

Bachelor's Thesis (Turku University of Applied Science) Degree in International
Business
International Business Management
2013

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CULTURAL CHALLENGES FOR EXPATRIATE MANAGERS OPERATING WITHIN PROJECTS

CASE STUDY: JVC LIMITED, LOMÉ PROJECT



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The fast growing paces of the market today increasing globalization. When globalization comes into play, cultural challenges arise for those stepping out into the global arena. Expatriates have become a common aspect in companies today. Thus, cultural challenges tend to arise for expatriates working within projects. The main aim of this thesis is to provide a guideline by which expatriates can follow upon entering, working and future purposes for projects. The case study helps provide insight into projects and the cultural challenges that go along.

JVC Limited is a Ghanaian company that specializes in engineering and taking on major construction projects in West Africa. West Africa has an abundance of mineral resources and energy potentials. The Lomé project, a power plant project, was brought forward by a Scandinavian client to be subcontracted by JVC Limited. The thesis will look into the elements of project management and how does cross-cultural communication; cultural dimensions, cultural synergy and expatriate management play a vital role.

This thesis will take a qualitative approach of research is adopted into this study. The research is based on interviews of highly respectable expatriates in the Lomé project. Existing literature is used to reveal studies on expatriates in project management and cross-cultural matters. The theoretical framework and research will be analyzed and form a conclusion to the research question presented.

Keywords: project, expatriate, cultural challenges, cultural adaptation, cross cultural communication

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1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization in today's market is happening at a faster pace. Companies have increased their employees in international projects. (De Pater, Johnson, Kristof-Brown & Van Vianen 2004, 697.) This thesis focuses on some of the cultural challenges expatriates may encounter within operating projects. An expatriate can be defined as one who works in a country or culture other than their own (Wilson, M. & Dalton, M. 1998, 1). Expatriates are aware of the international assignments they accept being in different conditions as to the ones in their homes. It is also important to note, that they are aware of working with local residents who may have different values and habits compared to theirs. (De Pater et al. 2004, 697.)

The key is not to ignore the cultural differences, but rather to prepare the expatriate. The purpose of this thesis is to explore through theoretical findings in terms of cultural challenges commonly faced. A case study will aid in further understanding the real-life scenarios of expatriates faced within a project. The case study is on a Ghanaian company, JVC Limited, conducting a project in Togo, West Africa. JVC Limited used the aid of foreign manpower from the Nordic countries that worked side by side with local residents. Managing cultural challenges is not an easy task, but with better understanding and knowing more about the process may aid in future projects.

1.1 The purpose and limitations of the study

The motivation for this research came from interest in working within project management. Alongside project management arises the possibility to be deployed as an expatriate to different corners of the world. The thesis places focus, however, on a very current challenge in the world of project management in foreign countries. The study goes through several theories and concepts that help understand the cultural challenges encountered within project management. After contemplating what research would be useful and

interesting, a company showed interest in the objectives of the study, which then led to a research question. The thesis has a personal objective and a developing aspect.

The main research question in this study is expressed as:

What main cultural challenges do expatriates face when operating within projects?

The theoretical framework will work around the question. This will be done by means of concepts based on project management, factors that cause cross-cultural challenges, developing cultural communication skills, creating cultural synergy and strategies for expatriates and different management styles to consider. The focus will be placed on a case study, which will aid in narrowing down the thesis.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview on Project Management

Control is the fundamental word for project management. It is the one word that holds true to the definition of what is and what is not project management. One definition of a project is as stated “The planning, monitoring and control of all aspects of a project and the motivation of all those involved in it, in order to achieve the project objectives within agreed criteria of time, cost and performance.” (Lester 2007, 4.) A project must meet three fundamental criteria:

1. Completed on time
2. Stay within budget
3. Meet quality requirements

(Lester 2007, 2.)

In certain projects that include industrial objectives, safety is of equal importance to the criteria mentioned above (Lester 2007, 2). From a

management perspective, motivation is the operative word. A project is predicted to be unsuccessful, unless all or most of the participants are not only competent but also motivated to produce a satisfactory outcome. In order to achieve this, techniques and procedures have been developed to enable the project manager to meet the criteria set out in the most effective way. (Lester 2007, 5.) Management competence will reflect how a manager uses knowledge and skills effectively in order to reach goals. Global project managers will need 'hard' system and process skills as well as 'soft' skills for building networks and relationships across cultures. (Maude, 2011, 211.)

Projects are exposed to internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to matters within the organization such as the project team and shareholders for instance. As for the external factors, these are commonly the clients, contractors, suppliers, and local governments to name a few. "PESTLE" is commonly used when referring to these factors (political, economical, social, technical, legal and environmental). Project managers are to pinpoint what are these factors and how do they affect their projects. (Lester 2007, 12.)

Failures are considered a commonplace in projects; researchers state that a staggering 70% are exposed to such (Barker, S. & Cole, R. 2012, 4). A project plan is more than a schedule. The schedule is there to lay out the project tasks and timings, and at times lists important milestones. The plan is used to show what the project manager has been asked to do and how does the manager intend to deliver. This would include objectives, deliverables and even resource requirements. Thus, a good plan is the foundation stones for a project. (Barker, S. & Cole, R. 2012, 14-15.)

It is stated that different types of projects need different types of project managers. With the increasing amount of globalization, projects and project management has to become diversified. This in turn will help managers become intercultural and adaptable. (Müller & Turner 2007, 298.) Success factors are influenced and grouped into leadership & teams, policy & strategy, stakeholder

management, resources and contracting. The use of different success factors and criteria are required for varying projects. As well as traits of the project manager should be examined. These can be classified as gender, nationality, age, level of education, project management certification and job title. (Müller & Turner 2007, 300-301.)

Project classification can help gather significant data to what type of project is being executed. A common model is used to help guide the categorization process. There are six areas, which will be focused on, as they can be treated independently. (Müller & Turner 2007, 301.) Table 1 is adapted from Müller and Turner.

Table 1: Project Categorization Used (Müller & Turner, 301)

Project Attribute	Project Types
Application area	Engineering and construction, ICT, or organizational change
Complexity	High, medium or low
Strategic Importance	Mandatory, repositioning, renewal
Contract Type	Fixed price, remeasurement, or alliance
Life-cycle Stage	Feasibility, Design, Execution, Close-out, Commissioning
Culture	Project manager in single culture, host culture, or expatriate

Project Stakeholders

Stakeholders are divided into two main groups; 1) direct (or primary) stakeholders, and 2) indirect (or secondary) stakeholders. Direct stakeholders are those who are directly associated or are involved in the planning, administration or execution of the various phases of the project. Indirect

stakeholders, on the other hand, are those as the name suggests indirectly associated with the project. These can be the human resource department, senior management levels whom are not directly responsible for the project. Indirect stakeholders can also be the national and local governments, professional bodies and interest groups such as stockholders, labor unions and pressure groups. Aside from the two groups, each can consists of positive and negative stakeholders. These are the ones who support and who do not support the project, in that order. Such stakeholders are illustrated in table 2. (Lester 2007, 27.) The stakeholders we are interested from a cultural aspect is the human resource department of the company.

