we consequently should be held responsible for any inaccuracy found in this research. Where appropriate within the thesis we have made full and proper acknowledgement that any work of third party members have been included in the reference list.

Signed: ................................. .................................
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Project Management and Cultural Aspects

In the contemporary world, majority of organizations have the propensity to operate and manage their businesses by projects. The need for project management was fundamentally driven by companies that realized the benefits of organizing work around projects and the vital need to communicate and coordinate tasks across departments and professions. In other words, project management is the “application of knowledge” (Project Management Body Of Knowledge - PMBOK, 2000) including “planning, monitoring and control of all aspects of a project and the motivation of all those involved in it” (BS6079-1, 2000:5) to achieve the project requirements on time, cost, quality etc depending on types of project.

The critical success factors of projects are derived from different aspects, for instance corporate culture, project objectives which are to be in-lined with the organization’s goals, project teams and so on. As the project lifecycle involves planning, organizing during the project initiation, controlling, leading and motivating during the implementation, key decisions are required to be made at different stages taking both hard and soft skills into account. Apart from technical and human-side skills, Henrie and Sousa-Poza (2005) embraced the fact that culture plays a significant role, generating both positive and negative impact (Shore and Cross, 2005), in project team since all the team members bring their own culture into the team, and that culture shapes the core decision making process within the team. The project team tends to develop a unique personality over time, which generally creates complexity especially when taking culture divergence into account. It becomes a reflection of everyone involved, radiating confidence and certainty if spirits are high, seething with doubts and confusion when direction is lacking. Therefore, leadership including decision making undeniably plays a fundamental role, however individual team member attitudes make the difference.

According to Pheng and Leong (1999), national culture is more deep-rooted in the individual than the organizational culture because individuals learn their national culture at a very early stage in life when its influence is not known, while organizational culture is acquired at a conscious point later. Therefore this fact adds the major importance of national cultures regarding the various project management process including decision making styles in the organization in different countries. In parallel, changes and uncertainty associated with globalization demand the companies to understand national culture’s influences on decision making (Müller, Spang and Ozcan, 2007) in today’s projects not only at international level, but starting from domestic stage to be able to plan and execute the project effectively and efficiently.
**Decision Making**

As the organizational environments become more hostile, complex and turbulent, they leave the conventional domains of organizational and team decision making ineffective (Busenitz and Barney, 1998). According to Weber et al (2004) individuals arrive at decisions in qualitatively different ways; that is they employ different cognitive processes, which differ largely on demographic dimensions such as age, gender, ethnicity or culture. Weber et al further state that culture enters the universal decision making process (of selecting best alternative) by causing the prevalence of factors that impact the way in which choice is made.

**Globalization – Trade and Investments Cooperation between Thailand and India**

As globalization requires companies to understand a national culture’s impact on decision making, it is more interesting to explore these aspects in countries that are main trade partners or can be potential key partners in the near future such as Thailand and India. After India’s economic reforms in 1993 under Look East policy (Chowdhury, 2005), India began to open herself up more economically, especially to the Southeast Asian countries (Indian Embassy – Thailand, 2007). Together with Thailand’s Look West policy from 1996, the two countries have set the arena for a substantive consolidation of bilateral relations, including economic and commercial links (Chowdhury, 2005; Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Thailand, 2007). Moreover, in the recent years, Thailand and India took another step further and have established the cooperation in terms of trade and investments. The two countries signed five agreements covering many issues including a free trade agreement in 2003. It is believed that India presents a huge opportunity for Thailand and Asia in the coming future (Anon, 2007). And today, Thailand, as a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), hopes to play an essential role in connecting India to ASEAN and other East Asian countries (Anon, 2007; Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Thailand, 2007).

**Insights of Business-related Aspects of Thai and Indian Culture**

**Thailand** – Cooper and Cooper (1990), Klausner (1993) and Segaller (1993) have provided the literatures that create the general picture about Thai culture including (but not limited only to) the following features:

- Cool-heartedness (jai yen) is deeply rooted in Thai culture not only on living basis but also on business context. People tend to maintain social stability and emotional control. The Thais generally have a high degree of reluctance to express emotions.
- Thai culture emphasizes on harmonious interpersonal relationships with a need for face saving and indirect communication patterns and the slim chance of any kind of pessimistic criticism.
- A focus on respect of the younger generation to the elders or of the inferior toward the superior and strict social hierarchy (kreng-jai).
- A high degree of eclecticism and syncretism both religious and in general, the capacity of uniting and integrating Westerners’ elements apparently contradictory principles and philosophy.
India – on the other hand is a very diverse nation. The business culture and etiquettes draw from a large mix of cultures and backgrounds. However Budelman (2004) observes the following common features:

- Region, religion, caste and language are considered at the time of employment or entering into business partnerships, and they determine the relative status of an individual in the organization.
- Hierarchy, which has its roots in Hinduism and caste systems, plays an important role in Indian businesses.
- Relationships of mutual trust and understanding are preferred even over lucrative business opportunities.
- Indians hugely rely on intuition and faith to guide them in decisions.

1.2 Research Problem

With the significance given to project based structures by most organizations today, it becomes important to study the largely unexplored area of cultural impact on project management especially on decision making in project teams. Therefore, the national cultures and its impact on decision making in project team are our principal areas of interest.

Most of the published project management literature gives more emphasis on tools and techniques, while the cultural aspects are overlooked (Kloppenborg and Opfer, 2000, cited in Henrie and Sousa-Poza, 2005). The evidence suggested by Shore and Cross (2005) together with Müller, Spang and Ozcan (2007) shows that the cultural dimensions can explain the preferences that guide management behavior and decision making in project teams. In fact, Müller et al (2007) have conducted the research on cultural differences in decision making in a mixed-culture project teams, involving two nationalities which are German and Swedish. However, the research focusing on a single nation’s cultural impact on decision making in project teams in comparison with another culture is still scarce. It is important for the project manager to understand national cultural factors that could impact project management as a whole, since the culture could be useful in terms of providing framework to explore the complexities of the management process. Therefore by implementing the framework, project managers can develop a more sensible approach of comprehending and managing the cultural differences that are anticipated in international projects (Shore and Cross, 2004). Furthermore, there are various issues and problems raised in numbers of studies in the past mainly due to different cultural aspects such as inter-cultural communication (Müller et al, 2007), managing people, problem solving and conflict approach (Trompenarrs, 2004) when more than one culture are involved in the working process. In today’s business context, as it expands and becomes more globalized, companies not only large size but also small and medium enterprises require to understand different national cultures’ impact on business ethics and how business is conducted differently especially for their business partners.

Both authors are also adequately motivated by the practical aspects of increased globalization and the growing business opportunities between India and Thailand. We, as citizens of Thailand (Waragarn) and India (Ghazal) are well aware of the increasing rate at which both economies are growing, and are therefore keen on being part of this growth. The IT sector in both countries has benefited the most from the
all-round economic growth and has attracted a large number of international projects, showing potential for large scale collaborations between Indian and Thai companies. We are interested on being part of such collaborations, as we have already experienced studying in three different cultures during the course of our current masters, and we would like to enrich this experience by working with each others’ cultures.

The last decade has seen the huge impact of globalization on the way organizations perform their routine activities with a greater than before extent of focus on project management in order to be in sync with the fast changing environment. This fact points out the remarkable area of potential research: the understanding of national cultures, different decision making style and formation of future cooperation between Thailand and India. Therefore, the research question is:

“How is decision making in project teams influenced by national cultures?

1.3 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to explore the national cultures impact on decision making in project teams through an empirical study with a focus on the information technology (IT) industry in Thailand and India as future main trade partners. The research objectives are:

1. to investigate the national cultures influence on decision making in project teams in Thailand and India by focusing on IT industry based on Hofstede (1980) five cultural dimensional framework;
2. to identify similarities and differences in decision making styles of Thailand and India;
3. to draw up useful lessons for project teams in two countries and future mixed-culture teams to consider the great impact of national culture on decision making in project team.

By conducting this research, useful lessons for project team on national cultures impact on one of the most important factors in project management which is decision making can be drew for IT companies in Thailand and India. The similarities and differences in the way decisions are made in the two countries will provide the insight for the project teams to concern more and understand why people from different cultures act or response to various situations differently giving high emphasis to decision making process. The result obtained will not only be beneficial to the two focus countries, but also for other nations that have interests in conducting business with Thailand and India especially in IT industry. It can also be helpful to be taken as the valuable lesson for future mixed-culture project team between Thailand and India. The outcome can be used by IT project team members as well as those individuals who are interested in cultural impact on various aspects in today’s business context especially in project management area at a global scale.
1.4 Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 provides the general view of the research, containing the background, problem, aim and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on cultural divergence and decision making under and beyond project management context.

Chapter 3 deals with the research methodology including research paradigm, qualitative research approach as a strategy, tools and technique used in data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability, and limitations of the chosen methodology.

Chapter 4 is the analysis part of data collected from respondents in Thailand and India based on the experience gained by different project teams in IT industry. The data is analyzed separately by countries then the comparison is made at the final section of the chapter.

Chapter 5 the last chapter is devoted to discussions, conclusions on the results from the data analysis. Problems, limitations and recommendations are also given here for improvement for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The following literature review is guided by the research question of our thesis: “How is decision making in project teams influenced by national culture? (in the context of the IT industry in Thailand and India)”. The aforementioned research topic is divided into two main categories: Culture and Decision Making; and each of these categories are further divided into sub categories wherever possible. The objective of this literature review is to analyze the literature, both theoretical and empirical, on cultural and decision making aspects to the degree to which they can be linked with each other to answer the research question, in order to identify gaps if any in the existing knowledge in both the fields that fail to address the research question and which we aim to fulfill through our research.

2.2 Theoretical Framework on Cultural Divergence

2.2.1 Definition of Culture

It is difficult to give a single definition that best encapsulates a term “culture” (Pheng and Leong, 1999; Müller and Turner, 2004). “Culture rather than human nature determines a man’s motives and drives. To put it another way, every man has many potential interests and goals, but society to a large extent determines which will be actualized” (Benedict, 1934). The PMBOK Guide states that “Culture is the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought” (PMI, 2000, p. 27). According to Encyclopedia Britannica, culture allows people to adapt the environment to their own objectives rather than depend completely on natural selection to accomplish adaptive success. The major contributors in cultural field are Geert Hofstede (1980), Edward T. Hall (1989), Shalom Schwartz (1992), and Fons Trompenaars (1994). One of most famous definition was given by Hofstede (1980, p. 5) defining culture as “the collective program of the mind, which distinguishes the member of one human group from another”.

2.2.2 Hofstede’s Cultural Framework and its Application

The seminal work of Hofstede has been influencing the majority of studies concentrating on cultural aspects over the past two decades. Hofstede has motivated a great improvement in the discipline by signifying a theoretical model which serves to synchronize research efforts (Redding, 1994). His framework for defining and measuring cultural differences categorized in 4 major dimensions, which are power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and lastly masculinity.

*Power distance* measures the extent to which members of society accept how power is distributed unequally in that culture. Individuals in societies with higher levels of power distance are likely to follow formal codes of conduct. Moreover they are hesitant to disagree with the superiors. In contrast, the individuals in societies with
lower levels of power distance do not feel as constrained by perceived or actual differences in status, power, or position (Hofstede 1980; Blodgett, 2001; Muriithi and Crawford, 2003; Müller and Turner, 2004; Rana, 2007).

*Individualism* informs that the individualists are supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate family. They value independence, and tend to believe that personal goals and interests are more important than group interests (Hofstede 1980; Phatak 1986 in Miroshnik 2002; Triandis 1995; Schwartz 1992). On the other hand, *collectivism* is where people belong to in-groups and can expect their relatives to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Collectivists are likely to view themselves as members of an extensive family or organization, and prioritize group interests over the individual needs (Hofstede 1980; Triandis 1995; Schwartz 1992).

The dominant value of *masculinity* represents a cultural preference focusing on achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success. In this society individuals are more aggressive, determined, and competitive; whereas people in feminine societies are more modest, humble, and nurturing. *Femininity* focuses more on relationship, modesty, caring for others, and quality of life (Blodgett, 2001; Müller et al, 2007; Rana, 2007).

*Uncertainty avoidance* measures the extent to which people feel uncomfortable and threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity therefore they try to avoid these situations. Societies with strong uncertainty avoidance feel a greater need for consensus and written rules, and are intolerant towards deviant persons or ideas. In contrast, societies with weak uncertainty avoidance rely less on written rules and are more risk tolerant, believing that practice counts more than principles. Chang and Din (1995) added that the essential concern addressed by this dimension is the culture’s stance towards time and future, whether the culture concerns about the future plan and tries to control it or just set it loose and let it happen.

Under the influence of Chang and Din’s work in 1995, Hofstede has added the fifth dimensions in his culture framework (Müller and Turner, 2004). Long-term versus short-term orientation measures the development of virtues related to the past such as respect for tradition. *Long-term orientation* is the degree to which a culture embraces continuing devotion to traditional values. High long-term oriented cultures lay emphasis on long-term commitments and respect for traditions. Hofstede (2003) added that changes occur more rapidly in the cultures with low level of this dimension (*short-term orientation*). In short, this dimension is the culture characteristic that focuses on to what extent the group invests for the future and to observe how patient they are to wait for the results.

According to Blodgett et al (2001), Hofstede’s cultural framework has been applied in a wide range of research mainly in the behavioral science disciplines. From the fields of marketing, Hofstede’s framework has been utilized to examine topics for instance cross-cultural differences in customer’s behaviors (Alden, Hoyer, and Lee, 1993 in Blodgett et al 2001). Moreover, the 4 dimensions have been adapted and employed also in the field of management to prepare for globalization such as soft-skills training for international managers (Harris and Kumra, 2000), international construction management (Pheng and Leong, 1999), organizational identification and employee
turnover intentions (Abrams, Ando, and Hinkle, 1998 in Blodgett et al 2001), and to compare stereotypes across different cultures (Soutar, Grainger, and Hedges, 1999 cited in Blodgett et al 2001). Hofstede’s work, apart from marketing and management expertise, has been applied in studies of advertising (McCarty and Hattwick, 1992; Gregory and Munch, 1997; Zandpour et al., 1994 cited in Blodgett et al 2001), global brand strategies (Roth, 1995), and in ethical decision making (Vitell, Nwachukwu, and Barnes, 1993; Blodgett et al., 2001). Furthermore, surprisingly Hofstede’s work has been applied in the information systems research and information technology area in recent years (Ford, Connelly and Meister, 2003).

Hofstede’s perspective was supported by Chang and Ding (1995) who looked into the 4 dimensions of cultural differences and conducted the survey in 22 different countries in Asia. Müller and Turner (2004) mentioned in his research that the 4 dimensions developed by the 2 Chinese authors were correlated with Hofstede’s (1980) framework. First of all an integration measures the social stability and tolerance in the society, which correlates with power distance. Second, a Confucian work dynamics reveals the virtue, social hierarchy, and structure in organizations. It is not related to Hofstede’s (1980) dimension, but rather led to the formation of Hofstede’s (2003) fifth dimension concerning long-term orientation. Third, human heartedness shows the empathy among the people in a culture, which related to masculinity dimension. Lastly, moral discipline emphasizes on moderate and adaptive behavior of human being. It measures the extent to which people in the culture keep themselves under control in relation to others, which correlates to the individualism and collectivism dimension.

Blodgett (2001) noted in this work that Hofstede’s framework was developed and based on macro or national level analysis aiming to describe and compare systematic differences in values and attitudes across nations and their people in diverse culture in general. Hofstede (1997) reminded that his instrument was not intended to measure and compare cultural differences at a micro or individual level as he acknowledged the dissimilarity between the analysis within culture and between cultures.

2.2.3 Different Perspective from Other Cultural Experts

After Hofstede’s empirical work has been recognized worldwide, Schwartz (1994) has looked into the inner layer of culture onion (Hofstede, 1980) which is value and defined human values as “desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (Schwartz, 1994; Ng, Lee, and Soutar, 2007). He conducted a survey from numbers of teachers and students in more than 40 countries, asking them to rate the importance of 56 values in total as a guiding principle in their lives (Ng, Lee, and Soutar, 2007). Schwartz analyzed the individual values based on 2 levels which are individual and cultural level keeping in mind that the values of individual reflect their own unique experience as well as normative cultural influence (Schwartz, 1994). Therefore, he came up with 2 dimensions at individual level (conversation to openness to change, and self-transcendence to self-enhancement) and the other 3 dimensions at cultural level (embededness vs. autonomy, hierarchy vs. egalitarianism, and mastery vs. harmony) (Schwartz, 1994; Ng, Lee, and Soutar, 2007).
Based on the research done by Ng, Lee and Soutar (2007) comparing the cultural frameworks of Hofstede and Schwartz, from statistics it appears that, Schwartz’s values and dimension contribute more at least in a trade context and does play a more significant role than Hofstede’s 5 dimensions.

Back in 1993, a Dutch culturalist “Fons Trompenaars” with his colleague Hampden Turner have introduced a new framework focusing on the way cultures develop approaches to deal with problems and unknown situations. He came up with a framework consisting of 7 dimensions based on empirical evidence collected from roughly 15,000 employees in almost 50 countries (Trompenaars, 1994; Müller and Turner, 2004). Slightly different from Hofstede’s work, Trompenaars focuses more on the individuals in the culture reaction among themselves at the micro level, therefore 5 of his 7 dimensions cover the way people in that society relate to each other (universalism vs. particularism, affective vs. neutral, individualism vs. communitarianism, achieved status vs. ascribed status, specific vs. diffuse). He also concerns about the people’s attitude towards time in culture, therefore the sixth dimension was introduced (time as sequence vs. time as synchronization). Lastly he added the final dimension (internal control vs. external control) taking people’s relationship with the environment into account.

Universalism versus Particularism, the first dimension is used to define how human judge other people’s behavior. Universalism looks at rules in general and at a broad view. However if there is no rules that fit, people in this culture will somehow find the best rule. Universalist, in the other word, rule-based behavior tends to be conjectural and believe that “all persons falling under the rule should be treated the same” whereas “particularist judgments focus on the exceptional nature of present circumstances” (Trompenaars, 1997, p. 31). When there is no rule, they judge the situation based on their own merits, instead of trying to force-fit with the existing rules.

Individualism versus Communitarianism – in the individualist culture, it concerns about he rights of the individuals. People are likely to do things on their own and view group-objective less important than ones own goal. However, communitarianism is all about the rights of the society as a whole. The people in this culture set the collective goal before their own needs (Trompenaars, 1997).

Affective versus Neutral, this dimension deals with feelings and relationship between people. In culture with high affectivity, people tend to express their feelings plainly, while in the cultures which are neutral, people seem to carefully control and subdue their feeling expression (Trompenaars, 1997).

Specific versus Diffuse are closely related to the way people express their emotion. It deals largely with the degree to which people involve others in one particular areas of life, or “diffusely in multiple areas of their lives and at several levels of personality at the same time” (Trompenaars, 1997).

Achieved status is about gaining status by doing or performance, assuming that the individuals and organizations earn and lose their status on a daily basis. On the other hand, Ascribed status is concerning about gaining status by being or other means, such
as age, gender, education and profession, assuming that status is acquired by right rather than daily performance (Trompenaars, 1997).

Another dimension on attitude towards time is either to view time as sequence or as synchronization. Time as sequence looks at events as sequential items in a period in other words, it is progression throughout time. It may be thought as falling dominoes in a chain. However, time as synchronization perceives events in matching terms. It likes things to be constructed in a regulated fashion. It may be thought as a firework display played with synchronized music (Trompenaars, 1997; Phatak 1986 in Miroshnik 2002).

Lastly, the Trompenaars’ (1997) dimension regarding people’s relationship with their environment, the definition of internal control or inner-directed is self judgments made within people’s own minds. It perceives thinking as the greatest utensil and that well thought out ideas and perceptive approaches are most useful. External control or outer-directed is about data gathering from everyday life. It perceives this as more of a systematic approach and likes to search of information before making decisions.

Apart from Hofstede and Trompenaars empirical study, Hall (1976) looks at culture from a different perspective, focusing on the correlation of language and context in communication (Müller and Turner, 2004). He grouped cultures into 2 categories by the contextually related language (Hall 1976). High-context and low-context communication are based on the extent to which speakers depend on factors other than explicit speech to get their messages across (LeBaron, 2003). In culture with high-context communication, people tend not to speak their mind out, but rather use nonverbal language such as body language to convey their meanings. The communication is less explicit due to the long former relationship while sharing a common context. In other words, information in this culture is more in the persons and their relationship rather than in the coded, explicit part of communication (Hall, 1989; Müller and Turner, 2004). Low-context communication, conversely, is the culture that the information is shared explicitly and in detailed codes. There is a clear separation between personal and work life (Hall, 1989; LeBaron, 2003; Müller and Turner, 2004).

2.2.4 Criticism on Cultural Theories

Certainly, there are many issues raised by different authors regarding the use of Hofstede’s and Trompenaar’s model, arguing that these models are problematic, oversimplified and were developed for their own purpose with specific need (McSweeney, 2002, cited in Harris, et al, 2005); Gooderham and Nordhuag, 2003, cited in Harris, et al, 2005). The 2 models are for developing cultural profiles mainly of management style. Therefore, they are hardly suitable with some specific area such as designing for e-commerce (Jagne, 2004). Regardless the criticism on Hofstede’s work, Gong, W., Li, Z.G. and Stump, R.L. (2007), applied the multidimensional framework to investigate the role and consequence of national culture on the use and the access of internet across countries. However, regardless the various criticism on Hofstede’s model, the author still believe that his five cultural dimensions is the most suitable framework to utilize in order to find the answer to the research question.
2.2.5 Cultural Studies Summary

The summary of 5 main authors in cultural studies can be found in table 2.1. The table shows the research done by different culture experts using wide range of concepts and finally generated the new knowledge as the outcome for the area of cultural studies. Throughout the literature review, in agreement with other researchers, due to the absence of a more satisfactory model (Harris, et al, 2005), Hofstede’s effort on his work of 5 national culture dimensions is seen as the most influential framework to be utilized in exploring the national culture influences on decision making in project team (Müllerand Turner, 2004; Müller et al, 2007), focusing on IT industry in Thailand and India (refer to the figure 2.2 and 2.3 on the next page for Hofstede’s 5 dimensions scoring for both countries).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hofstede (1986)</td>
<td>IBM employees in 72 countries but only used data from 50 countries</td>
<td>Understanding culture differences based on national culture (Hofstede, 1989)</td>
<td>5 dimensions: power distance, individualism vs collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs femininity, long-term vs short-term orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall (1976, 1989)</td>
<td>University-based research in many countries</td>
<td>Intercultural communication (Rogers, Hart, Miike, 2002)</td>
<td>Paradigm for intercultural communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation of language and context in communication (Müller and Turner, 2004)</td>
<td>High-context communication, Low-context communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwartz (1994)</td>
<td>Teachers and students in 49 countries</td>
<td>Individual values recognized across cultures, analyzed based individual and cultural levels (Schwartz, 1994)</td>
<td>2 dimensions (individual level): conversation to openness to change, self-transcendence to self-enhancement (Ng, Lee, and Soutar, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 dimensions (cultural level): embeddedness vs. autonomy, hierarchy vs. egalitarianism, mastery vs. harmony (Schwartz, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trompenaars (1997)</td>
<td>Survey on 15,000 employees in almost 50 countries</td>
<td>Focusing on the ways culture develop to approach problem solving and unknown situations (Trompenaars, 1994; Müller and Turner, 2004)</td>
<td>7 dimensions: universalism vs. particularism, affective vs. neutral, individualism vs. communitarianism, achieved status vs. ascribed status, specific vs. diffuse, time as sequence vs. time as synchronization, and internal control vs. external control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Different Perspectives and Research on Cultural Studies
2.2.6 Hofstede’s cultural dimensions scoring for Thailand and India

Based on Hofstede’s (1980) research in fifty different countries, five dimensions ranking for Thailand and India were presented in figure below in order to see and compare the differences in national cultures between the two focus countries.

