

**THE EFFECT OF COMMUNICATION ON PERFORMANCE OF
MULTICULTURAL WORK TEAMS AT OXFAM GREAT BRITAIN
KENYA.**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination to any other University.

Signed Date:

Mugo Dorcas Watitu

D61/70336/2009

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university supervisor.

Signed: Date:

DR. JOHN YABS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the beginning, God. By His grace I have been able to complete this work. I am indeed grateful.

My gratitude to my husband and children for their sacrifice and forbearance. Much appreciation.

Appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. John Yabs for his support, dedication, guidance and patience in supervising this project. Thank you.

I wish to thank the staff at Oxfam GB-Kenya for giving me a hand in data collection. Thank you for your time and effort.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my lovely twin daughters, Lilian and Linda who had to bear my absence and miss the motherly touch during the period I was undertaking this project. I hope that one day they will understand the meaning of their sacrifice.

ABSTRACT

Globalization has driven international business to a new stage of development.. The philosophy to 'think global, act local' to meet the diverse needs of the organization, host country regulatory requirements and better understand the local cultures of the clientele base has led to the engagement of foreign nationals managers in the work force. MNCs have been faced with diverse challenges with this move, one of the principle ones being the challenge of communication across cultures. This research is a case study of Oxfam Great Britain Kenya with the objective of finding out the effect of communication on the performance of multicultural work teams.

Some of the principal findings of the study are that that multicultural team communication is varied and hence there is the task of ensuring that the messages communicated are decoded by all persons from the different cultural backgrounds in the same way; that communication cuts across the team regardless of the cultural background and being a core backbone of the functioning of any organization, poor communication has been known to paralyze operations leading to poor work performance and that communication in a multicultural setting is a complex activity that requires similarly complex systems to ensure common approaches and understanding.

Some of the recommendations include that there should be more informal interactions between the teams to enhance bonding; all communication should consider the diversity of the audience; the organization should consider the use of translators where difficulties in understanding the official language are evident and there ought to be more face-face communication in order to be able to understand and embrace non-verbal cues.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MNCs	-	Multinational Corporations
HP	-	Hewlett Packard
Oxfam-GB	-	Oxfam Great Britain
UK	-	United Kingdom
US	-	United States
UHC	-	University Health System Consortium
ICT	-	Information Communication Technology
KPI	-	Key Performance Indicators

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalization has driven international business to a new stage of development. In an effort to drive growth through economies of scale, organizations have expanded into international trade through various direct and indirect exports. This may be in the form of foreign subsidiaries or representative office, foreign direct investments, alliance, joint ventures and others. The philosophy to 'think global, act local' to meet the diverse needs of the organization, host country regulatory requirements and better understand the local cultures of the clientele base has led to the engagement of foreign nationals managers in the work force. Thus, there is a need to understand national cultures and cross-cultural implications of these multinational corporations (MNCs) and the local workforce managers.

Multicultural teams have become very common in recent years. With cross border mobility becoming much easier, the number of people moving from one country to another has grown significantly. This has also led to more people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds intermarrying. Their children could be born and grow up in different countries and have hybrid cultural identities. Globalization and the advances in communication and transportation technology have reduced trade barriers and increased interaction among people.

1.1.1 Communication

Wikipedia (2010) defines communication as the activity of conveying meaningful information. Communication requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication;

thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality. The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the sender.

Communicating effectively is the biggest challenge for multicultural teams because communication styles differ across cultures. For team members to work through these differences, they first have to understand that people communicate differently. Direct communicators prefer to say what is on their mind, and they deal with conflict by addressing it promptly. Others prefer indirect communication and will speak around an issue while carefully choosing words to avoid offense. They will rely on nonverbal cues to communicate their messages. They will deal with conflict indirectly, through a third party or by avoiding the issue altogether.

Informal or formal communication styles prove to be another difference that comes out in multicultural teams. Most Americans communicate informally and prefer to speak as equals and avoid rituals. They interrupt or speak over each other during meetings. Formal communicators are perceived to be very polite as they observe the courtesies that informal communicators disregard. They wait their turn to speak. Often, they wait to hear what their manager has to say before expressing an opinion. Thus, they are often perceived as not having much to say in the U.S. environment. This is far from the truth; they are just too polite to interrupt. Formal communicators are often from hierarchical cultures such as Asian and Latin countries and will defer to people with higher titles. Understanding these styles and how they impact team dynamics and the perceptions of individual members represents the first step to creating effective

teams. Team leaders need to be trained to recognize such dynamics and develop an environment that brings out the best performance of all individuals.

Language disparities can impede communication. To bridge this gap, employees can practice development of listening skills; practice being respectful; practice speaking more slowly; and avoiding slang or idioms.

1.1.2 Indicators of Team Performance

The term Key Performance Indicators (KPI) has become one of the most over-used and little understood terms in business development and management. In theory it provides a series of measures against which internal managers and external investors can judge the business and how it is likely to perform over the medium and long term. Regrettably it has become confused with metrics – if we can measure it, it is a KPI. Against the growing background of noise created by a welter of such KPI concepts, the true value of the core KPI becomes lost.

The KPI when properly developed should provide all staff with clear goals and objectives, coupled with an understanding of how they relate to the overall success of the organization. Published internally and continually referred to, they will also strengthen shared values and create common goals.

