CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS IN AFRICA

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Purpose. The paper explores leadership in the face of cross-cultural differences in the management of agricultural projects in Africa. Cross-cultural differences are a result of the diversity of cultures. The differences are especially in behaviors, attitudes, functioning, and communication in the management of agricultural projects across Africa.

Results. Cultural varieties are observed in the leadership of agricultural projects based on the leadership style of the manager or leader. The leadership styles range from servant leadership, and charismatic to transformational leadership, these differences sometimes cause conflicts. The culture of the community or society has an effect on the management of agricultural projects as well. This is witnessed in the case of individualistic versus collectivistic societies; these two cultures bring about cross-cultural leadership differences. Misunderstandings arise due to their different beliefs, backgrounds, or values. To address cross-cultural differences, both the leader and follower must do something, for a greater impact on agricultural projects in Africa.

Scientific novelty. The paper highlights that cultural intelligence has a great deal of impact in management of agricultural projects in Africa. However, cross cultural leaders in this space need to demonstrate cultural intelligence beyond linguistic intelligence to have interpersonal, intrapersonal and spatial intelligence to effectively deliver in the cross-cultural agricultural world.

Practical value. This paper entails ideas that will help leaders of agricultural projects in Africa overcome cross cultural difference for effective management of the projects. The followers also have a role to play in managing cross cultural difference so to achieve greater impact in agriculture projects in Africa. Flexible leadership and culturally sensitivity while promoting creativity and motivation there will be great achievement to project goals. To achieve great success in a cross-cultural environment, mutual respect, leadership and effective cross-cultural communication is required.

Key words: leadership, management of agricultural projects, cross-cultural differences, Africa.

Introduction. A project is “a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.” (Project Management Institute, 2008). Projects range from agriculture, software development, evangelism, research and development, infrastructure construction, telecommunications facilities among many others (Maxfield, 2016). The world gross domestic product (GDP) stands at 45 trillion USD, from these, about 20 % is gross capital formation from projects, in India its 33 % and 43 % in China. Project Management plays a key role in value creation across the world (Godfrey & Siraje, 2019).
In recent years, there is a rising interest in project management and its factors of success. Projects are mainly conducted in a cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary and cross-functional environment. This is more visible in global organizations, managing projects internationally and bringing together of multi-cultural teams. According to Jacoby (2020), he states that in today's cross-cultural business community around the world, project managers occasionally experience cross-cultural differences. Even the greatest cross-cultural leaders experienced some intercultural differences in their missionary work (Bediako, 2002). These differences have the potential to affect the completion, even abandonment of the project and cuts across all projects sectors including agriculture.

**Review of literature.** In the available research, scientists have proposed an improved model of agricultural project management in order to ensure the efficiency of agricultural producers’ functioning (Prysiazhniuk & Plotnikova, 2017); the theoretical and practical aspects of project management in organic agricultural production are substantiated (Kucher et al., 2018); systematized the results of theoretical research and developed methodology of project portfolio management (Ivanova Nikolova, 2016); justified the theoretical foundations for the application of the project approach in the field of agricultural logistics (Maltsev, 2021).

In Africa, development partners have paid a keen interest in funding projects in water and sanitation, clean energy and agriculture. As a result, the agriculture portfolio in terms of projects is one of the areas that is heavily funded across the African continent. Hofstede (2005), and others have various conducted studies on cross-cultural management. The studies propose a number of value systems that can be studied in the context of cross-cultural dimensions. Value systems are important since they affect human feeling, thinking, and also affect the behaviour of institutions, co-operations and organizations in a manner that is predictable (Kumar et al., 2011).

In agricultural project management, we have many companies and development organizations operating in different countries across Africa. The global recruitment procedures requires that the project manager in cases where an expatriate is required should not be located in their host country. This leads to a situation where the head of a project has a different culture from that of the rest of the employees who are predominantly locals. For the project manager to successfully lead, they need to have a high cultural intelligence to achieve project objectives (Hummel & van der Duim, 2016).

**Materials and methods.** The paper explores leadership in the face of cross-cultural differences in the management of agricultural projects in Africa. Cross-cultural differences are a result of the diversity of cultures. The differences are especially in behaviors, attitudes, functioning, and communication in the management of agricultural projects across Africa.

The theoretical review of thematic literature is used as the main research method in the paper.