Table 2: Stakeholder groups. (Lester 2007, 28.)

	Positive stakeholders			Negative stakeholders		
	Direct		Indirect	Indirect		
	Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal	External
Sponsor		Client	Management	Stockholders	Disgruntled employees	Disgruntled end user
Project manager		Contractors	Accounts Dept	Banks		Pressure groups
Project team		Suppliers	HR Dept	Insurers Utilities		Unions Press (media)
Project office		Consultants	Tech. Dept	Local authorities		Competitors Politicians
			Families	Government agencies		Residents' associations

2.2 Managing Cultural Dimensions

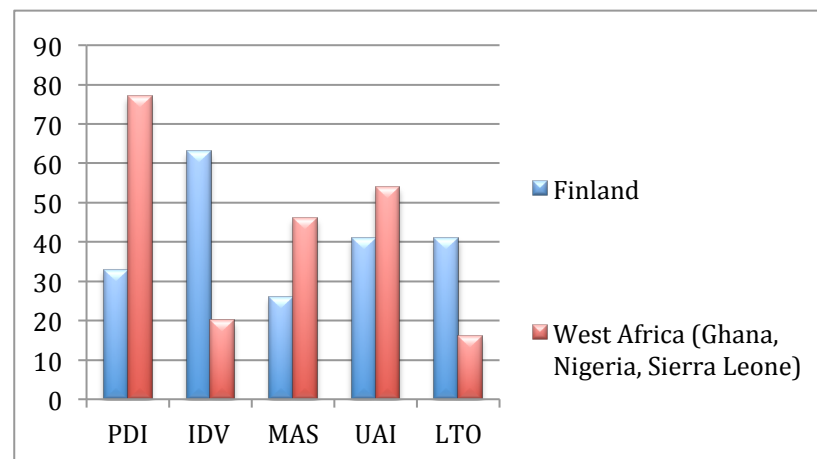
The concept of culture must be grasped in order to understand the process of cross-cultural communication. Due to the increase in globalization one of the many traits a manager should own is the ability to manage cultural diversity. (Maude 2011, 3.) Hofstede's five dimensions is a popular classification of national cultures (Melé 2009, 46). Hofstede's multicultural study is the most widely utilized typology of cultural syndromes. Hofstede focused on the matters concerning work-related attitudes. (Harris 2008, 12.) These dimensions are:

- Power Distance (PDI)
- Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)
- Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)
- Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)
- Long-term orientation (LTO)

(The Hofstede Center c, 2013.)

Hofstede added a fifth dimension to national cultures based on a research done in 1991 by Michael Bond. A dimension based on Confucian dynamism, is the long-term/short-term orientation. Societies are compared to societies, without a comparison, a countries score is meaningless. (The Hofstede Center c, 2013.) It should, however, be noted that there are shortcomings to the model and it has received criticisms. The most noted critiques are the biased samples, incomprehensible, issues particularly with the individualism/collectivism dimensions and the overlapping of dimensions. (Maude 2011, 10-11.)

Comparison of Finnish and West African Culture (Hofstede's five dimensions)



Graph 1. Comparison of Finland and West Africa. (The Hofstede Center b & d, 2013.)

Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

Individualists reign from North America, Europe and Australia. Individualists are described as independent, self-contained and autonomous. Managers from individualist countries tend to be more results-orientated when it comes to employee relations and who value individualism and achievement. Collectivists, on the other hand, are countries such as Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East. In these countries, family relations are very strong and loyalty in the workplace is of high value. (Maude 2011, 8.) Collectivists look towards a harmonized group, as opposed to individualists who do not look down on overt conflict and disagreeing is acceptable (Harris 2008, 12).

Individualism has to do with a person's self-image, whether he or she refers to himself or herself as "I" or "we". Finland scores itself as more of an individualistic country. In the workplace, hiring and promotions are supposedly done by merit only. The employee and employer relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage. Wrongdoing causes loss of self-esteem and guilt in individualistic cultures. (The Hofstede Center b, 2013.) West Africa, on the other hand, scoring at a low 20 is a collectivistic society. Loyalty is the paramount and society fosters strong relationships. Employer and employee

relationships are linked to moral terms; promotions and hiring decisions are based on an employee's in-group. While wrongdoing in collectivist societies is led to loss of face and shame. (Hofstede Center a, 2013)

Power Distance (PDI)

Power distance, according to Hofstede, expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (The Hofstede Center a, 2013). In high power distance countries, hierarchy and inequality is valued. This is where managers tend to not communicate on an equal level with their employees and opt for autocratic management methods. These methods often lead to low levels of disclosure, openness and informality. Subordinates' style of communication is often deferred and managers have a condescending aura to them. In such countries, confrontation and conflict is highly avoided. As for Scandinavian and other northern European countries, people are more of equals and their managers consult employees. A high level of informality is practiced in the workplace. (Maude 2011, 9.) An unequal distribution of power within a culture is prominent when dealing with high power distance countries. It is studied that collectivist cultures tend to be more of high power distance. (Harris 2008, 13.)

As Finnish score low on PDI, they are characterized as having accessible superiors and being independent for instance. As for West African cultures, the score is significantly higher at 77. This would mean, according to Hofstede, that within organizations reigning in West Africa, centralization is popular and characteristic inequalities. Subordinates are usually directed in what action to take and the ideal views of bosses are autocrats. (The Hofstede Center d, 2013.)

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

When referring to uncertainty avoidance, it puts a question on the behavior of individuals when it comes to taking risks. Arab, German and Japanese are particularly high on uncertainty avoidance. By taking a view on the world in what

we refer to as “black” and “white” terms. In the workplace, this would be reflected through less apt to promote innovative behavior. Low-uncertainty-avoidance cultures, on the other hand, would more likely engage in riskier behavior. (Harris 2008, 13.) Higher levels of anxiety have been noted and formal rules are implemented in high-uncertainty-avoidance cultures. People fear failure, take fewer risks, resist change, want job security and plan careers. Countries, which score lower-uncertainty-avoidance, are innovative and those of higher scores are experts in precision technology for instance. (Maude 2011, 9.)

Finland and West African cultures follow into the medium to a high score of UAI. The main characteristics of these cultures are time is money, work hard and stay constantly busy, precision and being punctual is important. Security also plays a role by being an important element in individual motivation. (The Hofstede Center b & d, 2013.)

Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

Another note-worthy cultural dimension is gender associated. Masculine countries are ones that value achievement, acquisitiveness and competitiveness. They also look to distinguishing male and female roles in society. The feminine societies are dubbed the Scandinavian countries for one. They put an emphasis on concern for people, quality of life and sexual equality. (Maude 2011, 9.) Characteristics, which can help determine if the nation is masculine or feminine, can be defined by the women’s position in the workforce. Is there a well-defined distinction between male and female employees? There are distinct roles for females and males in a high masculine country. It is also believed that it is easier for men to climb faster on the career ladder as opposed to females. In low masculine countries, it is an equal arena for both genders. Women can do what men can do. These countries show respect to females in high positions. (The Hofstede Center a, 2013.)

Finland scores considerably low in masculinity. Finland is therefore classified as a feminist society, where can be found managers that strive for consensus, equality is valued, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Finns tend to solve conflict by means of compromising and negotiating. In the work environment, incentives such as free time and flexibility are favored. The overall focus on well-being and status in society is not shown. An effective manager in a feminist society is one that is supportive and decision-making is done through involvement. (The Hofstede Center b, 2013.) West Africa, scores higher than Finland, but is still considered relatively feminist. Similarities are found when comparing Finnish masculinity culture and West African. West Africans value an enjoyable working environment and good work relations are high motivators. (The Hofstede Center d, 2013.)

Long-term orientation

As for long-term orientation, Hofstede defines it as a society's search for virtue. Those with short-term orientation have a strong concern for the absolute truth and are normative thinkers. These societies have great value for traditions, they want quick results and a small tendency to save for the future. Those of long-term orientation tend to believe that truth depends on a situation, context and time. They can adapt tradition to change, save and invest, and show perseverance in achieving results. (The Hofstede Center a, 2013.)

The Finnish society holds characteristics of short-term orientation. Thus, they have strong social pressure, impatience for quick results. Many Western nations, including West Africa, fall under this category. (The Hofstede Center b & d, 2013.)

2.2.1 Cross-Cultural Communication

Project managers also require good communication skills. A good communication system will allow a flow of information, which will give managers the needed knowledge available to them. According to Barker and Cole, in

many cases employees feel the need to improve communication within the company. Managers use several tools of communication; these can be face-to-face, emails, meetings and workshops to name a few. (Barker & Cole 2012, 103.)

A demand for managers whom are skilled at working and communicating with people from different cultures has grown of importance to world business. One definition of cross-cultural management is explained as; the behavior of people in organizations around the world and shows people how to work in organizations with employee and client populations from many different cultures. (Adler 2002, 11.) All business activity naturally involves communicating. When colleagues speak a variety of languages and come from different cultural backgrounds, communicating becomes more difficult for managers. (Adler 2002, 73-74.)

There are many reasons as to why and how failures in communications occur. The most common and in relation to this study are cultural difference, misunderstandings and poor leadership. Cultural differences as mentioned earlier can obstruct communication with language barriers, internal jargon and overall language differences. Accents and variations in pronunciation can cause misunderstandings in verbal communication. However, the solution to this may be as simple as to speak clearly and confirm in writing. Jargon, on the other hand, is an entirely different thing. As jargon is created within the internal community, when an expatriate manager joins from a different environment and culture, problems may arise. This in turn may cause delays in instruction giving and execution. (Lester 2007, 294.)

Leadership wise, instructions given and written should be clear. Often in these cases sketches are added to written communications to make sure the message is sent as clear as possible. Though there are many communication barriers, it can all be solved by good communication planning and sensitive project management. (Lester 2007, 295.)

2.2.2 Cultural Diversity and Business Ethics

Business ethics is a field, which focuses on ethics in business activity. It can be defined as a guide for human excellence in business organizations or, more colloquially, as a guideline for human quality in business. (Melé 2009, 10.) An issue in business ethics is cultural diversity, mainly in regards to morality and religion. Cultural diversity challenges business ethics when moral or religious beliefs clash with the dominant culture in the workplace. Another example is also when a company operates in a cultural environment in which the local values and the values of the company are different. As an expatriate, which method should he or she approach the new environment, do they apply universal principles or do as the locals do? (Melé 2009, 46-47.)

There are those that show respect to cultural diversity and believe it can enrich a company's activity in some aspects. On the other side of the spectrum are the cultural relativists. Cultural relativists argue that the principal ethical conduct of the cultural environment or society should be followed, and there are no universal values and principles. Due to the fact that they support different cultures have different moral codes. Relativists object cultural imperialism, which refers to imposing one's culture on another. (Melé 2009, 48.)

However, common values in different cultures exist. Thus, the existence of some of these basic common values and norms makes business activity possible between different cultures. It is suggested that ethical norms will provide the basic rules of conduct and should be respected. Thus, violating these norms may result in the loss of business. Such norms are illustrated in one's wisdom traditions and in most world religions. For example these norms can consist of the 'Golden Rule', honesty, avoiding wrongdoing and so forth. Without these basic rules many argue, that markets will fail. Thus, these rules are necessary in business, which therefore reflects on a manager's behavior

with his or her business activity. These are supported by the need for universal business ethical standards. (Melé 2009, 50-51.)

However, these ethical standards may be challenged. A project manager's ethical dilemma arises when a project manager is taken out of his or her comfort zone. The local laws and customs applied in the new environment may cause unease for the project manager due to ways business is conducted. This often leads to the question, "What is the right thing to do?" Some environments may bring up the issue of bribing government officials to speed up the legal paper works and permits, for one. There are companies that have adapted a code of conduct to assist in such situations. Lax and Sebenius have developed the following questions in order to aid with helping to approach in the right way (Williams, J. n.d. [referred to October 2013].):

1. Are you following rules that are generally understood and accepted for the task-taking place? For example, in poker, bluffing is accepted as part of the game.
2. Are you comfortable publicly discussing and defending your action? Would you be comfortable if your friends were aware of it? Your family? On the front page of a newspaper?
3. Would you want someone to do it to you? To your family?
4. What if everyone acted that way? Would the resulting society be desirable?
5. Are there alternatives that rest on firmer ground?

(Williams, J. n.d. [referred to October 2013])

2.2.3 Cultural Differences and Misunderstandings

Cultural differences are based on values, attitudes and behavior. How does this affect a manager's behavior? There can be two types of manager's according to Adler; these are one's that do not trust their employees, and one's that do. (Adler 2002, 46.)

