

How to become an effective multicultural team

Case Study of a Multicultural Churchplanting Team Working Among the
Maranao Tribe in the Philippines

Assignment for

ICL 6440

Leading Multicultural Teams

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Spring 3 - 2013

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1. Introduction

More and more mission organizations send from anywhere to everywhere. Missionaries are often working in multicultural teams. This is a challenge for today's church. This paper is a case study which gives an example how such a team could overcome the challenges resulting in the cultural diversity and become an effective team.

Part two is a brief introduction of the imagined multicultural church planting team working among the Muslim Maranao tribe in the Philippines.

Part three is a study of some major anticipated cultural challenges which could arise in the team. Included are some of the culture values researched by Hofstede, Trompenaars and the GLOBE study.

Part four reflects on the biblical-theological issues which need to be considered in the situation described in part three.

Part five outlines possible principles and practices that could facilitate the effective ministry of the presented team.

2. The Background of the Team

The team comprises of six team members.

Sun-ja, a 26 year-old single woman from Gwangju Korea, who comes from a Korean Presbyterian background.

Tammy, a 32 year-old single woman from Los Angeles, California, USA, who comes from a large independent community church.

Ajit, a 36 year-old single man from Kochi, Kerala, India, who belongs to the Indian Pentecostal Church.

Leonardo, a 24 year-old single man from Brazil, who comes from a Methodist church.

My wife Angela, who is 43 years old and mother of two boys, six and eight years old. And myself as the team leader, who is also 43 years old, and we belong to a small Bible Church in Germany.

3. Major Intercultural Challenges

This third part examines the challenges which arise out of the diversity of the team. Their cultural and national background influenced them and will lead to a lot of challenges and conflict. This paper can only imagine what could happen on the basis of some general cultural values. Each individual is different and there is also diversity within each national culture, but the stereotype predictions can be helpful to prepare for a multicultural team situation.

3.1 Differences in Expected Leadership Style

People from different cultural background are used to different leadership styles. This section will look at the different leadership styles the team members may expect and the resulting challenges. To do this different cultural values will be compared.

3.1.1 Power Distance

The GLOBE Study defines: “*Power Distance* is the degree to which members of an organization and society encourage and reward unequal distribution of power with greater power at higher levels.”¹ India, Brazil and Korea are countries with high power distance. Superiors and subordinates view each other as unequal and the most respected boss is a good father.² The USA is a pretty egalitarian society,³ where the boss can eas-

¹Jageep S. Chhokar, “Introduction.” In *Culture and Leadership Across the World: The GLOBE Book of In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies*, ed. J. S. Chhokar, F. C. Brodbeck and R. J. House (New York: Psychology Press, 2008), 5.

²Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations - Software of the mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), Kindle ebook, 73.

³Michael H. Hoppe and Rabi S. Bhagat, “Leadership in the United States of America: The Leader as Cultural Hero,” in *Culture and Leadership Across the World: The GLOBE Book of In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies*, ed. Jagdeep S. Chhokar, Felix C. Brodbeck and Robert J. House (New York: Psychology Press, 2008), 508.

ily be approached and the leader will ask for feedback and input. On the other hand “For a leader in a high-power-distance culture to ask the advice of a subordinate could signal that the boss doesn’t know how to lead.”⁴

Sun-ja from Korea might expect the team leader to give very clear directions and keep close control on what she does. At the same time she would see the team leader as a father figure who would help her, and maybe even provide financial help.⁵ The same may be true for Ajit and Leonardo. Tammy would expect to be consulted by the team leader who should be a resourceful democrat.⁶ How should the team be led? Should there be a vote for every decision? Making decisions could be a real challenge

3.1.2 Individualism versus Collectivism

There is another cultural value, individualism versus collectivism. In most societies in our world the interest of the group dominates over the interest of the individual.⁷ India, Brazil and Korea belong to those societies, the USA is on the opposite site of the Pole while Germany is just in between.⁸ This could lead to some challenges. Tammy and to some part even the team leaders couple wouldn’t mind if each team member would have a personal ministry completely separate from each other.⁹ One doing children ministry, another community development, and some maybe community health services. They all have the desire to reach to community for Christ and the team is a means to an end. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner describe the challenge like this:

The individualist culture sees the individual as “the end” and improvements to communal arrangements as the means to achieve it. The communitarian culture

⁴James E. Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 95.

⁵Michael Gibbons, class discussion, Korntal, May 10, 2013.

⁶Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations*, 76.

⁷Ibid., 90.

