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Motivation of the study:

As the usage of World Wide Web grew enormously in the past decade so did the number of global development teams. Especially in the IT field, teams having members, for example from Europe, US, Eastern European countries, Middle East, Philippines, South Asia is a common scenario. The more the teams have cultural diversity the more complexity is seen in managing projects. Although there are numbers of methods have been developed in order to ensure the successful accomplishment of projects but the performance of projects are highly influenced by Intercultural factors like language, race, age, gender, religion, sexual preferences, beliefs, habits, etc. So, the analysis of these factors is an essential task to gain and guarantee fruitful output.

Bangladesh has also become a stakeholder in the IT boom by creating conducive environments, drawing attention of IT companies around the globe to invest in the country. The country, with its huge underutilized man power (cheaper than India, China and Malaysia) benefited from the growth of IT sector by providing a nationwide IT infrastructure and skilled labor force. (1)

Many companies have been managing projects from their Bangladesh offices and people from different nationalities working on those projects. Addition to this, people of Bangladesh has many cultural differences. They have different colloquial languages, culture, food habit etc. in different parts of the country. All these matters play important role in project management. This paper is to provide insights into cultural issues to keep in mind in order to manage teams and projects effectively in Bangladesh. This will also be useful for team leaders, managers, chief executive officers, chairmen, primarily the decision makers; those who would like to create offices or teams in the country in future.

Objective of the study:

The major objective of this study is to analyze the intercultural issues of Project Management in general as well as in the context of Bangladesh.

The specific objectives of this report are-

- 1) To provide insight about Project Management, its components and constraints
- 2) To find out the general and intercultural issues in Project Management.
- 3) To identify challenges and realities of intercultural Project Management in Bangladesh.

Methodology:

For data collection, a software consultancy firm in Bangladesh has been chosen. The company has been running for past 15 years and operating their Bangladesh office for last 10 years. Its main branch is in the United Kingdom and it also has an office in Germany. The company has over fifty employees in total and 30 of them are in Bangladesh. Its business type is Information Consulting Services and annual revenue is seven million dollars.

Data collection methodology:

Data collection have been done in the following two ways –

- 1) Survey
- 2) Interview

Primary data:

All employees including the managing director, country managers and executive assistants have been provided with an online survey form to answer some carefully selected questions.

Secondary data:

Some persons of the same company have been selected in order to be interviewed. Questions were developed carefully and have been asked over internet through online conference software, Skype.

Interview was taken to gain insights into their experience and get to know as to what they think about issues regarding intercultural project management.

The following table lists the people who have been selected for the interview and the rationale behind choosing them –

No.	Person	Rationale
1	Managing director.	Main manager of the company works from the UK office. Have three distributed teams. Also a team of country managers, executive assistants, office assistants etc. Have the overall understanding and experience of project management, especially in intercultural context.
2	Country manager, Bangladesh	Manages a local team of lead and other developers, executive and office assistants. Recruits people in Bangladesh, determines salary, bonuses and yearly increments of local employees. Reports to the managing director on daily basis. Have first-hand experience of building team in Bangladesh.
3	Executive assistant, UK and Bangladesh.	Both the executive assistants in Bangladesh report to managing director and the country managers. Generates salary sheets and inform individuals of different office related information. Maintains organizational charts, documents. Sends and replies to office related emails to both the employees and sometimes to clients regarding invoicing. As they reply to employees' email regarding office related queries sometimes they have to deal with angry employees regarding issue with salary

		statements, their amounts. Sometimes they also have to face angry clients for invoicing related issues.
4	Team lead, UK. Works with Bangladesh team over internet. Also works with the local team on day to day basis.	Manages project teams in UK. Responsible for selecting who would work on which project and ensuring the projects are done successfully. As he works collaboratively with the global teams, especially the Bangladesh team, he is much aware of the issues and challenges of projects also the intercultural issues, especially dealing with the Bangladesh team.
5	Team lead, Bangladesh. Works with the UK team over internet and the local Bangladesh team on daily basis.	Responsible for supervising and managing project teams in Bangladesh. Decides the project teams and members in Bangladesh office. So, he is aware of the cultural context in Bangladesh as well as the challenges faced while working with global teams. His experience would be valuable for the study.
6	A developer in Bangladesh, who works over internet with overseas teams and went to UK to work on-site with the UK team.	Works on local Bangladesh team and with the global teams on projects. While working on-site in the UK he observed, first-hand, the cultural differences in both the teams. He had to learn and adapt the working culture and ethics of UK and has valuable input for the study.
7	A developer in Germany, who works over internet with both the UK and Bangladesh team as well overseas teams from clients (depends on the projects). He also has been to Bangladesh to train Bangladesh team	Works on German team and with the other global teams. Has been to Bangladesh and experienced huge cultural differences between the first world and third world. He had to learn and adapt with the teams on-site and gained a good experience working with the people on-site

