



**BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:
A CASE STUDY OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL KENYA**

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this research project is my own original work and is in no way a reproduction of any other work that has been previously presented for award of a degree in any university.

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Lastly, I thank all those who contributed either directly or indirectly towards the completion and presentation of the final version of this project report.

DEDICATION

I would like to solemnly dedicate this project report to my husband Geoffrey Kengere, for his support and encouragement throughout this research process and the entire Masters in Communication, right from the beginning.

I also dedicate this to my beloved parents, sisters and brother for their moral support throughout the writing of this document. May God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

In times of rapid growth, both in terms of economic development and globalization and international development in developing countries, an increasing number of international organizations extend their development agenda abroad. A subsequent challenge of this development is the managerial implications of cross-cultural management. This study employs a qualitative approach in a single case study of British Council Kenya, which is one of the international offices of the British Council United Kingdom. After reviewing the previous studies, the authors summarize the differences of management style, staff behavior and communication system in different cultural context and find the barriers of cross cultural communication in international organizations. The findings of this study indicate that the barriers of communication come from the national cultures' influence at the work place and behaviors of people with different identity. Moreover, culture also influences people's way of thinking and behavior, resulting in different understandings toward vision and purposes of the organizations.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYM

HC	: High Context
LC	: Local Context
UK	: United Kingdom
UN	: United Nations
UNEP	: United Nation for Environmental Programme
SSA	: Sub-Saharan Africa

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework showing the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In times of rapid growth, both in terms of economic development and globalization, an increasing number of international organizations have extended their operations across countries. Globalization and the rapid development of economics, has meant that organizations that operate beyond their borders have become more and more prevalent. Intercultural communication presents a new challenge to managers. Culture, as Hofstede (1997) states, is the “software of mind” that can influence people’s patterns of thinking and behaving. Mental programming influences people’s living and working all over their lives. When someone tries to understand the management style or behaviors of one organization in different countries, some basic principles are challenged.

For instance, the Chinese feel that all men are born unequal and they should all obey the decision of the authority (Martinsons & Hempel, 1998). While Western people believe that all men are born equal and they can make independent decisions and act on their own (ibid). Ambos and Schlegelmilch (2008) argue that one culture may support certain type (or types) of organizations rather than other types, and culture differences will eventually influence on the performance of company (ibid). In other words, national culture can influence the management and communications of organizations. For instance, the management style in the west is different from that in the east: Dutch management style is “approachable” and “assertive”, while, Japanese managers are “high hierarchical” and “dictatorial” (Ybema & Byun, 2009). Poon, Evangelista and Albaum (2005) compare the management differences in China and Australia, and find that culture is a significant influence in management style in multi-culture perspective.

All organizations that extend their businesses abroad have to face a challenge of cross-cultural communication. Bennis and Nanus (1985) refer to Erez (1992) and claim that communication is the only approach by which group members can cooperate with each other towards the goal of organizations. Especially formulate - culture organizations with

offices in other countries, it is necessary that managers have frequent communication and sufficient understanding for organizational goal. Technical developments have removed most of the physical barriers on communication. However, managers still encounter some cultural barriers.

In order to achieve success, managers working in global environments must be proficient in cross-cultural communication. They have different characteristics of culture resulting in thinking, understanding and communications diversity. These diversities obstruct organizational development and management more or less. Adler and Graham (1989) refer to Mishler (1965) and argue that "The greater the cultural differences, the more likely barriers to communication and misunderstandings become." More and more managers have paid attention to the problem of cross-cultural conflict on communication. This study employs a qualitative approach in a single case study of British Council Kenya.

1.1.1 Cross-cultural Communication

The term "cross-cultural" emerged in the social sciences in the 1930s, largely as a result of the Cross-Cultural Survey undertaken by George Peter Murdock, a Yale anthropologist. Initially referring to comparative studies based on statistical compilations of cultural data, the term gradually acquired a secondary sense of cultural interactivity. By the 1970s, the field of cross-cultural communication (also known as intercultural communication) developed as a prominent application of the cross-cultural paradigm, in response to the pressures of globalization which produced a demand for cross-cultural awareness training in various commercial sectors. Cultural communication differences can be identified by eight different criteria namely: when to talk; what to say; pacing and pausing; the art of listening; intonation; what is conventional and what is not in a language; degree of indirectness; and lastly cohesion and coherence.

Cross cultural communication thus refers to communication between people who have differences in any one of the following: styles of working, age, nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation among others. Cross-cultural communication can also

refer to the attempts that are made to exchange, negotiate and mediate cultural differences by means of language, gestures and body language. It is how people belonging to different cultures communicate with each other.

Each individual can practice culture at varying levels. There is the culture of the community one grows up in, there is work culture at the work place and other cultures to which one becomes an active participant or slowly withdraws from. An individual is constantly confronted with the clash between his original culture and the majority culture that he is exposed to daily. Cultural clashes occur as a result of individuals believing their culture is better than others.

Cross cultural communication has been influenced by a variety of academic disciplines. It is necessary in order to avoid misunderstandings that can lead to conflicts between individuals or groups. Cross cultural communication creates a feeling of trust and enables cooperation. The focus is on providing the right response rather than providing the right message.

When two people of different cultures encounter each other, they not only have different cultural backgrounds but their systems of turn – talking are also different. Cross cultural communication will be more effective and easier if both the speakers have knowledge of the turn taking system being used in the conversation for example: one person should not monopolize the conversation or only one person should talk at a time.

1.1.2 Barriers to Cross- cultural Communication in International Organizations

Many studies have established that in multinational firms and international organizations, it is not the best solution to push country offices into the head office's way of communicating. The best solution of communication would be to reach a mutual understanding between the headquarters and country offices, which depends on mutual learning and mutual adaptation- in multi-culture management perspective.

When the headquarters and its country offices do not share the same views which derive from the influence of different national culture where the firm operates in, problems and

barriers will occur. Sometimes the headquarters would hold the opinion that the country offices lack initiative on work, at the same time, the country offices would think that the headquarters would not treat their suggestions seriously and afraid to express the frustration to the headquarters. This same phenomenon plays itself within the organization that has staff of different national cultural orientations. Many international organizations have both locally appointed staff and internationally appointed staff. More often than not the internationally appointed staffs are employees of different national culture from the locally appointed staff. Due to differences in cultures, the emotional distance towards superior-subordinate relationship is varying. Sometimes the internationally appointed employees who usually hold senior position in the organization try to evoke the passion of locally appointed employees by asking for their initiative at work. While, locally appointed managers hold the belief that it is better when the power is centralized and subordinates just follow the instructions of the superiors. Therefore, locally appointed managers are expected to have comprehensive knowledge of the organizations to make “good” decisions for the subordinates. However, internationally appointed managers think that it is impossible for one to know all and they are depending on the wisdoms of the group. Besides, the language and geography distances always bring barriers in communicating and understanding each other. Even when they are using the same language (English), they might have different understanding on the same message because of the influence of the “hidden rules” in their mother tongue.

Many researchers have found that in Asian countries people tend to express themselves inexplicitly, while in Western world people are straight when talking (Ybema & Byun, 2009; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Jolly, 2008; Welth & Welth, 2008). Another point to be mentioned is that, life pressure varies from country to country. In low life pressure countries, people pay more attention to fulfil one’s self-worthiness, which will enhance the initiatives at work. While in high life pressure countries people struggle with their lives and follow superior’s instructions as the best way to keep their job.