It is Key when it is of fundamental importance in gaining competitive advantage and is a make or break component in the success or failure of the enterprise. For example, the level of labor turnover is an important operating ratio, but rarely one that is a make or break element in the

success and failure of the organization. Many are able to operate on well below benchmark levels and still return satisfactory or above satisfactory results.

Only relates to Performance when it can be clearly measured, quantified and easily influenced by the organization. For example, weather influences many tourist related operations – but the organization cannot influence the weather. Sales growth may be important performance criteria but targets must be set that can be measured.

Its an Indicator if it provides leading information on future performance. A considerable amount of data within the organization only has value for historical purposes – for example debtor and creditor length. By contrast rates of new product development provide excellent leading edge information.

Obviously KPI's cannot operate in a vacuum. One cannot establish a KPI without a clear understanding of what is possible – so we have to be able to set upper and lower limits of the KPI in reference to the market and how the competition is performing (or in the absence of competition, a comparable measurement from a number of similar organizations). This means that an understanding of benchmarks is essential to make KPI's useful (and specific to the organization), as they put the level of current performance in context – both for start ups and established enterprises – though they are more important for the latter. Benchmarks also help in checking what other successful organizations see as crucial in building and maintaining competitive advantage, as they are central to any type of competitive analysis.

1.1.3 Multicultural Work Teams

According to McGrath (1991), teams in an organizational context can be defined as complex, intact social systems that engage in multiple, concurring projects, while partially nested within, and loosely coupled to, surrounding systems. Thus, teams are multifunctional, contributing to the organization on three levels: (1) to systems in which they are embedded (e.g. a company, a company's sub-division), (2) to their members and (3) to the group itself as a complex social structure.

In an increasingly global economy, multicultural work teams are becoming more commonplace, and fostering teamwork in multicultural teams is a growing challenge. The growing body of intercultural research suggests important differences in teamwork across cultures and points to the complexity of culturally diverse teams. Studies have shown that the composition of the team determines the success of the group and may prevent the group from reaching its performance potential (Earley & Gibson, 2002; Earley & Mosakoski, 2000; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Ravlin, Thomas, & Ilsev, 2000).

Studies on culturally diverse teams demonstrate that moderately heterogeneous groups experience significant communication problems, relational conflict, and low team identity that have a dysfunctional impact on team effectiveness (Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997). As a rule, heterogeneous teams report reduced satisfaction with the team, which, in turn, negatively affects team performance (Earley & Mosakoski, 2000; Jehn et al., 1999; Ravlin et al., 2000).

In hi-tech companies, multicultural diversity is the norm rather than the exception. By design or by necessity, workplaces are increasingly "looking like the world." Old notions of "majority" and

"minority" cultures within an organization are rapidly becoming out of date. At Xpede Corporation, a California startup launched about a year ago to provide financial service products through Web-based applications, less than half of the 55 employees are Americans of European descent. Nearly every other major US ethnic group is represented, as well as a range of India's many communities, and countries as different as Vietnam, Germany, Mexico, the Philippines and Russia. One quarter of the workforce is powered by women, in a variety of engineering positions as well as more traditional administrative and marketing roles. Educational and corporate backgrounds are likewise very diverse, as are individual personalities and approaches to problems.

1.1.4 Oxfam GB – Kenya

Oxfam is a vibrant global movement of passionate, dedicated people fighting poverty together; doing amazing work, together. People power drives everything Oxfam does. From saving lives and developing projects that put poor people in charge of their lives and livelihoods, to campaigning for change that lasts. To have the biggest possible impact on the lives of poor people worldwide, Oxfam concentrates on three interlinked areas of work:

Emergency response which involves providing help fast in an emergency. Oxfam saves lives, swiftly delivering aid, support and protection; and also help communities develop the capacity to cope with future crises.

Development work which involves helping poor people take control, solve their own problems, and rely on themselves, with the right support. Oxfam funds long-term work to fight poverty in thousands of communities worldwide.

Campaigning for change which rides on the precept that poverty isn't just about lack of resources. In a wealthy world it's about bad decisions made by powerful people. Oxfam

campaigns hard, putting pressure on leaders for real lasting change.

In Kenya, Oxfam works with the most vulnerable communities in the dry and remote northern regions, and in the impoverished slums of the capital Nairobi. The post-election violence that devastated Kenya in early 2008 soon subsided, but key underlying issues such as rising poverty, inequality, unemployment and corruption remain. Rural pastoralist communities and poor urban settlements have suffered decades of neglect and under-development, leaving many Kenyans living without access to basic services. Oxfam is helping focus on providing clean water, building peace between conflict-torn communities, advocating for better governance, and helping ensure that poor people have enough food and income throughout the year.

1.2 Research Problem

As businesses face the dawn of the twenty-first century, one feature of the business environment is increasing globalization. Indeed, the vast extent of literature on globalization which has emerged in the last ten to fifteen years attests to this concern (Garrison, 1998; Haley, 1999; Ong et al, 1995; Swierczek & Hirsch, 1997; Terpstra and Kenneth, 1991). This may take many forms, ranging from foreign investments to international partnership, or even simply a web site that may be accessed from any computer on the planet with a suitable internet connection (Kidd, 2001). It is apparent that the globalization process is forcing businesses to rethink their strategies. This is apparent in the case of Hewlett-Packard (HP), an American MNC founded by Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard in 1937, which manufactures computers and other electronic components and equipment. In an effort to ensure that its employees understand the global diversity of its local

customers, Hewlett-Packard (HP) developed the HP way, which "involved a participative management style that supported individual freedom and initiative while emphasizing unity of purpose and teamwork"(Collin & Porras, 1996, p207). "As the company grew, a conscious effort was made to retain the sense of purpose, closeness, and informality that HP enjoyed when it was a small company. The HP Way reflected a faith in people to use their own discretion to make decisions, and along the way make some mistakes as well as contributions" (Collin & Porras, 1996, p207).