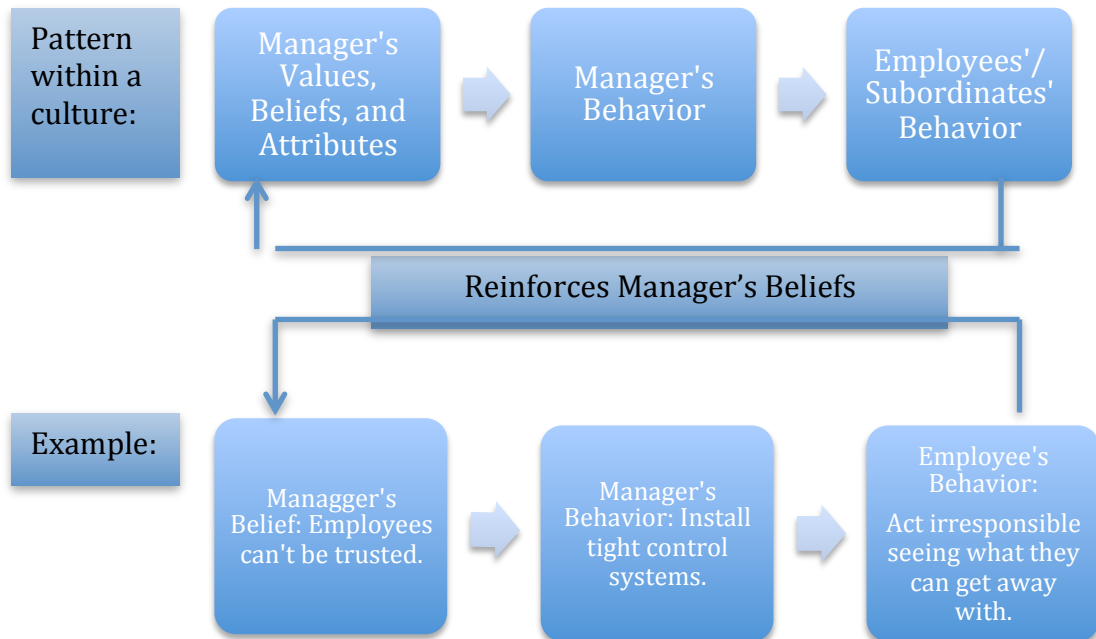


Figure 1. Influence of Managers' Attitudes on Employee Behavior. (Adler 2002, 46.)

Illustrated in figure 1 is how beliefs, attitudes and values can affect a manager's behavior with the example of a vicious cycle a manager can go through. There can be theoretically two prototypical examples of managers. These two types can be classified as vicious type and the compassionate type. As seen in figure 1's example, the vicious cycle takes place when a manager does not trust his or her employees. They begin by setting forth a tight control system, which includes time clocks and check-ins. From such behavior, an employee may begin to behave irresponsibly. Irresponsible behavior from the employee then further forces the manager's belief not to trust the employee. Therefore, a vicious cycle is imposed. (Adler 2002, 45-46.)

On the other side of the spectrum is the compassionate manager. A manager that trusts his employees, which then gives the employee initiative to do their best whether or not the manager is present. Management will then become more convinced that their employees can be trusted. In short, a manager's

attitude will in turn influence their behavior. This behavior will then reflect on how an employee will behave, which will be reflected back to management. It should be noted that it is not always as 'black and white' as the two examples. It is unmistakably easy for managers from one culture and employees from another to grow mistrust and misunderstanding far more easily. (Adler 2002, 47-48.)

One of the challenging issues expatriate managers face is cultural misunderstandings. There are several guidelines, which may be followed to minimize communication difficulties:

- Create a work atmosphere that can tolerate mistakes
- Put everything in 'writing'
- Write and speak in simple terms
- Use graphics when possible
- Monitor international communications
- Be respectful and courteous
- Be aware of cultural hotspots
- Be sure people understand

(Austin, J. n.d., [referred to October 2013].)

2.2.4 Cultural Synergy

It is important to go through the advantages and disadvantages of working in a cultural diverse environment. An important question to tackle is, "How does a manager and his operations manage cultural diversity and benefit from the outcome?" (Adler 2002, 105.) There is the issue of cultural blindness, when one chooses not to see cultural differences, thus limiting the ability to benefit from diversity. It is both perceptual and conceptual; we neither see nor want to see differences. In order to manager cross-cultural aspects effectively, it should be done without prejudice, to see difference where difference exists. (Adler 2002, 107.)

Table 3 is adapted from Adler, illustrating the potential advantages and disadvantages that can arise from cultural diversity. Fewer are said to be able to name advantages that arise from cultural diversity. The most common problems, which arise, are those of which people not understanding each other or that do not work at the same pace or way. Managers may tend to overgeneralize organizational practices from one culture that may not be suitable in another. (Adler 2002, 108.)

Table 3. Potential Advantages & Disadvantages from Diversity. (Adler 2002, 109.)

Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Synergistic Advantage: Organizational Benefits Derived from Cultural Diversity</i>	<i>Disadvantages: Organizational Costs Caused by Cultural Diversity</i>
Expanding meanings	Diversity increases
Greater openness to new ideas	Ambiguity
Multiple perspectives	Complexity
Multiple interpretations	Confusion
Expanding Alternatives	Difficulty converging meanings
Increasing creativity	Miscommunication
Increasing flexibility	Harder to reach agreement
Increasing problem-solving skills	Difficulty converging actions Harder to agree on specific actions
<i>Cultural-Specific Advantages: Benefits from Working with a Particular Culture</i>	<i>Culture-Specific Disadvantages: Costs Inherent in Working with a Particular Culture</i>
Better understanding of local employees	Overgeneralizing
Better able to work effectively with local clients	Organizational policies
Better able to market effectively to local customers	Organizational strategies
Increased understanding of local, political, social, legal, economic and cultural environment	Organizational practices
	Organizational procedures
	Ethnocentrism

Focusing on the potential advantages that can arise from diversity, are for instance new perspectives and new ideas. New perspectives and ideas enhance creativity, flexibility and problem-solving skills. Another note-worthy advantage is an improvement in the effectiveness of dealing with culturally distinct clients and colleagues. All of which can create an improved dynamics in communication patterns within the organization. (Adler 2002, 110.)

2.3 Developing Cross-Cultural Sustenance

Cross-cultural competence is a process that evolves over a period of time. It allows businesses to understand and effectively interact with people reigning from different cultures. Cultural skills involve both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication. Methods that organizations can undertake for their managers' practical cross-cultural skills are; exposure, coaching, immersion, projects and formal training programmes. (Maude 2011, 206.)

In international business, verbal communication is used in sometimes a misleading way. For instance, during a sales negotiation words can be misleading. As mentioned earlier there cultural skills involve nonverbal and verbal forms of communications. Nonverbal communication is an important factor for international business and cross-cultural management. It is harder to control nonverbal modes of communication than verbal messages, but making it more reliable in indicating feelings and attitudes. Nonverbal modes of communications are body language, facial expressions, gestures and other nonverbal gestures. Thus, allowing the ability to evaluate the real feelings as opposed to what could be said. Especially in a cross-culture context, verbal communication may not accurately convey what the individual means. (Maude 2011, 84-85.)