A matrix has been built to illustrate the differences between different cultures between the internationally appointed employees and the locally appointed employees and

communication within international organizations. Through the differences on management style, staff behaviors and communications system of the internationally appointed employees and the locally appointed employees, one can infer that these barriers of communication come from the national culture's influence, on the work place and behaviors of people with different identity (superiors and subordinates). First of all, except for getting profits people with different culture backgrounds have different expectations from work. These different expectations are strongly influenced by people's social statuses and their positions at work. On the other hand, culture also influences people's way of thinking and behaving and results indifferent understanding toward vision and purposes of firms. This lack of mutual understanding leads to various communication problems and results to the communication being trapped into a vicious circle. Besides, language differences and geography distances are always the barriers of cross cultural communication.

1.1.3 The British Council

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organization for cultural relations. It creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide and they call these cultural relations.

British Council builds trust and understanding for the UK, to create a safer and more prosperous world. In terms of reach and impact, it is the world's leading cultural relations organization. Cultural relations is a component of international relations which focuses on developing people-to-people links and complements government-to-people and government-to-government contact. British Council uses English, Arts, and Education and Society – the best of the UK's great cultural assets – to bring people together and to attract partners to working with the UK. The British Council has over 7,000 staff working in 191 offices in 110 countries and territories.

1.1.4 British Council Kenya

The British Council Kenya was established in 1947 as a library that provided study opportunities for Kenyan and East Africa students and educators. As demand for further

study and access to UK educational opportunities grew, the British Council Kenya began a UK exams service and started offering UK scholarship programmes.

Today, British Council has thriving exams and professional communication services that are run from its offices in Nairobi. Besides these paid-for services, the office continues to offer opportunities to Kenyans through programmes in the arts, schools, higher education, English language teaching and social development.

According to British Council website, with 42 million Kenyans, many of them young, and growing economic opportunities, British Council believes that its work in cultural relations plays a key role in sustaining the cordial relationship between Kenya and the UK. Over the coming years, the office will continue to focus its work on building capacity in education, supporting the development of thriving, sustainable creative industries and building the capacity of young people to make a positive contribution to Kenya. British Council Kenya office has 39 locally appointed staff and 2 internationally appointed staff. The Kenyan office also hosts SSA Regional office which has 33 locally appointed staff and 8 intentionally appointed. This brings to a total of 72 locally appointed staff and 10 internationally appointed staff. Due to the diverse cultures of internationally and locally appointed staff there is bound to be a barrier to cross cultural communications.

1.2 The Research Problem

Several researchers have contributed to their studies in the cross-cultural communication area (Mary, 1993; Bennett 1998; Yum, 1988; Ybema & Byun, 2009). In “Cross-cultural communication for managers”, Mary (1993) applies a multiple insights to managerial communications. In order to make communication effectively, Mary (1993) recommends managers to think about seven issues before communication. This study is designed only in a managerial context. In Bennett (1998)’s “Intercultural Communication: A Current Perspective”, he answers the question “How do people understand one another when they do not share a common cultural experience?” The question is answered from several aspects such as levels of culture, intercultural communication processes and cultural adaptation (Bennett, 1998). However, the focus of this study is too wide, which does not

stand on a managerial context but on a social context. In addition, Yum (1988) researches “the impact of Confucianism on interpersonal relationships and communication patterns”. He argues that the discussions of most communicational studies stay on the surface of the problem and do not go deeply to explore the source of problem. Thus, in his study, Yum (1988) “goes beyond these limitations and explores the philosophical roots of the communication patterns”. But the focus of his study is on social contexts. Also, Yum (1988) only discusses the impact of Confucianism. Confucianism can in parts be regarded as a culture, but not in its entirety. In addition, Ybema & Byun (2009) “explore issues of culture and identity In Japanese-Dutch relations in two different contexts: Japanese firms in the Netherlands and Dutch firms in Japan”. From three aspects: communication, the superior-subordinate relationship and decision making, they illustrate that in different organizational environments, cultural differences influence people’s identity take. On certain extent, Ybema & Byun’s (2009) study is similar with this study, for instance, engaging a comparison between the people from different culture. However, their study pays more attention to power and identity talks while other culture dimensions such as individualism, masculine, and Confucianism or long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1980) have not discussed in the study. Thus it is interesting to look into different culture dimensions’ influence on the communication in international organizations. By contrasting the differences of management style, staff behaviors and communication system between different cultures the barriers of cross cultural communication in international organizations will be found.

Though various studies have been done on cultural communication barriers at the organizations level in international organizations none has expansively covered developing countries within East Africa context. Thus the purpose of this study is to look into cross cultural communication barriers at the organizations level in international organizations. The research question of this study is: - What are the barriers to cross cultural communication at the organizational level in international organizations.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were;

- i) To establish the barriers to cross-cultural communication in international organizations.
- ii) To establish specific causes of barriers to cross-cultural communication in British Council Kenya.
- iii) To recommend how the barriers of cross-cultural communication in international organizations can be overcome.

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is important to underline that there have been few studies on barriers to cross cultural communications in Kenya. Considering that Kenya has become an entry point to many international organizations and multinational companies to East and Central Africa, this study is very important. International organizations like British Council have most of the East and Central Africa Operations headquartered in Kenya. The Kenya Office serves all countries in Sub Saharan Africa. There are other international development organizations whose headquarters are in Nairobi but have operations in the wider Africa and East Africa regions. Organizations like the United Nations (UN) Africa operations are headquartered in Nairobi, UNEP, UN-Habitat, Shelter Afrique, among others are headquartered in Nairobi. The employees in these international organizations are either internationally appointed or locally appointed. These employees' have different national culture and hence presented with cross-cultural communications challenges. As such, cross-cultural communication has become strategically important to organizations due to the growth of global business, development, technology and the Internet. Understanding cross-cultural communication is important for any organization that has a diverse workforce or plans on conducting global operations. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate and perceive the world around them.

Cross-cultural communication in an organization deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high-context vs. low-context cultures, nonverbal differences and power distance are major factors that can affect cross-cultural communication.

This phenomenon is gaining importance and should not be ignored. Studies need to be undertaken to establish the barriers of cross cultural communication for this organizations as they explore new business and development frontiers. The findings presented in this study will constitute an important reference point for future studies on this subject.

Organizations both local and international, policy makers and practitioners in this field will find the data that will be derived from the study an invaluable source of information on the subject. The findings will assist these organizations in understanding and appreciations of the anticipated challenges that will come with extending their operations beyond Kenya and for international organization for using Kenya as the regional head quarter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and review the writings that are related to the study of cross cultural barriers in communication in international organizations. This chapter lays a foundation for the analysis of findings from the study, leading to understanding of the concept of cross cultural management, national culture and management style that can contribute to barriers in communication. The chapter explores organizations that have spread their operations to other countries across the region and winds up with an attempt to understand possible barriers encountered during communication between employees of different national cultural orientation.

2.2 Cross-cultural Communication Management

Cross cultural management mainly focuses on the behavior of people from different cultures, working together as a group or an organization (Adler, 1983). Most of cross-cultural management studies aim at dealing with the issue of organizational behavior, such as leadership style, motivational approaches, strategy, organizational structure (Morden, 1995; Elenkov, 1998). Three aspects are discussed in this study as follows: - communication system, management style and staff behavior.

As to the cultural concept, culture is a complex issue in some fields such as sociology, anthropology and has now become a hot topic in management. Several contributions are devoted in this area by some authors, such as Hofstede (1997), Hall (1976, referred by Richardson and Smith, 2007), Golbe (2004). It is no exaggeration to say that Hofstede's dimension of national culture theory is a dominant theory. This theory is famous and popular, which is engaged by a large number of researches. Project GLOBE is a recent study, in which culture is linked to behaviors in organizations (Shore and Cross, 2005). Globe proposes nine cultural dimensions; some of these are similar to Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture (Shore and Cross, 2005). However, Globe's theory is still a new theory without sufficient test; therefore it will not be considered in this study. Hall's high context-communication and low context communication can perfectly serve

for the cross-cultural communication study and conflict-resolution studies (Kim, Pan and Park, 1998). In this study, both Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture theory and Hall's high context-communication and low context communication theory are involved.

