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Collaborative Decision Making as a Tool for Improving Decision-Making
Processes in the Multicultural Environment of a Multinational Joint Venture

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of
Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration by
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Research Project in my own organisation: Mining Industry/West Africa.

Ethical Conformity and Compliance declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research. It has been written entirely by me and not submitted for any previous degree. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no other people's work except in cases when referenced and then it has been duly acknowledged in line with generally approved standards.

The research received clearance from the UOL International On-line Research Ethic Committee prior to its commencement.

Research involving human Participants

All procedures carried out in this study were in compliance with the ethical standard of UOL and subjected to the approval of Ethical Standards Committee based on the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed consent

I declare that informed consent was obtained from all the participants/respondents in this research, and specifically from all individual participants from whom identifying information was obtained and who are mentioned in the study.

Disclosure of potential conflict of interests

I declare no conflicts of interest.

Signature: Malgorzata Maria Nwaigwe

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my daughters, Jagoda, Jadwiga, Joanna, Alexandra, and Ugochi, who because of my personal circumstances and professional environment were obliged to grow, develop, and operate in multinational, culturally diverse contexts.

Abstract

Collaborative Decision Making as a Tool for Improving Decision-Making Processes in the Multicultural Environment of a Multinational Joint Venture

Malgorzata Maria Nwaigwe

The importance of collaborative and collective behaviours, operations, and processes in human social interactions is clear and unquestionable. It has been evident at every stage of human development and lies at the roots of the very progress of mankind. Today, with distant cultures mingling and interacting with each other more than ever, the significance and impact of collaborative and cooperative behaviours and practices on successful business operations of international joint ventures (IJVs) is unquestionable.

An important factor in the ever-changing landscape of business, is the exclusion of African organisations from most academic considerations (Zoogah et al., 2014) and that gap I strived to fill.

I posit that changes in decision-making patterns, from a strict chain of command to more collaborative practices are necessary for successful navigation of national culture induced differences between stakeholders.

This study shows that Nigerian and European employees—as nationally diverse decision-makers inhabiting very diverse perspectives—were unaware of the ambiguity experienced by other parties, despite being very willing to collaborate towards the company’s common goals and visions, at least at the beginning of the project. The inability to understand and adapt to each other’s perspectives gradually caused the development of mutual distrust or disrespect, as well as the misunderstanding of individual approaches, intentions, and attitudes. In addition, foreign partners often did not understand the fundamental mechanics of local institutions, which have a considerable impact on the performance of the IJV.

The study was conducted over a period of approximately three years, using a mixed research methodology underpinned by strong pragmatism.

I found that collaborative decision-making is indeed possible in a multinational IJV, despite the challenges faced in its achievement. Indeed, once established, such decision-making practices become an excellent tool for improving the quality of decisions. I also note that collaborative practices help multicultural organisations, particularly by harnessing differences between diverse national cultures, to create a unified corporate vision. A distinct organisational culture resulting from the merging of the diverse cultures of collaborating stakeholders can therefore emerge by building on differences rather than allowing them to be divisive.

As the final conclusions of this research, I can posit that if IJVs with culturally diverse stakeholders follow the proposed approach, they can become more democratic, inclusive, and adaptive, attaining a competitive advantage through such emergent flexibility, resilience and collaboratively making good-quality decisions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction Problem Statement

“With business becoming more international, effective strategic management requires accounting for fundamental national differences (Hofstede et al., 1991, p. 165)”.

The above quotation is even more true today than when it was first written at the end of the twentieth century. Perhaps owing to its growing relevance, and veracity, Hofstede’s work on this subject provides a starting point for further reflections. However, his research was mostly quantitative by nature and was also limited to Western countries. My study expands this literature by examining predicaments involving similar variables in my own company in an Afro- European context, using mixed methods to examine these phenomena.

Working in a multinational and multicultural environment for over 30 years has come with experiences of various unpredicted difficulties and frustrations, particularly resulting from a variety of misunderstandings: of cultural nuances, multicultural biases, occasionally prejudices, and, every so often, more straightforward misunderstandings. Recently, such problems have become overwhelming. The need for a deeper understanding has gradually but increasingly emerged, particularly to enable the navigation and management of these differences in own company. This realisation has allowed me to formulate a research question. The answer(s) to this/these question(s) will facilitate understanding and handling decision-making processes in the new, multinational cultural environment and contribute to knowledge in this regard.

Thus, identifying hindrances in decision-making, and examining them through multinational lenses is of utmost importance, even while considering the business activities in my own company. Indeed, I realise that the problems experienced are probably not unique to my organisation. These issues are burgeoning, proliferating, and persisting in other similar companies, particularly in these turbulent times. My experience and observations show that we have reached a point at which globalisation and the mixing of different national and ethnical cultures, values, beliefs, and habits cannot be reversed, and this either becomes a problem or an advantage for a given organisation.

Along with increased internationalisation and globalisation of economic activities, the present era is marked by the emancipation of developing, hitherto underdeveloped, economies. Gradually, new economic powers and various multinational and multi-ethnic entities—both for business and other activities—have been emerging. The problems caused by these diverse organisational and national cultures, for efficient management and decision-making practices, are becoming increasingly complex and very apparent. After a literature review, I realised that this area has not yet been adequately researched. This is particularly true when considering the perspective of... I had in mind, which is relevant to my organisation. However, extant research has been done through the lens of Western economic theories. These theories, with a few exceptions, consider profit to be the ultimate goal: Wherein “actions aiming at increasing profit are *ceteris paribus* regarded as legitimate” (Adler et al., 2016, p. 5). Examining organisational and national cultures from non-Western points of view is imperative in this ever-changing economic landscape.

The impact of various national cultures on decision-making practices, and decision efficiency, should not be ignored. I realised that national cultures affect all the aspects of the organisational culture in international joint ventures (IJV). The aspect of collaborative (or otherwise) practices and their impact on decision-making in the increasingly diverse cultural environment is particularly salient to my research question. Therefore, the focus of my research will be to examine the importance of collaboration while arriving at crucial decisions affecting the company in nationally diversified environments.

Specifically, I shall examine how culturally distinct stakeholders can jointly take decisions, perhaps satisfying all, or almost all, the concerned parties. At the same time, these decisions should be optimal for the entire organisation—from both economic and social perspectives—given today’s ever evolving, increasingly complex, organisational environment.

Keywords

Decision-making: In this thesis, decisions will be considered as choices between several existing alternatives, each with different consequences, and taken by different organisational agents or stakeholders (Zaraté, 2013). Decision-making is a cognitive

process, allowing the selection of a course of action aimed at achieving a given set of aims and objectives in the most efficient way.

Decisions: Decisions are simply choices made regarding something; in this context about IJV operations in multicultural environment, following the consideration of several possibilities and their implications.

Low-quality decisions: In this thesis, decisions of low quality are decisions that are flawed: either by being inadequate for the existing situation, not improving the company performance, irrelevant, obsolete, or delayed. In some situations, rapid suboptimal decisions may be better than a delayed decision, which might be more thorough and closer to the optimal outcome.

Collaboration/Co-operation: Collaboration—as it is used in this thesis—refers to activities performed jointly with others, in order to achieve a shared, common goal. The term is often used synonymously with co-operation. However, though they often coexist, these terms are not synonymous. Each collaborative process involves co-operation because co-operation, also requires working together. However, co-operation is aimed mostly at achieving one's individual goal through working together, while collaboration strives for the achievement of common objectives. In other words, collaboration involves “working together towards a common goal”. Nevertheless, collaboration and co-operation must exist together to be successful.

Collaborative decision-making: This is a process of decision-making that is performed jointly by relevant participants, stakeholders, and managers with the intention of achieving commonly held objectives that are guided by a shared vision. Furthermore, collaborative decision-making is all inclusive, allows all parties to be heard, and all cultural nuances and biases to be included in discussion processes. Conflicts are often caused by ignorance of others' cultures, or personal positions and attitudes. Thus, collaborative decision-making enables the avoidance of unnecessary conflicts.

