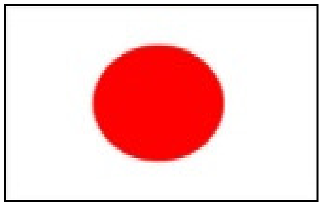


Influence of Culture and Communication Practices in Team Functioning:

Case Studies on Japanese and Philippine Financial Project Teams

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7 January 2010

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Winter Semester 2009
Master thesis, 15 hp

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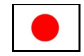

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research paper is the culmination of the MSPME programme (UK, Italy and Sweden) and the journey had been exhilarating.

While walking along Royal Mile's cobbled street in Edinburgh, the whole place was slowly enveloped in mist and the looming church spire from afar silhouetted the hazy sky. It was a picture perfect scene and a poignant reminder of a distant past, when people had to struggle in difficult conditions but they did it with much aplomb.

In Milan, I climbed the 13th century Duomo and from afar the magnificent vista of the Italian Alps pierced through an impossibly blue sky. Hence, on a hot Italian summer, I found myself climbing Punta della Valleta in Pila near the French border where at one point turning my back and going down seemed a lot easier than struggling for some more precious breaths in order to reach the summit. However, the lure of the top and seeing the snow capped Mont Blanc face-to-face was a big motivation to go on.

In Umea, I was enveloped by the utter coldness of winter but I gained appreciation of the serene beauty of the place, the family atmosphere of cafes illumined by the soft glow of candles, the languid lakes and forests covered with powder fine snow. There were countless opportunities for appreciating nature whether stranded in Skavsta on my way to Oslo or cycling around town in my trusty red mountain bike. In the process, I admired the Swedish people's ability to reach a state of prosperity to where they stand on the global stage.

Indeed, as the MSPME journey comes to an end a new chapter unfolds again. The many lessons of survival will always be etched in my memory just like the many times I took a glimpse of the distant views outside of the airplane's window en route to somewhere. The rolling, rumbling clouds, the "here" and the "there" and all those distance that lies ahead and realising that there are so many wonderful possibilities in life waiting to be unfolded.

My deepest gratitude to everyone:

Professor Ralf Müller for his thesis guidance and supervision. It was a big honour for me to have been under your supervision.

To all my professors and coordinators at Heriot Watt University, Politecnico di Milano and Umea University for all the knowledge imparted and the many invaluable tips shared. The European Union for the Erasmus programme's generosity.

To all my friends spread across various continents for making this MSPME journey a most pleasant one. And to my organisational contacts in Japan and the Philippines for allowing me to write your project team experiences. *Domou arigatou gozaimasu* and *maraming salamat.*

To my family for the love, support and guidance. You are my inspiration and the reason for my persistence. You are always in my heart in spite of the distance.

To God, I give Him back all the glory and honour. He makes everything possible in His time.

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List of Abbreviations

FSA – Financial Supervisory Agency (Japan)

BSP – Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (Philippines/ Central Bank of the Philippines)

ABSTRACT

This research paper was aimed at analysing the influence of culture and communication practices in team functioning. The scope of the study was limited to the project teams in the financial sector in Japan and the Philippines. The study was a qualitative research through the application of case studies whilst the primary data were gathered from semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study revealed that the project teams were collectivist with a noticeable degree of power distance, bestowment of status through ascription and the strong need for harmony in the project team environment. The communication practices were also affected by the hierarchical, relational, societal and regulatory dictates and expectations. However, there were some differences noted in Japanese and Philippine project teams as the latter exhibited more flexibility towards hierarchical relationship where position was not seen as hindrance in developing convivial and professional relationships. In so doing, culture and communication practices influenced team functioning in the aforementioned research context. Finally, the results of the study will allow project members, leaders and other key stakeholders in understanding the influence of culture and communication practices to team functioning in a more in-depth manner. This will lead to better policies and practices in helping them realise their goals and objectives.

Key words: Culture, Communication, Team Functioning, Power Distance, Achievement or Ascription, Collectivism or Individualism, Views on the Environment, Media Richness

CHAPTER I- Research Background

A. Chapter Background

This chapter broadly introduces the research topic by discussing the overall view on project teams. The research scope, aims, enquiries, unit of analysis and significance are also discussed as a launching pad for the research paper. Finally, the brief descriptions for all the succeeding chapters are also presented.

B. Introduction

There have been an increasing use of projects among profit and not-for profit organisations simply because project management has become a tool in enhancing organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Lynch, 2006). In fact, the theoretical underpinnings of project management mainly rest on its highly normative construct especially within the ambit of project planning, budgeting, controlling, allocating and analysing which all germinate from the activities of industries using projects (Cleland, 1994). Given the importance of project management in today's organisation, the issue on efficiency, impact to the intended stakeholders, success to the business and building core competencies are significant measures that highlight its importance as an intrinsic tool for business survival. In so doing, organisations that are not adept with the project management tenets are often left out and their survival as a going concern especially in a very hypercompetitive market becomes doubtful (Boddy, 1992).

As organisations move towards the "projectification" of their structure, the utilisation of project teams to implement their strategies has likewise increased. Project teams are typified by their involvement in the creation of new systems, processes and tasks and they are formed based on the actual needs of the entity. The key function of project teams is not only to link organisational strategies but also to realise these strategies through the planning and implementation of projects (Gardiner, 2005). They are also given the complex task of taking responsibility for putting a project in place whilst working in an environment where changes can take effect and its practical details become highly intertwined (Forsberg, 2000). Admittedly, in a more contextual perspective some teams work within the precept of high standards and even go beyond the general expectations in order to be more conspicuously successful whilst other project teams remain inherently lackadaisical, work with less cooperation and subsequently waste organisational resources. In so doing, the causes of these differences are interesting area for investigation particularly in the financial sector where little research on project teams has been undertaken.

Indeed, financial institutions such as commercial and investment banks have played a significant role in the growth of the global economy mainly due to the monetary nature of their assets and liabilities and their ability to run the payment system from household deposit taking to robust lending activities (Kareken, 1985). The issuance of debt instruments that has been accepted as a means of exchange and premised on a highly ensconced fiduciary relationship further heightened the importance of financial institutions to the economy (Dickson, 1998). In fact, it has been observed that the supplying transactions and portfolio management services offered by these institutions have been centred on a twofold role of collecting funds and subsequently providing enterprise liquidity all within the context of maintaining a well functioning financial system (Fama 1980). The highly regulated structure and the many unique responsibilities that financial institutions play in a market economy set the stage on how project teams are typically formed to realise these endeavours. Arguably, their usage in the financial sector has accelerated especially in addressing archetypal problems and one-off business undertaking. For example, with the escalation of merger activities, there had been countless projects that were established to resolve issues on software integration, movement of people to new locations and migration of services to the surviving entity. Relative to the foregoing, it is interesting to find out from a research the specific factors that influence team functioning in the financial sector.

C. Research Aims and Question

In so doing, this research paper focuses on the above issue by analysing the experiences of project teams in Japan and the Philippines considering little research has been undertaken on the said sector and geographical areas. Hence, other industries and locations are out scoped from the analysis. In addition, this research mainly looks into culture and communication as the significant component of a team functioning framework due to the observations noted by Hofstede (1980, 2001), Trompenaars and Turner (1997), House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004), Schwartz (1994) and Hunt (1980) and subsequent studies on the subject by Earley and Mosokowski (2000), Schweiger, Tugrul and Roland (2003), Oertig and Thomas (2006), Chiang (2005) and Daft (1997) which pinpoint to these factors as having impact on effective organisational and team functioning, respectively. Furthermore, Hall (1989) equates culture with communication and he argues that that the differences in culture amongst societies are expressed more succinctly in the communicative process. Relative to the foregoing, this research paper aims to investigate the impact of these factors in financial project teams. Also, the unit of analysis is team functioning whilst the study attempts to answer the main research enquiry as follows: **How do culture and communication practices influence project team functioning?**

D. Operational Definition of Terms

Project Teams – Comprise of individuals who are bonded together to implement a task, work together and share responsibility for the project outcomes all within a limited period and viewed from a wider organisational sphere (Boddy, 1992).

Team Functioning – how teams are effectively and cohesively formed relative to the influence of culture and communication practices. It is also the unit of analysis for this study.

Culture – The intrinsic assumptions, beliefs and routines which are embedded in the psyche of the society. As such, when these are shared with the other members of the organisation and ultimately accepted as a way of doing things, it becomes an acceptable practice and also a way of doing things (Hofstede, 2001 and Trompenaars and Turner, 1997).

Communication – Is the manner by which information is transferred from one party to the intended recipients with the expectation that the latter will understand the information and as a result influence the behaviour, perception and motivation of the receiver to achieve a desired outcome (Daft, 1997 and Baret, 2002).

Power Distance –Refers to how societies view and handle the inequality of individuals resulting from the obvious differences in wealth, power, influence and prestige. (Hofstede, 2001)

Individualism and Collectivism – Some societies put heavy emphasis on the efforts of individuals as a collective whole by reinforcing the need to belong to a community whilst some societies place heavy importance in an individual's unique role rather than their collective efforts to form a community (ibid pp 209-273).

Achievement and Ascription - Recognition in society is based on what is actually accomplished through the sole effort of the individual whilst ascription pertains to the recognition bestowed to an individual by virtue of birth, kinship, age, and connections (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997)

Attitudes to environment – In some cultures it is perceived that the origins of norms and values are from the individuals themselves. On the other hand, some societies view the environment as having more influence in the development of these values (ibid pp 141-154).

Media Richness Theory - illustrates the importance of knowing the appropriate media to be utilised relative to the requirement of the task. Hence, the theory is more organisationally focused but can also be applied within a general societal context. (Daft, 1997)

E. Brief Thesis Outline

Chapter I

Introduction

Chapter I discusses the background of the research paper by looking into the significant role of project teams in a financial set-up. As such, the research scope, aims, enquiries and unit of analysis have been formed and identified around the subject.

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

Chapter II reviews the various studies conducted in project teams. Initially, the discussion centres on the general theories and concepts of project management, teams, culture and communication and the narrative discussions on how these are applied in a project set-up are presented. A knowledge gap is also identified which further justifies the research initiative.

Chapter III

Research Methodology

Chapter III presents the fundamental philosophy of this research paper vis-à-vis the research strategy, data collection procedure, analysis, research context, methodological limitations and ethical considerations.

Chapter IV

Empirical Data

Chapter IV shows the results of the semi-structured interview through a narrative discussion. The case studies for Japan and the Philippines are shown separately following the proposed conceptual model and allow for succinct distinction in the project team circumstances and practices of the aforementioned countries.

Chapter V

Discussion and Analysis

Chapter V analyses the empirical data by comparing the results of the case studies on project teams and analysing the data set using classical theories on teams, culture and communication as well as previous studies that were undertaken on these subjects.

Chapter VI

Conclusions and Recommendations

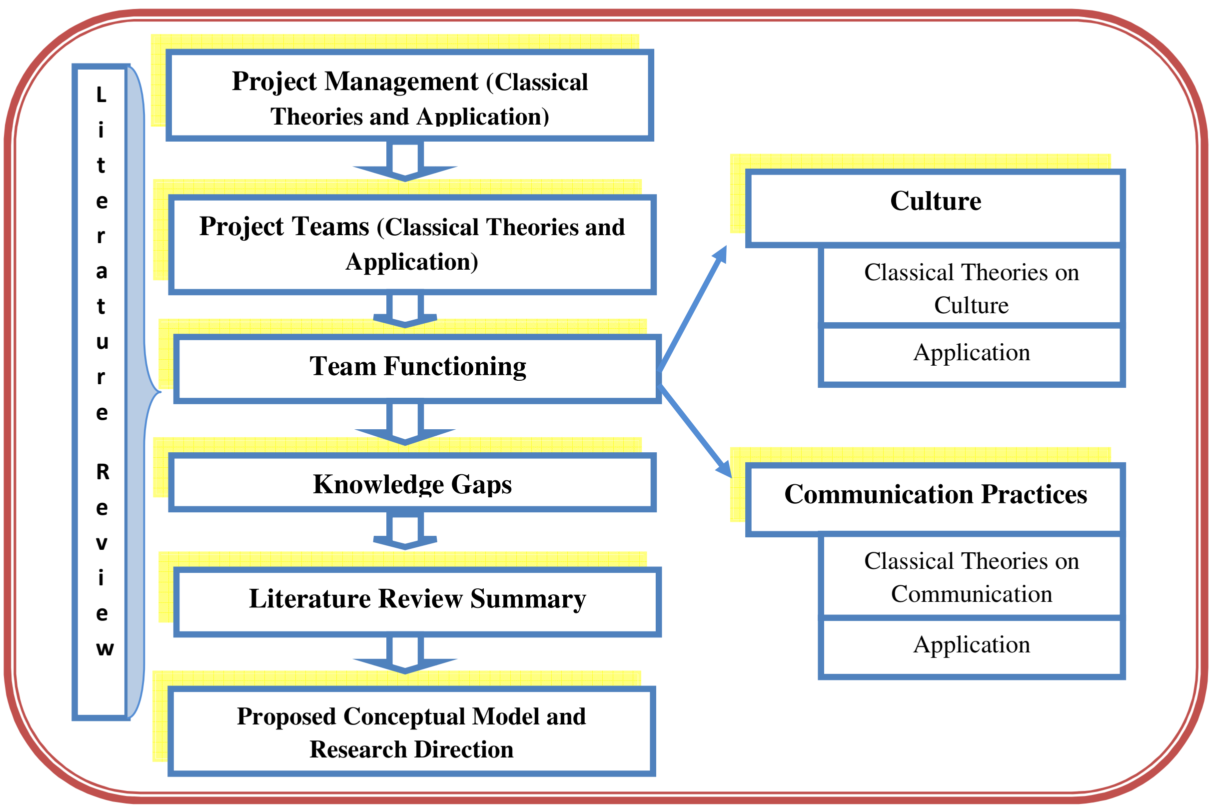
Chapter VI summarises and concludes the key findings of the research, limitations of the study and finally provide for suggestions that can be applied for future research on project teams.

CHAPTER II – Theoretical Background

A. Chapter Background

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the research paper (please refer to figure 1 below) using a funnel and sieve approach starting with the broad concepts of project management followed by the theories and studies on project teams and team functioning. The latter is divided into culture and communication whilst the classical theories as well as relevant studies undertaken on the subject are also discussed. The knowledge gaps are identified and a summary of the literature review is presented. The theoretical framework is shown as the penultimate section whilst the research direction concludes the chapter.

Figure 1 - *Development of Review of Related Literature*



B. Literature Selection Parameters

In order to select the literature that was included in this research paper, a brainstorming exercise was undertaken to determine which topics under the umbrella concepts of project/management, project/teams, team/functioning, organisation/culture and communication were relevant. After which, an extensive article and book search using these keywords were conducted on http://scholar.google.com. Those that had significant scholarly citations were included in the review whilst other articles that were deemed relevant but had fewer academic citations were taken into secondary consideration. The main articles and books that were culled from UMEA University library's electronic database also applied similar selection criteria. Finally, specific focus on the classical theories on management, teams, culture and communication is undertaken due to the absence of theories that have been developed within the ambit of project management vis-à-vis the research subject.

C. Project Management

C.1 Management Theories

In 1911, Frederick Taylor published the principles of scientific management where he underscored that the nation should not only move towards the conservation of its resources but also in building greater production efficiency (Taylor, 1911). In so doing, the author argues that inefficiency is traceable to the actions of individuals and the only way to resolve this dilemma is through the adoption of a scientific approach in managing any activities. *First,* there should be a system that will encourage efficiency where everyone is encouraged to produce exceptional outputs and be justly rewarded for it. *Second*, since there is a lackadaisical approach to work more labourers are needed to complete a task. Hence, they should be made more accountable to increase efficiency and effectiveness. *Third,* workers should be able to apply more rational way of doing a job by discarding commonly held beliefs in favour of the more scientific approach to completing a task. However, the author cautions that implementing this approach should be gradual so as to reduce the impact of the new set-up to the morale of the labourers. *Finally*, there should be equal division of labour between the management and workers where the former develops the scientific methods whilst the latter are given more responsibilities which have been normally reserved to management in the past.

Further complementing the scientific management theory of Frederic Taylor is the work of Henry Gantt in 1903 (as cited in Wilson 2003 pp 430-437). The author introduced the application of the Gantt chart for effective scheduling of resources whilst accelerating the viewpoint that management should be viewed from a more scientific approach where the process can actually be measured scientifically. The Gantt chart during its initial stage was primarily used to plan and manage product batches. This planning approach initially centred on a top-down approach where the component requirements are linked to the end requirements and as such, resources become available when the production runs need them. This methodological approach in the production process underscores the importance of a scientific planning tool to effectively manage organisational activities.

On the other hand, the field of management studies was further boosted by the publication of the theories of administration by Henry Fayol in 1937 (Brodie, 1967). His theory was based on the observation that the political and social power of organised groups was growing immensely and in spite of the difficulties in reconciling the interests of these opposing groups there was a succinct need to implement sound administration through the application of the following principles (Ibid pp 1-15).

Division of Labour –there should be proper division of work since it is not efficient for everyone to do the same tasks simultaneously since this will just lead to wastage of organisational resources.

Authority and its corollary responsibilities – this refers to the formal vesting of power to the individuals who will be tasked to take on formal responsibilities. The author points that whenever the authority is exercised an underpinning responsibility comes with it regardless of the task outcomes.

Discipline – the specific rules and regulations that will govern the activities of the organisation should not favour anyone since this will set the ground rule for discipline.

Unity of direction and command – the organisation must establish unity of purpose so that everyone will work towards its achievement and the labourer should only receive orders from their superiors in order to have a unified command.

Subordination of private interest for the good of all – Individuals should work towards the achievement of the common good rather than working for the benefit to oneself. Hence, they should be encouraged to go beyond their private interest and work instead for the benefit of the organisation.

Staff remuneration and equity – the work of the individuals should be equitably paid in accordance with what is considered just and fair within that particular situation. On the other hand, equity pertains to giving justice equitably regardless of organisational position.

Centralisation and orderliness – organisations should be able to determine the point of balance where power will be exercised and that the workers will feel that there is reasonable fairness in the set up whilst orderliness mainly refers to the application of the rule that everything has a proper place in consideration of the existing time and circumstances.

Stability of tenure and initiative –this recognises that job losses will always happen but there is assurance that the workers will maintain their jobs regardless of circumstances whilst initiative pertains to the capacity of the individuals to build plans for the future which the organisation can benefit from.

An important development in the study of management was the publication of Max Weber's bureaucracy since it showed the characteristics of organisational hierarchy (Weber, 1947). The author discussed that a bureaucracy is comprised of the following: The organisation is divided into structures with levels of controls emanating from these structures. The higher that one gets into the organisational echelons the higher the power and influence an individual has over the others. Another important feature is the concept of rules of management which essentially implies that the organisation is governed by a number of bounded rules in order to put semblance and direct the organisation towards the achievement of the objective. The author further recommends the application of a functional specialisation and technical qualification system where the division of labour depends on the specialisation or qualification of the labourers. Another important characteristic of Weber's bureaucracy is its mission orientated focus which is aptly described as *up- focused* when the mission is for the benefit of the stockholders whilst *in-focused* looks into favouring more the organisation itself rather than some specific group in the entity. A bureaucracy is also known for its impersonal status where every worker and customer should be treated equally regardless of status. Finally, the career growth of the workers hinges on their contribution towards the achievement of organisational goals and not based on connections and relationships.

C.2 Project Management

In so doing, the general management concepts as shown in the previous discussion has been influential in the growth of project management as an independent discipline. Project management traces its early beginnings in the early 50's and 60's where the establishment of PERT which took heavy inspiration from the Gantt chart was subsequently equated to project management (Fondhal 1987 and Shenhar and Dvir, 1996). Moreover, the discipline borrowed heavily from the key concepts and ideas of the classical management theories whilst its definition and scope substantially evolved over time (Kerzner, 2006). One of the early definitions of project management came from Gaddis (1959) where he defined project as an independent entity purposively formed to achieve an objective and conform to pre-established criteria.

Indeed, managing a project requires the application of the general management concepts such as the need to control and allocate resources, build teams and handle uncertainties (Shenhar and Dvir, 1996). As such, project management has been defined by Lock (1998) and the British Standards Institution (cited in Gardiner, 2005, page 5) as the proper planning, monitoring and controlling of all the aspects of the project. On the other hand, Forsberg, Cotterman and Mooz (2000) amplify this definition by arguing that project management has four essential components which include shared jargons, team functionality, the project has a lifecycle and there are external and internal influences to the project.

From a practitioner's point of view project management as stated in PMBOK (3rd edition) has three basic characteristics namely: ***Projects are temporary*** – projects are seen as temporary with a definite beginning and an end which occur after the realisation of their objectives, when it becomes clear that they will not be realised or they are no longer needed by the organisation. It also clarifies that being temporary should not be equated with the length of the project as some may last for long periods whilst others just exists for a very short period. ***Project creates unique products, services or results*** – a project will be able to build unique products, services and results. This uniqueness is the ability of the end result to have its own characteristics that are distinct from other projects. ***Project involves progressive elaboration*** – projects are implemented in gradual steps and as the project develops the details become more explicit and detailed. The progressive elaboration becomes an intertwined effort on the scope, definition and project deliverables. PMBOK then views project management as the utilisation of knowledge, tools, skills and techniques in order to realise it which entails the identification of requirements, establishment of clear goals and objectives, balancing the need for cost, quality and time and finally having a blueprint to achieve them all.