⁸Fons Trompenaars and Ed Voerman, *Servant-leadership across cultures: Harnessing the Strength of the World's Most Powerful Management Philosophy* (New York: McGrawHill, 2010), Kindle e-book, pos. 1121, fig. 7.1.

⁹Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 113.

sees the group as its end and improvements to individual capacities as a means to that end.¹⁰

Ajit is used that decision making “from the trivial to the corporate, is a combined effort. No jokes! Indians rely on their families for everything.”¹¹ Writes Ranjini Manian about Indian culture. Ajit together with Leonardo and Sun-ja may expect the team to be kind of a substitute family. So the team should be involved in much more details of live and decision making than Tammy would expect. The collectivist members may expect that everything is a team effort and done together.

Tammy from an individualist culture is used to being praised for individual achievement even publicly in a team meeting. This might be disturbing for the relationships of the collectivist team members who see the achievements as a success of the group effort.

3.1.3 Ambiguity and Uncertainty Avoidance

An other area which could influence the expectations for the team leadership is about uncertainty avoidance.

The USA and Germany have a much lower tolerance for ambiguity than Korea, Brazil and India.¹² This difference has an direct impact on how they deal with uncertainty, which is always present in human life.

People from societies with a low tolerance for ambiguity (high uncertainty avoidance) desire to minimize insecurity by having policies, time tables and detailed planning. Those living in societies with a high tolerance for ambiguity (low uncertainty avoidance) tend to live more in the present.¹³

This may lead to the following challenge in the team, that the team leader and Tammy would expect more rules and they might show stronger resistance to changes in

¹⁰Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business.*, 3rd rev. and updated ed. (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2012), 75.

¹¹Ranjini Manian, *Doing Business in India for Dummies: A Reference for the Rest of Us* (Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, 2007), 240.

¹²Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations*, 195-197.

¹³Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 129.

the team. On the other hand Tammy, Leonardo and Ajit might be much more flexible and be less calculating when taking risks and be less concerned with maintenance of records.

The Germans would like to have every thing organized into the detail, while the Asians would expect the unpredicted to happen. Planning might be a waste of time for them. Also Leonardo might prefer to go with the flow, as little organization as possible and we see what the Lord will do and what will happen. This could challenge the time badly.

3.2 Team Meetings and Conversation

Another area that could challenge the team is how team meetings should work. The schedule and time frame of the meetings. And how the conversation in and outside the meetings would happen.

3.2.1 High Context and Low Context Communication

“Many [leaders of multicultural teams] pinpoint direct and indirect communication as their greatest frustration.”¹⁴ Plueddemann discovered. This issue is connected to honor and shame. Asians rarely admit verbally that they are wrong and they have a hard time saying “no”. For Indians it is even rude to use the word “no” during a business discussion.¹⁵ The German team leader and Tammy may get frustrated by Ajit and Sun-ja and feel that they won’t say the truth, or won’t say what they mean, because the context is more important for them than the words spoken. The Westerners may not be used to reading between the lines. And even the nonverbal communication could be confusing, because in India “head nodding can indicate yes or no.”¹⁶

¹⁴Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 81.

¹⁵Susan Adams, “Business Etiquette Tips For International Travel”, *Forbes.Com* (June 15, 2012): 8, under “India”, *Business Source Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 18, 2013).

¹⁶Manian, *Doing Business in India*, 248.

Peterson describes the challenge as follows: “To be direct and ‘get all the pros and cons out on the table’ is a Western (and most noticeably American) tendency. Asians usually approach problems or difficulties in a more subtle, indirect way.”¹⁷

If Tammy confronts the other team members openly and communicates concerns straight forward she will offend them. Tammy may get right to the point in a conversation, while the others would meander to the point. The Germany team leader may offend the Asians with his frank and direct language. It might be a challenge to find a way of communication that is understood by all and doesn’t offend each other.

3.2.2 Rules versus relationship

“Some cultures strive for rules that apply to everyone, other cultures are more concerned with exceptions and specific cases.”¹⁸ Is harmony in the relationship more important or following the rules. This could lead to different challenges in the team, too. Is it more important to say the truth or to protect your friend?¹⁹ When do you make exceptions from the rules? The American and German culture sticks much more to the rules as the Brazilian or Indian do. Carl Goerdeler writes: “To bend rules is a Brazilian national pastime.”²⁰ This could lead to great conflict in the team between Leonardo and Tammy and the team leader. In Germany every thing has to be according to the rules and everything is regulated in detail.

This is also related whether a person is task or person orientated. People from Asian cultures are usually more on the person orientated side of the pole. For them relationships are more important than getting a task done. Those who are more task oriented

¹⁷Brooks Peterson, *Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures* (Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 2004), Kindle e-book, pos. 845.