Multicultural working environment: A multicultural working environment in an international organisation or IJV, is an environment where stakeholders, managers, and employees are of diverse ethnic/national origins, influenced by different national cultures, and varied work-oriented habits.

International joint venture (IJV) company: An international joint venture company is an organisation based on the agreement between two or more parties to pool their resources together towards a specific corporate initiative. This includes sharing business ownership, governance, profits or losses, and jointly undertaking new challenges and risks.

Company: The term “Company,” when capitalised, refers to my own IJV Company in which the research was performed.

Main propositions

The main proposition in this thesis is that all decisions are affected and influenced by national cultures, different habits, behaviours, perceptions of decision-making actors (organisation stakeholders), and general environmental conditions (internal and external context) in which the organisation functions. Additionally, that collaborating behaviours in decision-making can facilitate the navigation of these national culture-induced differences and promote the benefits of diversity.

In addition to the main research question concerning collaboration and decision-making in multinational environment, I also want to argue against a naïve universalism that accepts only one criterion for the evaluation of a “good decision” (e.g. profit), and only one method of organisational development—the one derived from Western management theories. I believe that failure of this singular approach has been demonstrated numerous times. Traditional economic thought from 19th and 20th centuries’ management systems includes a rigid and strict practice for chain of command, discrete and predetermined rules, and calculated processes. It is apparent that this thought is no longer adequate, relevant, or even efficient. In fact, this approach creates obstacles and constraints within today’s ever-evolving, and increasingly complex international business environments. These business environments desperately need resilience and flexibility.

This study has been conducted within my own organisation, where hierarchical and sequential decision-making practices have dominated. These were efficient as long as the Company remained small, and constituted an easily manageable system. Hierarchical chain of command, and rigid routines and practices, worked well enough.

However, the Company's growth had not been properly managed. Despite being considered adequate by both local and incoming foreign stakeholders, it was not accompanied by any qualitative changes in the organisational system. It seemed to correspond quite well with the requirements of the Company's new major foreign partners (from France), their worldviews, and practices.

Unity of command has been the prevailing principle throughout French economic theories and practices. The new, French foreign investors and partners of the Company—during the establishment of this IJV—were no exception in this respect. In fact, they insisted upon a decision-making process that required confirmation of most of the decisions from their principals in France. This demonstrates a predetermined chain of command with each manager reporting to a single, direct supervisor. Local Company stakeholders did not initially realise how many disruptions and problems this system would eventually cause. Following the establishment of the IJV, such problems commenced quickly. After 2012—with the influx of new staff from different ethnic and educational backgrounds—the disparity in decision-making procedures began to emerge, and problems in their efficacy began to multiply.

Furthermore, the managerial approach of local partners started to gradually change around 2014. One of the efforts to improve Company management under these new circumstances, I, as a CEO (researcher), started DBA studies. Through my guidance and influence, the Company management, gradually became aware of action learning practices. Additionally, some new collaborative management techniques were introduced, attempted, and implemented throughout the IJV. These changes began to yield very good results. Local managers showing great interest, and support of this new approach, were therefore encouraged to adopt collaboration practices. Meanwhile, French stakeholders were becoming increasingly aloof and rigid in their approaches. This appeared to be based on their past experiences, where these approaches gave them confidence in the workability of their rigid management structures.

The research data collected from the Company were gathered and analysed. The evidence demonstrated the effectiveness of new collaborative management techniques. Nevertheless, it was necessary that the established procedures, as required by the foreign French partner, continue, thus remaining a part of the Company's routine

practices. Despite a plethora of changes in the organisation, these old practices are lingering and are overlapping with the introduction of new policies. When there is a mix of old and new practices, it sometimes causes havoc, conflicts, undue stress, and confusion. Furthermore, it is suggested that existing practices and procedures are not sufficiently considering the cultural diversity of decision makers, other staff, and stakeholders, despite steadily improving and adjusting to the new needs of the Company. However, they do allow, in many cases, the co-operative and/or collaborative arrival at various conclusions, the development of new insights, and the development of collective organisational knowledge. While the old, rigid structures were clearly defined, strict and one-sided, they were also clear and explicit, following a defined chain-of-command principle. In addition, these practices have been in use for a considerable time, with some (especially foreign) stakeholders regarding them as superior to the strategies of an expatriate. For example, senior managers (PMs) termed the developing approaches as “fuzzy collaboration schemes.” Therefore, existing structures were difficult to amend, particularly those that the French partner insisted upon, and from which any deviation was regarded as disorder.

The situation in the Company was deteriorating; destructive practices occurred and suspicions abounded. This led to many complications and problems, such as delays, ambiguity, low-quality work, and often obsolete decisions. Further there were frequent conflicts among the principal decision-makers, management, operations staff, and other employees. In addition, the traditional, hierarchical command structure, tended to significantly prolong the lead time for each decision, thus delaying operations. This also delayed important activities such as site or construction works, and frustrated stakeholders. As an example, prior to the any decisions to be taken in Nigeria, agreement regarding the local situation was often sought from authorities in France. Since these decisions took a substantial amount of time, it is suspected that the management in France did not consider their Nigerian team to be very important or competent. When these decisions eventually came, they were often irrelevant to the local context and, in many cases, were obsolete. Additionally, the regulatory and administrative institutions of the host country (Nigeria) differ greatly from French

perceptions and their experiences in their own country or even other francophone countries. These differences increased the misunderstandings.

From my present knowledge level, I feel that these misunderstandings could have been avoided, if another approach to decision-making had been adopted—one that was collaborative, and inclusive of both the international partners and local context. Local managers should have been more vocal, and their voices should not only have been heard but also considered, trusted, and believed. Cultural diversity, and different work-oriented attitudes in this case, were considered to have been managed improperly, becoming the sources of various disputes.

My main intention therefore is to shed light upon those decision-making problems, which are directly related to cultural diversity. Specifically, I shall focus on problems that emerged during interaction between an African environment and work-related values influenced by European culture, which were introduced by foreign partners.

In particular, the concept of collaborative decision-making has been explored as a “would be” solution to these decision-making problems. This approach was considered worthy of mixed method analyses, allowing examination through pragmatic lenses. I believe that that collaborative decision-making practices will improve the IJV Company performance in all aspects.

In light of the practical organisational problems described above, I have come to the following overarching research question: How can work-related national cultural similarities, and differences, be effectively navigated to enable collaborative practices in decision-making processes in an IJV company? Additionally, based on this main research question, there are three sub-questions that this thesis aimed to address.

These are:

1. Will collaboration mean that the Company can take full advantage of the potential of the explicit and tacit knowledge of its many stakeholders at various managerial and operative levels, who have diverse cultural attitudes and habits?
2. Will it motivate various stakeholders and enable them to identify with overall goal of the IJV? What is the role of various managers and other stakeholders in this process?

3. Will the new structure provide a comparative advantage for the company's development?

Collaborative decision-making, and its practical value, has become the focus of "studies in various domains", including business studies (Zaraté, 2013). For example, it has been examined in project management, design, system analysis, and so on. However, the study of decision-making processes in a specific African versus European context remains a gap to be filled.

In one study, an evident management supply problem became unexpectedly more confusing, unclear and complex (Stacey, 2011). This problem was expected to be resolved via a new alliance with foreign partners, through alternative resources allocations (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000), and the introduction of new cultural constructs. This took on another dimension and evolved into a problem of its own, consequently emerging as an even more disordered organisation (Monk and Howard, 1998). The research question on improving collaborative practices in decision-making processes across multinational cultural influences in my organisation is open-ended. It calls for several new solutions, approaches, and explanations that are fluid and evolving. Answering these research questions will add both to theory and practice of IJV administration in a multicultural environment.

