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THE IMPACT OF MULTICULTURALISM ON GROUP WORK

– The process of multicultural group work through
the eyes of the International Business students of
Turku University of Applied Sciences



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Internationalization and multiculturalism are topics that touch tomorrow's companies and employees. In today's globalizing world many organizations have people from several cultures, which make multicultural work groups current phenomena. For this reason, it is important also for the business students to learn to work in multicultural groups, and especially understand its effect on their work.

There have been many studies on cultural differences and their effects on groups, and authors have found several advantages from multicultural work groups. However, cultural differences and different ways of working can also cause conflicts for the groups and disturb the work process, if there is no attention given to the issue.

The international business students of Turku University of Applied Sciences participate in many multicultural group work projects during their studies. The attitudes of these students towards multicultural work groups, the advantages and challenges that they experience during the process and the development of these attitudes became the topic of this thesis.

Firstly, literature on the different advantages and challenges that arise from multicultural work groups, cultural differences and diversity management is introduced in this thesis. After that, follows an explanation of the methodology used for the research, which in this case was a quantitative research method: a questionnaire that was sent for all the international business students of Turku University of Applied Sciences. The results of this questionnaire are presented in the form of tables and graphs, and in the end conclusions on the results and their connection with the previously introduced theories are given.

The research results show that the students enjoy working in multicultural work groups and that they experience many advantages from them. However, they also feel that multicultural work groups are challenging, and even though the comfortableness of the students towards the issue improves over their studies, the students mention for example the need for better guidelines as a way to improve the multicultural group work process.

KEYWORDS:

Multiculturalism, group work, diversity management, cultural differences, cross-cultural communication

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MONIKULTTUURISUUDEN VAIKUTUKSET RYHMÄTYÖHÖN

Kansainvälistyminen ja monikulttuurisuus ovat ajankohtaisia aiheita, joiden parista tulevaisuuden yritykset sekä työntekijät itsensä löytävät. Nykyaajan globalisoituvassa maailmassa yhä useammat työympäristöt sisältävät ihmisiä eri kulttuureista, joten monikulttuuriset työryhmät ovat yleinen ilmiö. Sen vuoksi myös liiketalouden opiskelijoiden on tärkeää oppia työskentelemään monikulttuurisissa ryhmissä, ja ennen kaikkea ymmärtää niiden vaikutus työhön.

Kulttuurieroista sekä niiden vaikutuksesta työryhmiin on kirjoitettu paljon, ja monia selviä etuja kulttuurillisesti rikkaista työryhmistä onkin löydetty. Kulttuurierot ja erilaiset työtavat voivat kuitenkin aiheuttaa myös ryhmän sisäisiä konflikteja ja häiritä ryhmän työsuoritusta, mikäli aiheeseen ei kiinnitetä huomiota.

Turun Ammattikorkeakoulun kansainvälisen liiketalouden opiskelijat tekevät tutkinnossaan useita ryhmätöitä kansainvälisissä ryhmissä, joten opiskelijoiden asenteet kansainvälistä ryhmätyöskentelyä kohtaan, sen koetut edut ja haitat sekä näiden asenteiden kehittyminen opiskeluvuosien aikana muodostuivat tämän tutkielman aiheeksi.

Tässä tutkielmassa käydään ensin läpi kansainvälisen työryhmän eduista ja haasteista, kulttuurieroista sekä kansainvälisten ryhmien johtamisesta kirjoitettua kirjallisuutta. Sen jälkeen esitellään tutkimustapa, jona toimi kvantitatiivinen kysely, joka lähetettiin kaikille Turun Ammattikorkeakoulun kansainvälisen liiketalouden opiskelijoille. Tulokset kyselystä esitellään erilaisten taulukoiden ja kaavioiden muodossa, jonka jälkeen viimeisessä kappaleessa tehdään johtopäätöksiä tuloksista sekä verrataan niitä aiemmin esitellyn kirjallisuuden teorioihin.

Tutkimustulokset tiivistettynä osoittivat, että Turun Ammattikorkeakoulun kansainvälisen liiketalouden opiskelijat nauttivat työskentelystä kansainvälisissä työryhmissä, ja kokevat sen monet hyvät seuraukset, mutta kokevat työn myös haastavana, ja vaikka opiskelijat kokevat prosessin helpottuvan opiskelujen mittaan, mainitsevat he mm. tarpeen selkeimpiin ohjeisiin ryhmätyöprosessin kehittämiseksi.

ASIASANAT:

Monikulttuurisuus, ryhmätyö, monikulttuurisuuden johtaminen, kulttuurierot, kulttuurien välinen kommunikointi

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1 INTRODUCTION

In today's world globalization is constantly growing and different cultures have to increasingly adapt to working with different cultures. For this reason it is very crucial that business people, students, and people in general have the knowledge and ability to work with people from other cultures and be able to do business across the borders. As off-shoring, setting up businesses in other countries, and mergers and acquisitions across countries are increasing more and more, it means that more and more people are working in groups with people from other cultures. This does not apply to only businesses, but also very closely to business students that aim to graduate with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the business world.

In Finland there are several universities where international degree programs have been set up, where students study in a foreign language surrounded by people from other countries. This is especially useful for business students who will most probably in their future careers have to deal with international issues. One of these kinds of international degree programs is the Degree Program in International Business in the Turku University of Applied Sciences (from here on referred to as TUAS). During the degree program many group projects are established where the students are working in multicultural groups from the beginning of their studies.

Multicultural groups where the group consists of people with more than one nationality are naturally becoming the work group of the future, as companies, in one way or another, become more and more internationalized. Employees and employers have to work in assignments, projects, or full time in multicultural groups. This can be challenging, as well as exciting, but most importantly it is a situation that employees need to understand, even though the situation might not always be easy. For this reason it is very important for business students to get multicultural group work experience already in their education.

As a student in the Degree Program in International Business in TUAS, the author of this thesis is familiar with the amount of multicultural group work that is included in the degree, as well as its challenges. The students coming to this particular degree program clearly want to work in an international setting. However, the students also often find the group projects in multicultural groups very challenging, and in the author's opinion, it seemed that they would have sometimes rather worked in groups with only people with the same nationality as theirs. For this reason, the author is interested to find out about the attitudes that the students have about working in multicultural groups, and how or if these attitudes change during their studies. As many people have studied and written articles on the effects of cultural diversity on group work, the author also wants to see how these writings apply to the international business students in TUAS.

As the author of this thesis is also an international business student in TUAS, it was easy to choose this target group as the focus of this thesis. For the author it is known that the students of this degree program firstly, have a lot of group projects during their studies, and secondly, need to work in multicultural groups several times. Hopefully this thesis will provide information on the attitudes of the students to help the lecturers of the degree program to understand the opinions of the students when it comes to the effects, challenges, and advantages of working in multicultural groups. Hopefully it could also provide some insight to the process that would be useful to other schools and businesses as well.

As the future business students and employees will have to increasingly work in multicultural work groups, this subject of study makes, in the author's mind, a very interesting research matter. Hopefully it would be possible for someone else in TUAS or in another school or research facility to expand upon the studies here, as this thesis is limited to the attitudes and opinions that the international business students of TUAS have.

1.1 Research questions

With the personal experience that the author has from working in the multicultural groups during her studies at TUAS, she remembers having both excitement and doubts about the process. It seemed that the feelings of the students varied when it came to the group projects, although they all knew how beneficial working in multinational groups was. As for future research and for the lecturers of TUAS to benefit, it would be interesting to find out more about the attitudes of students towards the subject. Ideally, the multicultural group work process could be improved even more in the future according to the needs of the students.

From the author's personal background, and after reading literature on the topic, the author developed three research questions, which she aims to answer in this thesis.

Q1. How does the diversity of cultural backgrounds impact the group work performance and process? (This refers to the advantages and disadvantages that it may cause.)

Q2. What is the initial attitude of students towards group work in multicultural groups when they start their studies in TUAS?

Q3. How does the attitude towards group work in multicultural groups change during the studies?

The author hopes that these research questions give an insight to the attitudes of the students about the process.

1.2 Structure

The structure of this thesis follows the usual pattern where a comprehensive look to the literature of the topic is given after the introduction. This literature part aims to give common definitions to words used in this thesis, as well as provide theories about the topic, so the results of the data collection can be compared to these theories. However, as this topic deals mainly with attitudes

and opinions of students, it must be pointed out that not many universal theories could be found that would straightly connect to the issues, but instead, literature on the topic is given in the form of introducing writings that authors have published on the topic and research that has been done in the area.

After the literature review, follows an explanation of the methodology used, and answers are given as to why certain choices were made, and how the questionnaire used was designed, and how the target group was chosen.

The last two parts of the thesis are naturally the survey findings in which graphs and tables depict some of the results, and also cross-tabulations are done to see relationships between different factors. In this part of the thesis the questions of the questionnaire and the motives for picking these questions are explained. After the survey results follow the conclusions where the author makes assumptions about the survey findings, as well as discusses the connections of the results with theories introduced in the literature part. In the end, limitations of this research are acknowledged and also suggestions for future research are provided.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is a look of the theories and writings published on the subject of multicultural group work and the themes that connect to it, such as culture, cross-cultural communication, and managing diversity. The definitions used in the thesis will here be defined through the common definitions of the authors writing about these issues. Some previous research on the topic is also introduced.

2.1 Working in organizations and in groups

An important part of analyzing people in their work is understanding organizational behavior, which means understanding how people behave in organization settings, and understanding all of the structures and cultures that affect organizational behavior. According to Mullins (2007, 5), the study of organizational behavior means understanding the behavior of people, process of management, the organizational context and processes, and the interactions between the organization and its external environment. So to understand the behavior of employees one must understand the components of the organizations and the relationships involved, as there are several components that affect the way people behave.

One of the factors that affect the organization and the behavior of its people is organizational culture. Alvesson (2002, 1) explains the concept in saying that “how people in a company think, feel, value and act are guided by ideas, meanings and beliefs of a cultural nature”, in other words the culture of the organization. An organizational culture can exist in several levels, such as in a big company, or as a subculture of a work group within an organization.

As the focus of this thesis is on the group work done at Turku University of Applied Sciences, an educational organization, it is not only important to understand the process of organizational behavior, and how people behave in organizations, but also the process of group work. Groups are a usual structure in organizations, where smaller or bigger, and temporary or long-time work

groups are formed constantly to get the work done. They are also great opportunities for people to learn from each other, and facilitate communications. For this reason group works are also commonly used in the TUAS International Business Degree Program.

Groups may in several organizations be called teams, and also many authors of the writings introduced here use the term team, so for the purposes of this thesis, the terms 'group' and 'team' are from here on used as synonyms.

There are several components to workgroups, such as the size and type of a group, and it is also important to know the stages of group development to understand how the group work process works. Another interesting factor is the productivity of the groups.

Steiner (1972, 9 in Adler 2008, 132) defines the productivity of a team by providing a formula, which is: $\text{team's actual productivity} = \text{potential productivity} - \text{losses due to faulty processes}$. So to maximize the results of a group work, it is important to define the faulty processes that are affecting the group work process, and to try to minimize their effect on the performance of the group.

Another key aspect affecting the group work process and performance is the cohesiveness of the group. According to Mullins (2007, 306) "co-operation among members is likely to be greater in a united, cohesive group". However, Mullins (2007, 310) also points out that cohesive groups don't necessarily produce a higher level of performance. Even though homogenous groups, where the members are very similar in terms of backgrounds, cultures, and attitudes can turn out to be very cohesive, it does not necessarily mean that these groups perform better compared to less cohesive groups. This brings us to the topic of multicultural groups and to the effects (both negative and positive) that the multiculturalism of a group can provide to a group's performance.