	and work on-site.	of different cultures and completely different country. As mentioned before, even in Bangladesh, there are many cultural differences based on the different regions of the country, so this broadens his horizon and that experience would be useful for the study.
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Limitation of the study:

There is always room for improvements and the study is no difference. It was not free from limitations. These limitations are discussed briefly below:

- 1) **Inadequacy of Data:** One company was chosen as a sample. That means the survey was done on only one company. It would have been good if it could be done in several companies. As the issues have dealt in the context of Bangladesh the only Bangladeshi company I am acquainted with was chosen for the survey.
- 2) **Limitation of Time:** The time available was not enough to conduct the survey on many companies. That hindered the quality of the survey.

Questionnaire:

The questions that have been asked by online survey are given below –

No.	Question	Question Type	Options
1	Your role in the company	Checkbox (Multiple answers can be selected)	1) Manager 2) Supervisor 3) Project Manager 4) Programmer/Developer/Executive 5) Student/Working Student
2	Your role in the	Checkbox (Multiple	1) Project Manager

	project you are currently involved in	answers can be selected)	2) Lead Developer 3) Programmer/Developer/Executive 4) Tester 5) Advisor
3	How many people are in the team?	Short text	Blank text box
4	Are your teams multicultural? (i.e people from different cultural background are involved in the team)	Yes/No	1) Yes 2) No
5	Do you prefer a culturally diverse team?	Yes/No	1) Yes 2) No
6	Why so? (i.e if you prefer intercultural project team why / if you do not prefer, why)	Long text	Blank text box
7	What project environment are you currently involved in?	Multiple choice (One answer can be selected)	1) Virtual 2) On site 3) Both
8	Which project environment do you prefer?	Multiple choice (One answer can be selected)	1) Virtual 2) On site 3) Both
9	Are you involved in	Yes/No	1) Yes

	multiple projects at the same time?		2) No
10	What you do think? What goes wrong in projects? Check 3	Checkbox (Multiple answers can be selected)	1) Lack of Planning 2) Poor User Input (& Mismatch of Expectations) 3) Lack of Senior Management/Executive Support 4) Poor Definition of Project Scope 5) Unrealistic Timescales 6) Lack of adequate Resources 7) Incomplete or Changing Requirements 8) Lack of Leadership and/or Communication Skills 9) Lack of Project Specific Skills/Competence
11	What are the major contributors to poor project performance?	Checkbox (Multiple answers can be selected)	1) Management 2) Requirements 3) Systems Engineering 4) Reliability 5) Schedule 6) Test Planning 7) Software (Architecture, Design/development discipline, skill levels) 8) Maintainability
12	What are the top success factors? Check 3.	Checkbox (Multiple answers can be selected)	1) Project Mission 2) Top Management Support 3) Project Schedule/Plan 4) Client Consultation

			5) Personnel 6) Technical Tasks 7) Client Acceptance 8) Monitoring and Feedback 9) Communication
13	What are the top challenges of working on a culturally diverse team? Check 3.	Checkbox (Multiple answers can be selected)	1) Communication 2) Integration 3) Team motivation 4) Difference in understanding of work etiquette 5) Resistance to change 6) Building trust
14	Would you like to see yourself as a project manager?	Yes/No	
15	Why so? (i.e if you would like to be a project manager, why / if you do not want to be a project manager, why)	Long text	
16	Which PM process do you prefer?	Multiple choice (One answer can be selected)	1) Traditional Waterfall Process 2) Agile Project Management Process 3) Depends on the project
17	What do you think? Project management training pays off?	Yes/No	
18	Comments (your	Long text	

	overall experience in projects, your suggestions on how to improve project performance etc.)		
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The questions that have been asked by interview are given below –