In a study by Müller and Turner (2003), the view that ***projects as production function*** which essentially captures the traditional definition of projects as discussed previously has been debunked as the authors argue that this does not take into full account the fundamental characteristics of the subject. The authors further illustrate a holistic approach in viewing projects as follows:

Projects as temporary organisations –Given their temporary nature projects can be likened to an agency whilst established to realise a particular undertaking hence, the agent (project leader) acts on behalf of the principal (project owner) with the ultimate goal of maximising the returns for the latter's benefit (ibid 3).

Projects as an agency for change –Projects are much more capable of implementing organisational change because of its flexible set-up and hence, it can handle uncertainties better compared to functional organisations which are fundamentally considered lethargic and inflexible (ibid 3).

Projects as an agency of resource allocation – Projects are temporary in nature and it is natural to get fresh resources as new projects are rolled out. Moreover, since projects are more flexible in orientation as compared to functional organisations, resource allocation is relatively faster and generally more seamless (ibid 4).

Projects as an agency for uncertainty management –The scope and structure of the project is more suitable to the management of uncertainties. In fact, the authors underscore that since projects are considered an agency, then it becomes a tool for the containment of uncertainties and management of urgencies (ibid 5).

Project manager as chief executive of the temporary organisation - the role of project managers has become more dynamic since they are considered the CEO's of the projects which essentially accelerates their responsibilities not only within the project realm but also within a wider managerial sphere (ibid 5).

Project manager as the agent of the principal **–** since projects are considered as agencies, then this requires the principal to monitor the performance of the agent through the establishment of hierarchical tier and control that will see to it that the agent's objectives are aligned with what the principal wants to achieve in the end (ibid 6).

Hence, as a forward looking tool, project management should undergo a deliberate planning process in relation to strategy, structures, leadership and organisational objectives. In fact, Ruuska and Varienien (2003) corroborate that project management should always consider a wider prism of perspectives premised on a robust management system, well qualified leaders, unimpeded flow of information and openness to innovation and creativity. Leseure and Brookes (2004) strengthen this argument and are convinced that the future trajectory of project management hinges on a more forward looking approach whilst incorporating other disciplines into the core tenets of its philosophical roots. Indeed, Bryde (2003) observe that project management has evolved and as a result its strategic focus has changed dramatically. However, in spite of these changes, Longman and Mullins (2004) argue that project management remains an essential tool for achieving organisational success.

D. Project Teams

D.1 Team Theories

If project management forms the theoretical underpinnings on how projects should be managed effectively, then the teams formed to implement them are the central driving figure that oversees their completion (Boddy, 2000). Indeed, the underlying classical theories on teams are quite varied and extensive. In fact, their development progression had showed a strong bias on the economic, process and team role perspectives. One of the economic models was developed by Marschak and Radner (1972) known as "Team Theory" which suggests that the functions of teams can be viewed by looking into the dilemmas faced by each decision makers. Teams are comprised of different members or decision makers with specific decision capabilities. However, a constraint occurs since they are given information that is markedly different from each other. Hence, since an undertaking is composed of different agents or members, a challenging issue arises when they attempt to infer the information from what the other agents have. As such, for a given information structure, team problem arises because of these divergent views. The team theory then establishes a solution whereby the decision rule for each agent corresponds to a Bayes-Nash equilibrium constrained by the fact that everything should be Pareto efficient or in layman's term there should be no coordinating problems among the different decision makers to reach the most optimal solution (ibid pp 189-217).

The appraisal of an individual's contribution to the organisation has often been the primary concern in analysing how the team goals have been realised (Margerison Mc Cann and Rod, 1995). In so doing, the Team Performance Index was developed to understand how team effectiveness can be achieved through the interlocking roles that each member has in a team set-up. In order to have an effective and cohesive team the following roles have been identified. ***Advising*** - members should be aware of the internal and external developments in the organisation and develop this intrinsic knowledge so that information can be shared to solve issues that affect the realisation of activities. ***Innovating*** – pertains to the members' ability to be creative and imaginative as a requisite for effective team formation. The model states that team environment should foster innovation to step up the plate for inventiveness and creativity. ***Promoting*** – mainly focuses in looking at opportunities that the organisation can leverage for development and to be able to sell them internally and externally that will solidify their going concern status. ***Developing*** – after having identified the opportunities, members must be able to realise them by bringing them forth from the abstract concept to something real and tangible. ***Organising*** – establishes the proper goals and vision to move forward organisational resources. ***Producing*** – ensures that the end result of the team activity conforms to the basic tenets of quality and a systematic approach to complete the undertaking. ***Inspecting*** – emphasises the importance of members not only in adhering to rules and regulations but also in focusing organisational effort to eliminate errors especially in the delivery of products and services. ***Maintaining*** – once the products and services have been delivered the quality cycle for effective team continues and in so doing, a member should be able to maintain the quality of these processes to achieve uniformity of results in succeeding activities. As such, these categories will allow for managers to review their strengths and weaknesses so that they can form into effective teams.

The "Team Formation" model developed by Tuckman and Jensen (1977) mainly identifies the process of team formation instead of the economic contribution of each of the decision makers. The five stages of team formation include ***forming*** where the members are selected and exploratory discussions on a task to be completed are undertaken. In this stage, the members become aware of their duties and the type of project that they will be involved. The next stage is ***storming*** where conflicts occur among team members in view of the differences in opinions and perspectives on how to go about with the project. The third stage is known as ***norming*** where the perceived differences are accommodated by the other members and trust and confidence is gradually formed. As the project progresses, the team members learn to cooperate and compromise with each other. The fourth stage is the ***performing*** where the teams become more effective and cohesive albeit some teams never reach this stage and hence, fail to meet their goals. Finally, the ***adjourning*** is the time when the team is disbanded since the task is already completed (Acuna *et al* 2009, Watson 1995).

Indeed, Tuckman and Jensen suggest that some teams never reach the norming stage and are likely to fail in view of a number of reasons. In answer to this dilemma, a number of team models were developed to see why some teams have been more conspicuously successful than the others. Conflicts can often undermine the end result of an undertaking. In fact, the study of Thomas and Schmidt (1976) indicates that managers had spent almost 20% of their time managing these conflicts which substantially reduced their effectiveness. Hence, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE survey (Thomas and Kilmann, 1975) identified the strategies that can be employed to mitigate conflicts in teams. The instrument is divided into 34 independent items and then sub categorised into 5 different aspects of conflict resolution.

These include the following: ***Avoiding*** – individuals are not to keen on taking positions since this can be highly divisional and can create controversy which undermine the organisation's effectiveness. ***Competing*** –directly compete with other viewpoints and beliefs as members try to press their point forward and influence the other members whilst convincing them that their position is the most beneficial to the organisation. ***Compromising*** – emphasis is given to finding a middle ground where all the ideas, beliefs values can actually be shared by all the members. ***Accommodating*** – members are more than willing to drop their position in order to accommodate the position of others just to make them happy. Finally, ***collaborating*** – focuses on sharing ideas and concepts with the other members and direct discussions on the succeeding steps are taken into consideration so that everything will be fully settled without any conflicts (Thomas and Killman, 1975).

The personality fit of an individual in a group set-up is also important as this influences organisational outputs. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was developed by Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers in relation to Jung's theory on the psychological categorisation or types of people. The MBTI comprises of a four-part scale where the categories are measured to determine the type of individual behaviour that can fit in a team set-up (Myers and MacCaulley, 1985). The model suggests that there are two sets of perception which can be grouped into sensing/intuition and thinking/feeling and two types of attitudes such as extraversion/introversion and judging/perceiving. ***Sensing-intuition*** mainly looks into the preference of individuals particularly in gauging realities and possibilities within a specific organisational condition. ***Thinking-feeling*** pertains to whether the individuals are more orientated towards using logic to arrive at a decision or to use intuition or gut feel to analyse a process or dilemma. On the other hand, ***judging-perceiving*** looks into the way how conclusions are reached by individuals through a gradual process or just through awareness of the existing conditions. Finally, ***extraversion-introversion*** analyses the preferred orientation leaning of individuals towards the external forces of society or internally such as ideas, philosophies and beliefs. The importance of knowing these personality types are underscored by the study of Moore (1987) which indicates that this type of test is highly important especially for organisation that are in the process of building their teams where personality types should match the needs of the group.

On the other hand, Raymond Cattel developed the 16 personality factors (16PF) in order to analyse the psychological make-up of individuals that comprise a team (Cattel, Tatsuoka and Eber, 1970). The main goal of the model is to identify personalities that can actually work well within a group set-up relative to a particular situation. In accordance with this rational, the following factors have been used to identify these personality types:

Factor A categorises individuals as cold or warm-hearted. Cold people are generally seen as fundamentally poor in building relationship whilst warm people have the uncanny ability to built strong relationships that lasts for a longer period.

Factor B analyses the ability of people to think and solve problems. People who scored low in this factor mainly lacks the ability to process abstract ideas whilst a high score generally leans towards high concrete thinking such as extensive use of logic in decision making.

Factor C focuses on the stability of emotions such that individuals who scored poorly are easily frustrated and have difficulties coping with loses and failures whilst higher scorer generally basks on their high level of maturity and to view failures more positively.

Factor E looks into the dominating aspect of whether the person is generally regarded as boastful/assertive or humble depending on contextual situations.

Factor F measures the extent to which individuals are enthusiastic about their ambitions, dreams and relationship and at the other end of the personality spectrum are individuals who are generally inhibited and have fewer goals in life.

Factor G focuses on the role of consciousness where individuals can be categorised as either expedient or conscientious.

Factor H – categorises individuals whether they are bold in their decisions and are mainly risk takers whilst low scorers are more docile and are generally viewed as risk averse.

Factor I – measures whether individuals are generally focused towards the use of feelings in deciding or are more logically inclined and therefore decisions are mainly based on an analytical procedures.

Factor L – identifies individuals whether they fall under egoistic whose concern are mainly to uplift their own conditions rather than helping others whilst the low scorers are generally perceived to be easy to work with and are very adaptable to any circumstances.

Factor M – distinguishes individuals for their creativity and imaginativeness compared to people who are more of the sensing type which means that they will only believe the existence of something when they are able to use their senses in confirming the situation.

Factor N – identifies whether people are generally shrewd and are aware of what is happening to the community and are quite diplomatic whilst low scorers are very straightforward and very unpretentious.

Factor O – high scoring individuals are high worriers and are easily dissuaded by criticisms and whilst the low scorers are confident and have a high degree of maturity.

Factor Q which is essentially categorised into 4 categories as follows: ***Q1*** which measures individual's capacity to change, ***Q2*** focuses on self reliance whether an individual is mainly collective or an individualist, ***Q3*** generalises individuals whether they have high self concept and image about who they are whilst ***Q4*** generally looks into the tension capacity of people whether they can be considered generally relaxed even in a stressful situation or highly tense in a given event.

The behaviour of individuals in a group was also studied by Schutz (1958, 1989) through the operationalisation of the FIRO (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Behaviour Model) where the author developed the 54 personality inventory items that measure the individual's capacity for inclusion, control and affection. Basically, ***inclusion*** refers to the ability of people to interact robustly in a group set up. The author points to the three sub categories under inclusion which include the following: *Structures* focus on the boundaries and hierarchies of the organisation, *connectedness* pertains to the involvement and the degree of commitment of the individuals towards the realisation of the undertaking whilst *shared meaning* focuses on the ability of the members to build team loyalty. ***Control*** mainly looks into the how individuals influence the decision of the group. It highlights the importance of having the right amount of influence and power in order to resolve any conflicts due to long standing disagreements and misunderstandings. Finally, ***integration*** focuses on the achievement of a business goal where the emphasis is on building a harmonious relationship with each other. The model further looks into the ability of each member to be able to develop affection and intimacy especially in a normal business environment.

Belbin's (1993) "Team Role Model" also addresses the team failure dilemma by analysing how individuals working in teams behave which influences its success or failure. Essentially, team members can be classified into nine different roles as follows: ***Implementers*** are considered to be very practical individuals who are more interested in realising an endeavour instead of philosophising on activities. The ***coordinators*** are the ones who set up the meetings, ask people in the team whether they have done their task and mainly delegate activities to the different members. The ***shapers*** are the ones who are on the lookout for possible competition and their ability to win these competitions exhilarate them. The ***planners*** are members who analyse problems from different perspectives and then come up with the best solution to the problem. The resource investigators check the available resources whether they are financial or human and see to it that they have enough of them to complete the project. The ***monitor-evaluators*** are the internal checkers of the team and see to it that the activities are actually complying with the requirements of the stakeholders. The ***team workers*** are well regarded since they can easily adopt to any circumstance and practically with anybody. ***Completers*** are the internal checker for errors and generally focus on identifying errors that need correction. Finally, the ***specialist*** is considered the consultant of the group and they have specific skills and knowledge which are not found in the other team members. (Belbin 1993, Sommerville 1998, Sallie 1999) However, Belbin issued a caveat that teams do not necessarily have to include all the nine types of roles for them to be successful. The author opines that there should be a balance of the team roles which fundamentally reflects the complexities of the task on hand. In so doing, team failures can be mitigated

D.2 Project Teams

Project teams are formed to implement organisational projects and they are the central driving figure that oversees their completion (Boddy, 2000). Table 1 summarises the key distinguishing features of project teams which set them apart from other functional groupings.

Table 1 - ***Distinctive Features of Project Teams***

Features	Description and Implications
Temporary Assignment	Assignments are made on an ad hoc basis and as a result team members generally do not focus on building a career as a member of a temporary group.
Diverse Membership	Individuals are culled from various departmental affiliations which bring to fore professionals with different qualifications, work styles and habits.
Physical Separation	Professional contact with the other members is cut after project closure. Hence, the need to build relationship at the onset should be prioritised if such is to be nurtured in the long term.
Political Agenda	Essentially copes in meeting the needs of different stakeholders who will have their own personal agenda.

Source: Boddy (1992)

As Boddy (1992) illustrates in Table 1 above, project teams are temporary in nature which means that their time span is actually related to the life cycle of the project and once it is completed they are also disbanded and members return to their original departments. Another important characteristic of project teams is the diversity of its membership. The members are selected from different departments with different professional background, competence, and depth of experience. These disparities may also include differences in culture, language and upbringing which make the project team highly diverse (Eskerod and Blichfedlt 2005). Once the projects are completed the project teams are also disbanded and the relationship among members is also cut off unless they have already formed a strong relationship at the onset which they can leverage even if the project is already completed. Finally, the project teams are also formed essentially to meet the needs of the project stakeholders and one of their key duties is to be able to achieve the project objectives (Boddy, 1992).

Bailey (1997) offers a similar definition on project teams as comprising of individuals who are bonded together to implement a task, work together and share responsibility for the project outcome all within a limited time period and viewed from a wider organisational sphere. Moreover, project teams are differentiated from other groups because the very core of their establishment is heavily premised on a united front within an established social structure, framework and time horizon. This is also corroborated Katzenbach and Smith

(1992) where the role of project teams starts from the initiation of the project to the measurement of their performance against a number of pre-established criteria.

As project teams are subjected to the changes in the business environment, their structural formation changes to include issues on innovation, creativity and even geographical dispersion. As such, Crichton (2009) underpins the importance of project teams whilst taking into consideration new developments in the field to holistically view their evolution. Arguably, Schneider (1995) points out that the vulnerabilities faced by project teams constitute a major shift from the usually staid approach of merely completing a project to a more proactive stance where the rise of problems give way to quick and instantaneous elucidation of answers. Although a number of literature points to team effectiveness and cohesiveness as pre-requisite for the successful outcomes of project, the evaluation criteria remain highly contested among practitioners and academicians alike albeit, Boddy (1992) came up with three questions as a threshold gauge to evaluate team effectiveness as follows:

Table 2 - *Evaluating Criteria for Team Effectiveness*

Threshold Question	Description of Desired Outcomes
Are the goals and expectations for the projects realised?	The outcome does not only satisfy the pre-established performance criteria but also measures on timeliness and cost have been undertaken.
Do the members perceive a development of an effective team from the beginning of the project to its closure?	The development of the team has become an invaluable organisational resource wherein team members can be readily tapped to lead future projects.
Are there any transferrable teamwork skills that have been developed which can be readily used in other projects?	The skills acquired during the project can be transferred not only in future projects but they can also be utilised on the day-to-day operations of the entity.

Source: Boddy, 1992

Table 2 shows the gauge whether project teams are as effective as they should be. The first criterion looks into whether the project team is able to complete the project and realise the objectives set by the project owners and evaluated against the triumvirate criteria for cost, quality and time. Another important gauge whether the project teams are effective is that the team members have been able to develop organisational and technical skills that can actually be tapped for future projects. Hence, the question of whether a team member became an invaluable organisational resource that can lead to successful projects in the long term. Finally, a successful project team also develops the member to use whatever skills that they acquired from the project on the day-to-day operations of the organisation (Ibid pp 120).

E. Team Functioning

The factors that influence team functioning is a highly contestable area. Admittedly, in order to fully understand the underlying nature of these variables a holistic approach should be considered (Schweiger *et al* 2003 and Earley *et al* 2000). The succeeding discussions attempt to understand the team functioning phenomenon through the spheres of culture and communication.

E.1 Culture

E.1.1 Cultural Theories

The development of cultural theories followed a dynamic progression. Initially, researchers on culture such as Kluckholm (1951) and Kroeber (1958) (as cited in Sackman 1997 p.17) believed that culture can't be captured in a catch all universal definition. In a number of studies after the assertions of the above authors, the economic and political climate took centre stage and the nation states became the gauge for culture. The research of Triandis (1972) became one of the earlier cultural studies which recognised culture as a man-made component of the environment. However, his framework was deemed very limited due to the absence of clear theories on the subject during that period (Hofstede, 2001).

In order to describe cultural differences in societies one of the pioneering studies was that of Hall (1981). The study suggests that culture can be best viewed from the communicative practices of societies. ***High context*** societies are mainly focused on building long lasting relationship over a wider time span. Hence, the model argues that individuals comprising this type of society already know how to behave in a specific context since they have had long cultural exposure in the set up. The societies that fall under this category emphasise on less structured communication and centralised decision making. On the other hand, ***low context*** societies are communities where the relationship of members has only been built for a short period. Hence, there is a requirement that the values, beliefs and traditions should be succinctly communicated so that the new members will be able to fit into a particular societal mould and expectations whilst low context societies are characterised by their reliance on rules and policies. Another important component of Hall's cultural model is the issue of ***space*** where individuals are actually demarcated from each other due to the boundaries that they subsequently create. The author argues that that these boundaries define individual space and terminate in what he terms as ***territory*** which is then ostensibly defined based on the individual's perception of the amount of possessions necessary for survival.

On the other hand, Hofstede's (2007) often cited work on *Culture Consequences* illustrates cultural dimension which changed the landscape of cultural research. The study analysed the subject by studying the experiences, values and belief systems of IBM employees in 72 countries which produced 116,000 answered questionnaires. The author opines that culture refers to a collection of individuals sharing common beliefs and norms whilst society is the highest form of its systemic assemblage and the members who comprise them have since at the onset innately carried “mental programs” brought about by their family’s way of life and subsequently reinforced by the educational and organisational systems that they have been exposed to in a time bound progression. The following are Hoftede’s cultural dimensions:

Power Distance –Refers to how societies view and handle the inequality of individuals resulting from the obvious differences in wealth, power, influence and prestige. In a business set-up, this is critically reflected in a “boss-subordinate” relationship where a low power distance index comes from flat hierarchical structures, democratic managers, little supervisory pyramids, and openness to information dissemination or vice versa. (ibid pp 79-137).

Uncertainty Avoidance – Uncertainties about the future are fundamental facts of human existence and the way society tackles them is influenced by prevailing national cultures. These uncertainties create stressful situations and society looks for answers in technology, law and religion. (ibid pp 145-199).

Individualism and Collectivism – Some societies put heavy emphasis on the efforts of individuals as a collective whole by reinforcing the need to belong to a community whilst some societies place heavy importance on an individual’s unique role rather than their collective efforts to form a community (ibid pp209-273).

Masculinity and Feminity –refers to the duality of roles brought about by the differences in sexes hence, the social and emotional roles becomes demarcated. In work situation, low masculine organisations tend to favour smallness in groupings, modesty of visions and lower stress related dissatisfaction whilst a high masculine society mainly focuses on achieving competitive advantage, overt emphasis on excellent performance and annihilation of competitors (ibid pp 279-341).

Long Term and Short Term Orientation - A long term orientation puts importance on being persistent in achieving a future undertaking and conserving resources whilst a short term orientation emphasises emotional stability and virtues as the inherent ties that bind society (ibid pp 350-370).