2.1.1 Diversity of groups

An important concept when talking about group work and managing groups is diversity. It is a concept that focuses “on the multiplicity of differences among people”. There are several dimensions of diversity, such as age, race, ethnicity, and gender. (Mullins 2007, 146.) Here we will concentrate on the effects of cultural diversity on group work.

When talking about some of the characteristics of groups, such as the different types of groups, the multiculturalism brings new issues to look at. Adler (2008, 132-133) gives us a list of different kinds of diversity teams: token teams (all but one member come from the same background), bicultural teams (50% of the members are from one culture and 50% from another), and teams where members represent three or more ethnic backgrounds. All of these compositions can affect the teams in different ways. According to Hopkins’s theory the most problematic type of a team is a one in which there are several representatives from a small amount of different cultures. This is because this kind of a team can easily fragment into smaller sub-teams, with a different culture in each of them. (Hopkins 2009, 107.)

Also the stages of team development can be influenced by the diversity of a team. One definition of the different team stages is Adler’s list of entry stage, work stage, and action stage. In the entry stage the team will first have to work on trust building. Then in the work stage, the team will create ideas, and finally in the action stage the team will have to agree on decisions. According to Adler, the diversity of the team affect these stages so, that it makes the trust building stage harder (as the group is less cohesive, the members have less in common). However, it makes the creation of ideas easier, as there are more diverse ideas flowing around, and again, the agreeing on decisions is harder than in homogenous teams. (Adler, 2008, 142-144.)

There have been many writings on the benefits of diversity to team work. Schmidt (2004, 151-152) lists for example improved communication, bringing fresh ideas to the table, and learning from those in other countries. In another

article, satisfying feelings, creativity and reduced group-think are also listed as advantages of diverse teams (Stahl, Mäkelä, Zander & Maznevski 2010).

Adler has studied thoroughly about the possible advantages and disadvantages of diversity in groups. She states that multicultural teams “have the potential to achieve higher productivity than homogenous teams, but they also risk experiencing greater losses due to faulty processes” (Adler 2008, 134). Referring to the previously mentioned equation by Steiner, in which faulty processes decrease the actual potential of the team, Adler also gives us an understanding of what those faulty processes can be that arise from team diversity. Adler (2008, 134-137) lists as possible disadvantages of multicultural teams: less cohesion, which leads to hardship in reaching agreements, miscommunication, stress (as a result of a lack of trust), inaccurate stereotyping leading to mistrust, and increased ambiguity. However, as Adler believes that multicultural groups have a greater potential than homogenous teams, she lists many advantages to multicultural teams. One of these advantages is the potential to avoid groupthink, which is an easy danger in homogenous teams (Adler 2008, 139-140). Other advantages include the situation where diversity forces the team members to understand other people and their perspectives and meanings better, generating better problem definitions through increased creativity, and generating more alternatives and better solutions (Adler 2008, 135).

One extensive research on the topic was performed by Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt and Jonsen where they study the effects of cultural diversity on teams. They start out by making several hypothesizes about culturally diverse teams and then through many empirical studies try to prove these hypothesized (based on the theories in the field) right or wrong. (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt & Jonsen 2010.)

In these studies Stahl et al. found both supporting and non-supporting results for the different hypothesizes, as well as results where it seems that there is no relationship between the variables in the hypothesizes. Some of the results include finding out that cultural diversity is positively associated with creativity

and higher levels of satisfaction, but also means more task conflict and less social integration. According to Stahl's results, cultural diversity does not affect communication effectiveness. Other results were, for example, that team size affects cultural diversity on communication effectiveness in such a way that communication effectiveness is reduced the bigger the team and also there is then reduced levels of satisfaction among the team members. Also team tenure affects the process so, that cultural diversity is associated with higher levels of conflict and less effective communication in teams that have spent more time together. It was pointed out that this could be, because teams that have spent more time together might usually be the teams with more complex tasks. (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt & Jonsen 2010.) This study clearly shows that cultural diversity does have an impact on the different aspects of diverse work teams, and so a critical factor would be to be able to manage the diversity in a way that faulty processes are minimized.

2.1.2 Managing diversity

Management, the process of co-coordinating people and activities, is a challenging job itself, and when it comes to diversity management, more challenges need to be taken into account. Management is the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the resources and operations of the company (Rao & Kumar 2010, 3) and can be described as an integrating activity (Mullins 2007, 414). So managing has a lot to do with guiding people and making a group of people work in the best possible way. When talking about managing work groups, this best possible way should be the way that minimizes the previously mentioned faulty processes. But managing diversity isn't only about trying to reduce the faulty processes. It should aim to capitalize on the possible advantages of a diverse work group. One way to put it is: "Good diversity policy not only reduces the negatives, it will also bring in extra talent, new perspectives, learning, and limitless opportunities for innovation" (Bagshaw 2004, 153).

As managers can have a huge impact on the successful performance of a diverse work group, it is crucial that they choose a good managing style. Adler identifies three different strategies for managing cultural diversity: the parochial approach (where the mentality is the only way is my way), the ethnocentric approach (where the mentality is that there are many possible ways to do things, but the best one is my way), and the synergistic approach (where one acknowledges that our way and their way is different, but neither is necessarily better). Adler points out the advantages of the third strategy, as she states that the managers who use this strategy manage the impacts of cultural diversity rather than cultural diversity itself. (Adler 2008, 107.) Emphasis should always be on finding ways to capitalize on diversity and minimizing the downsides, rather than focusing on managing diversity from a negative point of view, where it's a problem to be solved.

Adler also provides tips on how to effectively manage team diversity. She mentions that diversity can make teams effective when differences are recognized, there is mutual respect, equal power, and there is a super ordinate goal and external feedback (Adler 2008, 141). Lieberman et al. (2003, 60) advise to practice clear communication, give clear tasks and milestones, set a realistic pace to meet the goals, invest in training, and avoid using stereotypes when assigning roles. For summary, according to Thomas and Inkson (2009, 142-145) there are three things to do to reduce process losses and capitalize on diversity: managing the environment (providing management support, rewards, and self-management), allowing culturally diverse groups to develop, and fostering cultural intelligence (for example by training members in cross-cultural understanding).

2.2 Culture

The concept of culture has been defined by Hofstede as “collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, 4). Basically, culture embodies all the in written rules and ways of doing things that we have

in our head. Thomas and Inkson list characteristics of culture, stating that culture is shared, learned, enduring, and it has a powerful influence on our behavior. Culture is also systematic, organized, largely invisible, and depending on different cultures, a culture can be tight or loose. (Thomas & Inkson 2009, 25-28.)

As there are many cultures in the world, cultures can vary in various aspects. Cultures vary for example in how people see themselves, in the relationships that people have with the world, in personal relationships, in the concept of time, and the concept of space that people have (Adler 2008, 26-34).

There have been many different categorizations of cultures in literature, and one popular way to divide cultures, is to divide them into high-context and low-context cultures. In high-context cultures a high proportion of information is uncoded (not explicit). This means that there are indirect communications styles, and words are less important. In low-context cultures a big proportion of communication is expressed in words, and direct communication styles are used. (Hall & Hall 1990, 6.) This division of cultures divides them roughly into just two categories, depending on the communication styles of the culture.

However, a study where several different dimensions of culture have been taken into consideration was made by Geert Hofstede. After conducting cross-cultural studies between various countries for the corporation IBM in the 1970s, Hofstede developed his famous five cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and time orientations. The first four of these dimensions date from the IBM studies. (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, 22-23.) A fifth dimension, time orientation, was later added (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, 29-31). These 5 dimensions are usually listed when referring to the famous Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In 2010 a sixth dimension, indulgence vs. restraint, was added (Hofstede 2010), but as said, when talking about the Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the first five are usually mentioned.

It was felt by the author of this thesis that when it came to the topic of the thesis, the most important dimensions of culture that could be seen affecting group work were individualism vs. collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. This was because these two dimensions connect straightly with how people act in groups and how they act in new situations. For this reason, these two are defined more clearly. Individualistic cultures are such where individuals are expected to take care of themselves firstly, and people identify themselves as “I”, whereas in collectivistic cultures individuals are seen as part of a group, and they define themselves as “we” (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, 74-75). Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty, so that in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance people are intolerant to strange behavior and ideas, whereas in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, people have a more relaxed attitude towards the unknown (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, 167).

2.2.1 Attitudes and stereotyping

As explained earlier, cultures affect the mental sets of people, and therefore affect the behavior of people in different situations, for example in group work situations. Cultures therefore help to shape our attitudes about life. The word attitude is described in the Oxford dictionary as “a settled way of thinking or feeling about something” (oxforddictionaries.com) and Mullins (2007, 142) explains that attitudes are learned throughout life and embodied in our socialization process. When people hold certain attitudes about things, their behavior is affected by these attitudes they hold. Changing a negative attitude, for example a negative attitude towards working with people from different cultures, can result in better results, but changing attitudes isn’t that easy, since, as mentioned before, attitudes can date back to as far as to the culture we live in.

A negative attitude towards people from any other culture or people from a specific culture can form because of stereotyping. According to Mullins (2007, 236), stereotyping is “the tendency to ascribe positive or negative

characteristics to a person on the basis of a general categorization and perceived similarities”. Stereotyping sometimes helps to form attitudes about people and cultures, and according to Hopkins (2009, 18), stereotyping increases our feelings of self-worth, by creating an in-group and out-group. However, stereotyping can also lead to a lot of negative, when people cannot see past the stereotypes, after hearing them. As Hopkins (2009, 18) states, stereotyping is often self-reinforcing.

2.2.2 Cross-cultural communication

A big challenge in all groups, and especially in multicultural groups, is communication. Culture has a lot of impact on ways people communicate. As stated by Novinger (2001, 4), all communication takes place in the matrix of culture, and for this reason, culture is the biggest obstacle to intercultural communication.

Adler (2008, 71) states that the bigger the difference between the sender’s and the receiver’s cultures, the bigger the risk for cross-cultural miscommunication. According to this theory, it is more likely that a group consisting of members from cultures that differ from each other considerably (for example scoring very differently on the different cultural dimensions of Hofstede), will have the most cross-cultural miscommunication. The division of low-context and high-context cultures is extremely relevant here, as this division of cultures is based on communication styles. To recap, communication styles that focus more on words and less on behavior are low-context, and communication styles that rely more on nonverbal context or behavior than verbal communication are high-context (Novinger 2001, 6).

Understanding non-verbal communication can be very challenging for people from low-context cultures, as they are used to dealing with words and direct meanings. They may therefore miss a lot of the non-verbal signs, crucial for understanding the message. Similarly people from high-context cultures may have problems, as Mullins (2007, 214) explains that in low-context cultures, where it is normal to explain all details clearly and explicitly, other cultures may

find the spelling out of all the details unnecessary and embarrassing. Even though non-verbal communication is used more within high-context cultures, it is a crucial part of our communications, as from 2/3 to 2/4 of our entire communication takes place through nonverbal behaviour (Novinger 2001, 153).

Adler (2008, 80-85) lists that the most common sources of cross-cultural misinterpretation are subconscious cultural blinders, lack of cultural self-awareness, projected similarity, and parochialism (which is the mental state of thinking the only way is my way). Novinger lists many communication obstacles related to verbal processes and non-verbal processes of communication. Verbal communication obstacles can include: competency (such as accent, connotation, context, idioms, use of silence, polite usage of language, and style), and literacy (Novinger 2001, 48). Non-verbal communication obstacles can be: context, time sense, body motion communication, space sense, and the vocalic issues of loudness and speed (Novinger 2001, 57).