![Figure 2.1: Comparison of Hofstede’s 5 Dimensions Ranking for Thailand and India](image)

**THAILAND** – The cultural dimensions scoring obtained from Thailand never appeared or ranked with the very extreme numbers. All of them are often in the middle range, assuming that is because the cultural factors in particular to the religion which is Buddhism, commonly averting all extremes with its prominence on balance in life. Thailand’s scores on the 5 dimensions are as follows:

- **Power Distance (PDI):** 64 (22nd)
- **Individualism (IDV):** 20 (40th)
- **Masculinity (MAS):** 34 (44th)
- **Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI):** 64 (30th)
- **Long-term Orientation (LTO):** 56 (8th)

![Figure 2.2: Thailand’s Scoring on Hofstede’s 5 Dimensions](image)

Figure 2.1 shows that out of 50 countries in Hofstede’s (1980) research, Thailand ranked 22nd in PDI, 20th in IDV, 44th in MAS, 30th UAI and out of 23 countries, it ranked 8th in LTO.

As the numbers show in the diagram, Thailand has relatively high index on power distance and uncertainty avoidance. These numbers indicate that generally in Thai culture, people can accept the fact that the power is distributed unequally. Thais are likely to follow formal codes of conduct. Moreover they are hesitant to disagree with the superiors (Hofstede 1980; Blodgett, 2001). Moreover, they feel uncomfortable and threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity therefore trying to avoid these situations. People feel a greater need for consensus and written rules, and are intolerant towards deviant persons or ideas. With a very high rank in long-term orientation, it can be seen that Thai culture also lays emphasis on long-term commitments and respect for traditions.

With the relatively low scores on individualism and masculinity, it shows that Thai culture focuses more on collectivism, where people belong to in-groups and can expect their relatives to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. People normally prioritize group interests over the individual needs. Thais generally give more importance to relationship, modesty, caring for others, and quality of life (Blodgett, 2001; Müller et al, 2007; Rana, 2007).

**INDIA** – The five dimensions of India are relatively moderate given the ranking amongst 50 countries. However, a high Power Distance Index exists in the Indian society, having its routes in the traditional caste systems. Needless to say that the other four dimensions that are reasonably moderate are indicative of the process of change the Indian culture is going through. India’s scores on the 5 dimensions are as follows:

- **Power Distance (PDI):** 77 (10th)
- **Individualism (IDV):** 48 (21st)
- **Masculinity (MAS):** 56 (20th)
- **Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI):** 40 (45th)
- **Long-term Orientation (LTO):** 61 (7th)

![Figure 2.3: India’s Scoring on Hofstede’s 5 Dimensions](http://www.geert-hofstede.com)
Out of 50 countries, India ranked 10th in PDI, 21st in IDV, 20th in MAS, 45th in UAI and out of 23 countries, it ranked 7th in LTO.

The high power distance score is a representation of the high level of inequality of power and wealth in the Indian society. Long term orientation being the second highest ranking dimension of Indian culture reflects the preservation of the traditional Indian values even in the face of rapid economic growth and technological advancement. The upward trend in individualistic orientation on one hand marks a significant shift from the collectivistic orientation of the Asian countries, while on the other hand represents a reasonable balance between individual goals and family values. The average masculinity and low uncertainty avoidance indices are signs of the opening up of Indian culture to unconventional and unstructured ideas, and the reduced divide between values of men and women. This has directly resulted in greater flexibility in unforeseen situations and has given rise to more assertive and empowered women respectively.

Note:
1. PDI = Power Distance Index
2. IDV = Individualism
3. MAS = Masculinity
4. UAI = Uncertainty Avoidance Index
5. LTO = Long-term Orientation

2.3 Decision Making

Decision making is a type of conflict resolution process, in which contradictory goals are negotiated and reconciled (Svenson, 1996) to arrive at unanimous choice of optimum decision alternative. A generally accepted definition for decision making is that it is a cognitive process for selecting a course of action from different alternatives. The recent research on decision making is inspired from disciplinary models that are concerned with incorporating the context in which decision making takes place, which not only includes the psychological aspects of the decision maker’s behavior but also socio-cultural aspects of the situation (Allwood and Selart, 2001). Given this, it is of great interest to the authors to study the past and current behavioral decision theories and the influence of cultures on human decision making processes. Keeping this objective in mind the following review of decision making literature is divided into three broad areas, namely behavioral decision making theories; group decision making processes, and; culture and decision making

Parkin (1996) has classified decision making literature into three categories:
- Axiomatically based decision theories for complex problems using aids such as operations research, decision analysis, and multi-attribute utility theory.
- Models of human judgment and decision behavior derived from psychological research focusing on the judgmental aspects of decision making.
- Decision making in organizations as described by sociologists

The focus of this literature review is on human judgment and decision behavior and, decision making processes in organizations, which are the second and the third categories respectively.
2.3.1 Behavioral Decision Making

Prior to the 1950’s decision making theories were firmly grounded in economic theory and based on static models that were concerned with the determiners of a single choice among different courses of action, rather than with a sequence of choices (Edwards, 1961). In 1954 Ward Edwards coined the domain for the field of behavioral decision theories, by bringing together concepts from economics, decision theory, game theory and psychology. Since then, a large amount of research published identifies decision making as an area of psychology (eg. Einhorn and Hogarth, 1981; Kahneman, 1991). This psychological study of decision making has been characterized by the following features (Kahneman, 1991):

- normative theories of rational belief and choice
- emphasis on risky choice, and neglect of decisional conflicts
- analyses that invoke cognitive or psychophysical terms, and neglect of emotional and social factors

In addition to the above, the works of Kahneman, Tversky and others on the ‘heuristics and biases’ approach that deals with analyses of heuristics and measurement of biases, was characterized by two new features:

- emphasis on cognitive processes
- simple between-subject experiments drawing on subjects’ life experiences

In the initial phases, the economic theories of bounded rationality and decisions under uncertainty were linked to notions of adaptive and satisfying behavior, drawn from psychology (Simon, 1959). However, in the later years development in the field shifted focus of researchers in the psychological processes underlying judgment and choice, and the importance of cognitive processes and learning was recognized (eg. Einhorn and Hogarth, 1981).

According to Svenson (1996), there are two broad approaches to studying decision making: structural and process approaches; the major difference between them being that only the process approach takes into account psychological aspects and behavioral patterns in decision making through collecting process tracing measures such as information searching and think aloud protocols. These measures evolved overtime as solutions to overcome the limitations of the human mind and the largely used subjective expected utility rule. They combine several decision rules contingent on the situation, and can be used at all levels of decision making ranging from quick-automatic decisions to complex ones requiring sophisticated problem solving techniques. Some of the models developed include the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1964), image theory (Beach, 1990) and differentiation and consolidation theory (Svenson, 1992).

The other broad category identifiable in the psychological study of decision making is called ‘heuristics and biases’ approach. This approach consists of cognitive processes developed to predict and explain the diverse phenomena of judgment and choice, and departures from the rational model (Kahneman, 1991). The research in this area attempts to compare intuitive decisions to statistical standards, which are usually derived from expected utility theory. Developments in the heuristics and biases approach are made in the context of riskless choice (Tversky et al. 1988), choices
about delayed or extended outcomes (Loewenstein & Prelec, 1992; Varey & Kahneman, 1992) and behavioral game theory (Camerer, 1990). These explanations of judgment have been linked to multiple effects that further explain decision making behavior such as beliefs about chance and sampling, loss aversion tendency, hindsight, optimistic bias and so on (Kahneman, 1991). Brief accounts of these studies are provided in table 2.2.

Culture is an antecedent of human behavior, and there exists a cause and effect relationship between them (Berry, et al, 2002). Apparently the same relation exists between culture and decision making behavior. The following table summarizes some important psychological decision theories that show behavioral preferences, which may have derived from cultural conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Cognitive Dissonance theory</td>
<td>Leon Festinger</td>
<td>Dissonance is reduced or avoided by changing beliefs attitudes, behaviors to make them consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Image Theory</td>
<td>Lee Roy Beach</td>
<td>Decisions are shaped by three images: values and beliefs; decision makers’ view of their future; ways in which the future can be secured. These images are used to screen options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Differentiation and Consolidation Theory</td>
<td>Ola Svenson</td>
<td>The decision process involves differentiation as it applies several different decision rules instead of 1; and it collects post decision information which is known as consolidation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Riskless Choice</td>
<td>Tversky, Sattath and Slovic</td>
<td>Explains a loss aversion method for decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Behavioral game theory</td>
<td>Camerer</td>
<td>Uses psychological and mathematical models to develop games for decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Choices about delayed or extended outcomes</td>
<td>Loewenstein &amp; Prelec; Varey &amp; Kahneman</td>
<td>Studies show that extended or delayed outcomes are caused due to deteriorating trends and neglect of duration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Process Approach and Heuristics & Biases Approach Theories
2.3.2 Group Decision Making

Group decision making bodies have been in existence since the times of the Greek civilization and till today make important decisions in public and private sector. Groups represent a larger and more diverse set of perspectives than compared to individuals, and this is reflected in the quality of decisions made (Tindale et. al, 2003). However, when these groups involve more than one national culture, they have a greater likelihood to experience more conflicts, misunderstandings, poor performance (Salk et al, 2002) and reduced trust (Huff and Kelly, 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s the group decision making process evolved as moving from set of individual positions or preferences to agreement on a consensus choice for the group (Kerr and Tindale, 2004). Psychologists developed models to define the functions that lead to consensus (e.g. Lorge and Solomon, 1955; Smoke & Zajonc, 1962 quoted in Tindale et al 2003). One of the most important works in this area was that of Davis (1973). He developed the Social Decision Scheme (SDS) theory that assumes small group interaction to be a ‘combinatorial process’, which combines group members’ preferences for decision alternatives in such a manner that consensus is reached on a single group choice. The SDS theory provided a framework to aggregate several member preferences into one group choice. Recent research in the field of group decision making views groups as information processing systems (Brauner & Scholl, 2000; Hinsz, Tindale, & Vollrath, 1997; Larson & Christensen, 1993 quoted in Tindale, et al 2003), where information processing is defined as the degree to which information and processes are shared among the group members (Hinsz et al, 1997). Kerr and Tindale (2004) agree that the group decision making research is focused on combining preferences for continuous response distributions and group information processing.

Two of the recent models on preference combinations show the influence of ‘social sharedness’. According to Kerr and Tindale (2004) when information is socially shared (among the group members) they tend to have an inordinate impact on the group’s response. Davis’ (1996) model of Social Judgment Scheme (SJS) is a weighted linear combination of member preferences. Crott et al (1991) developed a model based on the single peak preference curve to present group decision data. This model tends to well describe group consensus processes with discrete decision alternatives.

Some researchers also look into group decision making processes where the groups reach consensus with minimal or no discussion between group members. In such decision processes, many people may provide advice to the decision maker who makes the final decision (Kerr & Tindale, 2004). One important area of research in these lines is that of “judge-advisor systems” (Budescu & Rantilla 2000; Sniezek 1992; Sniezek & Buckley 1995 quoted in Kerr & Tindale, 2004).

It is also increasingly recognized by decision theorists that when groups leave some information unshared, they fail to uncover hidden profiles (Wittenbaum & Stasser 1996 quoted in Kerr and Tindale, 2004), and this in turn led to the realization of how important shared cues are in predicting group judgments (Gigone & Hastie 1996 quoted in Kerr and Tindale, 2004).
Kameda et al. (1997) have focused on knowledge sharing to look at the influence members have within a group or which members are ‘cognitively central’ in the group. The greater the degree of overlap between the information held by a particular member with that held by other members of the group, the greater is the centrality of that member. These members can be influential, when the information they contain is perceived to be important (Sargis & Larson, 2002 quoted in Kameda et al, 1997).

Groups are considered to be better problem solvers than individuals because they may share a conceptual system of ideas, also referred to as “shared task representation” (Tindale et al, 1996), which can influence both group processes and outcomes. Tindale et al argue that the members of the group that favor an alternative consistent with shared task representations would eventually have more power within the group.

The literature on group decision making presented above focuses only on some theoretical perspectives in the field, and so it is now important to review an empirical study on group decision making in the context of a cultural frame. The objective of the study was to investigate how national culture and certain other factors that affect majority influence in group decision making. The authors (Zhang et al, 2007) developed a model of different teams. The findings of the study point that the effects of majority influence on decision making can be reduced through computer mediated techniques for communications instead of Face to face settings. The majority influence is also high in homogenous (same culture) collectivistic groups as compared to heterogeneous individualistic or collectivistic groups.

The following table provides a brief account of the developments in the group decision making literature:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Phases</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Key authors</th>
<th>Highlights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Models that describe how team consensus are made</td>
<td>1960’s and 1970’s</td>
<td>Lorge &amp; Solomon (1955), Smoke &amp; Zajonc (1962), Davis (1973), etc.</td>
<td>Social Decision Scheme and more models that combine member preferences Key topics – Jury decision making, group polarization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited or no discussion</td>
<td>1995 onwards</td>
<td>Budescu &amp; Rantilla (2000), Sniezek (1992), Sniezek &amp; Buckley (1995)</td>
<td>Multiple sources to provide decision alternatives, but one decision maker Research focus on “judge advisor systems”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining and sharing cognitions</td>
<td>1985 onwards</td>
<td>Gigone &amp; Hastie (1993, 1996), Stasser &amp; Titus (1985), etc.</td>
<td>Results of empirical research reinforce the need to sharing cues Sharing cues leads to better decisions, faster group consensus and decision implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitively central group members</td>
<td>1997 onwards</td>
<td>Kameda, Ohtsubo, &amp; Takezawa (1997), Sargis &amp; Larson (2002), Wittenbaum (1999)</td>
<td>Degree of information overlap determines the cognitive centrality of members Such members are influential when they hold important information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Task Representation</td>
<td>1980’s and 1990’s</td>
<td>Tindale et al (1996), Laughlin &amp; Ellis (1986),</td>
<td>Groups share conceptual system of ideas that makes them superior to individual decision makers Alternatives that are consistent with shared task representation are chosen eventually.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Developments in Group Decision Making Research

2.3.3 Culture and Decision Making

McCracken (1986) described culture using the metaphor of cultural knowledge as a lens that colors people’s perception of objects and messages in the environment. Among other things it is the national culture that plays a significant role in group decision making as it directly impacts behavior of individuals (Doney et al., 1998) and their use of products and technologies (Honold, 2000).

Studies in the marketing literature over past several years have concluded that culture has a significant impact on consumer decision behavior (eg. Tse et al, 1988; Radford et al., 1991). It is generally known that culture influences the tendencies of individuals to prefer particular states of affairs over the others. This provides sufficient grounds to assume that the cultural influence on consumer decision behavior and decision making in project teams is by and large the same.
Cultural influence is observed to be significantly high when the decision situation is risky (Tse et al, 1988) as well as when the decision chosen has to be accompanied by a justification for the choice (Briley, Morris and Simonson, 2002). According to Tse and his colleagues, national and ethnic cultures differ with respect to the extent that they regulate behavior, attitudes and values. The visible differences observed in the decision patterns between the Western and non-Western cultures are attributed mainly to the individualistic and collectivistic orientations (eg. Radford et al. 1991; and Moore 1967; Chan 1986 quoted in Tse et al, 1988).

The following conclusions about how cultures influence decision making are made based on the results and findings of empirical studies conducted in different cultures including North America, Japan, Australia and China to observe their influence on decision making among different classes of subjects including consumers, students and marketing professionals (Tse et al, 1988; Pascale, 1978; Radford et al, 1991, Briley et al, 2002):

- Cultural norms were observed to influence problem definition, and operating procedures and programs for processing information
- Intuition, feelings and emotions play a greater role in decision making in some cultures than in others.
- ‘Face saving’ that can either facilitate or hinder voicing of differences in opinions and ‘impression on others’ were observed to be major distinctive factors affecting decision making in different cultures
- Some cultures emphasize involvement and consensus of all team members and subordinates, while other cultures expect subordinates to quietly obey decisions made by their superiors
- Cultural differences in mixed cultural business relationships influence decision making only in the early stages, however gradually such influences erode when making cooperative decisions in case of long term relationships
- Different cultures prescribe different patterns of rewards and punishments
- Cultures also affect business decisions by influencing risk taking patterns.
- Extent of importance given to group goals versus individual goals is also affected by culture
- Communication and consultative decision processes that are found to be better in some cultures and not so good in others are highly instrumental in making quick decisions and implementing them.
- When asked to give reasons for their decision choice, individuals tend to choose such alternatives that are more verbalizable and often such choice is generated by accessing norms and decision rules that are conferred by their culture.

The above empirical studies were chosen for review as each focused on and compared two or more extremely different cultures, the Western and non-Western cultures. These cultures, according to Hofstede’s framework (1980) are visibly distinct from each other on all five dimensions, which allow us to identify the major cultural aspects that are to a large extent diverse in the different countries (Triandis, 1989) and are most likely to influence decision patterns in those countries.

Given the dynamics of cultural influence on decision making, it becomes highly essential to understand the cultural factors while working in mixed culture teams. The
integrative decision space model (Handley and Heacox, 2004) takes into account these factors to optimize the result of the decision making process. The cultural component of the model identifies the value of the individual’s cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede, using their nationality, which are later used to define the value of impact parameters that affect the decision-making process. The result of this cultural component is then combined with those of three other components to create a decision space.

The following table summarizes findings of selected empirical studies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Geographical Context</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Tse, Lee, Vertinsky and Wehrung</td>
<td>China, Hong Kong, Canada</td>
<td>Cultural norms influence problem definition, operating procedures and programs for information processing, generation of alternatives, risk taking patterns, prescribes patterns or rewards and punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Pascale</td>
<td>Japan and USA</td>
<td>Communication and consultative decision making processes highly affect the speed of decision making and implementing them. Influence of cultural differences in decision making gradually erode to facilitate cooperative decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Radford, Mann and Nakane</td>
<td>Australia and Japan</td>
<td>'Face saving' and 'impression on others' are important cultural factors. Team consensus versus authoritative decision making is a choice influenced by culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 Key Findings of Selected Empirical Studies

2.3.4 Decision Making Summary

Decision making is an important and inevitable process undertaken several times in a project. The behavioral aspects of decision making have been the interest of researchers since many decades. The theories developed by these researchers and authors provide the fundamentals of psychology in decision making and also underpin the current research. The section on group decision making highlights the important project management aspect of information sharing and communication amongst the team members. The section also discusses other concerns of team decision making including majority influence, power and modes of knowledge sharing, which provide the necessary information to guide research process for the collection of decision making data. The last section points out the direct impact of culture on decision making. These findings inform us as to when the cultural factors come into place in the decision making process, and this knowledge has further guided the design of the interview guide employed in the research process.
2.4 Knowledge Gap and Summary

Shore and Cross (2005) mentioned that although culture’s role in management is widely recognized, there is small number of literature that in fact addresses culture’s role in project management including decision making. Moreover, there is no evidence showing the in-depth knowledge or research on the role of national culture, i.e. cultural dimensions which could affect individual’s behavior in project management. Henrie and Sousa-Poza (2005) after reviewing almost 800 academic journals and 100 books, concluded that a clear consensus of culture definition and its impact within project management literature is missing. They also stated that most of the published project management literature emphasizes more on tools, techniques, while the cultural aspects are ignored (Kloppenborg and Opfer, 2000, cited in Henrie and Sousa-Poza, 2005). Henrie and Sousa-Poza embraced the fact that culture plays the critical role, generating both positive and negative impact (Shore and Cross, 2005), in project team since all the team members bring their own culture into the team, and that culture shapes the core decision making process within the team. However, there is still limited empirical research being applied to this area since 1993-2003 (Henrie and Sousa-Poza, 2005). The evidence suggested by Shore and Cross (2005) together with Müller et al (2007) shows that the cultural dimensions can be valuable in explaining the preferences that guide management behavior and decision making. In fact, Müller et al (2007) have conducted the research on cultural differences in decision making in a mixed-culture project teams, involving 2 nationalities which are German and Swedish. However the research focusing on one national culture’s impact in comparison with another’s on decision making in project team is still absent.

It is important for the project manager to understand national cultural factors that could impact project management as a whole, since the culture could be useful in terms of providing framework to explore the complexities of the management process. Therefore by implementing the framework, project managers can develop a more sensible approach of comprehending and managing the cultural differences that are anticipated in international projects (Shore and Cross, 2004).

As heterogeneity of cultures in project teams increases, the gap in the knowledge of the other cultures widens, and with it increases the complexities of managing the mixed culture project teams. To overcome the gap, this research attempts to identify cultural factors that affect team decision making processes in two countries within the same industry. These findings bring to surface similarities and more importantly differences in the influence of the two cultures on the decision making aspect of project management. The following chapter discusses in detail the tools and techniques used in this research with the objective to narrow the gap between the existing knowledge on cultural influence on project management and the relatively unexplored area of cultural impact on decision making in project teams.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research tool used for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data; and the rationale for the selection of the same. In order to guide the research process in the appropriate direction, answers to the following questions designed keeping in mind the research objectives were sought:

(1) What contributions can the authors make from their existing knowledge and understanding of key concepts in their roles as researchers?

(2) Which examples of identifiable, existing research can be used to inform the research process?

(3) What specific measures will be undertaken to ensure the validity and reliability of research results?

3.2 Research Paradigm

A ‘paradigm’ according to Bryman (1988: 4) is a ‘cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, how results should be interpreted and so on’. The social science disciplines however were never pre-eminent and thus are deemed to be ‘pre-paradigmatic’ (Bryman and Bell, 2003), meaning they compete for paradigmatic status. In the following research methodology also, we look at the two competing paradigms of ontological and epistemological considerations.

Ontological Considerations

Through this research we seek knowledge on how a country’s culture affects the decision making processes in project teams. However, this search will be guided by the assumptions we made about the participating organizations and the purpose of the research based on our views of the same. The two major assumptions among others are:

(1) cultural influence on decision making is a social phenomenon that is produced as a result of social interaction (and is in a constant state of revision);

(2) the appropriate research process would be to study models of human decision behavior in the participating organizations.

As the above assumptions take into account authors’ views and perceptions of reality, they are based on ontological considerations. Moreover, the belief that cultural influence is dependent on human actors rejects the objectivism position and holds the constructivism point of view of ontology.
Epistemological Considerations

Just as the ontological considerations look into what is identified and accepted as reality, the epistemological considerations determine what acceptable knowledge can be used to test and describe the reality. This research concerns with a social science discipline, which for the reasons as explained in the assumptions above can not be studied according to the principles and procedures of natural science. The subject matters of this research are individuals working in project teams, whose behavior cannot be assumed to be the same. Therefore an interpretivism view as opposed to a positivism view is taken into account when designing the research procedure.