An extensive study on culture was also undertaken by Trompenaars and Turner (1997) comprising of 30,000 participants in 50 countries. In the said study, the authors define culture as the manner by which individuals bond together to find solution to existing problems and reconcile dilemmas. Culture comes in layers and unravelling the meaning of each layer is crucial to understanding its nuances. The outer layer pertains to the readily observable form of culture such as language, building and food. The middle layer includes the norms and values that the group adhere to whilst the core layer focuses on the existence of the individual in a more abstract manner such as purpose of being. The authors point to seven cultural dimensions to holistically explain culture as shown in the next page.

Universalism versus particularism – universalism mainly focuses on the rules that govern interaction. It specifically reiterates that what is considered right should be applied to everyone without exception. On the other hand, particularism is more interested in building relationship rather than focusing on complying with societal codes that dictate relationship (ibid pp 29-48).

Individualism versus communitarianism – refers to how individuals view themselves whether they are independent from other individuals at the onset or they belong to a community before recognising their unique attributes. Hence, in some societies belongingness to a community is viewed more favourably whilst in another society places premium on the individual's role instead of the collective effort (ibid pp 50-67).

Neutral versus emotional – the authors point to a two-pronged approach to emotional involvement. For example, some cultures recognise that individuals should base their interaction in a neutral fashion and applying objective judgment to situations whereas some are more emotionally attached and decisions are based on emotions and subjective judgments (ibid pp 69-70).

Specific versus diffuse – specific relationship mainly focuses on a contractual relationship where the interaction is centred on what the contract states whilst diffused relationship goes beyond the bounds of a contractual obligation and focuses on nurturing personal relationship (ibid pp 81-97).

Achievement versus ascription - Recognition in society is based on what is actually accomplished through the effort of the individual whilst ascription pertains to the attribution bestowed to an individual by virtue of birth, kinship, age, and connections (ibid pp102-118)

Attitudes to time – Some societies look into past accomplishments more than planning for the uncertainties of the future. On the other hand, some societies generally abhor these accomplishments and look into what can actually be accomplished at the onset since time is viewed in a very linear fashion (ibid pp 120-137).

Attitudes to environment – In some cultures it is perceived that the origins of norms and values are from the individuals themselves. On the other hand, some societies view the environment as having more influence in the development of these values (ibid pp 141-154).

Following the research of Hofstede and Trompenaars and Turner an extensive research on culture is the GLOBE study initiated by House *et al* (2004) with a team of collaborators from 62 countries and the survey involved 17,300 managers in 951 organisations. The study developed additional dimensions of culture which separates it from the previous studies of Hofstede and Trompenaars and Turner. The GLOBE research defined culture as the common understanding grounded on values and beliefs that are essentially man made in nature. The study then looked into how culture is related to organisational, societal and leaders' effectiveness. The following are the nine cultural dimensions as proposed in the GLOBE study (House et al, 2004).

Performance Orientation – the performance of the society is likely to be influenced by the prevailing religious condition. The study argues that societies with more religious diversity and encourage setting of challenging goals and innovation are more likely to produce economic accomplishments (ibid pp 239-281).

Future Orientation –it illustrates that societies that put heavy emphasis on planning for the future instead of focusing on the present and past achievements are more economically prosperous whilst societies which are low in future orientation are more inclined to enjoy the moment and instead focus on hedonistic pleasures and short term enjoyment (ibid pp 282 – 342).

Assertiveness –It points that assertiveness is more organisationally focused but when taken in context from a societal point of view, being assertive is taken into less consideration. In fact the study points out that only Southern Asia and Confucian Asia put high importance to societal assertiveness whilst other regions focused on tender emotions (ibid pp 395-436).

Humane Orientation – Societies that tend to be more humane orientated focuses on friendship, sensitivity, tolerance and extensive support to other people whilst societies that are less humane in orientation generally focuses on the promotion of self interest and possible lack of concern for others. (ibid pp 564- 601).

Individualism and Collectivism – Individualism focuses on the ability of individuals to take care of themselves without needing the help of others whereas collectivism mainly focuses on the need of individuals at the onset to belong to a community in order to survive. (ibid pp 437-512).

Gender Egalitarianism – This shows that in a more gender egalitarian societies the role of man and woman are not distinguishable since they are viewed to be equal and both can actually do similar roles whilst a less gender egalitarian society mainly views the role of man and women are two distinct and separate activities (ibid pp 343- 394).

Power Distance – is a cultural dimension rooted on how individuals are demarcated by their status, upbringing and wealth in society (ibid pp 513-562).

Uncertainty Avoidance - mainly involves the use of rule and law especially to create semblance in situations that are highly ambiguous and are creating undue anxieties to individuals. (ibid pp 602 -653).

Schwartz (1994) conducted a study on the cultural dimension of about 60,000 individuals in 63 countries using secondary school teachers and students as respondents. In the said study he identified seven cultural value orientations as follows:

Conservatism –pertains to society's preference towards maintaining the status quo and the individual's behaviour toward restraint which may result to the disruption of the social order which has been traditionally embedded in society.

Intellectual Harmony – emphasises the ability of the individual to stand on their own and pursue their own goals without regard to society's contribution. It also focuses on the ability of the individual to have their own ideas and intellectual directions.

Affective Autonomy - pertains to how individuals pursue their own positive experiences that will help them achieve their goals.

Hierarchy – focuses on inequality of individuals resulting from the imbalance on power and resources where some have more than the others.

Egalitarianism – pertains to the ability of the individuals to go beyond their selfish interest in favour of committing themselves to helping society especially in the promotion of welfare for those less unfortunate members of society.

Mastery – looks into how individuals achieve their goals through their own positive assertion.

Harmony – pertains to how individuals can fit harmoniously into the environment. Similar with status quo where there is a need to preserve the existing environmental and societal condition so as not to disrupt the social order.

Table 3- Comparative Analysis of Cultural Theories

Cultural Dimensions	Hall	Hofstede	Trompenaars and Turner	House *et al* (GLOBE)	Schwartz
High Context	*Yes*	*Collectivism*			
Low Context	*Yes*	*Individualism*			
Power Distance		*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes (Hierarchy)*
Uncertainty Avoidance		*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
Individualism and Collectivism		*Yes*	*Yes (Universalism and Particularism)*	*Yes (Individualism and Collectivism)*	*No*
Masculinity and Feminity		*Yes*	*No*	*Yes (Assertiveness and Humaneness)*	*Yes (egalitarianism and affective autonomy)*

Cultural Dimensions	Hall	Hofstede	Trompenaars and Turner	House *et al* (GLOBE)	Schwartz
Long term and Short Term Orientation		*Yes*	*Yes (Attitudes to Time)*	*Yes (Future Orientation)*	*No*
Neutral versus Emotional		*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes (Mastery and Intellectual Harmony*
Specific or Diffuse		*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*No*
Attitudes to Environment		*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes(conservatism and harmony)*
Achievement or Ascription		*No*	*Yes*	*Yes (Performance)*	*No*
Performance Orientation		*No*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
Self Transcendence vs Self Enhancement		*No*	*No*	*No*	*Yes*
Gender Egalitarian		*No*	*No*	*Yes (role of the sexes instead of masculine and feminine traits)*	*No*

Admittedly, there are some similarities in the cultural models as shown in Table 3 above. The concept of power distance is discussed by all the models which looked into the inequalities in the distribution of power and resources. Uncertainty avoidance is discussed by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Turner and House *et al* which essentially look into how societies cope with uncertainties through law, rule and religion. Individualism and particularism are discussed by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Turner and House *et al* on how society places importance on individual and collective efforts. The underlying rationale for both beliefs come from a two pronged perception that an individual's contribution can either come before being a member of a cohesive community or the community itself is far more important than the individual. All the cultural models (except Schwartz) explicitly look into how culture impacts time whether viewed by an individual or the society whilst the issue on masculine and feminist viewpoints were discussed by Hofstede, House *et al* and Schwartz. Other than these similarities, the other dimensions seem to be quite independent and these can in fact widen the analytical sphere if culture is viewed from these cacophonous contexts.

E.1.2 Project Teams

The applicability of the general theories on culture within a project team set-up is highlighted by a number of studies undertaken on the matter. The research of Oertig and Buergi (2006) analyses the challenges and structural dilemmas relative to the formation of teams that are envisage to implement head office projects in a foreign set-up. Hence, the challenge for these teams is on how to work cohesively in spite of the obvious cultural differences among the members brought about by structural and geographical set up.

These structural dilemmas are further corroborated by Sackman and Martin (2007) which underscore that having problems in cultural management can be diffused through proper understanding of this diversity. Admittedly, the study shows that when there is negative identity stereotyping, working relationship becomes sour which imperils project outcomes. Whilst the observations of the preceding studies mainly focus on cultural differences as deterrent to project team effectiveness, the study of Chong (2003) stresses the need to solve this dilemma through a more proactive organisational stance. In fact, the latter opine that the globalisation of business activities has put to fore the need to strengthen the firm's cultural competence whilst delivering projects through teams.

On the other hand, cultural composition and diversity are also major issues in building effective teams. In fact, Iles and Kaur (1997) strongly suggest that "diversity competence" is an essential tool in establishing effective project teams. As such, the potential synergies from teams brought about by diversity can only be realised if they have highly developed competences on the matter. Whilst the preceding study is on the culturally induced behavioural make-up of teams, the research by Segalla (1998) widens the scope of the enquiry by focusing on the impact of diversity in organisational resources. The study shows that successful teams have higher levels of national cultural diversity which can actually reduce cognitive dissonance if managed properly. In deviation to these observations, Partington and Harris (1999) introduce the concept of team balance and its influence on project outcomes. Team balance refers to the specific role each member plays and the study underscores that each of them has the capacity to assume another role in contingent situations.

Neal (1998) also argues that the problems associated with differences in national culture do not necessarily equate to project failure. The study emphasises that the underlying problem may come from the individuals' intrinsic preference to work with someone whom they share more commonalities rather than work with someone whose cultural beliefs, *mores* and traditions are not in-sync with their cultural make-up. On the other hand, Raiden, Dainty and Neal (2004) corroborates this argument by showing that cultural and attitudinal/ behavioural problems are the main barriers in having effective project teams. Organisational systems and processes particularly the set-up of management is never "acultural" since it is hinged on a deeply-ingrained national culture (Fish, 2008). Arguably, since there is always a more dominant culture over the others, achieving a balance among them becomes a major challenge as issues on power distance, structure and resources confound to the dilemma (Rodrigues, 1998). Indeed, cultural conflict occurs because of failure to understand this diversity and by being cognizant to these differences, organisational cohesiveness can be achieved (Canen and Canen, 1999 and Darling and Folioso, 1999).

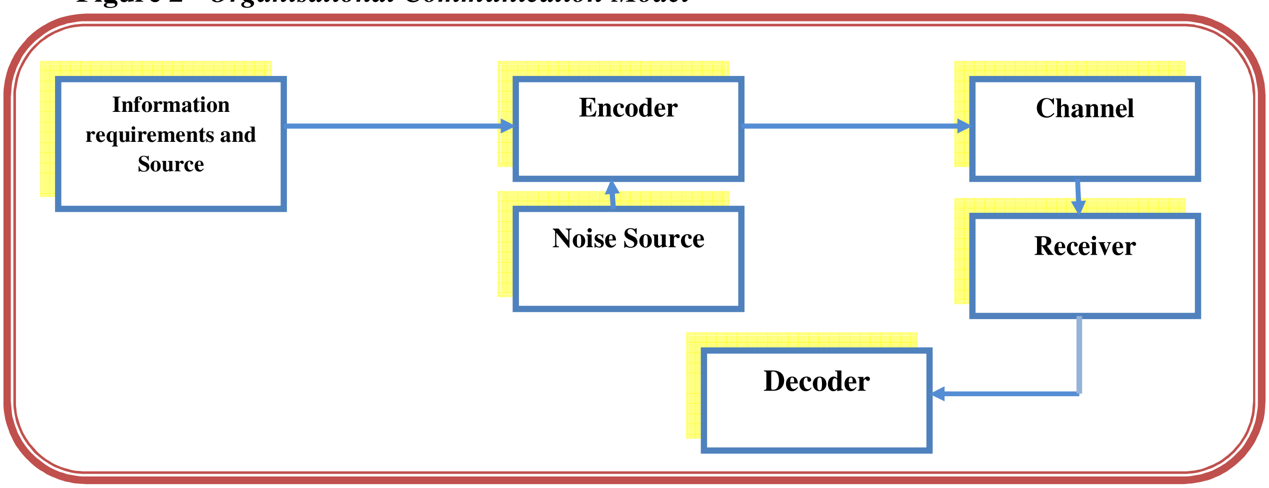
On the other hand, there is a dire need to be aware of how culture shapes management strategies, policies and decisions which require greater awareness to an individual's cultural make-up (Satow and Wang 1994 and Kanungo 2004). It is also important to understand the organisation's strategies and policies in order to build a cultural diversity model that will address conflicts that are driven by culture (Seymen, 1996). Finally, cultural diversity is often seen as a hindrance in achieving operational success and Higgs (1996) suggests that there should be a greater recognition of this diversity to foster camaraderie among the concerned individuals.

E.2 Communication

E.2.1 Communication Theories

The development of organisational communication theories began in the late 50s and early 1960s (Redding, 1985). However, it was only in the late 70s and early 80's that the development of organisational communication theories intensified. In fact, May (2005) points to the development of intepretetative, critical, postmodern and feminist research which expanded the sphere of communication theories. In addition, the author opines that the growth of communication theories has also been influenced by models that were actually developed in other academic discipline. One of the more common models in organisation communication is the structuralist theory which looks into communication from the structures of the organisation. As such, structuralists view organisation as an open system which fundamentally receive energies from the environment, transform them into usable form and then transmit them back to the environment whilst Niuliep (1996) says that this is basically the often cited "input-throughput-output" system (p.341).

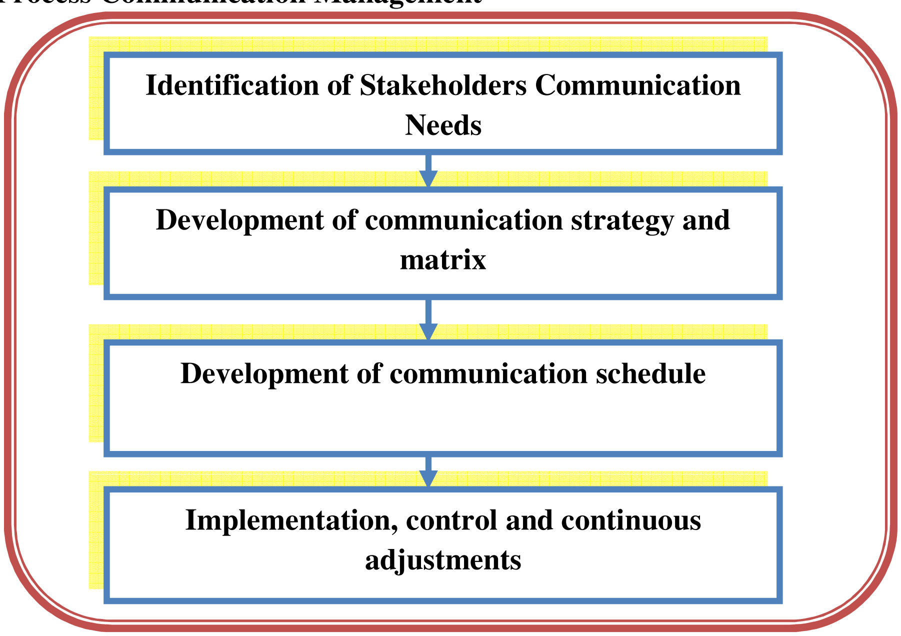
Figure 2 - ***Organisational Communication Model***



Source: Hunt 1980 (As cited in Kelly, 2000 page 93)

This classical view on communication is illustrated by Hunt (1980) (please see figure 2) and it suggests that communication is a two way process. It starts with a communication requirement where information from a source is required to be transmitted to the receiver. The encoder processes the information but the noise sources asphyxiate the flow of information which often leads to communication breakdown. If there is no communication breakdown, the information is then transmitted either through the formal or informal communication channels until the receiver gets the information and then decodes this for information processing. Whilst the model provides a good theoretical base in analysing information dissemination, its structure is fundamentally flawed because it failed to incorporate a feedback mechanism where the receiver should be able to convey whether the information was useful or not for decision making. Furthermore, the lack of an end-appraisal methodology makes it even litigious since it undermines the importance of knowing whether the flow of information in the organisation is actually working as intended.

Figure 3 - Process Communication Management



Source: Müller (2007 pp 779-800)

In answer to the communication dilemma pointed above, Müller (2007) illustrates an effective process for communication management as shown in Figure 3. The author emphasises the importance of identifying the needs of the different stakeholders at the onset since their communication needs are contextually different from each other and tailor fitting the communication strategy and matrix based on this information is important for effective communication management. However, it is also important to understand the knowledge of the stakeholders for that particular undertaking so that the communication strategy will address their expectations in a more effective manner. Indeed, the development of communication schedule allows for a seamless flow of information relative to the exchange of information among the different channels. Finally, the communication needs of the stakeholders changes hence; there is a need for control and continuous evaluation of the needs of the stakeholder. By having these continuous adjustments and feedback mechanisms a more effective communication flow is established.

In contrast to the structured and linear communication theories as discussed previously, the Symbolic Covergence Theory developed by Borman in the 70's emphasises on how individuals in the communicative process actually converge their individual fantasies, dreams and meanings into shared symbolic system (Borman, 1982) as follows: The model looks into the communication process instead of viewing the individual's communication characteristics. It starts by understanding how the communication process helps in sharing group fantasies and argues that the analysis of messages in communication involves understanding the shared fantasy themes of people and how this is subsequently shared in the community. Once this is cohesively ingrained in the society it becomes integrated through an organising principle which subsequently becomes a rhetorical vision. This is a unifying symbol which is often used by the individuals to view the existing reality and this can actually come from the common slogans and labels that are circulating in the community. It is highly distinguishable from the shared fantasy because rhetorical visions are more focused on pragmatic goals, scientific innovation, realistic problem solving and consciousness. Once these become an intrinsic component of the communication process rhetorical communities take shape. The author further suggests that once the individual becomes indoctrinated by the proliferating vision, membership to the society becomes highly ideological. The author further points that this is a holistic approach in analysing the communicative process since it does not only look into the give and take of messages in a structured manner but it underpins the importance of the unfolding events as crucial to understanding the communication process holistically.

Whilst the previous communication theories specifically focused on societal communication, the communication theory that was developed by Daft and Lengel (as cited in Daft,1997) known as the Media Richness Theory illustrates the importance of knowing the appropriate media to be utilised vis-à-vis the requirement of the task. Hence, the theory is more organisationally focused but it can also be applied within a general societal context. The authors point to the two different richness in communication such as media richness which pertains to the media's ability to process these information into rich information whilst information richness focuses on how the information can actually be transformed by the passage of time. The model also points to the importance of knowing which media channel is applied, language tone and usage of personal touch that may influence the communication process.

Table 4 - Hierarchy of Media Richness for Managerial Communication

Media		Characteristics		Media Richness	Best for Communications that are:
		Feedback	Cues and Channels		
Face to Face	Oral	Immediate	Audio & Visual	High	Ambiguous, emotional divergent background
Telephone		Rapid	Audio & Visual		
Addressed Documents	Written	Slow	Limited Visual		
Unadressed Documents		Slowest	Limited Visual	Low	Clear, rational , official similar backgrounds

Source: Daft and Lengel (as cited in Daft, 1997 p. 560)

Table 4 shows that face to face communication is considered to be the richest source of media since the feedback is immediate and the cues and channels can be seen and interpreted at the onset (e.g. body language of the sender and receiver). The model also points to telephone conversation as the second source of media richness since the feedback is rapid but not as fast as face to face conversation. The authors argue that these two media approaches are more appropriate for very unclear communication situation, relational focused and high diverse background between the sender and the receiver of information. On the other hand, the written media are perceived to be very low in richness because of their slow feedback mechanism and very limited chance to see visual cues that are important in the communication process. On the other hand, this form of media channel is actually preferred when the communication is content specific, for official use in the organisation and the sender and the receiver actually shares similar backgrounds (Ibid 53).

However, it has also been argued in a number of researches that the rich media is actually more focused towards the need to solve issues that are more complex in nature which require an oral communication medium whilst the low media are mainly applied for very common and routine organisational matters (Kil Soo, 1998). The author further opines that the theory is not without a fault and the criticism focuses on the inability of the model to look into situational matters or its failure to take into consideration the specific situation and behaviour of the players in the communicative process.

E.2.2 Project Teams

Indeed, the ease of flow of information in organisations is highly critical albeit, a number of challenges or barriers in effective communication occur as pointed in the classical theories on communication. Goh and Willy 2005 emphasise that these barriers are intrinsic problems to effective communication whilst Kelly, 2000 identifies them to include information overload, time constraints, technical jargon difficulties, hierarchical and task structure complexities and overstretched channels whether formal or informal. Indeed, organisational communication is highly complex and the manner by which information is transferred from one party to the intended recipients with the expectation that the latter will understand the information and as a result influence the behaviour, perception and motivation of the receiver to achieve a desired outcome (Daft, 1997). On a similar vein, Baret (2002) suggests that a meaningful communication emanates from a proactive approach whereby the intended receiver is motivated to support the performance of a goal.

