

# Communicating Effectively across Cultures

## A Validated Web-supported Model for Multicultural Teams

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### Abstract

Multicultural teams are becoming the norm rather than the exception. In order to facilitate effective communication needed for successful teamwork, a web-supported communication model for multicultural teams (comMCT) is introduced in this paper. The model was developed through a comprehensive literature review and qualitative field study. Empirical data was collected through expert interviews in which a semi-structured questionnaire was employed. For the evaluation of the interviews, a qualitative content analysis was adopted. 21 project managers from various countries participated in the study.

The model consists of four modules: structural, functional, organizational, and interpersonal/behavioral, and each module has several elements presenting features and actions to be taken. The model addresses technical, cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal competencies to be possessed or acquired. The comMCT model was evaluated through a second field study. The majority of experts rated the model positive or very positive in its structure, language, understandability, usefulness, completeness, and originality. The only aspect in which experts disagreed was the model's redundancy, which mirrors the intertwined nature of interpersonal and organizational aspects.

### Introduction

In the last few decades, organizations witnessed an urgent need to react to rapidly occurring and ubiquitous changes. With globalization and the advances in communication technology as well as increased mobility, interaction with different cultures has become more common than before. Consequently, the number of studies on how to do business and how to interact with/across various cultures has increased substantially. Furthermore, teams and workgroups in companies and organizations have begun to become more diverse by inclusion of individuals with culturally different backgrounds. Although cultural diversity and its management in society have been of interest for research for centuries, cultural diversity within the project teams is a relatively new research area.

Cross-cultural studies (e.g. Earley, 1993; Haire, Ghiselli, & Porter, 1996; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), Hofstede's study being in the forefront, showed that culture is one of the most important variables affecting individual's behaviors both in

organizations and in workgroups/teams. As Hofstede (1980) suggested 80 percent of the differences in employees' attitudes and behaviors are explained by national culture. By considering this insight, a considerable amount of studies has been conducted on the comparison of homogenous and heterogeneous teams, effects of cultural diversity on team processes and outcomes, and opportunities and risks arising from cultural diversity. These studies showed that multicultural teams (MCTs) tend to suffer from language difficulties and cultural differences which may bring along risks such as emotional and task-related conflicts, misunderstandings, stereotypes and rejection, more time and effort consumption, lower cooperation, less participation and contribution tendency of minorities, lack of trust and harmony, high turnover rate, and tendencies for absence, social loafing, and convergence (Arman & Adair, 2012; Behfar, Kern, & Brett, 2006; Bjørnstad, Fostervold, & Ulleberg, 2013; Elron, 1997; Hanges, Lyon, & Dorfman, 2005; Kirchmeyer, 1993; Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992; Köppel, 2008; Krentzel, 2001; Ochieng & Price, 2009a; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2013; Von Glinow, Shapiro, & Brett, 2004; Watson & Kumar, 1992). As Matveev and Milter (2004, p.105) signified "any, if not all, of the multicultural team challenges can be explained by the diverse cultural backgrounds of team members". On the other hand, cultural diversity provides significant opportunities for creativity and innovation, learning, better decision-making, and prestigious and motivating work environment as a result of availability of different viewpoints, knowledge, experiences, and reduced group-thinking (DeSanctis & Jiang, 2005; Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Köppel, 2008; Garcia-Cabrera & Garcia-Soto, 2010; Podsiadlowski, 2002; Salk & Brannen, 2000; McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996).

Cultural diversity in teams can be both an asset and a liability, as differences can create a balance (cohesion and unity) or an imbalance (subgroup dominance, member exclusion, etc.) depending on how differences are handled and how effectively diversity is managed (Snow, Snell, Davison, & Hambrick, 1996; Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010). Therefore, to us, the most prominent question is not whether to compose the team as heterogeneous or homogenous or whether cultural diversity has advantages or disadvantages but rather what one should (and should not) do when a team is culturally diverse. This is because cultural diversity in teams is not anymore a decision, but the reality in most cases.

In addition, communication processes in multicultural teams tend to be one of the most 'fragile' elements, since the 'multicultural' nature of the team manifests itself most prominently when team members interact with each other. Furthermore, utilizing the opportunities and eliminating the risks as well as overcoming them are only possible through a healthy communication environment and effective communication during the whole project. As Ochieng and Price (2009b, p. 11) deduced at the end of their study, "effective communication is the key to managing expectations, misconceptions, and misgivings on multicultural project teams. As confirmed, good communication strategies are primary in establishing, cultivating, and maintaining strong working relationships". However, only a few studies such as Butler and Zander (2008) and Congden, Matveev, and Desplaces (2009) concentrated on the communication in MCTs, specifically. A comprehensive analysis of the communication problems within multicultural project teams and how to alleviate them is still open for further exploration and research.

In this context, the vital aspect of communication in culturally diverse teams and work groups is an attractive research area intersecting various disciplines such as project management, international business, organizational behavior, and human resource management. These are inevitable for dealing with the increasing inherent complexity of today's problems. The work described in this paper addresses, in particular, the communication in culturally diverse project teams, i.e., in multicultural teams (MCTs) and presents comMCT, a communication model, which has been developed and evaluated as part

of a dissertation thesis (Güver, 2016), by the first author of this article. The model comMCT captures essential knowledge for communicating effectively in MCTs, and provides a web-based resource to make this knowledge available in a systematic, structured, comprehensive way, as confirmed by the validation study and to facilitate self-organized collaborative learning.

Recent meta-analytic review studies showed that there is no direct interaction between cultural diversity and team outputs. For example, a very recent study (Stahl, Maznevski, et al., 2010) reviewing 108 studies from 1996 to 2007 demonstrated that there is no direct association between cultural diversity and team performance. Another study (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007) reviewing 35 studies from 1985 to 2006 revealed that cultural diversity has no significant effect on social integration. These results lead us to the conclusion that many external and internal factors influence the relationship between cultural diversity and team outputs; furthermore it is very difficult to arrive at a conclusion about the final effect of cultural diversity on any team processes and outcomes, as opportunities and risks of cultural diversity interplay during the project interactions. Therefore, this study aimed at revealing individual communication problems by exploring successful and unsuccessful communication situations, processes, and scenarios. For this reason, empirical data in this study was collected through interviewing experts who have special knowledge and experience in the research subject. The most revealing way to analyze the data (that in part needed to be translated) was to employ qualitative content analysis, as described in more detail in the next chapter.

This paper is structured as follows: Following the introduction, the second section sketches out the research methodology and the third section demonstrates the communication model for MCTs. The validation of the model is described in the fourth section. The last two sections present discussions, conclusions, and directions for further research and learning.

## Methodology

In order to derive the features of the comMCT model, in the PhD-Thesis, first of all, Güver (2016) conducted a comprehensive literature review among the total of 159 studies, 16 studies making comparisons of cultures and nations in the organizational context, 87 studies researching the effects of diversity on workgroups and teams, and 56 studies revealing the dynamics of multicultural teams specifically were analyzed to determine, define, and presents the gap in the research area and to integrate existing theories and results of previous studies into the model.

Secondly, a field study was conducted with project managers, through which, thoughts, experiences, and attitudes of professionals were gathered. For the collection of the data, *expert interview* was employed. As this study tries to acquire specific knowledge and experiences of individuals, the *individual interview method* was adopted. *Semi-structured interviews* were employed as *data collection technique*, because it was not possible to communicate with all experts in person, which is needed in an unstructured technique. But in order to gather as much information as possible and to make use of interviewees' knowledge and experiences which may go beyond the questions, the questionnaire was designed to eliminate any restrictive factors. Interviewees were free to choose the questions to answer, blanks for the answers were unrestricted so that they could write as much as they wanted, and additional space was provided for closed questions, in case they had any comments to add.

For the evaluation of the interviews, a qualitative content analysis was adopted. The unit of analysis in this study was determined to be *thematic*, i.e. *meaning unit*. Each interview in its entirety was regarded as a *sampling unit* and a *context unit* was considered as *individual answers to questions*. When developing and defining the coding categories that is at the very

heart of qualitative content analysis, the main approach was the inductive method, because the aim of the analysis was theory building. However the deductive category development approach was also employed for the initial version of the coding catalogue. Hence, a coding manual including coding catalogue with sample statements and coding rules was developed.

Consistency of the coding catalogue and rules was tested through a test-retest process (intra-rater reliability) and a test-test process (inter-rater reliability). Those processes were applied firstly to a selected excerpt of the data (formative reliability check) and secondly to the whole text (summative reliability check). The codes as well as the rules for segmentation and coding were revised accordingly, and then both reliability checks were repeated until a sufficient agreement rate was reached. In this study "*percent agreement*" method enhanced by "*code overlap*" approach was employed for calculating the reliability. This level of agreement requires the coders to agree not only on the presence, frequency, and spread of specific codes, but also on their location. Overlap-rate of 80% was determined to be the reliability threshold for both reliability checks (formative and summative) and for both reliability types (inter-rater and intra-rater).

For the formative check of reliability, the reliability threshold of 70% agreement rate was determined to be sufficient, whereas 80% agreement rate for summative reliability check. Formative check of reliability process achieved an intra-rater agreement rate of 79.2% -well above the 70% threshold- and an inter-rater agreement of 70.7% -slightly above 70% threshold- for the overlap rate of 80%. Summative check of reliability process achieved an intra-rater agreement of 86.8% -well above the 80% threshold- and an inter-rater agreement of %83.6 -well above the 80% threshold- for the overlap rate of 80%. QDA-Miner tool was employed as a content analysis tool through all of the content analysis processes from coding to the evaluation.

The target group of this study was project management professionals who (i) have been working or had worked as project managers in MCTs for five or more years, (ii) have managed at least two MCTs, and (iii) preferably have a project management certificate. A total of 23 eligible interviews were conducted over a period of 9.5 months. Two of the interviews were not used because they did not meet the requirements above. Hence, in the field study, 21 respondents participated, 16 of which (71%) were male and 5 (29%) were female, between the ages of 31 and 67 averaging at 46, with nine different nationalities -namely Turkish, British, Austrian, German, Czech, Indian, Pakistani, American, and Australian-, and from nine different countries -namely Turkey, the United States, Austria, the United Kingdom, Germany, Pakistan, Kenya, China, and Australia-. Project management experience of the participants varies between 5 and 30 years averaging at 13.91 years. Number of managed MCTs varies between 2 and 30 among project managers, and the average number of the MCTs managed is 10.2. Thus, as a whole, the study covers the knowledge emerging from 292 years of project management experience and managing 210 culturally diverse project teams. More than half of the interviewees (63%) have at least one of the following project management certificates: PMP (Project Management Professional), Prince2 (Projects in Controlled Environments), IPMA (International Project Management Association) Level B (Certified Senior Project Manager), and PSM (Professional Scrum Master).

Based on the result of the literature review and expert interviews, a communication model for MCTs (comMCT) supporting effective multicultural teamwork was developed and rendered on a web-platform. Finally, as a proof of concept, the comMCT was evaluated through a field study, namely a second round of expert interview with a different set of project management professionals. In this evaluation study, a total of 10 respondents participated, 7 of which (70%) were male and 3 (30%) were female, between the age of 28 and 53 averaging at 45, with 7 different nationalities -namely Turkish, Austrian, German, Czech, Israeli, British, and Brazilian American-, and from seven different countries -namely

Turkey, Austria, the United Kingdom, Germany, Czech Republic, Brazil, and Israel-. The average number of MCTs managed by the participants is 6, and the number of MCTs worked in is 13. Project management experience of the participants varies from 6 to 25 years averaging at 14.7 years. Half of the interviewees (5 out of 10) have one of the following project management certificates: PMP, Prince2, and IPMA.

