
Introduction

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Biographical notes: Dr. Thomas Grisham has over 36 years of management experience on projects ranging up to US\$2 billion in the power, infrastructure, transportation, education, commercial, communications, manufacturing, business development and dispute resolution sectors. This experience was gained in 53 countries across a variety of business models. He has devoted the past 11 years primarily to research and education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. His research has focused on cross-cultural leadership and international business issues with over 25 papers and book sections published, and a book on international project management in progress. He has BE, MBA, Doctor of Project Management, PMP and PE degrees.

Richard Fellows is a Professor in the Department of Real Estate and Construction, The University of Hong Kong and is Joint Coordinator of CIB W112, 'Culture in Construction'. He graduated from the University of Aston and has worked as a quantity surveyor for several major contractors. Fellows has a PhD from the University of Reading, has taught at a number of universities in the UK and other countries and was coordinator for research in construction management for the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council in the UK. His research interests concern economics, contracts and management of people in construction – especially cultural issues as drivers of behaviour and performance. He has published widely in books, journals and conferences.

As the speed of globalisation increases, as companies become flatter, and as firms engage in temporary organisations like Joint Ventures (JVs) and other forms of strategic alliances, there is a corresponding increase in the need for effective and efficient cross-cultural leadership. The goal of this special edition is to explore cross-cultural leadership in the 21st century – particularly, its development path and the forces determining its development – as well as its impacts on organisational performance.

Is cross-cultural leadership a learned behaviour and, if it is, what are the attributes and dimensions? If people are to learn such behaviour, what genetic personal characteristics should they have, if any, and what skills must they learn? In learning cross-cultural leadership skills, what metrics and techniques are useful in training and preparing leaders to function in this new and evolving global market place?

Cross-cultural leaders must be flexible, and must be able to have an impact on followers outside of their own physical workplace, and their own organisation. They will need to know how to lead in diverse organisations and contexts, most especially, multicultural. They must also understand how and when to delegate and empower others and how to lay down the mantle of leadership and then follow when the situation requires.

Are there common, similar attributes of cross-cultural leadership regardless of culture? How might a Chinese leader view cross-cultural leadership, and would the dimensions be compatible with those of a leader from the UK? Do people raised in multiple cultures have any lessons to teach regarding the skill set required to function effectively in a cross-cultural environment?

These are some of the themes explored in this publication. The goal is to seek out theory, practice, and research on cross-cultural leadership topics. We have been fortunate to receive a broad coverage of the topic from a variety of global perspectives. Many of the papers are within the context of project management, which is also propitious as many firms are moving toward this model internationally to help to reduce costs and to increase revenues.

In the first paper, 'The role of organisational culture in construction company alliances', the authors explore the issue of alliances. In the global market place partnerships, consortiums, alliances and the like are normal business practice.

The second paper, 'Leadership skills and competencies for cross-cultural construction projects', focuses on the leadership attributes. It is, again, in the context of a construction project. Such projects are extreme examples of international business endeavours, for they require building what is, effectively, a temporary organisation which must have its own culture, norms, values and processes.

'Impact of leadership and power on successful ERP adoption' looks at the effects of one structure for constructing a temporary organisation.

The fourth paper, 'A cross-cultural study of leadership styles among executives in Bulgaria and Finland', compares the leadership styles across those two specific cultures.

'Organisational culture of joint venture projects: a case study of an international JV construction project in Hong Kong', also explores a particular type of temporary organisation and its effects on a project.

The last paper, 'Temporary project cultures', takes the broad view of the convergence of cross-cultural leadership and temporary organisations.

We thank the authors for their work and participation in this edition, and hope that readers will find the contents stimulating and useful in their research.