**Results and discussion.** Cross Cultural Differences in Agricultural Projects in
Africa. Cross-culture is defined as Cultural dimensions that a society has to deal with and the various solutions that exist to deal with it. According to Mittal and Elias (2016), cross cultural management is defined as: “the behaviour of people in organizations around the world and shows people how to work in organizations with employees and client populations from many different cultures”. The rising co-operation among companies located in different countries demonstrates the importance of cross-cultural management especially since these countries have different cross-cultural backgrounds. In the area of culture and management, Hofstede (2005) proposed a “dimensional approach to cross-cultural comparisons”. With rise in “globalization”, we are increasingly seeing companies and organisations being run from different places across the world. Hence, communication across cultures becomes important. Professionals across the world, including agricultural professionals in Africa need to learn how to work with diverse cultures (Fiske, 2017).

It is possible for human beings to acquire and consequently learn new cultures. This learning process needs communication to coding and decoding language and the illustrations used in the communication. There are ways beyond language that human communicate, they include body language, gestures, facial expressions and posture etc. (Jogulu, 2010). Simply put, one cannot separate culture and communication, in the occasion someone is exposed to a certain culture, communication must also come in and play an important role (Khan et al., 2020). In the world of business, intercultural communication, is the communication where there are colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds. Hence international business communication and intercultural communication is really important to enable the individuals to compete internationally (Mwampambane et al., 2021).

Leadership in Cross-Cultural Differences in Agricultural Projects in Africa. In project management it is said that successful implementation of the project about 90% is all about communication (Brislin & Macnab, 2011). Across the world, there are different cultures and among the different cultures, cross-cultural differences exist. Communication is impacted by cross-cultural differences due to people from different cultures (Mokgwane & Omobonike, 2020). There are many companies operating across Africa, people get exposed to diverse cultures which they learn or even get absorbed. This leads to a number of barriers such as communication due to the difference between the way of doing things and communicating (Pauliene, 2012).

Often at times certain gestures have different meanings across different cultures. A proper understanding of intercultural communication is important to be able to overcome the cross-cultural barriers. Whereas differences occur across cultures, within the individual is the aptitude to adapt overcome and work with those differences. For instance, international agricultural experts working in a country or culture completely different to where they come from, sometimes get used to the new culture and adapt effectively and thus perform effectively (Mittal & Elias, 2016). To achieve this requires cultural intelligence, this enables people to overcome the challenges brought about by the diversity in cultures.
According to Earley (2006), Cultural Intelligence is “the ability to exhibit certain behaviours, including skills and qualities, which are culturally tuned to the attitudes and values of others”. Adapting with the differences in a given culture is required by an individual in order to live within it. Cultural Intelligence involves (Chaney & Martin, 2011):

a) Linguistic Intelligence: This involves learning the native language over and beyond using international business language (English). Learning the local language increased effectiveness when communicating with locals. In Africa, working in a different country from yours for example a Kenyan working in West Africa may need to learn French or other local languages for effective performance. Increasingly, recruiters as part of the recruitment procedures in agricultural rural development require the expert to know how to speak the local language even if they do not come from that country or culture.

b) Spatial Intelligence: this is the space used during meetings and introductions. Working in different parts of Africa requires one to know what space to use what kind of communication. An understanding of the environment and setting specifically is of utmost concern or importance.

c) Interpersonal Intelligence: this involves understanding other people and their motivations. An agricultural professional from Morocco working in South Africa will need to understand the South African people. He/she further needs to understand what their motivation is and why they do things they way they do them. This understanding will enable the professional to interact well with the communities and guarantee better impact.

d) Intrapersonal Intelligence: This is being aware of one’s own cultural style and as result adjust to international counterparts. Being required to work in an environment different from where you were brought up can be daunting and frustrating. To successfully ace through it, it is required of one to understand self. Introspection on why things are done the way they are done in your community is necessary.

Effect of contemporary leadership styles in cross cultural management. The leadership style of a leader has an effect in terms of how the cross-cultural leader engages with people. Leadership styles are classified into traditional and contemporary leadership strategies. A leader who uses personal influence to inspire and develop people towards achieving goals of the organization and create impact in the community is a contemporary leader. This style is completely different from that of a traditional leader. There are three main types of contemporary leadership strategies namely servant, charismatic and transformation Leadership. The paper reviews how the leadership style of the leader affects adapting to cultures and its effect on cross cultural leadership in general (Zhu et al., 2019).

Servant Leadership and cross-cultural management. In servant leadership the goal of the leader is service. In traditional leadership, the focus of the leader is the improved efficiency of their company. In servant leadership, the leader is there to serve the people rather than the people serving the leader and this differs significantly from
traditional leadership (Zhu et al., 2019). Former President of Seventh Day Adventist General Conference W.A Spicer talking about Adventist leadership is quoted to have said. “There are no posts of honour but only of service.” Mark 9:35 says that whoever desires to be greatest among people must be a servant.