### **A Communication model for multicultural teams (comMCT)**

The core-contribution of the PhD-thesis (Güver, 2016) and the central subject matter of this paper is the integration of the literature review and the findings of the field study into the model comMCT. In this model, conclusions are made through the combination of existing literature and aggregate statements introduced by the interviewees. Therefore, the statements of the interviewees are not individually mentioned; however, specific contributions of the existing literature are referred explicitly to maintain citation conventions. This model aims not only at integration and visualization, but also validation of the findings of the study. Therefore, comMCT is presented in a web-platform for effective visualization and easy evaluation by project management professionals. Furthermore, the web-platform enhances accessibility, prevalence, and usefulness of the model. (Please see <http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/index.php> for the web-based presentation of the model comMCT and see Appendix A for some sample screen shots).

#### **Layout of the comMCT**

The communication model comMCT is visualized as demonstrated in Figure 1. As seen in the figure, comMCT is a flexible model in which team culture, project culture, organization culture and the four modules developed are interaction with each other, and the boundaries of this flexibility is determined by project constraints.

Culture is defined as “a set of taken-for-granted assumptions, expectations, or rules for being in the world. As paradigm, map, frame of reference, interpretive schema, or shared understanding, the culture concept emphasizes the shared cognitive approaches to reality that distinguish a given group from others” (Adler & Jelinek, 1986, p.74). Multicultural teams refer to the teams whose members have different nationalities from which, consequently, different cultures emerge. In the model, multicultural team concept is demonstrated with a team picture including members from different nations.

The model comMCT consists of four modules: structural, functional, organizational, and interpersonal/behavioral, and each module has several elements. Details of these modules will be explained in the following sections. The white triangle at the center of the model indicates that project constraints (cost, time, and scope/quality) are the core of the model, as the main aim of the communication process is to attain required outputs within these constraints.

The four modules of the model are surrounded with red circles which refer to the project culture and organizational culture. That means these four modules are inherently influenced by the project culture, which is also inherently influenced by the culture of the organization within which the project will be conducted. On the other direction, these four modules influence project culture, which also influences organizational culture.

Organizational culture is defined as “the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1984, p.3). As Adler and Jelinek, (1986) stated

“organization culture is a widely acclaimed metaphor for understanding how organizations differ, how their members cohere, and how organizations and members interact”.

An organization’s culture composed of artifacts (norms, standards, and customs), values, and assumptions shared by organization’s members and these elements guide the behaviors within the organization. A project’s culture -based on the organizational culture within which the project will be performed- includes artifacts, values, and assumptions which are specific to that project organization. Whereas organizational culture distinguishes the organization from other organizations, project culture distinguishes the project from other projects, even within the same organization.

The yellow circle denoting team culture is included at the center of comMCT, as it is an important factor shaping the communication within the team. Team culture can be defined as a set of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerge from the interactions of team members. Team culture in the model is shaped by the cultural backgrounds of the team members and provides a basis for project culture and consequently for organizational culture. Team culture is developed naturally within the boundaries of the project, and as a consequence of the 'free place' provided to the team members. Cultural variety and culture-specific attributes of the members has an important impact on team culture. Each project has a team consisting of individuals. Each individual brings some additional cultural elements and habits into the team (such as way of greeting, tone of speech, eating habits, jokes, etc.) independent of the organizational culture and project culture. A team culture emerges from the integration of these cultural elements and habits of the individuals. (Please see the model on the web-platform for more details).

Figure 1. Layout of the model 'comMCT'



### Structural Module of comMCT

*Effective communication plan:* Communication plan should be defined clearly and early in the process, well-structured, and well-documented; should include boundaries, predetermined/clear communication channels/paths, sustainable/strong communication processes, predetermined means/nodes/frequency of communication, well-established/open communication channels among members, and common communication procedures/tools. Effective communication plan allows team members to know 'who should receive what information from whom', and prevents interpersonal tension and conflict among team members which would be caused by different communication habits and expectations.

*Open communication structure:* Multiple communication channels giving opportunities for preferences should be available and utilized. Communication structure should ensure frequent enough communication among team members, foster open communication, provide opportunities for proper resolution of conflicts, and encourage direct communication. A balanced 'open' structure should be available which ensures flat hierarchy, allows for horizontal and vertical communication, but has balanced limits. Communication structure should ensure agreement by all (as much as possible), and be well-documented.

*An inter-connected communication system:* Communication, interaction, and coordination should be built among all parties (i.e., stakeholders, project managers, team leaders, and team members) involved (Ochieng & Price, 2009b). This inter-connected communication system prevents the situation that the strength of the relationships within the team and the knowledge/information transfer abilities of the team members are influenced by the nature of the interactions (Ochieng & Price, 2009a, 2009b; Zeuschel & Thomas, 2003).

*Adequate communication procedures/processes:* Adequate internal and external communication procedures and processes should be defined. Communication patterns, within which communication functions, differ across countries. For example, sending and receiving data depend on the physical context and non-verbal communication in UK, whereas data is contained in straightforward codes (e.g., spoken or written words) in Kenya. (Ochieng & Price, 2009a) Defining communication procedures by considering these kinds of differences and local regulations is needed for an adequate/stable internal/external communication, especially for dispersed teams.

*Suitable technical environment:* Suitable tools and well-equipped infrastructure/workplace should be available. In addition, connection quality and access to relevant communication technology should be ensured. Suitable technical environment ensures that electronic communication such as video conferencing is held without technical malfunctions. The availability of technical environment and open communication structure allowing team members to use new media has a particular importance for distant multicultural teams.

*Ad-hoc calls with preparation:* Dispersed MCTs may have difficulty in having common working hours, especially in case of having members in different locations with different time zones and/or with different working hours. They may also suffer from time delays and confusion as a consequence of electronic communication, especially in case of different communication technologies of countries. In order to overcome these risks, the right time of day for each party should be chosen for ad-hoc calls, parties should have a detailed agenda, the relevant data should be sent out before the call, and the potential issues should be discussed person-to-person (p2p) beforehand. Ad-hoc calls with good preparation help also in dealing with language problems which are very likely to be experienced during the call.

*Using the right communication tools:* Communication tools include communication media (f2f (face-to-face), e-mail, instant messaging, wikis/blogs/shared platforms, forums, social media, video conferencing, phone/teleconferencing, visual aids, daily scrums, business trips, tools/templates), communication type (written, verbal), communication form (p2p, meetings), and communication style (formal, informal).

When deciding on the communication tools to be used, these factors should be considered; (a) availability of the communication tool and opportunity to use it, (b)

appropriateness of the communication tool (according to the content and aim of the communication, and project stage), (c) type of the project team (dispersed or collocated), (d) skills of the team members (technical, communication, and language skills), and (e) individual and cultural preferences of the team members. Although it is very difficult to come to a conclusion about the "right" communication tool, there are some points which can be integrated into the communication model of an MCT.

MCTs are exposed to poignant risks because of language difficulties, cultural differences, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, subgroup formation tendency, low degree of psychological safety, and high degree of psychological distance and uncertainty (Behfar et al., 2006; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Gibson & Grubb, 2005; Köppel, 2008; Krentzel, 2001; Ochieng & Price, 2009a; Ochieng, Price, Ruan, & Egbu, 2013; Wyss-Flamm, 2002), which indeed produce a negative group atmosphere. The psychological distance refers to the situation that communication peers constantly feel that they would not completely understand one another. It is difficult to reach to a common communication ground with the existence of high psychological distance (Krentzel, 2001).

As Terry (2007) stated, lack of trust appearing in MCTs often, is one reason for this negative atmosphere. There are several reasons for lack of trust in MCTs. For example, team members intend to switch to their mother tongue as a result of both task-related and emotional issues; this "code-switching" reduces trustworthiness. In addition, team members with lower language proficiency may be perceived as incompetent and less dependable for the task and this perception reduces the trustworthiness of these team members. Using a foreign language may produce anxiety among team members with a lower language proficiency, which results in tendency to trust less to those who have higher language proficiency. (Tenzer et al., 2013)

In this regard, communication tools are to be used adequately in a way that not only meets project communication needs but also helps in overcoming the outlined problems, building a healthy work environment, enhancing trust, and achieving group harmony. F2f communication has a special importance for knowing one another, dealing with conflicts, and promoting building trust, and therefore should be used frequently, especially in early processes (e.g., kick-off), in vital stages of the project (e.g., milestones), and in complex and creativity demanding phases as well as for the first contact. Face-to-face communication is crucial for an effective team building, team development, and establishing confidence and facilitates development of the 'we-feeling' (Köppel, 2008).

Electronic communication such as e-mail, instant messaging, and tele/video-conferencing is very important for both dispersed and co-located teams, even vital for the former. E-mail is suitable for formal communication, for sharing documents, meeting minutes, and final decisions, for distribution of tasks and responsibilities, and for organization of project meetings; hence has a special importance for knowledge management. Instant messaging and video-conferencing should be used when direct communication and discussion is needed, and are more effective when team members are on a similar time zone. Whereas instant messaging is suitable for p2p discussions, video-conferencing is suitable for group discussions, presentations, and complex and urgent situations.

Wikis, blogs, and other forms of shared platforms are suitable for sharing experiences and for introducing the project as well as the team to the public. They can be used as newsletters highlighting what is going on in the project, socially and professionally. Forums, which can be used for both formal and informal communication, are suitable for the exchange of ideas and views. Social media such as LinkedIn, twitter, and project-focused social media are suitable for informal communication and broadcasting.

Visual aids such as charts and white boards are to be used especially in the phases of execution and closing. It can also be used during video conferencing. It may be preferred when talking is not possible or considered ineffective. In case of emotional conflicts, which is



more likely in MCTs, talking may not be possible or, even if it is possible, it may be undesirable and therefore ineffective (Von Glinow et al., 2004). Active use of visual aids and drawing tools helps in presentation and understanding of ideas more readily and facilitates cross-cultural communication.

Daily scrums are to be used to synchronize the progress and work of team members and to report the problems to the leaders/managers. Daily scrums ensure that all team members follow up the progress and nobody stay out of the loop, and hence eliminate uncertainties and create a healthy work environment. Common tools and templates should be used for deliverables of the project. Using tools and templates (such as WBS, Action Item Lists, periodic status report format, and Earned Value Reporting) is quite important for effective controlling and monitoring. Such standardization reduces the risks emerging from cultural work habits and language problems.

Formal and written communication should be used frequently, especially in the phase of planning, informal and verbal communication in the phase of execution. Written communication which is crucial for knowledge management should be used for critical subjects like status updates, task assignments, and reports. Written and formal communication ensures a direct, stable, and professional level of communication, prevents misunderstandings and conflicts which can be emerged from lack of language proficiency and cultural differences, and supports that communication content is more binding. In addition, written communication provides an alternative to verbal communication in situations that the team members may feel uncomfortable talking. Verbal and informal communication, shared platforms, forums, and social media create a warm group atmosphere, in which members get to know one another more closely and overcome cultural barriers.