Another paradigm that can be used to describe the philosophy for this research is the ‘interpretative’ view (Burrell and Morgan. 1979). This paradigm seeks to explain behavior from the individual's viewpoint, which is achieved by observing on-going processes. It is based on the assumptions that an organization is a socially constructed product and the social experience of individuals is subjective, and; through research minor changes can be suggested to improve organization processes.

3.3 Research Strategy: Qualitative Research

As mentioned above the social experiences of individuals are subjective and thus cannot be measured using quantitative research tools. Therefore, in the collection and analysis of data, the emphasis is on words rather than quantification.

As a research strategy a qualitative approach is generally inductive as opposed to deductive. In the case of this research, theory does not guide research, but on the contrary it is generated as an outcome of research. As a result a greater emphasis is laid on establishing credibility of the conclusions and findings to convince the readers of their significance.

Main steps in Qualitative Research

The main steps are adapted from the qualitative research model developed and used by Prasad (1993) as quoted in Bryman and Bell (2003). The following steps describe in brief an outline of the research procedure adopted for the thesis.

1. General research question

The research background aptly describes the links between increased globalization and the resulting projectification of organizations around the globe with an ever-increasing demand to understand the cultures of different countries to the extent they influence decision making styles of project teams. Such an understanding will help organizations to manage mixed culture teams. These findings led us to develop the research question as is stated in Chapter 1.

The research objectives are milestones that would help to answer the research question. These objectives are not expressed as questions to determine what specific answers would fulfill the research aims:
- What are the theoretical frameworks surrounding the concepts of culture and decision making?
- What are the practitioners’ perspectives on the influence of their respective culture on decision making in project teams?
- What are the similarities and differences in cultural influence on decision making between Indian and Thai organizations?
- What conclusions in terms of lessons for the formation of future mixed Indian-Thai teams can be made?

The research procedure seeks to answer the above questions through the collection, analysis and interpretation of the relevant data.

2. Selecting the relevant subjects

This research has employed *Theoretical sampling* which is described by Glaser and Strauss (1967: 62) as ‘the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst … decides what data to collect … [and] where to find them in order to develop theory as it emerges’. The subjects so selected for the research are six large multi-national IT service providers. Members of IT project teams of these companies are often sent overseas on assignments and are thus exposed to working cultures of different countries. However, these individuals are presumably most influenced by their national culture and based on their experience, they can provide detailed accounts of the impact their culture has on decisions made in teams. A total of twelve people, two from each organization were chosen for interviewing from both the countries.

3. Collection of relevant data

It is recognized that the interviewees would have multiple perspectives regarding cultural influence on team decision making. To capture the different viewpoints semi-structured interview would be used as a tool for data collection. The responses collected through interviews would be coded and compared to see dissimilarities between responses of both the interviewees of each company. If significant differences are found, further data would be sought by interviewing a third individual from the same company. In case three interviews are conducted responses from all three respondents will be used for analysis highlighting the significant differences. Please refer to section 3.5 for more information on data collection both primary and secondary.

4. Interpretation of data

The data collected will be interpreted using three coding practices (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The data will first be categorized based upon the similarities and differences between statements of the interviewees using open coding. These categories will be linked to one another by making sensible connections using axial coding; and the relevant categories would be chosen through selective coding and would be linked to the other categories so as to help in answering the research question. More detailed information can be found in section 3.6 under data analysis.
5. Writing up findings and conclusions

The conclusion would be in the form of distinct decision making practices that can be directly linked to the respective cultures of Indian and Thai organizations. Therefore, information sought from the data collected would be such statements and phrases that are similar within each culture such as to develop a team decision making style for each country; and such statements or words that show completely dissimilar traits in decision making styles between the two countries such that a distinct pattern for decision making in each country can be developed.

3.4 Research Tool: Interviews

A personal interview as against a survey questionnaire was chosen as it would help to adjust the large amount of subjective information and multiple interpretations of different interviewees in the data collected. However, due to the limitations of time and scope, a detailed observation of participants would not be possible for data collection.

A semi-structured interview would allow the questions to be modified to include all the perspectives the interviewee may have. On the other hand the attention paid to little structure would ensure that similar information is sought from all interviewees. A semi-structured interview is relatively more flexible and allows including what the interviewees perceive as relevant and important.

Interview Guide

While preparing the interview guide care was taken to divide the questions into three major categories for the systematic flow of questions. The two major categories were demographic questions and questions on cultural influence on decision making. The two sub-categories in the second category included questions related to culture and decision making.

The questions were allowed to be more general than specific so as to broaden the scope for answers. Attention to little details such as use of simple language, obtaining personal information, and avoiding company sensitive information was made.

The interview guide was based on the understanding of theoretical concepts studied in the literature review, and the way in which these concepts could be used to draw the relevant data to answer the research question and fulfill the research objectives. The first draft of questions was tested using a pilot test, and subsequently revisions were made to incorporate suggested relevant changes.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Primary Data

The study concerned investigating the national cultures’ influence on decision making in project teams and the primary data sought by the semi-structured interviews comprised the perspective of project managers and members of project teams on this
initiative. The primary data collected in Thailand were all from project managers’ perspectives, whereas in India the data was collected from three different tiers of project team members including project manager, the team or module leaders and the software developers who are in the bottom tier of IT teams.

- Company Information

The interviews were conducted in 6 large organizations 3 in Thailand and the other 3 in India. The selected companies deal entirely with information technology (IT) business by providing different services to their clients including IT solutions, application development technology, IT outsourcing, and service maintenance. These companies are involved both in domestic and international IT projects not only at small (less than US $2 millions) but also at large (over US $2 millions) scale project. Among the 3 companies in Thailand, 2 of them are foreign companies from the United States of America, but have established their subsidiaries in Thailand for over 30 years. Another company is in fact originated in Thailand by Thai citizens. The 3 Indian firms are also large IT solution providers, operating across multiple nations. Two of the companies are based in India having operations worldwide, while the third is a division of a US company in India. The more detailed information about each company can be found below. The initials T and I correspond to the first letter of Thailand and India respectively.

**Company T-A** – was established in 1952 and now is a world class quality and outstanding company that excels in offering innovative IT solutions for its clients success. The company proposes a wide range of IT services that claims that can deliver measurable business results. The offers this company proposes are business continuity and resiliency (maintain business operation under virtually any condition which complies with regulations), end user services (give guidance to end user from any time or place), integrated communications (design, implement and manages the networking environment of the company), maintenance and technical support, outsourcing (focuses on the core business and at the same time driving innovation and efficiency), security (access your security position and design), implement and manage measures both internal and external, server, site, storage and data services (simplify storage and manage data more efficiently to sustain business growth). These services are highly beneficial to companies who invest in IT as this would improve their day to day running of their business and therefore generating a higher return.

**Company T-B** – a trusted advisor of vast number of national and international companies within Thailand serves both private and public enterprises and is Thailand’s most successful systems integration professional service firm focusing on telecommunications, financial services, manufacturing, energy and education. With a main objective to tackle IT infrastructure, systems and storage management, convergent network integration, security, enterprise application and integration, disaster recovery, outsourcing and professional services to maximize their clients return on IT investment. As a result of their renowned expertise in the IT field they achieved the ISO9001:2000 certificate from SGS in 2004.
Company B has three wholly-owned subsidiaries and is in complete control of these companies. These three subsidiaries are also leading the market in their segments. The first subsidiary combines market leading skills in infrastructure, system management, security and applications to maintain their client’s information system requirements. The second subsidiary is a main provider in the most up-to-date technology and solution to meet client’s IT application requirements. The company has unique capabilities to be flexible which facilitates full commitment and support for every range of solution. The third subsidiary for over 12 years has provided a combination of solutions and core technology unmatched by rival firms and is therefore Thailand’s leading total network integration contributor. This indicates the success the company B has urbanized.

Company T-C – with a long history, company T-C is currently the world’s fifth-largest integrated energy company with the expenditures including partners from 1962 to 2006 of US$ 12.75 billion. The company has its own IT supporting subsidiary in many different countries all over the world. One of its main IT divisions was certainly located in Thailand. As the top oil and gas producer, the unit in Thailand daily operates more than 160 platforms in the Gulf of Thailand with total production of roughly 100,000 barrels of oil, 40,000 barrels of condensate and 1.5 billion gross cubic feet of natural gas. The IT strategic business unit plays the crucial role in developing IT solutions to achieve world-class performance including systematic management of safety, health, environment, reliability and efficiency of the operation. Company T-C utilizes proven and emerging technologies to improve the overall performance to achieve the operational excellence. The company was the first to introduce advanced technology such as water flood system for crude oil production, and system design of facilities and equipment for ongoing staff training.

With its high effort and great performance, company T-C has been recognized not only by local but also international organizations to receive various impressive awards, including the 1994 and 2004 Prime Minister’s Outstanding Industry Award for Safety Management, the 1998 Prime Minister’s Outstanding Industry Award for Environmental Management, the ISO 9001 and IS) 14001 certifications from SGS Company of Switzerland, and the ISO 17025 certification for their laboratory from the Thai Industrial Standards Institute, Ministry of Industry.

The organizational structure of the company in management level consists of managing director at the top, president, four general managers (operations services, assets, policy, government and public affairs, and finance), and six managers (operational excellence, medical and security, legal manager, operations planning, human resources, information technology and finally base business).

Company I-A – is India’s leading IT company, which today employs 74,000 consultants and claims to have more than 100,000 person years of experience. Commencing operations in 1968, the company became the pioneer in India to develop an offshore delivery model for IT services. The company operates in 34 countries across the globe serving varied industries such as banking, financial and insurance, manufacturing, telecommunications, retail, media and entertainment to name a few. In the financial year 2006-07 the company recorded global revenues of USD 4.3 billion.
Company I-A is the proud recipient of a number of national and international awards which among other include the Best IT service provider in the 2007 Global Services 100 listing, IBM Asia Pacific Excellence Award for Consultants and Integrators in 2005, Dataquest-IDC Best Employer in IT services, Hangzhou Government’s Management Innovation Award. The company has embraced quality parameters of IEEE, ISO 9001:2000, CMMI, SW-CMM, P-CMM and Six Sigma.

The management structure of Company I-A has the CEO-MD at the top, at the second level are the functional heads – CFO, Corporate Affairs, Global Sales and Operations, and Global Human Resources, and under them are the Geographical Heads of India, North America, UK, Europe, Asia Pacific, Iberoamerica, and MEA.

**Company I-B** – was started in 1981 and today it has its offices in 22 countries and serves such diverse industries as aerospace and defense, automotive, banking, communications, energy, healthcare, insurance, life sciences, retail and many others. Its service offerings span business and technology consulting, application services, systems integration, product engineering, custom software development, maintenance, re-engineering, independent testing and validation services, IT infrastructure services and business process outsourcing. The revenues of the company have been growing consistently and in the last financial year they were USD 3.3 billion.

I-B has time and again been honored by customers, industry bodies, media and other influencers. Some of these awards include the Best IT Services Technology Project of the Year at the CNET UK Awards, the Platinum Award for Excellence in People Management by Grow Talent Company Limited and Businessworld Magazine. The company has been placed by the Fortune Magazine amongst the Ten Top Companies for Leaders – for producing the strongest leaders in the world.

The management council of Company I-B comprises of 44 members, which is led by the CEO-CMD. There are 40 heads of functional departments and 3 geographical heads under the CEO-CMD.

**Company I-C** – is one of the world’s largest IT services and consulting providers. It is an American company which has re-entered India in 1992 after an exit in the 1970’s. I-C is the only IT company in the world and in India that offers end-to-end solutions to customers from hardware to software, services and consulting. The services cover the entire spectrum of the customer’s e-business needs from the business transformation and industry expertise consulting to infrastructure, technology design and training services. Its global revenue at the year end 2006 was USD 91 billion.

I-C’s areas of expertise in India are business continuity and resiliency services, integrated communication services, IT strategy and architecture services and outsourcing services. The company has two out of its eight research labs in India. The IT consulting division, the research labs and the company’s journal of R & D have together received a number of awards. These among others include: HPC Challenge Award at Supercomputing 2006, Best Paper Award at DSOM Conference 2006, and numerous other awards from the parent company in the USA.
At the top of the organizational structure is the Chairman, President and the Chief Operating Officer. Under him are the senior executive officers of the following divisions: Sales and Distribution, Innovation and Technology, Marketing and Strategy, Finance, Research, Communications and Human Resources.

- Interview Questions

A set of interview questions was adapted from the previous study regarding national culture’s impact on decision making in a mixed-project team (Müller et al., 2007) and developed further based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and decision making in all aspects that could help to answer the research question. There were 2 sections in the interview questions, first asking about the respondents’ demographic information and the second dealing with cultural aspects and decision making. The original version was written in English, however, there was a need to translate the questions into Thai so that it is easier for the interviewees in Thailand to comprehend and respond. For Indian respondents, the questions are asked in English as it was in original version.

The majority of the interview questions are open-ended (some yes/no questions are introduced in relevant with another sub-question asking for more in-depth reason why and how) in order to encourage the respondents to develop and provide extensive answers during the interview (Denscombe, 1998). To avoid the interview bias, the interviewers were conscious and carefully asked questions without leading subjects into preferable answers. The interview questions both in English and Thai are shown in appendix A and B sequentially.

During the interview, a trusting atmosphere (Bryman, 2003) was created by clearly stating that all information gathered was to be confidential and remain anonymous. Moreover, to encourage the interviewees to share detailed and honest information, they were informed that the results of the study were only for academic and not for business or commercial purposes.

- Pilot Test

To ensure that the respondents will understand and be able to answer the interview questions, the interview questions were distributed to 26 classmates (masters in strategic project management) after the approval by the supervisor. Consequently, there were some misunderstanding and misinterpretation of questions. Therefore, the interview questions were revised. Finally, the 2 pilot testing interviews were conducted, not only to ensure the comprehensiveness of the questions (Burns, 2000), but also to guide the length of the actual interview. The interviews were planned to be finished in 45-60 minutes, however, after the pilot tests the scheduled time was changed since all the questions were answered fully within 40 minutes.

3.5.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data, indeed, was collected mainly to explore the study in cultural and decision making field, to find the knowledge gap and for the purpose of writing up the literature review. The data was collected through extensive research from a wide
range of sources such as books, academic and practitioner journals, articles, conference reports, newspapers, websites, etc. After reviewing the secondary data, we chose to base our study on the research done by Müller et al (2007) on cultural differences in decision making in mixed German-Swedish project teams as it inspired us to conduct the research on decision making in our home country’s project team which are Thai and Indian and compare the results between them. The authors have again utilized the information from secondary sources mainly from books on research methodology to be able to conduct the extensive research hoping to generate immense contribution to the area of business studies concerning globalization.

3.6 Data Analysis

Rich information was gathered from the interviews. By reviewing through all the qualitative responses led to significant insights. However, data analysis and summary are difficult and challenging to be made. Therefore, coding was chosen and used as a tool to identify patterns and relationship as well as the data blocks for the content analysis. According to Collins and Hussey (2000), a common mistake in qualitative research is that the authors highlight or pay attention too much on an articulately expressed, yet not widely shared opinion. To reduce the chances of making this mistake, coding can be used to organize, manage and retrieve the meaningful data collected. It also allows similar responses to be categorized and grouped together.

Data coding was done in 3 main stages. Initially, reflecting the interview questions, the first set of generic codes (open coding) was allocated to examine the impact of different cultural aspects on decision making based on secondary data. We also use this type of coding to distinguish the similarity and differences among the respondents country by country. In short, we started to analyze the data we collected from 2 countries separately by looking at the similarity and the differences in the answers we got. Nevertheless, it could not cover all the descriptive information from the interview. For that reason, closer attention was paid during the interview and hence the second set of codes was formed to label words and phrases (axial coding) from the content of the responses and finally review and link them together. Once the 2 data coding stages were done, we will select the most significant information and put them in our comparison between the 2 countries by using selective coding. After using the 3 coding, the data set from both primary and secondary data on national culture’s influence on decision making in project teams were cross-analyzed. As a result, the answer for our research question became clear.

3.7 Reliability and Validity of Research

The two levels at which reliability and validity of the qualitative research are measured are the research procedure and the results of the research. Reliability is concerned with the repeatability of the results of a study, whereas validity refers to the extent to which the research measures what is said to be measured or observed. LeCompte and Goetz’s (1982; as quoted in Bryman and Bell, 2003) measures of reliability and validity are:
External Reliability

This refers to the degree to which the study can be replicated. This research can be replicated by conducting a similar study of cultures and their influence on team decision making in different countries on a larger scale. Similar studies can also be conducted to observe different aspects of project management other than decision making. This proves the study has the required external reliability.

Internal Reliability

The internal reliability refers to the extent to which the responses of multiple interviewees are consistent or there is sufficient coherence between the responses and the indicators used to measure them for all the interviews. In order to maintain adequate internal reliability we would interview two people from each company. Their responses would then be divided into two sections, namely cultural aspects and decision making, and the correlation for each section would be compared with the other. If the correlation is found to be high, there would be significant consistency in the responses. If it is found to be poor, a third individual from the company would be interviewed to improve the correlation.

Internal Validity

It is the congruence between theoretical concepts and observations of researchers. To attain a high degree of congruence, the interview questions were framed based on an understanding of the theories surrounding culture and decision making. The principal concepts among these being Hofstede’s five dimensions of culture and team decision making theories and models.

External Validity

It is the extent to which results can be generalized from samples to populations. To enrich the quality of the sample, members of project teams from different tiers were included from the various companies studied for research. Responses from only two interviewees sufficed the purpose of the study, which shows the limited variation in responses of the sample. These findings show that the results obtained from the sample can be generalized over a larger population to a certain extent. Moreover, the theoretical framework upon which the study is based – Hofstede’s dimensions of culture were based on a large population from over 50 countries, which itself is a proof of the external validity of the current study.

3.8 Summary

The research methodology chapter fulfills its objective of selecting an appropriate research tool given the limitations of time and scope. In the process of selecting the tool, the above chapter has taken into consideration the literature reviewed and both authors’ knowledge on the key concepts to study the research paradigm. The assumptions made thereafter justify the use of a qualitative-inductive study. In this research, we hold the constructivism point of view of ontology using inductive approach by collecting qualitative data via semi-structured interviews. The findings would then be analyzed using grounded theory approach. A step by step procedure adapted from a published empirical study for conducting qualitative research has been
followed in order to avoid any major anomalies. The selection of interviews as the research tool has been supported by justification for the choice. The process of preparing the interview questions has also been described in brief. The important chapter of data collection and analysis has been introduced explaining in detail both processes. In the end the chapter also explains how reliability and validity of this study have been touched upon and can be measured.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

Hofstede’s framework on 5 cultural dimensions (1980) allows us to identify the major cultural aspects that are considerably diverse in the different countries (Triandis, 1989) and are most likely to influence decision patterns in those countries.

This chapter, based on the data collected, aims to investigate the national cultures aspects’ impact on decision making and to identify similarities and disparities in the way decisions are made in IT teams in 2 countries of interest, which are Thailand and India. Subsequently, the useful lessons on cultural impact on decision making for single-culture and mixed-culture project teams can be drawn. The information given in this chapter was supported by analysis of primary research findings from interviews, paying particular attention to theoretical arguments grounded within the literature review.

The interviews were conducted with IT project team members from 3 companies in Thailand and the other 3 in India. The interviewees were asked questions on their national culture that could have impact on decision making in IT project team. The respondents will be referred by country, followed by the company and respondent number, such as T-A1 (Thailand – company A, respondent # 1) and I-B2 (India – company B, respondent # 2). Therefore the respondents from Thailand were T-A1, T-A2, T-B1, T-B2, T-C1, T-C2 and the Indian respondents were I-A1, I-A2, I-B1, I-B2, I-C1, and I-C2. All interview responses can be found in Appendices 3 and 4 for Thailand and India respectively.

4.2 Categories of Findings

Open, axial and selective coding are useful in exploring patterns and deviation to show the similarities and differences between the IT project teams in Thailand and India. Therefore the mechanism is adopted to categorize and analyze the data to answer the research question. The 2 main areas based on the framework from the literature reviews that were analyzed are cultural divergence and decision process differences. Each of them has major categories as followed, which were formed prior to the interviews based on interview questions and also derived from the data collected (sub-categories applied when appropriate):

Part A: Cultural differences categories included:
1. Organization
   - Organizational culture and system
   - Flexibility in working
   - Conflict approach
2. Team/Consensus orientation
3. Individualism/Collectivism
4. Communication
   - Discussion Atmosphere
   - Formality/Informality
Part B: Decision process differences categories were:
1. Decision making
   - Decision making style
   - Authority in making decision
   - Criteria and pattern in making decision
   - Best practice in IT teams
2. Decision implementation
   - Decision acceptance in teams
   - Acceptance of changes
   - Commitment to decision implementation
   - Clear responsibility

4.3 Findings and Analysis of Interviews

Primary research was conducted through twelve semi-structured interviews in IT industry, six with project team members in three companies in Thailand and the other six with the members in three companies in India. The interview focuses on cultural differences that may have influence on decision making in IT project teams. This section of the research aimed to address the cultural aspects and its impact on decision making based on the IT project team members’ perspectives in Thailand and India.

Part A: Cultural Difference

4.3.1 Organization

Organizational culture and system

Seniority – Due to a strict culture of respecting seniority, all Thai project managers have mentioned that seniority has always played an important role in Thai organizational culture. This may greatly be due to Thailand’s relatively high power distance index (refer to PDI score in figure 2.2) that people can accept the fact that the power is distributed unequally in the society. In the project organization, new roles and responsibilities were assigned, therefore in the project team seniority still appear to have impact but less compare to the organization as a whole. Five out of six Thai respondents (except T-C2 who opposed that due to a clear role defined for project team, seniority is left out of the project but still plays significant role in the organization) agreed that according to Thai way of doing things, seniority still exists and plays its role in project team. “It depends on the level of expertise of the project team members. The impact of seniority will be a lot less if the members are skillful and expert in IT area” (T-A1). Everyone in the project team will listen and pay more attention to what the superiors say and barely oppose that suggestion (T-A1, T-B1, T-C1). In addition, the project manager would hesitate to make decision in opposition to the members who have more experience with higher position in the organization (T-B2). Seniority and organizational positions (hierarchy) always influence highly on every process in the project including decision making in project teams (T-A2, T-C1). Nevertheless, respondent T-B2 stated that “if I am very confident with what I am doing, I will have to make decision regardless seniority and superiority”.

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The Indians have different viewpoints on seniority in organizations. Although the Power Distance Index of India (figure 2.3) reflects the huge divide between the more powerful and the less powerful, some of the Indian respondents have stated that seniority in organizations has little influence on project management in general and decision making in particular (I-A1 and I-C1). According to I-A1 the ability to make better decisions does not necessarily come from seniority in position, rather it is the experience and knowledge in the specific area that contributes to better decision making. On the other hand I-B2 has stated and I-A2 would agree that the Indian culture teaches us not to ask questions to the seniors. This actually discourages the juniors from seeking important information and most decisions are left to be made by seniors. However, I-B2 is now seeing a change in the trend of complete confidence in senior’s decisions, and he is hopeful of a total turnaround in the trend in some years. Respondent I-B1 on the other hand states that certain seniors themselves want to exercise control in making important decisions, irrespective of what the culture teaches them to do. This not only leaves a lot of the team members dissatisfied, but sometimes also results in the managers making unreasonable expectations from the team. This would eventually add to the dissatisfaction of the employees, thereby resulting in a high attrition rate for the company (I-B1).