As cross-cultural communication is an aspect of multicultural group work that can increase the risk of faulty processes, if not managed well, it is very important for the groups and their supervisors to be aware of strategies and ways of making cross-cultural communication work. Prince and Hoppe (2000, 15) list 3 practical rules for better cross-cultural communication: to capture (to focus fully on conversation, and refer to your knowledge about other cultures to understand all meanings), to clarify (to look for non-verbal cues, and to ask to check your understanding, and to confirm (to give people a chance to paraphrase what you just said, or to write down your message, or schedule a follow-up conversation). An internet article "10 Strategies for Overcoming Language Barriers" (Berardo 2007) lists solutions, such as: speaking slowly and clearly, asking for clarification, checking for understanding, avoiding idioms, being careful with jargon, being specific, choosing an effective communication medium, providing information via multiple channels, and being patient.

As some of the reasons listed above for cross-cultural misinterpretation can result from personal attitudes and perceptions, it is extremely important for the members of multicultural work groups to develop their cultural intelligence to

avoid these misconceptions. According to Thomas and Inkson (2009, 16), cultural intelligence (which means being skilled in understanding a culture and reshaping one's own thinking to be more sympathetic to other cultures, and developing one's own behavior to be more skilled when interacting with others) has three parts: knowledge of culture, mindfulness, and cross-cultural skills. The authors also list activities to develop one's cultural intelligence. These include formal education/training, using cross-cultural groups and teams, having cross-cultural interactions at home, and having foreign experience (Thomas & Inkson 2009, 158-163).

2.3 Conclusions on the literature review

Clearly, the impact of cultural diversity on group work is a popular topic of research in the field. Many authors have written on the different aspects of group work, and also on the effects of diversity on groups. These authors have found several advantages resulting from diversity of groups, but also challenges that may cause faulty processes to the group performance.

It is also crucial to understand the different aspects of culture when talking about diverse groups. Possibly the most important aspect is cross-cultural communication which plays an important role in multicultural work groups. Members of the group can suffer from various communication obstacles, and need to therefore develop their cultural intelligence.

From studying the literature introduced in this chapter, the author of this thesis developed the questionnaire used for the research.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research type

Even though there are many different approaches to research, a popular division between quantitative and qualitative method is usually made (Denscombe 2010, 237). Denscombe explains the difference between the two by stating that quantitative research focuses on numbers as the unit of analysis, whereas qualitative method focuses on words as the unit of analysis. Quantitative research tends to be used with greater quantities than in qualitative research, and quantitative research is also associated with analyzing specific variables, when qualitative research is more about getting the big picture. Quantitative research is also associated with precise research design. (Denscombe 2010, 237-238.)

Questionnaires are usually considered as a quantitative resource method (Denscombe 2010, 242). An online questionnaire was used for the data collection of the thesis and the chosen method is therefore a quantitative one. This was chosen because the research was concerned with several people (all of the IB students of TUAS), of whom specific answers of attitudes and opinions were asked. However, the research method of this thesis also connects with qualitative research, as many of the questions of the questionnaire deal more with qualitative variables (attitudes and opinions, which are measured in words, not in numbers). So even though a quantitative method was chosen as the research method, there are many qualitative variables in the questionnaire.

3.2 Used research type: An online questionnaire

In this thesis an online survey was used as the data collection method, because of its ability to reach a lot of students easily and also because it is an easy way for people to answer to a set of questions. According to Denscombe, surveys are useful when factual information about a group of people's behavior and attitudes is wanted. Denscombe states that a survey is a good data collection

method when there are a many people studied, there is a clear target in the research, the research is about relatively uncomplicated thoughts and feelings, and the researcher is looking for a pattern within groups or categories of people. (Denscombe 2010, 12.) As the research of this thesis deals with relatively simple thoughts and attitudes of a group of several people, it was considered that an online questionnaire would be the most suitable method.

3.3 Design of the questionnaire

The survey was made according to the research questions determined earlier, as well as theories and writings introduced about the subject. The most important research variables are listed here, with their connection to the research questions. For the first research question “How does the diversity of cultural backgrounds impact the group work performance and process?” the main research variables were: the positivity level of multiculturalism’s effects on group work, challenges related to it, and advantages related to the process. As for the second research question that deals with the initial attitude of students towards multicultural group work, the most important research variables were the excitement levels, positivity levels, and comfortableness levels at the beginning of studies, as well as the enjoyment of doing group work in multicultural groups. Finally, for the third question about the change of attitudes during the studies, important research variables were excitement levels, positivity levels, and comfortableness levels after 9 months, as well as the year group of students, as this variable can be used for many cross-tabulations to find changes in attitudes through study years.

However, a lot of other questions and research variables that weren’t necessarily as straightly linked to the research questions, as the ones mentioned above, were also asked to get a better understanding of the subject. A lot of questions were asked about general attitudes that students have about the subject, as it hadn’t been studied much before. The main goal was to find out about the attitudes and feelings that the students possess about working in multicultural groups. Some of the questions related straightly to theories and

writings from the literature part of the thesis (such as the advantages and disadvantages that the multiculturalism of work groups possesses).

In addition to the research variables listed before, that linked straightly to the research questions, the research variables of the survey also included some basic variables (such as age, year group and nationality), and then there were many variables linked to attitudes, as well as variables linked to the cross-cultural communication and its challenges. There were also many qualitative questions asked about the feelings of the students (such as “Do you enjoy doing group work in a multicultural group?” and “Do you find it more challenging to work in multicultural groups than in one-nationality groups?”).

In the questionnaire the author tried to use different question types, but chose them most importantly depending on the question matter. In many cases a multiple choice question was used, as it is the simplest way to choose the best option from many options. However, in questions related to the challenges and advantages of multicultural group work, multiple questions where several answers could be chosen were used. The main objective was to see whether or not the listed factors have occurred in work groups, and how often. This connected straightly to Adler’s (2008) theories about the advantages and disadvantages of working in multicultural groups, and so it wasn’t necessary to see which factor that occurred was the biggest challenge/advantage, but to see if these were in fact the factors that the students experienced. In these questions, a “something else, what?” option was also used, as naturally not all of the possible factors could be listed. This type of a question could also bring out some factors that hadn’t been considered at all.

There were many questions related to feelings and attitudes where a scale was used to compare the feelings of the students. Also, the two questions related to the different attitudes at the beginning of studies and after nine months of studies was designed in a way that the same factors and scales were used to make it easy to compare on the change of attitude. These were very important questions, as they related straightly to the third research question.

In most of the questions a multiple choice question type was used, so a selection of predetermined factors could be given for the students. These given options were usually taken from theories/opinions of authors presented in the literature part of the thesis. However, in the end there was an open question where students could include comments or suggestions that they might have about the multicultural work group process in TUAS. Even though people might easily skip open questions in surveys, this was an important way to get straight comments from the students outside of the theories of the thesis, and a chance to find out attitudes and opinions that might not have been guessed that the students had.

3.4 The recipients of the questionnaire

The survey was sent to international business students, as the topic of the thesis is directly linked to them. From all the TUAS students it is known by the author that the international business students have had to do many group work assignments in international groups. For this reason all of the IB students of TUAS were the target population of the survey. On the 23rd of April in 2013 the survey was sent to 162 people in total, consisting of 5 year groups: NINBOs12, NINBOs11, NINBOs10, NINBOs09, and IB08. It was known from the beginning that the last group, IB08, would probably not have that many respondents as many of them had left the school already, but it was included in the respondents to give them a chance to answer.

In the beginning it was considered that the survey could be given as a paper version to the students by the author of the thesis visiting their class. However, as some of the students weren't available during the spring semester, because of a work placement period they had, and as some of the students had very different course selections, the only group that this would be feasible to was the first year group, group NINBOs12. However, as the goal of the data collection was to get a variety of results from all year groups for cross-tabulations, it was decided that having an almost 100% response rate from one year group would

affect the results too much, as there wouldn't be an equal/almost equal response rate across the year groups.

The students were given three weeks to answer the survey, after which on the 15th of May in 2013 the results were taken out. By this point there was a reasonable amount of answers, and there were several respondents from all of the year groups, excluding IB08.

4 FINDINGS

After three weeks of response time, the results were taken out, and there were 31 respondents in total, out of the 162 who received the questionnaire. This gives the research a 19 % response rate, which the author feels is a relatively good response rate. Here the results will be explained, question by question, and analyzes are also made to compare the relationships between different variables. Different figures and many tables have been made with Microsoft Excel to make the presenting of these results more visually attractive and to clearly depict the response distribution. The findings are divided into categories by the topic of the questions. In the end there are also some additional cross-tabulations made that connect straightly to the third research question.

4.1 General questions

In the beginning of the questionnaire some general questions about age, nationality, and year group were asked. These are typical questions in the questionnaire and are good for getting the respondents comfortable with the questionnaire by starting out with easy questions. They are also interesting, both for seeing some basic statistics about the population, as well as cross-tabulations between different answers. It can be interesting to see how the answers divide, for example with year group.

Firstly, the gender of the respondents was asked, and there were 18 females in total and 13 females, so the distribution between genders was pretty equal, as 58 % of the respondents were females and 42 % males.

In the question to find out the age of the respondents 5 categories were created to see where the responses distributed with age, and to easily compare what was the most common age group. As seen from the pie chart below, it was found out that most of the students answering where between 21-23 years old. This is basically due to the fact that most of the people studying in the international business degree program at TUAS are normally between these ages. The majority of the people were clearly young adults, as expected.

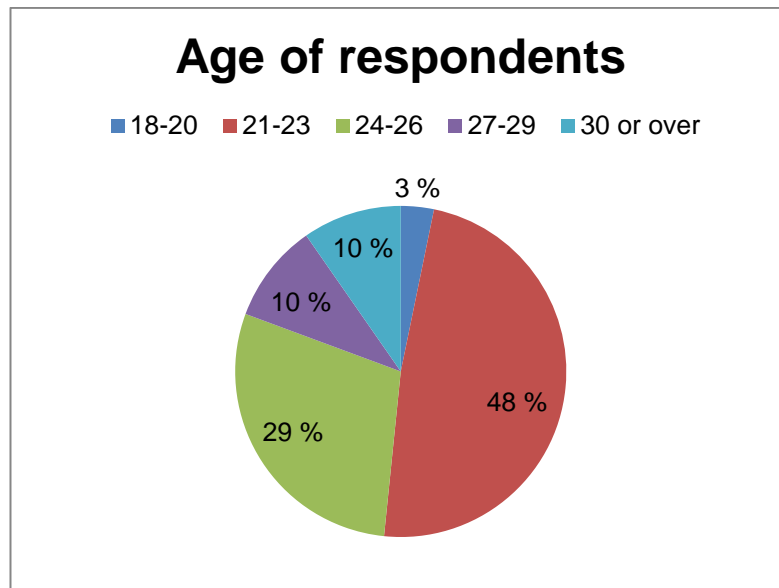


Figure 1. Question 2: Age of the respondents.

One of the most interesting variables for cross-tabulations is the year group (question 4 of the questionnaire), as it connects straightly to the research question about the change of attitudes. It can be used to find out how the opinions of students have changed during the school years, and for this reason it was important to have a variety of answers from different year groups. For this reason the questionnaire was also sent to the IB08 year group, although as mentioned earlier, this group of students was predicted to have a very low response rate, as most of them aren't at school anymore. In fact, the email including the questionnaire link only went to a few students from the IB08 group.