Regular p2p meetings should be arranged as much as possible for direct communication. Both personal and work-related "small talks" should be employed. As a direct contact, personal meetings help in meeting social needs (such as recognition, motivation, and identification) and so provide basis for satisfaction and personal readiness to contribute. On the other hand, occasional team meetings (may be brief in duration, at the very least as a symbolic act) should be employed frequently, especially in the phase of planning. (Köppel, 2008)

Person-to-person communication gives opportunity for knowing team members as individuals and not evaluating them with stereotypes and prejudice, while meetings facilitate idea/knowledge sharing and cooperativeness within the team. Meetings and person-to-person communication gives opportunity for knowing team members' skills and abilities, hence provides better utilization of creativity and innovation potential of MCTs.

Last but not least, business trips should be used for increased local presence of team leader, in case of dispersed teams (Köppel, 2008). Business trips allow that geographically dispersed team members feel included and respected, and it increases trust within the team. It also gives opportunity for knowing culturally diverse team members better, hence reduces the problems that may be caused by stereotypes and grouping the people as "in-group" and "out-group".

### **Functional module of comMCT**

*Effective goal setting:* Project goals should be defined clearly and early in the process. Team members should participate in the goal development process, if possible. Participation in the goal development processes increases commitment of team members to the goals, and result in higher cognitive understanding of task and work requirements. (Earley & Gardner, 2005)

*Effective rule setting:* Project rules including communication and interaction rules should be defined clearly and early in the process. The rules should be defined with balance -

neither too strict nor too relaxed- and should give enough free space to the team members. When setting the rules, expectations of team members, cultural differences and cultural/religious constraints/observances should be considered. For effective consideration, expectations should be expressed by team members clearly and acceptances of cultural/religious constraints/observances should be determined in advance. Standard procedures that apply to all team members should be adopted (Ochieng & Price, 2009a).

*Effective work/time planning:* Work packages and action items should be defined clearly and with sufficient level of details. It should be ensured that the planned work packages, with their contents and due dates, are binding for all. When scheduling; different time zones/holidays/working hours, local regulations, and cultural/religious observances should be considered. Consistency and clarity regarding time issues should be ensured. It should be kept in mind that some certain tasks might demand additional time in case of MCTs. However, time differences and different working hours give opportunity to dispersed MCTs for longer and more continuous working hours, when planned accordingly. By all manner of means, common working hours should be standardized in case of dispersed teams. Considering these factors will protect the project against change requests and other additional costs in further steps of a multicultural team work.

*Effective conflict management:* Conflict risk is very high in culturally diverse environments as a result of language problems, stereotypes, different attitudes toward hierarchy and authority, conflicting work and/or interaction norms and habits, and different non-verbal behaviors (Krentzel, 2001). Therefore, defining clear and robust problem-solving and conflict resolution procedures (Ochieng & Price, 2009b) as well as a special mechanism for emergency situations is very critical for MCTs (Hanges et al., 2005). Project goals should be expressed in case of conflicts (Ochieng & Price, 2009b). Conflicts should be solved as quickly as possible and the relations among team members should be balanced by managers. These factors prevents conflicts to turn into resistance and prevents frictions -generally caused by cultural differences/sensitivities and language problems- between team members to develop into a resentment.

*Effective monitoring/controlling:* In culturally diverse teams, members trust each other less and rely more on formal control mechanisms. Furthermore, different perceptions of 'appropriate' monitoring and reporting can cause task-related conflicts and can turn into interpersonal conflicts as a result of decreased trust and motivation. Therefore, monitoring and controlling activities have special importance for MCTs (Gong, 2002, as cited in Earley & Gardner, 2005). A clear process and procedure for monitoring, reporting, and controlling should be defined (Earley & Gardner, 2005). For an effective controlling, the units should be defined clearly; performance criteria should be defined transparently, and individual and team performance should be assessed transparently. In addition, it should be controlled regularly whether the team stays within the schedule (Joshi & Lazarova, 2005) and whether rules are being followed thoroughly and correctly. Effective controlling and monitoring is particularly important for dispersed teams which are exposed to a higher risk for lack of cohesion and commitment. Task-related monitoring and reporting promotes trust, confidence, motivation, and effective task-accomplishment. (Earley & Gardner, 2005)

*Effective kick-off meetings and celebration:* Kick-off meetings and celebration should be face-to-face and all parties should be included, if possible. Cultural differences and sensitivities should be considered when arranging kick-offs and celebration meetings which should embrace all cultures. Using visual aids and introducing team members facilitate an effective kick-off/celebration meeting. An effective kick-off provides a good start and collaborative atmosphere which would enhance the upcoming team activities; effective celebration ensures an effective closing and increases the viability of the team.

*Effective decision-making:* MCTs have a rich resource pool arising from availability of complementary skills, generally originating from cultural strengths, and a high creativity and innovation potential emerging from diversity of knowledge, techniques, viewpoints, ideas, and experiences. In contrast, MCTs have a risk of lack of participation and contribution of some team members caused by numerous barriers such as language problems, being a minority, having cultural differences, and lack of confidence. For this reason, freedom of expression, equality, and effective analysis of different views are key factors for an effective decision-making in an MCT. In addition, all team members should be encouraged to contribute and participate and various communication tools should be used when collecting ideas and views.

*Ensuring 'learning from the project':* In MCTs, team members show more information-processing behaviors (Dahlin, Weingart, & Hinds, 2005; Stahl, Makela, Zander, & Maznevski, 2010) and there is more opportunity for learning, both in a general sense and intercultural learning. Intercultural learning refers to "the process of becoming more aware of and better understanding one's own culture and other cultures around the world" (British Council). In order to facilitate learning, all documentation should be provided to the whole team, as much as possible. Project objectives and deliverables should be reviewed as a team at regular meetings, a process review should be conducted (Ochieng & Price, 2009b), and project outcomes and processes should be discussed jointly. In addition, a 'project reflection' and 'lessons-learned' session should also be provided at the closing stage. In this session, everyone should be included and feedbacks from all team members should be gathered, if possible. Learning from the project eventually facilitates confidence, motivation, and satisfaction within the team and ensures developing as a project team (Ochieng & Price, 2009b).

*Adapting to the target culture:* It is essential to adapt to the target people/culture of the job and to the culture, rules, and local regulations of the country where the project is conducted. This element reduces the risks emerging from cultural differences.

*Using a common language:* The language which will be used during the project (usually English) should be determined and a project-specific language (e.g., how to greet/address each other, degree of formality in language, etc.) should be developed. Frequently-used and ambiguous terms and common concepts/terms should be defined. The use of critical words which have different meanings in different cultures/languages should be avoided (Hanges et al., 2005). 'Comfort zone' should be abandoned and team members should avoid using acronyms or terminology familiar only to them. Furthermore, enough free space and time should be provided for common reflection. Common language facilitates common understanding within the team.

*Recording business-related communication:* This element enhances confidence and trust within the team and prevents misunderstandings, conflicts, and role ambiguity, and hence crucial for knowledge management. It is also helpful to team members with lower language proficiency.

*Common understanding within the team:* A common understanding of goals, drivers, and scope of the project and agreement on the 'implementation road map' should be ensured. A 'common project delivery methodology', a 'common project plan', a common sense of urgency as well as a common time perception, and a common understanding with regards to priority, work distribution, and importance of communication should be provided. It should be ensured that work packages along with their contents and due dates are understood by all members and all team members are familiar with the project processes/standards/instructions. In addition, an orientation session should be created at the beginning to facilitate a common understanding. Cultural differences in work habits and norms as well as different attitudes towards hierarchy and authority may create emotional and task-related conflicts. For this

reason, common understanding within an MCT is more difficult but that much more important.

*Sufficient member participation:* Team members should be included in critical processes such as risk management and time management, as much as possible. An environment, which is open to discussions and alternative methods, should be provided. Team members should be given the opportunity to share their cultural, personal, and project-related expectations. This element not only provides utilization of creativity and innovation potential of MCTs but also reduces the realization of misunderstanding and conflict risks by supporting early identification of differences and increasing responsibility-taking and bindingness.

*Ensuring that the managers/members are provided with sufficient time:* It should be considered that managing MCTs and working in MCTs require more time and effort because of slower decision-making process, existence of many issues to be handled, longer adaptation period, and language problems. Sufficient time should be provided to managers, team members, and the task and the schedule should not be too tight. Allowing sufficient time for team members is especially important for common understanding within the team. Enough time gives opportunity to determine the risks and opportunities of cultural variety and to take necessary actions to create 'value-in-diversity' and to avoid 'conflict-in-diversity'. In addition, working in an MCT is more prestigious and motivating because of the enjoyable work environment and more learning opportunity. But in order to utilize this potential, time pressure should not be too high. Time has a special importance for project managers, if the time they are provided is estimated based on only the technical issues; cultural diversity could turn into being a disadvantage.

*Enough free space to the team members:* Enough free space should be provided to the team members. This free space enables establishment of team/project values and mutual understanding. A shared team culture is created with the contribution of different reflection and behaviors of team members in this free space. Granting sufficient leeway enables team members to bring their full potential into the project. Free space supports cultural affinity within the team by providing team members with opportunities for knowing one another more closely.

### **Organizational module of comMCT**

*Effective team-building:* Necessary qualifications should be defined adequately and early in the process. In this respect, in addition to technical and educational skills in the task area, good communication/documentation/time management skills, intercultural soft-skills, language proficiency, and intercultural experience are essential for MCTs. When building the team, cultural differences, strengths, and weaknesses should be considered. Team members who are compatible with one another (regarding their culture, personality, education, etc.) should be selected and if there is a risk of an unacceptable level of tension, members from certain cultures should not be paired, if possible.

A suitable heterogeneity degree and structure should be established. Cultural mix of the team should be as quantitatively balanced as the project allows that there is no majority or minority in the team, no dominance of one group or few groups, and there is a balance in representation of different cultures. A balanced structure prevents formation of strong/dominant subgroups, and reduces in-group/out-group tendencies and ethnocentrism, those impair the communication processes. (Köppel, 2008).

*Re-forming the team:* The team should be restructured or reformed when needed. When other options such as adaptation, structural intervention, and managerial intervention fails, it should be considered to exclude team member(s) from the team, especially in case of existence of strong fault lines and extremely negative attitudes such as offensive threats and

stereotypes (Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2006). A careful observation of the team and making required structural changes provides that measures are taken for cultural differences and communication challenges before the project comes to a deadlock.

*Adaptation of culturally different new team members:* Cultural awareness should be promoted within the team which is a key factor especially for those who will work for a short period of time. Meetings should be arranged for adaptation of new team members, which is a key factor especially for those who will work for a long period of time. Sufficient information and documentation should be provided to the new team members and they should be supported socially and psychologically. In addition, if members from different cultures are to be included in the project, they should be involved as early in the process as possible.

*Training:* Culture-specific and/or intercultural training as well as language training should be provided, if needed. Training activities should be arranged at the beginning of the project and include all members, as much as possible. In the training activities both didactic and experiential techniques should be used (Puck, 2007). Similarly, not only theoretical but also practical and strategic materials should be employed (Terry, 2007). In addition, regular team development activities should be implemented. During the development activities, cultural differences should be considered and suitable techniques should be employed that take into account values and sensitivities of all the participants.