In Africa, Servants leaders are hard to come by. However, in management of agricultural projects especially those funded by international donors, servant leaders are more likely to perform well as they utilise every kind of resource to ensure the community needs are effectively met. Servant leaders are known to easily adapt to different cultures and also manage cross-cultural differences well. Their main goal is service hence they put the people’s interest over and beyond their personal interests (Zhu et al., 2019).

Charismatic leadership and cross-cultural management. The leadership style that combines persuasive communication, interpersonal connection with charm to motivate others is referred to as charismatic leadership. Most leaders have some sense of charisma in them. Followers in one way or another would want to follow the leader as a person, over and beyond the business interest they represent. Examples of charismatic leaders in Africa include Nelson Mandela and Kwame Nkurumah. A charismatic leader can be both good and bad morally speaking. Since one can use the influence to lead a revolution.

Charismatic leaders use their charm to influence interpersonal cultural intelligence. They have a strong influence on the followers and the followers will strive to ensure that the leader succeeds. In management of agricultural projects in Africa, charismatic leadership is required in instances where the intervention promoted in novel and very new to the culture. A leader who exerts influence and wins the trust of the community is required to push the idea of adoption of the novel model. Charismatic leaders are usually very opinionated and thus find it very difficult to make adjustments to ensure the success of the project. In some instances, they would prefer by all means to exert their ideas on the people (Maxfield, 2016).

Transformational leadership and cross-cultural management. The leadership approach that causes change in social systems and individuals with a goal of making followers leaders is termed as transformational leadership. This leadership style at its best it creates positive change in the followers (Zhu et al., 2019). Transformational leaders often lead by example and are called quiet leaders and for a greater good, they are willing to make sacrifices. They have confidence, courage and use inspiration, empathy or rapport to engage the followers. Transformational leaders have the will power to change the course of history. Even before the term transformational leadership existed, we have people who demonstrated transformational leadership. Examples of transformational ideas are such as Netflix, Amazon, Microsoft.

In Africa, with the growing concern of poor mechanization and modernization of agricultural productivity. There is need for transformational leadership in the sector to drive innovations that will improve efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and reduce costs. However, in some cultures, transformational leaders will be perceived to be
imposing their ideas on people and lead to a backlash. It is therefore necessary for the transformational leader to exercise great cultural intelligence in leading the project to ensure he or she gets the buy in of members in society.

While there is no perfect leadership style, it is imperative thereof, on the leader to adopt a mix of the contemporary leadership strategies depending on the situation. Agricultural projects in Africa require dynamism and fluid adaptability to the situation. To avert the adverse effects of cross-cultural differences brought about by the leaders’ leaderships strategy, the leader should be aware and adopt the four levels of cultural intelligence and embrace willingness to learn in the course of implementing the project (Zhu et al., 2019).

The Effect of Structure (Collectivist and Individualistic) Culture in Management of agricultural projects. Hofstede described ways that can be used to understand other cultures based on a study of employees working in a multi-national corporation. The four ways are based on: the structure (Individualism vs. Collectivism): depending on emphasize whether on the individual or the group. Power distance: based on the feeling on distribution of organizational power. Uncertainty avoidance and Masculinity vs. Femininity (Early, 2006).

Structure (individualism or collectivism). The term structure refers to “organizational structure in business. Individualism refers to the culture that focuses on the individual over the group. Collectivism refers to the shared values of the group where the interests of the group overweigh the interests of the individual” Hofstede & Hofstede (2005). Collectivism and individualism are two different concepts. Fig. 1 below demonstrates the difference between individualistic and collectivist culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualist Culture</th>
<th>Collective Culture</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Competitive, decision-driven</td>
<td>- Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Short-term gains</td>
<td>- Long-term growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Linear time, impatient</td>
<td>- Flexible time, patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Direct, explicit communication</td>
<td>- Indirect, circuitous communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal accountability</td>
<td>- Protection of face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transaction oriented</td>
<td>- Relationship oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Independent</td>
<td>- Interdependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Emphasis on content</td>
<td>- Emphasis on context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Private offices</td>
<td>- Open office plan</td>
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Fig. 1. Summary of collective vs individualist cultures. Collectivism and Cross-Cultural Differences in Agricultural Projects

Source: formed by the authors.