Even though all stakeholders were initially positive toward one another, and though they were enthusiastic about the new IJV project, difficulties in joint decision-making could not be avoided. Eventually, the stakeholders lapsed into their own biases and prejudices, and developed negative attitudes towards each other. These opinions bordered on distrust, suspicion, and apprehension. As a researcher who is also the CEO of the Company, I endeavoured to identify the cause of such a situation. I reiterated that these difficulties are the result of cultural differences, biases, and ethnic prejudices not properly understood by the stakeholders. These difficulties were not adequately considered from the beginning of the joint activities and were overlooked, ultimately leading to their mismanagement. The new alliance, which was so full of potential at its inception, became plagued by ambiguities in communication, lack of mutual understanding, misinterpretations, misconstrued intentions, and a lack of

compliance, therefore confounding and complicating decision-making processes and ultimately overall company management.

Notably, decision-making processes were extremely prolonged and cumbersome, and infected by suspicion and misunderstandings. This situation sometimes became hostile and full of distrustful attitudes, which adversely affected supply chain (SC) performance, decision-making processes, and general operations. It became clear that the organisation operated at a higher level when there was less complexity, which the foreign alliance had apparently introduced. Delays, and the related expenses, began to multiply, and the resolution of the problems was not yet in sight. At the time of writing this thesis, a meaningful solution is yet to be found. The initial composition of the IJV has essentially disbanded, resulting in the French partners withdrawing.

Extensive reflection, analysis, and discussions with stakeholders suggested that most of the problems that were encountered could have been anticipated if national differences in work attitudes, working habits, and organisational culture had been properly appreciated from the inception of the IJV. In addition, in situations where these problems arose, they were not navigated or handled appropriately since various biases, preconceptions, prejudices, and/or other intercultural misunderstandings were not adequately identified or defined. This impeded communication and understanding in this new cross-cultural context.

Reflecting on the challenges—and the advantages—that could result from the merging of the stakeholders' different national cultural backgrounds, I suggested applying the principles of co-operative or collaborative decision-making. This approach might have resolved most of the problems that occurred, and I posit that they still can. Therefore my hypothesis is that co-operative or collaborative decision-making approaches will result in greater harmony between foreign partners. In this thesis, I tested this hypothesis through a mixed methodology based on a pragmatic worldview.

It is assumed that certain cultural dimensions correlate with economic performance (Schein, 2003). I attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How do different national and ethnical cultures impact interpersonal relationships?

2. Are “collaborative-decision-making” practices possible in such a diversified culturally working environment?

Furthermore, I shall investigate how such practices contribute to the creation of a distinct organisational culture, which embraces national differences, and moves towards common objectives that are desirable to all participants? Schein stated that “whether or not a culture is good or bad, functionally effective, or not, depends not on the culture alone, but on the relationship of the culture to the environment in which it exists” (Schein, 2003, p. 8), and these thoughts provide the basis for the overall research question.

It is hypothesised that co-operative or collaborative decision-making will provide both practical and theoretical value. From the practical perspective, it should provide pragmatic solutions to management problems in the Company. It will allow greater insight, and increased understanding of navigating national dimensions of cultural diversity in Afro–Foreign (European) IJVs, which will ultimately improve decision-making and general performance.

From the theoretical perspective, it will provide vital information on the reality of Africa based IJVs and problems within the IJV, thus contributing to existing knowledge in this field. Specifically, this research can elucidate the nuances of decision-making processes, especially those affected by a diversity of national cultures. This thesis will contribute to a body of knowledge on collaborative decision-making as a means of managing nationally induced cultural diversity in the work environments of IJV companies, particularly in an African versus European context.

Chapter 2: Problem Setting in Context

“There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees, which are falsehoods on the other” – Blaise Pascal (Hofstede, 2001, p. 374)

When setting out a path to answering the overarching research question, I started by listing the salient issues and processes that were relevant to the successful performance of my own IJV Company. The biggest problem was inadequate decision-making, inefficient processes, and poor results from decisions taken, particularly in regard to new business structures and needs. Many decisions were flawed owing to long lead times. In fact, the issue had often become obsolete by the time the decision was eventually made. This was caused by misunderstandings, biases, preconceptions, ethnocentric attitudes and outright favouritism; even sabotage and corruption were evident. The results of these problems were disastrous for all parties, often leading to conflicts, and a halt to company operations. This eventually caused the collapse of the joint venture, from which the Company is still recovering. At the same time, based on the lessons derived from the failure, and with the help of this study, the Company has been searching for new solutions through other alliances, while attempting to retain and continue to benefit from an international dimension. Therefore, in this study, I am seeking strategies for navigating differences, and handling the prejudices, animosities and preconceptions that can stem from cultural differences and national biases within IJVs.

International Joint Ventures (IJVs) have proliferated as the preferred form of international alliance in today's businesses (Bartels et al., 2002; Boateng, 2000). Many foreign investors have expanded to unexplored areas of the African continent. They sought quick and good returns on their investments, as well as market expansion, and access to resources, among other things. At the same time, some investors also have culturally determined objectives for these new IJV organisations or more broadly, the local partner's country (i.e., local context). Indeed, many large corporations and companies have adopted corporate responsibility programs, and ideologies that define these culturally determined objectives. Today, very few African countries allow incoming investors to operate freely in their territories without any social, environmental, and

other corporate values imbibed into their corporate activities, and especially without the participation of local partners.

Rigorous and reliable statistics on these situations are unfortunately somewhat inadequate. African countries were not used to carrying out censuses or socioeconomic studies of IJVs. In addition, statistical research and publications were sometimes thwarted because the results could have undesired political and social implications, meaning that data obtained from official sources are often ambiguous and unreliable. Despite this, what the existing literature does show is that about 30–60% of West African based IJVs fail (Boateng, 2000; Nnamdi, 2018). In fact, Bartels and colleagues (2002) found that the failure rate is even higher, at 30–70%.

What could be the cause of such a poor performance? Is it actually a poor performance, or is it a premeditated approach by actors unable to work together in a nationally diverse cultural environment? Are Western thought and practices that are no longer readily accepted as superior, prevailing, or predominant, generally accepted and automatically applied? These questions result from the main research question undergirding this study, as well as the specific decision-making process within a single multinational IJV.

For years in Nigeria, like in many other African countries, IJVs have been of prime interest to international businesses. Similarly, governments have insisted on IJVs as a business and development concept, while gradually reducing the required percentage of local partnerships. African governments intended to attract foreign investment and finance to help develop strategic economic sectors, while simultaneously maintaining control over those sectors. These policies favoured the establishment of IJVs as the preferable form of direct foreign investment (DFI). For example, Biersketer (1987) discussed how the Nigeria Enterprise Promotion decrees of 1972 and 1977 led to one of the most comprehensive mandatory joint-venture programs. However, this program has since been developed, altered, and amended by consecutive democratically elected civilian governments, therefore removing equity restrictions to attract further foreign capital investment. This foreign investment is secured through existing and new laws, one of which is the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission Act of January 1995. It has been revised several times, and

there is a trend towards greater inclusivity and liberalisation. Related to this legislation, the publication “Compendium of Investment in Nigeria 31-1-2017” outlines the fiscal incentives in Nigerian tax laws, other far-reaching concessions, and relaxations approved by the Federal Government of Nigeria, which is supported by existing laws. These include the possibility of higher equity for foreign partners—even up to 100% ownership—special negotiable incentives, protection against nationalisation, and expropriation, among other favourable initiatives.