Obviously, these issues emanate from a structural viewpoint but the relational issues in communication are likewise very extensive brought about by the value dimension on power distance, uncertainty avoidance and individualism (Loosemore and Muslamani, 1999). The authors further argue that communication process becomes highly complex since individuals have their own cultural biases, upbringing and motivation. As such, the effective flow of information requires the greater engagement of employees to work together to achieve objectives whilst the organisation provides the right structure and support for effective communication (Welch and Mary, 2000).

The studies of Mc Kinney, Barker, Smith and Davis (2004) and Tomas and Drury (1998) show that effective communication is needed to form cohesive and effective teams. They observe that the impact of communication to performance and the expression of communication values are critical areas for project success. In fact, teams will become more effective by having a well defined communication channel. In addition, Mc Kinney *et al* further underpin the need for a simple communication channel especially for highly complex projects in order to mitigate communication failure. They suggest that having sufficient channel support, tersely established roles and responsibilities and highly charged environment conducive for transferring information are key to effective project team communication.

Admittedly, whilst the studies mentioned above mainly focus on how communication impact team effectiveness, the research of Reed and Knight (2009) expands the enquiry by analysing how a flawed communication structure negatively influences project outcomes. The study further upholds the general observation that having poor infrastructure channels and the lack of understanding on project objectives lead to project failures. Another critical issue that must be addressed in effective communication is on cross cultural communication. Ochieng and Price (2009) show that effective cultural communication strategy should be provided to allow for the unimpeded flow of information since this can hasten problem identification, information dissemination and creation of resolution process especially for conflicts.

There are also other aspects to communication which can't be encapsulated by looking into these perspectives on a stand-alone basis. As such, Oh, Kim and Lee (1991) emphasise the importance of understanding communication from a relational sphere (e.g. leader-subordinate or vice versa in project teams). The study accentuates the significance of having an unimpeded flow of information as this point to greater awareness of project problems and outcomes which essentially foster member's belongingness to the often impenetrable inner sanctum of teams. An appraisal mechanism should also be put in place in order to determine whether the flow of communication is actually working as intended. In so doing, Thomas (1999) look into the ways of developing an assessment tool measurement for communication. The author recommended that communication effectiveness can be measured through the Compass Software. However, this recommendation is fundamentally weak since it only focuses on a surface solution given that technology changes rapidly, as opposed to coming up with a real evaluation criteria that can be applied across industries regardless of the changes in technology, sector and time horizon.

F. Knowledge Gaps

As can be gleaned from the literature review, project teams are crucial in the realisation of project goals and objectives. However, their effectiveness and cohesiveness are dependent on a number of factors which include culture *(e.g. Hofstede etc)* and communication *(Daft and Lengel etc)*. It has also been observed that these factors seem to be mutually reinforcing as pointed by Hall (1989) and how they can influence team functioning instead of analysing them in piecemeal manner is an interesting frontier for investigation. Arguably, the result of the literature review shows a bias towards looking at culture and communication practices in a piecemeal approach (from the general management and project management studies) rather than analysing them in a mutually reinforcing manner albeit, researchers such as Schweiger *et al* (2003) and Earley *et al* (2000) have underpin the importance of analysing team functioning from a more holistic sphere. As such, this research paper addresses this knowledge gap since the influence of culture and communication practices are viewed under the guise of a unified team functioning framework. Moreover, the earlier studies on the subject which utilised the piecemeal approach and subsequently identified the said factors came from western information technology, engineering and construction entities and whether these hold true for financial project teams in Japan and the Philippines is another knowledge gap that this research paper attempts to elucidate.

G. Summary of Literature Review

The importance of knowing the critical variables that impact the development of project teams into cohesive and effective entities cannot be undermined. Admittedly, there is no escaping the often dissonant perspective where several factors such as culture and communication need to reach a beneficial fruition to build a framework that will capture the idiosyncrasies of project teams as shown in Table 5:

Table 5 - Summary of Review of Related Literature

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Project Management</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Project management refers to the proper planning, monitoring and controlling of all the aspects of the project whilst it has also four fundamental elements which underscore the need for a common understanding of the goals and objectives of the project (Forsberg et al 2000). Project can be viewed from a wider sphere such as a temporary organisation, agency for change, resource allocation, uncertainty management, CEO of the project and agent to the principal. (Müller and Turner 2003)</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="4">Project Teams</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Comprising of individuals who are bonded together to implement a task, work together and share responsibility for the project outcomes all within a limited period and viewed from a wider organisational sphere. Boddy (1992) etc.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Team Functioning</th><th>Key Proponents</th><th>Analytical Description</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Culture</td><td>General Cultural Theories</td><td>Hofstede (1980) Trompenaars and Turner (1997),) Hall (1981), Schwartz (1994), House et al</td><td>Views culture from different dimensions such as Hofstede’s 7 cultural dimension and Trompenaars and Turner’s 5 cultural dimension etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Team Application</td><td>Oertig and Buergi (2006), Sackman and Friesl (2007), Neal 1998, Raiden adn Neale (2004), Iles and Hayers (1997), Segalla (1998), Partington and Harrisl (1999), etc</td><td>The intrinsic assumptions, beliefs and routines which are embedded in the psyche of the team members. As such, when these are shared with the other members of the organisation and ultimately accepted as a way of doing things, it becomes an acceptable practice and also a way of doing things. Moreover, it also looks into diversity due to professional alliances, position in the organisational hierarchy, personal interests and geographical considerations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Communication Practices</td><td>General Communication Theories</td><td>Daft and Lengel (1985), Baret 2002, Nielanp (1996) Jimes (2005) etc.</td><td>Communication can be viewed from a structuralist functional approach which implies that it is highly affected by the structure and functions in the organisation. It can also be viewed based on the richness of the media used.</td></tr>
</table>

	Project Team Application	*Mc Kinney, Barker (2004), April et al (2009), Ochieng and Pricel (2009), Oh (1991), etc*	The unimpeded flow of information from team members and project leaders, project teams with management and teams with the other key stakeholders or vice versa.
Additional Observation			
It has also been observed that the issues and challenges faced in team functioning relative to culture and communication practices can be a result of the structural, relational and individual's response to certain situations.			

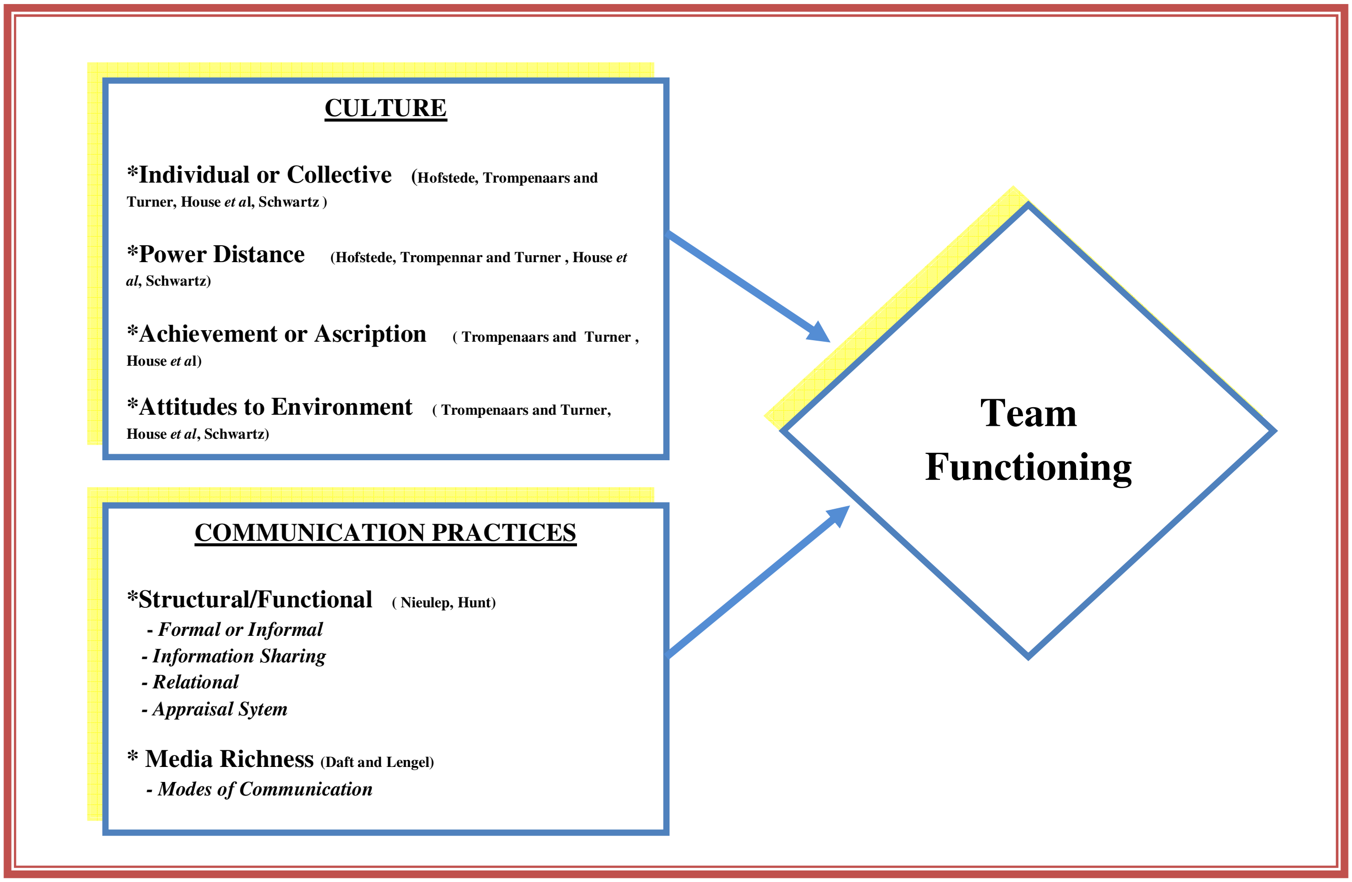
H. Proposed Conceptual Model

The review of related literature shows that there is no single identifiable factor that can ostensibly capture the nuances of effective and cohesive team formation. In fact, a majority of the studies follows a piece-meal approach of analysing the phenomenon albeit; there are also some studies which identify an umbrella variable and then essentially decomposing it into sub-variables. This research trajectory is followed by Schweiger *et al* (2003) which underscore that team functioning is comprised of unifying performance, complexities, composition diversity, motivation, practices and norms, IT infrastructure and leadership.

However, a modification of the Schweiger framework is necessitated because there are some critically interlinked factors that can actually influence team functioning more conspicuously and the review of literature identifies them as culture and communication. In fact, Hall suggested that culture is communication and as such analysing the shared experiences within such framework is more holistic (Hall and Hall, 1990). In addition, Hofstede (2001), Trompenaars et al (1997), House *et al* (2004), Schwartz (1994) and the studies on the subject by Earley *et al* (2000), Schweiger *et al* (2003), Oertig and Buergi (2006), and Chiang (2005), among others pinpoint to these variables as important factors in effective organisational and team functioning, respectively.

In so doing, the team functioning framework for this research paper include culture and communication in view of the aforementioned raison d'être. On the other hand, the items under each factor are drawn extensively on the observations made by the classical theories on the subject and the subsequent studies undertaken to validate them. The first 2 cultural factors were common among the cultural theorist albeit the succeeding cultural factors were new observations by the recent study on the subject. Figure 4 presents a schematic illustration of the proposed conceptual model.

Figure 4 - Proposed Conceptual Model



I. Research Direction

Indeed, by mainly focusing on culture and the communication practices of team functioning, this addresses the issue of focused research instead of having numerous factors which often lead to over generalisation and subsequent dilution of research findings. Moreover, this approach in understanding project teams does not attempt to preclude a catch all pragmatic paradigm that will essentially capture all the attributes of team functioning. Rather, it points out that the fruition of interlinked variables such as culture and communication practices as crucial in understanding team functioning. The next chapter presents the fundamental philosophy of this research paper relative to the research strategy, methods, and data collection procedure and research context.

CHAPTER III –Research Framework

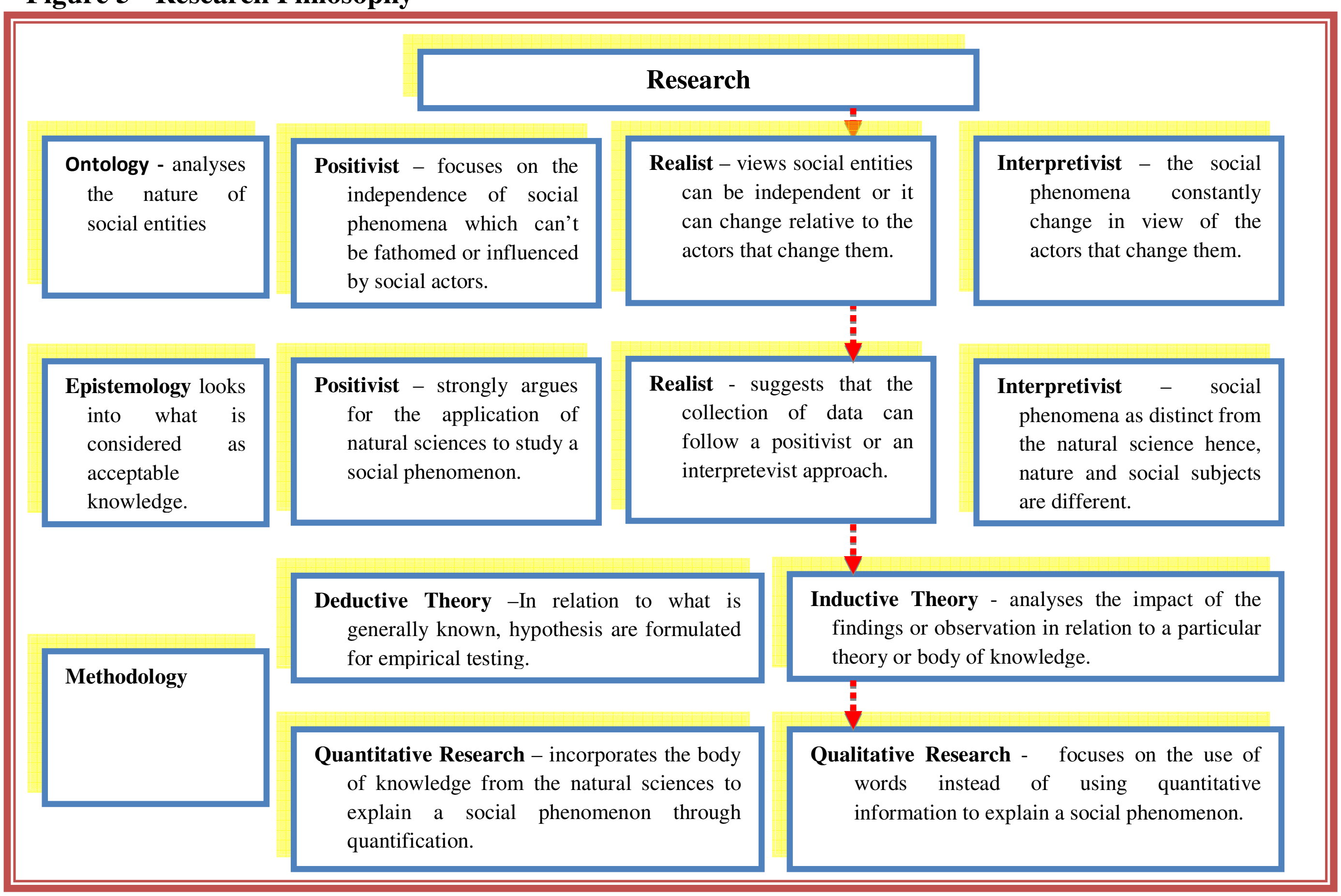
A. Chapter Background

This chapter discusses the research paper's underpinning theoretical and practical precepts as a tool in realising its aims and in finding ways to answer the posited enquiries. Initially, the discussion centres on the theoretical and practical methodologies whilst the limitations of the research methodology are then identified. The crucial issues on research ethics are discussed as a capstone section for the chapter.

B. Theoretical Methodology

The research process is influenced by an underlying philosophy. Saunders and Thornhill (2003) opines that the realisation of a research agenda is affected by its philosophy and Sobh and Perry (2006) argue that having the right research philosophy is crucial since its cuts the unnecessary activities that have no bearing to the research work. The interrelationship of the research ontology, epistemology and methodology is shown in Figure 5 whilst the dotted arrows point to the research paper's philosophical leaning which is explained further in the subsequent sections.

Figure 5 - Research Philosophy



Source: Bryman (2008)

B.1 Research Philosophy (see Figure 10)

The ontological consideration of a research focuses on the set of ideas that can explain social phenomena (Denzin, and Lincoln 2000) and whether this can be objectively viewed from the actors or they are highly influenced by them (Bryman 2008). As such, the ontological enquiry of *what is* becomes distinctive from the epistemological question of *how does* a situation becomes known (Locke, 2007). There are three schools of thought under this ontological umbrella which shows a distinctive chasm for each of the perspectives. An objectivist views the social phenomena as independent and cannot be influenced by the social actors whilst a constructionist perceives the situation as highly influenced by actors that operate in the environment. On the other hand, a realist views the social phenomena to be either independent or affected by the social actors depending on the situation. In fact, Booth and Woods (1997) is of the belief that by clearly delineating an objectivist and constructivist approach in viewing a social phenomenon is difficult since knowledge development should be geared towards a more pluralistic advancement of viewpoints.

Relative to the foregoing, this research paper follows a realist approach towards answering the research query. This is because the collection of data follows the stance of the positivist whilst a high value proposition is considered on the existing situational reality. As such, what is essentially described may be different from the existing team functioning practices. Hence, this necessitates the need to view the situation from a realist perspective.

On the other hand, research epistemology pertains to what is considered to be the applicable phenomenological knowledge which can be viewed from a three pronged sphere. A positivist recommends the application of natural scientific methodologies to investigate a social phenomenon whilst an interpretivist underscores that a social phenomena is markedly different from the natural sciences and therefore, should be viewed from the subject independently (Bryman 2008 and Saunders and Thornhill 2003). In between these epistemological viewpoints is the realist which takes into consideration both approaches. In fact, the discussion of reality is not tied-up to a contextually bound idiomatic layman's approach to a research whilst leading to a more universally acceptable view of the phenomenon (Locke,2007).

In so doing, this research paper follows a realist perspective because the context of project teams are fundamentally different from the other teams and viewing this from a combination of a positivist and interpretivist approach is more appropriate and holistic. In addition, since the conditions of project teams are markedly differentiated by culture (Hofstede etc) and communication (Daft and Lengel etc), a contextual understanding through a realist prism underscores the importance of observing whether a deemed truth on project teams actually matches the independently existing conditions of project teams in the real world.

The development of a research philosophy is influenced by how the theoretical process is viewed and understood. Bryman (2008) suggests that the gathering of data and their subsequent analysis is steered and swayed by an underlying research theory. Hence, in a deductive approach, a research is undertaken in order to solve enquiries posited by an existing theoretical precept. On the other hand, an inductive approach focuses on the development of a theory only after the data collection and analysis has been completed. In so doing, this research paper utilises an inductive approach since the build up of a team functioning theory is context driven and generalisation cannot be pursued robustly which run counter to the tenets of the deductive approach.

C. Practical Methodology

C.1 Research Strategy - Qualitative

The research strategy focuses on whether the investigation is primarily quantitative or qualitative. A quantitative research focuses on the objectivity and application of natural scientific approaches to analyse a phenomenon whilst a qualitative research specifically favours the inference and interpretation of a phenomenon through a more subjective approach. The choice between a quantitative and qualitative research is context dependent. As such, if both techniques are dissimilar but of equal importance to the research agenda, then it is not reasonable to judge an approach from the advantages of the other (Bryman 2008 and Firestone 2009).

In so doing, this research paper follows a qualitative research strategy since it mainly uses an inductive approach to generate a theory for team functioning. This is also in line with the research paper's ontological and epistemological leaning towards a realist perspective which looks into the analysis of team functioning phenomenon in a qualitative manner. In order to do this, a case study method has been adopted which is discussed in more detail below.

C.2 Research Method – Case Study

The application of case studies in social research traces its beginnings from the extensive use of case histories in clinical psychology and medicine where the specific area of a patient's condition is targeted (Hamel, 1992). In social science, case studies have since followed a strategically focused investigation towards a specific setting (Bryman 2008). Thus, by being context driven, this allows for more flexibility and in-depth investigation aimed at identifying gradations and subtleties that can only be surface tested by other empirical approaches (Lewin and Johnston, 1997).

The application of case study research is grounded in a number of advantages. It comprises of a detailed context analysis where there is no attempt to isolate a phenomenon and as such, a more holistic view is generated. In consumer and marketing research, it has often been observed that case studies provide qualitative information that at times can be more persuasive compared to quantifiable data (Liu, Leach and Johnstone,1999). In addition, case studies can be applied to explore, analyse, support and raise doubts to an existing theory and can be as effective vis-à-vis other methodologies that have been traditionally perceived as more authoritative (Lewin and Johnstone, 1997).