No.	Question
1	What is your role in the team/company?
2	How long have you been working here?
3	How your day to day works affect others in your team/company?
4	Is your team/company culturally diverse?
5	Are they from different nations or from different cultures within the same country?
6	Do you have issues working with your team? What types of issues?
7	Do you find yourselves always motivated working with your team?
8	Are you able to motivate your team?
9	Are you comfortable enough going to superior or subordinate with any sort of issues?
10	What challenges do you face while working with your diverse team?
11	What will you recommend the project managers to manage a culturally diverse team?
12	Tell about your overall experience working with people from other culture.

What is a project?

A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result. (2)

If one organizes a large party or event, this is called a project. Because it is a specific party, for a specific reason, it is held on a specific date and time. That means it is unique, temporary and has a defined beginning and end created a specific product or service.

At work, if an office is moved, it is most likely being handled as a project.

If one company decides to hire new virtual employees, the whole hiring process can be handled as a project.

Everyday operations, is not a project. Washing clothes is not a project.

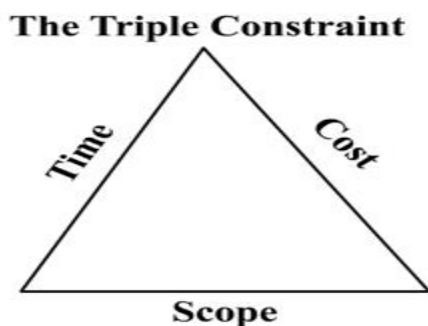
When a project is executed, certain constraints are faced by the project team. A constraint is a factor that might imply some restrictions on a project and define its limitations. It defines the what, how and when of a project.

For example, if a party is to be arranged, and if it has to be occurred on a certain date, that is constraint.

If new software has to be developed for a company, it has to be developed within a certain date and it has a limited budget. These are constraints of the project. A project manager has to ensure the overall management of the project by overseeing and using their knowledge and skills along with right project management tools and techniques, bearing the constraints in mind.

The formal definition of “constraint” is: “The state, quality, or sense of being restricted to a given course of action or inaction. An applicable restriction or limitation, either internal or external to a project, which will affect the performance of the project or a process”. (3)

The three most significant project constraints - schedule, cost and scope are known as the project management triangle or the triple constraint.



When one is changed, it affects one or both of the others.

Who is a project manager?

Project managers are organized, passionate and goal-oriented who understand what projects have in common, and their strategic role in how organizations succeed, learn and change.

While managing the trade-offs, the project manager (PM) is expected to integrate all aspects of

The project, ensure that the proper knowledge and resources are available when and where needed, and above all, ensure that the expected results are produced in a timely, cost-effective manner. (4)

As a summary, a project manager is supposed to have the following skills -

- 1) Leadership skills - key element of a successful project, PMs have to be people person
- 2) Technical skills - ability to decompose complex problems into sub problems and solve them
- 3) PM process skills - the whole project management process, how to start and manage and control the project

And a project manager has the following roles –

- 1) Working with people in the project
- 2) Gather different technical expertise required for and integrate into the project
- 3) Looking at the overall picture of the project, and divide the whole problem in smaller components and assign people to appropriate tasks
- 4) Dealing with stakeholders in the project

What is project management?

One of the early attempts of defining project management says -

Project Management is the application of a collection of tools and techniques (such as the CPM and matrix organization) to direct the use of diverse resources toward the accomplishment of a unique, complex, one-time task within time, cost and quality constraints. Each task requires a particular mix of these tools and techniques structured to fit the task environment and life cycle (from conception to completion) of the task.

The project management institute (PMI) defines,

Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements. It is accomplished through the use of processes such as initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing. (5)

Project Management provides an organization with powerful tools that improves its ability to plan, control, implement and control its activities as well as the ways in which it utilizes its people and resources. (6)

The British Standard for project management BS6079, 1996 defined project management as:

The planning, monitoring and control of all aspects of a project and the motivation of all those involved in it to achieve the project objectives on time and to the specified cost, quality and performance.