However, while modern policies and trends bestow more privileges of equity and business ownership, foreign investors are equally expected to contribute to the sustainable development of host economies. They are expected to do so by enlarging/enriching business practices and routines, and positively impacting the environment. However, investors do not come to the country purely with their funds, expertise, and assets – they bring along their cultural presumptions and biases as well. This is an aspect that is typically ignored. It is essential that they successfully merge with local cultures in order to yield positive results, whether in an IJVs or any other culturally diversified organisation in which Nigerians and foreigners work together. For these expatriate companies, working with local personnel and workers is unavoidable.

Despite being European, I have been working in a multinational environment in Africa for over 30 years. This experience has allowed me to become fully immersed in local culture and I have been fortunate over the years to observe changing cultural practices and relationships between various ethnically diverse workers. I noted if and how these practices and relationships affect decision-making processes in business organisation. This specific wealth of experience, particularly in the recent years of turbulence that saw an upsurge in the internationalisation of business, meant I was able to appreciate the emerging complexity of business relationships in this context. In addition, the entire world economy has recently experienced a range of diverse crises, recessions, and social unrest, which have affected economic activities and relationships between international stakeholders in global companies, IJVs, and other international institutions. This context meant it was vital to get a deeper understanding of the impact of individual national/ethnic cultures on decision-making processes in IJVs.

Collaborative decision-making—the subject of this thesis—is of particular interest in this context. It is proposed as a solution to various conflicts and problems that might arise with the blending of different national cultures. While some of the findings in this thesis might be relevant to other areas, further examination would be required, which is beyond the scope of this research. I analysed the type of working environment in which stakeholders and partners with different individual operational objectives and cultural biases participate. Despite these differences, they worked towards common ideals and shared organisational goals. If embraced truthfully, this relationship between stakeholders and partners should enable mutual understanding and meaningful communication, striving towards mutually beneficial solutions, while also benefiting from collective intelligence and insights.

To a certain extent, this thesis relies on the findings and principles of intercultural dynamics (Hofstede, 1993, 2001, 2010). Hofstede observed many general patterns and repetitive tendencies of clashes in international business on account of national culture diversity. I attempted to build on Hofstede's findings, which identified some crucial issues and constructs that are critical to studying multicultural business environments. Another objective of this thesis is to provide advice for organisations and individuals on how to improve and develop their decision-making routines, intercultural communication, and co-operation in the multicultural business environment of an IJV. The skilful navigation of these diverse tendencies, and working attitudes, should help to create a distinct corporate culture (Schein, 2010) that is acceptable to most stakeholders. This will strengthen the resilience of companies to crises and strong competition. It is also expected that a distinct corporate culture will increase company adaptability, despite, or perhaps thanks to, the novel, multicultural contributions to problem solving, and decision-making practices.

This research was performed in my own organisation, a mining servicing company supplying products and services to various mining companies located primarily throughout Nigeria and, to a lesser degree, other West African countries with similar environments and problems. The mining industry in Nigeria is regulated strictly and centrally, since some of the products, such as blasting agents for mining operations, are sensitive in nature. Therefore, this sector operates under specific

regulations in co-operation with security agencies and official regulating authorities, particularly in situations where there is a degree of danger. This is particularly the case with the frequent political and social unrest as well as insurgency in the northern part of the country. Local stakeholders are mostly natives of Nigeria, with various tribal and ethnic origins, while most foreign stakeholders are Europeans, primarily from France, Belgium, and Poland. Other nationals have also occasionally been employed, each associated with distinct, cultural, work-related values, habits, and behaviours.

The Company is small. During the period under review, it consisted of 50–65 employees prior to the creation of the IJV, and approximately 85 afterwards, with the number of employees then slightly decreasing again. This number of staff was sufficient for the import, storage, and distribution of products within Nigeria. Occasionally, when the need arose, the Company employed additional casual workers or outsourced some of its operations. The Company's permanent employees is set to increase when the factory becomes operational and factory workers have to be taken on. Unfortunately, this plan had not come to fruition before this thesis was completed. In its initial form, our IJV collapsed before the factory could be constructed. Foreign partners tactically withdrew in 2015/16, particularly after the political situation in Nigeria changed, and economic problems such as devaluation, forex, and other restrictions were introduced. These economic limitations unfortunately coincided with an increase in security threats throughout the country, which made investment less attractive to foreign stakeholders.

Despite its moderate size and limited technical capacities, the Company played an important role in the Nigerian mining industry. The Company did this by filling gaps in expertise, through the introduction of technology, know-how, and the provision of consultants from abroad, while procuring essential products and services that were not available or very scarce in Nigeria. Before the IJV was established, and shortly afterwards, the Company's business activities were exclusively import-/export-based and import-dependent. The Company also provided expert consultations, training, and technical advice as after-sales support, although these services were mostly outsourced abroad. The local company was established in 1996. In the early years of its existence, and throughout the period ending in 2005, this strategy was effective and sufficient.

However, in recent years, imports to Nigeria started to become increasingly difficult. The Nigerian currency (Naira) has been depreciating steadily and has been officially devalued against the dollar and other currencies. In some cases, it was devalued by over 100%, making imports of European products extremely expensive and not competitive.

New market operators from the Far East aggressively entered the African—and therefore also the Nigerian—market with different approaches, changing the domestic market characteristics and competition. Moreover, after 2015, the new Nigerian government introduced capital inflow policies, foreign exchange restrictions, and other protectionist policies that not only made foreign operations extremely costly but also affected relationships with foreign suppliers and investors. Imports gradually became increasingly volatile, costly, and unprofitable, rendering operations unmanageable, which remains the case at present. Economic crises and a recession made this situation worse. Regulatory requirements and anti-import restriction measures failed to help. Rather, these measures impoverished the country. This was particularly true for revenues from crude oil—the main revenue-gaining product of Nigeria—which also started to dwindle owing to falling crude oil prices in international markets. This situation caused some public unrest, and intensified religious and ethnic clashes, which were already plaguing the country's north, leading to a general atmosphere of instability.

Clinging to the status quo is easy and may appear safe, but in the long run, it is a very short sighted and risky course of action, considering today's ever-changing and volatile business environment. A business might become obsolete, irrelevant, and overtaken by current events if it remains stagnant in the face of turbulent changes. Therefore, amid a serious product shortage crisis caused by external factors, the Company management deemed it necessary to introduce substantial changes, deciding to manufacture some products locally, reducing its dependence on imports.

This was a very popular decision, and in line with the economic policies of the Nigerian government, which has stressed the importance of developing the mining sector through foreign investment through various legislation, programs, investment facilities, and tax incentives, as discussed above. The preferred form of this foreign investment in Nigeria remains the IJV (with various ownership proportions), which is

particularly preferred to direct investment. Unfortunately, in practice, the gigantic, bureaucratic, state apparatus regulating this kind of investment has been undermined by proliferating corruption, which constrained and limited laws that might otherwise have encouraged investment.

Following these developments in the industry, and in order to gain a comparative advantage, the Company looked for investors that were already producing materials in the mining industry. The Company joined with one of its suppliers, whose products it was already successfully marketing in Nigeria. The one it chose was a French supplier, which manufactured chemicals for mining and rock blasting. This foreign partner suffered from a diminishing market for their products in Europe. They were seeking new clients and opportunities, and needed to increase their foreign sales and presence in West Africa.

The parties—the Company and the French supplier—discussed the possibility of forming an IJV in Nigeria, as their interests seemed to converge. Their complementary needs, however, led to different approaches to IJV strategies. Acquaah (2009), using the findings from 76 African based IJVs, proposes that IJV partnerships from emerging economies (like Nigeria) perform better following efficiency-oriented strategies to strengthen their competitiveness. In contrast, partners from advanced industrialised economies (like France) are more successful at implementing a market-oriented (differentiation) effectiveness strategy. This was also the case with the Company. Both partners wanted to gain different things, which were only simultaneously possible through the new IJV. Both companies possessed capabilities sufficiently different from one another to mutually benefit from collaboration even though their worldviews and working cultures were diametrically different. This is the reason why it was believed that the problems experienced by both the local Company and the French Company could be overcome through establishing “organisational proximity” (Bathelt and Turi, 2011, p. 3). This would result in merging and thus exchanging complimentary capabilities and extending their market reach.