*Effective task-sharing and role/responsibility assignment:* The roles, responsibilities, and hierarchical structure should be defined in a clear and differentiated fashion as well as communicated clearly. Cultural differences, strengths, and weaknesses as well as compatibility of team members should be considered when designating tasks and assigning roles. The roles demanding cultural closeness to the target culture, such as business analysis and marketing, should be assigned to the 'local/native' team members. Furthermore, the critical roles such as leadership should not be assigned to one nation alone, if possible (Pfann, 2005). MCTs are more prone to the role ambiguity and role conflict due to cultural differences, language difficulties, and somewhat less cooperative group atmosphere, and that opens the doors for effort withholding, social loafing, and absence tendency of team members. Therefore, definition, documentation, and communication of the tasks, roles, and responsibilities clearly and early in the process is extremely important for MCTs.

*External support and assistance:* External support and assistance should be employed especially in cases where team members do not know one another and team leaders/members suffer from lack of intercultural experiences and competencies or they do not have sufficient cultural knowledge. For example, a translator, a cultural interpreter/expert/mediator should be included and consulting and coaching services should be resorted to, when needed. (Köppel, 2008) External support may aid also in overcoming problems which emerge from local regulations and rules.

*Employing adequate leadership-style:* Open and clear style of management should be employed (Krentzel, 2001; Miller, Fields, Kumar, & Ortiz, 2000). Coordination and communication rather than control should be used (Köppel, 2008). Preferences of team members regarding leadership style should be considered, which provides that leader's authority is broadly accepted and respected (Ochieng & Price, 2009b). An 'employee-oriented leadership' should be employed, besides strong governance should be ensured. 'Strong, yet flexible leadership' should be employed, which means, structure should be provided for the team members, but there should be enough flexibility to enable leaders and members to be responsive to the inevitable cultural surprises that will occur in multicultural teams (Hanges et al., 2005). Open style of management and flexible leadership increases trust, inspires team members and enables the team to benefit from variety of skills, approaches, experiences, and resources. Even though different leadership styles are suitable for different multicultural team compositions and for different projects, employee-oriented leadership usually helps in

developing an effective communication, increases satisfaction and motivation, and creates a supportive team climate which are more difficult to ensure in a culturally diverse environment. Strong governance and clear management style reduce some risks of multicultural teams such as disharmony, conflict, and lack of trust, and helps in dealing with problems emerging from cultural differences, social loafing tendencies, stereotypes, religious/cultural observances, and in-group/out-group tendencies.

### **Interpersonal/behavioral module of comMCT**

*Shared vision:* A strong and motivating project vision should be created at the beginning, and this vision should be made known to the bodies involved. Project vision should be improved and modified as necessary. Identification of the team members with the project vision should be ensured. Shared vision increases responsibility-taking, supports goal-orientation, and provides that team members bring their full potential into the project.

*Shared soft skills:* The following soft skills should be possessed by team members (or should be developed); *cultural intelligence, cultural knowledge/awareness, empathy/empathic understanding, openness/open-mindedness, patience, respect/non-judgmental respect, acceptance/tolerance, flexibility/adaptability, listening skills/active listening, professionalism, clarity in speaking/effective dialogues, problem-solving/negotiation skills, ability to follow regulations, communicativeness, motivational skills, observation skills, working well under pressure, critical thinking skills, and personal integrity/honesty.*

Even most of those soft skills are basically required for both kinds of project teams, i.e., culturally homogenous or multicultural, in MCTs they are more necessary and they should be developed better. Besides, some additional soft skills such as cultural intelligence and cultural sensitivity may be required.

With respect to cultural intelligence (CQ), it is not necessary that all team members have a high CQ, but a minimum amount of cultural intelligence (at least two high-CQ members) is essential. In this situation, a high-CQ member has the correct answer or solution, and another high-CQ member will support this view (Earley & Gardner, 2005). Cultural intelligence is more important for MCTs with high diversity level (Moon, 2013).

Empathy is especially important for project managers, as trying to understand employees, and explicitly showing this tendency, builds trust between employees and managers and helps in understanding people and situations better. When showing empathy, it should be kept in mind that it has some risks such as misunderstanding and abuse. Misunderstanding is caused by the perception of this approach by team members as questioning and as a threat. In order to eliminate these risks a balance and mutuality should be ensured. Mutuality means team members too should try to understand managers and leaders emphatically.

Respect is essential for co-existence and creates a supportive team climate which is safe to express divergent ideas (Crotty & Brett, 2012). Patience supports especially verbal communication and encourages team members with lower language proficiency to speak up. Adaptation, as a cross-cultural competency, is defined as "acknowledging cultural gaps openly and working around them" and "is important especially for managers" (Brett et al., 2006, p.88). For adaptation two conditions are required: (a) willingness to acknowledge the cultural differences, and (b) assumption of responsibility for dealing with these differences (Brett et al., 2006).

Active listening goes back to Carl Rogers (1959). When listening actively, the listener feeds back in her/his own words what they have heard in order to confirm the understanding of both parties. Especially team leaders should listen to team members actively and assure that the message is understood in the way it was intended.

Professionalism is a skill of approaching events professionally, acting diplomatically and formally, avoiding emotional tendencies, focusing on solutions rather than problems, being task-oriented, and avoiding concentrating on nationality/culture and on personal issues. When people act professionally, risks of cultural diversity would not occur as often as expected. In addition, professionalism helps in dealing with such risks if they occur.

Regarding motivational skills, there are two techniques to increase motivation, 'rewards' and 'recognition'. Whereas some team members are motivated by money or other financial rewards given for good work, some are motivated by being recognized for their skills. (gomentor.com) Team leaders should be aware of the motivational efficacy of rewards for team members from different cultures. For example, safety and social needs is more important for members from Central and Eastern European, American members are more motivated by pay, and Indian team members are more motivated by recognition and autonomy. (Hajro & Pudelko, 2010) Motivational skills create a supportive team climate in which team members are eager to express and exchange their different ideas. These skills enhance intercultural and task-related learning and also enhance building trust and harmony within the team.

Soft-skills such as cultural intelligence, cultural awareness, listening skills, empathy, openness, flexibility, tolerance, and patience supports cultural affinity, reduces the appearance of conflicts, misunderstanding, critical behavioral mistakes, and problems due to religious/cultural observance, and helps in overcoming language difficulties. Awareness of culture specific practices and cultural attitudes is particularly crucial for leading and facilitating the team and providing team-learning (Cseh, 2003). These kinds of soft-skills make people feel valued, regarded, and respected and support them in considering themselves as part of the project. These attitudes encourage team members to search for and to share different ideas.

*Shared attitudes and values:* The following attitudes and values should be established and maintained in the team; *equality, freedom of expression, effective analysis of different views, opportunity for social interactions, avoiding egos and aggressiveness, knowledge-sharing/common knowledge, valuing diversity, concentrating on similarities, awareness of differences and risks, sharing/considering cultural differences/expectations, goal-orientation/business-concentration, avoiding negative attitudes, behaving friendly/using power of humors, a balance between self-identity and team-identity, and responding adequately.*

Team members from diverse cultures should be given equal opportunity to show their competencies and to bring their knowledge and experience into the project. All ideas, thoughts, and questions should be expressed freely and without hesitation. People's opinion should be asked explicitly, if they are being quite. Equality, along with freedom of expression, ensures that the voice of minority team members and team members with lower language proficiency is also heard. Effective analysis of different views gives opportunity to benefit from the creativity and innovation potential of cultural diversity.

Team members should respond adequately (timely and by providing required information and data), when they communicate with one another. Responding adequately facilitates effective and faster task-accomplishment, creates a positive and collaborative team climate, and helps in dealing with cultural differences in communication styles, time perceptions, and work habits.

Social interaction provides opportunity for exchange of ideas, thoughts, and approaches, hence facilitates that team members know one another more closely, not only professionally but also personally. This factor promotes cultural awareness, enhances intercultural and task-related learning, and creates a warm group atmosphere in which mutual understanding is established and team members express themselves more comfortably.

Negative attitudes such as stereotypes, rejection, ethnocentrism, and negative statements about others should be avoided. Similarly, egoistic and aggressive behaviors should be avoided and different ideas and approaches should be appreciated. Avoiding negative attitudes, behaving friendly, and using power of humor build an enjoyable and positive work environment and prevent formation of detrimental subgroups

Diversity should be regarded as a positive ingredient for the project and as an interesting opportunity for exchange of customs and habits. Positive contributions of members from all nations should be recognized and highlighted. Valuing diversity aids developing mutual trust -which is vital for a positive group atmosphere-, reduces social loafing, strengthens responsiveness, facilitates divergence of ideas, and increases creativity and innovation potential of MCTs. (Gibson & Grubb, 2005)

Knowledge-sharing/common knowledge creates a supportive team climate, in which cooperation, collaboration, and integration grow stronger. It supports better utilization of the knowledge gathered from different skills, ideas, approaches, and experiences. It also provides that all team members are on the same page and team members with lower language proficiency do not lose the thread.

Team members should concentrate on similarities rather than differences. Similarities and "common fate" should be emphasized among team members. This approach provides that team members re-categorize themselves as being part of one larger 'in-group' with respect to common group membership -instead of several in-groups and out-groups-, which in return results in cohesion and commitment. (Gibson & Grubb, 2005)

Cultural differences and practical implications as well as other risks of MCTs affecting both project-related and emotional matters should be identified in early processes of the project. Team members should speak about cultural differences and expectations and be eager to learn and understand others as well as to develop mutual respect. Managers and team members should attempt to understand the local context and culture in which they are working. Culture-specific attitudes and behaviors should be respected and religious activities should be allowed and respected, as much as possible. But goal orientation and business concentration should always be kept in mind, when taking into account individual/cultural interests/preferences, showing respect and empathy, providing cultural/religious privileges. Goal orientation together with professionalism creates a professional work environment providing that project success has always the precedence. These two elements prevent abuse of well-intentioned behaviors such as tolerance, empathy, and religious/cultural privileges.

A balance between self-identity and team-identity is another important element. That can be achieved through (a) supporting self-identity by highlighting the features individuals bring to the team, such as educational perspective, (b) enhancing cultural identity by supporting formation of culture-based moderately strong subgroups, and (c) enhancing team-identity by emphasizing features shared by all team members. This balance between self-identity and team identity supports meeting psychological and cultural needs of team members and increases satisfaction and motivation. It provides that culturally different team members are more comfortable within the team. Creating a balance between "one's own self-concept" and identification with the team increases cohesion and commitment. (Gibson & Grubb, 2005)

#### **A Note on comMCT:**

It should be noted that some elements are closely related to and complement one another such as cultural intelligence, cultural knowledge/awareness, empathy/empathic understanding, patience, openness/open-mindedness, respect/non-judgmental respect, flexibility/adaptability, and acceptance/tolerance. Similarly, some elements are essential for the application of some other elements. For example, freedom of expression, equality, and



effective analysis of different views are essential for an effective decision-making; problem-solving/negotiation skills for effective conflict management; flexibility/adaptability, cultural knowledge/awareness, and cultural intelligence for adapting to the target culture and adaptation of culturally different team members; and professionalism for goal-orientation/business-concentration.