Sometimes, even promotions in project teams were based on factors other than seniority. I-A1 was made the project manager of her team even when she had only completed 1 year with the company as an intern because she had put in considerable amount of time in the project and she was closest to the technical aspects of it.

There are two respondents (I-B2 and I-A2) from all who attribute the significance of seniority to the Indian culture. I-C2 believes that the respect for seniority in her organization originated from the organization’s culture and not Indian culture. The remaining respondents have provided evidence of the fading divide between the seniors and juniors in their respective companies.

Relationship (Friendship) – Half of Thai respondents (T-A1, T-A2, T-B2) mentioned a high impact of project team members’ relationship on decision making in project team. Sometimes the benefits and disadvantages of alternative options may be overlooked due to the friendship of the project team members (T-A2). It also impact in the way that the option can be predicted by project team members if it will be agreed or opposed by other members, therefore that person can take advantage of preparing strategy to persuade the team members to change the direction and believe in what he/she said (T-B2). Respondent T-B1, T-C1 and T-C2 stated that the relationship of the project team members do have some impact but not so high depending on the personality of each one of them (T-C1). However that impact will increase and greatly influence the decision making when the decision is 50-50 votes. People will go along with their friend’s opinion or vote, but still the process is still analytic and always ends up with realistic choice (T-B1). Instead of having great impact on decision making, relationship or friendship of project team members actually helps the team to proceed with the work smoothly (T-C2) and resulting less conflict and argument (T-A1). All the response from Thai project managers proved that Thai project teams normally work as family very calmly (cool-heartedness or jai-yen) and in a humble way allowing more flexibility and reduce argument.
With the exception of two (I-B1, and I-B2), all other Indian respondents believe that relationships do not influence decision making in teams. According to I-B2 relationships shape team dynamics, and influence decision making, working in teams and reactions to team members. I-B2 believes that personal relationships play a very important role and have considerable impact in decision making. Although I-C2 does not see any influence of relationships on decisions, she feels you tend to approach with your problems those members of the team with whom you have developed closeness or an informal relationship. Respondent I-A2 holds a neutral stand point as far as influence of relationships is concerned. According to him relationships may affect decision making in some teams but not all. Sometimes interpersonal relationships may also hinder decision making (I-B2), especially when there is very little client interface and an absence of professionalism in the way the team works.

**Flexibility in working**

All Thai respondents stated that there is high flexibility in working in Thai project team. Therefore there is not much pressure when processing the work, which can help the project team members to work more freely, comfortably (T-A2) and creatively with less conflict (T-C2). When there is flexibility allowed in the project working environment, people tend to be less aggressive (T-B1) and discuss more about the problems or uncertain events since the scope of work can be amended (T-B2) or adjusted when appropriate (T-B1). Also because Thai people tend to take less accountability or be less proactive, that is why high flexibility in project team is allowed (T-C1). Respondent T-A1, nonetheless appreciated the fact that Thai teams do allow high degree of flexibility while working in project, stated the bad points about having too much flexibility that it results in being not definite and not decisive enough to process to further stage of the project.

Most Indian respondents feel that flexibility is allowed to a certain level especially in smaller teams of a maximum of 25 people. The flexibility allowed is however a recent phenomenon, which did not exist 6-7 years ago, when most of the team members were only expected to take directions from project managers (I-B2). All respondents barring I-B1 agreed to have the flexibility to make decisions concerning their individual work on their own and in the manner they want to. In I-C2’s team the flexibility in work is minimized as each and every process performed in a team has to be in accordance with the guidelines and standards. However, according to her, such rigidness helps to standardize work across all countries in which the company operates and co-ordinate the cross-cultural teams. I-B1 has stated that in a big team like hers, the managers make most of the decisions internally. By not considering the inputs from the team members, the managers run the risk of creating unreasonable schedules for the team members and thus putting them under pressure.

**Conflict Approach**

Generally Thai project team members will try to avoid generating conflict (T-A1, T-A2, T-C2) and having any hard-feelings (T-B2, T-C1) with anyone in the project team at the first place. However when it already happened, not very surprising that all respondents mentioned about the way Thai people approach conflicts as “compromising”. All Thai project managers kept repeating that they always
compromise and avoid having argument within the project team. Everything will be taken care of calmly (jai-yen or cold-heartedness), therefore to keep all parties satisfied and continue working in the project as usual. It can be referred to figure 3 under masculinity; it showed Thai culture does not focus on achievement or material success, but rather emphasizes on relationship, modesty, and caring for others (Blodgett, 2001; Müller et al, 2007; Rana, 2007).

Although the Indian respondents have not explicitly mentioned a conflict resolution approach, their responses suggest that the Indian culture does to a certain extent help avoid conflicts. According to I-A1 and I-B2 under the influence of Indian culture people hesitate to ask questions to their seniors and shy away from making major decisions by themselves or without the consent of a superior. I-A1 and I-C1 believe in using a diplomatic approach when opposing a decision approved by the majority or taken by the seniors. I-A2 advises to think twice before opposing an already approved decision, which may be considered as an offence by the senior; and weigh the pros and cons before voicing an opinion.

4.3.2 Team/Consensus Orientation

When asking about the team consensus, the majority of Thai respondents firstly talked about the team’s sense of belonging then continued with the consensus aspect (T-A2, T-B1, T-B2, T-C1). Therefore, it could be implied that Thai project team members gave high importance to team orientation as well as keeping in mind the consensus of the team. Respondent T-C1 mentioned that in the organization, they always have group exercise for team building and generating the sense of belonging. When there is no consensus, the project team will go through phase gate process which is commonly used in the organization. Everything discussed in the team were kept confidentially and valued as important information (T-A2, T-B2). Respondent T-A1 and T-C2 stated clearly regarding the team consensus that when the decision cannot come to agreement, the votes must be taken to finalize the majority option. It is necessary for the project team members to have great sense of belonging as well as set high value for team commitment (T-A2) to be able to accept the situation when the decision cannot come to consensus. All the respondents have mentioned about numbers of meetings held to communicate and plan everything as a team as well as decision made by team committee (T-B2), not by individuals.

All the Indian respondents stated that the teams they worked with so far gave importance to team consensus, whenever the decision was made in teams. However, for decisions concerning financial aspects the team may not be consulted at all (I-C1). Team consensus also depends on the availability of time (I-B2), the project context and how welcoming the manager is (I-A1). Most respondents work with one team only for a project, after which the team is dissolved (with the exception of I-C1, who would continue working with the same team as long as he is employed in his current company). Some of the respondents have to work with several teams on one project alone (I-A1, I-A2 and I-C2). Moreover, interactions between teams situated in different locations (as was the case for I-C2) were very few and limited to formal discussions. Therefore, it can be assumed that before these employees develop a sense of belonging towards the team they may have to leave that team to join another one for a different project. Respondent I-C1’s responses however reflected concern for his
team and a sense of belongingness towards it. This concern of his made him change an appraisal system that according to him was inequitable towards his team.

### 4.3.3 Individualism/Collectivism

Throughout six interviews conducted from Thai project managers, it is perceived that Thais commonly do things more as a group or a team. Every issue raised will have to be discussed in the meeting and sorted out in team by having project manager as a leader or ‘facilitator for the discussion’ (T-C2). Thais sometimes are not decisive or not definite enough (T-A1) to make decision on their own due to the lack of confidence (T-B2, T-C1). Therefore they seek consultation and help from the project team members to generate best solution for the project, believing that more people working together is always better than working alone. The evidence was also supported by Hofstede’s score of Thailand on individualism (refer to figure 2.2) which was 20 out of 100, showing that people in this culture tend to do things more in a collective way. Group’s objectives or goals were always set as the first priority before individual ones (T-A2). “The performance of the project team is always the most important thing to keep in mind. Personal issues or other things need to be left outside the team” (T-B2).

Almost all Indian respondents feel that in making decisions the opinions and the best interests of all team members are taken into account. However, I-C1 is of the opinion that it is in the interest of the company to keep the employees satisfied. Moreover, when it comes to problem solving, individuals tend to handle the situation first by themselves before taking it up as an issue in the meetings (I-A2, I-B2 and I-C2). This explains why India’s Individualism index is higher than the Asian average (of 20). However, at times the concern for team is placed ahead of logical decision alternatives. An example of this is I-C1’s decision to stop the implementation of an appraisal system that would fail to adequately recognize the contributions of his team members. A hint of collectivism is also seen while expressing opinions and a concern for everyone’s feelings is reflected. I-A1 has stated that expressing an opinion by hurting someone’s feelings would adversely affect the health of the project. I-A2, I-B1, I-B2 and I-C1 have all stated that would be very cautious in doing so.

### 4.3.4 Communication

**Discussion Atmosphere**

The team discussion in the meeting seemed to be very open-minded and informal according to all Thai respondents’ answers. However respondent T-C1 mentioned that the discussion atmosphere in Thai team was not as active as Westerner and European teams. The statement was supported by the answer from respondent T-B1 saying that Thai people like to do things calmly and step by step. The process in Thai project team tends to be easy going (T-B2) as Thai culture put emphasis on cool-heartedness (jai-yen), however at the same time it was done very logically and reasonably (T-C1). Everyone in the team was encouraged to be creative during the process of brainstorming for ideas and different alternatives (T-B1, T-B2, T-C1). The discussion was also done in an analytical way (T-B2, T-C2) after finished brainstorming (T-B1,
T-A2) to mainly identify pros and cons of each option as well as to mitigate the risk (T-A1) via the variety use of tools for decision making (T-C1).

According to the response of project manager T-B2, the atmosphere of team discussion was done in 2 different ways. When the team members had high familiarity among themselves, the environment tended to be very open, informal and creative. However, it would result differently when the senior managers or superiors were involved in the team, generating certain level of pressure. Therefore, the discussion atmosphere will be more in the analytical and formal way.

According to the Indian respondents the team discussions are open-forums, where all members are asked to give their views and opinions on the topics being discussed. The discussions always follow an analytical and logical process. Even after the decision is finalized, an approval from everyone is sought (I-C1).

According to I-B2, before the discussion begins, the work is already divided into blocks of work that can be fairly distributed among the team members. The discussion process is enhanced by encouraging the team members to ask questions on suggested solutions or decision alternatives with the objective to establish their viability (I-C2). Although all team members are encouraged to give their opinions (I-B2 and I-C1), but because of poor team dynamics in some teams most of the people end up not speaking (I-B2). In case of very big teams of over 100 people, there are no discussions. The managers make the decisions themselves.

Formality/Informality

All Thai respondents have stated that the communication as well as the discussion was done informally. The majority said that it is due to the fact that Thai people always work as family with high level of friendship involvement. Not only the communication that was done casually (T-B2), the process of working was also planned and implemented in a relax way (T-A2, T-C1, T-B2), not to put pressure on the project team (T-B1, T-B2).

The informal communication is very important for Thai people who work in the project team because of the culture that emphasizes on face saving. During the meeting, if someone needs to make objection or give negative comment it will be done carefully (T-A1, T-B1, T-C1) in a very calm (T-B1, T-B2) attitude and indirectly (T-A1, T-A2, T-C2). If that objection is possible to be communicated before the meeting starts, Thai people will do so, in order not to surprise that person or to make him/her feel offensive and embarrassed (T-A2) and also to maintain good relationship with everyone in the project team (T-A1, T-C1).

Only two Indian respondents (I-A2 and I-B2) have acknowledged the aspect of informality in working with teams. In I-B2’s team some discussions are extremely informal. Such meetings can only be held when there is liberty of time. There are other discussions which are semi-professional/formal where long intense discussions are ended with 5-10 minutes of personal talks to cool down the atmosphere. However, when the teams are working directly with the clients they are required to maintain high levels of professionalism.
In India, because of numerous regional languages, the official language for business correspondences is English. However, respondent I-A1 has stated that communications with certain clients are mostly held in regional languages. This is considered informal in India.

On the other hand, in respondent I-C2’s organization, there is a prescribed formal code of conduct which everyone should strictly follow. Meetings can not be held without prior notification of the time and agenda. No discussions other than those mentioned in the agenda can be raised in the meetings. Such stern code of conduct is justified by the wide-spread operations of the company and the need to standardize processes.

Part B: Decision Process Differences

4.3.5 Decision Making

Decision making style

The majority of Thai project managers declared that there is no significant difference in decision making style in Thai IT project teams. The project team has full authority in any aspect regarding the project including decision making (T-A2, T-B2, T-C2) and generally the project manager is the one who makes decision for the team (T-A1, T-B1). Respondent T-C2 mentioned that “in our organization, the project team normally has someone called ‘decision executive’ to make decisions. The project team plays greater role in giving information and recommendation”. It is not compulsory for the project team to consult superior managers or the experts, but they can do so when they need guidance and if they feel not confident enough to make decision (T-A2, T-B1, T-C2). However, when the team makes decision they should keep the senior management informed (T-B1). All Thai respondents stated that, according to Thai style, people seem to be more ‘kreng-jai’ (obey and respect the superiors, elders and give high value to friendship) to each other, therefore “in Thai teams people with less seniority would stay back and do not play important role in decision making. They would support the decision of those who have higher position, while the superiors would give more feedback and are willing to take decision” (T-C1). Respondent T-B2 was the only one who mentioned that the decision making styles are varied depending on the team’s familiarity with different types of project as well as the team members themselves; hence two different styles of decision making were experienced. First style, “the project leader or project manager is the one who made decision” in the other word the decision is made by individual. Another style can also be seen when everyone in the team is familiar with one another, therefore the decision will be made by group or all members.

According to I-B1, in India the decision making style depends on the type of manager. Some managers make the decisions themselves, while others involve the entire team in the process (I-A2 and I-B1). For very big projects, which consist of 100-200 people, the managers have to make the decisions internally (I-B1) as participation of the entire team may not seem feasible. However, the leaders of each module can convey the suggestions, opinions, complaints or other issues of their teams to the project manager, who may consider these for making decisions.
There are different ways of involving the team. Respondent I-B2 mentioned the following three: a system of votes, where each vote carries equal weight; the project manager leads the discussion and the decision is arrived at through team consensus, and; the project manager takes the decision, informs the team about it and resolves any doubts or problems relating to the same.

If decisions are to be taken individually, respondent I-C2 suggests ways of seeking help from other team members in making the decision, or verifying a decision already taken for its appropriateness. The simplest way to get an opinion is to discuss the problem with another member during the peer review. If the problem still remains to be solved the issue can be raised during the team review, where all team members can contribute to the decision. Another alternative could be to ‘walk-in’ the office of any member outside the team and consult him/her on the problem situation. In addition to these the internal tool can also be used to seek solutions to problems by registering them into the tool. The tool would provide a solution in accordance with the type of project and its complexities. I-A2 in her company has the facility of a support group, which consists of experts in specific technical areas. The support group will help provide a work-around if not the best solution for a given problem.

Authority in making decision

According to the responses from 6 Thai project managers, the IT project teams in Thailand appeared to have ‘complete authority’ (T-B2) to make decision by themselves without the need of seeking approval or consultation from the experts or senior managers. Clear roles including level of authority of project team is always well-defined and communicated for the project team via the project charter (T-A1) and project team organizational chart (organizational breakdown structure), work breakdown structure (T-B2) before the project actually starts (T-A2). All Thai respondents clearly stated that if it is not a ‘major or complex decision’ (T-C1) and if the issue is under project team’s responsibility (mainly technical aspects) and within the scope of team’s capability, the project team has fully authority to make decision. However, when dealing with a large project with high cost involving (T-B2) or when the decision has to deal with the financial issues, the project team needs to consult the supervisors or general manager (T-B1) and send the proposal to senior managers or seek further assistance from the finance department (T-A1). Respondent T-A2 added that sometimes they need to involve people from those relevant departments to participate in the team to help each other choose the right decision. “In general we always have the consultant participating in the project team not to make decision but to guide us to the right direction. Finally it is down to the project manager to make decision after the team has discussed” (T-B1). To sum up all responses from Thai project managers, Thai project teams do have authority to make decision as long as it is under their expertise and responsibility which should be clearly stated in the project charter.

All the Indian respondents have stated that the team holds the complete authority to make decisions on technical aspects of the project. While the administrative or other non-technical decisions are taken by employees outside the project team (I-C2). Occasionally help from support groups or employees outside the team is sought (I-A1). The roles of the team members are very well defined and they are required to
take all the necessary decisions in order to complete the tasks assigned to them in that role (I-C2). If the management has objections with the decision made, then the team has to draft another decision conducive to all.

Respondent I-C1 in his position as project manager has only 80 percent of the control in decision making, while the remaining 20 percent remains with the top management. I-C1 exercises this 80 percent control by encouraging the entire team to contribute to the decision making process.

Criteria and pattern in making decision

The frequently mentioned criteria that were used to make decision in the project team in Thailand are:
- Sufficient information (T-C2, T-A1, T-B1, T-B2)
- Feasibility (T-B1, T-B2)
- Quality of decision (all respondents)
- Timing (T-C1, T-B1, T-B2)
- Budget (T-A1, T-A2, T-B1, T-B2, T-C1)
- Limited resources (T-B1, T-B2)
- Project success (T-B2, T-C2)
- Logic and reasonability (all respondents)
- Benefit and impact / value and trade off (all respondents)
- Risk assessment and management (T-A1, T-A2)
- ROI (T-A1, T-A2)

All Thai respondents stated that the criteria for decision making are relatively the same (no significant difference). Minor changes can be made depending on different situation and types of project. “Sometimes new criteria may introduce when the project is involving many stakeholders” (T-A2), “however the basic ones are kept the same” (T-A1). The majority of Thai respondents were positive that there is consistent pattern of making decision in their organization except for respondent T-B1 and T-B2 who declared that their organization is customer-oriented. Therefore there is no such a thing as the consistent pattern for decision making in the project team (T-B1, T-B2).

The decision making criteria cited by the Indian respondents in their order of importance is given as follows
- Time saving (I-A1, I-B1, I-B2)
- Customer requirements/specifications (I-A1, I-C1, I-C2)
- Quality (I-A1, I-B1)
- Cost to the project (I-A1, I-A2)
- Resource availability – technology and manpower (I-C1, I-C2)
- Revenue (I-A2, I-B1)
- Client’s convenience (I-A2)
- Effort (I-B2)

The above mentioned cover the major criteria IT teams in India consider in project decision making. However, certain factors may require the addition of other criteria to the above list. Such factors include the type of project, type of decision, project constraints (I-B2), expected outcomes and technologies (I-A2). Most respondents
state that the decision making pattern is consistent throughout all IT teams, with the exception of I-A2, who believes there is no rule for making decisions. Usually it is a group that makes the decision (I-B1) and they consider the above stated factors for selecting alternatives.

Best practice in IT teams

The mainstream of Thai respondents emphasized that the best thing to do in IT project team is to involve all parties (T-C2) including customers (T-B1, T-B2), staff from finance department (T-A1, T-B1) and senior management (T-C1) to work together from the beginning of the project. By doing so, all parties can “negotiate and participate frequently in the project discussion which will lead to major decision making” (T-B1). For that reason the decision can be made faster (T-C1). All Thai project managers believed that it is best for the IT project teams to have full authority to make decision for the project. Further assistance and guidance though can be obtained when needed from the senior managers or the experts. “The roles and responsibilities of everyone in the project team should be clearly defined” (T-A2). Project managers will take role to monitor every process and make sure that everyone performs their roles well (T-A1, T-A2, T-B2). Sufficient amount of information is required for the team to be able to execute the project (T-B1).

Apart from that, respondent T-A2 and T-B2 underlined that IT project team in Thailand should focus on the culture aspects less when working in teams, by stating that “Thai organizations should take international project management standard more into the project team, because we still keep the way we do things based on our culture and what we have done in the past” (T-B2). “Team members should be able to participate in the discussion and the meeting without hesitation regarding seniority or hierarchy in the organization” (T-A2). All respondents agreed that the scope of the project must be very clear. Everything needs to be discussed and done in the meeting only; ensuring there will be no external political issues involved later (T-B2). Moreover, the discussion atmosphere should be kept open as it is, however the team members should be more active and feel more accountable during decision making process (T-B1, T-C1).

Respondent T-A1’s perspective however was against the mainstream since he believed in diverse decision making process, stating that “personally, I do not see the best practice in decision making process. It all depends on the different situation and project scope. It also depends on how much information you have to make that decision”.

The best practice suggested by all the Indian respondents unanimously was that the project manager should take a conscious step in encouraging all team members to participate in the discussion and ask them for their opinion, listen to their opinions, problems and suggestions and give due consideration to all. Such a process would ensure changes don’t occur in the future (I-B2). Respondent I-C1 suggests a management formula of ‘expectation setting’. All the team members would be asked to voice their viable expectations from a project. These inputs should then be considered in making all project decisions. Doing this in the beginning of the project ensures the employees are content with the decisions made later on.
In addition to that, in order to improve the quality of the decision outcome, those who are experts in particular areas should be consulted to the extent possible (I-A2). The duration for the decision process can also be minimized by developing such a tool where all discussions on even small problems and their decisions between the members of the team can be recorded and made available for use whenever such information is required (I-C2).

4.3.6 Decision Implementation

Decision acceptance in teams

All the respondents from Thai IT companies agreed that the decision is generally accepted in teams. Respondent T-B1 and T-C2 emphasized that when there is the team consensus the decisions are normally accepted by all members. It is obvious that some people will not agree when the decision comes from voting (T-A1), however, they still need to work accordingly (T-A2, T-B1) without holding the team back (T-A2, T-C1) to achieve the main objectives of the project (T-C2). “Sometimes they complain outside the project team, but it never affected the team’s activities” (T-A2). Nevertheless, “we normally do not have any problem with people not accepting the decision and try to interfere with the process, since we ensure in every meeting that every issue is mentioned and sorted out” (T-B2).

Usually in India once the decisions are approved by the majority, they are not revoked by the team members (I-A1 and I-B1). However, the members have the tendency to feel offended when their suggestions or opinions are not taken into consideration (I-C1). But such members by questioning the decision made would help improve the discussion process (I-C1). According to I-A1 the major reason why the decisions are accepted as they come is because they are never so complex that the team would have to face problems in accepting them.

In the recent past, I-B2 has observed a change in the cultural trend in accepting decisions. Before, 6-7 years the employees would simply accept the decisions without asking too many questions, but now they have become pickier. Such employees show hesitation in accepting most decisions.

Acceptance of changes

The majority of Thai project managers (T-A1, T-A2, T-B2 and T-C1) accepted the fact that it takes more time for the members to accept the complex decision giving rise to changes in routine activities. Complex decision and changes are time consuming for acceptance because team members will try to find the reasons in understanding the issues and the problems that could rise after implementing (T-B2, T-C1). People will spend more time to identify pros and cons of that decision as well as perform risk assessment (T-A1, T-A2, T-B2). For the decision that has greater impact on the members, it may be very difficult and challenging for them to accept (T-C2). “Sometimes they reject to accept the decision because they do not like to deal with unknown situations. They prefer to work according to their normal routine” (T-C1). Respondent T-B1 also said that people always tend to reject the decision that could make them change their routine activities. However, “at the end, we can accept the
changes only if someone ensures that it will have positive effect on overall project performance” (T-A2). The senior managers need to be informed only when there is major change in project routine activities (T-B2).