¹⁸Trompenaars and Voerman, *Servant-leadership*, pos. 854.

¹⁹Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner write about an example: Your friend had an car accident. He went to fast and if you testify that he went at the allowed speed it may save him from serious consequences. The percentage opting for telling the truth and not protecting the friend was USA 93; Germany 87; Brazil 79; India 54 and Korea 37. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves*, 46.

²⁰Translation by author, “Regeln zu beugen ist ein brasilianischer Volkssport.”, Carl D. Goerdler, *Kulturschock Brasilien* (Bielefeld: Reise-Know-How Verlag, 2008), 44.

find their satisfaction in the achievement of goals. This could lead to very different expectations for the team meetings. The task oriented prefers a team meeting where only the ministry is discussed and wants it to be very focused. The relationship oriented will view a team meeting as a social gathering where the relationship of the team members are growing, they prefer group interaction to personal accomplishments.²¹

3.2.3 High and Low-Contact

Are you touching other people while talking to them or do you keep save distance? It depends on your cultural background.

Immediacy behaviors are actions that simultaneously communicate warmth, closeness, and availability. ... people in [high-contact] cultures stand closer and touch more. People in low-contact cultures tend to stand farther apart and touch less.²²

In Korea physical contact is inappropriate with older people and people from the opposite sex.²³ You keep your distance while talking to others. “Brazilians stand very close and use physical contact during conversations. In Brazil, closeness inspires trust, trust inspires long-term relationships.”²⁴ This could lead to challenges in the team. As team members offend each other by getting into someone’s personal space or by giving others a feeling of rejection by being to distant.

In a team meeting Leonardo and Sun-ja may happen to sit next to each other. Leonardo may sit very close to Sun-ja and may even physically touch her during the meeting. This could be offensive or displeasing to her maybe even seen as harassment by her.

²¹Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 79-80.

²²Raymond J. Wlodkowski, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 129.

²³Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: Asia* (Avon: Adams Media, 2007), 141.

²⁴Susan Adams, *Business Etiquette*, under “Brazil”.

3.2.4 Feminine and Masculine Culture

The distinct role men and women play depend on their culture. “In many cultures men are generally expected to be more ‘masculine’ and women are expected to be more ‘feminine’ than in equality-focused cultures.”²⁵ In masculine cultures the strongest should win a conflict, in feminine compromise and negotiation is preferred.²⁶

This could lead to some challenging situations in team meetings. Tammy is from a rather masculine and assertive society with high gender egalitarianism.²⁷ She may fight in an argument if she feels she is right, her idea should win. Sun-ja from a much more feminine and less assertive culture might be looking for a compromise and seeking silence as a way for communication. Leonardo being from a very loud society, may speak very loud and raise his voice as Ajit may be, too.

The feminine culture is usually less competitive where there is a lot of competition in masculine cultures.²⁸ Tammy might seek competition with other team members, about who reaches the most, gets the best reports, support or what ever.

In masculine cultures excellence is praised in feminine the weak is praised to encourage them.²⁹ There is a lot potential for conflict.

3.3 Standard of living

Standard of living could also be a challenge for the team. Americans expect that they have a high standard of living, while some Koreans may prefer to live very simple.³⁰

²⁵Peterson, *Cultural Intelligence*, pos. 3642.

²⁶Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations*, 170.

²⁷Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations*, 144; Cynthia G. Emrich, Florence L. Denmark and Deanne N. Den Hartog, “Cross-Cultural Differences in Gender Egalitarianism.” In *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, ed. Robert J. House et al., (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004). 365; Deanne N. Den Hartog, “Assertiveness.” In *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, edited by R. J. House et al., (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 410.

²⁸Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations*, 165.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Perry Shaw, “Leading Multicultural Teams” (lecture, ESCT, Korntal, May 14, 2013).

If team members decide individually and have very different standards it may lead to jealousy. Depending on the support level of the individuals some may not be able to rent similar to what others do. Tammy might be able to get a noble nice apartment. Ajit as the oldest one might expect that he needs to live at least on the same level. In the Philippines the Indian population stays usually in Manila and they are the rich people who own the businesses, that could bring expectations with it.

Another question connected is, how will the team be viewed by the locals? Which social class does the team like to connect with? The way the team and the team leader lives may lay an example for the new church plant and how the church leaders will expect standard of living.

3.4 Dating/Courtship

A team comprising of four single members could easily get in a situation where either two team members or a team member and a national fall in love with each other and start a dating relationship.

