Cross-Cultural Communication in Construction Industry: How do Chinese Firms Cross the Barriers in Tanzania?

Fatma Waziri[1*] ,Salha Khalfan[2]
1.School of Management, Wuhan University of Technology,25 Luoshi Road, Wuhan, Hubei, China
2. School of Sociology, Central China University, 152 Luoyu Avenue, Wuhan, Hubei, China
Email of the Corresponding author:wazirifatma@yahoo.com

Abstract
The international nature of doing business in construction projects has highlighted the importance of cross cultural communication as the challenge it brings to Managers. Among the challenges facing Chinese Construction Firms in Tanzania is how to maintain communication richness. Nevertheless International construction projects can involve multinational project teams from different political, legal, economic and cultural backgrounds. As the business environment becomes more complex and dynamics occur at a rapid rate, multicultural construction projects must improve their ability to address such external challenges. This paper is an attempt to examine how cross-cultural complexity and cross cultural communication misunderstandings can be effectively managed. To that endeavor the author examines the role of culture; how it influence communication and explores how communication barriers can occur in Chinese construction firms in Tanzania. Probably one could realize that construction managers from China are likely to translate and respond differently to the same strategic issues because they have distinct perceptions of the environmental opportunities and threats and communication rules.
Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, Cross cultural barriers, Management Style, Chinese Construction firms, Tanzania

1. Introduction

With Global economic integration, companies operating internationally, usually encounter cross-cultural barriers such as understanding differences in communication systems, management practices and decision making(Huselid,et al, 1997; Becker et al, 1999; Wright, et al 1999) Different characteristics and expectations of culture result in different thinking; understanding and behaving. Sonja and Philips (2004), has an opinion that those cultural differences can interfere with management practices in organizations. To say more managers are in complex pressure of finding appropriate balance between global, home country and local practices of strategic human resource management.

Construction industry plays a huge socio-economic significance role in the development of the economy of any country. Considering its unique nature, the industry employs the diverse range of occupational cultures and qualifications, from unskilled, craft, managerial professional and administrative. Its structure culture and working practices present a challenging environment within which to utilize effective HRM strategies and technique. Hence managing communication is a key enabler of effective Strategic Human Resource Management. Communication problems are greatest challenge in international business, because managers spend on average, 75% of their time communicating (Gerald 2000)

2.0 Literature Review

While many researchers have investigated culture in construction (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998; Meek, 1998; Bathrobe et al.,2000,; Kwan et el, 2001), understanding of cross cultural communication in Chinese project teams is insufficiently developed. Furthermore, the industry has not sufficiently responded to cultural issues facing its workforce within the construction industry.

2.1 Culture and Communication in Chinese Firms

Various researchers have reflected on the meaning on the team "culture". Hofstede (1997) states that culture is the "software of mind" that can influence people's patterns of thinking and behaving. In this regard, is often difficult to change since culture is instilled from a young age and greatly resists dilution and change despite prolonged to exposure to another culture (Shackleton & Ali, 1990). Yum (1988) has an opinion that culture is a patterns of a new challenge to managers, (Sonja and Philips,2004) assumes that managers in today's multicultural global business community frequently encounter cultural differences, which can interfere with management practices in organizations.

Axley 1984 define communication as metaphorical pipeline along which information is transformed from one individual to another. While Thomason (1988), consider communication as the lifeblood of any system of human interaction as without it, no meaningful or coherent activity can take place, Rogers (1973) has an opinion that information communicated in a manner greatly different from what is common culturally often leads to a lack of comprehension or to misunderstanding. Hall (1976) concluded that in cross cultural communication there are

two things in the way of understanding; the linearity of language and the deep biases and built in binders that every culture provides (p.61).

Poon, et al (2005) while comparing the management differences in China and Australia, has found that culture is a significant influence in management style in multi-culture perspective .Different characteristics of culture result in thinking, understanding and communicational diversity. For instance, Ambos et al (2008) argue that one culture may support certain types of organizations rather than other types, and culture differences will eventually influence on the performance of company, as well as how people interact in that particular organization.

Several empirical studies on cross-cultural management have been conducted in China since 1990s and numerous empirical studies have been done in the past two decades across different level of construct and practices (individual group and organization). Among all these studies concerning China, there are mainly two common types; the first type focuses on foreign managers and employees' center on their adjustment and performance in Chinese culture; and the second type of the study examines Chinese who work with these foreigners in multinational management setting .