However, the applicability of case studies has also been marked by a number of asphyxiating issues. Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1992) points to the problem of theory validation resulting from the stringent process involved that may run contrary to the actual evidence. The author also points to the criticism hurled on the heavy reliance of subjectivity in data analysis. In spite of these drawbacks, Zonabend (1992) opines that case studies still offers a more micro approach to understanding a social phenomenon because it gives special attention to the details of the context rather than understanding the whole situation.

Thus, this research paper employs a case study method mainly because it provides a context specific tool in analysing the project team's functioning capacity vis-à-vis influence of culture and communication practices. It also allows for greater flexibility in gathering data which is essential in analysing the team functioning phenomenon from a realist ontological and epistemological perspective.

C.3 Data Collection Method – Semi Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview is a flexible way of gathering information where the researcher has a pre-set of questions on a topic whilst the interviewee is provided with the ample freedom to answer them. The researcher can ask follow-up questions depending on the answer of the interviewee (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In addition, it is still up to the interviewer whether the sequential arrangement of queries is strictly enforced, or whether a change in sequencing and contents is necessitated by the situation (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). Nevertheless, given the flexibility involved in a semi-structured interview, there is a chance that the interviewee's response may be embellished and Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that the interview context should always maintain a balance rapport.

In so doing, a semi-structured interview is typically suited for this type of research mainly because the research question investigates the key factors that influence team functioning and identifying such can actually be done by knowing the opinions, key beliefs and actual experiences of the personnel who have worked within the ambits of project teams. In addition, a semi structured interview allows for greater flexibility and thus, more probing questions can be immediately employed to clarify answers and viewpoints on the influence of culture and communication to project teams. An interview guide has been developed for this research paper (see Appendix).

C.4 Research Sampling – Theoretical Sampling

The issue of sampling in the realm of qualitative research is deemed complex due to the disparate interpretation of what constitute effective sampling methodology. This is brought about by the lack of clear sampling guidelines established for qualitative research as compared to the rigidly followed scientific approach to statistical sampling in quantifiable research (Coyne, 1997). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), theoretical sampling is an intrinsical component of grounded theory and it is primarily utilised to develop pockets of categories to make them more specific and useful. The author further argues that the aim of a theoretical sampling is not to expand the base sample but instead to find useful, relevant and engaging information that can improve ideas, demarcate knowledge boundaries and fit them in the emerging categories.

This observation is validated by Bryman (2008) and he underscores that the emphasis of this type of sampling is to reflect the theoretical underpinning of the data and whether more data is required to reach a desired level of information is context specific. Hence, it is not the number of samples that counts but on the quality of data gathered that determines the sufficiency of the sample. This sampling methodology is then viewed as an ongoing process for the data collection relative to the emergence of knowledge (Becker, 1993).

In so doing, this research paper employs theoretical sampling. The project teams in the two selected organisations were purposively selected by the researcher due to personal contacts whilst the selection of the seven interviewees were mainly triggered by the need to analyse the team functioning framework as influenced by culture and communication practices rather than the need to have a large sample size. The following table briefly describes the research context of this study.

Table 6 – Sampling Description

Organisation	**Japan Institution** –*Involved in allied and non-allied financial services. It has a strong presence in the Asian market and representative offices in Europe and the Americas. Its main clients in the foreign market are Japanese companies both private and multilateral agencies which ensure the steady flow of customer base. Its recent thrust to expand its global reach is focused on the emerging economies of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) region as well as previously untapped markets.*	
Interviewees	**Previous Project Position**	**Type of the Most Recent Project Involvement**
J1	Project Manager	**Exotic Structured Swap** – *introduction of financial product in the overseas branches. The project involves designing the product to comply with banking regulations, testing whether there is a ready market and changing the configuration of the computer software to allow for seamless recording and end of the day reconciliation among the affected branches and the head office.*

J2	Team Member	**Cash Flow Capture Risk System** – *change of the risk system procedure for the end of the day-cash flow report submitted by foreign branches to head office. It includes the development of software capable of determining whether the cumulative position of money market and foreign exchange traders are compliant with the threshold level set by the head office in relation to the allowed positions for foreign exchange and money market instruments.*
J3	Team Member	**Regulatory Testing for Overseas Branches** – *compliance testing of foreign branches as required by the Japanese Financial Service Agency (FSA/banking regulation). It requires the testing of systems and procedures and whether previous FSA findings have been corrected.*
Organisation	**Philippine Institution** – *a medium sized commercial bank with diversified operations in commercial and trust banking services. A former unit of a foreign banking network based in the northern hemisphere but was subsequently spinned-off and sold to the local shareholders. It has no foreign banking presence but it has maintained strong ties with a number of foreign clienteles and institutions in view of its historical relationship with them.*	
Interviewees	**Previous Project Position**	**Most Recent Project Involvement**
P1	Project Manager	**Acquisition of a Distressed Bank**- *involves the feasibility study of acquiring a financially distressed bank, testing for regulatory issues in the acquisition (e.g. waiver of risk asset ratio requirement for a certain period), negotiation with both the bank to be acquired and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP/Central Bank of the Philippines) with regard to concessions such as asset write-offs, quasi reorganisation and security backed interest benefits.*
P2	Team Member	**Software Development –** *development of a budgeting software aimed at helping the different departments with their budgetary requirements since this will link the main software of the planning department with the individual departments allowing for real-time checking of variances. The project has also been aimed at unclogging the paper report requirement of the budgetary requirements.*
P3	Team Member	**Acquisition of a Distressed Bank**- *see previous discussion.*

P4	Team Member	**Software Development** – *see previous discussion.*

The interviews for the Japanese and Philippine project representatives were conducted from 16 to 18 and 23 to 25 November 2009, respectively which lasted between 35 minutes to 50 minutes for each of the respondents. The interviews were conducted via telephone whilst notes during the interviews were taken to initially flag down relevant information in the case study and the interview transcripts were subsequently prepared as basis for the data analysis.

D. Research Methodology Limitations

Research validity pertains to the ability of the parameters that was established to appraise and gauge concepts or social phenomenon whilst research reliability focuses on the consistency of the parameters in measuring these concepts through tests of stability, internal reliability and consistency in observations (Bryman and Bell 2007, Healy and Perry, 2000). The following has been established using Yin's (2003) tests of validity and reliability so that this research paper complies with these tenets in order to make the study as credible as possible:

Table 7 – Test of Validity and Reliability

Tests	Case Study Tactic	Research Phase	*Description of Approach Undertaken*
Construct Validity	• Use multiple sources of evidence	Data Collection	*Two organisations from different geographical regions and seven interviewees were chosen for the semi-structured interview to allow for more divergent views on how culture and communication practices influence project team functioning*
	• Interviewees are made to review the draft case study report	Data Collection	*Interviewees were provided with the narrative form of the case study for their review and further comments before the same were included in this research paper. As such, the problem of researcher's bias was addressed.*
Internal Validity	• Do pattern matching	Data Analysis	*The result of narrative interview were compared with the conceptual model which include cultural dimension on individualism and collectivism, power distance, achievement or ascription and attitudes to environment (Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars and Turner, House et al, Schwartz). On the other hand, the communication aspect also looked into the*

Tests	Case Study Tactic	Research Phase	*Description of Approach Undertaken*
			structural and relational issues as well the richness of media applied based on the perspective developed by Daft and Lengel etc.
External Validity	• Application of replication logic in multiple case studies.	Research Design	*This research paper is a multiple case study using the experiences of two organisations coming from seven interviewees. Hence, the selection of the two organisations allows for either replicating the findings from the other organisation or to provide contrasting viewpoints on the influence of culture and communication practices in team functioning from a wider sphere of project team perspectives.*
Reliability	• Develop case study database	Data Collection	*The data and interview scripts are kept so that other researchers in the future can have access to them and can generally replicate this research paper accordingly.*

Adopted from Yin (2003) page 34

E. Data Analysis

In accordance with the suggestion of Wolcott (as cited in Seidman 1998), qualitative analysis should undergo a reduction process prior to the analysis and the subsequent interpretation of the research data. In addition, Gillham (2000) argues that the analysis for case studies should look into the chronology, logical coherence and the theory built-up for the issue being investigated. Yin (2003) further underpinned the importance of doing pattern matching where categorised data are compared to the conceptual models and applicable studies on the subject. As such, the analysis is undertaken as follows:

The result of the interviews were coded and classified relative to the proposed conceptual model. The coded answers for the cultural questions were subsequently categorised under the four national cultural categories as illustrated by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Turner, Schwartz, and House *et al* (see proposed conceptual model in Chapter II) such as collectivism or individualism, power distance, achievement or ascription and attitudes to environment. *For example, an answer on a group reward system is coded as culture and classified under collectivism or individualism.* On the other hand, the answers for the communication practices followed the same protocol where the coded answers are clustered in accordance with Daft and Lengel's etc. communication practices on formal or informal, information sharing, mode of communication or media richness, relational and appraisal system. *For example, when the answer refers to the minutes of meetings then this is classified under the formal form of communication and further analysis is made to see whether such can be classified in other categories.* After the answers have been appropriately categorised, the analysis delves into whether the results of the study confirm or contradict with the findings of the classical theories, previous studies on the subject and documentary data gathered from the entities themselves. The reasons for such similarities and differences are further explained in narrative discussions.

F. Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a vital concern in conducting a research. There has been emphasis in safeguarding people's identities and research locations especially if the same has been requested by the respondents. In fact, personal information and opinions are to be obscured and only made available to the public under the guise of shielded anonymity (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). The names of the organisations or even of the respondent can only be shown if there is explicit consent from them as the lack of consent precludes the need to respect their rights for privacy and confidentiality (Bryman and Bell 2007).

In this research paper, the financial sector intrinsically revolves around a fiduciary relationship and information leak is strongly safeguarded since this will create a moral hazard that may imperil client relationship. As such, the respondents for this research paper requested anonymity which tacitly requires that the names and that of their organisations be withheld whilst they are identified using generic terminologies. The succeeding chapter will present the empirical data gathered from the semi-structured interview in a narrative form.

CHAPTER IV – Empirical Data

A. Chapter Background

This chapter presents the empirical data gathered from the semi-structured interviews in a narrative discussion. The case studies for Japan and the Philippines are presented separately which focus on cultural issues such as individualism, collectivism, power distance, achievement, ascription and attitudes to environment whilst the communication section delves into the issues on structural/functional and media richness.

B. Japan Project Teams

B.1 Culture

B.1.1 Individual or Collective

The interviewees underpinned that since project teams were comprised of members from different backgrounds and professional affiliations it was very important to find some commonalities with the other members. In relation to group affiliation, the three interviewees pointed to the loyalty that the members attached to their universities (*daigaku*). J1 demonstrated this as follows: *"In fact, if the leader is actually a graduate of universities like Waseda University then members who are graduate from that institution become closer."* J3 stated that members put emphasis on this aspect because of the presumption that they knew more or less the hardships that the other members endured whilst getting their degrees so this was a good starting point in knowing the other members better.

Another facet in group affiliation was underscored by J2. He stated that it was very important to come from the same social clubs (*bu*) since this provided a common ground where the sharing of interests (sports activities or other social endeavours such as Red Cross) can be undertaken whilst building a stronger team functioning. On the other hand, the place of their domicile (*furusato*) also played a role on how they were perceived by the other members. For example, people who grew up in the mid part of Japan (particularly Osaka) were sometimes considered as too talkative and flamboyant as compared to the quiet and reserve stance of the northern Japanese.

In spite of the above affiliations, the interviewees stated that this was just secondary since they came to know the other members better regardless of their group affiliations. They opined that the group relationships that they learned in the clubs *(bu)* or universities (*daigaku*) emphasised respecting other members regardless of their affiliations. Moreover, the "*sempai kohai*" (teacher student) relationship underscored the importance of respecting (*sonkei suru*) the leaders since they were considered as the adviser of the group.

The collective nature of Japanese project teams was also marked by the consensual nature of their decision making process. J3 opined that given the sizeable resources poured in projects the decisions cannot solely rest on a single member. On the other hand, the interviewees mentioned that every member was considered important ("*minna wa totemo taisetsu desu kara*") whose opinions and suggestions should be heard before the collective decision can be undertaken. Once the decision was reached, this became a collective effort and it was usually no longer questioned internally. This was commonly reached through a "*ringi*" decision system (*e.g. the approval of a client's rolling credit line will go through the scrutiny of all the credit members through a formal memo and where dissenting opinions were raised this had to be addressed until the team came up with a collective decision to approve the line*) where everyone's approval was needed before it can be forwarded to the next hierarchy of decision makers. According to J1, although decisions were collective in nature, the role of the group leaders were always taken into account since they were the most senior and respected in the group (*ichiban ue*). Moreover, when there were disagreements, they played an important role since they were tasked to restore the team's harmonious relationship. J2 pointed to an important consideration why the decision of the team leader was no longer opposed as follows: *it is also very important to point the role of the senior leader in making decision since he is respected in this aspect to provide guidance on how to come up with a collective decision for the matter. So members no longer question the decision since the nail that sticks out is usually hammered."*

Another aspect of collectivism can be viewed from the reward system. The three interviewees preferred group recognition as compared to awarding the efforts of the individual members. J1 underscored the importance of recognising the collective effort/spirit or "*gurroppo seishin*" although he admitted that some team members contributed more than the others. This was further validated by J2 and he observed that from an external perspective it was very important to reward the group collectively. He stated that this was the essence of a group reward system since everyone was given management recognition whilst maintaining harmony in the group. In fact, J3 illustrated this as follows: *"Of course group reward system is much better because it recognised the effort of the team and not just a single person so there is harmony in team so that after the project is completed the team relationship is still there and everybody is still tomodachi (friends)."*

The above observation was actually corroborated by J2. He believed that it was better to have group recognition since it mitigated conflicts and jealousies since there was a possibility that the members will work in future projects. J1 illustrated that this group recognition system was usually given during big events such as the organisation's anniversary celebration. However, for smaller projects, the citation was usually awarded in less pompous occasions such as the beginning of the work week where separate ceremonies were given for each of the team members by their respective departments. The award usually included management citation contained in bamboo or metal cylinder (which symbolised infinity and flexibility) and tokens such as mugs or paper holders with the emblazoned name of the organisation (symbolising loyalty and length of service).

B.1.2 Power Distance

The Japanese project teams shared a number of similarities albeit; their projects were quite different and independent from each other. Firstly, senior management chose the project leaders from the departments that were most affected vis-à-vis seniority and competence. Secondly, representatives from other affected departments were selected based on the recommendations of the heads or the immediate heads if they did not take part in the project. For example, in the *structured exotic swap* team J1 illustrated that there were representatives from the accounting department since they were the point persons on how to record the new financial product in the system whilst complying with international accounting standards. The computer programmer took part due to the need to modify the software program in order to capture the new transaction. The member from the legal department was tasked to determine whether the issuance of the new product complied with Japanese FSA regulations. Finally, the other team members came from the international division since they planned to launch the project in their overseas branches and management wanted to know whether there was enough demand for the product. The interviewees also mentioned that the team members were mostly male managers who were on their way to more senior positions in the organisation.

According to the three interviewees, since the leaders were mainly selected due to their senior position, they were expected to be accorded with respect and professionalism (*sonkei suru*). J1 also mentioned that the leaders were generally viewed as repositories of knowledge and experience which gave them the impetus to decide during crucial periods. According to J3 in his previous international audit engagement, their leader was referred to as teacher (*sensei*) which demarcated his role from the other members. In fact, he opined that it was unusual to call the leader on a first name basis since this was considered rude and highly inappropriate. As such, he pointed to the indulgent dependence (*amae*) relationship where the leader was expected to take care of the subordinate like a good father to his family. Relative to the team members' relationship with each other, J2 opined that team relationship usually evolved from professional to personal (*tomodachi).* He illustrated that given the long working hours that they spent together, the informal activities such as going to "yakitori" (barbecue houses) and karaoke allowed for the discussions of team concerns in a more relax environment. He also emphasised that going to *onsen* where everyone went to the steaming pools naked removed the hierarchical divide between the leader and the members and for once they became co-equals even only during that period. However, in spite of this relational evolution J2 pointed to the clear existence of the "*sempai-kohai*" (senior-subordinate) relationship among the leaders and members even at the onset. *"Of course, this also changes as the team becomes working more and more and certain personal relationship occurs. This is actually the sempai kohai relationship were our leader actually becomes our trusted mentor. Our sempais actually acts as a strict mentor but also a friend (tomodachi)."*

Another aspect of power distance was the openness of the team to new ideas, suggestions and recommendations which were highlighted by the experiences of J1 and J3. They illustrated that each member had different (*betsu-betsu*) skills set and this helped the team achieved the desired result given the heterogeneity in opinions where they were able to select the best solution. In contrast to this viewpoint, J2 mentioned that team openness was context dependent. He stated that there were instances when the leader wanted to implement his ideas in a dictatorial manner. As such, suggesting an alternative course of action became futile. However, J2 underpinned that there were also instances where project leaders were actually very open to suggestions and recommendations especially for new financial frontier projects (*e.g. new products and systems that may challenge existing financial regulations)* where there were no existing in-depth experience on the matter.

On the other hand, the three interviewees stated that team roles were already established prior to the roll out of the project. J3 opined that the clear establishment of roles underpinned the importance of what was expected of each of the members so that duplication and overlapping of functions can be mitigated. Also, team members were chosen as a specialist hence, there was a clear expectation that they should contribute to the realisation of the project in accordance with their technical background and skills. J2 corroborated this claim and pointed to the following: *"they are expected to know the issues on hand regarding their department if the project is implemented. Hence, being flexible in the role maybe difficult since team members were actually selected based on their departmental and level of experience."* In addition, all the three interviewees were in agreement that the flexibility of the team roles could only be undertaken if the task required a generalist knowledge and skills set. For example, these tasks can be taking the minutes of the meeting or coordinating with suppliers or vendors on some project requirements. The interviewees also believed that if team roles were not clearly defined at the onset this can be a source of problem since the members may find themselves in situations where they will be doing functions which were not in-sync with their skills and professional experiences.

Finally, another aspect which determined power distance was on the type of leaders and members manning the team. There was a common ground relative to the ideal team leader. One of the characteristics they looked for was someone who had the knowledge and technical skills necessary to realise the project. Hence, J3 suggested that if the project required the development of a new financial product then at the minimum the leader must be conversant with the basics of plain vanilla, structured and unstructured products. Another ideal characteristic of a project leader was someone who had the capacity to motivate the team members. J3 suggested that the team leader should be able to have the right coaching skills to step up the plate of members who may be lagging behind (*amae*). As J2 points out: *"Leader knows what he is doing and he has lots of experience on the matter and of course he encourage people the team member must contribute to the project and working well with other so that there is wa (harmony) in the group (sic)."* In a similar vein, the ideal team members should have the right technical skills and experience so that they can contribute towards the realisation of the project. The three interviewees also agreed that team members should be able to work harmoniously with the other members and they could easily blend well in a group set-up to produce harmonious (*wa*) working relationships.

B.1.3 Achievement or Ascription

The interviewees opined that being involved in a project was a step forward in their career progression since senior management gave them additional responsibilities on top of their normal duties. J2 mentioned that this was also part of the rotation system where potential high flyers were given the chance to be involved in a number of activities where they can hone their skills and at the same time work with the more senior members of the organisation. On the other hand, being chosen as a leader was a big achievement since this was perceived to be a vote of confidence by the management relative to the member's loyalty to the organisation. In fact, senior management placed heavy importance to the length of service that one had accumulated before one can be appointed as the project leader which J3 illustrated as follows: *"For example the assigned leader is the one who really has good experience gained from a long time and as such is seen to be very capable of doing the work."*

Another area of ascription in Japanese project teams was through the attainment of professional titles. Given the interdepartmental nature of the project teams, it was important that the members obtained professional qualifications. Although staffs generally started their careers from a generalist level, there was a high expectation that they had to obtain the required departmental professional qualification where they were assigned on a semi-permanent basis *(they can still be rotated to another department as a management prerogative)*. For example, the team member from the accounting department had a certified accountancy qualification, the compliance member had the legal certification from the Japanese justice system and the marketing representative had passed the trader's examination before they can sell and trade foreign currencies and money market instruments. The interviewees agreed that having these professional qualifications gave them more credence in the project teams and to the clients that they deal on a face-to-face basis.

The issue on achievement ascription was also underpinned by the interviewees in relation to their educational background. J1 illustrated that there were perceived preferences given to graduates from Tokyo University, Kyoto University, Waseda University, Keio University and Sophia University. In fact, J1 pointed that there were perceptions that one's future achievement can be traced to their educational upbringing and J3 puts this succinctly: *"there have been hearsays that certain organisations prefer to hire the graduates from a particular university especially if the hiring managers come from the same school. In fact, if they learn that the applicant is from a particular university against a lesser known university then the graduate of the highly regarded university is already on an advantageous position mainly because of the perception that they are better trained."* However, J1 was quick to point that this did not mean that members who completed their educational degree from other universities were not welcomed. He stated that there were times that he had better working relationship with the graduates of the International Christian University, which was a relatively smaller university compared to the more famous universities stated earlier.