2.3 Dimensions of National Culture

According to (Joynt & Warner, 1996) "Culture is the pattern of taken-for-granted assumptions about how a given collection of people should think, act and feel as they go about their daily affairs". Hofstede (1997) addresses that there are two kinds of cultures: organizational culture and national culture, which differ when it comes to values and practice. Values come from the experience of life, in other words, one's values come from family and school in the early years of his or her life. While practices come from social experience; working. The differences in national culture lie in values rather than practice. While, in organizational level, culture differences appear mostly in practice rather than value (ibid). Ybema and Byun (2009) refer to Schneider and Barsoux's (1997) argument that the head offices country's culture has often remained in international organizations and the national culture of head office's company is often challenged by the national culture of country offices, because of the foreign rule put on it. National culture provides a principle for employees in organizations to understand how to work, how to approach to the goals and how they want others to treat them. If the management within an organization fails to consist with these "deeply hold values" together, the employee will feel unsatisfied and frustrated, thus will perform poorly (Newman & Nollen, 1996). Furthermore, the effectiveness of an organization will decrease. Hofstede (1980) argues that there are four dimensions of national culture: low vs. high Power Distance; individualism vs. collectivism; masculinity vs. femininity; and uncertainty avoidance. Before long, the fifth dimension is found by Harris Bond, which was called Confucian dynamism (Bond & Hofstede, 1988). Subsequently, Hofstede takes it into his framework in terms of long vs. short term orientation.

2.3.1 Low versus High Power Distance

Power distance is “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed” (Hofstede, 1997). In low power distance countries, the authority is distributed within the organization. Superiors are dependent on subordinates as consultation on a limited extent. Therefore the emotional distance between them is relatively small: it is quite easy and pleasant for subordinates to approach and contact their superiors. However, in high power distance countries, power is always centralized within the organization.

Only a considerable dependence exists from subordinators to superiors. “Subordinates respond by either preferring such dependence, or rejecting it entirely, which in psychology is known as “counter dependence”: that is dependence, but in a negative sign” (ibid). High power distance countries thus show a pattern of polarization between dependence and counter dependence (ibid).

2.3.2 Individualism versus Collectivism

According to Hofstede (1997) “Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty”. The two dimensions (power distance and individualism) tend to be negatively correlated: larger power distance countries are also likely to be more collectivist; small power distance countries are more individualist. When the authority is distributed, people are likely to be individualist. When the authority is centralized people are likely to be collectivist.

2.3.3 Masculinity versus Femininity

Masculinity and femininity means the extent to which the society views the role of male and female. In “masculine” society, people are more competitive, assertive, and

ambitious. Moreover, accumulated wealth and material possessions are always valued (Usunier & Lee, 2005). While in “feminine” culture relationships and quality of life are more valuable (ibid). Sweden for example is considered by Hofstede (1997) to be the most “feminine” country in the world.

Managers in masculine cultures are assertive decision-makers. They believe in facts rather than group discussions (Newman & Nollen, 1996). Feminine managers are “intuitive rather than decisive for consensus” and they listen to the suggestions of the groups (Hofstede, 1997). In Feminine cultures welfare of the society is valued: people are caring about others, sympathy for the weak and pay more attention to the quality of life; while, in masculine cultures power and material progress are valued: gender roles are clearly distinct, people respect for the strong and pay more attention to competition and performance (ibid).

2.3.4 Long versus Short term Orientation

Hofstede (1997) argues that the dimensions of culture can be described as a society's "time horizon" or, the importance related to the future comparing to the past and present. In long term oriented societies, persistence, ordering relationships by status, thrift and having a sense of shame is included in the value while in short term oriented societies, normative statements, personal steadiness and stability, protecting ones face, respect for tradition, and reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts” are included. In Asia, China and Japan are regarded as typical long term oriented countries with a relative high score while the Western countries are more about short term orientation. (Hofstede, 1997)

2.4 High Context-communication and low Context Communication

High context or low context communication theory is one of the most important theories in cross-cultural research, which can be viewed as a culture based on the messages that people within the culture prefer to use (Richardson and Smith, 2007). It properly links management style and staff behavior to discuss the issue of cross-cultural management in communication. According to Richardson and Smith (2007) refers to Hall (1976) and

argue that cultures cannot be easily classified into high context or low context communication, but to some extent, “some cultures tend to be at the higher end while others are at the lower end of the continuum”. In a high-context culture, people interdepend on each other. Information is widely shared through the word with potential meaning. In a low-context culture, people tend to be individualized, kind of alienated and fragmented, people do not involve with each other too much (ibid).

2.5 International Organization Communication

Ybema & Byun (2009) emphasize that culture difference influences communication between the people with different identity. In this study, internal communications of organizations includes two parts: management style and staff behavior. To some extent, management style imply superior part of the organization, similarly, staff behavior imply subordinate part in the organization. Usually, because of the gap among these positions, barriers also occur during the transmitting of messages and information. Communication system is used within the organization to help colleagues transmit messages and information. Organizations use communication system to link people together and make them work toward organizational goals.

2.5.1 Management Style

Culture is a factor influencing the style of management. Several researchers have emphasized the importance of culture on management style (Williams, Morris, Leung, Bhatnagar, Hu, Kondo and Luo, 1998; Morden, 1995; Koopman, hartog and Konrad, 1999). Williams, Morris, Leung, Bhatnagar, Hu, Kondo and Luo (1998) discuss the different ways managers use to solve the conflicts within the organization. Chinese managers rely on an avoiding style while US managers prefer a competing style. Morden (1995) argues leadership style is influenced by culture result in centralized or decentralized. In addition, an effective management style facilitates communication and information transmission (Mcphee, 1985). The Chinese have a different point of view on the concept of leadership with western norms (Martinsons & Westwood, 1997). As a result, a distinctive in-group exists in the organization and bureaucratic regulations are

used moderately (ibid). Chinese leaders are not used to listening to subordinates or adopting team's perspective (Martinsons & Westwood, 1997 refer to Fukuda, 1983). Therefore, in China, important decisions are only made by leaders according to their individual experience or knowledge. It is natural that Chinese leaders possess authority to determine the organization's objectives (Martinsons & Westwood, 1997 refer to Silin, 1976).

Western countries believe that a person has his/her individual rights and a legitimate power to protect their private property. The belief has been deeply rooted in western organizational structure. According to Martinsons and Westwood (1997), in most western organizations, any decision-making in the system does not depend on its top managers or owners, instead, on a rational and impersonal set of rules with a well-defined purpose.

2.5.2 Staff Behavior

Staffs are crucial assets of organizations. They build an organization with their knowledge, skills, and experience. Webb (1996) argues that education provides important developments and has been viewed as one of the most important values of staff. Skills of the labours will eventually lead to the inequality of their wages (Juhn, Murphy & Pierce, 1993). Wage is always viewed as the motivation part or the purpose of working. Educational level, which has a positive relationship with skills, will determine the wage level of staff. Thus well-educated staff will earn more and be more motivated than their less educated colleagues. In international organizations, language is another important skill of staff that cannot be neglected (Usonier & Lee, 2005). According to Jiang (2000), there is a close relationship between language and culture. Moreover, both of these two influence each other interactively. Culture is immersed in its language and will influence the way of people expressing and receiving messages.