According to expectations there were no answers from group IB08 students, but fortunately there were responses from all other year groups. 15 of the responses were NINBOs09 students, 5 were NINBOs10 students, 4 NINBOs11 students, and 7 were NINBOs12 students.

Table 1. Question 4: Year group.

| Year group | Total |
|------------|-------|
| NINBOs09 | 15 |
| NINBOs10 | 5 |
| NINBOs11 | 4 |

| | |
|-------------|----|
| NINBOs12 | 7 |
| Grand total | 31 |

One reason for the high amount of NINBOs09 students (the oldest year group with responses from it) can be explained by the fact that the author of this thesis is herself a NINBOs09 student. It can be that her classmates were more motivated to answer the survey, because they recognized the name of its designer. It can also be that other NINBOs09 students were checking their email more regularly, as they were as well working on their theses and other school projects in order to graduate soon. There were fewer NINBOs10 responders than for example NINBOs11 responders, possibly because that particular year group was at the time working in their work placements, and therefore might have been checking their school emails less regularly. The first year students (NINBOs12 students) had more answer than them, as most of them regularly had courses at the moment.

Another interesting variable that can be used to see change in opinions depending on the amount of multicultural experience is the amount of multicultural groups that a student has worked on (question 5). Even though all of the IB students of TUAS have to work in multicultural work groups at some point, this question was still put to the questionnaire, as it would be interesting to find out in how many different multicultural groups people have worked in, and to possibly see whether or not this had affected their opinions.

Most of the students had by the point of answering the survey already worked in more than 5 different multicultural groups, as 26 gave this answer. 3 people had worked in 3 groups, and 2 people had worked in 4 groups. As none of the students answered working in only 1 or 2 groups, it is clear that the students work in several different multicultural groups.

This also makes sense, because as mentioned before, most of the students were from NINBOs09 group. This means that most of the people had had many school years behind them, and therefore naturally many different multicultural groups. However, as seen from the cross-tabulation below, the amount of

different multicultural groups can still vary between students, as some of the last year students had still just had 3 or 4 multicultural groups.

Table 2. A cross-tabulation between questions 4 and 5: Amount of multicultural groups and year group.

| | Amount of mc groups | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|---|-----------|-----------|
| Year group | 3 | 4 | 5 or more | Row total |
| NINBOs09 | 2 | 1 | 12 | 15 |
| NINBOs10 | | | 5 | 5 |
| NINBOs11 | | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| NINBOs12 | 1 | | 6 | 7 |
| Column total | 3 | 2 | 26 | 31 |

The author was very interested in the nationality of the students, because as talked about in the literature review part of the thesis, one's culture can certainly affect the opinions and attitudes held. For information on the students, the nationality of the students was asked in question 3. To make it clearer categories were made to get a picture of where most of the students came from. The categories were taken from the different continents, and Finnish people were a separate option, as it was known that there would mostly be Finnish people.

Table 3. . Question 3: Nationality of the students.

| Nationality | Total |
|----------------------|-------|
| African | 1 |
| Asian | 6 |
| European non-Finnish | 3 |
| Finnish | 21 |
| Grand total | 31 |

From the table it can be seen that most of the responders were Finnish. This was to be expected, as the degree programs always have a majority of Finnish

students. There were also other Europeans, as well as several Asian people, and one African.

Even though the previous categorization of nationalities was good for getting a whole picture of the nationality distribution, it wasn't really useful for identifying different cultures of students, as for example in Europe there are several different cultures in many aspects. For this reason questions 6-8 were developed to get a better picture of the cultures that people came from. In this section three aspects of culture, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and high-context vs. low context were chosen, because it was thought that these are aspects that affect how people act in a group, how they deal with different aspects of group work, and how they communicate, as these were relevant themes of the thesis.

The bar graphs made from the answers of these three questions depict well how the answers were divided. As seen clearly, in the individualism vs. collectivism aspect, a majority of the people felt they came from an individualistic culture. So even though there were people from different cultures, as seen from question three, there was still a dominant trend when it came to this aspect of the culture of the respondents.

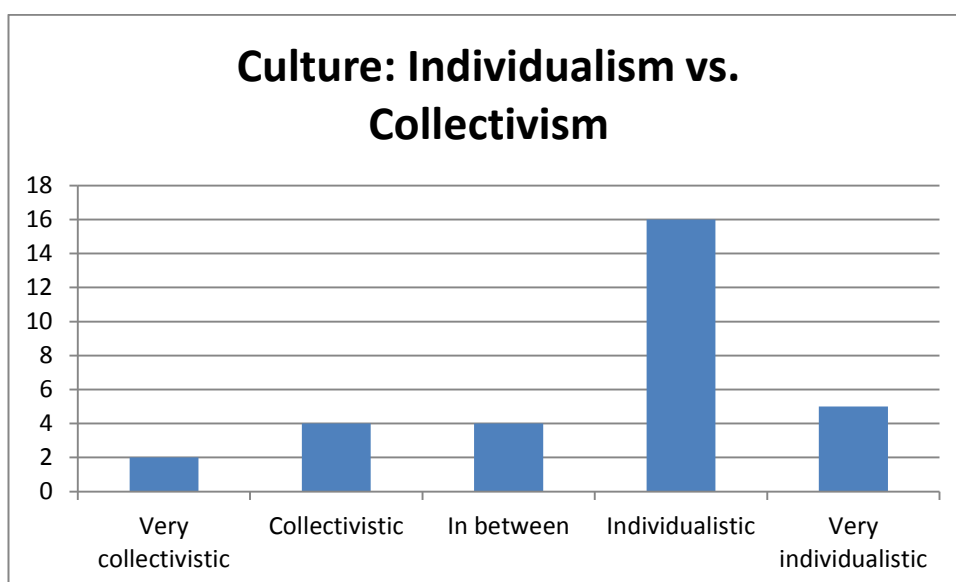


Figure 2. Question 6: Individualism vs. collectivism.

As for the Uncertainty avoidance aspect, as seen from below, many people considered their culture to have a high level of uncertainty avoidance or to be in between, and there were fewer people depicting their culture as low uncertainty avoidance or very low uncertainty avoidance. However, no one considered their culture to have a very high uncertainty level, so the division was more in the in-between zone than in extremes.

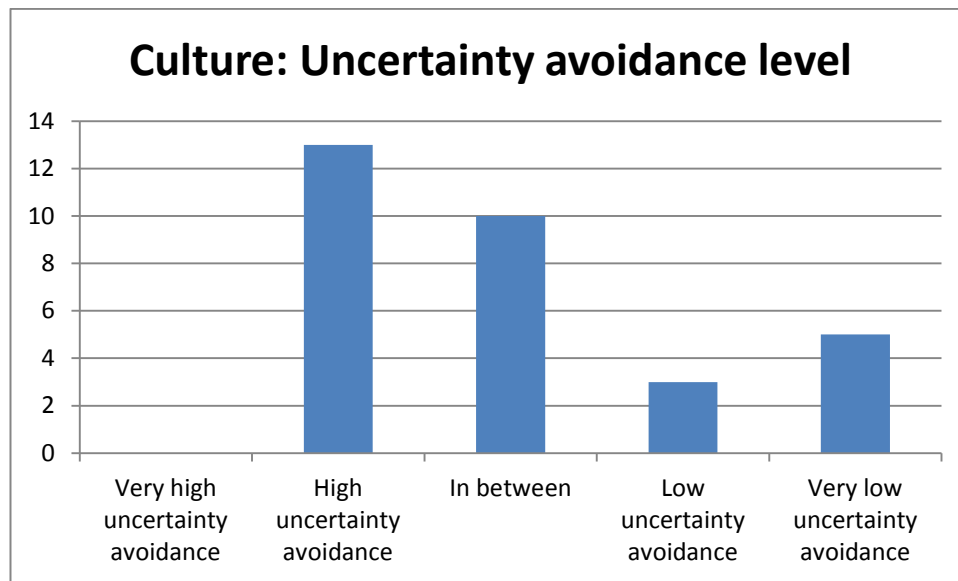


Figure 3.Question 7: Uncertainty avoidance.

For the last aspect of the culture that was surveyed, high-context vs. low-context culture, there were a lot of people that identified themselves coming from a high-context culture, low-context culture, or from a very low-context culture. Even though many people felt that they came from a high-context culture, when looking at this cultural aspect from the two sides of it, there were still more people in the low-context culture side, as a combined of 16 people answered either “low context” or “very low context”, and 11 people answered “very high context” or “high context”.

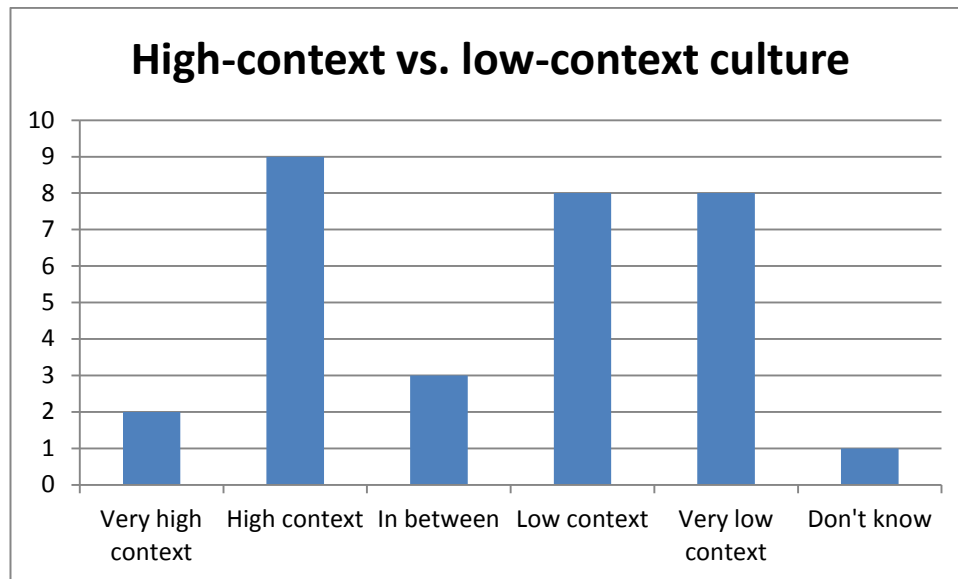


Figure 4. Question 8: High-context vs. low-context.

In these three previous questions there might be some inconsistencies (such as the strange division of the last question), or some interesting answers on how people from specific cultures identified their cultures differently than in Hofstede's analysis. For example, as seen from a cross-tabulation between the individualism vs. collectivism aspect and the nationality of people (depicted below), 1 Finnish person identified his/her culture as collectivistic and 2 Finnish people said it was in between, even though Hofstede categorizes Finland as an individualistic society (The Hofstede Centre 2012).

Table 4. A cross-tabulation between questions 3 and 6: Nationality and Individualism vs. collectivism.

| | Individualism vs. collectivism | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Nationality | Very collectivistic | Collectivistic | In between | Individualistic | Very Individualistic |
| African | | 1 | | | |
| Asian | 2 | 2 | 2 | | |
| European non-Finnish | | | | 2 | 1 |
| Finnish | | 1 | 2 | 14 | 4 |

This is just an example of the fact that even though definitions of the different aspects of cultures were given in the questionnaire, people can have different perceptions of their cultures, and therefore might answer in ways that don't collide with what other people have previously written on the matters. However, it is still interesting to see how people have defined their cultures, and what seems to be the major trend.