Nonverbal communication competence can aid an expatriate project manager to fit into the foreign culture. Self-awareness plays a role in such a context, it is important for the manager to perceive how his or her behavior and action will be

interpreted by the foreign culture. Understanding the cultural difference is a stepping-stone, but important to have a good understanding of the cultural differences in a communicative context. (Maude 2011, 90-91.)

2.3.1 Expatriate Management Styles

Expatriate managers need to be aware of their employee's cultural values and adapt their management practices to be compatible with them. One of their roles as a manager is to motivate their employees. An important quality that an expatriate manager should have is flexibility. Different cultures respond to imported management techniques differently. The key is to find one that works for both. (Maude 2011, 153.)

Expatriate managers have different styles. These can be classified in four distinct styles of management:

1. Participative style: A manager discovers the need to change their natural management style to adapt to the new environment.
2. Laissez-faire style: This style of leadership has negative impacts on projects as the manager chooses to use an inappropriate management style.
3. Paternalistic style: A controlled organizational context is favored. The manager looks to gain consent from their employees rather than using oppression.
4. National style: When a manager displays culturally influenced managerial approaches.

(Maude 2011, 158-160.)

It should, however, be noted that there is no universal model of cross-cultural business communication which can be applied at all times in all countries (Maude 2011, 107). However, that does not mean that expatriates cannot learn the appropriate skills in learning how to carry out cross-cultural business activity (Maude 2011, 219).

2.3.2 Strategies in Managing and Adapting into a Culturally Diverse Workforce

The U-curve model developed by Oberg (1960) implies that cultural shock is an integral part of the adjustment process. The cross-cultural adjustment will then come as a result from progressing through four stages. (Maude 2011, 183.) Illustrated in figure 2 are the stages taken:

1. Euphoria, the honeymoon stage
 2. Culture shock, stress and disillusion (based on observed differences between the new culture and home culture)
 3. Recovery, accepting new cultures values
 4. Adjustment or integration, individuals ability to function in the new culture and home culture
- (Maude 2011, 183.)

For project managers, where projects take over a duration of 12 months, are given sufficient time to overcome the effects of cultural shock. A study conducted by Tung (1998) shows that expatriates take an average of 6 to 12 months to feel comfortable in their new cultural setting. (Maude 2011, 184.)

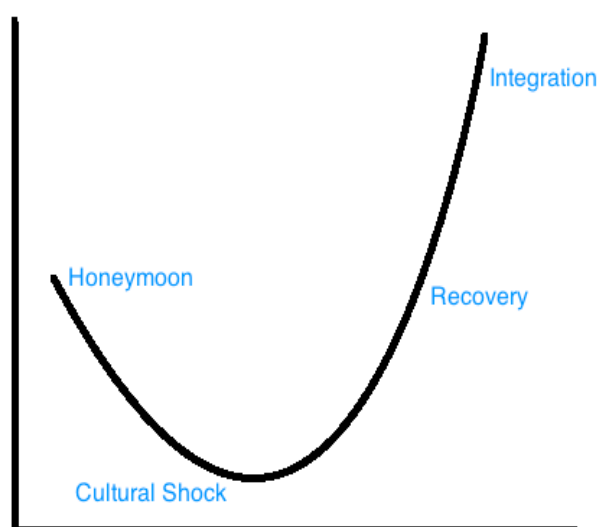


Figure 2. U-curve on Cultural Adaption.

Cross-cultural adaptation has multiple dimensions, which need to be investigated individually. The most widely accepted model of adjustment developed by Black et al.'s (1991) has received the most empirical support. The model is based on the perception that people do not adjust to the three dimensions presented at the same time or in the same way. An example used are expatriate managers, they develop quickly to their environment, but take longer in terms of their general living. Due to the fact, that expatriate managers are mainly focused on doing their jobs well which naturally means communicating with their employees and local colleagues. (Maude 2011, 187.) The three inner-related dimensions are:

1. Work adjustment
2. Interaction adjustment
3. General living adjustment

(Maude 2011, 187.)

Research shows that 70% of North American expatriates are thrown into the mix without preparation. Training is underrated in most organizations for expatriates, and most expatriates are unaware of their need for formal training. After which, in a lot of the cases, expatriates are chosen based on their domestic performances rather than their cross-cultural skills and knowledge. Therefore, it is just as important to include expatriate training in companies who outsource expatriates to their international business activities. Expatriate training is focused on developing skills necessary for successful interaction with host-country nationals and operations in such. (Harris 2008, 189-190.)

Rigorous training is seen more effective in preparing the expatriate. This would include training in cultural, communication and job toughness. Cultural toughness refers to the degree at which the expatriate finds adjusting to the host country's culture be. As for communication toughness, which is a function to show to what extent is the expatriate required to communicate with the host-

country locals. The more communicative the expatriate will be, the more language training will be necessary for instance. Lastly, job toughness, this relates to the degree at which the expatriate's new job function will require more advanced skills in relation to their previous job position. Naturally, it should be trained and sought after at how well will the expatriate handle the new job in a new environment. (Harris 2008, 194.)

3 CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

Whenever problems arise, solutions are sought after. A systematic search for an answer to a question is followed by what we refer to as research. A definition for research is a systematic and logical study of an issue or problem or phenomenon through scientific method. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad 2010, 2.) The research approach of this thesis is of a qualitative approach. This is mainly due to the fact that the assessment is based on the behavior and attitudes of the subjects. Research funding is made on the basis of interviews of the respondents. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad 2010, 7.) An ideal case would to use both a qualitative approach and quantitative to provide accurate results. The reason behind a qualitative approach is not only does it give the respondent a freedom of speech and thought, but also it allows the questions and answers to be flexible.

The study initiated by looking through theoretical studies within the research area. After which I compiled a questionnaire. A questionnaire was sent to individuals whom were involved in the project at the time. The questionnaire consisted mainly of open questions allowing the respondents to give more personal answers. The questionnaire was sent to one individual who does not reside in Finland to reply by means of email. As for the other respondent, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with basis of the questionnaire compiled. The two respondents had vital positions in the project

and are seen of high value to the study. One respondent acted as project manager and the other as logistics supervisor of the project's operations.

The interview questions are based on:

1. Background information of the company and the expatriate
2. Project Management and it's stakeholder's involvements
3. Cultural Challenges within Project Management
4. Suggestions on future project management strategies

There were no more than 3 expatriates in management positions at the time of the project. Two have willingly complied with responding to the questionnaire. The limitation of the study is the fact that it is being based on two individuals' insights and for instance none on a local manager's point of view. Being a case study, there are limited personnel involved at the time. This in turn affects the availability of individuals for interviewing, which gives limited perspective answers. In other words, qualitative case studies are limited, too, by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. (Reis, R. 2009.) Below is a list adapted from Flyvbjerg, 2006 stating five misunderstandings about case study research.