This could be very challenging for the team and the whole ministry of the team as the dating procedures are different in almost every culture. The “Living in the Philippines” website describes the challenges when courting a Maranao lady.

A suitor should be the most hardworking and patient bachelor in town. A go-between who will mediate for the contracting parties of the groom needed. The parents of the groom contact the parents of the bride regarding the desire of their son marry. The woman's family announces the dowry. When all is settled, the wedding celebration takes place in fun and merriment.³¹

This gives a good example how different the Maranao culture is compared to the USA where the two dating make their own decisions. In the Maranao culture the parents and a mediator do this, often marriages are prearranged. Even the culture of the team members are totally different. In high power cultures the parents have usually much

³¹Living in the Philippines, “Maranao Culture, Customs And Traditions”, <http://www.livinginthephilippines.com/Culture-And-Tradition/maranos-culture-customs-and-traditions.html> (accessed June 12, 2013).

more say and in India some marriages are still prearranged. The duration of dating, courtship and engagement differ in each culture. The same is true if the couple could meet alone or if they need a chaperon.³²

If team members don't know the customs of each other this could lead to a lot of misunderstandings and hurts on both sides. It could also bring the team leader in a challenging situation.³³

3.5 Hospitality

Hospitality could be another challenging area. Perry Shaw mentions the following differences in his handout.³⁴ Americans will invite you warmly, and the greatest compliment is when they do nothing special, you are "one of the family". Germans will invite you warmly, but the meal would be fairly formal and you will sit with the host family in a formal room. Koreans will welcome you warmly. They expect you to remove your shoes. Usually there is silence during the meal. Brazilians "rarely touch food with their hands. Use a knife and fork for everything, even fruit."³⁵ Indians are very gracious host. But they are just on the opposite side from the Brazilian "For Indian, to use the hand to eat is to relish the meal."³⁶

3.6 Time management

Different cultures approach time differently. This section will look at those differences and the challenges for the mission team.

³²Shaw, "Leading Multicultural Teams" (May 7, 2013).

³³Perry Shaw, "Falling in Love in Malaysia", a case study where a Californian guy and a Malaysian girl from a Muslim background get attracted to each other.

³⁴Perry Shaw, "Hospitality.pptx" (PowerPoint presented in class at ESCT, Korntal, May 7, 2013).

³⁵Gobal Portal for Diplomats, "Brazil," http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_br.htm accessed June 14, 2013.

³⁶Manian, *Doing Business in India*, 271.

3.6.1 Short-Term and Long-Term Orientation

Hofstede labeled differences in time orientation short-term and long-term orientation.³⁷ In the team Korea has the highest long-term orientation and the USA the highest short-term orientation. India and Brazil are in between. A possible challenge would be how long term do we plan? Tammy might look for short term goals and even her church might expect quick results. Sun-ja on the other side might plan on much longer time scales and expect results much slower and might be willing to invest more time in activities who might bring fruit much slower.

Those with short term orientation might be willing to spend a lot of money to reach the goal fast, while those with an higher long-term orientation would be more sparing with resources. For Tammy leisure time might be much more important than for Sun-ja.

3.6.2 Monochronic or Polychronic

Monochronic cultures divide time and so “Business is conducted at a precise time and location, while interaction with family and friends take place in a different time and place.”³⁸ Polychronic cultures “value interactions with people and events.”³⁹ Tammy and the team leader are from monochronic cultures. They are used to separate work hours and time for leisure and family. While the others in the team may be much more flexible in this area. Private live and ministry is not separated. They could even do different things at the same time, for example talking on the phone and welcoming a friend.⁴⁰

There are also differences in punctuality. The events and the people are important in polychronic cultures. Leonardo might be late because he finished a meeting with some one else. Brazil is the slowest of all countries researched by Levine.⁴¹ Being an hour late

³⁷Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations*, 238.

³⁸Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 84.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves*, 153.

⁴¹Robert Levine, *A Geography of Time: The Temporal Misadventures of a Social Psychologist, or How Every Culture Keeps Time Just a Little Bit Differently* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 136.

for a lunch appointment is not a problem. This could cause a lot of tension in a team if some team members are late to meetings. The monochronic team leader may even be tempted to start the meeting on time and this would insult the polychronic team members who come later.

3.7 Church Practices, Structures and Traditions

The team will also be challenged in finding a consensus for the practices, structures and traditions of the new church plant.

Sun-ja, coming from a Korean Presbyterian church, may expect that the church will have a clear hierarchy and become member of a denomination. From her background the Pastor and the elders should have status. Tammy may prefer an independent church with a very flat hierarchy, where the members elect the elders and the pastor by a democratic election. Leonardo may expect a church where the pastor makes the decisions by himself. Ajit from India may expect, that the pastor does everything in the church, that it will be a one man show.