4.2 Attitude towards multicultural group work

After general questions about the students and their background, questions about the attitudes that student hold towards multicultural group work, and how this attitude had changed were asked. In question 9 students were simply asked if they enjoyed doing multicultural group work. 10 stated that they preferred working in multicultural groups, 14 stated that they liked it somewhat and 7 were neutral about the matter. As there were no negative answers for this question, it is clear that the students do feel enjoyment of working in multicultural groups, and a third of the respondents even preferred to do so.

The next question about attitudes focused on the challenge of multicultural groups, and if the students see it as a challenge or not. Here 2/3 of the population (20 students) answered that they do see multicultural group work as more challenging than working in one-nationality groups, whereas 1/3 (9 people) answered "No", and 2 people were neutral. It's interesting to see that even though students see multicultural group work as challenging, they still enjoy working in them. From the cross-tabulation between the 9th and 10th question it can be seen that people who prefer doing group work in multicultural groups tend to see it less challenging, than people who just like it. But all in all, there is a trend of enjoying multicultural groups, but still seeing it as a challenge.

Table 5. Cross-tabulation between questions 9 and 10: Enjoyment of working in multicultural groups and the challenge of it.

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | More challenging to work in mc groups | | |
|--|--|--|--|

| Enjoyment of working in mc groups | No | No opinion | Yes |
|--|----|------------|-----|
| I prefer doing group work in a multicultural group | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| I like it somewhat | 2 | | 12 |
| Neutral | 1 | 1 | 5 |

Question 11 was linked to Adler's (2008, 143) theory of team development stages and how multiculturalism of a team affects these stages. The students were asked to rate how hard they found different stages of multicultural group work. In the trust building stage the answers divided pretty even in the middle, so that most of the people found it neutral, and many also found it somewhat difficult, as well as somewhat easy. As for the creation of ideas stage, the students found it quite easy, as 18 people said that it was very easy or easy. In the third stage, the students were again more neutral, and found it slightly more challenging than easy. From the figures below it can be seen that the stage that felt the easiest to students was creating ideas, and the other two had more neutral answers.

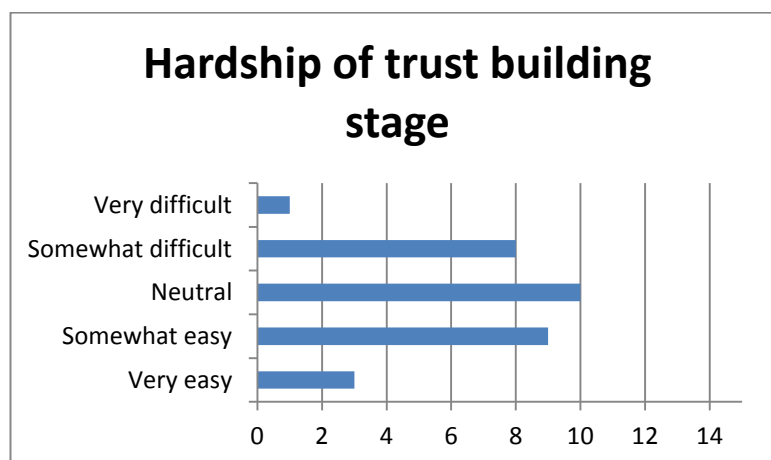


Figure 5. Question 11, part a: Hardship of trust building.

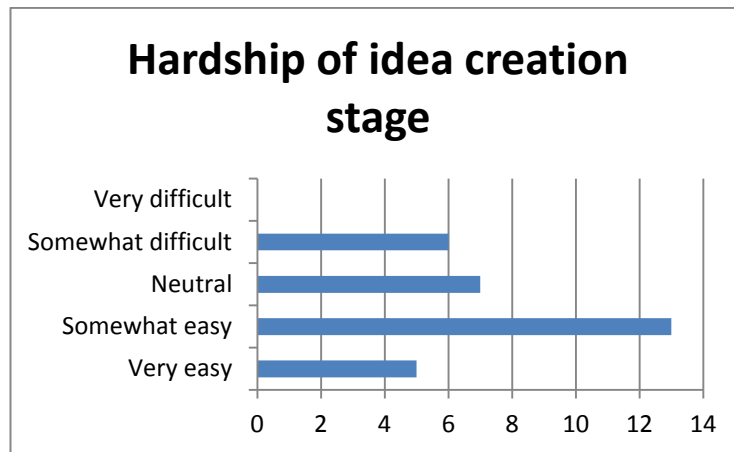


Figure 6. Question 11, part b: Hardship of idea creation.

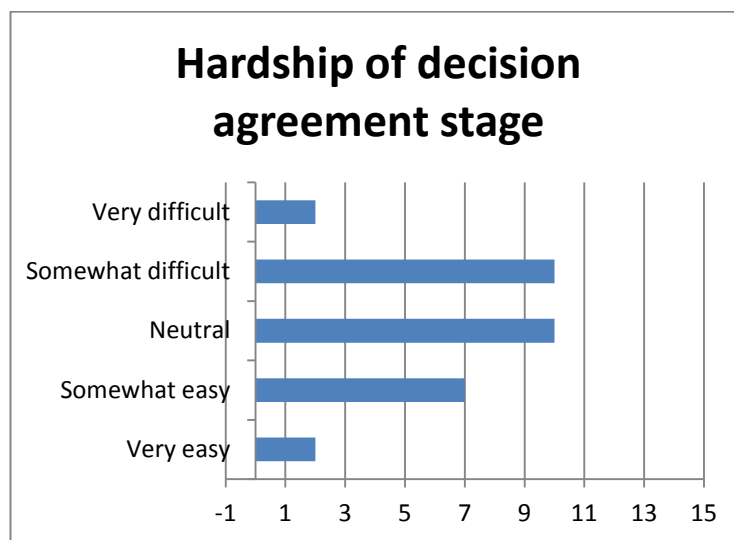


Figure 7. Question 11, part c: Hardship of decision agreement.

For interest, in this question the students were also asked to rate how hard communication felt for them in multicultural groups, as it is a big part of working in diverse groups. The answers distributed pretty evenly between “somewhat difficult” with 11 responses, and “somewhat easy” with 13 responses, so there seems to be many people who feel it to be hard, but also many who don’t see it as a big challenge.

In question 12 the respondents were asked in what kind of a group they would rather work in. The options for this question were taken from a list of different diversity teams, provided by Adler (2008, 132-133). From the 26 people who

chose a group type (as 4 people said they didn't know, and one didn't answer), a majority of the people wanted to work in a group where there are several people from several cultures. A 50-50 group and a group where everyone is from a different culture were also popular choices. As already realized from the results of question 9, the respondents definitely rather worked in multicultural groups than in single-culture groups, as only 1 person chose that group type. There were also no responses for the last choice of "a team where most of the people are from the same culture, but one or two are from other cultures".

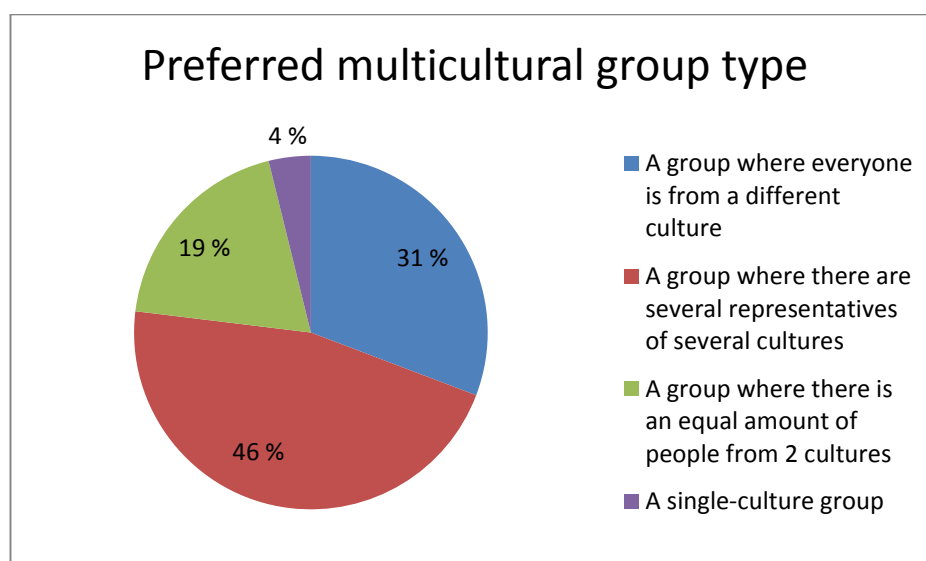


Figure 8. Question 12: Preferred group type.

The next two questions of the questionnaire connect directly with the second and third research questions of the thesis, the attitude of students about multicultural group work and the change in the attitude during studies. The 13th question asked the students to rate their level of excitement, positivity, and comfortableness about multicultural group work at the beginning of their studies.

As seen from the table below that presents in percentages the answers given, the level of excitement seems to be quite high at the beginning of studies, as all of the answers fall to the neutral/high categories. The level of positivity is equally high, with 1/3 saying it was very high, and almost 50% saying somewhat high. In the level of comfortableness there is more of a variety of answers.

There were several people who experience a level of comfortableness, but also several people whose comfortableness was not so high.

Table 6. Question 13: Attitudes at the beginning of studies.

| | Very high | Somewhat high | Neutral | Not very high | Not high at all |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Level of excitement | 33,33 % | 50 % | 16,67 % | 0 % | 0 % |
| Level of positivity | 33,33 % | 46,67 % | 20 % | 0 % | 0 % |
| Comfortableness | 13,33 % | 33,33 % | 30,00 % | 20,00 % | 3,33 % |

In the next question, the students were asked to rate the same factors based on their feelings after their first year of the degree program. In these results below, it can be seen that the level of excitement is lower than in the previous question, and there are more people who answered neutrally. As for the level of positivity, the attitude seems to also have changed so that there are more answers in the lowers categories, so positivity has gone down. But still over 65% have felt positive about working in multicultural groups. With the comfortableness factor the trend seems to be to another direction, as more people have answered “Very high” or “somewhat high” than previously, so it shows that after a year of studying, the level of comfortableness has risen.

Table 7. Question 14: Attitudes after one year of studies.

| | Very high | Somewhat high | Neutral | Not very high | Not high at all |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|
| Level of excitement | 19,35 % | 32,26 % | 32,26 % | 12,90 % | 3,23 % |
| Level of positivity | 22,58 % | 45,16 % | 22,58 % | 9,68 % | 0 % |
| Comfortableness | 25,81 % | 38,71 % | 19,35 % | 12,90 % | 3,23 % |

Lastly in this category of questions, the students were asked to rate their first experience in working with a multicultural group at TUAS. This was considered to be an interesting question to see how much the first experience affects the overall feeling of the students.

Most of the students felt positive about the experience, and only under 15% felt negative or very negative about the experience (depicted in the graph below).