The stakeholders decided on the form of a Joint Venture (JV) based on typical “shared management” principle (Killing, 1982, p. 120), where the French company was to provide technology and the Nigerian Company was responsible for local goodwill and

knowledge, a substantial and readily available market, storage facilities, and a distribution and transport network all over Nigeria and beyond. The IJV capital was to be shared between the parties with a 55/45% split, the French investors insisting upon a majority stake. Each partner had an equal number of directors on the Board of Directors. This arrangement seemed to be mutually acceptable: the Nigerian company would gain technology and local product availability, while the foreign company would benefit from wider market access and economic interactions.

The merger between the two companies, resulting in the establishment of the IJV, required a certain level of cognitive proximity between the partners to enable them to communicate more easily and integrate their respective cultures into a new overarching structure (Bathelt and Turi, 2011). Only this level of integration could make the arrangement mutually beneficial, with both sides satisfied and the Company thriving.

Based on the findings from my thesis, I now believe that cooperative and collaborative practices in many areas, but especially pertaining to decision-making practices, could have helped achieve these aims, even in the volatile Nigerian business environment.

However, in a challenging socio-political context and deteriorating economy, the business did not operate as well as expected. The Nigerian economy began to decline, in tandem with a general global economic crisis. In addition, the advent of a new ruling party, who ascended to power in 2015, meant that many of the political and economic factors in Nigeria changed. The falling prices of crude oil, the main source of the revenue in Nigeria, as well as radical reforms and changes in economic and fiscal policies—mostly protectionist in nature—caused many problems that could not have been foreseen.

The general environment and economic indices in the market were totally different to the context in which the IJV was formed. The relationship between the IJV partners was impacted by this, and gradually headed in the wrong direction towards mistrust and suspicion. In addition, most likely owing to the changing political climate in Nigeria and policy reforms—which could appear hostile—the contribution to the foreign-investment share capital was not made as planned. The business project suffered underfunding and significant delays because of this. It has been implied—and this

research aims to investigate this proposition—that the French regarded their African, and especially Nigerian, partners with some prejudices, general distrust, and a patronising attitude. This attitude was not baseless, as numerous media publications had spoken openly about the appalling corruption and numerous scams that had originated in Nigeria. At the same time, the Nigerian stakeholders had started to worry about their foreign partner’s capabilities, were disappointed by them, and later felt deceived by their apparent inertia. These complex interactions within the IJV gave rise to new, unexpected, and even shocking issues. These problems almost destroyed the Company as they coincided with a global economic crisis and other unfavourable external and internal events. In fact, at the point at which thesis is being finalised, the IJV, as it was originally formed, is in a state of dissolution, with methods for separation enacted, and another foreign/technical partner sought.

Deep fact-finding analysis, sense-making from the crises, and deep reflection led me to conclude that the most significant problems resulted from a disparity in the partners’ expectations, meaning that they were unable to take mutually necessary decisions. Decision-making processes deteriorated to the extent that they became ambiguous and so wrought with distrust that they almost never led to the desired objectives. Proposals and solutions were not met with mutual understanding and consent. There were discrepancies in the partners’ approaches to solving problems. The French partner seemed to expect that they would make decisions and have Nigerians follow these decisions. That was not acceptable to local partners, who had anticipated joint decisions.

In fact, meaningful (particularly financial) decisions were often complex, requiring a time-consuming exchange of emails and letters, prolonged meetings, negotiations, costly checks and control procedures, write-ups, meetings in Nigeria and abroad, lengthy periods of waiting for replies, and so on. Thus, project realisation was delayed, and actual operations suffered. This situation was also made worse by the French partner’s tacit withdrawal of financing, as well as failure to agree on further financial activities. This continued for some time, but after the new, and current Nigerian government came to power, and the recession hit Nigeria in 2015, the French halted all their activities and, contrary to agreement, made almost no further contribution to the

IJV. The Company has survived the French partner's withdrawal and is slowly re-emerging. It remains multicultural—several different nationals are still operating within the system, and it has various stakeholders of different national origins. Additionally, the Company remains open to joining with another foreign investor or technical partner, meaning that the problem might re-emerge in a different context.

It is worth noting that in this new situation, and despite all the problems, action-learning practices have been gradually introduced. The Company also started to introduce some collaborative decision-making practices. These new approaches have been introduced based on my DBA studies. New management approaches were discussed and agreed upon in several management meetings, where stakeholders were made aware of these new techniques and practices. For the most part, management staff were supportive of this. The IJV project could have turned out differently if collaborative practices had been applied earlier. Though different for each organisation, collaborative decision-making practices can become a part of organisational culture, and evolve and adjust to fluctuating situations. These decision-making practices can benefit from multinational and multi-ethnic cultural constructs. Organisational culture is distinct from national culture, but it is a function of it. It exists within all national and ethnic cultural determinants. National values can enable or impede the success of decision-making (Hammerich and Lewis, 2013) . Hence, we can posit that skilful navigation of diverse national cultures within an IJV helps the IJV develop an organisational culture that is more collaborative. Likewise, I hypothesise that collaborative practices in decision-making can improve the quality of operational decisions.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

“All great ideas in science, politics and management have travelled from one country to another and been enriched by foreign influences.” (Hofstede, 1993, p.93)

The direction of my research aligns with this quote. Specifically, my research has emerged from my fascination with ideas of international co-operation, multicultural environments, and the diversity of human nature within business environments and beyond. Even though most of Hofstede’s works deal with intercultural and multinational culture issues in 20th century organisations, they remain relevant. In fact, his work has become more salient today, as transcultural and transnational organisations continue to grow, and proliferate, now more than ever, across the globe, including in Africa.

In addition to Hofstede’s research, I reviewed the extant literature examining IJVs from various points of view, especially those on collaborative decision-making in multicultural environments. In addition to published books and articles, I draw on so-called “grey” literature (Ridley, 2012), which, though not officially published, is still very significant in the field, consisting of reports, conference literature, thesis and dissertations, popular media, primary data sources, and finally a variety of websites.

My search strategy developed and evolved as the research progressed and can be broken down into three stages:

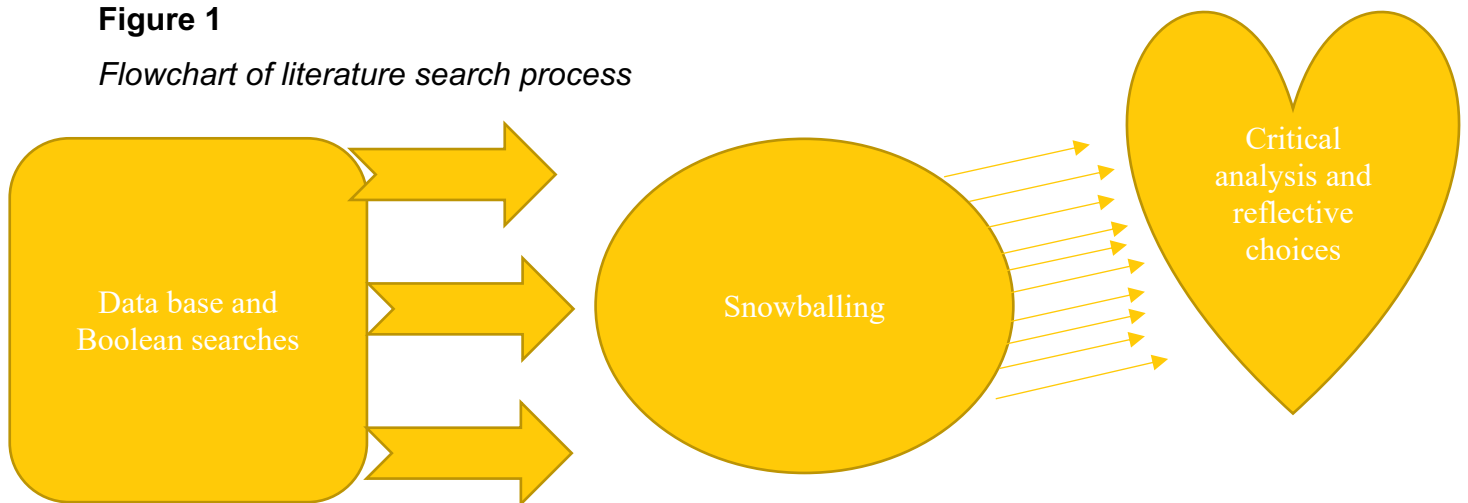
1. I used a simple method of keyword searches using Boolean logic (Riley, 2018), where the keywords were: “Organisational culture” AND “decision-making”; “National culture” AND “decision-making”; “National” OR “organisational values” AND “collaborative decision-making IJV in Africa”. Through this, I identified and developed categories and themes for reading.
2. I used the technique of a snowball search—following the index of the bibliography of the text read. This approach was applied to themes selected from the first stage by reading through either citations or text bibliographies.
3. After using this technique, I developed the following nine themes, which are imperative to understanding the interaction of various national cultures in a business environment:
 - (i) National versus organisational cultural values