2.2 Cross cultural Barriers in Chinese Multinational Firms

The African community knows very little about Chinese firms. Majority of the China is still a new place and Chinese Firms and management practices are not well studied. Cultural problems result in deep rooted management problems. According to Rozkwitalska (2010), a cross cultural communication is the influence of a person from one national to organizational culture on another person or people from different national or organizational culture. Individuals and organizational factors influenced by three levels of mind programming belong to major determinants of human actions (see Hostede, 2007). Rozkwitalska, (2010) mentioned, the concept of cultural barriers is based on;

- **National culture bonded** like cultural distance, cultural shock, cultural stereotypes and auto-stereotypes, prejudices and national ethnocentrism
- **Organizational factors:** MNC headquarters' characteristics institutional ethnocentrism, the cultural gap, and subsidiary's characteristics,
- **Individual rooted factors**, like ethnocentric attitude, perception barriers, low international experience of individual employees, their characteristics insufficient level of cultural intelligence and cultural competence.

There is a paucity of research on micro-level; organizational level, manager-worker communication which could have significant implications for how the two countries engage each other within larger Sino-Tanzania relations. Chinese presence and engagement with Tanzania require a more informed strategic management related practices that may be observed through cross-cultural communication in their Construction firms(Baregu,2008). Firms based information and knowledge of the behavior of and relationships between workers within may thereby help to then pinpoint distinct characteristics of transitional Chinese in Tanzania and a better understanding of the cross cultural communication barrier of Chinese Construction companies management style, communication system and staff behavior, within Hofstede cultural dimension of collectivism/individualism, power distance, uncertainty/ avoidance femininity/ masculinity scale and long/short term orientation(Triandis,1988) .

3. The Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to link the relationship between the cross cultural communication barriers and the management styles, communications system and staff behavior of Chinese Construction firm in Tanzania. Highlights from relevant reviewed literature, sets the basis of the conceptual model and hypothesis to fulfil the purpose of this study. Therefore, mainly there are six hypotheses were developed and utilized to accomplish the objectives of this research. These hypotheses are expressed as follow:

4. Hypothesis

H_0: National culture does not influence Chinese Construction Companies Management style
H_1: National culture does influence Chinese Construction Companies Management style
Hypotheses 2
H_0: National culture does not influence Chinese Construction Companies Communication System
H_1: National culture does influence Chinese Construction Companies Communication System
Hypotheses 3
H_0: National culture does not influence Chinese Construction Companies Staff behavior
H_1: National culture does influence Chinese Construction Companies Staff behavior
Hypotheses 4
National Culture values influence team performance in Chinese Construction Companies

5. Methodology

The target population was three large Chinese Construction firms operating in Tanzania who were member of Chinese Business Chambers of Tanzania. The respondents from the firms included: Human Resource Manager, Foreman for road constructions, safety and environmental officer, Liason officer, senior mechanics, assistant engineer, and Site field work Manager and field workers from road constructions projects. The study used the questionnaire developed by Hofstede (1980) and Husselid (1995) to collect the data. Hofstede's instrument used cross validation with samples to include of 50 nations, among them East Africa, West Africa countries and China (Ng et., 2007). Although Hofstede(1980) surveyed IBM employees and managers related to the work situation of IBM, his findings were confirmed in the numerous studies (Kirkman et al., 2006 and Sondergaard,1994). Huselid's instrument had been used in the USin nearly 1000 firms. Huselids scale has shown reliability coefficients of between 0.75 and 0.88. parts of the instruments that used different scales were pilot tested by this study and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient confirmed the reliability of the measured variables with a coefficient of 0.70. A mixed method empirial approach involving both interviews and survey was used.

The questionnaire was administered to three Chinese Construction Companies, out of which Two were in Tabora Region and One in Tanga Region. In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed to individuals in the sample. Of these 161 questionnaires were successfully complete and returned to the researchers, giving a response rate of 54% figure considered substantially sufficient for the study. Analysis of the profiles of the firm was based on the length of the employment, gender, level of education, age, and target market. The interviews were carried out to contextualize survey findings and also explore in greater detail issues of interest emerged from data collected using questionnaires.

6. Testing of the Hypothesis

Based on the objective of this research, mainly three hypotheses were proposed. Each hypothesis was tested using correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis and analysis of variance. As to get significant items related with National culture Values, cross cultural communication barriers, and performance, a factor analysis was conducted. All variables except communication systems are positively and significantly correlated to Team Management. Staff behavior and Management style in terms of hiring selection alone explain up to 20% of variance in firm performance (R2=0.2.). To test for the moderating effect of communication barriers measured by power distance on the relationship between management style and staff behavior, the coefficient of determination (R2) obtained when cultural orientations were in the regression equation and when they were not compared.

The Difference is shown on (Table 1). The Table reveals that R2 decreased by 10% from 40% to 30% but remained the same at 40, respectively, when cultural values and beliefs were introduced in the regression equation. Furthermore, communication barriers and national culture account for 30% of team performance .