B.1.4 Attitude to the Environment

There had been heavy emphasis on building harmonious working relationship. However, the interviewees demonstrated that conflicts happened and were attributed to members who actually did not do their assigned task, they were extremely pushy with their ideas and they did not blend well with the work ethic of the team. In fact, conflicts were generally regarded as part and parcel of team work and hence, compromises were strongly encouraged. Basically, the interviewees frowned on conflicts and as such a number of activities were specifically undertaken to make the team more cohesive. These included formal team building activities which the organisation arranged such as out of town activities and informal activities which the members themselves set up such karaoke and "*onsen*" (steam baths) trips.

B.2 Communication

B.2.1 Formal or Informal

The Japanese financial project teams had a formal communication system and the interviewees agreed that there had been heavy emphasis on evidential matters brought about by the need to comply with internal and external regulatory requirements. They pointed to the Enron scandal and the subsequent promulgation of the US Sarbannes Oxley as primary reasons why the Japanese FSA became strict with the paper trail for major decisions and risks activities. J2 illustrated this as follows: *"Importance is given to evidential matter especially for decision making not only to comply with our internal systems especially internal auditors but also with the regulatory authorities. The crisis in 1997 and also recently has made the FSA really totemo kibishii (very strict with this situation)."*

As such, major communications were required to be in formal memos, emails and communiqués where a paper trail could trace how the decision was concluded. For example, J2 illustrated that the issuance of a new product required the approval of the majority of the senior directors. The Japanese FSA during their audit counted the number of attendees in the minutes of meeting and determined whether there was a proper quorum when the approval took place. Hence, if there was no paper trail to support the decision, the financial product could have been suspended from trading and the organisation could have found itself in a major dilemma *(okii mondai)* where regulatory suspension and payment of penalties could have been meted. As such, the interviewees stated that this can create an embarrassing situation not only for the project team but also to the senior management of the organisation.

J1 and J2 stated that they preferred the formal communication process especially for major decisions for reasons stated above. J2 also clarified that he did not want to earn the ire of the senior management if the regulatory authority found insufficient evidence that can be traced to his department since this will derail his professional growth. In so doing, the communication process from a team perspective was highly structured with clear policy guidelines relative to the formalisation of communication, the required storage media, retrieval procedures and length of period where documents will be stored (e.g. legal documents for 10 years, correspondence and emails stored for 3 years etc.) in the document warehouse. Moreover, the interviewees believed that the Japanese FSA was very strict (*kibishii)* and they were literally at their mercy. Hence, the interviewees perceived the highly structured form of communication as important and the clearer the communication guidelines, then the better for them because they did not have to make second guesses.

B.2.2 Information Sharing

The interviewees mentioned that transparent information sharing was needed for effective decision making and to comply with internal and external regulations. For example, J2 illustrated that the minutes of meetings were circulated even among the absentee members and they had to make formal notation to show that they were aware of what transpired in the meeting. Another way they disseminated information was through the "*ringi*" system where the prescribed memo was routed to every decision maker and everyone was expected to give their judgement why they agree or not to the undertaking until a unified decision was reached. This openness in information sharing among the team members was also corroborated by J3 whilst he mentioned that requirement of the Japanese FSA as follows: *"We circulate a lot of memo regarding decision so that everyone in the group is in the loop. This is a requirement of our organisation of course the regulators that everyone should be doing this so that risks are mitigated. Ours is a highly regulated so we have to comply with this."*

More than complying with the requirements of the internal and external regulators, the interviewees pointed to the importance of having a free flow of information so that members can freely share their opinions and suggestions that might be useful in decision making. Although each team member brought extensive work experience there was still an expectation that the team leader will still provide the necessary team coaching. This was illustrated by the example provided by J3: *"For example, a member actually do not have previous experience in treasury products but he has actually gained knowledge on them when he handled their recording and risk controlling from an accounting perspective so there is an expectation that the treasury marketing person will help him further to understand the financial product."* Hence, they believed that team coaching was relatively normal requirement since this was part of the indulgent dependence (*amae*) expectation emanating from such context. Given the formal and structured communication process, the role of informal sharing was also underpinned by the interviewees. These informal activities allowed for faster sharing of information which helped the members learn more about project demands and problems.

B.2.3 Modes of Communication – Media Richness

There was a strong preference towards formal communication where the process of documentation can be established. Even verbal communication was highly regulated. For example, where telephone communication was concerned especially on matters pertaining to trade confirmation, the actual telephone conversations were recorded and then subsequently checked by the Risk Management Department on a regular basis. This was done to reduce errors especially in the order details for foreign currency forward and spot transactions were erroneous recording can lead to huge financial losses. The interviewees pointed that their organisation was always implementing "*kaizen*" procedures aimed at reducing errors in the most efficient and effective manner. However, since this was rather tedious and expensive (especially for the conversation checking), this was limited to trading activities and were not used extensively in project teams.

Relative to the highly structured communication process, the interviewees viewed formal communication as necessary in effective team functioning since failure to do so can result to penalties and sanctions. However, J3 mentioned that being too formal in the communication process was too restrictive. He pointed to an interesting situation where the informal communication process was applied first and when a decision was reached a final memo was circulated and signed by the concerned parties to comply with the internal and regulatory requirements.

B.2.4. Relational

In terms of the relational aspect of communication, the team members considered two aspects that underpinned the process such as (a) teacher-student (*sempai kohai*) and (b) colleague or friend (*tomodachi*). In relation to the *sempai kohai* type of communication, the interviewees pointed to the use of the highly respectful language (*go*) when talking to the leader. This form of communication was known as "*keigo*" (the most polite form of the Japanese language) which was only used to show respect to someone who held senior positions. The interviewees stated that failure to use this type of communication was deemed disrespectful and conduct unbecoming of subordinates. On the other hand, the "*tomodachi*" type of communication was highly informal and had very flexible structure compared to the "*keigo*" which was extensively used for colleague to colleague communication. In was also pointed by the interviewees that the hierarchical nature of team relationship can be seen when leaders addressed their subordinates as "*kun*" or "*chan*" (terms of endearment for a little boy or little girl, respectively) instead of the formal "*san*" (mister or miss) whilst the subordinates had to address the leader in "*san*" at all times. In so doing, the highly structured form of communication was not only governed by the internal and external regulations but also by the specific language requirement of the society to show respect (*sonkei suru*) to the project leader. J3 further illustrated this as follows: *"In terms of the sempai kohai relationship, yes since respect is really given consideration to the project leaders so communication process is affected by this."*

B.2.5. Appraisal System

The interviewees agreed on the importance of a good communication appraisal system. This was actually done through the preparation of frequent report memos to apprise not only the team members but also the other project stakeholders. From J1's perspective the continuous improvement system (*kaizen*) pertained to the regular feedback mechanisms that have been implemented in the communication system. The regular issuances of memos, minutes or meetings and emails and whether enough information have been circulated for decision making which allowed for the identification of problems as they occurred. For example, when there were problems in producing evidentiary matters, then the communication policy was established. On the other hand, J2 stated that the organisational communication policies were actually applicable to a project team set-up. He illustrated an example *"whereas before there were problems in deletion of important emails which actually resulted to problems with the regulatory authorities and sanctions and the lessons learned from this resulted to the implementation of more clearly established guidelines for communication which actually cover organisational and even project teams"*

C. Philippine Project Teams

C.1 Culture

C.1.1 Individual or Collective

The interviewees agreed that having the same set of interests, professional affiliations and demographics such as regional affinities contributed to the member's preference to work with someone who shared them. For example, P3 illustrated that in developing a budgeting software there were some comments made by the computer programmers that the project representative gave unclear instructions thinking that software development was as easy as posting the account balances to a t-account. On the other hand, P1 illustrated that there had been instances when members sided with the views or decisions of a fellow alumnus. The interviewee pointed to the De La Salle University versus Ateneo de Manila University competition where there was an attempt to outdo each other relative to solving an organisational dilemma. In addition, it was also revealed, that a member's ethnic affiliations can also influence the team members' perception towards each other. For example, when the operating and capital budgets were slashed and the main proponent happened to be an Ilocano (*stereotypically known in the Philippines as miser*), some members claimed that the budget was slashed because of the Ilocano's spendthrift (*kuripot*) ways. However, the interviewees reiterated that the preference to work with someone having the same background was just secondary since what were crucial to team functioning were the actual contributions that members could provide and not on their previous or existing group affiliations.

On the other hand, the group decision making was relatively consensual in nature. There was a recognition that the essence of team formation was to be able to get the best solution from a number of perspectives which the members can provide. P1 and P2 stated that arriving at a consensual decision was highly complex. Group decision making was expected to be convivial but heated debates occurred which led to a number of disagreements that impacted the group decision making. This was illustrated by P1 as follows: *Everyone can contribute in solving problems and it is just normal in any team endeavours that disagreements occur so* *the leader is tasked to weigh the solutions and come up with an acceptable answer that will satisfy everyone."* Moreover, there was also the need for "*pakikisama*" (belongingness achieved through cooperation and building harmonious working relationship). The interviewees highlighted the importance of team members to be able to work well in a team set-up

In terms of a reward system, the interviewees agreed that the appreciation of the group's effort should be collective rather than focusing on the effort of the team leader or members. P3 opined that the group recognition mitigated jealousy (*tampuhan and selosan*) from occurring due to the perceived unfairness of management in providing a just and equitable reward recognition system. Moreover, the interviewees wanted to mitigate grapevine intrigues and gossips (*tsismisan*) especially on issues that a member was favoured by management hence, the difference in monetary incentive received. Although P2 agreed that group reward recognition was important as a non-pecuniary mechanism, the monetary component can still be based on what senior management deemed fair relative to the contribution of a member. Since this incentive system was confidential in nature it was still perceived positively by the interviewees since no one knew what the others received which effectively addressed the "*tampuhan* and *selosan*" mentioned above. There was also an agreement that since the organisation was relatively small in size, the chance of working with the other team members in future projects was relatively high. Hence, the interviewees point to the need for relational harmony (*kapayapaan*) and avoid unnecessary guffaws (*labanan*) due to the perception that the group reward system was flawed and bias at the onset. In fact P3 succinctly illustrated this as follows, *"Having group reward recognition is much more beneficial to the organisation in the long term since it mitigates the usual problem of staff jealousy where somebody was recognised for the efforts undertaken by another member."*

C.1.2 Power Distance

The members were chosen from the different departments that were affected by the project. Relative to the selection of the project leaders, the selection criteria were based on different parameters. For example, they were chosen if the project emanated from their departments and there was an expectation that they will be the main coordinator of the project. On the other hand, if the project was more generalist in nature, members were given the chance to choose from among themselves who will lead the project. In another case, some members actually took turns in becoming project leader regardless of their departmental positions since future projects may be comprised of the same set of individuals who had previously worked before. As such, the selection of the leader remained flexible given the anticipation that one may become the project leader in the next project. Hence, there was an expectation that the other members should strive to contribute their best towards the realisation of the project. P2 stated this using a more religious fervour as follows: *"there is really an expectation that one should contribute to the best of his abilities because of the possibilities of becoming the team leader in the next project and as such, no one wants to be in a situation where the other members are not doing their jobs. Hence, do not do unto others what you don't want others do unto you" (* more commonly known in the Christian parlance as golden rule).

Another issue in power distance was the team's relational aspect. There was an agreement among the interviewees that the teams that they were involved with had professional and convivial relationships. The smallness of the organisation was partly attributed to this set-up since the more that they were exposed to the other members in previous projects the better they knew the behaviours and preferences of the other members (*kiliti at pakikisalamuha*) which led to behaviour modification. The interviewees demonstrated this through the Filipino terminology called "*barkada*" which was a buddy group whose relationship transcended professional relationship. As such, the interviewees mentioned that in between the serious side of the projects, they can actually talk about their favourite PBA (*Philippine Basketball Association*) player or the recent winning exploits of Manny Pacquiao (*Filipino boxer who had won 7 different world championships in different weight categories and winning US$ 15 million average per bout*) which lightened the atmosphere especially in heated arguments and conflicts.

P3 stated that these were normal occurrence in teams since everyone was given the right to speak their minds whether towards the project leaders or members. Hence, the differences in opinions sometimes became a relationship irritant. For example, P1 illustrated that the marketing member pushed for a more flexible financial product such as *swaptions (combination of swaps and options)* but the compliance representative became the main antagonist since he thought that there were many ambiguous provisions in the local regulations that did not favour the issuance of such product. In so doing, the debate centred on how to maximise returns, going around the law which the compliance person did not subscribed or to drop the product proposal which the marketing person vehemently objected.

Team openness was key characteristics of the project teams since each member was expected to contribute to the realisation of the project. However, this team openness as pointed by P3 was also context dependent which implied that as long as the suggestions or recommendations were reasonable and valid then members were actually open to such undertaking. In fact, there had been instances where a decision was already reached by the leader and imposed to the project team whilst the members actually challenged this decision because of the perceived weaknesses (*butas*) to the proposed solution. In so doing, the openness of the leader to new views were directly challenged which at times were accepted through compromises and negotiations but there were also instances where such suggestions had been bypassed directly. However, this was still taken positively because the decisions made by the most senior person can be challenged without fear of disrespecting his position and opinion. P1 stated this in a Filipino proverb that was made famous by a Tagalog action genre movie in the 90's *"trabaho lang to pre walang personalan*" or my friend this is just a job please do not take it too personally.

Another issue on power distance was flexibility in team roles. The interviewees were in agreement that it was difficult to be flexible in specialist project since team members were specifically chosen to contribute based on their technical skills and experience. P2 mentioned that members of the finance and strategic planning were familiar with the accounting and budget cycle, the process flow of value streams and the manner by which transactions were recorded. However, these members were not familiar with systems development whilst the IT member had an in-depth understanding on the matter. As such, when a project on the improvement of the accounting department's system's capabilities was rolled out, the key inputs from each of the members were coalesced to develop an IT support infrastructure that was in tune with the needs of organisation. Hence, switching team roles from this perspective cannot be undertaken. On the other hand, when generalist projects were concerned such as Christmas party or company summer outing, the interviewees opined that team roles can become flexible since the members can actually take turns in writing the minutes of the meeting, coordinating with the food suppliers, or talking to senior management relative to the financial budgets and other project requirements.

The ideal team leader for the interviewees was someone who had the right balance of technical and project skills and sense of urgency to move the project forward and interpersonal skills such as motivating and coaching. In fact, the interviewees pointed to the importance of having leaders with the right attitude towards "*pakikisalamuha*" (dealing with another person depending on the context of the situation) so that they can easily adopt and adjust to the project circumstances. They mentioned that having a difficult and hard to reach leader may stall the harmonious relationship of the project team. On the other hand, ideal members were viewed as someone who also had the "pakikisalamuha" so that they will not push forward their ideas to the extreme, they can work well with others and they can maintain the harmonious working relationship with the other team members. As P1 illustrated *"An ideal leader and member should not only be conversant with the technical stuff of the project but they have the emotional maturity and adaptability to work with anyone in the group."*

C.1.3 Achievement or Ascription

The three interviewees believed that taking part in project teams was an indirect recognition of the member's ability to multitask whilst providing the opportunity to work with other high flyers. Aside from their competence, members were strategically chosen in accordance with the needs of the project. For example, the launch of a new financial project required members to come from the compliance, accounting, marketing, trust and operation departments. The interviewees also pointed that the chosen members should know the ins and outs of their departments (*paikotikot*) so that they can address project problems accordingly. The interviewees then pointed that most of the members were already occupying managerial positions and taking part in the project team expanded their leadership reach which they considered as organisational recognition. As P2 points out: *"members are generally chosen from the affected departments and they are chosen based on their competence, depth of experience and the assumption that they can actually foresee problems as they crop up in the project and therefore expand their managerial reach."*

The extensive use of professional titles was highly evident in the organisation especially in a team set-up. According to the interviewees, there had been a pervading belief that that when one had the necessary professional qualification (CPA certificates, lawyers and engineers etc), they were given preference in the team set-up. For example, for issues on regulatory compliance there was a high degree of credence accorded to the opinion of the lawyer (someone who passed the bar exam administered by the Philippine Supreme Court) compared to someone who did not have the legal jurisprudence to do so. In addition, the opinion of the certified accountant was given more credibility especially on issues dealing with the recording of the transaction. Such preferential treatment was underpinned by P2 in the project environment as follows: *"there seems to be a bias toward members who had professional qualifications since they are considered experts in their field."* In fact, one of the human resource policies was to require staff to obtain their certifications within a certain period. An interesting observation was noted by the interviewees wherein instead of being called by their first names, some members were called attorney, CPA or engineer depending on their profession in their respective project teams.

Similar to professional qualifications, there had been emphasis in recruiting graduates from universities that were perceived to produce high quality graduates. They pointed to four universities that they extensively hired historically such as the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University, Ateneo De Manila and University of Santo Tomas. Hence, in a project set-up there were cliques formed especially from members who came from the same educational institutions. However, the interviewees pointed that the most important aspect in team functioning was the ability of the member to produce result. In fact, P1 pointed that he would not cuddle a fellow alumnus who happened to be the weakest link in the project team. The interviewees also pointed that the organisation's hiring policy had become more open to other universities which ensured a more diverse work environment. In fact, P2 mentioned that some of the graduates of the other educational institutions were "diamonds in rough" and given the proper training they were even more competitive.

C.1.4 Attitude to Environment

The ability of the members to compromise towards an important decision was important in maintaining peace and harmony (*kapayapaan*) in the project team. The interviewees reiterated that as long as the other members' position was well explained whilst the arguments were valid then compromise could be undertaken. Whenever there were conflicts in the team set-up, the interviewees agreed that they did not want them since they work in a closely knit organisation and it was better to maintain harmonious working relationship. One of the identified sources of conflicts was the perception that members were difficult to deal with since they pushed their ideas to the extreme and did not listen to the opinions of the others. Another reason that conflict occurred was the inability of the team members to complete their assigned tasks. In order to avoid conflicts, they had team building activities such as a half-day group activity facilitated by the Human Resource Department. However, the more informal activities such as going to a restaurant, having karaoke during Friday night or just going to a cafeteria was viewed as helpful in fostering team bonding as P2 demonstrated: *"the many informal activities that we do help in making the team more cohesive. We have some basic activities such as going to a nearby cafe called Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf which are a good break from the formal nature of the project teams."*

C.2 Communication

C.2.1 Formal or Informal

The project team's communication process was anchored on a highly formalised system. The interviewees pointed to the strict requirements of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP-Central Bank of the Philippines) regarding the documentation of major decisions especially those that impact the risk capacity of the organisation. The interviewees pointed to the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and the Enron Scandal in the US as the trigger events when the BSP passed more stringent policies on communication which required paper trails for major business activities. On the other hand, the interviewees were quick to point that informal communication was also widely used especially for activities that did not require major decisions and alternatively did not expose the organisation to any major business and operational risks.

In fact, the entity's communication procedure had been established in the overall organisational policy which was approved by the board of directors. The formal codification of the communication process set the rules on the documentation of important decisions, legal documents which included contracts and terms of reference, and email trails for major and minor activities, among others. The policy also set the retrieval, warehousing and the length of period that communication documents will be stored before they can be purged. For example, credit contracts will be kept for 10 years after the maturity of the contracts; printed email trails for major decision can be scrapped 4 years after project closure, whilst the warehousing of these documents will be managed by the general department.

The interviewees believed that having a clear guideline on team communication was very important so that everyone knew what was expected of them. The interviewees mentioned that since their activities were not only regulated by internal procedures but also by the requirements of the regulatory bodies, it was better to know the expected means of communication. However, the interviewees reiterated that team members should also be flexible enough to know which situation required the proper documentation or the application of informal communication process especially in situations that required quick and instantaneous decisions.

C.2.2 Information Sharing

The interviewees were in agreement that having the proper information was a major requisite in keeping the team properly informed. Another important aspect of information sharing through the proper communication channel was to mitigate speculations and rumours (*tsismis)* that may come from grapevine and unverified sources. For example, the developments of the project were regularly emailed to members whilst the absent members were asked to make notation in the minutes of meetings so that they will be in the loop on what had transpired.

On the other hand, there was no formal team coaching as members were expected to bring to the projects their own skills and technical knowledge gained from their respective experiences. However, the interviewees mentioned that all home grown staff who became officers of the organisation underwent the management development program (MDP). This was an intensive 9 month training programme for senior staff where they were rotated in different departments and complemented by the formal training from internal and external sources. As such, if the trainees were assigned in a local branch, they were tasked to do teller functions and face to face customer marketing. The interviewees then signified that this gave them an overview of what to do in the project and they can always ask their leaders or colleagues for clarifications especially when the need arose.

On the other hand, the informal sharing of information was done over a cup of coffee during the "meryenda" (snack break) in the afternoon and dinners or karaoke events where the team members can actually be more at ease with the surrounding and discuss the project more informally. This is illustrated by P3 as follows: *"it is very important to share information in a very informal setting as it allows for more creativity to come about. With the atmosphere more relax and informal the tension which usually occurs in the team environment is reduced."*

C.2.3 Modes of Communication –Media Richness

P1, P3 and P4 underpinned their preference for face to face and direct verbal communication as compared to written (especially formal memos) communication since they viewed the former as more proactive to the needs of the project. However, P2 stated that the mode of communication should be context dependent. He stated that since the project teams were formed in a highly regulated environment, they did not have the option to go for the less formal communication as far as documentation of major decisions and risk issues were concerned.