Plueddemann gives a list of challenges about high-context and low-context churches.⁴² Some prefer topical sermons, some expository sermons. Sun-ja may prefer a preacher who stands behind the pulpit and Ajit may expect that the preacher walks among the people. There might be huge differences in the preferred music style, vigorous music with raised hands or quiet thoughtful singing. Leonardo and Sun-ja may expect benches in the church others may prefer chairs for more flexibility. Ajit might be used to everybody praying at the same time. Sun-ja might be used to just the leader reading a prayer. Tammy may expect individuals praying but one after the other.

The team may also struggle with the role of women in the church, depending on their national culture and their church culture. In masculine cultures like Korea children min-

⁴²Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 87, table 5.1.

istry would be done only by women.⁴³ Then the question should women be leader in the church.

There are many other challenges which should be discussed like baptism and the Lord's Supper, but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

4. Biblical-Theological Issues

Now that part three looked at the team challenges through the lens of cultural values, this fourth part considers biblical-theological issues which arise in this multicultural situation.

4.1 The Theological Paradox

Plueddemann is right that "Crosscultural leaders face a theological paradox. God is at work in every culture, but Satan is too."⁴⁴ This section will look at this paradox. First it describes where God's character could be found in the culture of the team members and then second what the consequences of the fall are.

4.1.1 God's character seen in the different cultures

Humans are created in the image of God. "In the Fall the good of Creation was not lost but corrupted."⁴⁵ Each team member despite their sinfulness reflect in their culture and preferred leadership patterns something of the divine image of God.

In Sun-ja, Ajit and Leonardo's case, preference for more power distance could model the biblical truth, that Jesus is the source of all power⁴⁶. The Bible gives different examples for high power distance and the writer of Hebrews challenges the congregation "have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority" (Heb 13:17)⁴⁷. Respect

⁴³Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations*, 165, table 5.4.

⁴⁴Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 65.

⁴⁵Perry W. H. Shaw, "Vulnerable Authority: A Theological Approach to Leadership and Teamwork," *Christian Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (May 2006): 121.

⁴⁶Perry Shaw, "3.1 Leadership, Power and Authority – Biblical.pptx" (PowerPoint presented in class at ESCT, Korntal, May 9, 2013), slide 13.

⁴⁷All scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV, Biblica, Inc., 2011.

for authority is found in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. Paul tells the church in Rom “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established” (Romans 13:1). Sun-ja expecting the leader to act as a father is found in God’s character who is our loving and caring father.

At the same time we could see God’s character in Tammy’s values for low-power-distance, as the New Testament gives us examples where Jesus calls the leaders to serve.

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:25-28)

Each culture has values which mirror God’s character.

4.1.2 Consequences of the fall

This section will look at the results of the fall in the values and customs of the team members, in particular how their behavior is determined by pride, fear, shame and blame.

Pride is the reason for many of the challenges because “we all like to think that our culture [way to do things] is the best culture in the world.”⁴⁸

Sun-ja may blame Tammy for being wasteful with resources if she lives in a better place or spends more money to get things going.

Tammy may fear her supporters if she cannot come up with quick results. And Ajit may blame her because she thinks that anything is possible by hard work and endurance and that she doesn’t the Lord. Together with Leonardo the Asians may blame the West-

⁴⁸Perry W. H. Shaw, “Entrepreneurs and Tribal Leaders: Cultural Issues in Institutional Leadership and Teamwork,” *MEATE Journal* 4, no. 1 (May 2008): 24.

erners for being unspiritual because they prefer to follow strict rules.⁴⁹ At the same time Tammy and Sun-ja might blame Ajit as unspiritual because long team meetings, listening for prophetic words and expecting powerful manifestations of the presence of God would be an emotional waste of time for them.⁵⁰

If the Asians come late to a meeting, the team leader may blame them for not caring about the others and they would feel shame. And the Asians would blame Tammy for humbling them and if she would leave the meeting “on time” because she has other appointments.

If Leonardo doesn't stick to rules which the team agreed on, the leader may blame and shame him for doing this and he might blame the leader for not being concerned about the person. There might also be fear on the Asian's side about how will the others view me and they would make decisions out of fear. On the other side are the Westerners who are so pride because they “do what is right” (a phrase I heard continually from a Western colleague) and continually hurt others.

Sun-ja may make decisions out of fear that she could offend others.