The specific attributes of collectivism culture such as collaborative and interdependent. If focuses on long-term growth and is relationship oriented focusing on processes. There is emphasis on context and relationships. The office plan is open and flexible time. Such culture values indirect or circuitous communication. In cultures that value collectivism managers and project team members work together. Delegation is mainly by those in authority to other employees. Africans in general are collectivist in nature with the spirit of “harambee”, “ubuntu” and “ujamaa” deeply entrenched. This in turn has an influence on the management of agricultural projects (Kumar et al.,
Individualism and Cross-Cultural Differences in Agricultural Projects. The individualistic culture is one that is competitive, decision-driven with a focus on short-term gains. It is also focuses on results and is independent. The project team members prefer a private office plan and direct/explicit communication, each project member is personal accountable. It is believed that individualism is more of a western culture. Project leaders who have embraced a western culture of individualism find it a bit difficult in managing African agricultural projects as the people are more inclined to a collectivist society. Employees also tend to value group work rather than individual effort.

Management of Cross-Cultural Differences in Agricultural Projects in Africa. Cross-cultural differences in agricultural projects in Africa can be managed through the combined efforts of the leaders and followers (project participants) as illustrated below.

Leader’s roles in Management of Cross-Cultural Differences. Leaders/managers should have the skills of managing cultural diversity in projects. Deep immersion within different cultures to make sense of their specific context and values is referred to as multicultural leadership. According to Early (2006), leaders need to support cultural diversity by creating multicultural leadership strategies in the project. Cross-cultural leaders should develop a multicultural training program since it is necessary for project team members to work cohesively. Structured mobility programs in cultural diversity management should be advanced to the leader so as to enhance competency in working in different geographies, cultures, regions and rotations (Zhu et al., 2019).

Leaders should be culturally intelligent; they should have respect to all cultures. The leader needs to have concern on different cultures of their social customs to avoid misunderstanding. They should learn more about the languages, history and cultures and avoid rushing or being rushed. The leaders should use humour and avoid jargons by using simple language. It is said that people will trust you when they know you care about them and have their best interest. As result, they will invest in their performance quality. The leader should strive to value people and what they do. The leader should encourage people to try their own novel ideas and think for themselves. The leader should strive to ensure that the project creates diversity and further align governing policies and practices to embrace cultural diversity. Since, a better understanding of cultural diversity is key to retention of employees (Zhu et al., 2019).

Follower’s Roles in Management of Cross-Cultural Differences. In managing of cross-cultural differences, the followers also a role to play. In most cases in African agricultural projects, the followers are mainly other project staff and project beneficiaries. The followers should also demonstrate cultural intelligence. The followers should develop skills on cultural awareness. The followers should be open to a new perspective of things, creativity and innovation. People have to work harmoniously to achieve organizational goals. Hence, the followers and leaders coming together to eradicate conflicts stemming from cross cultural differences (Tinajero,
The followers should be willing to participate in training to increase awareness on how to recognize and respect cultural differences in the workplace is needful toward achieving the goals of an organization (Vogelgesang et al., 2009). Training enables people from diverse backgrounds to understand one another. There is a need for the followers to be willing to make adjustments so as relate and work well. Followers should be willing to interact with each other even on sensitive issues regardless of their religious, social or historical affiliations (Tinajero, 2021).

**Conclusions.** With the rise in globalization, diversity at the workplace and internationally in agricultural projects is increasing. This rise often leads to cross-cultural differences that can further lead to difficulties and miscommunication or enlarged perspectives and creativity (Blethen, 2018). A lot of studies are being done in the area of cross-cultural differences in project management that provide a framework and guideline for interactions (Alder & Gundersen, 2001). Leader of cross-cultural or multi-cultural project teams making use of the literature can be able to increase their performance (Chamorro & Sanger, 2016).

Managers and leaders should be aware of their own contemporary leadership strategy and adapt based on situation to avoid or manage cross cultural conflicts that may arise (Alves et al., 2006). Individualism and collectivism is a situation that leaders in agricultural sector is Africa should be aware of in their design and implementation of project initiatives (Brislin & Macnab, 2011). It has been observed that linguistic intelligence has a great deal of impact in agricultural projects in Africa. However, cross cultural leaders in this space need to demonstrate cultural intelligence beyond linguistic intelligence to have interpersonal, intrapersonal and spatial intelligence to effectively deliver in the cross-cultural agricultural world.

Important to consider that it also goes beyond the leader. The followers also have a role to play in managing cross cultural difference so to achieve greater impact in agriculture projects in Africa. Practicing flexible leadership and culturally sensitivity while promoting creativity and motivation there will be great achievement to project goals. To achieve great success in a cross-cultural environment, mutual respect, leadership and effective cross-cultural communication is required.

This paper entails ideas that will help leaders of agricultural projects in Africa overcome cross cultural difference for effective management of the projects.

**References**