C. 2.4 Relational

The interviewees stated that they were encouraged to speak their minds. However, the openness of senior heads to talk to anyone from the team members had some limitations. For example, they illustrated that they cannot go to the senior heads regularly especially on matters that can actually be easily resolved by the members themselves. According to the interviewees, this was basically the essence of a seamless flow of information where it should not be stifled by hierarchical ranking. P2 argued that there was no one in the group that can solely claim ownership to innovative and creative solutions to problems. Hence, openness to the flow of information relative to suggestions and recommendations were highly preferred albeit, there were some situations where the team decision had been finalised and communicated to senior management which was subsequently reversed. However, based on the observations of the interviewees, the general openness of the communication process in the project team set up fostered a better environment for team functioning.

C.2.5 Appraisal System

According to the interviewees, the policy of the organisation requires that there should be continuous checking of project developments as embodied in the communication policy of the organisation. This continuous feedback mechanism required the regular need to provide reports to project stakeholders and also provide their feedbacks for improvement of the project. The interviewees were in agreement that although a feedback mechanism had been codified due to previous problems in the past some of the provisions were not directly applicable to a project set-up.

The succeeding section discusses the analysis of the empirical data using applicable theories and models that were drawn from the review of related literature. A comparative analysis was also undertaken for the Japanese and Philippine project teams.

CHAPTER V –Discussion and Analysis

A. Chapter Background

This chapter analyses the empirical data through the application of cultural and communication theories and models as well as studies undertaken on the subject. The analysis also compares and contrasts the similarities and differences of the Japanese and Philippine project teams. In areas where the findings of this research paper are similar to previous studies, the reasons are pointed out whilst if they are different the possible reasons are also explained.

B. Discussion and Analysis

B.1 Culture

B.1.1 Individual or Collective

B.1.1.1 Group affiliation

According to Hofstede (2001), individualistic societies placed importance on the role of the individual in the society whilst collective societies emphasised on the role of the group to maintain the well being of the individual. In terms of group affiliation, the findings of the research revealed that the Japanese project teams exhibited collectiveness as team member's underpinned their preference to work with someone whom they share certain commonalities whether these were through educational (*daigaku*), social clubs (*bu*) or regional (*furusato*) affiliations. This was further illustrated in the Philippine project teams where the importance of sharing commonalities such as those mentioned above helped in the initial built-up of relationship that were deemed essential for effective team functioning.

In the studies by Hsu (1971) and Ho (1979) they noted that eastern societies tended to be collective where a person's meaningful existence was dependent on the need to belong to a group. These studies further argued that collective societies did not negate an individual's intrinsic characteristic but they highlighted the need to maintain a group in order to keep the well being of the individual. In addition, Hofstede (2001) added an additional cultural dimension relative to the noted difference between Western and Eastern cultures where filial affinity was more pronounced in the latter. The results of this study confirmed the findings of the above authors. For example, the Japanese project teams emphasised the need to belong to social clubs (*bu*) and cliques (*tomodachi*) as a common ground in keeping the well being of members whilst the Philippine project teams underscored that having the same set of skills and expertise gained through a similar professional affiliation and the need to belong to the same clique (*barkada*) were one of the initial bases for relationship built-up.

However, it had been observed that in both project teams that group affiliation was just secondary since what was more important was the contribution of the members to the project. This research paper further noted that from an external perspective the project teams exhibited collective behaviours especially on their perceived preference towards a group attachment albeit, they still maintained their individualistic stance especially on crucial issues such as failure of the other member to contribute to the realisation of the project objectives. This was pointed by one of the interviewees that he will not cuddle a fellow alumnus if he happened to fail in his team duties. This situation was noted by Kawasaki (1969) and he underpinned that individuals were drawn through the collective mindset due to the expectation that they have to fit in to the societal expectations due to the tyranny of the former. However, the individuals still maintained their stance on certain issues and were termed in this context as privatised individuals.

B.1.1.2 Group Decision Making

Another issue which demarcated an individualistic and collective societies was through their decision making process. According to Hofstede (2001) collective society placed heavy emphasis on the belief that group decisions were preferred as against an individualistic society's bias towards allowing the individuals to decide on what they deemed was most suitable in a particular context. Martinson and Davison (2007) corroborated Hofstede (2001) and suggested that the differences in the decision making process especially for East Asians can be attributed to the high degree of collectivism, hierarchical structure and the need to derive meaning through context. In contrast to this were the less structurally fixated western societies which allowed for the development of more individualistic and egalitarian decision making as pointed by Schwartz (1994).

It was observed that Japanese project teams placed heavy emphasis on collective decision since everyone was considered important in the group (*minna wa totemo taisetsu deshita*). This was clearly reflected in the "*ringi*" system where the group had to come up with a unified decision whilst dissenting opinions had to be thoroughly addressed so that everyone was in agreement with the final decision. On the other hand, the Philippine project teams also exhibited the same attributes where there was emphasis on arriving at a collective decision. In fact, both case studies showed that the collective decision making was due to the need to conform to the group (*Japanese - guroppo seishin and Philippines -pakikisama)* and maintain harmony (*Japanese - wa and Philippines - kapayapaan*). This was also in line with the findings of Hofstede and House *et al* (2004) which underpinned that where collectivist societies were concerned the need to maintain peace and order within the group was a primary objective. This was further pointed by Holtgraves (1997) that collective societies tended to allow the individual to save face and maintain harmony and free the affected member from a potentially embarrassing situation. This was clearly demonstrated in the

Japanese project teams where one of the interviewees mentioned that it was better to conform to the group because "*the nail that sticks out gets hammered down*."

B.1.1.3 Group Reward Recognition

The collective nature of the Japanese and the Philippine financial project teams was further underpinned by their preference towards a group reward system in view of the need to maintain harmony (*Japanese - wa and Philippines - kapayapaan*) in the project team. In fact, Hofstede (1981) noted that collective society preferred having a collective allocation of rewards since this was viewed as non-divisive and less obtrusive to relationships. In addition, they preferred the group reward system since they wanted to mitigate jealousy and intrigues (*Philippines - intriga and tsismisan*) which can subsequently harm the member's future working relationships.

A notable observation was the idea floated by P2 that although there was a collective group reward system, the monetary reward was still premised on management prerogative to grant it under strict confidentiality; hence in spite of the individualistic stance of the reward system, it was still perceived positively since no one knew what the others received mitigating potential conflicts which can have adverse effects on team functioning. This reward system actually reflected the findings of Kawasaki (1969) that the individual was at the mercy of the collective tyranny; hence even the amount of rewards received was affected by how the group viewed the individual.

B.1.2 Power Distance

B.1.2.1 Team Structure and Composition

Hofstede's (2001) power distance analysed how societies viewed the inequality among individuals brought about by wealth, power and prestige. In an organisational context, the author looked into power distance as follows: *"the power distance between a boss B and a subordinate S in a hierarchy is the difference between the extent to which B can determine the behaviour of S and the extent to which can determine the behaviour of B (p. 99).* In the study of Schwartz (1994), he termed this concept as *hierarchy* where the demarcation of individuals came from the inequitable distribution of power, influence and resources. In relation to this research paper, the degree of power distance among the Japanese project teams showed a wide chasm between the leader and the subordinates. This was shown by the manner by which the leader was chosen by management where seniority in position was the primary consideration. Moreover, the project members were likewise chosen in a similar manner by a heavily centralised decision making that emanated from the entity's top management. In fact, these observations demonstrated Hofstede's and Schwartz high degree of power distance which showed a bias towards a centric form of decision making and concentration of authority whilst the hierarchy reflected the existential inequality of the higher and lower echelons of management.

On the other hand, the Philippine project team exhibited a stark contrast from the Japanese project teams primarily in the flexibility of choosing their project leaders where selection was not anchored on the length of service in the entity but it depended on the project context. Hence, this allowed even junior members to be selected as the project leaders if the situation called for it. In so doing, the degree of power distance between the leader and the member was much less in view of the more flexible team environment where the position itself was not viewed as hindrance to forming professional and convivial relationships. In so doing, this corroborated the study of Chong *et al* (2003) that when a higher responsibility was given within the sphere of limited supervision, the power index becomes less since the staffs were given the flexibility to decide and execute the project. As such, the greater reliance to higher power then the higher the power distance as noted in the Japanese project teams due to the emphasis on seniority as basis for gaining foothold to leadership positions.

B.1.2.2 Team Relationship

According to Hofstede (2001) and Trompenaars and Turner (1997), societies with high power distance had a structured form of relationship bounded by hierarchical position. In relation to organisational power distance, Meyer and Rowan (1977) pointed that the practices, values and social beliefs in the societies were carried forward to the organisation. In so doing, Cohen (1976) stated that the social arrangement was manifested by the power structure of the entity. These observations on organisational relationship were noted in Japanese project teams where relationship was based on the hierarchical demarcations between leaders and subordinates. In fact, J3 pointed to one of his project experiences where the leader was directly called as teacher (*sensei*) and therefore should be accorded with respect and professionalism (*sonkei suru*). In so doing, calling the leader on a first name basis was rude and inappropriate. This was further observed in the leader-subordinate or teacher student relationship known as *sempai kohai* where the hierarchical divide required a formally bounded relationship underpinned by respect and professionalism. In so doing, this led to the indulgent dependency (*amae*) relationship where the leader was expected to provide support and guidance to the subordinates.

Whilst the Philippine project teams showed considerable hierarchical relationship centred on professionalism and conviviality, the strict leader subordinate relationship was less evident since the member's focus was to modify ones behaviour (*pakikisalamuha*) to fit to a particular context regardless of the position that one held in the project team. In fact, it has been noted that the Philippine project teams exhibited a more flexible approach to relationship which was not bounded by hierarchical demarcation. Further analysis to this situation pointed to the former ownership of the organisation where the institutionalised policies and procedures came from the head office domiciled in the northern hemisphere, hence this may have influenced the Philippine project teams' western orientation as compared to the Japanese project teams stringent eastern orientation.

In relation to the member-to-member relationship, Meyer and Rowan (1977) underpinned the carryover of societal beliefs to an organisation. This was clearly demonstrated between the Japanese "*tomodachi*" and the Philippine's "*barkada*" practices where there was a need to transcend the professional relationship in order to nurture the welcoming relationship required for team bonding. Hofstede (2001) and Trompenaars and Turner (2004) noted this in their studies that Eastern and Southeast Asian societies placed importance in building convivial and familial relationship even in a business set-up.

B.1.2.3 Team Openness

Power distance can also be viewed from the openness of the organisation which can be constrained by the existing hierarchical divide in the organisation. Hofstede (2001) illustrated that low power distance index among organisation had a pragmatic superior-subordinate relationship and openness to new ideas and innovation were highly encouraged whilst a high PDI organisation focused on a polarised and emotional laden superior-subordinate demarcation. In relation to team openness, the Japanese and Philippine project teams demonstrated general openness to new ideas and opinions especially for decision making.

In fact, the Japanese project teams pointed to the divergent skills of the members (*betsu-betsu*) which underscored the importance of putting all ideas into an official document and then selecting the best one to implement. This was also succinctly demonstrated in the "*ringi*" system where everyone's opinion was gathered to answer problematic situations. On the other hand, the Philippine project teams also demonstrated general openness not only in accepting members from different departments but also to new ideas and suggestions. However, it was noted that in both Japanese and Philippine project teams, this openness was actually context dependent which showed that that there was actual instance where it was futile to provide suggestions and recommendations since a course of action had already been decided by top management for implementation. Although this general openness is in contrast to the findings of Hofstede (2001) that Japan and the Philippines are high power distance society, hence, openness is not one of their major virtues, the project context especially in a financial environment required significant openness on information and knowledge from the members (e.g. development of new financial products).

B.1.2.4 Team Role Flexibility

The flexibility of roles in the organisation can also determine power distance. According to Hofstede (2001) a low power distance index was characterised by the members having the chance to escape from the ambiguous roles and task overloads whilst a high power distance leaned towards having focused roles and tasks. On the other hand, it was illustrated by House *et al* (2004) that the degree of power distance was implicit in nature and to reduce this required flexibility in roles to allow for competence building. In both the Japanese and Philippine project teams, there was a clear consensus that team roles particularly for specialist projects were deemed inflexible hence; a high power distance was noted since they can't change roles (e.g. accountant doing the accounting work etc). This basically confirmed the observation by House *et al* (2004) that because of the implicit nature of roles in a given context there was a clear expectation that they can only function within the bounds of this constraint. Hence, empowering team members to function outside of their skills set may not be feasible whilst the switching of roles were favoured in more generalist functions. This observation was also demonstrated in Japanese and Philippine project teams that in a more generalist projects, team members can switch roles without regard to their skills set and experience (e.g. the computer programmer taking the minutes of the project meeting) hence, allowing for greater flexibility which influenced how teams realise the project goals.

B.1.2.5 Ideal Team Leader and Member

Hofstede (2001) pointed that low power distance organisations perceived their ideal boss to be a resourceful democrat, pragmatic and relied on others for support. The managers also placed importance on personal know-how and that of the experiences of the subordinates. On the other hand, in a high power index organisations, the ideal boss was described as someone who was a "well meaning autocrat" (p.107) and a compassionate decision maker. Manager in such context also saw formal rules as important in achieving order and semblance to the organisation.

Japanese project teams emphasised their ideal leader as someone who was effective in coaching especially within the realm of a "*sempai-kohai*" (teacher subordinate) relationship. Also, the study showed the relative dependence of the member to the leader for knowledge transfer as underscored by "*amae*" or indulgent dependence. This fitted the high power index description of Hofstede where the manager was expected not only to be a well meaning autocrat but also to be figuratively a good father providing for the upkeep of the family. This was also in accordance with the findings of Alarid and Wang (1997) that Japanese leaders were expected to care for the self development of their members whilst realising the objectives of the organisation. On the other hand, the ideal leader for the Philippine project teams was encapsulated by the term "*pakikisalamuha*" where there was emphasis that an ideal leader should be democratic; practical orientated, and was able to understand the needs of the members. This ideal leader concept was under a low power index which was a big contrast to the ideal leader of the Japanese project team.

B.1.3 Achievement or Ascription

B.1.3.1 Indirect and Direct Recognition

According to Trompenaars and Turner (1997), societies bestow the status to their members through achievement or ascription. Achievement was due to the actual accomplishments of the member whilst ascription was bestowed because of age, gender, social connections, education and profession. According to House *et al* (2004) the performance orientation of society was dependent on how the members weaved through its success criterion. In some societies, there were pervading beliefs that gaining power led to success whilst other societies focused on the need to stand on one's own in order to gain achievement. In fact, the study of Schwartz (1994) pointed this as *intellectual harmony* where individuals gained recognition through their own hard work and volition.

In regard to this research paper, it had been observed that that taking part in projects was perceived as an indirect form of recognition due to the expansion of leadership reach and improvement in skills and competence. Also, taking part in project teams was viewed as having gained the trust of senior management where potential high flyers can further hone their skills and relationship across the organisation. However, it was also clear that the status of members was affected by the level of ascription by the organisation. Trompenaars and Turner (1997) illustrated that ascription can be based on age, social connection and profession. This observation was confirmed the study of Alarid and Wang (1997) where they noted the high level of formality and respect given to leaders due to their status as one of the more senior members in the organisation. In another aspect, project teams in both Japan and the Philippines shared the bestowment of status through ascription in view of the member's social connections due to university (*daigaku*), social clubs (*bu*), regional (*furusato*) and professional affiliations.

B.1.3.2 Professional Title and Education

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, there had been emphasis on professional titles and qualification on how the organisation or the project team initially perceived the members. For example, the members in the Japanese and Philippine teams were expected to have the departmental professional qualification (*e.g. accounting department and the member should have a certified public accountancy certification).* The findings of the research further revealed that the members put premium on these certifications in view of the perception that having them was a proof of one's competence and technical ability. In fact, this research paper also observed that a high degree of credence was given to the opinion of a certified accountant and lawyers as compared to someone who did not have these qualifications. Another issue on this aspect was on how the project teams viewed their members in relation to their educational affiliation. Among the Japanese project teams, there were perceived preferential treatments bestowed to graduates of Tokyo University, Kyoto University, Waseda University, Keio University and Sophia University, among others, whilst the same observation had been noted in the Philippine project teams were members who graduated from the University of the Philippines, De la Salle University, Ateneo de Manila University and University of Santo Tomas were given preferential status.

The findings above can either be viewed from an achievement or ascription prism. Achievement because getting those professional titles and being accepted by those universities required hard work and a certain degree of intelligence. This is in line with the findings of Trompenaars and Turner (1997) and Schwartz (1994) that achievement orientation showed that a person was bestowed status because they achieved more in terms of gaining authority, skills and knowledge which the other members did not have. On the other hand, the ascription aspect was premised on the perception that society had placed importance on those professional titles and educational degrees due to the long and successful list of people who have had them. In so doing, Trompenaars and Turner (1997) illustrated that this societal bestowment did not mean it was irrational or without basis. They argued that although there were justifications to such beliefs there were no expectations to delve on it. In fact, ascription did not mean that societies prefer people who were older (e.g. seniority) or graduate of some well known universities but simply because as one got older the more experience the member had and the greater expectation of having more competence that can help the team function more effectively.

B.1.4 Attitude to the Environment

Trompenaars and Turner (1997) underscored the need to understand how individuals view their external environment. One perspective focused on how individuals can actually influence the environment by controlling some aspects of the environment whilst another viewpoint believed that that individuals were intrinsic part of nature and therefore they should go along with it. These perspectives created a two pronged vision on environment whether an individual is internally controlled or externally controlled. In relation to the findings of this study, it was noted that both the Japanese and Philippine project teams valued harmony (Japanese-*wa* and Philippine – *kapayapaan* and *pakikisalamuha*) in the project environment. There was a strong indication from the project teams that there was a need to achieve strong congruence among the members through compromises and negotiations. There was also the emphasis in controlling conflicts in order to maintain the harmonious working relationship in the team. In fact, Trompenaars and Turner (1997) stated that people should be given ample time and space where they can manage conflicts because these were distressing conditions. Also, Schwartz (1994) underpinned the issue on "*conservation*" where members in the society preferred the status quo in order to maintain harmony. Hence, the interviewees believed that conflicts should be avoided as much as possible.

In so doing, there is a strong belief among Japanese and Philippine project teams that environmental harmony should be considered so as not to create confusion and negate team functioning. In fact in the study of Oikawa and Tanner (1992) noted that the intrinsic nature of Japanese society especially in viewing society was to maintain *wa* (harmony) and *amae* (dependency) resulting from cooperation, sharing, trust and avoiding conflicts. Furthermore, the need for team harmony and the avoidance of intrigues and jealousy fitted the findings of Hofstede (2001) and House *et al* (2004) which indicated that in collectivist societies like Japan and the Philippines, the direct avoidance of conflict was a key virtue that must be nurtured. On the other hand, the study of Miyahara, Kim, Hunter and Horvath (1996) reinforced this claim by illustrating that collective society placed premium in group synchronization instead of focusing on idiosyncratic traits of the individuals.

B.2 Communication

B.2.1 Formal or Informal

The discussion in the previous sections showed that the underlying societal culture was also reflected in the culture of the organisation and that of the project teams. In fact, Japanese project teams were characterised by their hierarchical and structural nature where relationship, issues on power distance, achievement and ascription as well as views towards the environment were affected by the underlying culture which subsequently impact team functioning. On the other hand, whilst the Philippine project teams also showed similarities on the above issues, it was noted that there were certain degree of flexibility which allowed members not to be rigidly constrained by the hierarchical demarcation within the team.

Given the above contexts, the communication processes of these project teams were likewise affected by these issues. Hall and Hall (1990) demonstrated that communication is culture and as such societies that were considered high context had the needed information among themselves whilst a low context society underscored the need for more explicitly coded communication. Relative to the Japanese and Philippine project teams, it was noted that that their communication process was very formal mainly because of (a) strict regulatory requirements that were imposed by their respective regulatory agencies such as FSA and BSP which required evidences to be preserved since failure to do so will lead to penalties and business sanctions and (b) the cultural aspect of communication which highlight the need for respect and professionalism especially in a hierarchical set-up (e.g. Japan – use of *keigo* communication as a sign of respect).

Relative to project teams in Japan, the need for formal communication process had been viewed in a positive manner since this was in compliance to higher authority. In fact, Oikawa and Tanner (1992) noted that Japanese society mainly focused on maintaining “*wa*” (harmony) towards society, hence, complying with numerous laws and procedure were part and parcel of building a harmonious society in spite of the views by some of the interviewees that the Japanese FSA was very strict (*totemo kibishii*). On the other hand, another notable finding among Japanese project team was the strong need to maintain respect and professionalism (*sonkei suru*) as well as *amae* (dependence) and hence, the strong focus on formal communication. This was also in line with the findings of Hofstede and House *et al* (2004) where it was revealed that a high power distance society such as Japan placed heavy emphasis on a the formal communication system in view of its intrinsic hierarchical divide delineating the society from the one who wielded power and the one accepting the power. In fact, disturbing this harmony was deemed to negate team effectiveness.