The team leader couple and Tammy might blame and shame the others for being dishonest and vice versa they could blame them for being insensitive.⁵¹

There could be a lot of sin in the motives and behaviors of the team members which needs to be addressed for a fruitful ministry.

Tammy and the team leader couple may blame the others for being a liar or hiding something if they won't say frankly what they think. Sun-ja and Ajit may not speak up because of their fear that they might offend others. And if Tammy starts counting how

⁴⁹Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 190. This is the case in what Plueddemann describes as the wildflower leadership model.

⁵⁰Perry Shaw, “The Mauritania Ministry Team.pptx” (case study presented in class at ESCT, Korntal May 10, 2013).

⁵¹This happened in a situation in West Africa which Plueddemann describes in Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 79-80.

many people she has witnessed to, Leonardo may blame her for being worldly minded or having spiritual problems.⁵²

4.2 Self-esteem/Acknowledgement and the Cross

Each culture has another way to acknowledge and praise people. It is the human nature that we seek acknowledgement. Tammy may seek it in her achievements, what she has done and what she can list. Her self-esteem might be highly achievement-oriented. Sunja may seek acknowledgement by fostering good feelings among others, that is by cultivating harmonious relations. Her self-esteem may depend strongly how she is perceived by the others in the team. Ajit and Leonardo may find acknowledgment in their relationship with the team members. Their self-esteem may strongly depend if they get to know the others in the team well and if they feel that the others trust them.

Everybody longs to feel significant. “But ultimately true significance is found not in the opinion of others, but in one’s relationship with Christ.”⁵³ As long as the team members seek acknowledgment, self-esteem or significance in what they do, how they feel about others, or how people think about them, this will be a problem for the team. Only if they have found significance in Christ they are free to serve others. “In the model of Christ, incarnational ministry implies sacrificial and even humiliating self-giving (Phil 2:1-11).”⁵⁴ This is the key for an effective ministry.

⁵²Shaw, “Entrepreneurs and Tribal Leaders,” 15.

⁵³Shaw, “Vulnerable Authority,” 127.

⁵⁴Perry Shaw, “Decontextualization: A Much Neglected Element of Mission,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (April 2009): 218.

4.3 Doing or Being

The team members might be more concerned about what they do and how their relationships are and overlook an important truth that Wiersbe and Cymbala get right on the point: “*God is as concerned about the servant as He is the service. ... He not only wants to do something through us, He also wants to do something in us; and that is why the ‘hedgehogs’ show up in our lives.*”⁵⁵

God wants to use the difference in cultures and the difficult circumstances to help us grow, mature and become more like Christ. This team could be the place where God wants to transform their lives. The challenges are a means but not a hindrance for God’s work.

4.4 God’s plan

In a multicultural context,

effective Christian organizations are those that recognize that all cultural patterns of leadership reflect something of the divine image and something of the Fall, and seek from each contributing culture to maximize the impact of the former and minimize the impact of the latter.⁵⁶

Each team member should seek to develop the godly part of their culture and encourage the same in the others.

Sometimes they must even find a third way for dealing with an issue. Shaw gives a good example for this when he compares autocratic and democratic leadership.

Overwhelmingly throughout the Scriptures the ideal model is not that of democracy or autocracy but theocracy; leaders see themselves as, first and foremost, servants and followers under the authority and leadership of God, and from that position lead others.⁵⁷

The alternative to being in control of what happens to us not to be fatalistic it calls for trust in God and making use of the God given resources.

⁵⁵Warren W. Wiersbe and Jim Cymbala, *On Being a Servant of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007,) 25.

⁵⁶Shaw, “Vulnerable Authority,” 122.

⁵⁷Shaw, “Vulnerable Authority,” 121.

This is where the individual must be willing to change out of love to God and for the glory of God.

For the team to overcome the cultural differences each one needs to get back to God's plan for our life and ministry. The team members need to realize that,

We will be evaluated by how much we have loved Christ and how much we have influenced others to love, know, glorify and fear him. The greatest command is not to plant megachurches, found a global ministry or be an outstanding Bible translator. The greatest command is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.⁵⁸

This biblical principle gives a good guideline for the team to overcome prejudice and wrong motives in working with each other.

For most of the cultural values discussed in part three we will find examples for both sides of the pole in the Bible. Therefore we need to respect each other in the diversity and adapt to the practices which are best for the context according to biblical measures.

5. Principles and Practices to Facilitate Effective Ministry

The prior parts of this paper looked at the cultural challenges and biblical issues concerning the team and it became clear that it will be a challenge for the team to become effective. This fifth part will look at some principles and practices which could facilitate an effective ministry of the team.