Intercultural communications and interactions assumed an even larger role with global marketing and sales strategies as the one world market have forced businesses to think global, act local and integrate. In the past decades, western countries multinational corporations (MNCs) have expanded their investments into Asia Pacific, either through direct exports, foreign domestic investments or even through alliance or joint ventures. In addition to controlling cost, efforts to drive 'think global, act local' philosophy to meet the diverse needs of local clientele, will require MNCs' global strategy to engage the services of foreign nationals in the Asia Pacific region in the work force. Thus, MNCs have to deal with the complications and issues of international business cultural differences. It is essential to note that whilst the MNCs have to deal with the complications and issues of international business cultural differences, local employees have to react towards the cross cultural conflict that these MNCs bring into their local country.

Against this background, this project aims to examine the extent to which the performance of staff at Oxfam GB is affected by their cross cultural differences envisaged in multicultural work

teams. The problem of this study therefore is to find out how communication affects the performance of multicultural teams.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to determine the effect of communication on performance of multicultural work teams at Oxfam GB-Kenya.

1.4 Value of the Study

The findings of this study will benefit:

Oxfam GB in understanding the cross-cultural influences on performance of their existing multicultural teams. They could use the findings of this research to identify the gaps in their communication and information communication platforms that could be a hindrance to effective performance. The research will provide information on the strategies that can be adopted in management of multicultural work teams for long term success of the organization.

Other multinational organizations can adopt the findings and improve on their teams' performance. The findings of a case study can be used as a basis for generalization for other organizations. Therefore, other organizations of similar nature to Oxfam can use the findings to identify the gaps they may be having and check what recommendations they can adopt to improve on their practice.

Future researchers and scholars who may wish to use the study as a source of reference and for stimulating interest for further research. At the same time, it will contribute to the pool of existing knowledge on the subject of communication and information communication technology; multicultural teams and performance.

CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cross Cultural Studies

According to Kluckhohn & Kroeberg, (1952), one key contributor towards this notion is Geert Hofstede. Despite being challenged in recent years, one of the major works relating to cultures and cross cultural studies was reflected in his book "Cultures Consequences: International Differences in Work related Values", published in 1980, "The Confucian Connection: From Cultural Roots to Economic Growth", which he published with Michael Bond in 1988 and "Cultures and Organization: Software of the Mind", published in 1990, proposes that national cultural and values, as they affect the work environment and its management, could be categorized on the basis of five variables, namely:

Power Distance , which relates to how society deals with the fact that people are unequal in a social and status sense, and how different societies deals with this reality; Uncertainty Avoidance, which relates to how society copes with uncertainty about the future, and deals with the reality of risk; Individualism Collectivism, which relates to the relative closeness of the relationship between one person and others; Masculinity Feminism, which relates to the sexuality of roles in society, and the degree to which a society allows overlap between the roles

of men and women and the Confucian Dynamism, or short term/ long-term orientation, which relates to the emphasis on stability, thrift, respect for tradition and the future.

The impact of cross cultural complications was also discussed by Vern Terpstra in 1985. Terpstra (1985) identifies five factors to be considered in international business: Cultural Variability which is the degree to which conditions within a macro-culture are at a low or high, stable, or unstable rate; Cultural Complexity which is the issue of high- and low- context cultures; Cultural Hostility which is the degree to which conditions locally are threatening to organizational goals, norms, value and others; Cultural Heterogeneity which is the degree to which cultures are dissimilar or similar and cultural Interdependence which is the degree of sensitivity of the culture to respond to conditions and developments in other cultures.

2.2 Intercultural Communication in Multicultural Teams

Worldwide intercultural cooperation drives corporate growth and development across the globe resulting in a heightened demand for a qualified but diverse workforce. Researchers have documented that the successful performance of multicultural teams is a vital and contributing factor to organizational success (Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995; Snow, Snell, Davison, & Hambrick, 1996; Wheelan & Hochberger, 1996). The increased reliance on multicultural teams has renewed interest in understanding and developing the communication processes necessary to develop high performance teams across cultural differences. From surveying American and Russian managers, Matveev and Nelson (2004) found a significant effect of national culture on cross-cultural communication competence, suggesting the need to train managers to become more effective in culturally complex workplaces. Their research suggests that the national culture of team members plays a significant role in determining whether communicative

behavior is perceived as competent, emphasizing the central role that national culture and ethnicity plays in assessing communication competence already documented in the literature (Hughes, 1971; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelson, 1993).

2.3 Cross-cultural Communication Competence and Multicultural Team Performance

In companies that work to expand globally, team performance becomes vulnerable to cross-cultural interaction problems (Matveev & Nelson, 2004). Managing cultural diversity, cultural differences, and cross-cultural conflicts have surfaced as frequent challenges for cross-cultural teams (Marquardt & Hovarth, 2001). Because of their diverse perceptions, managers are more likely to interpret and respond differently to similar strategic issues or team tasks (Schneider & DeMeyer, 1991). Cross-cultural communication competence is thus an important component of a manager's ability to address any performance challenges (Matveev & Nelson, 2004).