All Indian respondents with the exception of I-C1 have mentioned that there is no significant difference in accepting complex decision as compared to accepting simpler decisions. If the team takes longer to accept such decisions they miss out on that amount of time in implementing the decisions (I-A1). Moreover, I-A1 believes the decisions are never very difficult to accept. Respondent I-C2 further stated that if at all there are any changes in the routine activities performed by the team, they are always given adequate training to do away with any hesitation that may arise later on. Respondent I-B2 mentioned that there are always some people in the team who lack confidence in accepting any decision different from their routine activities, but most members of his team are confident enough to accept any decision. Those members who hesitate to accept any decision are assured that they will be helped by other members in anything that they fail to understand (I-B2).

Commitment to decision implementation

Thai project team members seemed to have high commitment to decision implementation. According to all responses from Thai project managers, they mentioned that once the decision is made, it will be announced clearly in the meeting and everyone will work accordingly to the plan under the new roles assigned to each of them. The decisions are implemented “through a meeting, consensus through a questionnaire form, e-mail, phone conference” (T-C1). “Normally everyone will perform according to their roles to generate the best outcome for the project” (T-A1). “No one will interrupt or get in a way for the project to be delivered, even if they are not happy with the decision made” (T-B1). “As we are quite familiar with all the team members, we do not have any trouble when implementing the decision made” (T-B2). Respondents T-A1 and T-A2 also stated that after the decision has been announced in the meeting, the project manager is the one who plays vital role in managing, facilitating and controlling the working process to ensure that everyone is getting the job done in time due to the scope of the project.

Most Indian respondents (I-A1, I-A2 and I-C2) believe that there are hardly any problems in convincing the employees in coping with decisions concerning change. The employees are given training in advance to deal with such complex decisions (I-C2). On the other hand according to I-B2 there are people who are very picky in what they are doing. They hesitate to accept any different decision, and want to minimize their efforts. Some members of I-C1’s team also sometimes hesitate to accept such decisions in which their suggestions are not taken into account.

Clearly defined responsibility

All Thai respondents mentioned that everyone in project teams does have clear roles and responsibility. Respondent T-A1 emphasized that the roles are clearly written in the project charter. The majority of the respondents (T-A2, T-B1, T-B2, T-C1, T-C2) stated that the responsibility and task is given to each of the team members during the
meeting before the project actually starts. Therefore everyone will be able to work accordingly to the roles and responsibilities that are clearly assigned to them.

According to all Indian respondents, the roles and responsibilities of all team members for every project undertaking are clearly defined; however the respondents have described many ways in which they are delegated to the team. The most common among them are informing the team members during the meeting or by sending them an email with specific instructions thereof (I-A2, I-B1, I-B2 and I-C1). Informing the team about their responsibilities during a meeting works best as the members are given a chance to discuss their reservations or problems if any and by dealing with these issues the project manager can gain a buy in of the members (I-B2 and I-C1). The information about the responsibilities is stored in the form of minutes of meetings which are circulated to all members (I-A1). Such information may also be stored in an internal tool with the team (I-C2).

4.4 Comparison of Decision Making Styles in Thailand and India

Based on the findings of the data analysis, some major similarities and differences between the way decisions are made in IT project teams in Thailand and India were identified and shown in the comparison table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Seniors and project leaders play an important role in decision making</td>
<td>▪ Respect for senior’s decisions is implied in Thai culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Team holds complete authority in making decisions</td>
<td>▪ Only the group or the project leader makes decisions in Thai teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for decision making</td>
<td>▪ Members of Indian teams many times also make decisions individually</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>process</td>
<td>▪ Expectation setting in the beginning of decision making process in India</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Time is an important decision making criterion</td>
<td>▪ Involvement of other parties in Thai decision making process</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Decisions are accepted by all after majority approval</td>
<td>▪ Focus on faster decision making in Thai teams</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ High commitment towards implementation of decisions</td>
<td>▪ Attention to quality of decision process in Indian teams</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Avoidance of uncertainty or complex decisions by Thai teams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Higher acceptability of decisions by Indian teams due to assurance of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>help or training before implementation of complex decisions</td>
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Table 4 Comparison of Decision Making Styles of Thailand and India
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS

The following discussion is presented in the form of two cultural profiles and seven dimensions of team climate for decision making, revealed from analysis of empirical data. The data analysis in the previous chapter brings to light two important findings of the study: cultural differences between Thailand and India along eight important facets of working in teams; and seven dimensions of team decision making as emphasized by both Thai and Indian IT companies studied. Both Thai and Indian cultures have their distinct influence on each of the decision making dimensions. Such influence will be studied using axial coding to identify relationships between the decision making dimensions and cultural aspects of both countries.

5.1 Cultural Profiles

The findings of Part A of data analysis are points of cultural differences between the team working climates of Thailand and India, which are presented below as cultural profiles. Each vertex of the octagon represents an element of the team climate. The extent to which each element affects working in a team is determined from the responses of the interviewees. The impact is high if all six or at least five respondents mention the significance of the element; it is medium if three or four mention it; and it is low if two or less respondents refer to the existence of the element.

![Figure 5.1: Cultural Profile of Thailand](image)

**Figure 5.1: Cultural Profile of Thailand**
Decision Making Dimensions

The analysis of Part B reveals important differences in decision making processes of Thailand and India along the seven dimensions.

1. Team Structure for Decision Making

The Indian teams comprise of three hierarchical levels: project manager at the top, module/technical leads in middle and software professionals at the bottom most level. The projects are divided into modules and a team of software professionals and a module lead is allotted to each. The Thai teams generally have a very simple structure, with the project manager leading the entire team without middle level leaders in between.

The breaking down of project work into modules and operating each module remotely with very little interface with the rest of the team reflects the Indians need for individualism. The Thai teams on the other hand like to work in a group as a family. The Thai people also show a preference for informality in communications and discussions, and so the levels of hierarchy are deliberately kept less.

2. Decision Making Process

In Thailand the project manager or an expert member of the team makes the decision and the other members provide useful information. While in India, group discussions are led by the project manager but opinions are sought from all and decisions are arrived at through team consensus.
The difference in the decision making processes can be attributed to the differences in the degree of respect given to seniority in organizations. Thai people value and support the senior’s decisions, whereas Indians show moderate respect for seniority but give higher consideration to merit and knowledge.

3. Team Discussion

Although team discussions for decision making of both India and Thailand follow an analytical and logical order, the Thai discussions are highly informal and relatively more flexible. This informality slows down the pace of the discussion process.

The informality is imbibed in team discussions by the Thai culture. All team members work as a family and as a result not only the communications but also processes are planned in relaxed manners. High flexibility in discussions and a relaxed decision atmosphere reduces stress levels in the team and thereby helps to avoid conflicts.

4. Autonomy in Decision Making

Both Thai and Indian teams hold complete authority to make decisions as far as technical aspects of the project are concerned. However, the members of Indian teams are at times authorized to make decisions individually without consulting others.

The Indian culture is more individualistic than the Thai culture. As a result team members are given substantial autonomy in making decisions regarding their work.

5. Decision Making Criteria

The Thai teams give considerable importance to criteria such as availability of sufficient information, logic and reasonability, and risk management. However, Indians cite time saving and meeting customer specifications as the most important criteria in lieu of the ones mentioned by the Thais.

The Thai people score high on the uncertainty avoidance index. As a result they either substitute decisions having uncertain outcomes with those having more certain outcomes or they provide for risk mitigation strategies to avoid any anomalies.

6. Decision Acceptance

Both Thai and Indian teams do not take very long to accept decisions approved by the majority. However, some of the Thai people may take longer in accepting complex decisions involving change in routine activities. On the other hand Indians may take longer to accept decisions when their suggestions are not taken into account. But such behavior is not commonly seen with the Thai people.

Due to the uncertainty avoidance trait of the Thai people, they find it difficult to accept complex decisions. They however, do not reject decisions simply on the grounds of their suggestions not being considered. This is because they respect and value decisions of their seniors and friends. Therefore, complex decisions that are
approved by majority are also accepted by the Thai people even if they take longer to implement.

7. Suggested Best Practice

The Thai people prefer to involve all parties including the customer, finance personnel and senior management in the decision making process. Representatives from these parties should be encouraged to participate in the process, but the final decision making authority should remain with the core IT team. The focus should be on international project management standards instead of cultural aspects concerning working in teams.

The Indians suggest that the decision process should aim at satisfying the expectations of team members to the extent possible. Such a process would require the project manager to encourage the team members to state their opinions and suggestions, and to give due consideration to all.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

The increasing trade relations between Asian nations has lead the advent of cross-cultural project activities. Yet most of the project management literature lays little or no emphasis on cultural aspects (eg. Henrie and Sousa-Poza, 2005). The lack of sufficient empirical data in this area triggered our research to explore cultural aspects influencing decision making in project teams in Thailand and India. The literature review points out the gap in research on the role of national cultures in project management. However, recently researchers in the project management branch have shown evidence of the influence of cultural dimensions on project management (Shore and Cross, 2005) and decision behavior in projects (Müller et al 2007). We have attempted to explore the influence of Thai and Indian cultures on decision making in IT project teams by conducting semi-structured interviews in 6 organizations. The interview responses were analyzed using coding principles of grounded theory with the objective to answer the research question, ‘how is decision making in project teams influenced by national cultures?’

The analysis of data and the findings thereof reveal significant differences in decision making styles of Thai and Indian IT teams. The differences have strong links with cultural aspects. The impact of these cultural aspects on decision making of Thai and Indian teams is explained below in order to answer our research question.

1. The Thai teams are more organic in structure compared to the Indian teams. There is very little stress on formal codes of conduct and high levels of flexibility are allowed in team tasks. The Indian teams are generally more mechanistic as they emphasize specialization of work, have well-defined hierarchy of authority and stress on formality and inflexibility when working in teams. This also explains Thailand’s low and India’s high score on masculinity.

2. Decision making in Thai teams is a group process but the final authority remains at the top, whereas in Indian teams decision making is decentralized to the extent that each team member can take decisions concerning their work. The Thais lack confidence in making decisions individually. Moreover they believe that as the seniors are more experienced they are better off than themselves in making decisions. As a result the Thais generally shy away in making decisions alone. The Indians seek decision making control to a certain extent.

3. Thais show a high tendency for uncertainty avoidance when making decisions. Whenever possible they prefer decisions that have known outcomes or provide for risk management plans for decisions that have uncertain outcomes. The Indians do not show such high tendency for uncertainty avoidance. They do not take very long to accept complex decisions or change situations. But the Indians also do not hesitate to oppose a decision of the senior.

4. Overall the Thai teams are driven by respect for seniority and friendship, and this is reflected in their decision making processes. The Indians on the other hand show a
preference for individualism and they recognize knowledge and skills in place of seniority. However, this preference of the Indians is a recent phenomenon. Until few years ago, the Indians too respected the decisions of the seniors and had very limited say in the decision making process. But now with more options available in the IT sector and other industries in India, the risk of growth being affected by stating opinions has reduced to a considerable extent. Consequently, the trend of unquestionable confidence in the senior’s decisions has been changing since the past few years.

5. There are also a number of similarities in the decision making styles of India and Thailand. These among others include: high level of commitment of all team members towards implementation of decisions; clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the decision making process; important role of seniors in decision making for all teams in Thailand but for very large teams (of more than 100 people) in India; and complete authority for decision making held by the team.

Knowledge of the cultural differences and similarities would facilitate better management of mixed Thai-Indian project teams. Therefore, by keeping in mind the importance as well as the impact of various national cultures and presenting each member with social working knowledge of peers within the mixed-culture team, arguments and conflicts due to misconception and pre-judgment can be minimized. Hence it will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the working process and environment in the project team.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

Through this study we have observed seven cultural elements that affect working in Thai and Indian teams. These elements along with individualism (Hofstede, 1980) form the eight dimensions of the cultural profiles of Indian and Thai project teams (see figures 5.2 and 5.3) representing important similarities and differences in team working behaviours of Indian and Thai individuals. Although the other four dimensions developed by Hofstede (1980) are important cultural factors that measure differences amongst 50 nations, however the elements forming the cultural profiles are found to be important specifically for Thai and Indian cultures.

The study has also revealed seven dimensions for measuring differences in decision making processes between the two countries. These dimensions as mentioned in Chapter 5 are drawn from analysis of interview responses, and can be used to base new theory on team decision making practices in India and Thailand.

6.3 Managerial Implications

The following managerial implications are basically recommendations for future managers of mixed Thai-Indian teams for pre-planning of decision making processes:

- As the need for individualism is different in Thailand and India, it is important to determine the structure for decision making in consultation with all members.
- The mixed teams should always involve all members in the decision making process, not only as information providers but as active participants.
The levels of formality and flexibility in team discussions must be determined before any project work is undertaken.

As the Thai team members would hesitate to take decisions individually, all decisions should be taken in groups. If at all decisions have to be taken individually, the Thai members should be given the assurance of assistance whenever needed.

The most cited decision criteria by the Thai and Indian interviewees such as reducing uncertainties, time saving and satisfying customer needs must be taken into account, not only for maximizing team cohesion but also for optimum results.

To ensure high acceptability of decisions, efforts to simplify the complex decisions to the extent possible should be made in order to clear doubts and uncertainties if any.

Suggestions from all team members regarding the implementation of complex decisions must be invited to maximize acceptability of decisions.

To improve the overall decision making process in addition to the core team all affected parties such as the finance personnel, the senior management, external experts and the client must be consulted in the decision making process. The project managers should aim at satisfying the expectations of all team members.

The most important task for a project manager of a mixed team should be to ensure that the cohesion amongst all team members is sufficient enough to avoid the formation of two groups of Thai and Indian members.

6.4 Limitations

Although the entire research procedure has been carefully planned to fulfill the purpose of the study and avoid inaccuracies if any, the research methodology has however faced the following constraints and limitations:

- Due to the paucity of time, the sample was confined to the IT sector only, which otherwise could have included wide number of other sectors as well.
- The scarcity of time has further led the in-depth study of the IT sector restricted to only 12 participants. The findings from the small sample may be difficult to be generalized over larger populations.
- As mentioned in Chapter 3, the research methodology is based on assumptions drawn from epistemological considerations or the authors’ beliefs and perceptions of reality. Such assumptions and any conclusions drawn thereof may be flawed by inaccuracies in researchers own knowledge of key concepts.

Throughout the writing of this thesis, there have been many impurities mainly due to the fact that the researchers were residing in two different countries during the last one and half month before submission. The two authors have had great difficulty in long distance communication since the beginning of the writing process. Although the research background, problem, objectives and literature review were done together, the major parts of the research including data collection, data analysis, discussion and conclusion had to be done from distance. Moreover communications with the supervisor were held mainly via e-mail and occasionally through voice over internet protocol mediums such as skype. Therefore the communication process was time-consuming and the limitation of time further constrained the scope of the research.
There were some difficulties and drawbacks in the data collection process as well. For example, this study involved participants from two countries (Thai and Indian) and the interviews were done separately in Thailand and India. The downfall of this is that the view of one member carrying out the interview may create misjudgment as there is only a view from a single perspective. Also it was the first time for both authors to conduct the semi-structured interviews and hence it was difficult to handle the conversation and develop new questions as the interview progressed. Due to high pressure during the interview without having experience and short schedules for interviews, the interviewers tended to stick mainly to the questions that were prepared prior to the interview thus not many new questions were developed during the interview process.

The set of interview questions was created originally in English and then translated to Thai for the 6 Thai interviews. The interviews were later transcribed in English. The analysis of data so collected may be constrained by different interpretations of each author. Moreover, the alteration of language before, during and after the interview may cause a sense of bias as there is sometimes no direct translation of certain words in the given language.

During the interview, one of the companies in Thailand refused the request for recording the conversation. Although documented notes were taken during the interview by hand, several key messages may have been missed due to the vast amount of information given at variable speeds. Besides that, due to the business peak time of the year, another Thai company hardly had time for the interview. The interview was done half via telephone and the rest by e-mail. This could also create a bias in data collection process since the answers from that respondent may not be purely from his/her perspective. The similar problem happened when we were trying to make the appointment for interviews with one of the Indian companies. They kept postponing the date of interview and this extended the data collection process beyond what was planned by the authors.

### 6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The outcomes of this study provide useful insights on the topic of cultural influence in decision making to future managers of mixed culture teams. This research will be most beneficial to managers of mixed Thai-Indian project teams in successful management of team decision tasks. This study has provided the fundamental base for future research, which can further be improvised keeping in mind the following recommendations.

A suggestion for future researchers on the same topic using qualitative approach may be to consider conducting interviews at a larger scale and inputting a wider range of interviews from companies from a more vast selection of countries and industries alike. By comparing these companies it would give a better overall view of the average culture impact on decision making of any given company in any industry. A definite answer to what national culture impact on decision making may not be clear as it could vary from industry to industry as like country to country. The pattern of decision making in project teams in different industries can be compared and that
would reinforce the transferability of proposition presented and increase the validity and reliability of the outcome in this paper.

After the qualitative research has been done, we could also gather information about why and how decisions are made in that way in different countries based on their own national cultures. The quantitative study then could also be conducted to quantify the responses, strengthen the proposition as well as to prove hypothesis and finally show the trend for decision making in certain scope of future research.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (English)

Part 1: Participant Demography

1) Please tell us the overview of the company and types of project you were involved in

2) What was your role in the projects?

3) How long have you been working in this position?

4) How many projects have you participated in?

5) How big is the project team? How many members?

6) How many different project teams have you worked with?

7) Have you studied or worked overseas? How long?

Part 2: Cultural Aspects on Decision Making

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give importance to team consensus?

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?
10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Thai)

ส่วนที่ 1: ข้อมูลส่วนตัวให้สัมภาษณ์

1) กรณีให้รายละเอียดคล้าๆ เกี่ยวกับบริษัท และประเภทของ โครงการที่คุณมีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องในโครงการที่มี
2) หน้าที่ของคุณในโครงการนั้นคืออะไร
3) คุณทำงานในตำแหน่งนี้มานานเท่าไรแล้ว
4) คุณมีประสบการณ์ทางโครงการมากกี่ครั้งแล้ว (ทั้งมากกี่โครงการแล้ว)
5) ขนาดของโครงการที่คุณมีอยู่ในเครื่อง มีกี่คน
6) คุณเคยทำงานกับทีมที่เปลี่ยนไปบางที หรือ ผู้ช่วยทำงานกับทีมเดิม ผู้ร่วมงานเดิม
7) คุณเคยเรียนหรือทำงานต่างประเทศมากกี่ปี นานเท่าไร

ส่วนที่ 2: วัฒนธรรมที่มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องกับการตัดสินใจ

1) กรณีเลือก 1 โครงการที่คุณเคยทำ และคิดถึงวัฒนธรรมของประเทศไทย คุณคิดว่า วัฒนธรรมนี้ๆ ได้ช่วยทำให้การตัดสินใจในโครงการที่มีสะดวกหรือไม่ยุ่งยากอย่างไร
2) ต่อเนื่องจากข้อที่ 1 จากประสบการณ์ของคุณหรือโดยจินตนาการ คุณคิดว่า มันจะแตกต่างกันไหม ถ้าคุณต้องทำงานร่วมกันในโครงการที่มีคนจากหลายเชื้อชาติ หาต่างกัน คุณคิดว่ามันต่างกันอย่างไร
3) ตำแหน่งของทุกคนในโครงการที่มีมีผลกระทบเพียงใดในการตัดสินใจในโครงการที่มี และมีผลอย่างไร
4) ความสัมพันธ์ การรู้จักกัน หรือ การเป็นเพื่อนกัน ของคนในโครงการที่มีมีผลมากน้อยเพียงใดในการตัดสินใจของโครงการที่มี และมีผลอย่างไร
5) การตัดสินใจที่มาจากคนสนใจ (คนพื้นฐานกัน) ในบางครั้ง คุณคิดว่า มันไม่ได้โทษที่สุดต่อโครงการที่มี คุณคิดว่ามันจะมีผลเพียงใดและแสดงความคิดเห็นส่วนตัว ต่อความคิดเห็นส่วนของกลุ่มไหน
6) ในขณะที่ความคิดเห็นของคุณที่อาจมีผลต่อโครงการ และในขณะเดียวกันคุณอาจจะต้องจัดมันเข้ากับความคิดเห็นของคนอื่นหรือต้องทำร้ายจิตใจของ ผู้ร่วมงานในโครงการบางคน คุณคิดว่ามันจะแสดงความคิดเห็นนี้ไหม
7) คุณคิดว่า ทีมที่คุณทำงานร่วมอยู่ด้วยขณะนี้ ให้ความสำคัญต่อ ผลเล็กหรือใหญ่ หรือความคิดที่ว่า เราเป็นทีมเดียวกัน มากน้อยแค่ไหน (team consensus, team’s sense of belonging)
8) กรณี.wikibook.onyxแล้วกับ

บรรณาธิการในการแสดงความคิดเห็นในกลุ่มที่จะนำไปสู่การตัดสินใจของทีม (เช่น เปิดกว้าง, เสมือนความคิดสร้างสรรค์, เคมีิ่งวิเคราะห์, แสดงความคิดเห็นอย่างมีหลักการ)
9) โครงการทีม มีอำนาจมากน้อยเพียงใดในการตัดสินใจของโครงการนั้นๆ (ต้องปรึกษาโทรศัพท์)

10) จากประสบการณ์การทำงานของคุณ (กับหลายๆทีม)
คุณมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรบ้างเกี่ยวกับ วิธีการตัดสินใจที่หลากหลาย

11) หลักการหรือบรรทัดฐาน (criteria) ในการตัดสินใจของโครงการทีมคืออะไร

12) ความเห็นของจากข้อ 11 หลักการหรือบรรทัดฐานการตัดสินใจเหล่านี้บัน
เหมือนเดิมไหมเวลาทำงานใน ทีมไอทีที่ไม่เหมือนกัน (ทำงานกับหลายๆทีม หลักการ
การตัดสินใจเปลี่ยนไปบ้างไหม)

13) ในประเทศไทยโดยรวมแล้ว ในทีมไอที คุณสังเกตเห็น
ระบบการตัดสินใจที่คงรูปแบบเดิมไปบ้างไหม (consistent pattern of making decision in IT
teams)

14) หากตัดสินใจไปแล้ว การตัดสินใจนั้นๆ
จะถูกนำมาปฏิบัติหรือดำเนินการในโครงการที่อย่างไร

15) การตัดสินใจนั้นๆ เป็นที่ยอมรับต่อทุกคนในทีมอย่างไร

16) ทุกคนในทีมใช้เวลาในการยอมรับการตัดสินใจที่ซับซ้อน
(ข้อเสนอให้การทำงานปกติทุกวันอาจต้องเปลี่ยนไป) พอๆกับการตัดสินใจปกติทั่วไป
(ไม่ส่งผลกระทบต่อ การทำงานรูปแบบ) อย่างไร

17) ความคาดหวังของคุณคือ วิธีที่ดีที่สุดในการตัดสินใจในทีมไอที
ในอุตสาหกรรมไอที ในประเทศไทยคืออะไร
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW ANSWERS (Thai Respondents)

Appendix 3.1 Respondent T-A1 (Thailand – Company A – Respondent 1)