1. Misunderstanding no. 1. General, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge.
2. Misunderstanding no. 2. One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.
3. Misunderstanding no. 3. The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while

other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.

4. Misunderstanding no. 4. The case study contains a bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions.
5. Misunderstanding no. 5. It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies. (Flyvbjerg, B. 2004, 421.)

The restatements to the misunderstandings are as followed;

1. Universals can't be found in the study of human affairs. Context-dependable knowledge is more valuable.
2. Formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development; the force of a single example is underestimated.
3. The case study is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to these activities.
4. There is no greater bias in case study toward confirming preconceived notions than in other forms of research.
5. Difficulty in summarizing case studies is due to the properties of the reality studied, not the research method. (Reis, R. 2009.)

3.3 Pilot Test

A pilot test was carried out in order to test-drive the interview questions. The concern was to examine the clarity and understanding from the questions. The pilot test was sent to family and friends in order for them to comment. The purpose of the pilot test is to spot mistakes and limitations within the interview questions. It is vital to know if the interview questions presented will give the

answers needed for the research question. Alongside the interview and research question, respondents were asked to state if any questions were found incomprehensible or irrelevant to the topic at hand. In addition, the supervisor of the thesis is to review and provide feedback.

3.4 Data Collection

The data for this thesis was collected by means of interviewing. Two individuals were interviewed who were based as expatriates in Sierra Leone for the duration of the project. The author of the thesis interviewed one of the individuals face-to-face on 27.11.2013. An email was sent earlier to the second interviewee, the reply was sent in on the 26th of November 2013. The findings are studied later on in the thesis.

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were semi-structured. This in turn means that the interviews varied in context slightly. Therefore, making sure that to get the most information as possible during the interviews. The follow-up questions were naturally sent by email. The questions asked ranged from closed to open. After receiving the replies from the individuals, the data was then analyzed. Comparing the two answers to one another in order to spot similarities and differences did data analysis. The model structure for the interview is seen in appendix 1. This thesis uses primary and secondary data to analyze and explain as to what are the cultural challenges expatriates' faces when working within projects. Secondary data is attained through books, journals, and the like. As for primary data, this is attained through thesis, reports and articles.

3.4 Overview of JVC Limited

Upon opening the website of company JVC Limited, one of the first things that catch the eye is their motto. "Yes, it can be done perfectly." Josren Ventures Limited was founded in 1997. The firm's headquarters are located in Takoradi, Ghana where they specialize in the construction industry. During the years

2002-2006, the company transformed from a sole proprietorship to a Limited Liability Company by shares, and followed by the development of new services. (JVClimited.com.gh, 2013.) JVC was then registered to providing the following services:

- General Engineering Services
- Construction of Plant and Installation of Equipment
- Maintenance of Plant and Equipment
- Sales and Distribution of General Engineering Materials
- Manufacturer & Manufacturer's Representative
- Logistic Services and Crane Operations (JVClimited.com.gh, 2013.)

The current workforce of JVC is at 300 employees. It is recognized for its competence amongst its peers. Over the years, JVC has transformed itself into an international general engineering company. Where they take on major construction projects in the energy sector in West Africa. All the projects being done and that have been done, have been achieved with the support of competent professionals comprising of both Nationals and Expatriates. (JVClimited.com.gh, 2013.)

3.5 Case Study: Lomé Project

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were categorized into four separate question areas. Two expatriates were interviewed who were involved in an industrial project that took place in Lomé, Togo.

a) Overview

1. Person A

Boutros Mali engineer graduate, who is a Finnish national, was the project manager during the mechanical erection works for the 100 MV Power Plant in Lomé, Togo. The project was to last a duration of 8

months. The project's main deadlines were categorized into three according to Mali. The deadlines were:

1. Erection of fuel storage tanks in five months time after the initial kick-off
2. The installation of all steel structures in six months time after kick-off
3. The erection of all pipe arrangements in eight months time after kick-off (including testing) (Mali, 26.11.2013.)

As project manager, Mali had knowledge about the budgeting and told that it was sufficient to the project. When asked what were the quality standards the project required, Mali mentioned API650. API Standard 650 refers to the standards of welded tanks for oil storage:

“This standard establishes minimum requirements for material, design, fabrication, erection, and inspection for vertical, cylindrical, aboveground, closed- and open-top, welded storage tanks in various sizes and capacities for internal pressures approximating atmospheric pressure (internal pressures not exceeding the weight of the roof plates), but a higher internal pressure is permitted when additional requirements are met.

This standard is designed to provide industry with tanks of adequate safety and reasonable economy for use in the storage of petroleum, petroleum products, and other liquid products. This standard does not present or establish a fixed series of allowable tank sizes; instead, it is intended to permit the Purchaser to select whatever size tank may best meet his needs. This standard is intended to help Purchasers and Manufacturers in ordering, fabricating, and erecting tanks; it is not intended to prohibit Purchasers and Manufacturers from

purchasing or fabricating tanks that meet specifications other than those contained in this standard.” (Api.org, 2013.)

The local government was involved in the project by doing the paperwork for all local permits and custom duties. In Africa, you can compromise everything with money. The client is always ready to be flexible, but there is a price for it. As for other stakeholders involved, this included the owner’s engineers and consultants. Thus, meaning that you as a subcontractor are not allowed to communicate directly with the owners. (Mali, 26.11.2013.)

Mali had described the project to be in the engineering and construction application area, complexity at a medium, a mandatory importance, fixed type contract, with focus on the execution and commissioning. Mali also describes himself to be a project manager in a single, host culture and expatriate.

As an expatriate, Mali, has had previous experiences in African countries. However, he has not undergone any form of cross-cultural training. As an engineer, his educational background had proven to be an advantage during the project. As well as his past experiences as an expat.

2. Person B

Jad Rizk, also a Finnish national, was the project’s logistics supervisor. He made similar remarks as Mali in regards to the duration and purpose of the project. Upon responding about the budgeting, Rizk mentioned that in most cases the budget is naturally made by the client to cover all the needs. The needs usually consist of the construction works and the subcontractors’ fees and charges.

Rizk dealt with local government in terms of getting work and residence permits. It was also mentioned that the local government

provided supervision on the site. In many cases the client is demanding, especially if they do not recognize the methods used by the locals. It must be kept in mind that the client is the one that will approve all the documents presented to him before they sign a contract. In other words, both locals and nationals have to abide with what was agreed with and signed in terms of doing business. When it comes to how certain stakeholders had affection on the project, it was mainly financially associated. The local bank could control the project and its progress by not releasing payments to the client and their supervisors on time. If everything were to be done according to the contract and having the project stay within the timetable; besides the financial aspects, there would not have been any major stakeholder setbacks. (Rizk, 27.11.2013.) Thus, the payment releases from the local banks was mentioned as the only obstacle. As well as the approval of invoices by the client who delayed it to some reasons beyond the subcontractors reach.