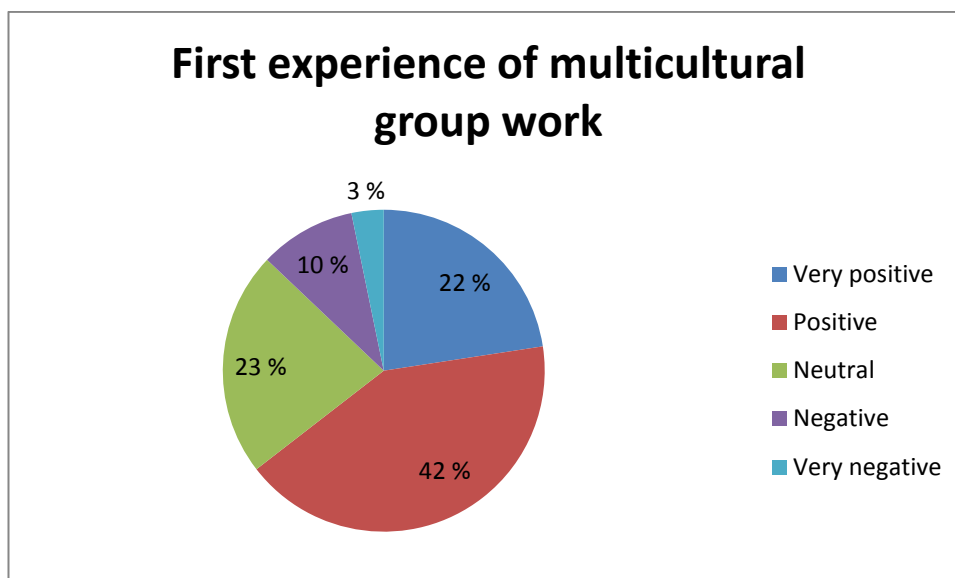


Figure 9. Question 15: First experience of multicultural group work.

It was thought that it would be interesting to see how the results of the first multicultural group work experience affected the overall attitude of the student towards multicultural group work. A cross-tabulation was made between the results of this question and the question of whether or not students found it more difficult to work in multicultural groups than in single-culture groups. It was first considered to do the cross-tabulation also between the first experience question, and question 9 on if people enjoy multicultural group, to see if the first experience affected the overall enjoyment of the process. However, as there were only positive and neutral answers to question 9, it was decided that doing the cross-calculation with question 10 made more sense.

It was found out that people with all kinds of first multicultural work group experiences found multicultural groups to be more challenging than single-cultural ones. However, the people who had a very negative or a negative first experience answered only “Yes” to multicultural work groups being more challenging, whereas people who had neutral or positive experiences gave both answers. A first negative experience shows to affect the students so that they experience multicultural work groups as more challenging than people with positive first experiences.

Table 8. Cross-tabulation between questions 10 and 15: The challenge of working in multicultural groups and the rating of the first multicultural group experience.

| | First experience of mc work | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|---------|----------|---------------|
| | Very negative | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Very positive |
| More challenging to work in mc groups | | | | | |
| No | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| No opinion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | |
| Yes | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 3 |

4.3 Effects of multicultural groups on group work process and performance

The questions that next followed in the questionnaire were straightly related to the first research question about the effects of multicultural groups on group work. In question number 16 the students were asked how they felt multiculturalism impacts the group performance.

The trend was that people felt that multiculturalism had positive effects on group work, as 15 answered “Positively” and 3 “Very positively”. Also about a 1/3 (8 people) answered that they felt that it didn’t affect the performance at all. Only 4 people saw it affecting it negatively and 1 person very negatively. So all in all, the students felt that multiculturalism had more positive effects on group work or no effect at all.

Next, the students were asked what these effects of multiculturalism on group work are. In question 17 a list of possible challenges were given and students were asked to choose the ones they had encountered. This list of options was derived from literature introduced earlier, mainly Adler’s (2008, 134-137) writings on possible disadvantages of multicultural teams. The students could choose as many options as they wanted, as the aim was to find out whether these factors had been experienced, and by how many people.

Depicted in the table below, all of the 4 choices given were experienced by at least 9 people from the respondents. Over 50% (16 people) had felt increased complexity in the process, and almost 50% (14 people) had experienced cross-

cultural communication problems. Increased ambiguity and more conflict were experienced by about 30% of the population.

Table 9. Question 17: Challenges of multicultural group work.

| Factors that make mc group work challenging | Total |
|---|-------|
| Cross-cultural communication challenges | 14 |
| Increased ambiguity | 9 |
| More conflict: harder to reach agreement on decisions | 11 |
| Increased complexity in the process | 16 |

Even though the options for this question were predetermined by the popular writings on the matter, a “something else, what?” option was included in the end to find out what other problems students might have had. One answered here that he doesn’t find multicultural group work challenging, which means, that it would have been a good idea to include a “No problems” option in the question. Another explained that understanding the worldviews of other people is challenging when they don’t speak much, and breaking the ice is also hard. These could probably be categorized in the cross-communication challenges. Another student pointed out that it is difficult for people from a masculine culture to work with those from a feminine culture, and explained how these two differ from each other. She also mentioned that “the imbalance makes the group’s performance less effective than expected”. This answer shows that it could have been also useful to use the masculine vs. feminine cultural dimension as a question in the questionnaire. The last open response for the question was from a person who had noticed that students who come from Asia and Africa aren’t as academic as the others, which has negative effects on the quality of the work, but is also good practice to cope with different skill levels. This problem falls into the category of cross-cultural communication, more specifically to problems with different levels of literacy.

Question 17 was naturally about the advantages of multiculturalism on group work. Again predetermined options that were taken from Adler’s and other people’s theories were given, as well as a possibility to name another factor.

Again, the students were able to choose as many options as possible. As seen from the table below, all of the choices given were experienced by the respondents, but only 5 people mentioned “More feelings of satisfaction”. “Positive effects on ability to learn” and “More creativity” were quite popular choices, as 20 picked the former one and 17 the latter. It shows that these factors taken from literature on the topic are in fact factors that the students experience.

Table 10. Question 18: Advantages of multicultural group work.

| Advantages of mc group work | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| More creativity | 17 |
| Better problem-solving process | 12 |
| Positive effects on ability to learn | 20 |
| More feelings of satisfaction | 5 |

There were 3 open answers given for this question. One stated that another advantage is language and more points of view, while another one mentioned learning to cope with different styles. These two both refer to abilities to learn something new. The last open answer was from a student who mentioned the opportunity to get to know the others a bit more and share things together.

4.4 Cross-cultural communication

As it was mentioned in the literature review of the thesis, cross-cultural communication is a big part of multicultural group work. To find out how big of a part according to the students, they were asked in question 19 how much of an impact communication has in the performance of multicultural groups. 25 people said it had a big impact, 2 people said it had somewhat of an impact, 2 people felt neutral about the matter, and 1 person thought it had just a little impact on the performance of the groups. So there were no people who felt that it had no impact at all. This shows that the students do feel that communication plays a big role in the group performance.

Next, the students were asked about the different communication problems they had encountered. The students could choose as many options as they wanted, so that it would be seen if these factors had affected the students' communication or not. The list of options was created taking the most common communication problems from the literature written on the topic, mainly Novinger's (2001) communication obstacles. Again, the students were allowed to name another option if they felt like it.

As seen from the bar graph below, the students had encountered all of the mentioned communication problems, mainly problems in the different levels of literacy in English and also different ways of speaking. When interpreting the results, it was realized by the author that the list of options given was pretty limited, since from many different communication problems only the most common ones were chosen. Probably for this reason there were many added statements by the students. One reason for the limited amount of options for this question was the fact that the author wanted to give specific options, which are easier to understand for the students, instead of categories.

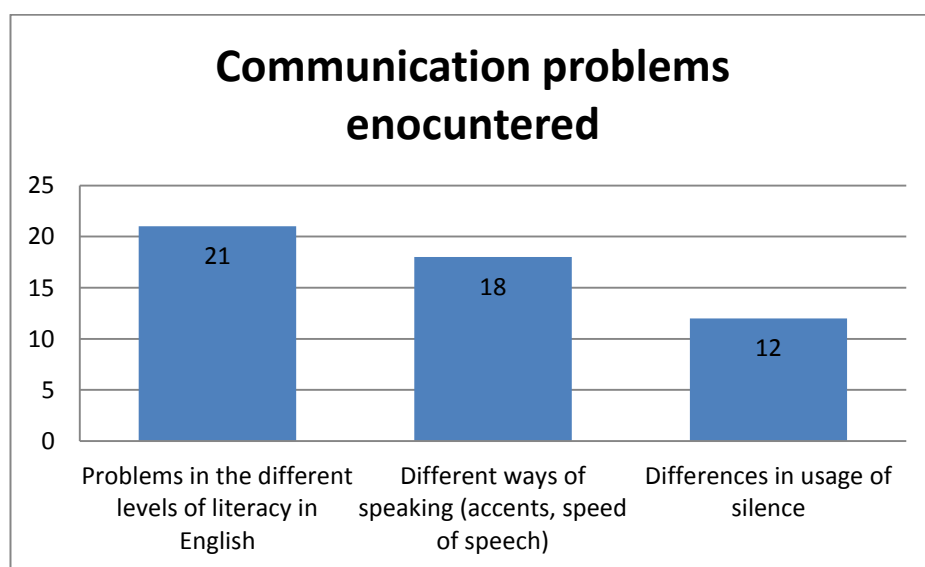


Figure 10. Question 20: Communication problems.

There were several other options mentioned by the students. One student mentioned different skill and knowledge levels and another said different levels in straightforwardness and saying no. One student referred to attitudes

explaining that a problem can be different attitudes and ways of seeing things or a too high ego. Then there were two students who talked about non-verbal communication obstacles, as one mentioned physical distance, and the other: “saying something and meaning the other, indirect communication”. This shows that the students have experienced many problems related to verbal and also non-verbal communication (which could have been useful to use as an option in the question).

After asking about the communication problems, a question about the ways to deal with these problems naturally followed. Again, a list of options was created by using the literature introduced on the topic, mainly an article by Berardo (2007) on the topic. As seen from the graph below, all of the five methods given were used, and checking for understanding and asking for clarification were used most popularly.

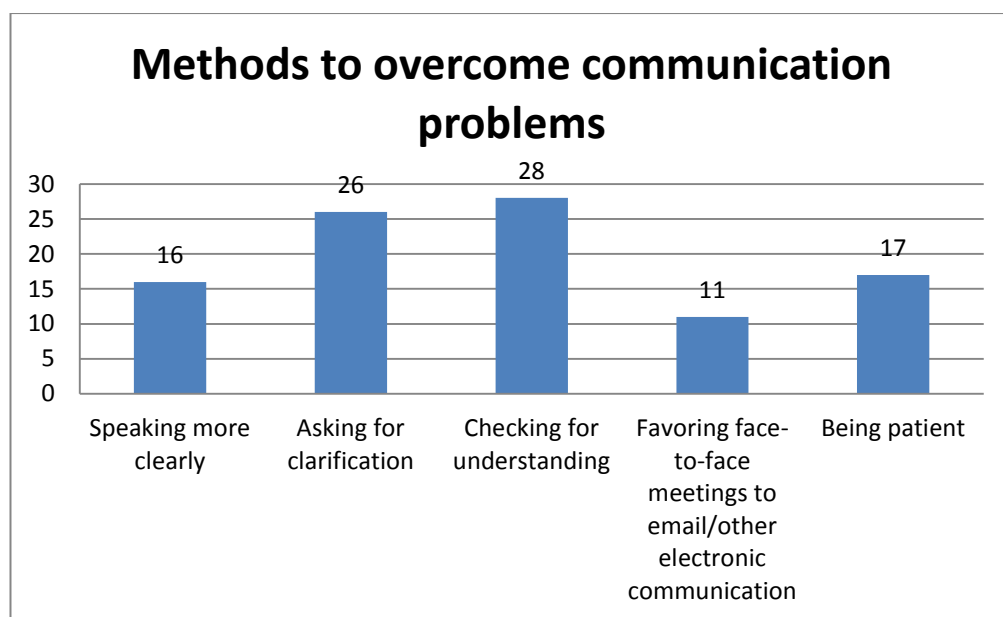


Figure 11. Question 21: Methods used to overcome communication problems.

Again, the students could add another option and one student stated favoring messages as it is clearer to understand writing and you can use time to compose the message well.