Table 1 Regression results for the barriers influencing relationship between National culture and cross cultural communication at work

Variable	R^2 before	R^2 after	Change in R^2
Cultural values:			
Power Distance	0.4	0.3	-0.1
Cultural Beliefs:			
Collectivism/individualism Uncertainty Avoidance Masculinity/Femininity	0.4	0.4	0

Table 2 Results of the regression analysis of the effect of Management style, cultural values and cultural value belief and Team performance

| Variable	Beta	t value	a Value
Management Style:			
Decision making	**0.3**	**4.0**	**<0.01**
Motivation to employees	**0.2**	**2.3**	**<0.01**
R^2=0.2			
Staff behavior	**0.3**	**3.3**	**<0.01**
R^2=0.1			

From table 2, Decision making and motivation to employees explain up to 20% of variance in team performance (R^2=0.2). Staff behavior alone accounts for 10% (R2=0.1) of variation in performance.

Table 3 Regression analysis of factors influencing staff behavior at work

Variable	Beta	t value	a Value
Cross Cultural barries:			
Different expectations from Manager	0.3	3.5	<0.01
Lack of mutual understanding	0.3	3.2	<0.01
R^2=0.2			
Staff behavior	**0.2**	**2.4**	**<0.05**
R^2=0.4			

6.1Factor Analysis of the conceptual model

The relationship between national culture, communication barrier and team performance is a complex process and little is known about these variables are linked. This study advanced a conceptual model linking these variables by introducing cross cultural communication barriers to moderate the relationship between national culture and management style, communication system and staff behavior. From the literature it is apparent that the relationship between the four variables has not been examined (from Tanzanian context).That their combined effect on team performance has not been examined before on Chinese Construction Firms operating in Tanzania.
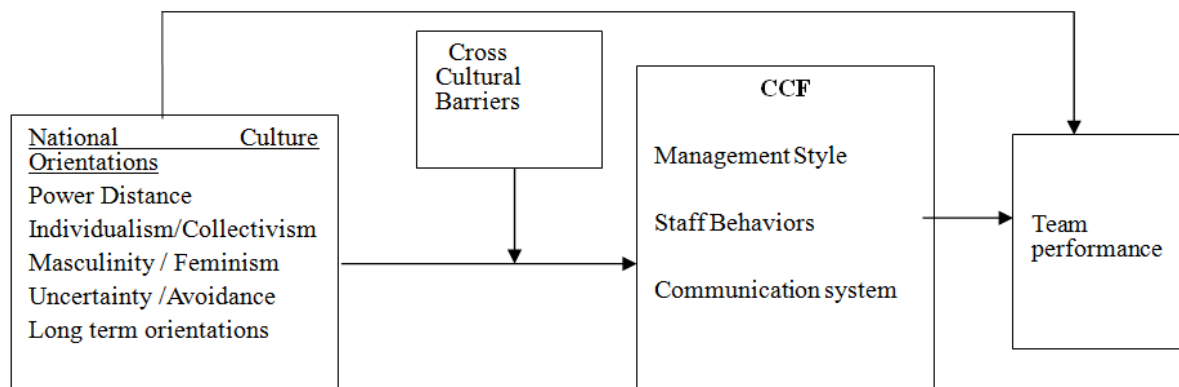
Figure 1. A conceptual model

The framework suggests that an interrelationship among national culture orientation, management style, communication system and staff behavior. There is a direct link between National Culture and team performance. Most studies hypothesize a direct link between national culture and team performance. It is rather indicated that the cross cultural barriers that exist, moderate the relationship between National culture and managerial implications in multinational firm. It can be argued that National culture values do not lead directly to team performance, but influence process, such as employee job motivation and it is these processes that ultimately lead to team performance.

7.Conclusion

From the results, has answers emphasized the fundamental understanding on how Chinese Construction firm come across the cross cultural communication barriers when managing Teams in Tanzania. Moreover the result found the influence of National culture values index (Power distance, Individualism/collectivism, Masculinity/femininity and long term orientation) on Team Management. From the result analysis these barriers of communication come from national culture's influence on the work place and behaviors of people with different identity (Superiors and subordinates).

References

Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, (1997). Technical and strategic human resource management
effectiveness as determined of firm performance. *Academy of Management Journal* , 39,171-188,949-969.
Becker, B.E.,and Huselid, M.A (1999).Overview: Strategic human resource management in five leading firms. *Human Resource Management*, 38, 287-301.
Wright, P.M.,and Snell, S.A (1991). Toward an integrative view of strategic human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review,1,203-335*
Barney, J B., and Wright, P.M (1998). On become a strategic partner: The role of Human resource in gaining competitive advantage. *Human Resource Management*, 37,31-46
Hitt, M.A., Keats, B.W., and DeMarie, S,M (1998). Navifating in the new competitive landscape:Building

competitive advantage flexibility in the 21ˢᵗ century. *Academy of Management Executive,* 12, 22-42.