Respondent T-A1 at present is working with a giant American IT company located in Bangkok. He works as a project manager and delivery project executive, in charge of outsourcing IT projects for one bank in Thailand. The project involves with service maintenance and managing process in providing infrastructure. He deals largely with managing the project team as well as project and strategic planning. He has been working in this position for almost 1 year participating in uncountable IT projects. The size of project team is dependant on the project size, difficulties and complexity. However, under his control normally he manages 14 people under the organizational matrix. The project team members keep swapping around but time to time the project team is the same again depending on the scope of the project and expertise. Apart from working in Thailand, he has worked in Germany for a few months and also attended many seminars and trainings held overseas especially in European countries.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

Talking about the decision making process in Thai culture, I have to admit that it is not definite. Sometimes Thais fail to provide the clear-cut information or direction before the decision is made. However, the culture helps in the way that people in the team always work with high level of friendship, humbleness, flexibility, kreng-jai (cool-heartedness and respect the superiors). I think it is very good to have all these aspects including in the culture, however people have to know when is appropriate to utilize them. The bad thing about this is that Thai people are not decisive enough sometimes when they concern the seniority and friendship among the employees during the decision making process.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

It is definitely different. The way people perceive things or understand the same issue is different. Everyone give importance to issue or things in a different way. For example, from the westerner point of view, they may think that it is good for project team members to challenge each other during the meeting for a better result in projects. In contrast, if that happens in Thai team, it will be viewed as impolite, rude, and disrespectful. Therefore, sometimes when Thai people have to work with the westerners they could think that those people are aggressive. Same thing happens the other way around, the westerners working with Thai people will think that Thais are easy going, does not really give comment or opposition to other people’s comment, which could be seen as a wrong attitude towards working in teams.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?
Talking about the position in the project team, it is very important and it also has high impact on decision making in the team. But when we talk about the position in the organization (matrix organization), if the team members are all experts and have high working skill, the position in the organization would not matter at all. The position in the project team (new role assigned) is always prioritized and everyone has to follow that rule. Therefore the project manager or project leader is the one who has highest power or authority to make decision in the project team regardless other people’s organizational position which may be higher than his/hers. I would say that the impact of the position or hierarchy in the organization will be high if the project team members have less expertise, however it will appear in contrast if the project team members have high level of expertise, the organizational position will hardly have any influence on them. Therefore, in the company that I am currently working for, all the project teams give high importance to the position in project organization more than at the corporate level since we are expert and we care most about the quality of the project to be delivered to the clients.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

Again it depends on the cultures. For Thai culture, relationship and friendship among the team members have high impact on decision making. We have the culture of ‘kreng-jai’ or respect the elders and superiors, barely oppose their suggestion. But when the foreigners are in the same project team working together with Thai people, that impact of relationship on decision making will be a lot less. Though, it still plays relatively significant role in smoothing the working process in project team, resulting in less conflicts or arguments. To be honest, in general, we pay attention to the working process and the outcome of the project more than relationship of people in the team. Again all these things are dependant on the level of expertise of the project team members.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

Undoubtedly yes and everyone in the team is supposed to do the same. Team members are all grown people and they always discuss things about the project. We never criticize personal issue, therefore we all are encouraged to participate as much as possible during the meeting. All of us are to a certain extent skillful and expert in IT project therefore we always give comment and discuss things around the topic to generate the best solution/decision.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

If I know that my opinion which I will be giving is potentially going to hurt other team members’ feeling, I will be more careful when I speak out. I tend to go around the topic but not directly to what I want to say at the first place, using indirect approach to comment things in the meeting. In the case that I know for sure that the person will not be happy listening to what I have to say and if it is something possible
to be discussed externally from the whole group, I will find good occasion to talk to that person privately before the meeting to save his/her face and to show respect to him/her. Normally everyone does that (informal communication) in order to maintain good relationship with everybody in the project team.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give importance to team consensus?

What I understand from the word consensus is that it deals with democracy and takes the votes from the majority to be finalized decision. Therefore, it depends on what topic we are discussing about. Some of them do require, but at the same time some of them do not require the team consensus to make the final decision. We actually do give importance to team consensus, however the shortcoming about this is that sometimes when the decision cannot come to agreement, we have to take votes. Some people of course will not be happy with the decision made. With Thai culture that deeply rooted in people’s mind not to talk or to express wholeheartedly what they think, they will tend to keep that inside and complain a lot outside the meeting. Sometimes they will lobby and gossip externally and that could slow down the process of the whole project if the project manager is not authoritative enough.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

The discussion is very open and informal. There are 3 broad stages in the process. First of all we will open the floor to anyone who wants to generate the idea (brainstorming) by having one facilitator to smooth the discussion. Every idea and comment will be listed on the board. Then after that we will analyze each option we have to see pros and cons as well as risk management. And at the end of the meeting we will sum things up by making one decision. If there are more than 1 option to be chose from, we will take votes for majority.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

In general the project team has its authority to make decision until a certain point (everything under project team’s responsibility). All these things are clearly defined in the role of project team before the project started. For example, the decision that has to deal with technical issue, the team has fully authority to decide. However when it comes to the issue about finance, the team will have to send the proposal to the senior manager or to seek for further assistance from finance department. Everything depends on the role and authority that are clearly defined in the project charter.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

Generally the decision making style is not diversified. I do not see any significant difference in decision making style. But the way we propose or generate options for decision making is varied. For example, sometimes we take votes, or involve top management using top-down approach to make decision (only the people at management level will make decision). But during the discussion, anyone can participate. Normally the project manager will be the one who make decision, but
sometimes when there are more than 1 alternative, we will take votes concerning team consensus.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

First of all we look at the benefit that we can get out of that decision. Then we evaluate and analyze pros and cons of each option. Whatever generates better result with less risk involved, we will go for that choice. We also look at ROI (which one gives better ROI) and the impact of each decision (risk assessment) on every aspect concerning that project. We will compare many different factors depending on the project given.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

The criteria are relatively the same. But the last measurement will be different. What I mean by that is for example, we take ROI as the last measurement. This project may state clearly the minimum number of ROI, but some other projects may not fix the ROI index. But the basic criteria are kept the same.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

I would say we do have consistent pattern of decision making process. Refer to the answer in Q11 for the pattern of decision making process.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

After the decision is made, the project manager has to control and ensure that everyone in the project team perform accordingly and in the right direction as the decision suggested. Normally everyone will perform according to their roles to generate the best outcome for the project.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

When the decision is agreed by all members, obviously everyone will accept that decision and work normally according to their role. But when the decision is made by voting, some people will reject that decision and sometimes reduces the working speed in the project. The project manager will have to play a major role in ensuring that everyone gets the job done in time due to the scope of the project. Things other than that can be discussed externally.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

Certainly, it takes more time for the members to accept the complex decision because we have to spend more time to explore every detail including risk assessment (to see the impact that could rise when implementing that decision) that deals with the
decision made (because it affects our routine activities). In contrast, the simple decision that has nothing to do with changing daily activity or uncertainty, people can accept that easily.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

Personally, I do not see the best practice in decision making process. It all depends on the different situation. It also depends on how much information you have to make decision. It all varies for different project. There is no such a thing as “one single way” or best practice for decision making that can be applied in every situation. Things have to be adapted appropriately according to the changing situation. I believe in diverse decision making process which depends largely on situation and project scope however the consistent pattern in the way decision is made (criteria) remains relatively the same especially in IT project.
Appendix 3.2 Respondent T-A2 (Thailand – Company A – Respondent 2)

Respondent T-A2 is currently working with IT company originated in America as a project manager and outsourcing project executive. It has a huge subsidiary in Bangkok for more than 20 years. The project that he is involving deals with service maintenance and managing process in providing IT infrastructure. His role is to manage the project team and in charge of strategic planning for IT project. He has been working in this position for 2 years having completed more than 40 large IT projects. The size of team is dependant on the size, difficulties and complexity of the project. Normally he manages 10 staff under the direct matrix organization. In the organization, we normally change the project team members depending on the scope of the project and expertise to fit with project requirement. Sometimes we work with the same team. Apart from working in Thailand, as the IT project manager, he has worked in Malaysia and America for a few months and also attended many seminars and trainings held overseas especially in European countries.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

I think Thai culture helps in the way that people do compromise a lot, therefore we can hardly see conflict within the project team. People work as family having high level of brotherhood. Therefore they tend to help one another in any way they can. We are very open-minded and in that way we listen to everyone’s opinion. When the decision cannot come to an agreement, we do not fight with each other, but listen to the reason calmly and finally narrow things down to one single decision which sometimes is led by superiors.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

Surely yes. I understand the foreigner viewpoint about Thai people. They think that we do not have good attitude towards working (time, commenting, contributing). Foreigners tend to be more aggressive when they work in the project. Everything has to be done perfectly as the process written in the project charter. However it is different in Thai team. Things are more flexible and we tend to work informally. I would not say that Thai people have a wrong attitude towards time. We do keep things on time, however we are flexible when there is some uncertain situation happen. In that case, we can postpone things to be done in other time but still keeping in mind the time scope. We do not say much (if it is not very important things to be mentioned) in the meeting because we respect the person who speaks earlier. However we do comment on issues that really need to be fixed or adjusted for better result for the whole project.

I do like working with both Thai and foreign in a different way for different projects. I would like so much if the 2 ways of working can be integrated. Foreigner teams are very strict on the information and the scope of the work. Everything is stated clearly so it is easier for the team to work technically. However, when some mistakes happen, they cannot accept that. Everything needs to be perfectly done. This is what I do not like. With Thai teams, even though it is a bit difficult in technical
aspects, but with the working environment as family, the superiors in the team always help to facilitate the process. In Thai team, we also allows high degree of flexibility in order not to put too much pressure on the team members, believing that they will be able to work more comfortably.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

I would say that it depends on the degree of expertise that the individuals in the team have. In a very skillful team, organizational position hardly affects the decision making. However in Thai culture, position and seniority do play significant role in decision making in the organization. Therefore in the project team that has many new staff involve, the position in the organization plays major role in decision making.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

Relationship also plays significant role in project team in terms of making decision. If team members are friends, they might agree with each other while overlooking pros and cons of that alternative. We tend to maintain good relationship with everyone and normally do not oppose the opinion if there is no highly need. As I am a project manager, sometimes based on Thai culture, it gives me a hard time to make decision when it is 50-50 votes. To be honest, sometimes I follow what my friend (in the project team) said because I know him and according to the past experience he never made mistakes yet. Therefore, I think to some extent, relationship among the project team members play a vital role in decision making.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

Yes as I am a project manager I have to do so. However it might be a little bit different if I am one of the team members. I probably still oppose that decision made by the majority if I really see a better result. However it will take time for me to speak up since many people in the team are senior managers.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

There is always a good way to talk and persuade people to at least listen to what you have to say. If I know that my opinion that might appear to be objection to some people’s idea, I will find ways to approach that person indirectly to save his/her face. I do not really know if you could translate directly to English. Saving face is in Thai culture that we tend to do things that could make other people embarrassed or humiliated as least as possible. I will avoid making other people feel bad, however I do have to state my point of view but in indirectly way. If I can talk to that person before the meeting, I would do so to let him/her know at least not to shock that person
during the meeting. I will try to keep good relationship with all project team members as much as I can. And I am sure that most of the Thai people are the same.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give importance to team consensus?

Yes, we do give importance to team consensus. We are quite democratic on discussion as well as in the decision making process. When we cannot come to the group agreement, we have to take votes and everyone has to agree with that as we highly respect group sense of belonging. Team commitment and goals are always more important than individual’s.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

We generally encourage the team members speak out without worrying about the seniority. At the very beginning stage of the project, we stated clearly and make sure that everyone understands and will not take things personally. Everything is supposed to be discussed only in the meeting not externally. Therefore the atmosphere of team discussion is very open-minded. It is also analytical after the process of brainstorming. We have to evaluate and analyze pros and cons of each option. Then after that we have to do risk assessment and mitigate them. The general the discussion is done informally.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

The authority is given and clearly stated before the project starts. If the decision that needs to be made is under the project team’s responsibility or in team’s capability, the project team can always make decision without asking for approval or consultation from the senior management. However when the decision has to do with finance or something else apart from technical issue, we need to involve people from those relevant department to participate in the team to help each other choose the right decision.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

Significant different style in decision making cannot be seen in our organization. I have worked with many different team, however the process of making decision as well as the style remain consistent. We normally make decision in team since we have authority to do so. However when we need to consult the expert, we can do that too. Due to the high expertise that all the project team members have, we hardly require external supervisor to help us decide what to do.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

The first criterion we look at is the benefit that we can get out of that decision. After that we evaluate and analyze pros and cons of each option among the team members. During this time we can also involve anyone externally who can contribute to the analyzing stage. Then the team has to do risk assessment and try to mitigate them. The
decision that generates the best result with less risk involved will be selected. Varied depending on the project, ROI could be one of the criteria to be considered. Another criterion that we take into consideration is the impact of each decision on every aspect concerning that project. We will compare many different factors depending on the project given therefore the criteria are varied. However what I mentioned before are the basic criteria we normally use.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

The criteria for decision making are similar (no significant difference) as I mentioned earlier in the previous question asked. Sometimes the new criteria may introduce when the project is involving many stakeholders (for example financially ROI might be included in the criteria). However the basic ones are kept the same.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

I am not positive about the whole country but I am pretty sure that for our organization, we do have consistent pattern in the way decisions are made. Refer to Q11.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

Each decision made will be announced during the meeting. From that time, everyone has to work accordingly to what that decision suggests. The project manager is the one who plays important role to manage, facilitate and control the process to be in-line with the decision and the project objectives.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

Normally we come to agreement for most of the decisions as we gave importance to the team consensus. Though sometimes we have to take votes, surely some people will not agree, but as for the team, they need to proceed to next step without holding back the team’s performance. Sometimes they complain outside the project team, but it never affected the team’s activities.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

Certainly not. It takes more time for the team members to accept complex decision. Thai people tend to avoid challenges and try not to face uncertainty. We take more time to analyze and discuss on all issues around that new complex decision. But at the end, we can accept it only if someone ensures that it will have positive effect on overall project performance.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?
I think first of all we need to ensure from the very beginning stage of the project that everyone will participate in the discussion and the meeting without hesitation regarding seniority or hierarchy in the organization. Every needs to know that the project objective to deliver high quality IT services is the most important thing to keep in mind. Therefore every idea, comment, and suggestion is very important.

The role of everyone in the project team should be clearly defined and the project manager has to monitor every process and make sure that everyone performs their roles well. The project team should have authority to make decision without the need of consulting or asking for approve from the senior managers. Since all the team members are expert, they should be authorized to take challenge and made decision by themselves. However the consultation can be obtained from the external experts or senior managers when needed.
Appendix 3.3 Respondent T-B1 (Thailand – Company B – Respondent 1)

Respondent T-B1 is presently working as project manager (both outsourcing and in-house) in one of Thailand’s leading systems integration and professional services companies. The business is involving both private and public sectors, focusing on IT solution set comprises of IT infrastructure, systems and storage management, security, enterprise application and integration, disaster recovery, outsourcing and professional services. He deals largely in both international and domestic projects that provide a portfolio of solutions to offer clients and end to end solution by offering SUN Microsystems, Oracle, Veritas and Brocade. He is also in charge of application development technology (ADT) which is to outsource the human resources in terms of services to the clients. He has been working in this position for 17 years involving with many different IT projects (IT solutions – setting up infrastructure 6 big projects per year and outsourcing 3-4 projects every month). The size of project team is dependant on the size and the complexity of the project. It could be from 2 to 20 members. The team is always changing depending on the expertise to fit with the scope of the project. He has been training and working oversea for some period of time.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

Working with Thai or domestic team is easier to make decision since they are very flexible and generally not aggressive toward work. The scope of the work can be adjusted or amended where appropriate. However, for the major issues obviously it cannot be changed. Anyhow, the flexibility that Thai people have can always facilitate the decision making process since it allows things to be done easier. We like having flexibility for ourselves as well as for others. Anything problem happens, we can always talk and help each other to solve the problem, not to force one party to do things according to the scope or the previous objectives of the project.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

In a different way, I also like to work with foreigners. The reason is because they always give a clear scope and specification of project that they need. The project scope, objectives, etc that they provide are very well-defined and clearly stated. It is also easier for the team to understand what they need to do and to know if they are able to deliver the project with high quality or not. However, the bad thing about having very clear scope and fixed objectives is that it does not allow flexibility when there is uncertainty. Therefore it generates high pressure when working in teams. When there is something happen, the foreigners tend to stick with the objectives and the scope that was set earlier and do not adjust or amend anything. They force themselves and us as well to work accordingly to what was planned before. One thing that surprised me alot was when I worked with Japanese people, they are very reasonable and allow things to be changed (because I thought they are inflexible), however their expectation is very high again putting pressure on the project team. At the end I still prefer working with Thais since we always work as brothers and sisters.
We always compromise and help each other to find the best solution for each decision making.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

The position in project team (new roles assigned specially for a certain project) is more important than organizational position. Everyone has to work accordingly to the roles for that project regardless other people’s position in the organization that might be higher than some people in the team. But sometimes, due to the culture of respecting the elders or the superiors, everyone in the project team tend to listen and pay more attention to what those superiors say. It also constrains the thoughts or new idea sometimes, since people believe more and normally do not reject to the elders’ suggestions.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

It somehow affects the decision making; however the impact is not big. If the decision cannot come to the consensus (50-50 vote), in that case the relationship among the team members will have great impact on that decision. The person might go along with his/her friends’ opinion or vote. But generally, we are always analytic and finally end up with realistic option for decision making.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

Personally I will oppose when I see other way that is better. Normally Thai people at the same level will not hesitate to speak up and share the idea. The new generation tends to do that a lot. However, some people who have worked with the company longer feel a little bit offensive. But they always have to understand that it is for the group or the project’s own good.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

Normally Thai people when we talk we always think of the listener’s feeling. When everyone is in the meeting, we tend to give idea very calmly, never shown the aggressiveness. We are not afraid or hesitate to talk since there is always ways to talk. Reasoning always comes first, then we have to find the way to present that idea softly without hurting anyone, because we know that Thai people hate losing faces (or to be embarrassed or humiliated). Thus, when we talk we really have to be careful.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give importance to team consensus?

Everyone has a great sense of team belonging. They always think of the quality and the outcome of the project before anything else. We put high importance on team
consensus as well, but it cannot be said that we always get down to the agreement. Project team members are not always happy with the decision made, but they will need to proceed accordingly once the decision are finalized.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

We are quite informal when we discuss any issue to generate better environment that would not constrain ideas. Thai people have something called ‘cool-heartedness’ so the atmosphere is very calm. The discussion always allows creativity. Everyone is open-minded and always accept new idea. We will brainstorm as many ideas as possible, then go down to the process of careful analysis later. We make sure that everyone speaks out and all main note of each idea is captured.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

Normally in the team, we have authority to make decision among the project team members. However as soon as the decision that needs to be made is out of the scope of our work (not only technical skill but involving financial issue), we need to consult the supervisors or general manager in the same line of organization. In general we always have the consultant involving with us since the beginning of the project, so whenever we need them, they are there to help. Therefore the decisions are made faster and no need to consult higher managers. However these experts are not there to make decision, but to guide the team to get to the right direction and finally it is down to the project manager to make decision for the team.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

I do not see much difference in decision making style when I work in the different project teams. We always do brainstorming, analyze pros and cons of those options, do risk assessment, mitigate the risks and finally come up with the final decision. As the seniority still plays significant role in working in Thai organization, we have to pass that decision made to the supervisor just to approve (to see if they are ok with the decision), but normally if the decision making process has been done carefully, the supervisor always give us approval to proceed for further step in the project.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

I will talk about the criteria of making decision before the project actually starts. These are some criteria we have to think of before making decision.

- Feasibility (can or cannot do the project) is the first thing we consider
- Then we look at time, budget and resources, see if we can achieve the project objectives
- Approaching strategy to all stakeholders mainly the project owner

Then in the project team itself, we always have to think of the risk of taking that specific decision and try to mitigate them.
12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

It can be a little different (not much) depending on the scope of the project. But we always emphasize on the 3 criteria mentioned in Q11. We always have to consider about our resources, see if we have enough people to carry out the work. We also have to look at relationship with different stakeholders and see how that decision could affect those people.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

Same as the answer for Q11. However, sometimes it is better to consult the supervisor or seek for consultation from the experts. There is no such a thing as a consistent pattern. It always changes depending on the situation. But again we tend to stick with the 3 criteria mentioned on Q11. Occasionally, the boss will just tell you what to do without looking at the decision you and your team has made and in that case, you need to follow the order. For example, we think that we should not participate or accept to work on this project, however the boss order you to do so because there is another project (bigger one) coming up after this small project is done. In order to get to win the bid in that big project, you have to finish the small on first even though the team thinks that it is not feasible.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

After the decision is made, it will be clearly announced in the meeting so everyone understands exactly what they need to do. They all have to proceed the work after the decision is made and announced without interrupting or getting in the way for the project to be delivered (even though they are not happy with that decision).

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

If the decision was from the team consensus, surely there is no problem of accepting. However sometimes we cannot get down to the agreement, therefore there are some people who are not satisfied with that decision. But again they need to proceed the work without interrupting anyone else in the project team. They can complain externally but not during the time that the project is executing.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

For those who have high expertise, it will be easier for them to accept the complex decisions since they can get used to new things or challenges very quickly. However it does not work like that with normal or routine workers/staff/employees. They will always tend to reject the decision that could make them change their routine activities. Although these people are not happy with the decision, they will have to work and make everything proceed smoothly. The group achievement is always prioritized before individuals’.
17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

In my case, I really want to get the customer to involve in the process at the very beginning stage of the project. First of all we need sufficient information to decide whether or not we are capable to execute that project. Why we can and why we cannot. Everyone in the team has to share idea with realistic reasons. The atmosphere of the discussion for the decision making should be very open. When we discuss we will only talk about technical issues nothing to deal with financial yet. We do not take budget into the consideration. Therefore, we should involve the customers and the person from finance department to negotiate and participate frequently in the project discussion which will lead to major decision making.
Appendix 3.4 Respondent T-B2 (Thailand – Company B – Respondent 2)

Respondent T-B2 is working with a purely Thai IT company in charge in IT project integration (infrastructure section). He works as a project leader for 7 years so far dealing with all projects on IT infrastructure based on sun-server microsystem, while project manager deals with both infrastructure (hardware and software setting up) and application (trailer make – develop new program) of IT project. He has completed more than 15 large projects (US$ 6-10 million) and many more for small projects. If the company involves other partnering organization to work in the project team, the team always changes. However if the project is assigned internally, most of the time we work with the same team. Again it depends on the project scope, teams can change due to the expertise that the members have. The project team size ranges between 3 to 20 members and the roles keep changing. He never studied or worked oversea, therefore all the information will be based on Thai culture perspective only.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

I think Thai culture does facilitate the decision making in a way but at the same time it creates problem as well. It is good that we as Thai people always compromise and avoid having conflict or hard-feeling with anyone. However sometimes the decision did not generate the best outcome because of the seniority and the way that we are very humble and calm as well as kreng-jai the superior, the younger people with more creativity will not urge to speak up in the meeting.