While many researchers have investigated cross-cultural communication competence and cross-cultural effectiveness (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Redmond & Bunyi, 1991; Samovar & Porter, 1991), understanding of the relationship between cross-cultural communication competence and multicultural team performance is insufficiently developed (Hofner & Saphiere, 1996; Wiseman & Shuter, 1994). Furthermore, past research finds the relationship between ethno-cultural diversity and performance to be highly complex (Ng & Tung, 1998). Combined analyses of multicultural team performance, cross-cultural communication competence, and national culture orientations of team members could explain how communication competence influences the performance of multicultural teams.

In the multicultural work environment, obtaining information from a colleague requires a high degree of cross-cultural communication competence. Furthermore, Matveev & Nelson (2004) argue that high competence has a direct and positive effect on the decision making and problem-solving abilities of managers. Past research has identified various characteristics that constitute cross-cultural communication competence, including relationship skills, communication skills, and personal traits such as inquisitiveness (Black & Gregersen, 2000; Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Mendenhall, 2001; & Moosmuller, 1995). Cross-cultural communication competence entails not only knowledge of the culture and language, but also affective and behavioral skills such as empathy, human warmth, charisma, and the ability to manage anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1998; Spiess, 1996, 1998). The Cross-cultural Communication Competence Model (Matveev & Nelson, 2004; Matveev, Rao & Milter, 2001) includes four dimensions: interpersonal skills, team effectiveness, cultural uncertainty, and cultural empathy.

2.4 Cultural perspective on challenges faced by Multicultural teams around the World

Multicultural teams create multi-faceted challenges (Berry, 1997). Teams whose members come from different nations and backgrounds place special demands on managers, especially when a feuding team looks to the boss for help with a conflict. When a major international software developer needed to produce a new product quickly, the project manager assembled a team of employees from India and the United States. From the start the team members could not agree on a delivery date for the product. The Americans thought the work could be done in two to three weeks; the Indians predicted it would take two to three months. As time went on, the Indian team members proved reluctant to report setbacks in the production process, which the American team

members would find out about only when work was due to be passed to them. Such conflicts, of course, may affect any team, but in this case they arose from cultural differences. As tensions mounted, conflict over delivery dates and feedback became personal, disrupting team members' communication about even mundane issues. The project manager decided he had to intervene, with the result that both the American and the Indian team members came to rely on him for direction regarding minute operational details that the team should have been able to handle itself. The manager became so bogged down by quotidian issues that the project careened hopelessly off even the most pessimistic schedule—and the team never learned to work together effectively.

According to Deller (1997), multicultural teams often generate frustrating management dilemmas. Cultural differences can create substantial obstacles to effective teamwork, but these may be subtle and difficult to recognize until significant damage has already been done. As in the case above, which the manager involved told us about, managers may create more problems than they resolve by intervening. The challenge in managing multicultural teams effectively is to recognize underlying cultural causes of conflict, and to intervene in ways that both get the team back on track and empower its members to deal with future challenges themselves. The wrong kind of managerial intervention may sideline valuable members who should be participating or, worse, create resistance, resulting in poor team performance. This is not about differing national standards for doing business, such as accounting practices but about the day-to-day working problems among team members that can keep multicultural teams from realizing the very gains they were set up to harvest, such as knowledge of different product markets, culturally sensitive customer service, and 24-hour work rotations. The good news is that cultural challenges are

manageable if managers and team members choose the right strategy and avoid imposing single-culture-based approaches on multicultural situations.

2.5 Strategies Successful Teams use to deal with Multicultural Challenges.

There is no one right way to deal with a particular kind of multicultural problem (Arthur & Bennett, 1995) and identifying the type of challenge is only the first step. The more crucial step is assessing the circumstances or "enabling situational conditions" under which the team is working. For example, does the project allow any flexibility for change, or do deadlines make that impossible? Are there additional resources available that might be tapped? Is the team permanent or temporary? Does the team's manager have the autonomy to make a decision about changing the team in some way? Once the situational conditions have been analyzed, the team's leader can identify an appropriate response.

Arthur & Bennett, (1995), in their study of the relative importance of factors perceived to contribute to success of teams came up with the following strategies.

2.5.1 Adaptation.

This involves acknowledging cultural gaps openly and working around them. It means that people see the problem as not an issue of personalities but as cultural difference. Once they do that, it's amazing how much they can live with it. And a subset of that is fusion. Fusion allows the coexistence of multiple approaches. In teams, there may be synergies from approaching problems in multiple ways because we'll get more insight and preserve the unique perspectives of people who approach problems in different ways. Some teams find ways to work with or around the challenges they face, adapting practices or attitudes without making changes to the group's membership or assignments. Adaptation works when team members are willing to acknowledge and name their cultural differences and to assume responsibility for figuring out

how to live with them (Hannigan, 1990). It's often the best possible approach to a problem, because it typically involves less managerial time than other strategies; and because team members participate in solving the problem themselves, they learn from the process. When team members have this mind-set, they can be creative about protecting their own substantive differences while acceding to the processes of others.