4.5 Improving the process

This thesis focuses on finding out about the attitudes and opinions of students about working in multicultural groups and the effects of it on group performance, and so the focus isn't on managing the process, but finding out the attitudes and opinions of the students. However, managing diversity is one part of the topic as well. As students themselves might know what could be done to improve the process, one question was added to find out about the improvements that the students think should happen to make the process of multicultural group work function better.

A list of possible options, as well as a chance to name another option, was given to the students to ask them what can be done to improve the process of multicultural group work at TUAS. The options were chosen by looking at the writings of authors in the literature review part of the thesis, more specifically the part about managing diversity. As seen from below, the most popular choice was providing clearer objectives and guidelines, as it was chosen by 26 of the students. Over 1/3 chose more time for team-building, creating a flexible schedule, and more support from teachers. 7 people also supported giving more training on cross-cultural communication. One person wrote another option, which was "Feedback sheets after a group project which asks to evaluate every group member". So even though 14 people supported a flexible schedule for the projects, it seems like the students still want more structure in the process by getting clearer guidelines and objectives for the projects.

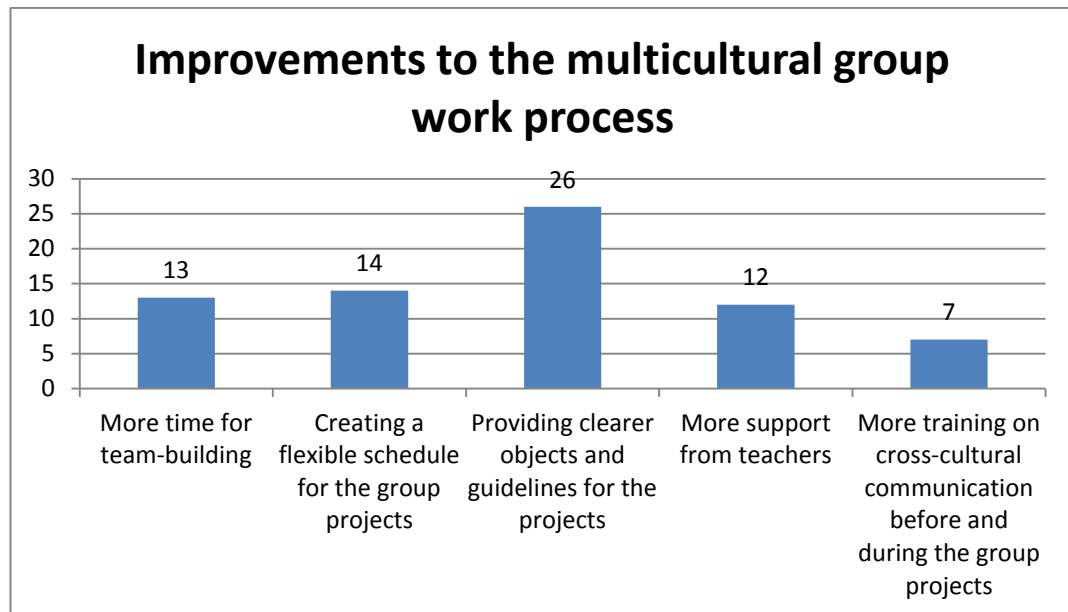


Figure 12. Question 22: Improvements to the multicultural group work process.

The last question of the questionnaire was a request for the students to give comments or suggestions that they had for the multicultural group work process in TUAS. As the author hopes that the teachers of the IB program could learn something useful from this thesis, this question was added to give the students a chance to give suggestions.

5 people answered the question, 3 of which gave suggestions for the multicultural group work process. One person mentioned that cross-cultural programs should be promoted more, especially to international students, and that these programs should have room for exchange of ideas about culture. Another person suggested that sometimes it would be beneficial for teachers to assign the groups, but then in these cases the teachers would have to know the students well enough to make functional groups. The student suggested that one way to do this would be for the students to fill in a form about their behavior, and then for the teacher to assign different people with different roles to groups. This person also mentioned that it is more personalities than cultures that affect, but culture can give some direction. The last suggestion was that the roles of each member of the group should be clarified from the start with mutual rights and limitations.

Other comments on the question were an explanation on how it's a personal process to open one's mind, and that nothing needs to be done to improve multicultural group work, but individuals need to work on their own process. Another comment was that there are people from many different cultures, and often the work focuses on things that are like the Finnish communication style

4.6 Cross-tabulations

As the third research question of the thesis is about the change in students' attitudes towards multicultural group work during their studies, a section for cross-tabulations related to this matter was created. There are already several cross-tabulations presented previously in the findings, as they link to the findings that are shown there. However, here a few cross-tabulations were made to find out about the change of attitude of students. In this section year group is compared with other variables to see if there is a trend. This variable shows best how much experience the students have with multicultural group work in TUAS, and can therefore show us the development of attitudes through years of study.

To see whether the year group has any connection to how much students enjoy multicultural group work, a cross-tabulation was made between questions 4 (year group) and 9 (enjoyment of multicultural group work).

Table 11. Cross-tabulation between questions 4 and 9: Year group and enjoyment of working in multicultural groups.

| Year group | Enjoyment of working in mc groups | | |
|------------|--|--------------------|---------|
| | I prefer doing group work in a multicultural group | I like it somewhat | Neutral |
| NINBOs09 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| NINBOs10 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| NINBOs11 | | 3 | 1 |
| NINBOs12 | 4 | 3 | |

As seen from the table, there is not much relation between the two factors. This is probably due to the fact that there were only positive or neutral answers for question 9, so there isn't a clear trend here. It seems that almost all of the year

groups have had very positive, positive, and neutral attitudes on multicultural group work.

However, there was more of a division in the results of question 10, where the students were asked how they felt about the challenge of multicultural group work (table depicted below).

Table 11. Cross-tabulation between questions 4 and 10: Year group and challenge of workin in multicultural groups.

| Year group | More challenging to work in mc groups | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------------|-----|
| | No | No opinion | Yes |
| NINBOs09 | 6 | 2 | 7 |
| NINBOs10 | 1 | | 4 |
| NINBOs11 | | | 4 |
| NINBOs12 | 2 | | 5 |

Even though there isn't a huge trend, it can still be seen that the students who had spent less time in TUAS had almost exclusively answers that they felt that multicultural group work was more challenging than group work in single-culture groups. The oldest year group of the respondents, NINBOs09, had almost a 50-50 division on the matter, so many of them regarded multicultural group work to not be any more challenging than single-culture group work.

However, these results are affected by the fact that there were more answers from year group NINBOs09 than from the others, so naturally there is more division in the answers of that year group.

One last cross-tabulation with year group and another variable was made to find out about changes in attitudes during the years of study in TUAS. In this cross-tabulation question 16 (did students feel that the multiculturalism of a group affected the group performance positively or negatively) was used as the other variable.

Table 12. Cross-tabulation between questions 4 and 16: Year group and the effect of multiculturalism on group performance.

| | Does mc affect group performance | | | | |
|------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Year group | Very negatively | Negatively | Doesn't affect at all | Positively | Very Positively |
| NINBOs09 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| NINBOs10 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | |
| NINBOs11 | | | 1 | 3 | |
| NINBOs12 | | 1 | 2 | 4 | |

As seen from above, again there are mixed results, as for example there are answers in all the categories from Year group NINBOs09. However, it can still be seen that NINBOs09 was the only group to have answers that multiculturalism affects group performance very positively. However the other groups also have answers mainly in the positive category, so there are not many conclusions to be drawn.

From these cross-tabulations it can be seen that there are some findings showing that the more time the students spend in the IB program, the more positively they see the effects of multiculturalism on group work, and the less challenging they see it. However, there wasn't a clear trend in any of these cross-tabulations which can be due to the facts that there weren't that many respondents from NINBOs10 and NINBOs11 and there were more respondents from NINBOs09 than from other groups, so it is harder to compare the responses.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this final part of the thesis, research findings are analyzed and they are compared with the theories and writings introduced in the literature review to see what theories hold through and which differ with the received results. A conclusion is given for the research questions, and in the end the validity and reliability of this thesis is discussed, as well as possibilities for further research on the topic.

5.1 Research findings' meanings and connections to the literature

The findings of the questionnaire were introduced in the previous chapter, but in this section the author will look into some of the possible explanations between these results. This section also gives us a look on how the results connected with the theories of the literature review part.

Many theories by Adler were introduced in the literature review of the thesis. This was, because the author of this thesis found out during her research that many writings and publications on multicultural group work and especially on its advantages and disadvantages refer to Adler. For this reason many of her theories were introduced in this thesis, and will in this chapter be compared to the findings of the data collection.

5.1.1 Attitudes of students

The questionnaire had many questions about the attitudes of students towards multiculturalism and its various aspects. The author of this thesis thought that it would be interesting to try to find explanations to certain attitudes and findings that resulted from the questionnaire.

An interesting subject of thought is the relationship between students liking working in multinational groups, but still finding it more challenging than working in one nationality groups. It can be that the feelings of satisfaction that the students get from working in multicultural groups make students enjoy them, even though it means more work. However, 1/3 of the respondents didn't find

multicultural group work more challenging. One possible explanation to this is that it could be that some people enjoy multicultural group work, because they don't find it too hard, or the other way around; they don't find it too hard, because they enjoy it so much.

Even though the attitudes of students cannot be fully understood without more in-depth study on the mindsets of the respondents, there are some conclusions that can be drawn from the results. The excitement, positivity, and comfortableness levels of students, which in all cases (both at the beginning of the studies and after one year) were mainly in the positive categories. Students often felt very high or somewhat high levels of the feelings, and there are some speculations by the author of this thesis as to why the level of excitement was the one to have the biggest change when comparing the change between the attitudes in one year. It is very probable that as the "newness" of the situation wears off, the excitement towards multicultural group works goes down, as the students already know what to expect. For the same reason it is very understandable that in the results of these two questions (questions 13 and 14), the biggest change to upward direction was in the comfortableness feelings of students, as they feel more comfortable with the concept after the first year of study.

These more easily explainable trends can also be seen in the last section of the findings with cross-tabulations made about the attitudes of students. As shown there, the students from older year groups were the ones to see multicultural group work as less challenging than the ones from newer year groups. As the students of year groups NINBOs09 and NINBOs10 have more experience with group works, having gone through several of them, they feel more comfortable with the idea.

5.1.2 Group stages – Connections to theories

As the first part of the questionnaire after the general questions dealt with attitudes of students, not many theories on this matter were found. For this

reason the previous section aimed to give the author's own speculations to the attitudes and opinions expressed in the results.

However, question 11 about the hardship of different stages of group work was developed based on Adler's theory. As explained earlier, Adler (2008, 143) states that the diversity of a team affects the three different team development stages so that the trust building is harder than in one-culture groups, the creation of ideas is easier, and agreeing on decisions is more challenging. The results of the questionnaire corresponded with this theory, as students gave more answers in "very easy" or "easy" categories when talking about idea creation than with trust building and decision agreement stages. The results of the thesis validated Adler's theory on group stages.

5.1.3 Impacts of multiculturalism on group work– Connections to theories

Adler has written and studied extensively on the subject of group diversity advantages and challenges. To see if these writings introduced before are valid in the minds of the respondents, questions 17 and 18 were designed using mostly options taken from Adler's theories.

It is shown in the results that the different advantages and disadvantages mentioned by Adler are valid aspects of multicultural group work, as all of these factors were experienced by several people. Especially on the challenges that students experienced, every option was picked by at least a third of the respondents. Adler's studies on these aspects are therefore also validated. However, the options chosen for these two questions of the questionnaire were already a condensed list of possible implications that Adler has discussed. Therefore, it can't be generalized that all of the advantages and challenges talked by the author correspond with the feelings of the respondents.