On the other hand, some elements may contradict with one another. For example; empathy/emphatic understanding, openness/open-mindedness, and respect/non-judgmental respect may contradict with professionalism and goal orientation/business-concentration; and sufficient member participation and free space to the team members with effective rule setting. For such cases the main criteria are the project goals and the project constraints which stand at the center of the model. When employing/applying these kinds of social and person-centered attitudes and practices, establishing a good balance is a key factor. Otherwise, these kinds of attitudes may damage the project which should be the ultimate priority.

### **Evaluation of the model comMCT**

In this part of the study, the quality and validity of the model comMCT was evaluated with respect to seven criteria; completeness, structure, language, redundancy, understandability, originality, and usefulness (for the participants and for a novice). The goal was to have the model evaluated in the field in order to find out what would be perceived as the strong and weak sides of the model. This evaluation also aims at validating the comMCT model and at the same time identifying areas of possible improvements for potential further take-up by researchers, industry, and/or educational institutions<sup>1</sup>. (Please see “<http://demo.moreit.com.tr/anket/index.php/438667/lang-en>” for the evaluation questionnaire).

*Completeness:* 80% (8 out of 10) of the interviewees answered ‘YES!’, when they were asked if the model was complete covering important communication-related issues of MCTs, and 20% (2 of the 10) answered “rather yes” referring that some little issues are missing. It was expressed in the study that learning aspect, external context aspect, and intra-personal and behavioral aspect are missing in the model and it should be tested in real life situations, in order to find out if all aspects are covered.

*Structure:* Half of the project managers (5 out of 10) answered ‘YES!’, when asked whether they liked the structure of the model, 40% (4 out of 10) answered ‘rather yes’ pointing out that there are some slight structural problems, and 10% (1 out of 10) with ‘partly yes, partly no’ stating that there are many important structural problems. One of the project managers stated that she/he found the model too static and it could have been made more dynamic and more applicable by integrating project management processes into the model. One of the project managers suggested that it should include a calculation tool for complexity level arising out of involving different nationalities and a dynamic .com model based on this level. It was also mentioned that the model would look nicer if it were more balanced in terms of the number of items in each module.

*Language:* 60% (6 out of 10) of the respondents agreed that the terms used describe what they stand for appropriately, and 40% (4 out of 10) of them stated that there are only a few problematic terms. One of the respondents expressed that some terms such as integrity and honesty, free space, being patient, and working under pressure need to be defined better.

*Redundancy:* 30% (3 out of 10) of the project managers perceived the model as redundancy-free, whereas 10% (1 out of 10) referred that the model contains redundancies. In

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<sup>1</sup> Redesign of the model based on the results of the evaluation of comMCT is an item for future work. An exception is grammatical and vocabulary-related suggestions of the professionals that only require slight changes for which the model is modified accordingly. This study represents this modified version of the model.

addition, 40% (4 out of 10) of them responded 'rather no' and 20% (2 out of 10) as 'partly yes partly no'. Some of the project managers argued that there are redundancies as a consequence of 'overlapping' elements among/within modules, especially between organizational and interpersonal modules. Another group of respondents argued that there are also totally redundant elements, as they apply to all projects irrespective of their MCT types or they are sub-items of another element.

*Understandability:* The entire project managers evaluated the model as understandable, 70% (7 out of 10) answered 'YES!' and 30% (3 out of 10) 'rather yes'. It was expressed that there are intersections between structural and organizational modules and some elements such as 'an inter-connected communication system' is not defined sufficiently, since no example is given and there is no clue as to how to establish such a system. In addition, it was stated that in the overall diagram, it is not clear what the arrows on project culture and organizational culture circles represents, what is outside of the whole diagram, what they interact with, and what is traveling through those circles.

*Originality:* All project managers found the comMCT as original and innovative, since 30% (3 out of 10) of them responded with 'YES!' and 70% (7 out of 10) with 'rather yes'.

*Usefulness:* Whereas 70% (7 out of 10) of the participants answered 'YES!' and 10% (1 out of 10) 'rather yes', 10% (1 out of 10) responded 'partly yes partly no', another 10% (1 out of 10) stated that they do not know about its usefulness for themselves. In addition, all of the participants agreed that the model would be useful to a person who has limited experience working in and with MCTs, 60% (6 out of 10) of them responding 'YES!' and 30% (3 out of 10) 'rather yes'. The remaining 10% (1 out of 10) of the participants answered 'partly yes, partly no'.

Project managers especially emphasized its usefulness as a check-list, and as a common vocabulary when working in MCTs. In addition, two of the participants showed their concerns regarding the possibility of the application of all aspects. One of them argued that some components, especially the organizational ones are out of her/his hands as a project manager, such as 'a balanced cultural mix of the team', and that she/he has no clue on how to apply components under the interpersonal module, such as valuing diversity. Another project manager emphasized the lack of resources to do everything foreseen by this model and suggested that a prioritization model would also be useful. That is to select which parts of the model will be more useful to observe based on the outcomes you need. One of the interviewees argued that it can be adopted and layered by bringing a very simple model at the beginning, and refining it later for more experienced users.

In order to come to a conclusion about the interviewees' overall perception of the quality and validity of the model comMCT, a cumulative evaluation method was developed and applied to responses to the questions which measure each criterion with five points Likert-scale. The sufficiency of the model was evaluated as follows:

1. Answer options were assigned points between +2 and -2, which means the model gets +2 points for the most positive evaluation (YES!) and, -2 for the most negative evaluation (NO!) for each evaluation criterion. Table 2 shows the points assigned for each of the answer options.

Table 2. Points given to the each answer options

Answer options	Point <sup>2</sup>
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<sup>2</sup> An adverse situation is eligible for redundancy question, as it is asked adversely. Therefore for the redundancy the model gets +2 for the answer "NO!", +1 for the answer "rather no", -2 for the answer YES!, and -1 for the answer "rather yes".

YES!	+2
Rather yes	+1
Partly yes, partly no	0
Ratner no	-1
NO!	-2
I don't know	(no point)

2. The model is expected to get minimum average point of 1 for each criterion and for the model as a whole; therefore the following two threshold values were determined for the sufficiency of the model:

- a. the average score of each criterion should be greater than 1
- b. the average score of the model should be greater than 1

3. The score of each criterion was calculated in order to decide whether the model is sufficient with respect to the seven criteria, namely completeness, structure, language, redundancy, understandability, originality, and usefulness. Two usefulness criteria were integrated into one by calculating average. Table 3 demonstrates the average scores calculated for each criterion and the whole model. As seen in the table, the model is found to be sufficient with respect to its completeness, structure, language, understandability, originality and usefulness, whereas insufficient with respect to its redundancy based on the responses of the interviewees. The completeness of the module is the criterion with the highest average point, followed by understandability and language. In addition, when an overall average is calculated, it is seen that the model as a whole was found to be sufficient.

Table 3. Score of the evaluation criteria

Criteria	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	Average	Sufficiency
<b>Completeness</b>	+2	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	<b>1.80</b>	sufficient
<b>Structure</b>	+2	+2	+1	+1	+2	+1	0	+2	+1	+2	<b>1.40</b>	sufficient
<b>Language</b>	+2	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	+1	<b>1.60</b>	sufficient
<b>Redundancy</b>	0	-2	+1	+1	+2	+1	0	+2	+1	+2	<b>0.80</b>	insufficient
<b>Understandability</b>	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+1	+2	+1	<b>1.70</b>	sufficient
<b>Originality</b>	+2	+1	+2	+1	+1	+2	+1	+1	+1	+1	<b>1.30</b>	sufficient
Usefulness for you	+2	+2	+2	0	+2	+2		+1	+2	+2	1.67	
Usefulness for a novice	+2	+2	+1	+1	+2	+0	2	+2	+2	+1	1.50	
<b>Usefulness</b>	(1.67+1.50)/2										<b>1.58</b>	sufficient
<b>Overall</b>	(1.80+1.40+1.60+0.80+1.70+1.30+1.67+1.58)/7										<b>1.48</b>	sufficient

## Discussions and Conclusion

Many researchers argued that culture is one of the most important variables affecting attitudes, approaches, and behaviors of individuals within an organization (e.g. Earley, 1993; Hofstede, 1980). Moreover, most of the challenges in multicultural teams are due to the diverse cultural backgrounds of team members (e.g., Matveev & Milter, 2004). In addition, many authors exposed that cultural diversity brings along several risks (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 1993; Hanges et al., 2005; Pelled, et al, 1999) and opportunities (e.g., DeSanctis & Jiang, 2005; McLeod & Lobel, 1992) for the team. The researchers (e.g., Snow et al. 1996; Stahl, et al., 2010) argued that multicultural teams can create value (value-in-diversity) or conflict (conflict-in-diversity) depending on how cultural diversity is approached and handled. Even

though it was concluded by several authors that effective communication is a fundamental issue in this regard (e.g., Ochieng & Price, 2009b), only a few studies had addressed the communication in MCTs specifically (e.g., Butler & Zander, 2008; Congden et al., 2009). Hence, this study fills an essential gap in the existing literature by identifying the circumstances for a healthy communication environment and for an effective communication during the whole project, such as to strengthen the opportunities and overcome many of the risks of MCTs.

Summarizing, this paper introduced a communication model (comMCT) for multicultural teams, intended to provide a knowledge resource for facilitating effective teamwork. The information included in comMCT was organized into four modules (structural, functional, organizational, and interpersonal/behavioral), each of which includes several elements referring actions and measures to be taken, soft and hard skills to possess, conditions to be fulfilled, and initiatives to be taken for an effective communication. Naturally, this information is highly intertwined and its clear organization is one of the major challenges of the work.

To our knowledge, this work is the first one that develops a comprehensive communication model for MCTs. Even though many of the previous multicultural team studies offer some theoretical and empirical explanations for the ways of an effective multicultural teamwork (e.g. Podsiadlowski, 2002), only two studies are found in the literature which put forth a model for MCTs. One of them (Matveev, Rao, & Milter, 2001, as cited in Matveev & Nelson, 2004) introduced an intercultural communication competence model with four dimensions; namely, interpersonal skills, team effectiveness, cultural uncertainty, and cultural empathy. This study explores soft skills aspect of communication, which only partly correspond to the interpersonal/behavioral module of our model. Our empirical study complements this study by providing some empirical proof to some of their findings (such as significance of empathy, cultural knowledge, openness, and flexibility) and by introducing additional soft skills (such as professionalism, motivational skills, and listening skills). Our study also extends the aforementioned work by defining other three modules exploring structural, functional, and organizational aspects of an effective multicultural teamwork.

Another study from Pfann (2005) presented a phase-by-phase work model for MCTs. In that model, four phases of multicultural teamwork -beginning of the cooperation, knowing each other and building trust, developing team identity and team culture, and effective cooperation versus dysfunction- and success factors for each phase are defined. That study covers a number of aspects of multicultural teamwork such as team structure, clear role setting, social events, and shared team culture for which our study provides further empirical confirmations.

In addition, most of the previous empirical studies researched the concept of MCT by gathering information from team members (e.g., Tenzer et al., 2013). Our study differs in this aspect, in that it is conducted by considering project manager's perspectives, whereas only a few studies (Hajro & Pudelko, 2010; Joshi & Lazarova, 2005; Köppel, 2008; Ochieng & Price, 2009a, 2009b; Ochieng et al., 2013) researched the issues from the point view of project managers (or team leaders).