- (ii) Collaborative decision-making.
- (iii) Mindfulness, judgement, trust, emotions, influence, and bounded rationality in different cultures.
- (iv) Communications and decision-making.
- (v) Knowledge-sharing and knowledge-creation in a culturally diverse environment—impact on decision-making practices.
- (vi) Negotiations and conflict resolution using collaborative decision-making approaches in the culturally diverse environment of an IJV company.
- (vii) Ethical considerations in cross-cultural environments, as related to the concept of collaborative decision-making.
- (viii) Support system for collaborative decision-making in an IJV environment: new tools and techniques.
- (ix) Hierarchy and power perceptions—leadership models in cross-cultural environments of IJVs.

In this third stage, I critically analysed and compared the extant literature. Figure 1 demonstrates the different stages of the literature review.

Figure 1

Flowchart of literature search process



Seventeenth-century philosopher Pascal (2004) observed the existence of nationally induced cultural differences, even within Europe alone. His famous saying, “vérité en deca des Pyrénées un erreur au-delà”, which translates to “there are truths on this side of the Pyrenees which are falsehoods on the other” (Pascale, quoted in Hofstede, 2001, p. 374) became proverbial. This is still a reality today, where despite

great interaction between cultures, the bridging of cultural gaps enabled through the Internet, rapid advancements in ever-faster communication, and the globalisation of economic activities in general, there still exist significant differences between national cultures. While many authors have considered this problem, none have done so from my chosen perspective. Specifically, previous scholarship did not specifically consider the role of collaborative practices in forming efficient decision-making processes in an Afro-European context. While the literature presents some theories in this respect, the subject is very broad and multifaceted. I shall now discuss the literature under my nine themes just identified.

1. National versus organisational values

The main argument is the claim that cultural factors are extremely important, and account for the development of a competitive advantage for some organisations more so than material and structural advantages. Cultural factors can aid economic performance but also impede it. Some of the extant literature demonstrates that cultural values are the ultimate determinants of human behaviour that lead to economic growth (Bond et al., 1991; Van Hoorn, 2014). However, most of these findings referred to Western economic models.

Although management theories make a claim to universality, the research was primarily conducted by Western researchers and research institutions (Tietze, 2004). Therefore, the literature mostly comes from a perspective of Western interests, with all its resulting pre-conceptions and biases. The management theories commonly applied tend to be based on Western—mostly American—conceptualisations of management, which are commonly accepted and considered universally successful, despite their basis on the US economy. These theories risk ethnocentrism (Hofstede, 1983) because they do not consider the impact of the researchers' nationality. At present, the claims to universality are these concepts are being questioned and examined, and an alternate perspective is emerging. This argues that the suitability of a theory is determined by the prevailing circumstances to which the theory is applied. It depends on existing conditions and the environment in which that condition exists. Consequently, these

Western-based theories are inconsistent with an African environment (Akpór-Robaro, 2008).

As a demonstration of this point, in my literature search, I could not find any links to management theories based on African realities. In fact, existing research remains preoccupied with the United States and Europe, while only recently addressing Asian cultural differences and interrelationships. Despite this preponderance towards Western culture, this American “economic success” is becoming less evident (Hammerich and Lewis, 2013) and “U.S. management theories containing a number of idiosyncrasies not necessarily shared by management elsewhere” (Hofstede, 1993, p. 82).

In line with this, I observed conflict in ideas related to working culture between European and African stakeholders of the IJV in the Company. This conflict exists particularly because Western theories place the stress on managers rather than workers, individuals rather than groups, and because they generally magnify the importance of the market processes. Their orientation is short term. This contrasts with the African context, in which collectivism, tradition, and emotion are very important values. In my opinion, and in line with Hofstede (1993), American ways of thinking are rarely relevant outside the United States. However, Europe has consistently tried to adopt American business approaches in various contexts, which unfortunately has also extended to Africa.

Recently, the subject of “cultural diversity in management” practices and the impact of national cultural values (including negotiations, IJVs, supply chain management, management practices, decision-making, etc.), are increasingly recognised as significant factors affecting management efficiency. Investigation of the impact of culture on management practices is supported by empirical evidence and inquiries like this thesis, which build on the proposition that “culture is a much more important determinant of the level of sophistication of management practices than formal institutions are” (Van Hoorn, 2014, p. 1).

Despite the reality that cross-cultural and multicultural environments in most of the mining ventures in West Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, the literature on this subject is still limited. This is, however, slowly changing as the practical interests of business ventures require analysis from economical and legal perspectives. For instance, some

of the legal issues experienced by IJVs in sub-Saharan Africa underline the salience of this issue; there is an increasing need to address them through more literature (Ibanugo, 2011). Africa is also receiving more attention owing to its sheer size and resources: “[I]n fact, of all the continents, Africa is said to be the most fascinating and promising; but she also poses the greatest challenges” (Ibanugo, 2011, p.). With 20% of the world’s total landmass, a population of nearly one billion (14% of world total), and a plethora of mineral resources, countries in sub-Saharan Africa have long generated some of the highest returns on deployed capital.

Locally connected IJVs or other mixed capital international set-ups in Africa exist already. Nnamdi and colleagues (2018) observed the popularity of forming IJVs in Nigeria rather than direct foreign capital inflow and ownership. This appeared to be due to the formal and informal practices of local institutions, which tend to be rigid and difficult. Even though market reforms have resulted in remarkable progress in this respect compared to previous decades, regulatory restriction still hinders the full ownership of investment in specific industries, including the mining sector.

Some of the IJVs, however, are successful and expanding but many others are failing and closing, unable to cope with the unexpected complexity caused by new cultural and socio-economic contexts. The failure rate quoted is often very high, ranging between 50% and 70% (Lowen and Pope, 2008). This is also the case with the Franco–Nigerian IJV studied in this thesis. Despite this, it is worth noting that when the right formula was found to allow nationally and culturally distinct partners to co-exist and cooperate effectively, many of the multinational IJVs were able to persist and even thrive and expand.

To explore this, Acquah (2009) analysed the reasons for the bad performance of IJVs in Africa. His research encompassed about 76 IJVs, with a focus on interactions between partners from African and developed economies. Acquah (2009) identifies that the reasons for failure are the different viewpoints of the partners, particularly regarding the different objectives they attempt to realise through their partnership, without first resolving fundamental issues. According to this work, foreign partners from developed economies, mostly in Europe, employ a strategy for market increase and differentiation, allowing them to generally increase their competitiveness.