Another extensive study on the impacts of multiculturalism on group work has been done by Stahl et al. Even though his findings were introduced earlier in the literature review, it should be mentioned that the study by Stahl et al. on the matter was so extensive that it not only embodied many more aspects than

those mentioned in the questionnaire, but it also studied the effects of different variables (such as group size, etc.) on those aspects, which this thesis didn't do. For this reason the connection between the results of this thesis and Stahl's research is thin.

5.1.4 Cross-cultural communication – Connections to theories

As emphasized by several authors in the literature review, communication issues are a big part of the multicultural work group process. This view of point is shared by the respondents, as when asked about the impact of communication on group work, the students felt that it had a big impact on the matter. This corresponds with the general opinion of authors writing in the field.

When going into detail about the different communication problems encountered and about the methods used to overcome these problems, again the questionnaire had a list of options taken from the writings introduced in the literature review part of the thesis. As the list is just a condensed version of all the possible impacts that are written about, the point was just to see whether these options were factors experienced by the students. Most of the students had experienced these communication problems, and also named other options, which were more or less related to factors mentioned by the authors.

However, in question 21 (methods to overcome communication problems), there were some contradicting results. Even though some of the methods, such as asking for clarification and checking for understanding were very popular choices, there was disagreement on the aspect of through which medium should the message be delivered. Most of the authors who were referred to in the literature review about their tips for managing communication problems, talked about the importance of speaking clearly, and also about the importance of understanding non-verbal communication. In the internet article "10 Strategies for Overcoming Language Barriers" (Berardo 2007) the importance of choosing an effective medium is mentioned. It is thought by the author of this thesis that most of these authors probably hold face-to-face communication as the most effective medium, as non-verbal communication cues are key, and

these can't be managed for example through email. However, in the findings it can be seen that only about a third of the students favored face-to-face meetings, and one mentioned that he specifically favored written messages, as it is clearer to understand.

This goes to show that the results of the questionnaire might have contradicting results with the theories introduced in the literature part, as many of the subjects studied here are about the students' opinions and attitudes. Even though there are theories that can be validated through the results of this thesis, there are always different opinions on these matters, and therefore always room for more study on the subject.

5.2 Conclusions on the research questions

To conclude on the thesis, the author will give her conclusions to the research questions. The first research question dealt with the impacts of cultural diversity on group work performance and process, and from the results it can be seen that international business students of TUAS find many advantages to working in multicultural group, as well as experience challenges with the matter. These advantages and challenges are in line with the work written on the topic by popular authors, such as Adler. An important notice is also that most of the students feel that the effect of multiculturalism on group work performance is positive.

As to what is the initial attitude of students towards group work in multicultural groups and how does this attitude change during the studies, it is shown that the students have positive levels in excitement and positivity at the beginning, and are first more neutral about their comfortableness level. During their studies, it is shown that the comfortableness level does rise, and that they maintain a level of positivity about multicultural group work, but experience a decrease in level of excitement.

In general, the students do enjoy working in multicultural work groups and see the many advantages that come from it. However, they also realize the

challenges connected to the issue and experience problems in the process. It seems that the students are willing to and excited to work in multicultural groups, but they feel like they need some improvements, such as clearer objectives and guidelines from the teachers to be able to minimize the amount of problems impacting the multicultural group work process.

5.3 Research validity and reliability

As explained by Brewerton and Millward, a research must be both reliable and valid. The reliability refers to the data consistency of the research. This refers to, for example, reliability of the results over time. Validity refers to the degree to which the research actually represents what it is supposed to represent. (Brewerton & Millward 2001, 88-89.)

The results of this research need to be considered only as a glimpse to the subject through this particular focus group (international business students of TUAS). The reliability and validity of the study is limited, as its focus group is the students of only one degree program in TUAS. Generalizations on the subject to other students and multicultural group work members can't directly be made. However, within the TUAS research facility, and especially this particular degree program, the reliability of the results is considerably good, as a reasonable percentage of the recipients of the questionnaire answered the survey. As there were 162 recipients for the survey and 31 answered, the response rate is 19, 14%. The reliability is also affected positively by the fact that answers from various different year groups were included in the research. This does not limit the research for students of only one particular year. However, it must be remembered that the majority of answers were from NINBOs09 group, and that the majority of respondents were Finnish. This lowers the generalization degree, even within the international business degree program in TUAS.

The validity of this thesis is positively affected by the fact that primary data was collected straight from the subject of study. However, the validity and reliability may be affected by the fact that the author of this thesis is herself an international business student in TUAS, and as she has personal experience on

the matter, the questionnaire questions and their interpretation can be influenced by her own personal experiences or attitudes on the matter. However, through the whole study, the author of the thesis has tried to work in an objective way and to emphasize when the assumptions given have been her own conclusions of the matter.

5.4 Implications for further research

The subject of multicultural workforce and group work in that framework is an interesting topic of study, especially for future, as more and more firms are becoming multicultural. This thesis only touches the surface of this topic, as it gives a glimpse to the attitudes and opinions of the international business students of TUAS. There are a lot of things that are left unknown and so implications for further research, even just in the TUAS facility, definitely exist.

As this thesis focuses on the attitudes and opinions of students towards the matter, it would certainly be interesting to research the topic more in-depth, for example with interviews to find out more about why students hold the attitudes they do, and what can be done to improve them and the multicultural group work process even more. It would also be very interesting to do a larger-scale study on multicultural work groups, either in other teaching facilities or in big multinational companies.

As this thesis concludes that the international business students of TUAS are willing to work in multicultural work groups, and see the advantages of it, another implication for future research could be to look into the matter from the group work process management perspective, and see what can be done to improve on the process.

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Appendix: Questionnaire sent to the IB students in TUAS

Multicultural group work at Turku University of Applied Sciences

My name is Laura Wegelius and I am a 4th year student in the International Business Degree Program in Turku University of Applied Sciences. I am currently writing my thesis on the topic of the effects of a multicultural workgroup on group work at TUAS.

This survey is the data collection part of my thesis, and so the purpose of this survey is to find out about the attitudes and opinions that students have about working in multicultural groups. The respondents of this survey are International Business students at TUAS.

Answering this survey will only take about 5 minutes, and will be appreciated greatly. It will also hopefully help teachers of TUAS to learn more about the attitudes of students to international group work and help to develop it according to your opinions.

Full anonymity is guaranteed.

Thank you for your contribution!

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. How old are you?

- ☐ 18 or under
- ☐ 18-20
- ☐ 21-23
- ☐ 24-26
- ☐ 27-29
- ☐ 30 or over

3. What is your nationality?

- ☐ Finnish
- ☐ European non-Finnish
- ☐ African
- ☐ American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Australian

4. What year group are you in?

- ☐ IB08
- ☐ NINBOs09
- ☐ NINBOs10

☐ NINBOs11

☐ NINBOs12

5. A multicultural group is a group consisting of people with more than one nationality. In how many different multicultural groups have you worked in during your studies at TUAS?

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5 or more

6. Hofstede defines individualistic cultures as such where individuals are expected to take care of themselves and care for the immediate family only. People define themselves as “I”. In collectivistic cultures individuals are seen as part of a group and people always take care of their relatives as well. People define themselves as “we”.

How would you define the culture in your home country?

☐ Very Individualistic

☐ Individualistic

☐ In between

☐ Collectivistic

- ☐ Very collectivistic
- ☐ Don't know

7. Hofstede defines uncertainty avoidance as the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance people are intolerant to strange behaviour and ideas, whereas in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, people have a more relaxed attitude towards new and unexpected things.

How would you define the culture of your home country?

- ☐ Very high uncertainty avoidance
- ☐ High uncertainty avoidance
- ☐ In between
- ☐ Low uncertainty avoidance
- ☐ Very low uncertainty avoidance
- ☐ Don't know

8. Cultures can also be divided to high-context and low-context cultures. In high context cultures information that is communicated is often uncoded so that more indirect communication styles are used and words are less important. In low context cultures most of the communication is expressed in words and there is less emphasis on non-verbal context.

How would you define the culture of your home country?

- ☐ Very high context

- ☐ High context
- ☐ In between
- ☐ Low context
- ☐ Very low context
- ☐ Don't know

9. In your studies at TUAS, do you enjoy doing group work in a multicultural group?

- ☐ I prefer doing group work in a multicultural group
- ☐ I like it somewhat
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ I dislike it somewhat
- ☐ I would rather work in a single-culture group

10. Do you find it more challenging to work in multicultural groups than in one-nationality groups?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No opinion

11. How hard did you find the following aspects during your multicultural group work experience at TUAS?

| | Very difficult | Somewhat difficult | Neutral | Somewhat easy | Very easy |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Trust building (getting to know each other at the beginning) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Creating ideas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Communicating | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Agreeing on decisions with the group | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

12. In what kind of a group would you rather work in?

- ☐ A single-culture group
- ☐ A group where there is an equal amount of people from 2 cultures
- ☐ A group where most of the people are from the same culture, but one or two are from other cultures
- ☐ A group where there are several representatives of several cultures
- ☐ A group where everyone is from a different culture
- ☐ Don't know

13. What was your attitude towards working in a multicultural group at the beginning of your studies?

| Very high | Somewhat high | Neutral | Not very high | Not high at all |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Excitement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Positivity | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Comfortableness | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

14. After the first 9 months (first year at TUAS), how was your attitude towards working in a multicultural group then?

| | Very high | Somewhat high | Neutral | Not very high | Not high at all |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Excitement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Positivity | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Comfortableness | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

15. How would you rate your first experience in working with a multicultural group at TUAS?

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Negative
- ☐ Very negative


16. Do you feel that the multiculturalism of a work group in school impacts the group performance positively or negatively?

- ☐ Very Positively
- ☐ Positively
- ☐ Doesn't affect at all
- ☐ Negatively
- ☐ Very negatively

17. In your group work experience at TUAS what factors have you encountered that make multicultural group work challenging?

- ☐ Cross-cultural communication challenges
- ☐ Increased ambiguity
- ☐ More conflict: harder to reach agreement on decisions
- ☐ Increased complexity in the process

Something else, what?



18. In your group work experience at TUAS what things have you encountered to be advantages of group work in multicultural groups?

- ☐ More creativity

- ☐ Better problem-solving process
- ☐ Positive effects on ability to learn
- ☐ More feelings of satisfaction

Something else, what?



19. How much of an impact do you think communication plays in the performance of multicultural groups?

- ☐ Big impact
- ☐ Somewhat of an impact
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Little impact
- ☐ No impact at all

20. What sort of communication problems have you encountered in multicultural work groups?

- ☐ Problems in the different levels of literacy in English
- ☐ Different ways of speaking (accents, speed of speech)

- ☐ Differences in usage of silence

Something else, what?

21. What sorts of methods did you use to overcome the communication problems?

- ☐ Speaking more clearly
- ☐ Asking for clarification
- ☐ Checking for understanding
- ☐ Favoring face-to-face meetings to email/other electronic communication
- ☐ Being patient

Something else, what?

22. In your opinion, what can be done to improve the performance of multicultural workgroups at TUAS?

- ☐ More time for team-building

- ☐ Creating a flexible schedule for the group projects
- ☐ Providing clearer objects and guidelines for the projects
- ☐ More support from teachers
- ☐ More training on cross-cultural communication before and during the group projects

Something else, what?



23. Please include some comments or suggestions you might have for the multicultural group work process in TUAS!



Thank you for your time!