5.1 Building Mutual Understanding

For the team to be effective each team member needs a humble willingness to learn from the others and treasure the diversity. The team leader needs to facilitate an atmosphere where everybody gets the change to introduce their culture without fear that they would be judged, blamed or shamed for the way their culture is. Plueddemann states an important fact when discussing a cross-cultural encounter. "They need to take the time

⁵⁸Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 173.

to build mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's orientation towards events and ideas."⁵⁹

It would be good if the team could meet before starting their ministry on the field for orientation, to get to know each other and share about their cultural values, church background, family background. So that they would be aware of the differences and possible challenges they will face in working together.

5.2 The Host Culture

Each team member should learn from the others and be aware of the others. But in the end the team will adapt and adjust to one culture which will become the guiding culture.⁶⁰ Lianne Roembke gives an important insight:

The normative culture to which all team members adapt is the host culture, not the cultures of one another. There will be adaptations to other team member's cultures represented but they will not be as extensive and, as such, are not normative. The majority culture represented in a given team, or the culture of the team leader, may consciously or unconsciously exert an amount of pressure to move towards or adapt to that culture, but if it is not the host culture, it should not be made the normative culture for the team.⁶¹

The team must devote time to engage in serious culture and language study. They need to appreciate the host culture they live in and adapt to it.

While doing this there is a danger which we will look at right now.

5.3 Decontextualisation

As the team strives to contextualize to the host culture it needs to be aware of the trap that

uncritical contextualization has a weak view of sin. It tends to affirm human social organizations and cultures as essentially good. Sin is confined largely to personal evil. But social systems and cultures are human creations marked by sin.⁶²

⁵⁹Ibid., 89.

⁶⁰Perry Shaw, "Leading Multicultural Teams" (lecture, ESCT, Korntal, May, 2013).

⁶¹Lianne Roembke, *Building credible multicultural teams* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000), 70.

⁶²Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994. 86, quoted in Shaw, "Decontextualization," 216.

Therefore the team must recognize cultural sins in the host culture and evaluate their own cultures and the host culture in the light of the word of God. So that they will practice according to the values and principles of the Kingdom of God. This is what Shaw calls decontextualisation.⁶³

Where clear biblical principles contradict cultural values, the Bible takes precedence, but where the Bible leaves room for flexibility, the cultural values of the local host culture should normally prevail.⁶⁴

It is so easy to see the sin in the others culture and only see the good in one's own culture. The team needs the mutual aid of each other to reflect on the values and practices in each culture from a biblical view.

5.4 Shared Vision and Motivation

For the team to work effectively it needs also a shared vision. "A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision."⁶⁵ It is the team leader who helps the team to develop this vision through the study of Scripture and prayer.⁶⁶ The leader with the team needs a mental picture of what God might do through and with them. The main challenge is, to stay focused on the vision and not to get side tracked that strategies become more important than the outcome of the vision itself.

Closely connected to a shared vision is the motivation to pursue the vision. Dan Pink gives three intrinsic motivators in the RSA video "Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us"⁶⁷ which could foster an effective team: autonomy, mastery and purpose. The leader needs to give the team members autonomy to be creative and implement their own ideas. This might be more natural for the Westerners, but we found even

⁶³Shaw, "Decontextualization," 214-218.

⁶⁴Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 89.

⁶⁵Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Ractice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 192.

⁶⁶Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures*, 192.

⁶⁷Dan Pink, "Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us," (RSA Animate, 2010), YouTube video file, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc> (accessed June 18, 2013).

in the Philippines, that people who had been very dependent on the guidance of the leader, developed creativity and ideas after they discovered the privilege of autonomy.

Second the team members need to be challenged to make a contribution to the ministry and not just being used for an end. If the individual gets room to develop skills and abilities this becomes an important motivation factor.

Third the team members must sense that what they do has a real purpose. They want to make a contribution. In Pink's example a contribution for a better world. For the team it would be a contribution for glory of God and the advancement of the church.

If each team member is excited about what they do and how they personally contribute do to that transcendent purpose of the team they will be truly motivated and become an effective team.

5.5 Group Dynamics

Each team generates it's own group dynamics. They can be helpful but could also lead to failure of the team. This section will look at stereotypes and prejudice, groupthink, the group development and the connected principles.

5.5.1 Stereotypes and Prejudice

Stereotypes can be helpful as "they allow us, to put people into a category, ... and make inferences about how they will behave based on that grouping."⁶⁸ This helps to be aware of differences in culture. This is what part three was all about. It is helpful to group people according to their nationality and culture in preparation for possible challenges and conflict, so that we know what to be aware of.