The first strength of our model is that it is a multidimensional model covering all aspects of multicultural teamwork. Secondly, it is based on both theory and practice as it was developed by considering existing literature in the research area and conducting a field study with actively working project management professionals. The third strength of the model is the extensiveness of the data it is based on. The model internalizes findings of 159 previous studies and the data collected from 21 project managers from nine different countries with nine different nationalities. Empirical data used to develop the model covers, as a whole, the

knowledge emerging from 292 years of project management experience and management of 210 culturally diverse project teams. Moreover, in the study, gender and age were represented with a good balance by the contribution of 15 female and 16 male professionals of ages between 31-67 -covering a good 36-year margin-, which strengthens the validity and representativeness of the study. And other strength of the study is the empirical validation of the model with another expert interview with 10 professionals from seven different countries with seven different nationalities.

Application of the expert interview and content analysis method is a methodological significance of our research. By collecting the data through expert interviews, special knowledge, experiences, and thoughts of project managers who have worked in several projects with a considerable amount of team members are included directly; and by analyzing the data through content analysis method, the reliability and trustworthiness of the study is strengthened, which is expected to be lower for a qualitative study compared to a quantitative study. The application of content analysis method, which has very limited appearance in existing MCT-related studies (e.g., Ochieng & Price, 2009b), would provide valuable insights to other researchers on the use of this method in this field.

The comMCT suggests that the first step of an effective communication in multicultural teams is identifying the risks and opportunities in advance. The model presents that interaction and communication within the team should be regulated to deal with conflicts and misunderstandings effectively. These regulations (such as communication plan and internal/external communication producers, communication rules, and task-sharing and role/responsibility assignment) are an important part of the internal project standards that balances the cultural diversity of the teams. When defining regulations, clarity, earliness, well-documentation, and well-communication are critical points.

In order to ensure common understanding within the team, common concepts and project-related terms should be defined, and common sense of urgency, common time perception, and a common understanding with regards to the priorities should be ensured. In an MCT, time pressure should not be too high, team members and leaders should be provided enough time and free space in order to know one another more closely, both personally and professionally. A shared team culture will be developed naturally as a consequence of interaction and communication of team members within this 'free space'. In this point, a good balance between "regulating" and "space for team members" is key issue.

With regard to the dispersed multicultural teams, the comMCT suggest that new media and suitable technical environment should be available, ad-hoc calls should be performed after a good preparation, and time differences, different working hours, and bank holidays would not be missed, when scheduling. In order to benefit from opportunity for longer and more continuous working hours, the work and time planning should be made accordingly.

It is implied in the model that communication tools should be used complementarily, all communication types, styles, forms, and media in appropriate level of combination. When choosing the communication tool to use, availability and appropriateness of the tool, type of the project team (dispersed or collocated), and skills and preferences of team members are decisive. Written and formal communication ensures a professional level of communication, protects the communication content, prevents misunderstandings and conflicts, and provides bindingness. Written communication is also suitable when facing with lack of understanding with speech. However, informal communication provides an enjoyable work environment and enhances team identification. For the first contact, face-to-face should be used as much as possible. Visual aids such as charts and white boards help in presentation of ideas more readily. They can be preferred when talking is insufficient. Using common tools and templates is important for standardization reducing the risks emerging from cultural work habits and language problems. Business trips are needed to contact with team members in

different locations, which helps in meeting social needs of members. Informal communication and social interactions and using shared platforms such as forums and wikis are important for knowing one another, promoting building trust, and developing a 'we-feeling'. Last but not least, business-related communication should be recorded no matter via which communication media carried out.

Other important elements integrated into the comMCT are following: Team members and managers should adapt to the local context and culture in which they are working; members from certain cultures should not be paired, if there is a risk of an unacceptable level of tension; if members from different cultures are to be included in the project, they should be involved as early in the process as possible; for adaptation of new team members, cultural awareness should be promoted within the team, sufficient information and documentation should be provided to the new team members, and they should be supported socially and psychologically; culture-specific, intercultural, and language trainings as well as external support and assistance should be provided, especially in lack of intercultural skills, cultural knowledge, and language proficiency; cultural differences/expectations should be considered, culture-specific attitudes and behaviors should be respected, and religious activities should be allowed and respected, as much as possible.

Shared soft-skills, values, and attitudes are other important components of the model. The model argues that team players should show empathy, tolerance, openness, flexibility, and respect to one another during the whole project. Listening skills, motivational skills, problem solving skills, communicativeness, and professionalism are other soft-skills which should be possessed or developed. Cultural knowledge/awareness and cultural intelligence are very critical for cultural affinity and developing mutual understanding. In addition, values and attitudes such as equality, freedom of expression, avoiding egos and aggressiveness, knowledge-sharing, valuing diversity, concentrating on similarities, goal-orientation/business-concentration, avoiding negative attitudes, and behaving friendly create an environment in which all team members feel comfortable in expressing their divergent ideas.

In this point, it should be emphasized that project constraints (cost, time, and scope/quality) are located at the center of comMCT, as one main aim of the communication processes is to attain required outputs within these constraints. That means when applying elements of the model, it should be ensured that project success is not surpassed and the project goals remain the main priority. When paying attention to the individuals, showing empathy and tolerance, and providing personal privileges, the whole project must not suffer, in other words, completing the project within reasonable time, budget, and concept/quality; and a balance and mutuality should be envisaged.

Valuing completeness over brevity of information, the model comes with some redundancies that were identified in the model's evaluation by some experts and have not been eliminated yet. This is because the model aims at classifying its features as differential and as modular as possible such that it can be easily adapted in practice by providing choices for the professionals which features to consider and to adapt. Other than that, the experts evaluated the model as being very good or good with regard to completeness, structure, language, understandability, originality, and usefulness.

Even though the model was found very useful for professionals in the evaluation study, it is obvious that application of all dimensions of this model -covering structural, organizational, interpersonal, behavioral and functional aspects of communication- might exceed the scope of the authority and/or responsibility of project managers and team members. Therefore, in addition to efforts and willingness of all project actors, its application requires a support from top management and stakeholders.

The comMCT makes a contribution to several related fields such as project management, international business, organizational behavior, human resource management, and intercultural communication by revealing how to handle, manage, and live with cultural diversity in multicultural project teams, and what soft and hard skills to possess for effective teamwork. Furthermore, it is intended as a flexible and versatile resource for life-long, self-organized, guided, or collaborative learning for young managers as well as for reflection about project communication by individuals or by small groups of managers aiming at collaborative learning.

Our work offers a number of valuable insights for practitioners. When working with multicultural teams, the model comMCT can be adopted to increase effectiveness and efficiency, since this research has practical implications for all multicultural team players; members, leaders, project managers, and project stakeholders alike. The model comMCT can be adopted by both project-oriented organizations and individual projects.

The comMCT may serve especially as a check-list both for experienced project managers and novices. The model has a modular structure which makes it possible to customize according to the need of the implementer and to incorporate specific elements needed. As one of the project managers suggested, it can be adopted by layering, to serve as a very simple model at the beginning and then it can be refined for the later stages of the project.

As effective communication is vital for all multicultural teams, the usefulness and applicability of the model would apply not only to project teams but also to other types of workgroups. Therefore, all intercultural organizations employing teams/workgroups can benefit from the results of this study when dealing with intercultural conflicts and in utilization of opportunities of cultural diversity. The model is also useful for all organizations and individuals working in a multicultural environment, as it provides some general insights with regard to cross-cultural communication. In addition, organizations that provide project management certification and trainings can benefit from the results of the study providing important insights on the social and cultural diversity-related aspects of project management.

### **Limitations and further research**

In this research as well as the encompassing PhD-Thesis (Güver, 2016), it was challenging to find participants for the empirical part of the study, as strict criteria were defined for the selection of the participants, there were limited number of experts with required qualifications whom it was difficult to reach out, and also participation required a considerable amount of time which was difficult for these experts to spare. However, statistical power of the study, more specifically internal and external validity, would have increased with a larger sample size. In addition, multicultural teams were researched only from the managers' point of views. Although the results imply that project managers approached the issues with an employee-oriented perspective, researching the subject also from the members' point of views would also increase its quality and scope.

Redundancy can be perceived as an area for improvement in this work, further applications of the model would show how to handle (potential) redundancies. In addition, further research studies can improve the model by prioritizing the elements, which will support its utilization, especially for small projects. Similarly, stratifying the model according to project phases, which might be a subject of another study, would support its application by the practitioners. A model having different layers would give opportunity to the implementers to adopt the model more easily and effectively, for example applying the first level (the most simple one) at the beginning and refining it later, or applying the first level for new starters and more advanced layers for experienced ones. Similarly, another research subject could be

giving the model a more dynamic structure by integrating it into the project management processes and including a commenting function to collect insights from applicants.

In order to enhance research, the study can be replicated and extended by further researchers. Future researchers can conduct the first empirical study in different study settings in order to improve the comMCT model and/or can conduct the second empirical study and test the model in different study settings to facilitate the generalizability of the model. Last but not least, testing the model in practice would add value and facilitate improvement of the model.