It is widely argued that some failures can be attributed to intercultural differences, misunderstandings, and conflicts (Hammerich and Lewis, 2013; Hofstede et al. 2010; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2011). Some problems can be related to these misunderstandings as well as the practice of overlooking local administrative and regulatory institutions. Collaborative processes, however, could have addressed this by utilising local partners' tacit contextual knowledge. These problems are clear in the study of the Company. Gradually, this IJV failed, deviating from its original forms, and creating more divisions and distrust between the partners, while abandoning its original aspirations and objectives.

In his seminal work, Schein (2010) demonstrates that organisations' value systems impact their idiosyncratic organisational culture. Additionally, it has been empirically shown (Hofstede, 1985; 2001; 2010; Meyer, 2014) that these values have a significant national component: they are the result of the complex interaction of the national norms and habits of organisations' founders, management and/or dominant elite.

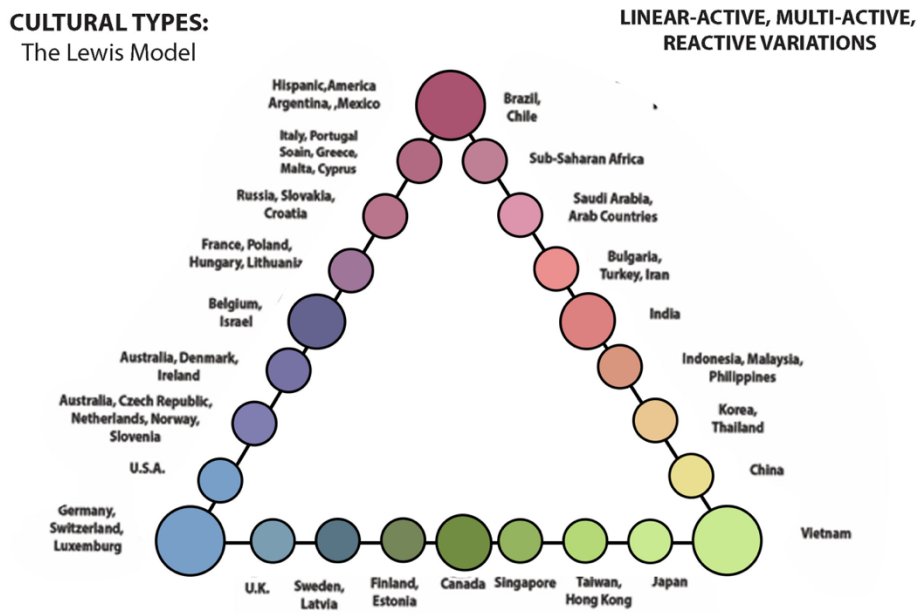
Nigeria is rarely mentioned specifically in the existing literature. Most of the literature considers a broader category—Africa or, at best, sub-Saharan Africa. Meyer (2014) constructs cultural maps used for analysis and Hammerich and Lewis (2013) develop a cultural Model (Figure 2). In their analysis, Nigeria appears as sub-Saharan Africa while France is mentioned as France. This alone demonstrates the low level of importance attached to the national status of an African country with distinct national/ethnic cultures, which are extremely worthy of analysis, particularly considering the presence of extensive natural resources and the sheer number of IJVs already located there.

Nevertheless, the Hammerich and Lewis Model (Figure 2) is an interesting and novel approach to the subject since it includes national values and addresses organisational culture from national perspective, linking in to the focus of my research questions. Notably, it places French at “linear/multi-active” side, while Nigerian (sub-Saharan Africa) is of a strongly “multi-active” variation. Multi-active cultures are flexible, warm, emotional, loquacious, and impulsive, while linear-active cultures are factual, cool, planners, and unemotional. These predispositions affect work-related attitudes and

habits and are reflected in controversies and clashes between different nationals in IJV environments.

Figure 2

Hammerich and Lewis Model (Hammerich, & Lewis, 2013)



2. Concept of collaborative decision-making: Applied to the cross-cultural environment of an IJV in Nigeria

The concept of “collaborative decision-making”, as it is considered in this thesis is relatively new, but collaboration itself is not new. The entirety of human civilisation is the product of this co-operation and collaboration across all domains. However, following enormous technological and economic development, and the resulting social changes, we still find it difficult to accept that much of our knowledge depends on collaborative approaches. We live in the community of knowledge (Sloman and Fernbach, 2017) and separation from this community impedes growth. However, owing to an innate need to feel in control, we tend to reject this obvious fact. Unfortunately, owing to our arrogance and desire to believe in our independence from others (sometimes even belief in our superiority) following the rapid technological development after the industrial revolution, ruling classes and the management elites of business organisations replaced the collaborative practices of the early days of humanity with decision-making systems

based on a strict chain of command. These systems worked well for some time; however, owing to their imposition and unnatural state, flaws quickly emerged. This system provided for strictly defined procedures, dehumanised employees, and organisations were treated like excellently working machines. These approaches were the most efficient and profit-yielding for many years. They also constituted the core of Western economic thought, not only in the United States but in Europe as well, including the French IJV shareholders.

These approaches started to show flaws, and when the economic situation began to change, they began deviating towards more complex realities. Applicable practices became the sources of potential crises, leading to mishaps and failures. Given the complexity of this new reality, collaborative approaches emerge as fundamental factors in human relations, and as salient elements required for effective organisation processes. Consequently, this has become the subject of recent literature. However, collaborative decision-making processes, as discussed in this thesis, have not been sufficiently examined from the perspective of the link between these processes and diversified cultural values in a multi-ethnic organisational context, especially in Africa.

Drawing from Doberstein (2016), collaborative decision-making is defined as “a method of collective decision-making where all stakeholders engage each other in a consensus-oriented deliberative process for managing joint company resources and maintaining economic growth through dynamic capabilities and allocation of resources” (Doberstein, 2016, p. 820). Thus, the objective of a collaborative decision-making processes is not just arriving at an optimum solution but also arriving at a compromise or satisficing decision (Owen, 2015). Collaborative decision-making also strives for much more valuable results, such as each participants’ comprehension of the decision-making process itself. Furthermore, Owen (2019) argues that collaborative decision-making processes should be seen as a practice that aggregates rather than compromises the comprehension and opinions of decision makers that are involved in the collaborative process.

The decision-making processes in modern companies have undergone considerable changes towards more distributed practices, democratisation, and decentralisation, while delegation to professional managers has been maintained. Even

though these processes may not be collaborative decision-making approaches (Owen, 2015), recent literature has shown a tendency to depart from strict control and central decision-making, towards the delegation of decisions to lower-level managers or even the outsourcing of these decisions to professionals and companies (Ambec and Poitevin, 2005).

Furthermore, the success of delegated decisions is closely tied to effective communication. This aspect will be examined in the next section, but it is worth noting that ineffective communication was also the root of the decision-making problems in the Company's IJV. Furthermore, the available research in this field highlights that controls and information should be related to the level at which decisions are taken.

One of the methods for examining collaborative decision-making is the model of multi-level decision-making. Beldek and Leblebicioglu (2015) propose the fusion of multi-level decisions, where higher-level decisions would be combined with previous (lower)-level decisions. These lower-level decisions can serve as indicators for higher-level decision makers through agent development schemes. Such a model, while illustrative, appears too theoretical and complicated for the practical decision-making structure I analysed in the Company. Nevertheless, the salience of the issue of collaboration in effective decision-making is clear.

Additionally, Doberstein (2016) underlines the importance of collaboration to effective and timely decision-making processes, pointing to collaborative advantages. For example, based on Doberstein's (2016) case study, 50% of decisions taken in a collaborative environment would not have succeeded under a traditional bureaucratic control model. Therefore, the proposition that collaborative decision-making—based on horizontality, deliberation, and diversity—results from strategic rules (Doberstein, 2016) would appear most suitable in situations of diversity where different cultural values clash and interact with each other.