We know exactly what Thai culture is like and how people do things in business world, therefore in our organization, in order to avoid having those problems mentioned earlier, we always state clearly that everything is to be kept internally in the project team only. Everyone is highly encouraged to give idea and comment without hesitation of seniority, keeping in mind the project scope and objective to be delivered with high quality. There will be not hard-feeling after the meeting and do not take anything in the project personally.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

I think it is a bit easier to work in multinational team, because everyone works under the scope of work. There is no such a culture that emphasizes on kreng-jai (respect to superiors), face saving, etc. The objectives, the scope and the schedule of the project are very clear and everyone contributes the best of their ability and is always responsible for their work. It is kind of difficult when working in purely Thai team because of the word kreng-jai and having seniority that plays important role in daily life and in business. When we want to say something, we have to say it indirectly. Thai people can hardly accept the situation of rejecting his/her opinion directly in the meeting (afraid of losing face or be embarrassed). It seems to be rude, therefore we have to go around the issue and then say it indirectly. People are very easy going, things then to be more casual. Most of the time, people always say that Thai people are always late. But I would not say so. I think it depends on the personality of that individual. If the person has high responsibility, there is no way he/she will be late.
Anyhow when working in the project team, I actually want the working environment to be more active and energetic not just let it goes as Thai style. According to my experience, I especially like to work in teams with people from Singapore, Australia, and America due to their high commitment to the project and very clear scope of work. In contrast I am a little bit hesitating to work with Japanese (according to the past experience) because they are too serious and always stress out on everything. They never take things easy or relax on any issue. Therefore, that creates a very high pressure in the project team. In this way I like Thai culture in the way that we allow flexibility. We listen to the team and adjust the possible aspect to still fit with the project scope.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

As I am a project leader, I have to make final decision at the end of the day. The person that can influence my decision is the one who has higher position in the organization with more years of working experience or more superior than myself. I will feel a bit hesitating to make decision in opposition to what those people suggested. But if I am very confident in what I am doing, I will have to make the decision regardless their seniority and superiority.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

I think it has relatively high influence on decision making in project team. As we know people in our team (that normally does not change so often), we know their style of working. We know their background and are quite familiar with all the members. Therefore we can predict if this person will agree with us, or oppose to our decision.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

It is not opposing but it is rather giving comment to that idea. If I have experience in doing that before (and I know that it does not give the best result) I will say in the meeting that according to the experience that we have done, some problems happened and we did not produce the best outcome. However I will not speak in an aggressive way, but softly explain. Everyone is encouraged to give comment. It does not matter if the person that the idea was opposed will understand or not, at the end it will have to come to team to discuss and decide what to do. In the project team, we have team committee to help project manager make decision. However the final decision has to be made by project leader or project manager.

Again it depends on the position that the 2 parties have when there are 2 options or more to choose from. If I have higher position in the project team, people will tend to follow my idea, but if the other one has higher position in the organization with more experience, other team members will believe that person. But again if I am sure about
that choice of not generating best result for the project team, I will share the reason in logical way. At the end of the day, it will be up to the team committee and project leader to make decision and everyone has to respect that.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

I think we all have to put team objective and performance forward, therefore it is necessary for me to oppose if I have to. However there is many good way to talk and persuade the team members without having hard-feeling. I have to express clearly that I oppose in the work context, I have nothing against that person. I will always avoid humiliating or make other people feel offensive or embarrassed and maintain good relationship with everyone in the team.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give importance to team consensus?

I think we give high importance to the team sense of belongings. I think it is because we normally work in the same team (most of the time), therefore everyone feels like a family working together. And generally we can come to team consensus automatically when making decision (but not always). Sometimes we have to take votes when there are more than 2 options.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

There are 2 types of team therefore we have 2 atmospheres when working in teams. If the team members have high familiarity among themselves, the atmosphere will be very open, informal and emphasize on creativity. The discussion will result in a very active way, since everyone tends to share the idea a lot more. But in the team that involves many senior managers or powerful people in the project, the project team will only give information as much as they can in a very analytical way. We will not focus much on creativity, because senior management does not seem to like challenges and uncertainty. Therefore the discussion atmosphere will result more in the analytical with formal process.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

Some of the projects that I involved in had high value in terms of money (high cost associated). They also integrated both IT infrastructure and IT application project teams together. I cannot see the whole picture of the project, since I am a project leader in infrastructure side. When more budgets is needed or if I need more resources such as people or external expertise to be in the team, I will have to propose to the senior management as well as the finance department and wait for their feedback. If they are ok with that, then I can proceed to further stage including making decision. However I have complete authority to make decision under my field or my responsibility (IT infrastructure).
10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

It depends on the familiarity of the different type of project as well as the team members. Sometimes members in the team are scared of making decision without me as project leader, while I gave them authority to discuss and make decision while I am away or when I cannot be in the meeting. Therefore one style of making decision here is that I as a project leader is the one who make decision (individual decision). Another style is that everyone in the team is very familiar with one another; therefore with high value we give for sense of belongings to our team we will make decision in group (group decision). Again it depends on types of project we are doing at that time.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

Firstly we look at the project success. There has to be someone responsible and monitor for all activities including decision making. Second we look at the budget for the project. We have to do everything accordingly to the plan and whatever we can to control the money we use not to be over the set budget.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

We use the same criteria for making decision in our team. Those that are mentioned in Q11 are the main one we always take into our first consideration. Do whatever we can (make any decision) to complete the project with high quality delivery as well as keeping the budget low and under control. We will make decision based on limited resources that we have at the moment and try to make the cost as low as possible.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

It always changes. There is no consistent pattern for decision making in our organization. Moreover, in Thai organizations we focus on customer-orientation. Therefore all the criteria we use are varied depending on the customer’s preferences. We respect and praise the customer (kreng-jai) so we will try to involve them in the process so that we know what decision can be made and in what way to satisfy the clients’ need.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

After the decision is made, everyone will have to perform accordingly to the new role or task assigned. As we are quite familiar with all the team members, we do not have any trouble when implementing the decision made.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

Before the project starts, we will introduce one statement, affirming that everything happening in the meeting (including agreement and opposition) will have to be kept confidential only in the project team. There will be no such a thing as someone does
not agree with that decision, but at the same time does not mention or express the disagreement in the meeting and after the meeting he/she goes out and complain. All the issues have to be introduced during the meeting. And when the decision is made by the majority vote, it does not matter if you agree with that or not, you will have to proceed accordingly to that decision. Therefore after the meeting everyone will be able to accept the decision made at the end of the day. We normally do not have any problem with people no accepting the decision and try to interfere with the process, since we ensure in every meeting that every issue are mentioned and sorted out. The performance of the project team is always the most important thing to keep in mind. Personal issue or other things need to be left outside the team.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

It is quite difficult and complicated for the team members to accept the complex decision because it deals with changes in routine activities. Therefore it is time consuming in the way that the decision needs to be evaluated and analyzed clearly concerning all the consequences after implementation. The team members need to be informed the reasons of making that decision and the benefit of having that decision made. Sometimes we need to consult the senior managers and inform them why we have to do thing this way if the routine or the project activities are required to be changed that much. But if it is not a big deal, we do not have to do so.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

I really want Thai organization to take international project management standard more into the project team, because we still keep our culture and the way we do things based on what we have been doing in the past. The culture of kreng-jai (respect the seniority and afraid of making other people feel bad) is still deeply rooted in Thai people when we work in teams. That sometimes constrain the creativity and the outcome of the project is not always the best. Sometimes the younger generation can do a better job, but due to the respect they give to the superiors they tend not to oppose anything mentioned or suggested by those senior people.

The scope of the project must be very clear. The standard that I am talking about is that everything discussed in the meeting or in the project team must be confidential and there will be no discussion or compliant after the meeting is ended. No external politics involved in the project. Project success and team performance are the on the first priority. Everything needs to be done in the meeting and I think that is the best way in making decision.

We also involve the customer at the initial stage of the project. We will discuss firstly internally to set the direction in the way that we can persuade or negotiate with the client. Then after that we involve them in the team to make the negotiation if the project can be delivered perfectly under all the requirements and the scope of work/ or can be delivered but with more budget and etc. We can discuss with the customer directly in the meeting and at the end comes to the conclusion and make decision.
Appendix 3.5 Respondent T-C1 (Thailand – Company C – Respondent 1)

Respondent T-C1 is currently working in the IT department in a huge American company as a project manager and project controller. She has been working in this position for 6 months and has experience of managing IT projects for at least 15 projects. Her role is to be in charge of all small projects that cost less than US$ 2 millions. The project team normally has 5-10 members depending on the scale of the project. Project teams are not always the same. It keeps changing depending on the scope of the work, resources and expertise. She has been working with 5 different project teams. Moreover, she does not only have experience working in Thailand but studying 12 years and working 5 years in America.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

Thai culture assists the project to listen to the senior management or project sponsor mainly due to the strict system of seniority and hierarchy. We always obey and respect what the elders suggest. However, Thai people tend to be more helpful and flexible when seeking for help. Therefore from my experience working with many diverse nationalities in different project teams, I think working with Thai people is a lot easier comparing to other cultures, since we are very flexible and the scope of work can be amended if needed. Thai people do not actually take accountability or be proactive as much as foreigners. We are very calm and always take compromising as the solution or even avoiding conflicts.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

International team can add more dynamic to the project. I have worked with American and European team members, and they are more pro-active in the project role than Thai members. They always share opinions without hesitation since they are more individualist. But when working with all Thai people, they tend to be quiet and agree with the person who is superior to them. Working with the Americans and Europeans is faster in the way that all decision can be made right away. There is no need for the decision made in the project team to be proved from the supervisor after the team has come to an agreement. But again the challenge when working with international teams is that sometimes the messages between the team members are lost due to many communication barriers such as languages, distances, telephone calls (non-face-to-face communication), etc.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

In our organization, we have a very clearly defined internal project management process. The project manager coordinates and works with the project team to find out the decision forward to the project sponsor (project sponsor is the person who initiate the budget, typically, they are the management from the users group and that they are the person that help to allocate the budget and also play the role of final decision
making in each phrase of the project). However, if the project sponsor already has pre-determined decision, it is very hard for project manager to influence with the project team decision. Therefore, the position or hierarchy not only in the organization but also the ones external play important role in decision making in project teams. Because the position plays significant role in the decision making in projects, we always try to involve senior management, thus it will be easier to carry on the decision making process.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

It depends on many factors mainly the personality of people. If you have project sponsor who is open-minded, he/she would listen when project manager present information to the team. Some project sponsor has pre-determined decision; in that case it will be very difficult to influence that conclusion. However, the relationship among the project team, when the project manager has credibility on the works, it can largely influence on decision making process.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

As I am a project manager, yes, if I feel that there is a better solution. I would request the project team to do more research on different alternatives, generally provide more proven data to the difference in each of the solution. We also have the mechanism called decision quality diagram which could help us measure what is the best decision.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

I will not hesitate to; however, being in Thai culture, I have to be careful in how I present different alternatives without creating bad relationship with my project team. I will find good ways to approach or present my opinion without creating any conflict or hard feeling among the team members. As long as we try to achieve the goals in terms of quality, time and cost, everyone in the project team is highly encouraged to give opinion and be open-minded.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give importance to team consensus?

Generally, yes. Moreover, we always have group exercises to generate the sense of belonging in the team. Sometimes if there is no consensus in the decision made, we will go through a process called phase gate that we commonly use in our organization.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

Everyone in the team is very open-minded, especially working with Thai people. The discussion normally proceeds informally. But when working with Westerners and
Europeans, they tend to be more active and the scope of the work including objective is more clearly defined. Everything is conducted in a formal way. The current firm has its internal project management process that would make sure that we look into different perspective when finding a solution for the project. We have a matrix to measure different aspects from logically thinking, reasoning, creativity.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

It depends on what type of decision. If it is not a major decision, the project team member has its own power to decide. Apart from that, the team has to consult senior managers.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

I do not see that much difference in decision making style according to my experience. However, I would like to point out one thing that I see frequently when working with Thai teams. People who are less senior (by age or the duration of work that they are in that role) would stay back and do not play lots of role in decision making; they would rather support the decision of those who are more senior than them, while the superior people would give more feedback and are willing to take decisions. Thai people seem to be more ‘kreng-jai’ (obey and respect the elders, the superiors, friends) to each others when comparing to non-Thai project members who are more active in the project.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

Logically Reasoning, timing, cost, quality, justify business needs.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

They are pretty much the same.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

Yes, it goes by those who have the most senior role to be the people who push the decision forward.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

Through a meeting, consensus through a questionnaire form, e-mail, phone conference (depends on what kind of decisions). Typically decision is made in a meeting. And once it is made, everyone has to follow.
15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

Sometimes not everyone agree on the decision made in the meeting. However, most of the time the decision is made according to the majority and thus is accepted by most of the team members. Everyone in the team has to work according to the decision made without holding the team back, even though some of them do not agree with that decision.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

No. When it comes to the complex decision, team members would try to find the reasons in understanding the issues or the problems that could rise. They will take more time to do risk management. Sometimes they reject to accept the decision because they do not like to deal with unknown situations. They prefer to work according to their normal routine.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

Agree to have the most senior person involve in the project team and make the final decision. However, it would be nicer if project teams get more active and feel more accountable during decision making period. Everyone should have a clear understanding of the implication before he/she makes decision.
Appendix 3.6 Respondent T-C2 (Thailand – Company C – Respondent 2)

Respondent T-C2 is working in a huge American company as a project manager in the IT department. The projects that he is currently dealing with are developing an in-house application such as reports on the web portal. He has been working in this role for 3 years and has involved in more than 10 big projects with maximum 20 project team members. The project team is not always fixed. It keeps changing depending on different aspects. He also has worked overseas for 3 years.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

I would not say that Thai culture always facilitate the decision making. In one way it does help in the process, since people are more flexible, tend to avoid having conflict and always compromise. We do things relatively in the informal way, as friends or family working together. In general, we are very calm as we called “cold-minded” meaning that we take things easily. Of course we are serious and put high effort when we are working, but at the same time we work calmly. We can hardly see any aggressive actions while working in teams. On the other hand, sometimes I feel that the seniority system we have in the culture kind of constrain the idea, uniqueness, creativity, etc, since people with less seniority would not speak up in the meeting because they are younger and with the word “kreng-jai”, younger people or less superior team members would not share or give their idea. Comparing with some other nations with different cultures, people like to express their thoughts regardless the seniority i.e. Singapore or Malaysia and I think that is a good thing to do when working in project team, especially for IT industry, since we need new idea and creativity.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

Yes, national culture plays a major role in managing the resources. For example, Indian-junior developer will only take order strictly from their supervisor. You must have written specification when you want to order or give tasks to them. Singaporean & Malaysian are very rigid and responsible to the role they play. They always look for more opportunity to take greater roles. They have capability to play the bigger role. They usually impressed us because the quality of their work generally exceeds the expectation. In a different way, Thai is very humble and do not like to take greater role. People normally take responsibility for their own work only, not seeking for more tasks to do. Obviously if the team members need help, they will help as much as they can. However, we will not interfere with other people’s responsibility without them asking for help, avoiding the hard feeling that they could think that we do not trust them or afraid that they will not produce good quality work.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?
The roles such as project management and project owner always play major role in decision making. Clear role and responsibility of each stakeholder are already well-defined in the beginning stage of project. For example, sometimes project manager role is to act as a facilitator to generate different alternatives to come to the decision which will be made by project owner. Normally, the project owner has high influence on decision making. While, the influence from the users or other stakeholders who got impacted by implementing this project can be medium to high depending on their characteristics.

The organizational positions that everyone in the project team has do not matter when working within the project team, since new roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Everyone will have to leave their positions in the organization outside and work with the new role assigned to them in project team. However, people tend to agree with the superiors anyways because of the culture teaching us not to be against the elders.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

It depends. Normally, the relationship among the members in the project team is helping to implement project smoothly. However, it has less impact on decision making because the decision is made by the committee of the project not by individuals or project manager only. During the process of selecting the committee, we would not put people who have conflict to work together in the team.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

Yes, we can oppose and declare the reason. At the end, it is up to the team to make the decision. It is also possible if we sometimes cannot get down to consensus, however the note or important message from different decision must be captured.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

No, there is always a way to talk. Generally, in Thai culture we can express things softer even when it is in a negative way. We do not say things directly; therefore we will not hurt anybody’s feeling.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give importance to team consensus?

Yes, normally we do. However, it cannot be said that we always get down to consensus. Sometimes we have to take votes and take the majority decision when we cannot come to agreement.
8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

It is very informal, analytic and open-minded. Everyone must share their concerns so that we could find the actions to mitigate them or deal better with risk management.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

The team has authority to make decision by themselves. In the project team normally it has someone called ‘decision executive’ to make decisions. The project team plays greater roles in giving information and recommendations.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

Normally in Thai style, we as a project team have authority to make decision by ourselves. However, we can consult the supervisor when needed or whenever we want to, but it is not compulsory. Whereas, in some other teams I worked with many people from different countries, they cannot make decision right away. They always need to ask for support, suggestions, approval from their bosses.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

Goal to have high quality of each decision,
Ensure the team has enough information to make decision.
Ensure we consider all possible alternatives and solutions
Ensure we are logical on the decision
Ensure we know the value and trade off/risk of choosing to made the decision
Ensure that the team are commit to those required actions.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

They are pretty much the same. Some of them might be changed or adjusted depending on the situation and projects.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

Majority is to ensure we know the benefit and the trade off/risk of making that decision, and also to make sure that we have enough information to work around with before making the decision.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

All the decisions made are clearly stated during the team meeting and the works are distributed accordingly to that decision.
15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

Normally it is accepted by all members because of the team consensus in decision making. However, when the decision was voted, surely there are some people who do not agree to that option. But still they need to work accordingly to the decision made to achieve the main objectives of the project.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

It depends on the impact to the team members. For the decision that has greater impact on them, it may be difficult and challenging for them to accept. But finally we have to get the commitment from all members.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

The best thing to do in IT team regardless countries is to ensure the quality of each decision. And to be able to do that the team should involve all parties to work together from the beginning of the project. Plus, the team should be able to make most of the decisions by themselves without seeking for further consultation from the supervisors.
Appendix 4.1 Respondent I-A1 (India – Company A – Respondent 1)

Respondent I-A1 has been with Company I-A for the past 4 years and in this period she has successfully completed one project, and is currently working on her second project since the last 8 months. In her first project she started off as a team member and then was promoted to the module lead position, and later on she was made the project lead. Both projects she was involved in related to data warehousing. In her current project she is a business intelligence resource investigator and in her role she has to collect requirements from the clients and convert them into work tasks to be performed by her team for the implementation of the requirements. In her first project she was sent to work on-site at the clients premise in the USA for a year.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

Culture most significantly affects the attitude of employees towards work. Usually we have 6 working hours. But if the work allotted for the day is not complete within the 6 hours, we have the tendency to extend our working hours just to complete the work. Secondly, for us Indians family comes first. So whenever there is a family issue, we take leave to tend to those problems or sometimes even ask for a transfer to our hometown. The Indian companies are very co-operative in this way. However, according to me the Indian culture positively affects the work environment, and this is reflected in the results and outcomes. We often take up a project as our own responsibility and we don’t give up easily. We are determined to get the work done. Decision making, therefore is often pretty quick and mostly well pondered upon, as we do not leave things unfinished at the end of each day.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

The cultural influence was definitely different in the US. There most of the employees would leave at day end even if their work was not over. They follow time very well. They come on time and leave on time.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

There are some people who have better decision making ability than others and hence they contribute more to the decisions made. But this does not necessarily mean that they have a high position in the organization. Superiority in the ability to make useful decisions may also come from the number of years of experience the person has of doing that particular work. For example, I am the senior most in my team in terms of experience, so I am always consulted by the project manager in making important decisions.
4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

No. I don’t think relationships in teams matter when taking decisions. At least I haven’t seen that happening.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

Yes, everyone has a say in the team. So it’s a team decision and each one related to the problem is asked to give an opinion. Even if a senior person makes a decision and a junior member feels it is not correct, he/she is allowed to give an opinion on that. But it is our Indian culture which teaches us to respect our seniors and not question their decisions. So even when our seniors are welcoming and the organizational culture invites everyone to participate in decision making process, most of the team members are hesitant to do so.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

No I wouldn’t do that because it is the health of the project that will suffer from my doing so. In formal relationships you always have to be diplomatic. But if I believe my opinion would save the project from going in the wrong direction, I have to let others know about it but not by being very sharp or rude. I don’t really want to hurt anyone’s feelings but I try and use a different way to communicate such an opinion.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give important to team consensus?

Yes. I think so. But this depends mostly on the type of project and the kind of manager. If the manager is welcoming to everyone’s opinion then there is team consensus. All teams I have worked with have been very cooperative and give importance to team consensus.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

There are many ways of discussions that go into making a decision. If you face a problem and you don’t know how to move ahead with it, you can raise this issue in the weekly team meetings and invite solutions from others. You can also approach a support group, a group of experts who specialize in one field each. They may either give you a complete solution to your problem or a work around, which is not the best solution but it may work at that point of time. Everyone in the team can contribute to the work around.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

When it comes to a project all decisions are made within the team and very rarely are the decisions made outside. Occasionally help from support team is sought; however,
the decisions are made by the team members. Even when we are working on site with
the client, all the technical decisions are taken by us.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you
participated in?

All the teams follow a similar decision making pattern wherein everybody’s ideas are
discussed. But the type of discussion also depends on the technology you are using. If
there is a problem in processes concerning only 1 technology, then only people related
to that technology are consulted. In such a case discussion does not involve all team
members.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

The most important factor is the time available for you to complete the work. The
second most important criterion is the client’s requirements. You not only try to meet
the requirements but you would go beyond and make such decision that would benefit
or add value to the client’s business or project. Third criterion is the billing. You tend
to provide all the features to the product/project while staying within the budget.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the
IT teams you have worked with?

When it comes to technical things, then the same criteria are used. But, when you are
working in a team you face many constraints and so your decision making criteria
change accordingly. For example, when I was only an intern with this company and
had put in considerable amount of time in a project, I was made the project manager
for it. I was chosen as I was closest to the technical aspects of the project. The
management easily could have chosen someone more experienced and technically
more sound but the criterion for choosing the project manager was experience of that
project.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT
teams in your country?

In case of technical decisions it is almost the same. However, for non-technical
decisions the patterns would be different. For example, ours is a CMMI5 company
and so we have to follow certain standards.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

We have meetings in which the duties are delegated to the team members. We
maintain minutes of meetings, which are circulated amongst all the team members. In
addition to that we also have an internal tool wherein we fill our time sheets; we see
what tasks are assigned to us and; how much time we are given for the task. In the
same place we have to log in our defects. Besides that in a large group we have one
person as a point of contact – who knows the duties of all the team members and
he/she can be consulted if there’s any problem or confusion regarding your role.
15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

Usually when the majority has approved something or made a decision then everyone accepts it.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

The rate of acceptability is the same for any decision. If you take longer to accept you end up getting less time to complete your task so the team accepts all decisions at more or less the same rate. There is never really anything hard to accept.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

I think having meetings and discussions is the best way. But there should be a time limit for everything. Besides that before the meeting everybody should be given an agenda so they know what is being discussed so that they can contribute the most. This way time is also saved and decisions are arrived at quickly and easily.
Appendix 4.2 Respondent I-A2 (India – Company A – Respondent 2)

Respondent I-A2 is currently working on his second project with his company. He leads three different modules of the project, managing 30 people under him. His client for the current project is a Government Department in India. The project involves developing webpages for all activities of the Department.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

The cultural influence is largely from the client’s side. Since we work with some of the government departments, we have a lot of direct interface with the government officials. So we have to deal with our clients in a very different way. Most of them have very poor technical knowledge, and so we have to help them develop the project requirements. Once we start working, there is a lot of interference from their end. Many a times specifications are changed when the project is mid-way. So these attributes of Indian government officials do affect the project and decision making processes.