In a lot of places in Latin America, they take the two-hour siesta. The North Americans would say they're not pulling their weight. But then they realized the Latin Americans were still working at 9 and 10 at night, when they had gone home. So they learned that they could send a problem to the Latin American office at the end of their day, and they would have it solved by next morning. Rather than accuse people of being lazy, they learned to use those differences.

An American software engineer located in Ireland who was working with an Israeli account management team from his own company was so shocked by the Israelis' in-your-face style: "There were definitely different ways of approaching issues and discussing them. There is something pretty common to the Israeli culture: They like to argue. The Americans tend to collaborate more, and it gets very stressful for them until they figure out how to kind of merge the cultures." The software engineer adapted. He imposed some structure on the Israelis that helped him maintain his own style of being thoroughly prepared; that accommodation enabled him to accept the Israeli style. He also noticed that team members weren't just confronting him; they confronted one another but were able to work together effectively nevertheless. He realized that the confrontation was not personal but cultural.

2.5.2 Managerial intervention.

According to Oberg, (1960), this is basically setting norms early or bringing in a higher-level manager. When a manager behaves like an arbitrator or a judge, making a final decision without team involvement, neither the manager nor the team gains much insight into why the team has stalemated. But it is possible for team members to use managerial intervention effectively to sort out problems. Doing it right often means doing it early in the life of the group. The manager sets some norms of what's appropriate and what's not.

When an American refinery-safety expert with significant experience throughout East Asia got stymied during a project in China, she called in her company's higher-level managers in Beijing to talk to the higher-level managers to whom the Chinese refinery's managers reported. Unlike the Western team members who breached etiquette by approaching the superiors of their Korean counterparts, the safety expert made sure to respect hierarchies in both organizations.

"Trying to resolve the issues," she told us, "the local management at the Chinese refinery would end up having conferences with our Beijing office and also with the upper management within the refinery. Eventually they understood that we weren't trying to insult them or their culture or to tell them they were bad in any way. We were trying to help. They eventually understood that there were significant fire and safety issues. But we actually had to go up some levels of management to get those resolved."

Managerial intervention to set norms early in a team's life can really help the team start out with effective processes. In one instance reported to us, a multicultural software development team's lingua franca was English, but some members, though they spoke grammatically correct English, had a very pronounced accent. In setting the ground rules for the team, the manager addressed the challenge directly, telling the members that they had been chosen for their task expertise, not

their fluency in English, and that the team was going to have to work around language problems. As the project moved to the customer-services training stage, the manager advised the team members to acknowledge their accents up front. She said they should tell customers, "I realize I have an accent. If you don't understand what I'm saying, just stop me and ask questions."

2.5.3 Structural intervention

A structural intervention is a deliberate reorganization or reassignment designed to reduce interpersonal friction or to remove a source of conflict for one or more groups (Zuckerman, 1960). This approach can be extremely effective when obvious subgroups demarcate the team (for example, headquarters versus national subsidiaries) or if team members are proud, defensive, threatened, or clinging to negative stereotypes of one another.

A member of an investment research team scattered across continental Europe, the UK, and the U. S. described for us how his manager resolved conflicts stemming from status differences and language tensions among the team's three "tribes." The manager started by having the team meet face-to-face twice a year, not to discuss mundane day-to-day problems (of which there were many) but to identify a set of values that the team would use to direct and evaluate its progress. At the first meeting, he realized that when he started to speak, everyone else "shut down," waiting to hear what he had to say. So he hired a consultant to run future meetings. The consultant didn't represent a hierarchical threat and was therefore able to get lots of participation from team members.

Another structural intervention might be to create smaller working groups of mixed cultures or mixed corporate identities in order to get at information that is not forthcoming from the team as a whole. The manager of the team that was evaluating retail opportunities in Japan used this

approach. When she realized that the female Japanese consultants would not participate if the group got large, or if their male superior was present, she broke the team up into smaller groups to try to solve problems. She used this technique repeatedly and made a point of changing the subgroups' membership each time so that team members got to know and respect everyone else on the team.

The sub-grouping technique involves risks, however. It buffers people who are not working well together or not participating in the larger group for one reason or another. Sooner or later the team will have to assemble the pieces that the subgroups have come up with, so this approach relies on another structural intervention: Someone must become a mediator in order to see that the various pieces fit together.

2.5.4 Exit Strategy

This entails removing a team member when other options have failed. In their study titled 'Individual differences in adaptation and well-being', Van der Zee; Van Oudenhoven, & Bakker, (2002), found out that people, whether on permanent or short-term teams were assigned work and they could see the end and knew they would get reassigned, they would do what we call "lump it", that is swallow their pride and cope. With much longer-term teams, there was found occasional examples of people leaving. Instead of trying to enhance the situation or the people, they just moved on.

An American member of a multicultural consulting team described the conflict between two senior consultants, one a Greek woman and the other a Polish man, over how to approach problems: "The woman from Greece would say, 'Here's the way I think we should do it.' It would be something that she was in control of. The guy from Poland would say, 'I think we should

actually do it this way instead.' The woman would kind of turn red in the face, upset, and say, 'I just don't think that's the right way of doing it.' It would definitely switch from just professional differences to personal differences. "The woman from Greece ended up leaving the firm. That was a direct result of probably all the different issues going on between these people. It really just wasn't a good fit. I've found that oftentimes when you're in consulting, you have to adapt to the culture, obviously, but you have to adapt just as much to the style of whoever is leading the project."