Rizk agreed with Mali in terms of project categorization. Rizk's additional comments on the complexity aspect gave more insight though. The complexity of the project was ranked medium to a high. This was due to the fact that the main contractor made the project drawings and the like. If it were to be made by JVC Limited it would have been far less complex to execute.

Previous experience wise, Rizk is a well-versed expatriate. He has been involved in projects in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Djibouti, Guinea, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Cyprus. Rizk, as Mali, did not undergo any cross-cultural training prior to the Lomé project. He does not have any educational background on project management. However, he stated that during his whole life work experience, it has most certainly aided him in learning the ins and outs of project management work culturally and technically. As a literature graduate,

the linguistic aspect of working in international projects has been more of an advantage rather than a disadvantage. He is fluent in Arabic, French, English and Finnish.

b) Challenges

1. Person A

Factors that negatively affected the project, in the words of Mali, were work ethics. Lomé was previously under the rule of the French. Therefore, are still following similar rules and laws of the French. An example given was, that working hours are only from Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 17:00. Overtime is more or less prohibited. However, this proved to be a big disadvantage on the project's part. Due to the fact, that power plant construction demands that working hours are from Monday to Saturday from 07:00 to 18:00. These working hours are viewed normal in such circumstances. Therefore, the local workers felt that they are doing you a favor. There are no favors; you have to pay for everything. Fellowship in a bad way. On the other hand, the best way to overcome challenges is to talk to them. All Africans like when you talk to them and explain what you expect from them. (Mali, 26.11.2013.)

You must be patient and listen to them as well and let them have a chance to bring their worries and complaints to you. The idea alone of talking to their "big" boss is enough. However, naturally this is not sufficient. It is very import for you to keep your words and pay their salaries on time. The banking and socials systems are not like westerners. People need their salary for normal daily routines. "No food for a lazy man" is what is lived by. Language, culture, history and religion must be respected, making it a cultural hotspot. (Mali, 26.11.2013.)

When approached with the question of factors that positively affected the project. It was interesting to note that Mali viewed people as very

friendly and respectful. Most of the local workers are keen to learn more and they still have a great respect for their superiors. The meaning of being on time has to be the biggest challenge. People just don't care for schedules or time as we do. (Mali 26.11.2013.)

2. Person B

Rizk did not mention the same challenges Mali did, but rather more on teamwork. The main challenges in Rizk's opinion were how to combine the behaviors of a European and an African employee. In order for the project to function efficiently and for the project's employees to work together harmoniously, it is important to learn the behaviors of the individuals. In terms of working together, they work efficiently. However, when asked to work alone, at most times they have to be supervised as they have a higher tendency to make mistakes. In groups brainstorming works better than an individual working on a task alone.

As long as you treat the locals as you treat the nationals, there will be no problem according to Rizk. On the other hand, if they notice that they are treated differently than the nationals, issues will occur. An example given of the nature of locals and nationals was interesting in a sense where the difference between cultures is significant. The Finns were seen standing by and commanding local workers to do the manual labor. Finns tend to stay within their profession and title rather than being flexible. In other words, if it is not in their job description they refuse to do it. As Mali mentioned as well, locals are willing to learn new things and have greater respect to their superiors. The locals are highly flexible and are willing to do things told to them by their superiors. Rizk believes that it was an asset to the project to have a culturally diverse workforce. Problems were outsourced and in areas that needed change. Everyone was and is replaceable.

c) Evaluation and Recommendation

1. Person A

In section 2.2.3, there are guidelines by which can help ease cultural misunderstandings and perhaps lessen them. Mali believes it is important to create a work atmosphere that can tolerate mistakes and to speak in simple terms. The use of graphics as visual support to what you are talking about is a big help. However, these alone are not enough in making sure people understand the individual's intentions. The steps taken to prepare and to lessen the cultural shock, was reading up on West-African history, culture and religion prior to the project. This naturally aids the individual in knowing the basics on how to act.

When comparing West-African culture to Finnish, Mali stated that in West Africa nothing works, but everything can be arranged. In Finland, everything works but nothing can be arranged. A person's job title means much more in West African than in Europe. It is not allowed to approach your boss to easily and it is required for the individual to follow the rules of hierarchy. (Mali, 26.11.2013.)

Mali viewed working with local employees more of a liability as opposed to an asset. If given another project, the project manager would try to look for more educated local workers, which in turn will allow responsibility allocation to be more spread out. When asked to compare the foreign clients and local stakeholders that matter that stood out the most were deadlines. Foreign clients want to stick to their deadlines and are ready to do whatever to reach their goals. However, the local stakeholders do not see this as an importance. If they have not received what they have expected, then they do not care much for deadlines anymore. (Mali 26.11.2013.)

The finances of the project also ride on the readiness of the local banks to release the funds. The down payment is easy to get hold of, according to Mali, however, anything after that is difficult to received. He noted that it should be one factor that is included in the proposal. Though, Mali views the local employees to adversely affect the project, he still believes a project is impossible to be done in Africa without locals help and aid. In order to ease future projects, working closer and communicating better with locals will help avoid conflicts and problems faced.

Upon questioning of cultural briefing and its importance, in Mali's words, *"This is the most important brief. You should not forget that you are a visitor in their country and [at the] end of the day their citizen are paying your salary."*

2. Person B

When asked does Rizk use Austin's guidelines whilst operating the project, he saw these, as useful traits expatriates should possess when working in projects. Mistakes can be done, but once should be a lesson enough. Rizk, however, due to the language skills owned he did not have as much communication problems as those who do not speak the local language. Thus, he did not feel the need to speak or write in simple terms. However, the use of graphics was common. It was used to ensure that the locals knew what was coming, by showing pictures of packing lists for instance. This approach is supported by Lester, 2007. Rizk mentioned that it is important to keep Austin's guidelines in mind when going to new cultures. It will help both add to the individual's cultural knowledge and help avoid conflict. As Mali, Rizk did not have any cultural briefing prior to the project.

In comparing Finnish and West African culture, Rizk believes there are more differences than similarities. He mentioned that when you

know how the individual behaves and how they do their job, there are no problems. One of the main differences is that it is hard to convince them if they say something wrong. Therefore, in most cases mouths are kept shut. On the other hand, the West African has a hard time accepting being corrected by their inferiors. They tend to be proud of themselves.

As in Finland, addressing the West African native CEO is done by first name basis by the higher management of the company. Naturally, the locals addressed the CEO with a title. The locals show respect, in the sense of titles and no first name basis, no matter whom they are dealing with.

Rizk found working with locals easier and more of an asset. Due to the fact, that he felt they were easier to deal with than compared to his Scandinavian coworkers. The clients did not release their dues on time, due to the issues related to payments being paid on time. When it comes to cash, the subcontractor has to wait. The client is waiting for their own payments from their clients, creating a domino effect. When it comes to payments, deadlines are never kept in projects. Therefore, tension is caused mainly due to finances.