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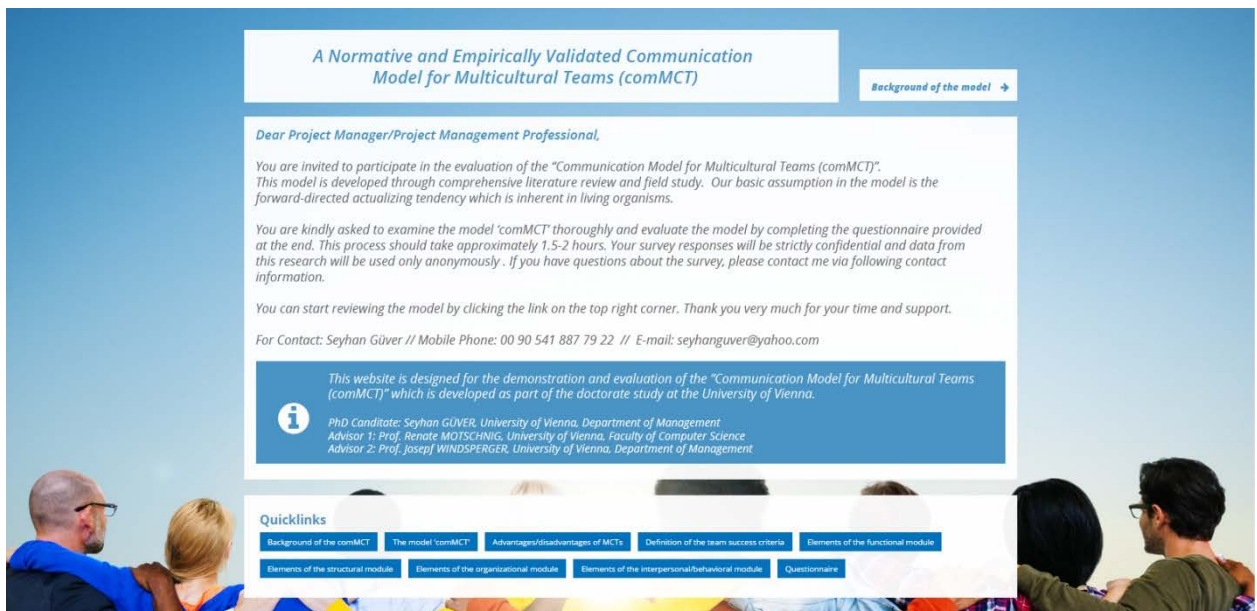
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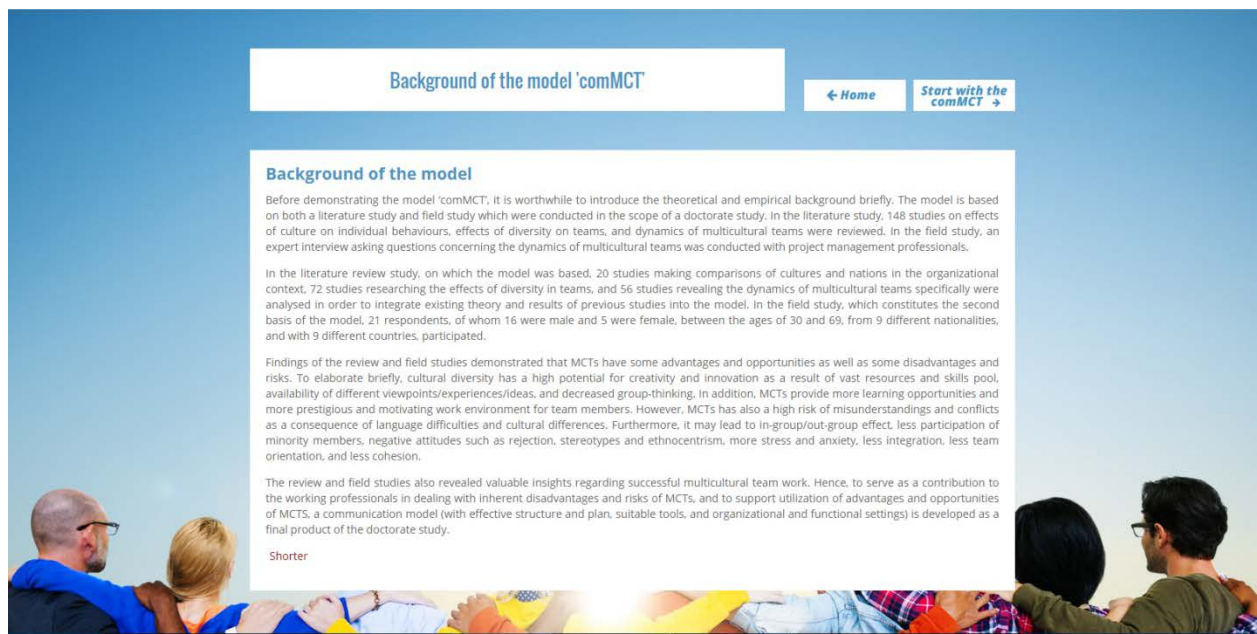
We would like to acknowledge Ertuğrul Yilmaz and Chris Li for their contribution in proofreading of the work.

## Appendix A. Some Screenshots from the Web-Platform for comMCT

### A.1. Page 1- Homepage (<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/index.php>)



### A.2. Page 3-Background of the model/ Long version



(<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/index3.php>)

A.3. Page 4- Model page (<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/model.php>)

← Home
← Background of the model

### A Communication Model for Multicultural Teams (comMCT)

**Basis of the comMCT :**

TEAM SUCCESS CRITERIA		
Team Processes	Team Outcomes	Long-Term Team Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Decision making/ problem solving</li> <li>➤ Planning</li> <li>➤ Participation</li> <li>➤ Turnover</li> <li>➤ Communication</li> <li>➤ Conflict</li> <li>➤ Cooperation</li> <li>➤ Role Expectations</li> <li>➤ Sub-group formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Performance</li> <li>➤ Satisfaction</li> <li>➤ Learning</li> <li>➤ Cohesion</li> <li>➤ Commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Viability</li> </ul>

1. 'Multicultural teams (MCTs)' in this model refers to the teams whose members have different nationalities from which, consequently, different cultures emerge.

2. This model aims to demonstrate a communication model providing a successful teamwork for MCTs. In this model, teamwork is regarded successful when it reaches the project goals and achieves viability. We argue that successful team outcomes are reached through effective team processes, therefore they are also considered as team success criteria in the model. Team success criteria on which comMCT is based are shown in the table on the left (Please hover on each criterion to see its definition or click here to see all success criteria with their definitions).

3. As the review and field studies revealed that cultural diversity brings along some advantages and opportunities as well as some disadvantages and supporting utilization of advantages/opportunities. Therefore, each element of the model is associated with the advantage and disadvantage factors which are also associated with team success criteria. (Please click here to see all advantages/opportunities and disadvantages/risks of MCTs with their explanations and their effects on team success).

4. comMCT is a flexible model in which several factors (team culture, project culture, organization culture and four modules) are in interaction and the boundaries of this flexibility is determined by project constraints.

**Layout of the comMCT:**

**According to this model:**

- comMCT consists of four modules: structural, functional, organizational, and interpersonal/behavioural. Details of the modules can be viewed by clicking on each. Each module has several elements, details of which can be viewed in the designated page for that module.
- Project constraints (cost, time, and scope/quality) are located at the center of the comMCT, as the main aim of the communication process is to attain required outputs within these constraints.
- Team culture is also included at the center of the comMCT, as it is an important factor shaping the communication within the team. Team culture in this context refers to the culture, which is developed naturally within the boundaries of the project, and as a consequence of the "free place" provided to the team members. Each project has a team consisting of individuals. Each individual brings some additional cultural elements and habits to the team (such as greetings, tone of speech, eating habits, jokes etc.) independent of the organizational culture and project culture. A team culture emerges from the integration of these cultural elements and habits of the individuals.
- Four modules will be inherently influenced by the project culture, which is also inherently influenced by the culture of the organization within which the project will be conducted. On the other direction, these four modules will influence project culture, which will also influence organizational culture.

You are asked to go through each module (1.structural, 2.functional, 3.organizational, 4.interpersonal/behavioral) in the given order by clicking on them. When you are done reviewing modules please evaluate the model by answering the questionnaire under following link: [QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

A.4. Page 5- Definition of the success criteria  
<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/list1all.php>

A Communication Model for Multicultural Teams (comMCT)
← Home

← Prev page

### Definition of the success criteria

Team Processes	
Decision making/ problem solving	The process of identification and evaluation of alternative solutions/ideas, and selection of the most effective solutions/ideas.
Planning	The process of defining and scheduling of tasks and milestones of the project.
Participation	The process of participation and contribution of team members during the project. Participation process of the project is shaped by the "ability" and "tendency" of team members to participate and contribute. This process includes withholding efforts of team members such as social loafing, free riding, and shirking.
Turnover	The process of team members' turnover during the project.
Communication	The process of imparting and exchanging information, knowledge and skills among team players by speaking, writing, or using some other medium during the project.
Conflict	"The process resulting from the tension between team members because of real and perceived differences. Because team members contribute to the team through social inputs and task inputs, conflicts in team is concerned with relationship and task issues". (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003, p.741). Conflict process of the teamwork also includes management of and dealing with conflicts.
Cooperation	The process of working together for a common goal. In other words, the process of sharing information, knowledge, insights and lessons learned with other team members, supporting each other, and looking out for the interests of other team members (Beersma et al., 2003).
Role Expectations	The processes of expectations regarding roles and responsibilities. Role expectations is "the extent to which members thought that their team had clarified what should be done, how it should be done, and so forth" (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000, p. 38)
Sub-group formation	The process of formation of sub-groups by team members with similar cultural background, especially through social categorization and similarity-attraction theories.
Team Outcomes	
Performance	Performance refers to the task outputs such as efficiency of operations, task accomplishment, decision quality, and productivity.
Satisfaction	Satisfaction is "a positive or negative affective response to the environment" (Detzel, 2001, p.29).
Learning	Learning by team members.
Cohesion	Cohesion is reflected in the "tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron et al., 1998, p.213). In a cohesive team, team members are attracted to each other, the general morale of the group is high, and group members show coordinated efforts (Riordan & Shore, 1997).
Commitment	Commitment refers to the identification with and involvement in the team (Riordan & Shore, 1997).
Long-Term Team Outcome	
Viability	Viability is "a group's potential to retain its members -a condition necessary for proper group functioning over time-" (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006, p.51). Viability of the team refers to the ability of the team to persist; capability of living, growing and developing; chance of succeeding; in other words whether the team has a future.

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A.5. Page 6- Advantages/disadvantages of multicultural teams  
<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/list4.php>

A Communication Model for Multicultural Teams (comMCT)
← Home

← Prev page

### Advantages/opportunities of multicultural teams

<p>✓ Resource/skills pool</p>	<p>MCTs have a rich resource pool arising from availability of complementary skills, generally originating from cultural strengths, and diversity of education, knowledge, and techniques. This advantage factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitates creativity and innovation which in turn influences the team process "problem solving/decision making" and the team outcome "performance" positively</li> <li>- facilitates effective time/work planning and better task duration estimation, which in turn influences the team process "planning" and the team outcome "performance" positively</li> <li>- results in more broadly valid outputs/solutions, which in turn influences "performance" outcome positively</li> <li>- provides more learning opportunities which influence "learning" process of the team positively</li> <li>- provides more motivating work environment which indeed influences "satisfaction" process positively</li> </ul>
<p>✓ Different viewpoints/approaches/ideas</p>	<p>Different viewpoints, perspectives, approaches, and ideas are present in MCTs. This advantage factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitates creativity and innovation which in turn influences the team process "problem solving/decision making" and the team outcome "performance" positively</li> <li>- facilitates effective time/work planning and better task duration estimation, which in turn influences the team process "planning" and the team outcome "performance" positively</li> <li>- results in more broadly valid outputs/solutions, which in turn influences "performance" outcome positively</li> <li>- provides more learning opportunities which influence "learning" process of the team positively</li> <li>- provides more motivating work environment which in turn influences "satisfaction" process positively</li> <li>- increases collective intelligence, which in turn influences the team process "problem solving/decision making" and the team outcome "performance" positively.</li> </ul>
<p>✓ Decreased group-thinking</p>	<p>Cultural diversity prevents groups from moving to premature consensus on issues that need careful consideration. This advantage factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitates creativity and innovation which in turn influences the team process "problem solving/decision making" and the team outcome "performance" positively</li> <li>- provides learning opportunities which influences "learning" process positively</li> <li>- increases motivation, which influences "satisfaction" process positively.</li> </ul>
<p>✓ Different work/life experiences</p>	<p>MCTs have potential of different work and life experiences. This advantage factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitates creativity and innovation which in turn influence team process "problem solving/decision making" and team outcome "performance" positively</li> <li>- facilitates effective time/work planning and better task duration estimation, which in turn influence team process "planning" and team outcome "performance" positively</li> <li>- results in more broadly valid outputs/solutions, which in turn influence "performance" outcome positively</li> <li>- provides more learning opportunities which influence "learning" process of the team positively</li> <li>- provides more motivating work environment which in turn influences "satisfaction" process positively</li> </ul>
<p>✓ More learning opportunity</p>	<p>In MCTs, there are more opportunities for learning through availability of different resources/skills/viewpoints and more information-processing as well as information-use behaviours. In addition to learning in a general sense, MCTs provide potential for intercultural learning. Read more: British Council defined intercultural learning as "the process of becoming more aware of and better understanding one's own culture and other cultures around the world. The aim of intercultural learning is to increase international cross-cultural tolerance and understanding". This advantage factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- influences the team outcome "learning" positively</li> <li>- increases motivation of team members which in turn influences team outcome "satisfaction" positively.</li> </ul>

Note. The list of advantages continues.