Though multicultural teams face challenges that are not directly attributable to cultural differences, such differences underlay whatever problem needs to be addressed in many of the teams. Furthermore, while serious in their own right when they have a negative effect on team functioning, cultural challenges may also unmask fundamental managerial problems. Managers who intervene early and set norms; teams and managers who structure social interaction and work to engage everyone on the team; and teams that can see problems as stemming from culture, not personality, approach challenges with good humor and creativity (Ward & Chang, 1997). Managers who have to intervene when the team has reached a stalemate may be able to get the team moving again, but they seldom empower it to help itself the next time a stalemate occurs.

Take, for example, this story about a financial-services call center. The members of the call-center team were all fluent Spanish-speakers, but some were North Americans and some were Latin Americans. Team performance, measured by calls answered per hour, was lagging. One Latin American was taking twice as long with her calls as the rest of the team. She was handling callers' questions appropriately, but she was also engaging in chitchat. When her teammates confronted her for being a free rider (they resented having to make up for her low call rate), she

immediately acknowledged the problem, admitting that she did not know how to end the call politely – chitchat being normal in her culture. They rallied to help her: Using their technology, they would break into any of her calls that went overtime, excusing themselves to the customer, offering to take over the call, and saying that this employee was urgently needed to help out on a different call. The team's solution worked in the short run, and the employee got better at ending her calls in the long run.

2.6 Factors that Sabotage Team Performance

It's so easy to underperform! We've all done it, had an off day or simply not felt like making an effort. Most commonly because our energy levels fluctuate perhaps from lack of food, lack of sleep, lack of exercise or simply our body's biorhythm. Naturally our personal wellbeing has an effect on our ability to perform. Whether you're an employee, manager, leader or business owner it's useful to understand and control your energy fluctuations. And even though this means performance could fluctuate, it's usually not long term or permanent. According to Watson & Clark, (1984), if you're working with a team where there is constant underperformance, where employees hesitate to work together or where fellow team members don't even show up, it's very likely there are other problems. At first they may seem to be just small problems that are left unresolved because they're not important enough. Yet because they're unresolved and continue to grow they soon begin to impact team performance. And still there is no resolution or discovery of the cause of the problems. If this sounds too simplistic, it is happening in teams every day.

One of the most important things to do is recognize the cause of the problems. An example would be if decisions are made when some team members are not present and they are not kept informed yet are expected to produce the same result as the rest of the team. Then at the next

team meeting they're reprimanded for their lack of activity. Mostly we only see the effect of the problem, like in the above example where those team members not present didn't produce a result, which was caused by a lack of communication. The following are the common of problems that sabotage team performance according to Fontaine, Manstead, & Wagner, (1993).

2.6.1 **Fear**

The most common cause of poor team performance is real or perceived fear. The fears can be personal or shared by the entire team. To overcome these fears skilled team leaders can assist individuals and the team to identify their fears, understand the cause of the fear and create a plan to reduce or eliminate it. Then there is also the fear of the external environment, such as the consequences of the current economic crisis, which can be reduced by creating shared objectives and goals. Along with identifying the actions the team could take it would give the team a common bond and help them overcome their fears.

2.6.2 **Internal Conflict**

This is an enormous source of underperformance in many teams. Conflict occurs most commonly when there are no ground rules and problems are not dealt with or cleared up as soon as they arise. Creating a Team Code of Practice will assist teams to reduce conflict by giving team members a pre-determined set of rules to abide by and to use in conflicting situations.

2.6.3 **Lack of Direction**

This can easily sabotage team performance without team members being aware of it. If the team leader, manager or leaders of the enterprise are not clear on the direction they are heading in,

their teams will simply follow in their footsteps. Direction must be set by the business leadership and consistently communicated to everyone in the team.

2.6.4 Lack of Communication

This, amongst team members, and from the leadership to the employees, remains one of the biggest problems in managing and increasing team performance. When people are not adequately informed there is an increase in mistakes, poor decision making, poor customer service and more. Multiple channels of communication that are open to communication passing in both directions are a critical part of increasing team performance (Ruben, & Kealey, 1979).

2.6.5 Lack of Trust

When this happens between management and staff or amongst team members, it creates a negative spiral that can be difficult to reverse. An example is the massive drop in trust amongst the world's financial institutions, has been partially responsible for creating the global credit crisis. When there is sufficient reason for people to stop trusting each other it can take a long time to re-establish that trust and get the team back to a higher level of performance (Ruben & Kealey, 1979). It's imperative that team leaders and managers avoid this scenario because the consequences can be devastating and long term.

2.6.6 Divisive Culture

This occurs in teams where there is no agreed set of values to guide the culture. This results in the most dominant people creating team culture which can quickly divide the team. For instance dominant leaders and managers can alienate some or all team members by not facilitating a

process that develops team culture. From the leaders or managers viewpoint it may seem to be an effective form of team management and control, but it usually has the effect of reducing productivity and performance. Ensure you're building an inclusive culture in your business and amongst your teams. If you're experiencing low levels of team performance consider the list of causes above and ask yourself if any of them could be the reason.

Leaders should take some time to step back and really analyze the cause, either by listening and observing or asking questions. Once you've identified the cause you'll need to make decisions and take action that will give you a different result. Involve your team in this process as much as possible and you'll gain far more than you would believe.