Project life cycle:

A typical project goes through different processes. According to PMBOK, there are phases of a project. These are –

- 1) Initiation – in this phase the project need and objective is identified. Requirement from the client is analyzed and, a feasibility study is conducted, to develop a new product or modify an existing one.
- 2) Planning – planning for the project is made and the milestones are set in this phase. The risk assessment is done as well.
- 3) Execution – in this phase the project plan is put into motion. Project manager and project team spend most of the time in this phase.
- 4) Monitoring and controlling – The project is controlled and monitored in order to guarantee a successful delivery. Corrective actions are taken if necessary.
- 5) Closing – this is the final phase of a project and the final product is delivered for live operations. The documents are also delivered with the product.

Project management activities:

Primarily, there are three key activities of a project, namely, Planning, Scheduling and Controlling.

- 1) Planning – Planning activities include defining project activities, planning resources etc.

- 2) Scheduling – Development of detailed planning, milestones etc. are included in scheduling activity.
- 3) Controlling – controlling and measuring the project progress, mitigate issues are controlling activities.

Project management methodologies:

There are many project management methodologies that have been developed in order to provide frameworks for planning, managing, controlling and delivery of projects successfully. Some of them are mentioned below -

- 1) Traditional waterfall method – In waterfall method, a project has to be completed once all of the requirements are developed and the project has come to an end completing all the phases. Once the requirements are fixed, there is no way to make any change that might appear needed over time. It is a rigid method.
- 2) Agile project management method – In agile method, a project can be delivered in iterations. The project starts from a firm foundation and delivers small chunks of it and takes feedback from the customer. As the whole project is delivered in iterations, it allows the facility to incorporate changes in requirements. It is a quite flexible method.
- 3) PRINCE2 – It is a process-driven project management method that focuses on high-level activities, such as management, organization and control — but not lower level activities, such as work breakdown or scheduling. It is based on seven principles, seven themes and seven processes. (7)
- 4) Rapid Application Method (RAD) – It is a method with rapid prototyping and iterative model with no specific planning involved. This methodology put more emphasis on process and less importance in planning. The main aim is to develop project at a faster pace. It follows iterative and incremental process.

Data analysis:

Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA):

The questions for the online survey were created via an online tool and an email was sent with the link of the survey to all the members who participated in it. Survey was available online for 15 days so that everyone can fill it in their spare time. The total time for filling the form was estimated 15 minutes.

During these 15 days, we were looking at the form and we went through the excel file that was recording all the responses from the survey tool. We were going through responses from each individual. While doing so, it has been realized that one question needed to be added in the survey form. Question number 13 was added and all the members were informed of the update on the survey form and people were asked kindly to fill up the form again and thanks to their courtesy they did so.

Deriving the main findings:

After the deadline was passed, the excel file was downloaded and used to generate summary from the data. Excel graphical tool was used to create graphs and charts. In total, 45 persons (90 percent of the people) responded to the survey.

The summary of the findings are discussed below –

- 1) 50% of the people who responded are developers or executives, 17% of them are managers, project managers or supervisors, rest of them are working students
- 2) 83% of them are developers/executive in the project they are currently involved in and 17% of them are lead developers
- 3) Majority of them (67%) work in a team of 5 persons
- 4) And majority work in on-site projects (50%), whereas 33% are from virtual teams and rest (17%) work on both types of teams
- 5) 67% of the people like both types of working environment, on the contrary, 17% prefer virtual environment and 17% would prefer onsite environment.
- 6) 50% of them work on multiple projects (more than) at the same time and 50% of them work only on one project at a time.