2) Related to the first question, would it be different when you with international team and what were the differences?

In our company, even when we handle offshore projects, we only have Indian employees in our team, and very rarely do we have foreign nationals. But there is a difference when working with a foreign client as compared to an Indian client. When we work with an Indian client we usually communicate in the regional language especially when the clients are government officials. Having a local person in the team would really make a lot of difference in communications, interactions, trust and understanding when we come in contact with the client.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

Yes, position in the organization does matter. Although everybody is welcome to give their ideas, decisions of the person who is higher up in the organization will carry more weight than that of others.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

This depends from person to person. Relationships may have influence in one team but may not work in all teams. This cannot be generalized.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?
When the decision is final and frozen then nothing can be done. But when the discussion is still on and you have a way to prove the decision wrong and support it with a logical and better alternative, then your opinion will be heard and accepted if found appropriate. For example, once when the team was divided into two sub teams and each was working in different locations, I suggested that the productivity of the entire team would be better if all worked from one location for reasons of logistics, communication and networking.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

When I have to do such a thing, I think twice before taking the step. When I have to propose my opinion to a very senior person, revoking his/her decision, I would consider all the pros and cons and accordingly make a decision as to whether or not I should do that.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give important to team consensus?

Yes the teams give importance to team consensus.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

When I am faced with a problem situation I try to solve it myself first. If I can’t do it myself I ask for help from other members of the team. We are also allowed to take help from outside. However, the decision is made within the team by either me or in consultation with the team members.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

The team has complete authority to make the decision.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

There are basically two decision making styles I observed. One in which it is the boss who makes the entire decision. This usually happens when you don’t have enough time for team discussion. The other style is where all team members are called to the discussion and asked to give their opinions on the problem being discussed. A team consensus is then reached.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

From the company’s viewpoint cost and profit are the important criteria. We also consider the client’s convenience while making decision.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?
This depends on the team, the project, what outcomes are expected from the project and the technologies used.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

There is no rule for making decisions. It depends on a number of things.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

Once the decision is made it is informed to all in terms of action items for everyone. If instructions are required to be given in a face to face manner, then meetings are called, otherwise an email is sent to everyone informing them of their responsibilities and instructions thereof.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

Generally the decision is accepted by all. Sometimes there are complaints when the people face a problem in what they hare doing. But help is offered and it is made sure the decision is accepted.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

Not much difference in time taken to accept any kind of decision.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

An appropriate process would be to involve everyone. Those from the team who have more experience in solving a similar problem must be consulted for every small problem. All others should also be given a chance to contribute to the decision making process and team consensus should be encouraged.
Appendix 4.3 Respondent I-B1 (India – Company B – Respondent 1)

Respondent I-B1 is in the I-B’s division that works for communication projects. She’s been working in this company since the past two years. Her current project is one of the largest and oldest customers of the company, which is the biggest telecom company in the UK. There are 175 people working on the project currently and the team is likely to expand further. Her work as a software developer involves testing, coding, and managing the development cycle. She has worked in UK for the company and has lived and studied in many different countries.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

I think culture affects the managerial strategy of the workplace. Managers in India and UK differ significantly as far as their managerial strategies are concerned. The Indian managers know that the young software engineers are fresh kids out of college, and so they are competitive and willing to work. So most managers make ‘working long hours’ an implied norm in the organization, and those who fail to work long hours are either castigated, or their appraisals suffer. While in the UK, managers give engineers a great deal of respect. Not only do they treat work hours like a 'chore' that you just must do and give you some sort of appreciation for it but they also encourage you to go home on time and come early the next day. Most Indians leave office when they have completed their day’s work. This is because we have been conditioned to work.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

Other than the number of hours they work, a difference between British and Indian managers is that the former have stronger relevant technical background perhaps because they have been in this field for a long time and perceive 'management' as different from what the Indian managers perceive it as. The Indian managers in many cases are not at all technical. They hold masters degrees and haven't dealt with technical things in a long time, which greatly impacts their management. So these are the two major differences

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

This is pretty straightforward. It depends on the manager - most managers make decisions internally, even if it relates directly to the development team or the testing team. Very few other managers will actually raise this in a meeting or ask for feedback. In our present team what one manager does is ask the people who are one level ahead of us and below him hoping that our views would get to him via our immediate seniors. This worked pretty well sometimes. We also have meetings called 'skip level' meetings, where we have a face to face meeting with our boss's boss. However our complaints and issues are only heard when someone is either at the brink of resigning or very adamant about a point.
4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

Again it depends on the manager. However all managers are susceptible to being influenced by those they are close to them. Personal relationships play a big role and have a huge impact.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

After a decision is made, it can't be revoked at our level. We can express our opinion but we do not expect anything to be done about the decision, but yes while the decision making process is in place we give our inputs freely in the meetings

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

No. I am speaking for the majority of the software engineers. However, people are hesitant to talk of things which they think might adversely affect their growth. They don’t complain about such things but the workforce is aware of the fact that they have many options and that they don’t have to work in conditions that they are not comfortable with. The attrition rate in a lot of companies is very high due to this. Actually it was felt that there was a need for the boss's boss to hear us - and that is when the skip levels began to happen. But most software engineers would rather look for greener pastures than try to fight a system like ours. There have been many who have stated their point but then they've had a hard time.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give important to team consensus?

Yes. My team gives importance to team consensus.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

With most managers it is an open forum. You are free to express what you feel. However there are few managers who will be receptive to what you are saying. Most already know the decision – it's the decision they want to take or they think is best. It all depends on the manager. For bigger teams usually there are no discussions. There however was a manger a few months ago who used to discuss everything in the project meetings and give due consideration to everyone. I've heard about 'politics' in teams of 5 so it all depends on managers.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

The decisions are always made in the team, never outside.
10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

The decision making style depends on the manager. Once, back in India the productivity of the team was a huge issue. All the managers had a meeting with the software engineers to discuss what the matter was so we all gave our different reasons and the manager saw that one of the problems was the link speed, which was slowing our work down. A solution was found in a meeting in consultation with all and before the end of the month it had been implemented. But over here, my friend had requested for an additional member in her team as the work load was increasing, but the manager called a meeting with the friend and her boss asking if it was really necessary to have an additional member. This really irritated my friend, as if they don’t believe her.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

The first and foremost criterion is the revenue. We also place a huge premium on quality of what we deliver. While money and quality are most important, time is also a decisive factor. Usually that is the largest complaint.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

Yes, the same criteria are used every time.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

Yes. Usually a group makes the decisions. It depends on the formation of team members, for example, this could be a group of managers who make the decision. On the other hand there are huge teams that have a collection of people who monitor everything from people movement to designs but it is always a 'group' that makes the decision

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

A mail is sent to everyone with the decision and from then on the managers observe that everyone follows that decision.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

You can’t keep everyone happy. Most of the times the team members accept the decisions and if they are not happy they will grumble and if they think it’s worth it, they might think about bringing it up in the project meeting.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?
No. Once a mail comes in it has to be accepted.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

I think the manager needs to make a conscious effort to listen to all parties and give everyone due consideration. That would be the best practice for decision making in IT teams.
Appendix 4.4 Respondent I-B2 (India – Company B – Respondent 2)

Respondent I-B2 joined the company as a software engineer approximately 7 years ago and has worked his way to becoming a project manager, and he has been in this position for the past 9 months. He has worked on 6 projects so far and has been to US and UK during the course of 2 such projects. He has recently completed a large project with a major telecom company.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

When it comes to culture, we Indians are very hard working and dedicated. I know people who have worked very long hours just to meet the deadlines. Per say the influence of Indian culture is towards the positive side. There are very few negatives when it comes to our work culture. Our education system does not teach us practical aspects of things. So even though we are very good in the theory part but when it comes to the practical applications of things, we are not very good at it. This is a drawback more of our education system than our culture. This is one thing that leads to a lot of confusion later on.

Our culture has taught us not to ask questions to our seniors. One of the biggest aspects of our culture that influences our decisions is our inability to prod information and get right answers. Due to this inability we generally tend to shy away from making decisions and leave this task to be done by somebody higher up in the organization.

2) Related to the first question, was it different when you worked with international team and what were the differences?

There are a lot of dissimilarities. There is a lot of professionalism when it comes to working in the UK or the US. Right from the number of hours to the kind of work a person is required to do are very professionally defined for that person when he/she joins work. Back in India it becomes a little unprofessional and this is because you are mostly working under high pressure environments when it comes to consulting and the only training you have is on the job training and you are usually not adequate training for a particular job. That is the core difference according to me.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

We generally tend to leave the decisions to higher ups. This is not because the person lower down in the chain is not capable of taking a decision, but it is the culture that teaches us to be this way. There is quite a degree of influence of position on decision making. But the trend is changing and probably within a few years this trend might be reversed.
4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

Yes, it does. It is not just restricted to here in India. Although there is higher degree of professionalism in the Western countries, but team dynamics, working in a team and your reactions to a person all over the world depend on what relationship you have with that person or with the team. However when it comes to working in a purely offshore project where there is not much client interface, these interpersonal relationships hinder in a lot of decision making. But when the team has to work face to face with the clients, there is a higher degree of professionalism involved.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

I have done that quite a number of times in the recent past. Now the trend is changing. You have many people speaking up and asking the validity of the decision made before it is implemented. 6-7 years ago you weren’t encouraged to ask questions, but now people are stepping forward and asking questions as to why they have to work in the said way. I am the kind of person who speaks up even for simple things. In my position I have the opportunity and trust to make the decision and I am more of an individual contributor.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

I have the knack of giving opinions. I do not hesitate in giving my opinions and I am very cautious in choosing my words when expressing my opinion.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give important to team consensus?

Yes.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

You cannot really generalize the discussion atmosphere. There are some team discussions that are very casual, in which decisions that could have been made and discussions ended within 10-15 minutes go on for 45 minutes. This can happen only when you have the liberty of time. On the other hand there are meetings which are semi-formal. These are really long meetings having intense discussions for 40-45 minutes followed by 5-10 minutes of personal talks just to cool down the atmosphere. Then you have really professional meetings which last for about 15-20 minutes. The team makes quick decisions and then ends the meeting.

Generally in team discussions, everyone is encouraged to speak up and give an opinion. Even those who are reluctant to speak are asked for an opinion. But there are also other teams in which team dynamics are not that great and not many people end up speaking.
9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

We have complete authority in making the decisions. We make the decisions and let the management know. If there are any objections such as time for implementation is not adequate or the decision would affect the work of other teams, then you basically go back to the drawing board and arrive at a more conducive decision. You usually tend to take a call on your own.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

You have lots of ways of coming up to a decision. Sometimes you can call for a vote, or if you are the lead you take the decision with the team consenting to it, or you just inform the team of what you are doing and then you clarify any doubts or queries if any.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

Time and effort are the two main criteria. But you can not generalize anything for all decisions of the company because we have too many project lines and too many different models followed in each line.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

It is not possible to generalize the criteria for all teams. They are different most of the times, depending on the type of decision you have to make and the constraints you have.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

All project managers of IT teams would consider the factors of time and effort as far as consistency in decision making patterns is considered.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

I scope the work which is coming in, and then I see what changes can be made basically to find out whether or not it is possible to do the work. Once it is done I try to match the different skills of the team members to those required to complete each task. Then I go back to the team and find out who wants to do work on which module. This is important because some members would want to try something different than what I had expected from them. After the team members have given their inputs I take them all together and then make the decision as to who is working on what and then we arrive at a consensus.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?
The team members are informed about the decision in a way I mentioned in the last question. Then if someone has a problem accepting the decision, then I find out the reason and ask if he/she would need help. All this is taken care of in the meeting itself. So basically there is no scope for hesitation left and the decision is accepted by all members without any complaints.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

It depends from person to person. For some people you have to tell them that there will be someone to help them if they don’t understand something. Then there are some people who are pretty confident and they accept the complex decisions in the same way as they do in accepting simple decisions.

When I joined this industry 6 years ago, there was no question of not accepting the decision. We were ready to do any work that is allotted at any time. But now this trend is changing. Now people are pickier about the work you are doing. These people know that they have many options outside the organization. So now there is a lot of hesitation in accepting work especially if is a big or complex task. Most people don’t want to work at all. They want to do minimum work and have the maximum pay.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

My decisions are mostly very interactive. This way I make sure changes don’t happen later. Mine is a team discussion always. I first get my work and scope it out to find out what needs to be done, what technologies are required and so on. Then I break it down into blocks of work. Later in a meeting it is discussed as to who does what, after which I come up with a first draft of the plan and discuss it with the team. If there are any changes suggested in the meeting, they are made there and the work is distributed.
Appendix 4.5 Respondent I-C1 (India – Company C – Respondent 1)

Respondent I-C1 is a frontline manager for a group of about 25 people, 1 subject matter expert and 1 quality analyst. His team is a support group that helps the employees in the US and Canada in resolving their technical problems. He has worked with two other IT companies before and this is the third major project he is handling.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help facilitate decision making?

All the IT companies I have worked with so far have originated from the USA. In my experience the processes used here have all been driven from America. The Indian division of company C was set up with American fundamentals, imitating their organizational culture and values here. Moreover, the influence of the American way of working including their decision making styles has been strong with the employees here. I don’t see a strong distinction between the Indian framework and the American framework.

2) Related to the first question, would it be different when you work with an international team and what could the differences be?

There may be a difference in cultural influence, but since I haven’t worked outside India, I cannot comment on this.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

There is little or no influence of organizational position on decision making. In our company the managers involve the entire team in matters that are going to affect them or decisions that change the way they work.

It is the organizational level that determines how much involvement of the team would be allowed. For instance, a top level manager’s decision would impact the company’s financial situation, while the decision of a middle level manager would affect accounts, whereas the third level or frontline manager’s decision would relate to a team. The decision that impacts the team would require the participation of the entire team in the decision process, whilst a financial decision about company sensitive information requires highest secrecy and the minimum number of people can be involved in the process.

Irrespective of the number of members involved in the team, the position of the members more or less is insignificant in decision making.

4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?
Speaking for my team, there is no influence of relationships between team members when we have to make a decision.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

Yes, I would oppose such a decision.

I’ll share with you an example. Once when we were determining the grounds for appraisal, I saw that the appraisal system was financially inequitable and it would leave some of my team members dissatisfied. I realized this was not in the best interest of both the employee and the company in case the employee decides to leave the organization. I requested to stop the appraisal system from being implemented.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

You have to be politically correct, and make others realize that your idea or opinion deserves credibility. In real circumstances you have to relate with your seniors and people around you.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give important to team consensus?

Team consensus to a large extent is considered for most decisions. However when the decision relates to finance the team may not be consulted.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

The problem situation is first analyzed, after which we discuss what is to be done given the current model. Then I invite suggestions from everyone and I choose the suggestion which is closest to the one already projected and propose that as what management has come up with. Then I leave the floor open for everyone’s opinion on the decision made, so as to ensure the team agrees with the same. I would say the discussion is very open, and everyone is encouraged to speak.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

As far as decisions regarding workload of the team are concerned, I as the project manager have 80 percent of the control. The remaining 20 percent remains with people up line. I exercise my 80 percent control by allowing the entire team to participate in the decision making processes.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

A few years back, when I started off my career as a supervisor, I was never invited to participate in the decision making process. I would only have to follow the directions given and pass them on to the fellow team members. At that time business laid down
the guidelines, and we had a step by step way of going forward to a position where we could make decisions. But now things have changed. The teams now have open discussions and complete involvement of the team in decision making. Now this is how everybody likes the teams to run.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

Priority one would be business impact in terms of how the client would react to the decision. Would the decision match client’s specifications or exceed them? Would it be a positive or negative reaction?

The second criterion would be how many people are required for the job – whether we need to bring in more people to the team or do we need to remove excess members? These are the two big criteria considered in all decisions.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

For most projects, it’s the same. Customer is given highest priority, followed by resource utilization.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

The pattern is the same. Everybody considers the two important criteria of business impact and resource adequacy. After that the decision making process depends on the context of the project, availability of time and other factors.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

The team is called to a meeting, wherein all members are involved in determining what work each has to do. The focus is to get the buy-in from all members to make them feel they are involved in each decision made. So the decision is implemented keeping everyone informed about the process. The responsibilities are divided in the meeting in consultation with everyone.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

The team members may feel offended to a certain extent if their opinions are not taken into account or if there is a monarchy and the team just has to follow directions given by the manager. Such members would have difficulty in accepting the decisions, which may lead to complaints or rejections. But the positive side of it is that such behaviors would eventually improve the decisions made if the complaints and opinions are discussed with everyone. You would rather have such people in the team who question your decisions than those who just accept the decisions as they are given.
16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

The acceptability rate for minor decisions is always higher than the decisions involving big picture changes.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

There is one formula, which works not only in decision making but also managing change. This is ‘expectation setting’. In an environment where situations keep changing, expectation setting in the beginning of the project would be the best way to manage it. If the expectations are not taken into account from the beginning there will always be dissent among members, as the project progresses and it becomes difficult to accommodate everyone’s expectations.
Appendix 4.6 Respondent I-C2 (India – Company C – Respondent 2)

Respondent I-C2 has been working with her current company since the past 1 year, and she is currently undertaking her first project with the company. This project comes under the top 5 biggest IT projects in the world. The details of the project could not be disclosed for the security of the project. But the first major part of the project will soon be released by the client. In India there are about 600 people working on this project. I-C2’s role in the project is to test the software that is developed.

1) Please pick one of the projects you were involved in and based on your national culture, how do the culture aspects help to facilitate decision making?

In my company we have a fixed set of rules and regulations to abide by irrespective of the culture. This is so because the company operates in a huge number of countries and it becomes important to standardize project management processes in all countries, not letting any specific culture influence any aspect of the project. Therefore, there is minimal cultural influence in activities directly related to project. Culture however, affects other decisions, like those pertaining to human resources to a limited extent. For example, declaring holidays on Indian festivities. The company is very stern on this issue. The same rules apply all over the world. The company maintains so much control that each and every step is recorded in specific tools for monitoring purposes.

2) Related to the first question, would it be different when you with international team and what were the differences?

I already have to co-ordinate with a team from another country. We have interactions on a daily basis and our work is totally inter-dependent. In my experience of working with this team I do not see and cultural influence in keeping schedules and deadlines, maintaining quality and so on. The company tools ensure that all processes are standardized every where. Cultural influence is further minimized by keeping the meetings very formal. We cannot deviate from the purpose of the meeting and we can not discuss things outside the agenda even if it relates to the project.

3) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the position (hierarchy) in the organization? How do those positions influence on decision making?

As far as decision making in our own work areas is concerned, we have the complete authority to make the decisions ourselves without consulting any higher authority. We can also seek help from anyone without prior permission.

However, in team decisions we have to respect the hierarchy. We have three levels of hierarchy in a team, the software developers are at the lowest level, after whom we have the technical leads, who are managed by the project manager, also called the module lead. In a team the project manager has the highest authority. When team decisions are concerned the position in the team does matter.
4) What is the degree of influence on decision making in project team when considering the relationships among the project team members? How do those relationships influence on decision making?

No, the relationships don’t matter so much. It is the position that matters most. But everyone knows whom you can ask help from when you are in trouble, even when it is not explicitly said so.

5) When you work in the project, if you feel like the decision made does not give the optimum result, do you tend to oppose the decisions agreed by the majority?

Yes, we can oppose the decision. Once I had requested something to be automated, but this would be very expensive for the project and would also require high maintenance for a very long time. Hence, the idea was initially rejected. Later, with the help of a colleague I made a projection of expenses and the likely benefits of automation. A meeting was called specially for discussing the idea, wherein we presented our plan supporting it with logical reasons and expected benefits. Our plan was found feasible and we were given a go-ahead for it.

6) Do you hesitate to give your opinion which could generate better decision though you have to oppose or hurt someone’s feeling in the project team?

No, I would not hesitate to oppose an inappropriate decision.

7) Do you think that the teams you worked in give important to team consensus?

Yes. They do always give importance to team consensus.

8) How do you see/how would you describe the atmosphere of team discussion which will lead to the decision making?

The team discussions are always logical and analytical. When we presented the plan for automation, the go-ahead was not just given without discussions. Everybody cross-questioned the viability of the idea. They were asking questions amongst each other and to people who had more experience in that particular area. We considered a lot of factors in taking that decision.

9) How much authority does the project team have in terms of making decision?

Our roles in the teams are very well defined. We are responsible for the completion of the module. So we have to make all the decisions relating to the work assigned to us. Whereas the administrative decisions fall outside the scope of our work and only those are handled by people outside our team.

10) What is your experience of the different decision making styles in the teams you participated in?

There can be many different ways of making decisions and consulting others. The decision styles frequently used are reviews, walk-in’s and registering queries in tools.
When we are faced with a problem we cannot solve it ourselves, we first raise this issue at the time of the peer review. The peers see if the decision made by us is correct or not; or if we are unable to arrive at a decision ourselves, they help by providing alternatives. If the problem is still not solved, we discuss it in the team reviews. In these reviews, the whole team brainstorms solutions and the best out of them is chosen.

In walk-in’s we simply go to an employee outside the team, who we think would be able to provide an appropriate solution to the given problem, and ask him to resolve the issue for us. In addition to this, we have a tool which registers our queries and gives us a solution based on previous problems of similar type in accordance to the type of project and its complexities.

11) What criteria were used in making decisions?

First we consider what technologies we have to use and what are available with us. Another equally important criterion is matching customer requirements and specifications. We cannot go beyond or under what has been specified by the customer.

12) Related to question 11, were the same criteria used for making decisions in all the IT teams you have worked with?

Yes, one way or the other all IT companies follow the same criteria for decision making.

13) Have you observed any consistent pattern in the way decisions are made in IT teams in your country?

I cannot comment about the country but the decision making process in our company is very consistent. It is the same as mentioned in Question 10.

In our company we also always try to find out where the mistakes and failures occur in the project. This would not only help expedite the speed of the projects but also improve the quality of outcomes.

14) How were the decisions implemented in the project team?

When the decision is made, the project manager sends it to the technical leads. The technical leads review the decision to see if any changes are required. If any changes are made, the revised decision is sent back to the project manager, if not the work is distributed among the developers for implementation. All instructions are given to us (developers) in advance in the form of weekly plans.

15) How were the decisions accepted by the team members?

Before implementing the decision, we may find some defects, which cannot be implemented. So the developers working on them are given an extended timeline to fix the defects. However, if the defects cannot be fixed they go into the next release.
If someone has worked overtime to repair the defect within time, he is paid overtime for the same. But generally, all other decisions without defects are accepted without complaints.

16) Do the team members take the same amount of time in accepting a complex decisions (giving rise to changes in routine activities) as they do in accepting simple decisions?

Yes they take the same amount of time to accept any decision. If anything new is coming up, we are given adequate training for it.

17) What according to you would be the best in practice decision making process for IT teams in your country?

There should be a tool where any discussions and outcomes of discussions between members of the team should be recorded and this information should be available to others for use to enhance the decision making process. This is important because most of the time in IT teams is lost in trying to solve technical problems. The information stored in this tool can also be used as reference for future projects that face similar problems.