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology focuses on research design, population of the study, sample and sampling methods, data collection methods and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is defined as the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to purpose with the economy in procedure (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

This research will be a case study. The cases study method provides much more detailed information on the subject under study. It is also free from material bias and enables one to intensively study a particular unit.

3.3. Data collection

Primary data will be collected for this study. Primary data consists of facts, assumptions and premises obtained directly from the field.

The data will be gathered through a structured interview guide and five senior managers will be interviewed.

3.4 Data analysis

Content analysis will be used to analyze the qualitative data. According to Nachmias & Nachmias (1996), content analysis is a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages and using the same to relate trends.

CHAPTER FOUR : DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the research findings together with their interpretation. Data on general information; the communication process and roles; communication channels and information flow; effects of communication on multicultural team performance and communication related challenges is analyzed.

4.2 General Information

General information considered included information on respondents, key players in the communication process and roles and channels of communication and how information flows within the organization.

4.2.1 General Information on Respondents

Table 1: Respondents

Department of Team Leader	Nationality of team leader	Length of Service (Years)	No. of nationalities in the team
Human Resource	Kenyan	6	3
Resource Mobilization	Nigerian	4	3
Finance and Administration	Kenyan	16	4
Procurement and Logistics	Briton	5	3
Public Relations	Tanzanian	7	2

From the analysis above, there is an indication that the diversity of cultures in each department is enough to warrant an investigation on how communication flows effectively amongst the team members. There is a balanced representation of different cultures across the team leadership and among the team members.

4.2.2 Communication Players and Roles

Table 2: Key players in the communication process and their roles

Key Player	Role
Directors and Managers	Dissemination and internalization
Team Leaders	Distribution and management of feedback
Team members	Contribution to ideas, processes and strategies

According to the findings, the effectiveness of communication is dependent on the participation of all parties within the team. Observance of protocol was mentioned as key and the issue of seeking clarity or affirmation in the course of the communication process is important for effective delivery of intended messages.

4.2.3 Communication Channels Information Flow

Table 3: Channels of communication and how information flows within the organization

Channels	Communication flow
Email/mail shots	Top-down
Chat messages	Bottom-up
Memos	Lateral/Parallel
Website	Headquarters to regional

Twitter – sumus/karl	Regional to headquarters
Phone	
Intranet/pop-ups	
Face-face/one-on-one	
Group meetings	

Different channels of communication and modes of communication flow are used depending on the line of structure and the nature of information to be passed whether formal or informal.

4.3 Effects of Communication on Multicultural Team Performance

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of communication on performance of multicultural work teams at Oxfam GB-Kenya. The respondents were asked questions based on the current team performance, current challenges related to communication and the effects of the challenges on performance of the multicultural work teams. The findings are presented in tables 4-5.

4.3.1 Current Team Performance

Table 4: Description of the current team performance

Department	Description of current performance	Is this the optimal performance?	Reason why its not optimal
Human Resource	Fair	No	Information load is very high and it needs to be put into context
Resource Mobilization	Fairly good	No	There is need for better understanding of the different

			cultural backgrounds for enhanced performance
Finance and Administration	Good	No	There is need for constant feedback and reviews which is hindered by the high scale of workload within the organization.
Procurement and Logistics	Good	No	There is a need for more personal than impersonal means of communication
Public Relations	Above average	Yes	Staff freely plan their work and go an extra mile. At times the team shares work and assist each other.

The findings point towards a fairly satisfactory performance but there is a lot of room for improvement if the issues pointed out are worked on with an aim of improving the performance.

4.3.2 Current Challenges and Effects

Table 5: Current Challenges related to communication in the multicultural team and their effects.

Department	Current Challenges	Positive effect	Negative effect
Human Resource	Information overload Misunderstandings amongst team members from different cultural backgrounds.	Diversity of ideas has led to enriched decisions	Information overload is time consuming.
Resource Mobilization	Differences in Language meanings Differences in accents	Embracing of differences has improved on team members' patience resulting into more team coherence.	In case of misunderstanding, conflict resolution is difficult affecting team performance.

Finance and Administration	Misinterpretation of information based on diversity of backgrounds Differences in directness or indirectness in giving feedback	Team members are challenged to improve to avoid direct negative feedback	Misinterpretation of feedback by a member being taken as a personal attack on one's personality leading to resentment and demoralization.
Procurement and Logistics	Misunderstanding of context informing world views. Verbal and non-verbal language barriers	None	Wastage of time and poor working relationships thus affecting delivery of program objectives.
Public Relations	National and international staff have separate informal gatherings and separate work networks.	None	Less cohesion amongst the team members.

The challenges that came out include information overload; misunderstandings amongst team members from different cultural backgrounds; differences in Language meanings; differences in accents; misinterpretation of information based on diversity of backgrounds; differences in directness or indirectness in giving feedback Misunderstanding of context informing world views.

The findings point towards congruence in the nature of challenges that each of the teams face in the face of a multicultural work setting. The challenges are either positive or negative and their effect on team performance depends on how the team leader is able to harness the potential inherent therein.