Many researchers have highlighted the importance of empowerment within the organization to both motivate staff and achieve efficiency. Empowerment within

organizations leads to high productivity and high performance as well as the satisfaction of the employees themselves. (Labianca, Gray & Brass, 2000; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999)

2.5.3 Communication System

Systems are procedures and rules, both formal (plans and budgets) and informal, which communicate plans and goals; monitor the organization; and informs others of the developments within the organization (Hitt, 1995). Systems can be used to maintain the patterns in organizational activities, not only those that can be predicted but also the suppressed ones (Simons, 1995). In international organizations, communication system is the most important system in international knowledge transfer. According to Erez (1992) refers Bennis and Nanus (1985) that communication is the exclusive approach in which a group can move toward the goal of an organization. In addition, Erez (1992) emphasizes that there is a closed relation between interpersonal communication and culture. Interpersonal communication is one of the parts of an organization's communication system. Communication forms the links which help group members to transmit the social values and facilitate their sharing (ibid). Collective action can be facilitated by shared meaning and shared communication mechanisms (ibid). Furthermore, Kraut, Fish, Root and Chalfonte (1993) classify communication into formal communication and informal communication. According to their point of view, formal communication tends to be scheduled in advance, arranged participants, participants in role, preset agenda, one-way, impoverished content and formal language and speech register. The structural and functional characteristics of communication and the nature of the communication setting influence the degree of formality. In terms of the different characteristics, formal and informal communication suit to different situation, "formal communication tends to be used for coordinating relatively routine transactions within groups and organizations, while, informal communication seems needed for coordination in the face of uncertainty and equivocality" (ibid).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Barriers of communication are likely to come from the national culture's influence on the work place and behaviors of people with different identity (superiors and subordinates).

First of all, except for getting profits and achieving the organization’s objectives, people with different culture backgrounds have different expectations at work. These different expectations are strongly influenced by people’s social statues and their positions at work. On the other hand, culture also influences people’s way of thinking and behaving and results in different understandings towards vision and purposes of firms. This lack of mutual understanding, differences in emotional distance towards internationally appointed staff against locally appointed staff relationship, different expectations on managers, different abilities of dealing with incidences, language difference, different purpose of working leads to various communication problems and leads to communication being trapped in a vicious circle. Cross cultural barriers in international organizations are likely to stem from these aspects and they constitute theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

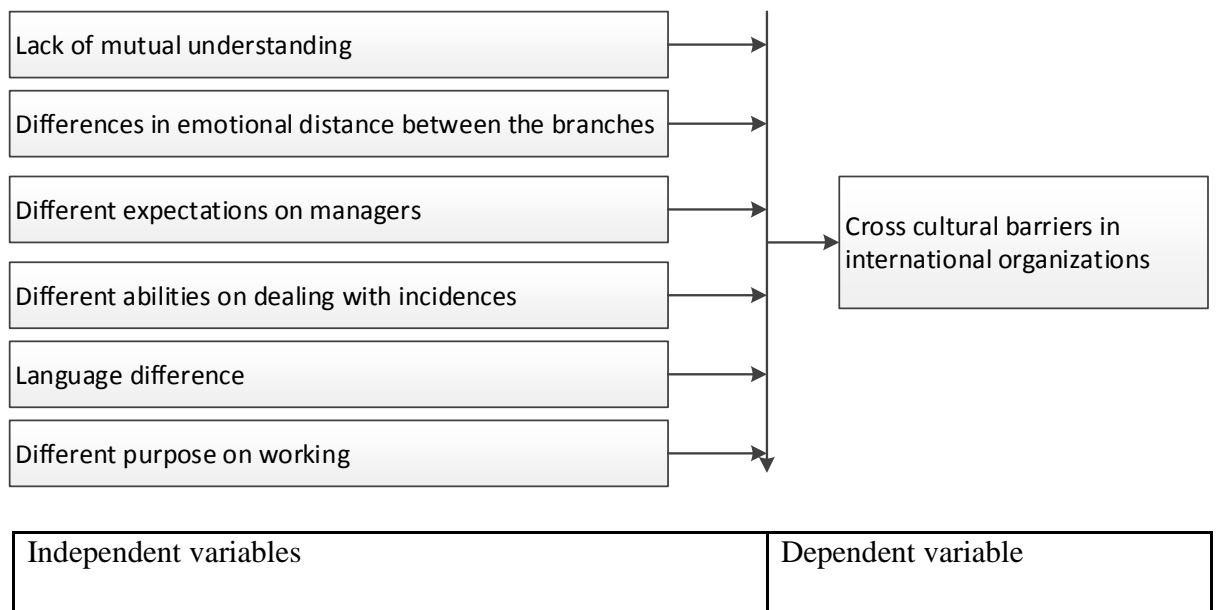


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework showing the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the methodology - strategy, data collection, method and research design followed by evaluation of opportunities and limitations of chosen method. Finally, the issues of generalization, validity and reliability of this research will be discussed.

3.2 Research Strategy

Background information regarding cross-cultural communication barriers in international organizations was obtained from scientific writing, other research, literature reviews and peer reviewed articles. Extensive amount of information provided a broad knowledge of the topic. Further reading led to deeper understanding of the topic and familiarity with the ideas, major concepts and basic vocabulary in the chosen research area. Thereafter, the research question was formulated. Centered on the topic of interest and the field of research, an ensuing methodology was developed.

3.3 Data Collection

Sources of data collections are generally categorized as being primary or secondary. According to Boslaugh (2007), primary data is collected with specific aim, by the researcher, for further analysis. Thus, if the data was collected by someone else for some other purpose, it is secondary data.

In this research paper, empirical data was derived from British Council Kenya which has both internationally appointed employees and locally appointed employees, both primary and secondary data was used, the results analyzed, consequently, a number of inferences were drawn.

3.4 Research Design

There are two dominant business research methods - quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research differs from qualitative research in several ways. On the word of Bryman and Bell (2007) in wide-ranging terms, quantitative method is more about collection of numerical data. Conversely, qualitative researchers are interested in answering questions “why,” observing situations and understanding the reasons and are not keen to merely accept the results based on numerical interpretations (Ghauri, Granhaug and Kristianslund, 1995). The choice of the research method depended on the field of study and type of the research being carried out. For the purpose of this study of cross-cultural communication in international organizations, according to Bryman and Bell (2007), qualitative approach is the most applicable one. Through qualitative method, data and information was gathered about cross-cultural business communication based on real life experiences and situations among internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff, which would be nearly impossible to conclude from quantitative method.

3.5 Population of the Study

British Council has operated for over 80 years. It has more than 200 offices around the world in over 100 countries. British Council has a global workforce of over 7,000 staff. The organization work in developing countries championing various development works. British Council Kenya office has 39 locally appointed staff and 2 internationally appointed staff. The Kenyan office also hosts SSA Regional office which has 33 locally appointed staff and 8 intentionally appointed. This brings to a total of 72 locally appointed staff and 10 internationally appointed staff.

3.6 Sampling Procedure

Since this study is designed to focus on the barriers on organization level in cross-culture communications in international organizations, the interviews was designed for various levels of staff, who have more knowledge of the organization and can provide more valuable information to the study. The staffs were grouped into Kenyan team and SSA team. In each team senior management and middle level management was clustered

together. From each cluster one staff with over two years experience were identified and randomly selected. This resulted into two senior management staff and two middle level management staff internationally appointed, two from Kenyan Team and two from SSA team. For locally appointed staff two senior management staff and two middle level management staff were selected for interview, that being two from Kenyan Team and two from SSA team. As a result eight staffs were interviewed, four locally appointed staff and four internationally appointed staff.