- 7) Half of the people believe that the main thing that goes wrong in projects is lack of leadership and / or communication skills (50%). Then come the issue of incomplete or change in requirements (33%) and lack of project specific skills / competence.
- 8) Half the people (50%) also believe that proper test planning is the major contributor to poor project performance whereas 33% voted for lack of proper leadership and rest thinks it is the overall system engineering that is the main reason behind poor performance of projects.
- 9) Majority of the population (66%) believe communication is the top success factor while rest of them voted for project mission (33%) and top management support (17%).
- 10) Then we asked them whether they would like to see themselves as a project manager in future. Majority of them (83%) said yes they would like to be a project manager someday.
- 11) They also provided reason as to why they would like become so. Some said, they want to apply their experience with projects, lessons from past failures in order to succeed in project delivery. Some simply said they believe they can do it. Those who do not want to be a project manager in future, one of them said, lack of experience as a developer makes it unrealistic to become a project manager. That means, they want to gain a lot of experience as a developer first. In essence, they think experience bring success.
- 12) As we mentioned before that there many project management methodologies we also asked people which methodology they prefer. We only mentioned the traditional waterfall and agile project management. Majority people (66%) prefer agile project management over the traditional sequential method (20%) and the rest (14%) think that it depends of the project.
- 13) 83% of the people working have a culturally diverse team whereas 17% of them do not work in team with people from different culture.
- 14) And 83% of them said that they prefer a team that is diverse in culture and 17% of them do not prefer teams with cultural diversity.
- 15) Those who prefer diversity in team, they mentioned two reason for their preference –
 - a. Relations in such teams build on professionalism and makes it easy to address issues

- b. Every culture has its own Strengths (S) and weaknesses (W). And they believe diversity helps teams to maximize S and minimize W.
- 16) On the other hand, people who do not prefer working in a diverse team mentioned the following issue –
 - a. Different cultures bring problems
- 17) Majority of the people (66%) think that the top challenge of working on a culturally diverse team is the communication, whereas 20% believe team motivation is a major challenge. Some (10%) find it hard to build trust in the team and rest (10%) think integration is a key problem.
- 18) Then there was a question that asked what people think about project management training. Do the trainings pay off? All of them (100%) said yes, project management trainings pay off. That means even the top management think that arranging trainings has advantages and help to have more productive team.
- 19) Finally, there was a blank text box that asked people to tell about their overall experience and suggestions on how to improve project performance. Only one person responded to the question. I think this is due to the fact that everyone had a lot of thing to share and they thought it will take them time to write in the online survey form. So, ignoring the question was convenient for them. I think this is one of the disadvantages of doing a survey. Some questions could be ignored by people. Face to face interview is helpful in this case. However, who responded to question believe –
 - a. Project success is guaranteed by motivation and professionalism of team members. Everyone must be willing to communicate and contribute towards same goals despite their differences.

Summary of the interview:

As mentioned earlier, the interview was taken through internet by Skype. In total 7 persons were interviewed and each interview took 15 minutes or more in some cases. There were different dates for every individual and every session was recorded through a digital media recorder. After that, points were noted from the audios, collated and summarized.

The summary drawn from the interview are discussed below –

- 1) When establishing a company what comes first is the name of the company. By that people recognize a company and it is the brand. In Bangladesh, it has been noticed that people value and respect company which has English names. It could be a name of a river, city, a direction (east, west, north etc.) or any English name. People also tend to trust foreign companies instead of local companies. Local small organizations try to utilize this mindset of people in their advantage and use such names. In addition to this, as Bangladesh was once a colony of British Empire so the colonial mindset is everywhere. Government job has the highest esteem and respect because it has stability. After government job, foreign company offshoring from Bangladesh are regarded as stable.
- 2) After establishing comes hiring people. Managers, mainly the managing director and country managers said that it is a hard job to establish a team right for the job with the right attitude. For this, recruiting is a crucial part of bringing right people with the right mindset. There are cultural differences, in countries, even as to how recruitment works. For example, British never send picture with their CVs whereas it is quite opposite in Germany. People do not mind sending picture with CV and same culture is seen in Bangladesh. So for recruitment it is important to adopt a strategy that is compatible with the local culture. They also said that as Bangladesh has many cultural differences in the different parts of the country they also want to hire people from cultures within the country. They see it one form of training and they believe it broadens individuals' horizons.
- 3) In terms of wearing dresses in work environment, the more a work environment is polished, disciplined, people come to work wearing the formal dresses, the more respect that work environment has.
- 4) Religion play an important role in the daily lives of people in Bangladesh and it is crucial to realize and respect to understand the team. People like to get good bonuses during the holy festivals, which happen twice a year. It motivates them a lot and brings happiness and joy to the team. People do not mind getting no or little performance bonuses but during the holy festivals it is a must. Even non-Muslims also like to get bonus during that time.