Avoiding challenges is very difficult at times. Rizk states that everything rides on the individual's personality and traits. For example, when matters arise when matters need to be pushed forward due to the client's demands, is the person you are dealing with asking for something under the table or not. In most cases in the third world, this is common. Bribery is something that causes ethical questioning to oneself. The client demands something to get done and in order to get it done you have to go down a non-ethical road.

It should be noted that before every project, the client briefs new expatriates who will enter the site on how to behave and what is to be done and so forth. If the person has been on similar projects before, they will not be briefed.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The criticism of Hofstede's cultural dimensions shows in the results where the interviewees prove this to some extent wrong. The criticism in question is how Hofstede's national culture is generalization. Mali disagrees with Hofstede on the fact that West African's are punctual. In Mali's opinion, one of the major drawbacks of the project was the inability to stay on deadline at times and the work hour issue with the locals. Though there is a high power distance in West Africa, the Finnish managers kept to their culture and referred to their superiors with their first name. Taking into account, that the CEO is West African and did not react negatively to the addressing.

The expatriate styles of Mali and Rizk are similar. The two managers used mixes of participative and national styles. Through past experiences in the field, Mali and Rizk were able to find appropriate styles in approaching new cultures. Adler gave an example of two separate managerial approaches, however, based on the interviews Mali and Rizk proved that a mix of approaches is used. Though they show trust in their employees, they believe it should be monitored and supervised, even to the extent of looking for more educated locals.

Different types of projects need different kinds of managers, supported by Müller and Turner. One manager stated that working with locals was a liability and the other saw working alongside with them as an asset. Mali mentioned that next project the search for more educated locals would be better for the project though viewing them as keen in learning new things. Rizk, on the other hand, finds them easy to deal with than the Scandinavian counterparts. This could also be due to the fact that Mali has less expatriate experience than Rizk.

Rizk has been an expatriate for most of his working life, which allows him to be more adaptable to new cultures. Which in turn could explain his favoring the locals more. Supporting Müller and Turner in the fact that experience aids the managers to become more intercultural and diversified.

As seen from the theoretical framework, expatriates encounter challenges when working in projects other than their host culture. The culture differences affect the project's deadlines and progress. The two expatriates supported this by mentioning challenges in locals view on deadlines. Local stakeholders delay progress in the finance department for instance as well as being on time in general. The expatriates used methods supported by the theoretical framework while operating in the project. For example, there were uses of graphics to explain matters to employees due to the high complexity of the project. As well as putting matters down on paper on how business will be conducted during the project, though the challenges did arise in this aspect.

The theoretical framework supported the results of this thesis; there were no outstanding or surprising results that appeared if not mentioned otherwise.

Critical evaluation

Reliable results were not reached due to the focus on one project only. There cannot be generalization made on what cultural challenges expatriates face in projects. However, having that said this thesis can be used as a guideline. It gives the idea of what cultural challenges arise and how do expatriates react and overcome them to some extent. Both expatriates studied have different backgrounds and experiences, knowledge and positions within the company.

Though interviews are a good option in collecting information and data, questionnaires could have been made to get further results from different projects and expatriates within them. Therefore, combining qualitative and quantitative data collective methods could have gone further in depth of the research question.

4.2 Further recommendation

Due to the fact that culture is a vast and a very individualistic matter of discussion, not everything could have been brought up in this thesis. The research could have expanded into exploring more than one area in Africa. Comparing the difference in cultures of the different regions in Africa and the responsiveness of expatriates. A further comparison of West Africa and Finns could have been made with adding locals into the mix. Therefore, interviewing and collecting more data from both expatriates and locals could develop this thesis further.

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APPENDIX 1 (Interview Questions for Expatriates)

1. Please state your name and role in the company during the Lomé Project?
2. What is your nationality?
3. Background information of the Lomé Project:
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Schedule
 - i. Duration
 - ii. Deadlines
 - c. Budget
 - i. Upon commencing the project, was the budget given outright and was it sufficient?
 - d. Quality requirements
 - i. By what quality standards, did your project seek after? (For instance, European standards or local standards)
 - e. Stakeholders (financers, clients, suppliers, etc.)
 - i. What was the role of the local government during the project? (For example for permits and the like)
 - ii. Did your clients prove to be flexible in managing the project? Were they able to compromise their requirements to adapt to the local way of doing business, if the need presented itself?
 - iii. What other stakeholders, had their hands in the project? How did these individuals affect the overall progress of the project? Any individual in particular?
4. Using the Project Categorization table (shown below), how would you categorize the Lomé project? (You may choose more than one type per attribute)

Project Attribute	Project Types
Application area	Engineering and construction, ICT, or organizational change

Complexity	High, medium or low
Strategic Importance	Mandatory, repositioning, renewal
Contract Type	Fixed price, remeasurement, or alliance
Life-cycle Stage	Feasibility, Design, Execution, Close-out, Commissioning
Culture	Project manager in single culture, host culture, or expatriate

- a. Please explain as to why you chose those types
5. Do you have any previous experiences as an expatriate?
 - a. If yes, where?
 - b. Were your previous experiences an advantage during the Lomé project?
6. What is your educational background?
 - a. Have you ever been through cross-cultural training?
 - b. Was your education an advantage during the project?
7. What were the main challenges that you faced during the project which were caused by cultural differences?
 - a. What factors negatively contributed to the project?
 - b. What about positively?
 - c. How did you overcome these challenges? Were they been successful?
 - d. What was the main cultural challenge?
 - e. Would you say you have used the following methods to ease the cultural challenges during the process of the project?
 - Create a work atmosphere that can tolerate mistakes
 - Put everything in 'writing'

- Write and speak in simple terms
 - Use graphics when possible
 - Monitor international communications
 - Be respectful and courteous
 - Be aware of cultural hotspots
 - Be sure people understand you
- f. Would you use these points or deem them successful for future purposes?
8. Were you briefed on the local culture before you left for the project?
- a. If yes, how did you prepare yourself?
9. How would you compare West-African culture to Finnish culture?
- a. In terms of hierarchy, was there a difference in the way people treated you due to your position and job title in the company?
10. Did you work alongside local employees?
- a. Did it adversely affect the project in any way?
- b. Was it an asset or a liability?
- c. Would you do something differently next time? What?
11. Having to deal with local stakeholders and foreign clients, how did this affect the project?
- a. With regards to the deadlines
- b. Availability of finances
- c. The overall ease of the project (did it make it more difficult and cause more tension? Or did it affect the project positively?)
- d. In the future, given a similar project, what would you suggest in order to avoid the conflicts or problems you faced?
12. Knowing what you know, how important is cultural briefing before any project?