3.7 Data Collection Method

Interview is one of the qualitative methods of collection of primary data and can be executed using different approaches. It can be:

1. Structured – exactly same questions for all interviewees, prepared in advance with no room for deviation
2. Informal – open, conversational interview with no particular structure or
3. Semi-structured – open-ended questions prepared in advance, the interviewer “goes with the flow” (Patton 1990)

In this research, semi-structured interview method was used. As interpretive researches, the interview began with broad questions to get a feel of the organizations and its operation and then resorted to open-ended questions that were primed in advance. A tape-recorder was chosen for documenting the interview as it was not certain how the interview would proceed. Recording the entire conversation offered the advantage of being able to transcribe and review the dialogue at later time.

3.8 Case Study Approach

Case study approach was chosen based on the nature of the research problem. Yin (1989) explained case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using sources of evidence”. Likewise, Noor (2008) identified that in research where one needs to understand a specific issue or

situation; case study can become particularly useful as it allows detecting cases rich in information. Investigating barriers in cross-cultural business communication, concerned with questions how and why communication mishaps happen, it was ideal to work with real life organization that has diverse employees of different national culture and interact on daily basis.

3.9 Pre-understanding: Generalizing from a Single case Study

Possibility of drawing conclusions about implications of cross-cultural business communication based on a study of one international organization could be questioned. Although not always applicable, as stated by Gummesson (1988), it is probable to generalize based on a single case study in the management field of research as long as the generalization is of a certain character. However, in this research, it is not possible to assert the degree of commonality of described situations or exact interaction patterns. Former being said, the author of *Qualitative Methods in Research Management* claims that the possibility of generalization based on a single case study company is “founded in the comprehensiveness of the measurements which makes it possible to reach a fundamental understanding of the structure rather than a superficial establishment of correlation or cause-effect relationships” (Gummesson, 1988).

3.10 Validity and Reliability

There is a close relation between generalization and concept of validity. As it has been mentioned previously, the concepts of validity and reliability, although highly important for any research, are a concern for this particular study. Validity demonstrates the extent to which one is able to study and get the results that is intended to be achieved. Equally important, reliability, demonstrates how consistent the measurement of research is (Bryman and Bell, 2007). For instance, if another researcher conducts an interview with the interviewed international and local staff at British Council Kenya regarding the same topic, the results should be just about the same. Some academics say that if research is not reliable, it is not valid (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Others remark that “accurate evidence is not so crucial for generation theory, the kind of evidence, as well as the number of cases, is also not so crucial. A single case can indicate a general conceptual

theory or property; a few more case can confirm the indication” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Therefore, there is assurance that this case study can be an excellent source for a future comparative study that may represent different aspect of reality. This way a researcher can pay attention to similarities and differences of extracted results. Nevertheless, the inferences of this research can be the subject to credibility verification as the majority of qualitative data was derived from interviews of organization’s employees. Therefore, the answers could be limited by the subjectivity of respondents.

3.11 The Researcher

This study employed a qualitative approach in a single case study of British Council Kenya. The researcher is an employee of the organization. The researcher held various interviews with colleagues but continuously reflected on her background and position and how it would affect what the topic she choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions. She examined herself as the researcher, and the research relationship with British Council and she provides assurance that assumptions and preconceptions, did not affect the research decisions, particularly, the selection and wording of questions for the interviewees. The relationship with the respondents and the relationship dynamics did not affect responses to questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In order to answer the research question, the analysis is based on the early theories that have been reviewed before. The primary data assessed the organizational communication in both International appointed staff and locally appointed staff from three aspects: communication system, management style and staff behavior. The secondary data that are the scores of Hofstede national cultural dimensions index is designed to illustrate the cultural influence on organizational communication.

Based on the previous theories and data collected from British Council, the research established that cross cultural management barriers occur in the communications between cultures as well as the communications between superiors and subordinates. A matrix (Appendix III) was built to clearly illustrate the differences of management style, staff behavior and communication system in British Council Kenya as unveiled below.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Management Style

Internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff within an organization are forced to develop a set of management styles in order to match the culture (Lee, Roehl & Choe, 2000). When the question of which management style staff preferred; locally appointed staff preferred power centralized while internationally appointed staff style preferred power decentralized in power distance. This fact indicates that the distribution of power within the organization varies between locally appointed staff and internationally appointed staff and result in different management styles. The senior management an internationally appointed shared his story that one time; *“I requested for a certain report for a project that was headed by a locally appointed staff and he knew that it was impossible for locally appointed staff to deliver the report within such a short*

notice. However, when the internationally appointed staff senior management asked the locally appointed staff senior management whether he could deliver the report on time, the locally appointed staff struggled for a little while but said "OK". But the report was not produced and delivered on time". Because of high power distance and high hierarchy level practiced in developing countries, subordinates are afraid of saying "NO" to their superiors. Also because of the individualist culture, in among the internationally appointed staff the decision is fully discussed within the department before implementation and subordinates are free to say "NO" as long as it is reasonable. The decisions are *"the work of the group"* (According to the senior management internationally appointed staff), rather than the boss's decision. But, for most of the time senior management locally appointed noted that *"the locally appointed colleagues just follow the decisions that are made by superiors without any doubt"*. These different ways of decision making probably may result in the unexpected outcome from locally appointed staff.

The masculinity are also varying between locally appointed staff and internationally appointed staff, which illustrates that locally appointed managers are *"decisive and assertive"* and internationally appointed managers are *"intuition and strive for consensus"*. These different expectations on managers resulted in barriers during communicating. Internationally appointed senior management mentioned that *"because British Council Kenya was established in 1947, he believed that locally appointed employees were experienced. Thus, sometimes he tried to learn from locally appointed employees. However, locally appointed employees did not give much response"*. Senior management locally appointed staff indicated that, for locally appointed staff the managers are expected to know everything in relative field in order to determine organizational objectives and make a right decision which is the responsibility for locally appointed. For locally appointed staff power can be gained through contributing to the organization. For internationally appointed staff, the role of managers is more like a mediator among subordinates to coordinate and group them. Internationally appointed managers are expected to appropriately empower employees and utilize employee's professional knowledge to achieve a purpose. It is difficult to say which one is better or

not, but if locally appointed subordinates employees are managed by internationally appointed management style, they cannot get any motivation to work or probability they have no idea about how to work. Otherwise, if internationally appointed subordinates are managed by locally appointed staff management style, the conflict will occur easily, because the argument will happen between superior and subordinate.

Another culture difference between locally appointed staff and internationally appointed staff is long-term orientation. Senior management locally appointed said that “*we are willing to learn and adopt the modern way of managing and organizing from the internationally appointed staff*”. However, because of high power distance, high collectivist and high masculine culture, it is not easy to really bring the essence of internationally appointed staff management into the organizing progress. In a short-term orientation culture, internationally appointed staffs feel that their management is more efficient and effective compared with their locally appointed staff. When problems or misunderstandings occur in the communication between internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff, internationally appointed managers keep feeling frustrated instead of finding the reason why these keep happening. In other words, as the superior of locally appointed staff, internationally appointed managers fail to take culture differences as a significant influence on managing and communicating. As a result, there are frustrations and barriers on communicating between internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff.

4.2.2 Staff behavior

Staff play a very important role in organizations. Thus, whether or not they feel motivated in their jobs can affect the efficiency of organizations. The internationally appointed employees feel that they are proud of what they are doing in the organization. The job has “*became a part of my identity*” according to quality senior management internationally appointed. When the same question was asked to locally appointed staff they do not share the same feelings as their internationally appointed colleagues do. As a feminine society, internationally appointed employees pay more attention to the welfare

of the society, while as a masculine society, locally appointed staff believe that material achievement and power is more important, and competition and performance are valued among locally appointed employees. In fact, locally appointment senior management observed that *“the average salary of internationally appointed staff is three times higher than that of locally appointed staff, and the household consumption level among locally appointed staff is just a little lower than that among internationally appointed staff. As a result, the life pressure among locally appointed employees is much higher than that of internationally appointed employees”*. Having a job among locally appointed staff is a way of making a living rather than enjoy life.

As in a HC (High-context) culture, people are deeply involved with each other and the relationships between people are complicated, especially in working places. As a result, locally appointed employees prefer to work collectively. However, this deeply involved relationship does not extend outside the group: people within the same group can communicate without any hesitation; people who do not belong to the same group will hardly communicate with each other. In addition in a low-context culture, people coming from other cultures can easily match these machinations, but in a high-context culture, these high-context machinations cannot be easily matched by people coming from low-context culture. As the Head of Programmes coming from a low-context internationally appointed staff, the Head of Programmes expressed the feeling that *“there are not enough communications between the internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff, and when he tries to communicate with locally appointed employees they seem afraid of expressing themselves”*. The locally appointed middle level management also feels that *“locally appointed staff are not willing to contact with internationally appointed staff unless emergencies”*. Communication can be made only when both internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff are willing to express the real thoughts of themselves. Actually, an internationally appointed manager does not realize that they have to deal with the differences between high-context culture and low-context culture. In addition, the programming of people from low-context culture get used to a high-context culture is time consuming.

In individualism there is a great difference between locally appointed staff and internationally appointed staff. The internationally appointed staff prefers group work that can involve all departments into the discussion and make comprehensive decisions. Locally appointed staff have already applied some of the “internationally appointed management” into their work. Group work is also one of the forms of handling issues. However, the essences of group work are not learnt by locally appointed staff: *“people just sit together and wait for the decision from the managers”*, observed senior management internationally appointed. Staffs are afraid of expressing themselves in the group. Some of the managers think *“it is a waste of time asking for people’s suggestions when no one is willing to say,”* according to one of the locally appointed managers.

Because of the high power distance among locally appointed staff, subordinates are depending on the superiors. In other words, employees are used to follow the managers’ decisions, and managers are expected to take all initiatives in organizations. While among internationally appointed staff, subordinates and superiors are treated equally. In different culture contexts, people’s identity talks are different because of the differences on power distance. As a result, in multi-culture organizations, there is a challenge on understanding the identity talk of individuals with different culture background.

With the culture of short- term orientated, internationally appointed staffs treat their brand seriously, and they will never risk it with substandard work. *“They could not understand why their locally appointed staffs tend to do substandard work in order to lower the cost even though this action would damage their brand in the future”*, according to the senior management internationally appointed. The locally appointed staff long- term orientation culture teaches people to have a second thought on gain and lose, which means they value long term success and set backs are allowed in the process of developing. Locally appointed staffs tend to make decisions for the future developments and they believe that the sacrifice of now may benefit the future. They would do substandard work in order to lower the cost for now and increase the funds for future development. However, they are aware that these setbacks may bring problems like damage to reputation.

4.2.3 Communication System

The Vision for British Council is “The future for the UK in this crowded, dangerous, beautiful world depends upon people of all cultures living and working together on foundations of education, mutual understanding, respect and trust”. The British Council’s Purpose is therefore to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide. According to the internationally appointed senior management, they observed that *“these vision and purpose statements are respected by all internationally appointed staff. Locally appointed managers know these statements. However, they do not think it is their responsibility to picture the future for the organization. Those statements to them are just sentences rather than the slogans that can represent the spirits of the organization, or simply, they do not have a clear vision of the organization”*. When it comes to long term orientation, locally appointed managers’ view, vision, purpose and mission as being for the future: those are the places where they want to go. However, vision to internationally appointed managers is the “unchanging ideas” of the organization and it stands for the present and the future of the organization. When asking the question *“whether vision stands for the present or the future”* misunderstanding occurs between internationally appointed managers and locally appointed managers. If the international organizations would like to communicate well in the future, a common goal and a mutual understanding of the organization are needed.

It was observed that, locally appointed staff and internationally appointed staff have different cultures, through Hofstede’s national culture dimensions concept the cultures are different. Lee, Roehl, and Choe (2000) emphasize that national culture, as an attribute of the country of origin will influence a national management system. Ouchi (1977) argues that communication system of an organization is influenced by the structure of the organization. Structure as the hardware (Rausch, Halfhill, Sherman & Washbush, 2001) of organization is built based on the particular circumstances and situational variables (Burnes, 1996). Along with the development of organizations and the enlarging of size of organizations, the hierarchy level will increase correspondingly (Ouchi, 1977). In the interviews it was found out that the organization’s structure has hierarchy levels. However, internationally appointed managers’ and locally appointed managers’ have

different points of view. To internationally appointed managers' the hierarchy level is lower and to locally appointed managers' the hierarchy level is high. One of the most important reasons of this phenomenon lies in the difference of power distance.

The differences on hierarchy levels of locally appointed staff and internationally appointed staff lead to diversity of communication systems. Among locally appointed staff, any problem and urgency has to be reported to the superiors in order to make solutions and get contact with relative departments, which can be regarded as a formal communication system. Concerning the internationally appointed staff, usually, the problem should be reported to superior firstly, and then, superior will decide how to solve it. But if the problem is too urgent to wait, subordinate can take action without reporting to superior. There is a story given by a middle level management that *“one time, I sent an email about the new design of a brochure to the locally appointed middle level manager; I would like to have good printed brochures for an upcoming activity by Friday when I fly back to the country. An email came on Thursday written that there was a typing error in the printed brochures and asked me what they should do. I feel that is funny and annoying, I cannot understand that why do they ask such a question, they can simply correct the typing error and give me a good printed brochures on Friday, why are they waiting for order instead of take initiatives?”* During the interview, a middle level management internationally appointed again and again mentions “why?” he is so confused about locally appointed staff management style.

However, locally appointed middle level manager knew it would be better to provide quality brochures. Since locally appointed middle level manager considers himself just a subordinate for internationally appointed superiors without much enough responsibility to make this decision, therefore, he decides to notify this problem to the internationally appointed manager first and let him decide what to do.

Locally appointed middle level manager mentions that *“among locally appointed staff, big problem will be discussed in a formal meeting. Small problem will be discussed between individuals. At the beginning every time there is a newly appointed international*

staff due to cross-cultural management conflicts, locally appointed staff cannot not coordinate with internationally appointed staff on both culture and skill level smoothly. But with time, the situation gets better than before.”

Among internationally appointed staff, both formal and informal communication system are used. In other words, internationally appointed staff communication systems are more tolerant to incidences and are more flexible, while, locally appointed staff communication systems are lacking the ability of dealing with incidences. In a HC culture, locally appointed staff are not willing to extend their relationship outside the group where they belong to. Therefore a feasible way to organize people from different groups is to use formal communication systems. While in a Local Context (LC) culture synonymous with internationally appointed, people are not highly involved and informal communication systems are feasible. However, as the organization grows larger formal communication systems are also employed. In an organization, both formal and informal communication systems are feasible, but considering that in the context of cross cultural management, sometimes a formal communication system is more time-consuming and inefficient. In addition, “language difficulties represent one of the biggest barriers to cross-cultural communication” (Munter, 1995). Internationally appointed managers have a good English skill. However, because of the mother tongue influence on English language a big gap exists.

Because of the differences on management style and staff behaviors, the communications between internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff and internationally appointed superiors and locally appointed subordinates are facing barriers. When an internationally appointed manager (who is intuition and strives for consensus) wants a locally appointed employee’s (who is afraid of expressing his/her idea) opinion on a certain issue, how could they communicate without knowing the expectations towards each other? These unknowing expectations are the barriers of cross cultural communications in international organizations.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section summarizes the findings of the study by discussing the differences on management style and staff behaviors, the communication between internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff, making conclusions and making recommendations for future studies given the limitations of scope.

5.2 Summary of Findings

In international organizations it is not the best solutions to push locally appointed employees into internationally appointed employee's way of communicating, or simply let the locally appointed employees work in their own way. The best solution of communicating in international organizations is to reach a mutual understanding between the internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff, which depends on mutual learning and mutual adaptation- in multi-culture management perspective.

5.3 Discussion and Conclusions

When internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff do not share the same views which derive from the influence of different national culture where the organization operates in, problems and barriers will occur. In this study particularly, when the internationally appointed employee hold the opinion that the locally appointed employees' lack initiative on work, at the same time, the locally appointed employees think that the internationally appointed employees would not treat their suggestions seriously and afraid to express the frustration to the internationally appointed employees. Due to differences in cultures, the emotional distance towards superior-subordinate relationship is varying. Internationally appointed managers try to evoke the passion of locally appointed employees by asking for their initiative at work. While, locally appointed managers hold the belief that it is better when the power is centralized and

subordinates just follow the instructions of the superiors. Therefore, locally appointed managers are expected to have a comprehensive knowledge of the firm to make “good” decisions for the subordinates. However, internationally appointed managers think that it is impossible for one to know all and they are depending on the wisdoms of the group. Besides, the language and geography always brings barriers in communicating and understanding each other. Even when they are using the same language (English), they might have different understanding on the same message because of the influence of the “hidden rules” in their mother tongue. Many researchers have found that in Asian countries people tend to express themselves inexplicitly, while in Western world people are straight when talking (Ybema & Byun, 2009; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Jolly, 2008; Welth & Welth, 2008). Another point to be mentioned is that, life pressure varies from country to country. In developed countries, people pay more attention to fulfill one’s self-worthiness, which will enhance the initiatives at work. While in developing countries people struggle with their lives and follow superior’s instructions as the best way to keep their job.

Based on the analysis of the information collected, a matrix has been built to illustrate the differences between different cultures between internationally appointed employees and locally appointed employees and communication within international organizations.

(See in Appendix III). Through the differences on management style, staff behaviors and communications system of internationally appointed employees and locally appointed employees can be concluded that barriers of cross cultural communication in international organizations exist. These barriers of communication come from the national culture’s influence on the work place and behaviors of people with different identity (superiors and subordinates). First of all, except for making an impact in people’s life, people with different culture backgrounds have different expectations on work. These different expectations are strongly influenced by people’s social statuses and their positions at work. On the other hand, culture also influences people’s way of thinking and behaving and results in different understandings toward vision and purposes of organization. This lack of mutual understanding leads to various communication problems and let the communication trapped into a vicious circle. Besides language

differences and geography distances are always the barriers in cross cultural communications.

From the study it was concluded that, the barriers of cross cultural communication in international organizations comes from the following aspects:

1. Lack of mutual understanding
2. Differences in emotional distance toward internationally – locally appointed relationship
3. Different expectations on managers
4. Different abilities on dealing with incidents
5. Language difference
6. Different purpose on working

5.4 Managerial implication

An in-depth study of the topic is presented in order to awake managers' awareness of cultural importance during the process of international knowledge transfer. Through analyzing and discussing the reasons of the conflict deriving from cultural difference, this practical study has provided managers ways to help them have a picture about what barriers culture brings to the cross-cultural management. They are expected to make sure that those barriers are in manager's mind when they are managing international organizations. When entering from a LC culture into a HC culture, firstly, managers should take their time and learn the differences of the communication and the culture. In a business context, mutual creation of value is dependent on mutual learning and mutual adaptation of international organizations.

5.5 Limitations of the study

Case study approach has its limitations. In the first place, lack of representativeness. There is a question of external validity when doing single case study. The first question is whether the research can be applicable to other organizations? Another limitation is the

fact of being studied may bring upon fear of misunderstandings or miscommunications and interviewee may choose to alter what is being discussed. Lastly, as academic research, the interviewee might not have high priority in their schedule for multiple interviews are planned to be conducted. In this study too only two cultures' influence of the communication are compared. Cultures, in this study are regarded as static context rather than dynamic context. The sample organization is a typical case, which meets with a lot of problems when internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff are trying to cooperate with each other. Senior management internationally appointed admits that they do not do any research about local country's culture when they decide to extend their business to these developing countries. So internationally appointed managers are all adrift in dealing with cultural differences. The problems, which are discussed in this study, may not happen in all of the international organizations. But these problems typically exist during the cross-cultural management.

5.6 Recommendations

This study is designed to elucidate the barriers of cross cultural communication in international organizations. In order to discuss the influence of national culture on cross-cultural communication, national culture is regarded as static context rather than dynamic context. On the other hand, the sample organization is a typical case, which meets with a lot of problems when internationally appointed staff and locally appointed staff are trying to cooperate with each other.

Hopefully, these problems presented in this study can shake the mode of managers' thinking, bring new thoughts and be helpful to managers in international organizations. In this research the focus was on two cultures of big difference as the study sample. For the future research, it would be interesting to extend the study on other cultures.

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Appendix I – Letter of Introduction

Maina Anne Njoki

P. O. Box 1609 - 00200 Nairobi

10th August, 2015

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: Master of Arts (MA) RESEARCH PROJECT

The above subject refers.

I am a student at The University of Nairobi pursuing MA and currently conducting my MA research project titled: *"Barriers to Cross Cultural Communication in International Organizations: A Case Study of The British Council Kenya"*

In order to undertake this research, you have been selected to form part of my study. This is therefore to request you to participate in a face to face interview that will enable me gather information that is necessary for the topic under study. The information required is needed purely for academic purpose and will be treated in strict confidence. Even where a name has been provided it will not under any circumstance appear in the final report.

Your assistance and co-operation will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Maina Anne Njoki

Appendix II: Interview Guide

PREAMBLE: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This interview is mainly going to cover management style, staff behaviors and communication systems within the organization. (Note: All the information provided will be kept confidential.)

General question

1. What kinds of problem do you meet when you communicate and manage locally appointed staff?
2. Can you give me a brief description about the history of British Council Kenya?

Management style:

3. What is the management style in this company?
4. How do the managers participate in the company activities? How effective are they?
5. How are the employees/ teams' behavior? (Competitive or cooperative, real function or nominal)
6. How is decision making structured (controlling centralized or decentralized)
7. How do you organize your team? (e.g. hierarchy)

Staff:

8. How does the team divide work? (position, specialization)
9. How do the internal rules and processes work on the team?

10. How do staff perform in the team?

Systems, Communication and culture within company

11. How do the departments communicate with each other? (e.g. Explicit and implicit)

12. How do the main systems work? Arrange the different tasks? (HR, Financial, Procurement, Communications...)

13. How is this system monitored and evaluated in the organization?

14. What are the core values and fundamental values of British Council? How strong are they?

15. What is the internal culture within British Council?

16. Does organization's vision stand for the present or the future?

Cross-cultural communication

17. Can you describe your first international experience with locally appointed staff/internationally appointed staff?

18. Who is responsible for the communications department within the organization?

19. Does every employee have to deal with cross-cultural communication on daily basis?

20. Describe your daily communication in general with each other within the organization

21. What kind of problems do you face when you communicate and manage subordinate staff under you (Cultural, technical, language?)

22. What do you think is the important variable in order to ensure good communication within the organization?
23. In your opinion what could be the obstacles to communication?
24. What do you think is the most important in order to ensure that a message is received and understood?
25. What type of communication mode do you frequently use within the organization? (Phone, email, face-to face, teleconference)
26. When do you feel written communication is preferable to verbal one? Why?
27. What do you do to ensure that someone you are communicating with understands what you are trying to get across?
28. How do you avoid communication mishaps in your work life? Tell us about a time when you miscommunicated with someone and what did you do to fix the problem?

Appendix III: Excerpts from Interviews with British Council Kenya Staff

Management Style

Internationally appointed staff prefer to use a project team to solve problems, major project is involved all team in the department, all the people are cooperated with a quite flat structure. In the locally appointed staff, they talk officially; they just wait for the orders and do not make personal contacts. There is a story mentioned by internationally appointed senior management that;

“Because of British Council Kenya has a long history for almost 70 years, we believed that locally appointed employee are experienced, therefore, sometimes we tried to learn something from locally appointed employee. But locally appointed employees do not give much response”.

On the other hand, other story was mentioned by senior manager internationally appointed that;

“One time, I invite a locally appointed manager for a cake in my house when the locally appointed manager. Although the locally appointed manager has no idea about how to make British cake, he still acts like he knows about British cakes, which is not the case”.

Locally appointed senior management mentioned that;

“Internationally appointed staff management style is with high standard. Comparing with locally appointed staff, their management style is more flexible, their attention is on outcomes. In addition, locally appointed staff uses half internationally appointed staff and half locally appointed staff management system, and gradually, the internationally appointed management style will be the mainstream in British Council Kenya in the future. Internationally appointed staff management style has potential to help the Council develop in the future, but there are certain parts that do not match the situation of Kenya.

Internationally appointed staffs prefer team and group work. Concerning to the wide range of project, team and group work is efficient, but concerning to the small project, individual communication will be better”.

Internationally appointed staffs prefer a flat organizational structure with a low hierarchy, when comparing with locally appointed staffs. Internationally appointed managers prefer to empower subordinate to do what they want, when locally appointed managers tend to use a bureaucratic approach to command subordinates what they should do. The senior management in internationally appointed staff mentions that locally appointed staff are afraid to say “no”, they do not want to make superior unhappy. She shared a story that;

“One time, internationally appointed senior management has requested for a certain report for a project that was headed by a locally appointed staff and he knew that it was impossible for locally appointed staff to deliver the report within such a short notice. However, when the internationally appointed staff senior management asked the locally appointed staff senior management whether he could deliver the report on time, the locally appointed staff struggled for a little while but said “OK”. But the report was not produced and delivered on time”

Communication system

Internationally appointed managers are easy to communicate with, if someone meets some urgent problem, he or she can ask for help directly from the manager who is responsible. When it comes to locally appointed managers, the communication bases on routines. They don't take personal initiatives but just wait for official orders. Among the locally appointed staff, any problem and urgency has to be reported to the superior in order to get a solution and get contact with relative department. Concerning the internationally appointed staff, usually, the problem should be reported to superior firstly, and then, superior will decide how to solve it. But if the problem is too urgent to wait,

subordinate can take action without reporting to superior. There is a story given by a middle level management that

“One time, I sent an email about the new design of a brochure to the locally appointed middle level manager; I would like to have good printed brochures for an upcoming activity by Friday when I fly back to the country. An email came on Thursday written that there was a typing error in the printed brochures and asked me what they should do. I feel that is funny and annoying, I cannot understand that why do they ask such a question, they can simply correct the typing error and give me a good printed brochures on Friday, why are they waiting for order instead of take initiatives? ”

During the interview, a middle level management internationally appointed again and again mentions “why?” he is so confused about locally appointed staff management style.

However, locally appointed middle level manager knew it would be better to provide quality brochures. Since locally appointed middle level manager considers himself just a subordinate for internationally appointed superiors without much enough responsibility to make this decision, therefore, he decides to notify this problem to the internationally appointed manager first and let him decide what to do.

Locally appointed middle level manager mentions that *“among locally appointed staff, big problem will be discussed in a formal meeting. Small problem will be discussed between individuals. At the beginning every time there is a newly appointed international staff due to cross-cultural management conflicts, locally appointed staff cannot not coordinate with internationally appointed staff on both culture and skill level smoothly. But with time, the situation gets better than before.”*

The British Council’s Purpose is therefore to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide. According to the internationally appointed senior management, they observed that;

“these vision and purpose statements are respected by all internationally appointed staff. Locally appointed managers know these statements. However, they do not think it is their responsibility to picture the future for the organization. Those statements to them are just sentences rather than the slogans that can represent the spirits of the organization, or simply, they do not have a clear vision of the organization”. When it comes to long term orientation, locally appointed managers’ view, vision, purpose and mission as being for the future: those are the places where they want to go. However, vision to internationally appointed managers is the “unchanging ideas” of the organization and it stands for the present and the future of the organization. When asking the question *“whether vision stands for the present or the future”* misunderstanding occurs between internationally appointed managers and locally appointed managers. If the international organizations would like to communicate well in the future, a common goal and a mutual understanding of the organization are needed. Internationally appointed managers and locally appointed managers represent different attitude to the vision of the organization.

Staff Behaviors

The internationally appointed employees feel that they are proud of what they are doing in the organization. The job has *“became a part of my identity”* according to quality senior management internationally appointed. When the same question was asked to locally appointed staff they do not share the same feelings as their internationally appointed colleagues do. As a feminine society, internationally appointed employees pay more attention to the welfare of the society, while as a masculine society, locally appointed staff believe that material achievement and power is more important, and competition and performance are valued among locally appointed employees. In fact, locally appointment senior management observed that

“the average salary of internationally appointed staff is three times higher than that of locally appointed staff, and the household consumption level among locally appointed staff is just a little lower than that among internationally appointed staff. As a result, the life pressure among locally appointed employees is much higher than that of

internationally appointed employees". Having a job among locally appointed staff is a way of making a living rather than enjoy life.

In addition, internationally appointed managers think locally appointed staffs do not interpret the same message in the same way. Locally appointed staffs are always afraid to express the real thoughts of their own.

In addition, British Council Kenya has heightened the standard (such as English skill and education level) to recruit employee. On the other hand, old locally appointed employees within the company have sufficient experience; therefore, the employees within the council have certain advantage on experience and skill. Furthermore, in these years, more and more employees are sent to United Kingdom to study new skill and experience of British management style.

Appendix IV: Matrix of culture's influence on communication between International staff and Local appointed staff

	Power distance		Individualism		Masculinity		Long-term orientation	
Local Staff (L) International Staff (I)	L	I	L	I	L	I	L	I
Management Style	Power Centralized	Power decentralized	Manager him/herself make the decision	Decisions are made through discussions	Managers expected to be decisive and assertive	Managers use intuition and strive for consensus	Willing to adopt new managements	Respect for their own way of management
Staff behaviors	High emotional distance with superiors	Equal with superiors	Ideas keep in the group	Ideas sharing within the whole organization	High life pressure; work for living	Low life pressure; work for fulfillment	Long term success preferred	Short results expected
Communication System	High hierarchy levels	Low hierarchy levels	High-context communication	Low-context communication	Formal communications are preferred	Flexible and can deal with surprises	Visions are for the future and they are flexible	Visions are for now and the future