On the other hand, the Philippine project teams also exhibited strong formal communication process because of the need to comply with regulatory requirements where the preservation of documentary evidences especially for activities that may endanger the going concern status of the entity due to risks and uncertainties. However, compared to the Japanese project teams where the hierarchical structure was very important, the findings revealed that it was also respected albeit, the team members were given more flexibility especially in their communication process such as leader to member or member to member without fear of disrespecting their position. Whilst this is contrast to the finding of Hofstede (2001) and House *et al* (2004) which mentioned that the Philippines had a high power distance which means that communication process should be strongly affected by societal or organisational hierarchy. It should be noted that the organisational context for this research paper was quite different since it was a direct subsidiary of a northern hemisphere bank before it was sold to the local stockholders. As such, the established policies and procedures to date, still followed a western orientation which might have influenced its communication practices.

B.2.2 Information Sharing

Hofstede (1981) noted that organisational success in a collective organisation was anchored on transparent information sharing, openly committing oneself towards alliance with strategic partners whilst individualistic societies attributed success by withholding information and not committing oneself to anyone. As such, House and Turner (2004) noted that collective societies tended to have more indirect manner of communication as compared to the direct communication in individualistic societies. However, Trompenaars and Turner (1997) noted that high context societies as defined by Hall and Hall (1990) that before effective communication can materialise the flow of information should be robust.

Relative to the above, it can be gleaned that information sharing in Japanese and Philippine project teams were very important primarily because of two reasons: (a) for compliance with internal and external regulatory requirements and (b) as part of the need to fill in information for everyone (as noted by Trompenaars and Turner, 1997) so that members will be in the loop relative to the developments and problems faced by the project which are all essential to team functioning. The Japanese project team exhibited transparent flow of information. For example the minutes of meetings were circulated even to absent members and they were made to make notation in the memo to show that they were aware of what transpired and the succeeding steps that members were expected to do. This was also shown by the "*ringi*" decision system where all the relevant information was presented in a formal memo where members had to decide on the matter. Moreover, the hierarchical structure of Japanese project teams which relied on "*sempai-kohai*" (teacher-subordinate) relationship underpinned the importance of information transfer from the leader to the member. This was also in line with indulgent dependency (*amae*) noted by the study of Oikawa and Tanner (1992) which underpinned that lower ranking person will highly depend on the higher ranking person for skills and knowledge upgrade whilst becoming loyal to that person in the process. Hence, there was already an expectation for free flow of information and high team coaching activities.

On the other hand, this research paper also noted the high degree of information transparency exhibited by the Philippine project teams due to regulatory requirement and the need to inform everyone so that they will be able to contribute more beneficially to the project. An important aspect which was noted as a result of the transparent disclosure of information was the need to mitigate the impact of erroneous information coming from informal and grapevine sources when such information were not freely communicated among members (*tsimis at intriga*). This was validated by Nichol (1994) and he opined that although in a communicative process, there will always be grapevine and rumours that will pass the information as newsworthy and a truthful depiction of what exist in reality. The author argued that this must not be encouraged since it may be an ill-informed rumour that may impact the realisation of the project goal. On the issue of coaching, there was no expectation that the team leader will provide the necessary coaching especially for everyone but it was revealed that in spite of the lack of formal expectation to do so, the team members can ask anyone in the group for clarification, hence a stark contrast to the coaching and knowledge sharing practices of the Japanese project teams.

B.2.3 Modes of Communication – Media Richness

The media richness theory by Daft and Lengel (Daft, 1997) indicated that the type of communication process was affected by the type of media used. The richest source of media was the face to face media since the feedback was very immediate and the cues and channels can be seen and interpreted at the onset accordingly (e.g. body language of the sender and receiver). On the other hand, the written media were perceived to be very low in richness because of their slow feedback mechanism and very limited chance to see visual cues that were important in the communicative process. In a study by Rowe and Struck (1999) indicated that the type of media applied was affected by the value orientation of the organisation in relation to culture where a certain type of media was favoured as compared to the other media regardless of whether these were more rich in the communicative process or not.

Considering the highly regulated and formal communication system among the Japanese and Philippine project teams, the study noted that there was a strong preference towards the formal way of communication because of the need to document evidences for major decisions and risks issues that impact the organisation's going concern. On the other hand, the "*kaizen*" approach to reducing error was also a crucial component in a highly regulated communication process among Japanese entities. It was noted that even verbal communications (e.g. trading and selling of foreign currencies and money market instruments) were recorded and regularly audited with the aim of reducing errors in the transactions. Hence, the Japanese interviewees viewed formal communication as needed for effective team functioning since failure to do so will result to penalties and sanctions. This observation further validated the findings of Hofstede (2007) that in collective societies clear authority and guidelines as well as close supervision lead to satisfaction, effective performance and productivity. In fact, in the study of Okabe (1983), pointed that culturally homogeneous societies such as Japan relatively shun verbal communication.

On the other hand, the members of the Philippine project teams mainly preferred a more informal form of communication since there was a pervading view that formal communication was highly reactive, stifling and generally time consuming. As previously discussed, the organisation was a direct subsidiary of a northern domiciled foreign bank before it was spinned-off and therefore the organisational policy as well as the existing culture may have been influenced by this western orientation. Hence, although the team generally exhibited a collective culture, the preferred mode of communication by the members reflected a more individualistic stance but they had no other recourse but to comply with regulatory requirements.

Another issue addressed by the bias towards non-face to face communication was the concern for "saving face." It has been noted that communication in high context societies as illustrated by Hall (1991) and Okabe (1983) should allow the receiver or the messenger to save face. This is also in accordance with the findings of Schwartz (1994) where he observed that some societies preferred to maintain the status quo so as not to disrupt the social order and therefore maintain harmony. As such, there had been strong preference for the more indirect form of communication which allowed for both the transmitter and receiver of information to avoid direct conflict. However, this research paper also noted that the interviewees among Philippine project teams expressed their desire for more face to face communication because they viewed the written communication as too time consuming and relatively bureaucratic which essentially were the drawbacks pointed by Daft and Lengel (Daft, 1997). Thus, even though the perceived richness of media for the direct communication was noted, this was not used extensively since the financial project teams were constrained by voluminous regulations and cultural considerations which negated the application of communication systems that have been identified to be more contextually rich, proactive and engaging.

B.2.4. Relational

The interaction between individuals involved the exchange of information over time and produced relationship that may extend to a certain period. The degree of relationship that was formed depended on the cultural context of the society (Hall and Hall, 1990). In relation to the Japanese project teams, communication process was directly affected by (a) hierarchy such as teacher-student (*sempai kohai)* which led to indulgent independence (*amae*) and (b) tomodachi (colleague-to-colleague relationship). In fact, even in the manner of conversation between the leader and member was governed by a distinct language usage called "*keigo*" and failure to use it was considered rude and disrespectful to the person holding the higher rank. In fact, in the study of Hall, they noted that Japan was a high context society and therefore it had an extensive network of relationships that was governed by cultural dictates. Also, it has been noted by Nishiyama (2000) that communication in Japanese focuses on "*enryo-sasshi*" which translate to self restraint and the author argued that this was due to the need for members to conform to the group vis-à-vis hierarchical relationships. On the other hand, this research paper noted that members of the project teams in the Philippine were mainly encouraged to speak their minds and challenged the position of more senior members if they deemed it fit without having to worry about disrespecting their position. Thus, the relationship was still professional and convivial but they had more flexibility within the hierarchical spectrum. As pointed earlier this is in contrast to the general findings on culture on the Philippines by Hofstede, Globe and Trompenaars which basically categorised the country into collective and high power distance.

B.2.5. Appraisal System

The issue on the institutionalisation of an appraisal system for communication was traced to the need to avoid the potential pitfalls when such had not been formalised. Hofstede (2007) and House *et al* (2004) highlighted the issue on uncertainty avoidance which underpinned that the rules governing society was one of the mitigating measures that reduced risks. This was clearly exhibited by the Japanese and Philippine project teams where the guidelines for communication appraisal were implemented as a stop gap measure for uncertainty avoidance.

In fact, the experiences of both project teams underscored the need to continuously review their respective communication practices order to solve problems that may result from a poorly maintained system. They also demonstrated the importance of having clear-cut appraisal system as embodied in the formal organisational policies. The institutionalisation of these policies relative to the Japanese project teams occurred when the regulatory authorities found out that there were no succinct policies on the matter (e.g., evidentiary matters). This was also in line with the observation by Nishiyama (2000) that Japanese organisations put heavy emphasis towards reduction of errors whilst one of the ways of addressing them is by having guidelines on almost everything including communication practices. On the other hand, the case study on the Philippine project teams also showed that communication policies were formalised when problems occurred such as those observed in the Japanese project teams. This holistically encompassed the observation of Perrow (1972) that "rules stem from past adjustments and seek to stabilise the future" (p.29).

CHAPTER VI – Conclusions and Recommendations

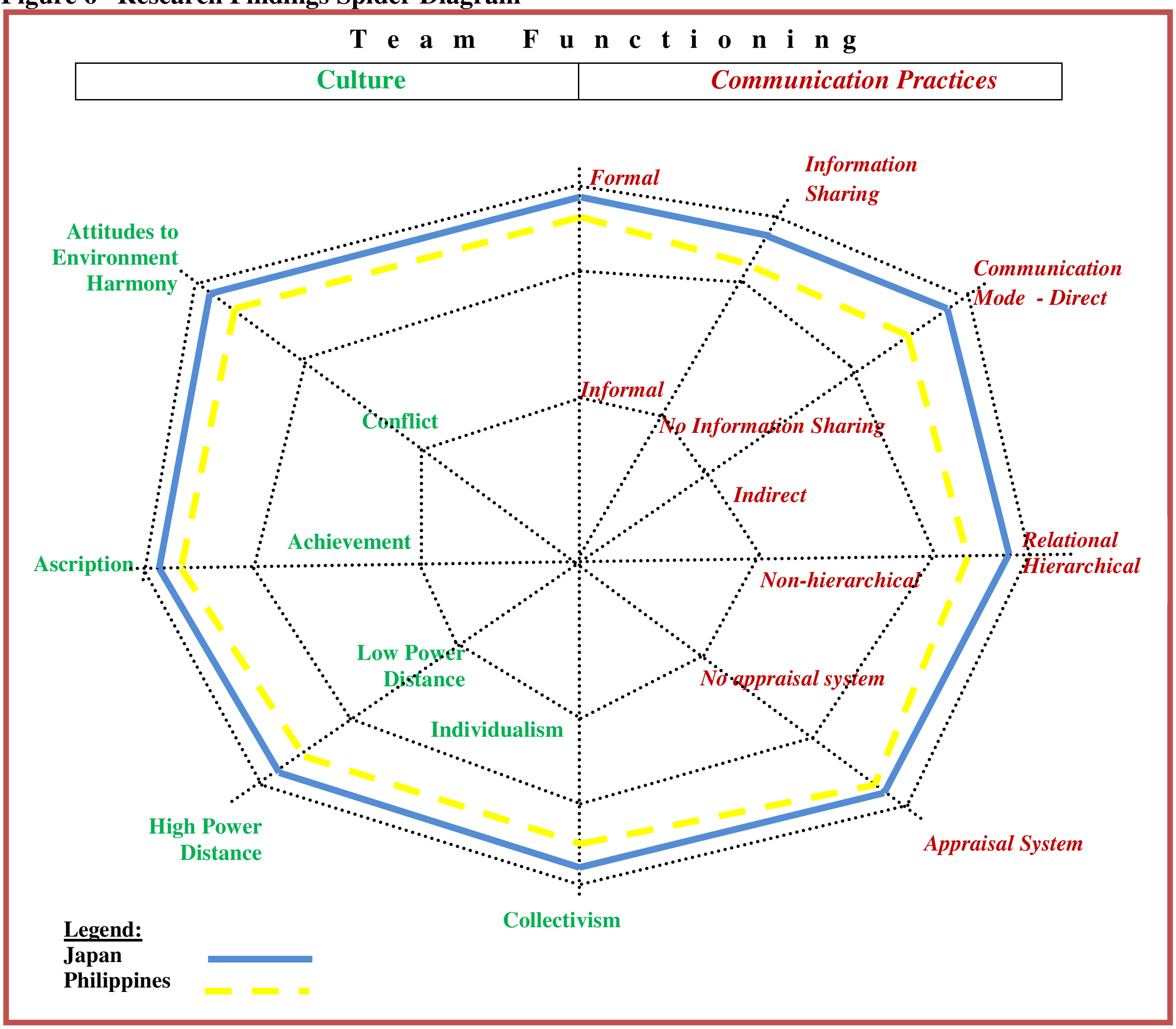
A. Chapter Background

The conclusion of the study is presented relative to the influence of culture and communication practices in team functioning. This chapter also highlights the limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research initiatives.

B. Conclusions

This research paper analysed the influence of culture and communication practices in team functioning among Japanese and Philippine financial project teams. The study applied a case study methodology with 7 interviewees from 2 financial institutions from the aforementioned countries.

Figure 6 –Research Findings Spider Diagram



The findings are shown in a spider diagram in figure 6 which illustrates that the nearer the line (solid line-*Japan*, dotted line- *Philippines*) towards a particular variable whether outward or inward (e.g. outward-*ascription* versus inward-*achievement*), the greater the project teams exhibited that characteristic. This is further explained in more details below:

B.1 Culture

- Japanese and Philippine project teams exhibited strong collectivism as shown by their preference towards group affiliations, collective group decision making and reward systems and practices. The study further noted that this collectiveness was intrinsically rooted in the members' desire to fit in the group and maintain relational harmony.

- Japanese project teams showed high power distance due to the hierarchical and societal expectations that emanated from the leader/subordinate relationship. Whilst the same was observed in the Philippine project teams, albeit it was revealed that members were not constrained by hierarchical relationship as they were given flexibility to challenge leaders' opinions without fear of disrespecting their position.

- Both Japanese and Philippine project teams exhibited ascription in giving recognition to members. It was noted especially for Japanese project teams that honour and prestige was ascribed to individuals due to their membership in certain groups and professional affiliations and loyalty to the organisation as shown by their length of service. On the other hand, the project teams in the Philippines also exhibited ascription relative to the importance of education and professional affiliations albeit, the selection of project leader was context dependent and not based on seniority of position.

- The Japanese and Philippine project teams demonstrated their views towards the environment through a strong preference towards status quo, harmony and avoidance of conflicts since delineating them will adversely affect team relationship.

- In so doing, the above findings indicate that culture directly influence team functioning as issues on hierarchy, relationship, and societal expectations translate to collectivism, high power distance, ascribed form of recognition and harmonious view towards the project environment. These led to the maintenance of team order, respect towards authority, facilitation of professional and convivial relationships for both the leaders and members and the ability to fit into the group in such team functioning realities.

B.2 Communication Practices

- The communication process in Japanese and Philippine project teams were highly dependent on formal communication due to (a) regulatory requirements reflecting the strong preference for the preservation of evidence and paper trail for major decisions and activities that affect the entity's going concern and (b) societal expectation of the need to respect authority which can be viewed from the formal sphere of communication.

- The strong preference in written communication was also influenced by the expectation of allowing members to save face in potentially embarrassing situation where a face to face and verbal communication may not directly allow. Also, the study noted that the formal communication was viewed as a requisite in maintaining harmony since this was in compliance with internal and external requirements.

- In terms of the hierarchical relationship influencing the communication process, it was observed that using informal communication for leader/subordinate communication in Japanese project teams was viewed as disrespectful in a number of situational contexts. On the other hand, the Philippine project teams were less influenced by hierarchical demarcations as relationship centred around conviviality without fear of being disrespectful to the other's position vis-à-vis the communication process.

- In spite of the observation that non-written form of communication was more contextually rich, the project teams had no other recourse but to extensively utilise written communication resulting from the highly regulated nature of the financial industry.

- The communication appraisal system for both project teams also hinged on the need to address uncertainty avoidance. There was a clear indication that the institutionalisation of formal communication guidelines served the purpose for risk mitigation.

- Hence, the findings indicate that the communicative practices had a distinguishable cultural aspect where compliance to internal and external regulatory requirements, respect for authority, maintenance of harmony and the ability to meet societal expectations were required relative to the flow of information for effective team functioning.

B.3 Theoretical Implications

The results of the study confirmed the findings of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Turner, House *et al* and Schwartz that Japan and the Philippines are collectivist societies, with a noticeable degree of power distance, bestowment of status through ascription and strong emphasis on harmony towards the society (this research paper –project environment). However, the result of the Philippine project teams challenged the previous finding that the country's societal dictates showed high power distance since the project teams were not too dependent on hierarchical demarcations; hence a lower power index was observed.

On the other hand, the study confirmed the findings of Hall which underpinned that communication can be seen more succinctly through a cultural prism where the use of communication media whether they were contextually rich or not was influenced by the need of the hierarchy, relationship through power distance, organisational and societal expectations and compliance issues. Finally, the research paper's conceptual model strongly pinpoints to the influence of culture and communication practices in team functioning.

B.4 Managerial Implications

The increasing "projectification" of organisations underpins the need for more effective project teams and their role has been further heightened by the increasing emphasis towards globalisation. For many profit and non-profit organisation, this will need the rationalisation of policies and activities that will address cultural and communication issues. Arguably, realising this undertaking requires an integrative approach towards team building, effective selection of members and leaders, implementation of culturally sensitive reward and recognition programmes and practices, effective conflict management initiatives and free flow of communication relative to realising organisational and societal dictates.

In so doing, the result of the study showed the important connection of culture and communication practices in team functioning which management can enquire into centred on more responsive programmes that are tailor fitted to the existing cultural mix and capitalise on the project team's heterogeneous diversity. Indeed, there have been countless organisational prescriptions which stressed the significance of team cohesiveness revolving around the need to build agreement with goals and personal interactions that will lead to greater impetus to stay in project teams.

However, as with many case studies, generalising the research's findings applicability with other project teams cannot be liberally applied since they only reflected the realities of the research context. Moreover, this study only looked into the cultural aspect from a national perspective hence, a caveat is issued considering that regional, industrial, organisational, community and familial set-ups have their own idiosyncratic cultural identities that were not directly addressed by the study. In addition, this research paper mainly looked into the financial industry within an Asian context thus; the findings may not be the existing reality for other industries and geographical locations.

In so doing, future researches on the subject may look into the other types of cultural values and communication practices that may influence team functioning. They can also look into the impact of culture and communication practices by delineating the size of organisation or the projects themselves as larger or smaller organisations or projects may have their own intrinsic set of culture and communication practices. Finally, future researchers may also opt for cross border and industrial-wide studies to be able to compare and contrast cultural and communication practices in team functioning from a wider and holistic research sphere.

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Appendix

INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

<u>CULTURE</u>

a. Individual or Collective

Is your team decision making process consensus based (i.e. leaders and members opinions are considered equally or bias towards another group) or not? If yes can you elaborate?

Are relationships with fellow members mainly dependent on group network/interest or professional affiliations or not?

Is the team success attributed mainly to the collective group effort or to a particular leader or member?

Do you prefer an individual or group reward recognition system? Why?

b. Power Distance

Can you describe your team structure? How many members and group leader(s)?

Can you describe the relationship of the team leader with the members in your current or previous project teams?

How open are team leaders or members to suggestions/recommendations to solve a challenge or dilemma?

Are the team roles clearly established? Or are members given the flexibility to switch roles during the realisation of the projects?

Can you describe your ideal team leader and member?

c. Achievement or Ascription

Are team members mainly chosen because of professional qualifications, seniority, competence or departmental affiliations? Can you clarify?

Is there an extensive use of professional title/seniority to clarify a member's competence (e.g. accountant, lawyer, software engineer etc)?

Are team decisions only challenged by people with higher authority? Can you provide examples?

D. Attitude to the Environment

Is there willingness among team members to compromise towards a decision?

What are the main causes of conflicts in your team work? How are these resolved?

How can harmonious working relationship be fostered? Can you provide some examples?

COMMUNICATION

a. Formal or Informal/Flat or Hierarchical

Is your team communication process highly formal (memos, notes, hierarchical, flat) or informal?

Do you have any preference? Why?

Are there any clearly established communication rules in a team set up? If yes, can you describe them?

How important are these in the team's effectiveness?

Are members given the flexibility to contact other key project stakeholders? Can you exemplify?

b. Information Sharing

Are information needed for decision making freely circulated among members? Or they are made known only to a few members?

Are there any team coaching from senior members especially to newer members for knowledge sharing?

Is there any informal sharing of information among team members (during lunch or dinner)? If yes, Can you give examples?

How important is having information sharing and free flow of information to a team's effectiveness?

c. Modes of Communication – Media Richness

Is there a preferred mode of communication in your team (e.g. face to face, email, phone call, letters)?

How effective are these modes of communications relative to information dissemination and feedback?

What are some of the problems commonly encountered using these modes of communication? How have they been resolved?

d. Relational

Is the communication process influenced by seniority/departmental affiliations of the members? Can you exemplify?

Are leaders or members open to suggestions and recommendations to tackle the project? If yes can you elaborate further?

Does the communication channel allow for the fostering of a more unified team?

e. Appraisal System

Are feedbacks continuously given relative to the development of the project/activities of the project teams and individual members?

Are there any continuous improvement mechanisms in place to solve any communication problems in the project teams?

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