CHAPTER FIVE : SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study aimed at determining the effect of communication on performance of multicultural work teams at Oxfam GB-Kenya. This chapter presents the discussion, conclusion and recommendations based on the study findings. The findings have been discussed in accordance to the objectives of the study; the conclusions drawn from the study and recommendations arising from the study given

5.2 Summary of Findings

Based on how the respondents described communication in a multicultural setting as; it was noted that communication cuts across the team regardless of the cultural background of the team members and therefore is of great essence. The respondents indicated that communication in such a setting can be poor based on the various challenges associated with working with people from different cultures. Being a core backbone of the functioning of any organization, poor communication has been known to paralyze operations leading to poor work performance. However, with deliberate and conscious effort both by the team leaders and team members to understand and embrace each others' differences, the same challenges can be turned around to become a rich source of strength for the team's performance. Some of the measures that the organization has taken in an effort to neutralize this challenge include creating a conducive

environment for all by treating all members equally in terms of benefits and other work related issues; having one on one monthly sessions amongst team leaders in order to share of ideas on how to deal with the various communication challenges that each team leader has been facing over the course of the month and mediation in the event of conflicts that has facilitate avoidance of a situation of reversing any gains attained in an effort to enhance multicultural team communication and subsequent performance.

It was also noted that multicultural team communication is varied to meet different needs in different key languages. This means that there is the task of ensuring that the messages communicated are decoded by all persons from the different cultural backgrounds in the same way. Nonetheless, there exists an official language of communication that everyone is fairly versed in to avoid mix up during communication. The organization has taken this measure in a bid to create rapport amongst all staff but where there is need for interpretation of communication in the language of the person concerned; the same is done to ensure that information flows and that this is not used by the affected team members as an excuse for poor performance. Use of more written communication as opposed to verbal communication is also a strategy that ensures uniformity in communication because non verbal communication can easily be misinterpreted depending on one's cultural background.

Communication in a multicultural setting is a complex activity that requires similarly complex systems to ensure common approaches and understanding. It is a challenging experience given the diversity of backgrounds of the team members. Language differences, accents and preconceived notions are some of the major challenges. The organization has taken certain

measures to deal with this challenge including creation of an open plan sitting arrangement to enhance openness and cohesion amongst the team members; planned diversity functions such as 'away days' and 'happy hour' and diversity awareness among staff. Team challenges or team building activities have enhanced team bonding with subsequent improvement in work performance back at work.

5.3 Conclusion

From the ensuing discussion, the conclusion is that communication has a great effect on performance of multicultural work teams in more ways than one. It has been proved that poor communication has the effect of bringing forth information overload which is time consuming; misunderstanding and conflict resolution is difficult affecting team performance; misinterpretation of feedback by a member can be taken as a personal attack on one's personality leading to resentment and demoralization; Wastage of time and poor working relationships that affect delivery of program objectives and less cohesion amongst the team members.

On the other hand, good communication has the effects of bringing diversity of ideas leading to more enriched decision making; Embracing of differences has the tendency of improving on team members' patience resulting into more team coherence and team members are challenged to improve on their work performance to avoid direct negative feedback based on previous mistakes.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher gives the following recommendations:

There should be more Kenyans or Africans in the Oxfam GB-Kenya team management as they have a better understanding of the local culture and thereby they can be able to manage diverse cultural teams from that platform.

There should be more informal interactions between the teams to enhance bonding.

All communication that goes out should consider the diversity of the audience.

The organization should consider the use of translators where difficulties in understanding the official language are evident.

There ought to be more face-face communication in order to be able to understand and embrace non-verbal cues.

Team leaders should drive the team from the front by being team players without any form of segregation.

Each team member must deliberately seek to understand and embrace other cultures. Better appreciation of the context and cultural differences inherent amongst the culturally diverse team members must be enhanced if any gains are to be realized in communication.

The organization should structure induction programmes to suit different cultural backgrounds and this should be a continuous process.

The organization should adopt an open door policy such that those having communication challenges can be heard and assisted thereby.

The human resources department should be led by a focal person who understands the underlying issues and is able to deal with them accordingly.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of this study is primarily related to the scope of the research. This is a case study of Oxfam GB Kenya and therefore may not be representative of the scenario in all Multinational corporations in whether in Kenya or beyond.

The study also focused on team leaders only as respondents leaving out other major players, for instance, the team members' perspectives out of the picture.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher suggests that similar studies be conducted in other multinational corporations for purposes of comparing trends and coming up with more generic conclusions on the effect of communication on the performance of multicultural work teams.

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APPENDIX : INTERVIEW GUIDE

General Information

Department of team leader.....

Nationality of team leader.....

Length of service with the organization.....

No. of different nationalities in the team.....

Background Information

1. How would you generally describe communication in your organization in the light of a multicultural setting?.....

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.....Who are the key players in the communication process?.....

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2. What is the role of each player in the process?.....

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3. How does information flow in the organization?.....

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4. What channels of communication are used in the organization?.....

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Effects of Communication on Multicultural Team Performance

5. How would you describe the current performance of your work team?.....

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6. Would you say this is the optimal performance? Explain your answer.....

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7. What challenges related to communication in your multicultural team are you currently facing? Please list them and expound.....

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8. How have these challenges affected the performance of your work team?

a. Positively.....
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b. Negatively.....
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9. Which challenges would you say has made the greatest positive contribution to your team's performance? Give reasons for your answer?.....

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10. Which challenges would you say have made the greatest negative impact on your team's performance?

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Measures Taken and Recommendations

11. What measures has the organization put in place to deal with the challenges of communication that hinders performance of team in your institution?.....

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12. What are your recommendations on how communication in multicultural work teams can be enhanced?

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