Gerald, M. J. (200), Cross-cultural Industrial and Organizational pschology: introduction to the special Issue , Journal of Applied Psychology: An International Review

Huselid, M. (1997). Technical and strategic human resource management effectiveness as determined of firm performance. *Academy of Management Journal* , 39,171-188, 949-969

Bennet, M.J. (1998). Intercultural communication: A current perspective. In M .J. Bennet(Ed),Basic concepts of intercultural communication: Selected readings (pp. 1-34).Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Fua Y; Kamenou N (2011), The Impact of Chinese values on Human resource policies and practices within transnational corporations in China, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol.22,No.16,pp,3270-3289

Shree S., (2011) Challenges Before Management with Reference to Cross Cultural Issues and Communication, The *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, Vol. V. No 3, pp. 7-11

Kwani Y.A and Ofori G, (2001), Chinese Culture and Successful Implementation of partnering in Singapore's Construction Industry *Construction Management and Economics,* 19, 619–632

Sonja, A. S and Philips, M.E (2004) Contextual influence on Culture Research Shifting: Assumptions for New Workplace Realities. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* Vol 4(3),370-390.Applied psychology: An International Review Vol 49, (1),192-221.

Asheghian, P and Ebrahimi, B (1990). International business: economics, environment and strategies. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Triandis, H. (1988), "Collectivism vs individualism: a reconceptualization of a basic concept in cross-cultural psychology", in Verma, G. and Beyley, C. (Eds), Cross-cultural studies of Personality Attitudes and Cognition Macmillan London

House, R. J., Wright, N.S and Aditya, R.N (1997), "Cross-Cultural research on organizational leaderhip: a critical analysis and a proposed theory", in Barley, P.C and Erez, M. (Eds), New Perspectives in international industrial Organizational Psychology, New Lexington Press, San Francisco, CA,pp.535-625

Foster, V., Butterfield, W.Chuan, C., and Pushak, N. (2008) "Building bridges; China's growing roles as infrastructure financier for sub-Saharan Africa' Washington D.C: World Bank

Roberstson, C.J (2000), "The global dispersion of Chinese values: a three-country study of Confucian dynamism", Management International Review, Vol.40 No 3.

Tsui, J. and Windsor, C (2001), "Some cross-cultural evidence on ethical reasoning" Journal of Business Ethics Vol.31 No. 2

Burke,C ans Corkin, L. (2006) 'China's interest and activity in Africa's Construction and infrastructure sectors', Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University.

Schuler, R.S., Dowling, P.J., and De Cieri, H. (1993) An intergrative framework of strategic international human resource management. International Journal of Human Resource Management, (4) pp 717-64

Baregu, M. (2008) "The three faces of the dragon: Tanzania-China relation in historical perspective," In Amphiah, K and Naidu, S eds (2008): Crouching tiger, hiden dragon? Africa and China. Scottsvile, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. P. 152-166.

Probst, S Raub, and Kai Romhardt*, Adapted from Managing knowledge Building Blocks for Success,* John Wiley, 1998 (p.34)

AFDB Policy Brief (2010) Chinese trade and investment activities in Africa. African Development Bank Group, Chief Economist Complex. (1)4

Tanzania Investment Centre (2008) Chinese trade and Investment in Tanzania

Chaponniere, J. R. (2009) ' Chinese aid to Africa, origins, forms and issues', in van Dijk, M.P. (ed).

The New Presence of China in Africa. EADI: Amsterdam University Press, pp.55-82

Adler N J (1997) A typology of management studies involving culture, Journal of International Business Studies, pp, 29-47

Hofsetde G, (2001) Culture Consequences: Comparing values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations, Thousand Oaks California: Sage 2001,pp.25-40

Rozkwitalska M, (2010Barriers of Cross-cultural Interactions According to Research Findings, Journal of Intercultural Management Vol.2, No2 pp.37-52

Benet, M.J.,(1988) Intercultural communication: A current perspective. In M.J.Bennet (ed), Basic Concepts of intercultural communication: selected readings Yarmouth, ME: intercultural Press

Merkin R.S (2006) Uncertainty avoidance and facework: A test of the Hofstede Model, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Vol 30, pp 213-228

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: http://www.iiste.org/journals/ All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: http://www.iiste.org/book/

Recent conferences: http://www.iiste.org/conference/

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar