

Multi-Cultural Team Management Parameters and Dimensions for Indigenous Construction Firms in Lagos, Nigeria

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Research has established the relevance of leadership capability, team capability and firm structure and strategy in multi-cultural team management. However, studies on leadership, team capability, firm structure and strategy as parameters of multi-cultural team management in small and medium-sized construction firms have received little attention. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the dimensions of the core of capability development as multi-cultural team management parameters. These core dimensions are project leadership capability, team capability and firm's structure and strategy. The objective of the study was achieved by conducting a field survey using convenience sampling technique. A Multi-Cultural Team Management Parameters' (MCTMP) Questionnaire was developed and used to collect data for the study. Analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that the respondents agreed with most of the dimensions of the three parameters of multi-cultural team management. The study concludes that creativity in designs/construction processes; periodic site meeting to monitor and review performances and clear roles and responsibilities are the top dimensions of leadership capability, organisational structure and strategy and team capability respectively. It was thus recommended that indigenous construction firms work on having good leadership that can identify the different parameters and dimensions to project and organisational management and devise means of instituting, reviewing and maintaining such to the advantage of the firm.

Keywords: Capability, firm strategy, firm structure, multi-cultural team, organisation.

INTRODUCTION

Uncertainties and challenges in the construction industry require constant evolving requirements towards the management of projects and teams. These are evident in the assertions made below. Mintzberg (1979) opined that the approach in resolving ambiguity and unpredictability brought about by changes is related to the organisational configuration adopted. Nelson and Winter (2002) submitted that organisations act as social-agents by responding to routines, procedures, practices and norms built over time. Ogbonna and Harris (2000) affirmed that construction projects are embedded in historical, social and institutional contexts and thus, are shaped by organisational characteristics. Dauber, Fink and Yolles (2012) inferred that the cultural backgrounds and configurations generated by the various project participants mould firms' output. Managers are thus faced with a series of daunting tasks amidst the dynamisms of the construction industry work environment and intense competition. These factors therefore make core capabilities a necessary tool/skill for leaders and managers especially in a multicultural team. From the perspective of organisational development, the

importance of interdisciplinary and multi-cultural teams amongst other factors is inferred (Zhang & Liu, 2006; Gill, 2006). Multi-cultural team entails the integration of the energy and synergy of individuals from different backgrounds, thereby resulting to creative approaches of resolving issues (Baiden, Price & Dainty, 2006). Proponents of multi-cultural team argue that differences in culture of work group or team results in a greater variance of ideas, thus leading to higher quality problem-solving skill. This improved problem-solving skill results from increased and diverse perspectives of styles, knowledge and insights that are valuable to resolving complex problems (Scott-Young & Samson, 2008). This argument, however, relies on the idea that diversity brings in skill variability. Consequently, cultural diversity in work places brings value to an organisation, thereby improving performance (Beyene, Shi & Wu, 2016). The above studies do not only emphasize relationship between multi-cultural team success and its drivers (Beyene, Shi & Wu, 2016) but also characterize an organisation as a complete system in which capabilities are

developed to resolve both internal and external challenges.

Previous studies on multi-cultural team addressed the issue from different perspectives. The need to develop innovative skills and capabilities in managing multi-cultural team was emphasized in the study of Alshawi and Ingirige (2003) and Blayse and Manley (2004). From the perspective of information, communication and culture, the works of Ochieng and Price (2009) and Brett, Behfar and Kern (2009) are foremost. On challenges, Ochieng and Price (2009) affirm leadership emphatic skill and effective communication as undertone to multi-cultural team management. Some authors have made efforts to develop multi-cultural team models by using certain variables in piecemeal. For instance, Pinto, Slevin and English (2009) used trust among project team members while Miller, Fields, Kumar and Ortiz (2000) used leadership.

At the core of capabilities development are strategic intent domain and organisational culture, structure and strategy as well as individual/group knowledge domain (Gill, 2006). Though, a number of studies have been conducted on multi-cultural team and other variables, studies that relate multi-cultural team parameters to the core of capabilities' development are sparse. This study therefore assessed multi-cultural team parameters in small and medium-sized construction firms based on the core of capability development. This was achieved by measuring strategic internet domain from leaders' capability, while individual/group knowledge domain was assessed from team capability and the third domain using organisational structure and strategy. The study is significant in its potential to highlight the prevalent components of the three parameters of multi-cultural team with a view to developing these criteria for improved project and organisational performance.

Relationship between Multi-Cultural Team Management Parameters and Project Outcome

The three core criteria to project success according to Stare (2012) are management of projects, project organisational culture and client-contractor behaviour. Factors such as

management support, roles and responsibilities, methodology, competing priorities, skilled personnel are embedded in project organisational culture. Ibrahim, Costello, & Wilkinson, (2013) highlighted clarity on roles, responsibilities and authority while Thomas & Mengel (2008) suggested alignment of project and organisational structures. Chua, Kog and Loh (1999) stressed project manager's commitment and involvement while experienced and qualified personnel were emphasised by Nguyen, Ogunlana and Lan (2004) and Enshassi and Abushaban (2009); thereby giving further support to management of multicultural team as an important aspect of human resource management.

Ofori (2012) highlights directing, co-coordinating, mobilising, motivating, persuading and visioning as key components of leadership and believed that leadership is needed in all aspects of construction. He further emphasized that leadership is required for expertise, professionalism, and innovation particularly in the context of construction hostile environment and its associated challenges (Ofori, 2003 & 2012).

Furthermore, Haas & Hansen (2005) opined that competitive performance does not depend on how much an organisation knows but on how it utilizes what is known. Utilising what is known can be said to be an integral part of leadership function. Muda and Nadrah, (2013) observe that team capability comprises personal integrity, working within industry, customer focus, quality, communication/interpersonal skill, developing/empowering people and working as a team. They suggest that they are the needed capabilities among construction industry team leaders.

Organisational structure and strategy relate to firm sizes as well as other organisational variables. The team and leadership capability in any given set of organisation thus depend on the culture, structure and strategy (Chew & Sharma, 2005). Elmualim, Green, Larsen and Kao (2006); Cheah, Kang and Chew, (2007) as well as Darawong, Igel and Badir, (2016) believe culture; structure and strategy are dynamic capabilities. They affirm that these capabilities are needed for

innovativeness and competitive advantage. When these capabilities and organisational factors are not well managed, project consequences such as cost and time overruns, delays, profit and overhead reduction, lack of trust as well as low quality projects often result (Jefferies, Gameson & Rowlinson 2002; Hoonakker, Carayon & Loushine, 2010).

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a survey research approach. A Multi-Cultural Team Management Parameters (MCTMP) Questionnaire was administered on 21 construction firms that have on-going projects with multi-cultural teams, in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. Forty-four questionnaires were administered, two questionnaires per firm: one for a manager and the other one for a supervisor. From literature review and prior interview with the construction firms, multi-cultural team parameters were categorised under three sub-groups namely: leadership capability, team capability and organisational structure and strategy. Each subgroup was measured with a number of dimensions as shown in the appendix. The respondents were required to express their opinions on the parameters and the dimensions as

subsets of multi-cultural team management, on a Likert type scale of 1-5 (‘strongly disagree’ as 1 to ‘strongly agree’ as 5). The most prevalent dimensions under each sub group were assessed using mean item score. The Cronbach’s Alpha value for the 29 variables in the questionnaire was 0.863, this coefficient was higher than the minimum recommended value of 0.7. This is an indication that the research instrument is reliable. Independent t-test was conducted to know whether there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the firms on the parameters and the dimensions.

DISCUSSION

Multi-cultural Team Management Parameters and Dimensions

This section assessed multi-cultural team management parameters and the dimensions. The parameters are three, namely; leadership capability, team capability and organisational structure and strategy, each with its dimensions. The results are as presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Leadership Capability for Multicultural Team Management

The descriptive statistics for leadership capability parameter as a subgroup of multi-cultural team management is as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Assessment of Leadership Capability for Multicultural Project Team Parameters

Leadership capabilities	Mean
Creativity in designs and construction processes	4.31
Clear communication between and among members	4.22
Development of improved quality products to satisfy clients	4.22
Technological innovation adoption	4.11
The leadership has the interest of the team at heart	4.10
Initiation of various skills development among each other	4.06
Ability to tackle complex designs and construction problems	4.00
Task and project implementation to reduce cost and time overrun	3.97
Enhanced decision making processes through consensus	3.90
Conflicts and disputes resolution	3.89
Aiming at competitive advantage attainment	3.71
Overall	4.05

Note: 1.00-1.49 for 1, strongly disagree; 1.50-2.49 for 2, disagree; 2.50-3.49 for 3, indifferent ; 3.50-4.49 for 4, agree and 4.50-5.00 for 5, strongly agree

Table 1 shows the result for the dimensions of leadership capability. The respondents agreed that the eleven dimensions of leadership are important factors to multi-cultural team management. The topmost factor is creativity in

designs and construction processes with the least as aiming at competitive advantage attainment. This result implies that all the enumerated leadership capabilities are essential based on a mean score that is greater than 3.50.

Organisational Structure and Strategy Parameters for Multi-cultural Project Team Management

The descriptive statistics for organisational structure and strategy is as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment of Organisation Structure and Strategy for Multicultural Project Team

Organisation Structure and Strategy Capability	Mean
Periodic site meeting to monitor and review performances	4.32
Planning, coordination and monitoring tools are in place	4.12
Access to wider information on firm functioning and project management	4.03
Organisation flexibility/ openness	3.98
Centralised decision making processes	3.75
Stereotypes organisational structure and strategy	3.52
National culture of top management members	3.47
The preferred culture of the larger percentage of the team members is reflected	3.41
Rewards, promotion and appointments are restricted to the top management	3.10
None provision of vision and mission statement	3.05
Overall	3.68

The respondents agreed with six of the organisational structure and strategy dimensions. However, decisions were not reached on the importance of four factors as important to multi-cultural team management parameters. The four

factors are: national culture of top management, the preferred culture of the larger percentage of the team members, rewards, promotion and appointments’ restriction to top management and none provision of vision and mission statement.

Team Capability Parameters for Multicultural Project Team Management

The descriptive statistics for team capability is as presented in Table .3.

Table 3: Assessment of Team Capability for Multicultural Project Team Management

Team Composition Capability	Mean
Team members assigned roles and responsibilities are clear and explicit	4.16
Team members are clear on individual roles in relations to the team as a whole	4.12
Team members are willing to put in their best as a result of motivation and incentives received	4.06
Team member willing to use previous knowledge gained to help with unforeseen	4.04
Team members are employed based on the possession of the needed expertise	3.90
Team members educational background is of importance	3.88
Team members are willing to take initiative for unassigned tasks	3.55
Team members are ready to put in the best as other jobs are not guaranteed	3.51
Overall	3.91

Table 3 reveals the result of team capability parameter for multi-cultural project team. The result shows that the team members agreed that all the factors are germane. Team members assigned with clear and explicit roles and responsibilities have the highest mean score (4.16). The least ranked factor however, is team members being ready to put in their best as other jobs are not guaranteed. Overall, there is a general agreement of a mean score of 3.91 among the respondents for team capability as a dimension of multi-cultural team management in construction.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): A hypothesis was postulated to find out whether there is any significant difference in the perception of the construction firms on the parameters and dimensions of Multi-cultural team management. The hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of construction firms on leadership capability, organisational structure and strategy as well as team capability as parameters of Multicultural team management in construction firms in Lagos, Nigeria. The hypothesis was tested using t-test. The decision rule is to accept H₁ if the p-value is greater than 0.05 at ($p \leq 0.05$), otherwise accept H₀. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Test of Significant Difference in Multicultural Team Management Parameters and Dimensions in Construction Firms

Multicultural Team Parameters	N	MS	SD	t-test	p-val.	Sig	Remarks
Leadership capabilities				-1.022	0.269	NS	Accept
Manager	23	3.86	0.493				
Supervisor	22	3.99	0.331				

Structure and Strategy				-0.513	0.133	NS	Accept
Manager	23	3.53	0.582				
Supervisor	22	3.61	0.468				
Team capabilities				-0.512	0.525	NS	Accept
Manager	23	3.92	0.360				
Supervisor	22	3.85	0.451				

MS=mean score, SD=standard deviation, NS= not significant, SS=significant, Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

The t-test showing the differences in the means of leadership capability, team capability as well as structure and strategy for the two groups of respondents is depicted in Table 4. The result shows a non-significant difference in all the parameters of multi-cultural capability. This means the hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the perception of both managers and supervisors on leadership capability, organisational structure and strategy as well as team capability as parameters of multi-cultural team management in construction firms in Lagos, is accepted. This result implies that the 3 parameters are important in multi-cultural team.

For the dimensions, the p-values are all greater than the critical value (0.05) indicating that the hypothesis is also accepted. This is an indication that most of the 29 variables/dimensions are paramount. However the dimension of structure and strategy that has to do with access to wider information as well as the dimension of team that has to do with motivation and incentives received have p-value of 0.01. This means the hypotheses for these two dimensions are rejected. The implication of the result is that there is a difference in the respondents' perception on the means of getting wider information and how issues that relate to rewards and incentives are resolved. This table was not however presented due to its size in this write up.

Generally, these results reveal that there is no statistical difference in the perceptions of the respondents on the 3 parameters and most of the dimensions of multi-cultural team capability. Managers and supervisors thus need to identify the parameters and the dimensions and use such to the advantage of the firm.

Discussion of Findings

Majority of the respondents agreed with leadership capability, team capability and

organisational structure and strategy as the parameters of multi-cultural team management in construction firms. On leadership, 7 dimensions that ranged from creativity in designs and construction processes; clear communication between and among members; development of improved quality products to satisfy clients; technological innovation adoption; leadership having the interest of the team at heart; initiation of various skills development among each other through the ability to tackle complex designs and construction problems were strongly agreed to. These dimensions have been researched into as resources and capabilities needed for improved performance (Olotuah & Taiwo, 2015; Baiden, Price & Dainty, 2006; Dainty, Moore & Murray, 2007). Other dimensions such as task and project implementation to reduce cost and time overrun; enhanced decision making processes through consensus; and conflicts and disputes resolution, though with lower statistical values here are prerequisite to growth and performance (Odusami, Iyagba & Omirin, 2003; Stare, 2012; Ofori, 2012; Ejohwomu, Oshodi & Onifade, 2016).

Periodic site meeting to monitor and review performances, planning, coordination and monitoring tools put in place as well as getting access to wider information on firms' functioning were dimensions that were strongly agreed to by the construction firms under organisational structure and strategy as a parameter to multi-cultural team management. On the parameter of team capability, dimensions such as clear and explicit roles and responsibilities; clear individual tasks, willingness to put in the best and team member willingness to use previous knowledge are the topmost dimensions strongly agreed to.

These findings are similar to the studies of Kant and Jagbir (2019) where the authors concluded that material management, waste

reduction, scope and change management are pre-requisites to reducing time and cost overruns in projects. The study of Gewanlal and Bekker (2015) in South-African construction firms also affirm that adequate consideration of issues relating to level of knowledge, experience and mutual agreement among participants should be considered to minimise the consequences on projects.

The test of hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of the managers and the supervisors on the three parameters of multi-cultural team. On the dimensions, however, the managers and the supervisors differ on assess to wider information and teams putting in their best due to reward and incentive received.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDIES

This study concludes that there is agreement on the perceptions of the respondents on the parameters and most of the dimensions of multi-cultural team capability. The firms only differ on issues relating to access to wider information on organisational functioning and teams putting in their best due to rewards and incentives received. That is, for effective multi-cultural team management, the need for current information and the access to it is of utmost importance. In addition, the prevalent dimensions of the 3 parameters are highlighted.

The prevalence of the dimensions of multi-cultural team capability such as 'creativity in design and construction' (Leadership capability),

'periodic site meeting' (Structure and Strategy) and 'clear and explicit roles and responsibilities' (Team capability) should be enhanced, monitored and tailored towards the success of multi-cultural team management and project delivery. This can be achieved by providing the needed leadership capabilities. As various structures and strategies have distinct impacts on performance, there is a need to identify the prevailing structure and strategy and be able to adapt it to the benefit of the firm. Finally, team integration should be designed based on the leadership, structure and strategy and current information in the industry.

The hypothesis on leadership capability dimensions are all accepted. This further stresses the importance of the right mind at the helms of affairs. Project leaders thus, need to be well equipped with every managerial tool for task and activities coordination to realise project objectives. On team capability, there is a disagreement on teams putting in their best due to incentives received. Based on the nature of construction and the need to have a well-knitted team, workers should be committed to their duties for quality to be delivered, rather than incentive/reward based delivery. Construction team leaders/supervisors should therefore nurture an integrated multi-cultural team that is committed to quality delivery. Further studies are to be conducted on multicultural team capability and the influence on specific aspect of project or organisational performance.

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