But stereotypes become dangerous, specially in conflicts, when they make us feel superior, or if they are wrong. Then stereotypes lead easily to prejudice. In this case stereotypes may become a mean for self-protection. "The prejudiced person can't see

⁶⁸Heidi Burgess, "Stereotypes / Characterization Frames," Beyond Intractability, <http://www.beyond-intractability.org/bi-essay/stereotypes> (accessed June 17, 2013).

how his prejudice shapes what he ‘sees’ and how he acts.”⁶⁹ The story of the Good Samaritan is an example for the prejudice of the Jewish leaders and the Samaritan who overcame it. Therefore striving for mutual understanding in the team is essential, to prevent prejudice and become effective.

5.5.2 *Groupthink*

Another principle for the team to follow is the awareness of groupthink. Groupthink develops out of the desire for harmony or conformity in the group. “Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative ideas or viewpoints.”⁷⁰ This could lead the team to narrow minded or wrong decisions especially among high uncertainty avoiding people. The team leader should foster a team climate, where team members may articulate disagreement and a different point of view. It is important for the low-context members and the older ones in the team to listen carefully to the others to understand their high-context-communication. This could happen by giving time, not criticizing different opinions, or anonymous responses to questions.

5.5.3 *The Group Development*

A third principle important for the team to be aware of is what Gangel calls the stages of group development.⁷¹ It describes what usually happens in a newly formed team or when some one new joins a team. At the beginning everybody is nervous and needs to survive. The team members seek security. Some may immediately try to gain control through offense. Most are not speaking at all and are just observing the situation.

⁶⁹Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 224.

⁷⁰Wikipedia, “Groupthink,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groupthink> accessed June 17, 2013.

⁷¹Kenneth O. Gangel, “Building Leaders for Church Education,” (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 147, quoted in Perry Shaw, *4.2 Group Dynamics.pptx*, (PowerPoint presented in class, ESCT, Korntal, May 13, 2013), slide 73-79.

Then in the next stage of storming, the different personalities try to find their place in the team. What they say is for the purpose of establishing hierarchy. “Arguments may become a testing ground for personal influence and prestige, rather than a matter of data and facts.”⁷²

In the third stage the group will start a counter-movement to work against the growing hostility. In this stage it is difficult to make decisions and the group might be in danger of getting into the groupthink pattern just to conform and getting peace into the team.

If the team is able to get through this cycle it will arrive at the performing level, where the team will become functioning effectively.

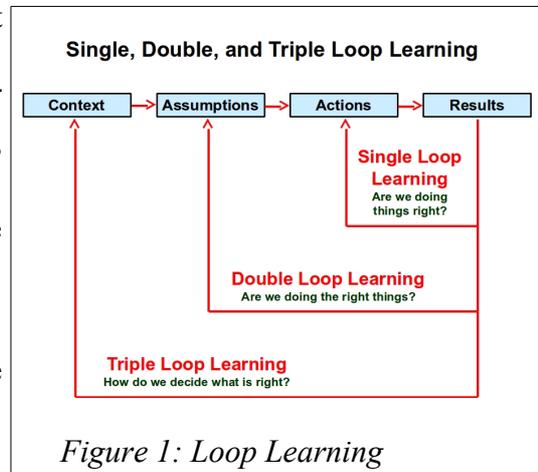
5.6 Single, Double, and Triple Loop Learning

A last principle is the model from Argyris and Schön⁷³ about triple loop learning.

Figure 1⁷⁴ shows the three loops. We start with the triple loop, which looks for the context and asks, how do we decide what is right? The answer to this question will describe the wide context for the actions that will be taken.

The double loop asks, are we doing the right things? What should we do as a team.

How do we get the results desired. The team makes assumption about what activities could lead to the desired results? And then later on the team needs to evaluate, are we still doing the right thing?



⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974), bk.

⁷⁴Adapted from Perry Shaw, "4.4 Institutionalization.pptx" (PowerPoint presented in class, ESCT, Kometal, May 9, 2013), slide 29.

The inner, single loop is asking, are we doing things right? It is about, how we do ministry, the specific actions we take. Why do we do it, the way we do it?

If the team comes back to this questions they might prevent them from getting side tracked and ending up in just doing something which does not lead to the desired results. It will keep the team effective.

6. Conclusion

For the team to transform the challenges of the multicultural diversity into an effective ministry, they must acknowledge the differences and challenges. They must treasure God's character in each other and at the same time be self-critical about their own sinfulness. Thereof they can build mutual understanding, and work together for the glory of God by following the principles and practices given.

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