During the month of Ramadan, people fast from dawn to dusk. Fasting means no food, not even drinks. People tend to get angry easily during this time. It is important to understand these so team members speak softly and calmly with each other and even if someone gets angry they try not to react. Specially, managers, supervisors, team leads should be aware of this issue.

Many people pray five times a day. So, it may happen that there is an important meeting ongoing and someone might want everyone else to excuse them for five or ten minutes. It should not be considered as an insult or a bad manner because the person who is seeking for it does not want to miss the prayer. Meeting conductors, team members should understand and respect individuals' inclination toward religion. It also makes them happy with their superiors and team members.

While in conferences or abroad for projects, Bangladeshi people might encounter culture shock for example, drinking of alcohol. It is better not to offer them any alcohol because it is not their culture as well as prohibited by their religion. They might take an offense.

- 5) There is respect for everyone, especially for the elders. People do not call their senior colleagues by their names. It is considered as an offence. People usually call their seniors as 'brothers' or 'boss' or 'sir'.
- 6) People are generous and love to feed others. One person who came to train and work on-site with the Bangladesh team from Germany mentioned that this something he did not expect. He was invited by many in their houses for dinners and lunches. People also feed him in restaurants and became offended when he wanted to pay the bills.
- 7) The person who went to the UK from Bangladesh said that British people are extremely polite and if they ask someone nicely 'could you please do that for me when you have time' this simply means I want you to do it now. It is really important to understand these little things in order to understand our team members better.

He also mentioned ice breaking with the British people is easy. Anyone can start speaking to a British people simply talking about the weather. British love speaking about weather. British people have some different work ethics than the Bangladesh and it is necessary to understand these differences.

- 8) People in Bangladesh are not too much professional. They do not argue over salaries and tend not to switch companies rapidly. So, a lot less employee turnover rate is seen in

companies. If they like the company and environments they do not want to switch if there are no overwhelming reasons. In some countries, for example in India, there is a lot of employee turnover rate, 50% which is alarming for global companies. Employees may switch companies for mere increase of 200 dollars in salary. It is not the case in Bangladesh.

- 9) There are differences in weekdays and weekends in Bangladesh than many other countries. Friday is weekend in Bangladesh as well as weekly prayer day. So, asking people for working on Friday shall be considered as an offense. Project managers or team leads that rely on people from Bangladesh team should plan and divide work according to weekdays and weekends so that no emergency arises and they do not need to call someone in Bangladesh to work on Friday. At the same time, Sunday is weekday in Bangladesh whereas in most countries it is the weekend and weekly prayer day. So, the managers and leads in Bangladesh working with global teams should plan accordingly.
- 10) As there are differences in culture and languages within Bangladeshi people, it is sometimes hard to mitigate risk of stereotyping, prejudices and racism. Not everyone would be same and they might not communicate what issues they are facing within the team. This will lead to distrust and disintegration within the team. Supervisors to sit with their subordinates on regular basis to find out where there issues are, what they are working on, where they are in terms of career and where they want to see themselves. Based on those supervisors to resolve individual issues and set goals and objectives and arrange relevant trainings for them.
- 11) Companies are now adopting agile project management methodology than the traditional waterfall method because this has been proven as useful. It ensures delivery of products early, with increments and gets the ROI (Return On Investment) as soon as possible. It is also beneficial for a culturally diverse team. An agile framework called DSDM (Dynamic System Development Method) deals with the overall management of projects and it provides a lot of guidance to strengthen communication. DSDM's emphasis on human interaction (e.g. through the use of workshops), visualization (e.g. through the use of modeling, prototyping and iterative development) and clearly defined roles is at the heart of excellent project communication. These activities have been proven effective for a culturally diverse team.

Summary:

The whole project helped me get to know many aspects of project management. It also showed the cultural issues seen in general also in teams working from Bangladesh. It was an eye opening project and people shared their experiences, opinion and also thanked for conducting such a research. I really enjoyed working on this project, learned by doing and it generated a lot of enthusiasm in my mindset.

Next steps:

In future, I would also like to conduct the same research collecting data from some other companies. My aim would be to collect as many data as possible and use other statistical tools to summarize and make sense from the data.

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