## Disadvantages of multicultural teams

<p>✘ Language problems</p>	<p>Language problems, not only in verbal and written communication may occur in MCTs. The language used in a multicultural project is always a second language for some of the team members. Therefore, they encounter language problems such as lack of language proficiency, having different dialects, and trouble with accent and fluency. This factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leads to misunderstandings, miscommunication, emotional and task-related conflicts, and personal clashes, which in turn hurt "communication", "conflict" and "cooperation" processes and "cohesion" outcome of the team</li> <li>- leads to less confidence to speak up, and less contribution and more silence of some members, which in turn influence "decision making/problem solving" and "participation" processes, and "performance" outcome negatively</li> <li>- leads to personal de-motivation, and emotional stress and anxiety, which in turn reduce "satisfaction"</li> <li>- leads to reduced information sharing, prevents learning, and in turn influences "decision-making/problem solving" process and "learning" outcome of the team negatively</li> <li>- leads to role ambiguity which influences "role expectations" process negatively</li> <li>- leads to misperception of some members and negative attitudes towards them, which in turn damage the processes of "cooperation" and "conflict" as well as the outcomes of "cohesion", "commitment" and "satisfaction" Read more: (Problems with translation or language usage may influence also the perception of individuals. Lack of language proficiency may be identified with the lack of intelligence and cause non-recognition and less utilization of expertise of non-native speakers, and less motivation and contribution of those. In addition, they are less respected and shown less patience (Behfar et al., 2006; Brett et al., 2006).</li> </ul>
<p>✘ General cultural differences</p>	<p>Cultural differences in a general sense (such as different values, attitudes, norms, religious activities, political thoughts) have a potential to affect MCTs negatively. This factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leads to misunderstandings, miscommunication and emotional and task-related conflicts, which in turn influence "decision making/problem solving", "communication" and "conflict" processes negatively</li> <li>- leads to role ambiguity which in turn influences "role expectations" process negatively</li> <li>- damages the "cohesion" of the team.</li> </ul>
<p>✘ Different non-verbal behaviours</p>	<p>Different non-verbal behaviours, such as body language and greetings are risk factors in MCTs. This risk factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leads to misunderstandings, miscommunication, emotional and task-related conflicts, and in turn influences "communication" and "conflict" processes negatively.</li> </ul>
<p>✘ Different communication/confrontation styles</p>	<p>Different ways of expressing yourself and confrontation with challenging situations as well as different turn-taking styles produce communication problems within an MCT. Read more: (For example, individuals from a culture with an indirect and implicit style may ask questions instead of highlighting problems directly with the team leader and tend to build consensus instead of open disagreement and confrontation. Members with a direct communication and confrontation style can perceive these behaviors negatively (less effective and passive, evading problems) (Behfar et al., 2006; Brett et al., 2006)). This factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication, which in turn influence "communication" and "conflict" processes negatively.</li> </ul>
<p>✘ Different perception of working</p>	<p>People from different cultures perceive work differently. In addition, perception of different types of work can also differ from culture to culture. Such perception differences on work and work types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lead to different implementations and in turn influence "performance" negatively</li> <li>- lead to role ambiguity and in turn influence "role expectations" process negatively</li> </ul>
<p>✘ Different pace/sense of urgency/time perception</p>	<p>Differences in perception of time (e.g. monochronic/polychronic), pace, and urgency are risk factors in MCTs. Read more: (For example, expectations for project deliverable timelines, the meaning assigned to "on-time" and "late", and reactions to deadlines differ from culture to culture (Behfar et al., 2006; Hanges et al., 2005)). Such differences regarding perception of time, pace, and urgency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cause missed deadlines, anger, misunderstandings and confusion, and in turn leads to reduced "satisfaction", "cooperation" and "cohesion" and influence "performance" negatively.</li> </ul>
<p>✘ Different attitudes towards hierarchy/authority</p>	<p>Different perception of hierarchy and authority may damage the project processes and outcomes of an MCT. Read more: (For example, in a hierarchical culture, some certain treatments of other team members, which are "normal" in egalitarian societies, can be perceived as disrespect to others. On the other hand, a very decisive status and hierarchy can result in lack of empowerment of project staff, which can be frustrating for team members from cultures with flat hierarchy (Hanges et al., 2005)). This factor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leads to misunderstandings, conflicts, and role ambiguity, and in turn influences "communication", "conflict" and "role expectations" processes of the team negatively.</li> </ul>

Note. The list of disadvantages continues.

A.6. Page 7- Elements of the structural module  
(<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/accordion.php?TUR=1>)

**A Communication Model for Multicultural Teams (comMCT)** Close

### Elements of the structural module

- 1 - Effective communication plan
- 2 - Open communication structure
- 3 - An inter-connected communication system
- 4 - Adequate communication procedures/processes
- 5 - Suitable technical environment
- 6 - Ad-hoc calls with preparation
- 7 - Using the right communication tools

**References:**  
Köppel, P. (2008). Konflikte und Synergien in multikulturellen Teams: virtuelle und face-to-face-Kooperation. Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag.  
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Van Ginow, M. A., Shapiro, D. L., & Brett, J. M. (2004). Can we talk, and should we? Managing emotional conflict in multicultural teams. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(4), 578-592.  
Zeutschel, U., & Thomas, A. (2003). Zusammenarbeit in multikulturellen Teams. *Wirtschaftspsychologie aktuell*, 10(2), 31-39.

A.7. Page 7- Sub-elements of the structural module  
(<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/accordion.php?TUR=1>)

**7 - Using the right communication tools** -

Using the right communication tools is vital for an effective communication among team members, which enables effective sharing of ideas, knowledge and experiences as well as status of tasks. Communication tools include four kinds of communication elements: communication media (such as e-mail, f2f, phone, forums etc.), communication type (written, vokal), communication form (meetings, p2p), and communication style (formal, informal). Although it is very hard to come to a conclusion about the "right" communication tool, the following points can be integrated into the communication model of an MCT.

- 7a - Effective decision of communication tools
- 7b - E-mail
- 7c - Instant messaging
- 7d - Wikis/blogs/shared platforms
- 7e - Social media (such as LinkedIn, twitter, and project-focused social media)
- 7f - Video-conferencing
- 7g - Phone/tele-conferencing
- 7h - Visual aids (such as charts and white boards)
- 7i - Daily scrums
- 7j - Forums
- 7k - Tools/templates
- 7l - Written
- 7m - Verbal
- 7n - Formal
- 7o - Informal
- 7p - Person-to-person
- 7r - Meetings
- 7s - Face-to-face



A.8. Page 7- Element 'open communication structure' with its details, as an example for the structural module (<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/accordion.php?TUR=1>)

### Elements of the structural module

1 - Effective communication plan

2 - Open communication structure

Definition/Explanation	Benefits/Function	Related advantages/disadvantages of MCTs
<p>Availability and utilization of multiple communication channels</p> <p>Giving opportunities for preferences</p> <p>A balanced "open" structure: Ensuring flat hierarchy, allowing for horizontal and vertical communication; but with balanced limits</p> <p>Ensuring frequent enough communication among team members</p> <p>Fostering open communication (i.e. project manager serves as a model)</p> <p>Well-documented structure</p> <p>Providing opportunities for proper resolution of conflicts</p> <p>Ensuring agreement by all (as much as possible)</p> <p>Encouraging direct communication</p>	<p>Helps in dealing with problems emerging from language barriers (such as lack of language proficiency, trouble with accent and fluency) and dispersion of team members by providing various communication media to the team members.</p> <p>Provides better utilization of human resources by supporting enough participation and contribution of all parties. Facilitates idea/knowledge sharing by giving opportunity to the team members to communicate in an adequate frequency and with their preferred media, hence supports creativity and innovation within the team. Creates more opportunities for learning. Helps in dealing with conflicts and misunderstanding emerging from cultural differences. Increases satisfaction and motivation within the team.</p>	<p><b>Provides utilization of the following advantages of MCTs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Resource/skills pool</li> <li>✓ Different viewpoints/approaches/ideas</li> <li>✓ Decreased group-thinking</li> <li>✓ Different work/life experiences</li> <li>✓ More learning opportunity</li> <li>✓ Potential for broadly valid outputs</li> <li>✓ Access to multiple resources</li> <li>✓ Cultural mediator/translator function of culturally different members</li> </ul> <p><b>Helps in dealing with the following disadvantages of MCTs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Language problems</li> <li>✗ Difficulty of having common working hours</li> <li>✗ Different work habits/norms</li> <li>✗ Less participation/contribution tendency of minorities</li> </ul>

3 - An inter-connected communication system

### Elements of the structural module

1 - Effective communication plan

2 - Open communication structure

Definition/Explanation	Benefits/Function	Related advantages/disadvantages of MCTs
<p>Availability and utilization of multiple communication channels</p> <p>Giving opportunities for preferences</p> <p>A balanced "open" structure: Ensuring flat hierarchy, allowing for horizontal and vertical communication; but with balanced limits</p> <p>Ensuring frequent enough communication among team members</p> <p>Fostering open communication (i.e. project manager serves as a model)</p> <p>Well-documented structure</p> <p>Providing opportunities for proper resolution of conflicts</p> <p>Ensuring agreement by all (as much as possible)</p> <p>Encouraging direct communication</p>	<p>Helps in dealing with problems emerging from language barriers (such as lack of language proficiency, trouble with accent and fluency) and dispersion of team members by providing various communication media to the team members.</p> <p>Provides better utilization of human resources by supporting enough participation and contribution of all parties. Facilitates idea/knowledge sharing by giving opportunity to the team members to communicate in an adequate frequency and with their preferred media, hence supports creativity and innovation within the team. Creates more opportunities for learning. Helps in dealing with conflicts and misunderstanding emerging from cultural differences. Increases satisfaction and motivation within the team.</p>	<p><b>Provides utilization of the following advantages of MCTs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Resource/skills pool</li> <li>✓ Different viewpoints/approaches/ideas</li> <li>✓ Decreased group-thinking</li> <li>✓ Different work/life experiences</li> </ul> <p><b>Helps in dealing with the following disadvantages of MCTs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Language problems</li> <li>✗ Difficulty of having common working hours</li> <li>✗ Different work habits/norms</li> <li>✗ Less participation/contribution tendency of minorities</li> </ul>

Cultural diversity prevents groups from moving to premature consensus on issues that need careful consideration. This advantage factor:

- facilitates creativity and innovation which in turn influences the team process "problem solving/decision making" and the team outcome "performance" positively
- provides learning opportunities which influences "learning" process positively
- increases motivation, which influences "satisfaction" process positively.

3 - An inter-connected communication system