Raghu and colleagues (2001), and Satty and Vargas (2013) support this proposition and add that argumentation based on collaborative decision-making might be facilitated by various analytical instruments. Along the same lines, other writers like Liu and colleagues (2013) have observed collaborative decision-making in modern supply chain management, leading to a competitive group advantage. This is in support

of the main hypothesis of this thesis. Similarly, I propose and use action research and learning practices to introduce collaboration into IJV decision-making schemes, while examining the impact of these practices. Furthermore, Liu and colleagues (2013) argue that collaborative processes lead to waste elimination through the synchronisation of decisions towards mutually agreed goals. Raiffa and colleagues (2003) take a similar stance.

Wildau and colleagues (1993) point out that decisions taken during collaborative interaction and negotiations in conflict situations involve people, employees, and stakeholders. Decisions affect their wellbeing and, in fact, sometimes their lives. Wildau and colleagues (1993) posit that the successful promotion of democratic, co-operative, and collaborative procedures in conflicting situations enables the integration of accompanying values and enhances cooperative ventures between the partners. Furthermore, they argue that for such positive cohesion to occur, foreign and local partners must work together to establish a relationship of mutual trust, respect, equal involvement in decision-making, and a collaborative team structure (Wildau et al., 1993). Therefore, the importance of equal, collaborative participation in decision-making processes is greatly emphasised. Furthermore, daily decision-making, including the resolution of pragmatic issues at work, allow further learning about co-operative processes and collaborative decision-making (Wildau et al., 1993). According to this work, unilateral decision makers—those who cannot engage in collaborative practices and decision-making—ultimately create resistance, ambivalence, and conflicts, and ultimately lose their partners, as was observed in the Company.

The extant literature shows some examples of situations and conditions under which collaborative decision-making in a diverse organisational environment is advantageous and feasible. This thesis posits that a multicultural business context is exemplary in this respect. From most of the available research in this field, I deduce and suggest that the advantages of collaborative decision-making might bring some clarity to the Company's complex, culturally diversified business environment.

3. Mindfulness, judgement, trust, emotions, influence, and bounded rationality concepts in decision-making literature relative to cross-cultural environments

One of the problems in decision-making in the analysed IJV were issues of judgement and judgemental traps. Seminal works by Simon (1990), Kahnemann (2011), Bazerman and Moore (2008), and, to a lesser degree, Weick and Quinn (1999) are especially illuminating in this respect. While they do not refer specifically to multicultural differences in values in an Afro-European context, it is obvious that cultural diversity will only amplify the results of their findings.

Despite the extant literature being extensive, there is little examination of issues related to judgements in decision-making influenced by emotions, feelings, and preconceptions embedded in national and cultural values in a diverse multicultural environment. This is exacerbated by the fact that there was no inclusion of Nigerian, or as a minimum, sub-Saharan cultures. The cultural diversity of values, linked to judgements and decision-making that are not necessarily irrational but often based on satisfying cultural needs, is bound by rationality and experience-based intuition (Simon, 1990). However, this construct is not sufficiently explored from the point of view of the present thesis: African versus European work-oriented cultural determinants. Even though in recent years, research on emotions and decision-making relationships took many different directions (George and Dane, 2016), researchers have not considered nationally induced Afro-European differences, perhaps because the subject is quite delicate and sensitive. This is especially true in light of social and political, interracial, and international developments in the society. Researchers might fear being accused of prejudices, or even racism and discrimination, if they suggest some nationally exclusive or inclusive concepts. For instance, the impact of emotions on judgement and decision-making in IJVs has not been studied from the point of view of different national/ethnic cultures. It has, however, been studied in at least four important areas: incidental mood states' influence on decision-making, the impact of the integral effect, the affect and emotional consequence of decision-making, and regret in decision-making. All four occur in the Company, as well as in other multicultural IJVs.

Drawing from Kahnemann (2011), several previous studies in this field, and based on existing rational choice models, Lerner and colleagues (2015) developed a

general model of affective influence on decision-making, stating, “Emotions constitute potent, pervasive, predictable, sometimes harmful and sometimes beneficial drivers of decision-making.” While I generally agree with this statement, I additionally argue that different national/ethnic cultures will display different perceptions and expressions of emotions. Accordingly, a culturally diverse IJV will have to encompass various cultural values and resultant habits, behaviours, perceptions, and working practices. A working context is thus culturally determined and very complex. Furthermore, emotions are culturally dependent, and emotional effects on decision-making can be studied.

The importance of mindfulness and sense-making on decision-making has been thoroughly described in the prolific writings of Karl Weick. He drew attention to the salience of effective sense-making—the basis of organisational reliability, effective and rational decisions, organisational flexibility, and reliance. I gained many insights both for this research and my working practice from these thinking processes, including “sense-making”. Sense-making and mindfulness, followed by deep and critical reflection, appear even more salient and difficult in complex, multicultural environments. When an organisation is composed of human perceptions and interpretation (Weick and Quinn, 1999), it is naturally, culturally influenced. These influences and interpretations are part of the decision-making process. Starbuck (2016) calls this approach a struggle between “thoughtful action and mechanistic behavior”. Polic (2009), builds on Simon (1990), and Tversky and Kahneman (1981), and views decision-making processes as shifting between irrationality and bounded rationality, and between intuition and reasoning. The differences in individual experience, perception, and intuition resulting from diverse culture values that impact decision-making are not discussed in the literature. They certainly merit further research, and are examined in this thesis.

4. Communication in cross-cultural environments as part of effective decision-making: The role of collaboration

As mentioned above, effective communication is a salient element in decision-making processes, collaboration, and cultural interaction. It can even be considered a fundamental element to the success of decision-making and negotiation. However, despite the earlier works of Hofstede (1993), which identified various cultural impacts—

including language and the role of effective communication—on decision-making, this subject has been viewed by most researchers from the point of view that language is merely a vehicle of transmission (Tietze, 2004). This contrasts with the view that language is a reflection of cultural values (Cohen et al., 2015).

Brannen and colleagues (2014) argue that language alone, as a key construct in international business, should be articulated and theorised on more. However, understanding of “communication” should not be limited to language alone. A similar approach is found in the work of Dehghani and Strandberg (2015), who criticise the concept that the importance of communication is understood as language proficiency only, and as something that can be easily learned. Similarly, according to Wilkinson (2011), language imposes certain perspectives of the world, in addition to its role as a tool to communicate. For instance, using English as the general communication medium will inject English into a global perspective on business practices.

Likewise, in a case study, it could be seen that using English might result in several difficulties and misunderstandings for French speakers, as might be the case for the Afro-French IJV stakeholders. People from both French or Nigerian backgrounds might claim proficiency in English, but still miss more subtle nuances to what is being said.

Indeed, most of the research available regards the dominance of Western management theories and ways of thinking as a result of the preference for English as a message-carrier (Tietze, 2004; Cohen et al., 2015; Wilkinson, 2011). The dominance of the English language has contributed to the treatment of these Western theories as universal.

Bird and Stephens (2003) argue that situations in which several languages are spoken in IJVs and other international environments will evolve towards, with the increasing dominance of the five major languages spoken today (English, Mandarin, Spanish, French, and Arabic). Today, there are approximately 4,000 languages spoken by about 6 billion speakers. In comparison, 1.4 billion speakers spoke about 10,000 languages in 1900. It is estimated that this trend will persist and by approximately 2100, around half of the languages spoken today will be lost (Davis, 1999). Should this phenomenon continue as predicted, it will lead to an unprecedented number of people

that will be able to speak and communicate in a common language. This will improve the relationship and understanding between different nationally and ethnically diverse participants of IJVs.

The concept of collaboration as a tool to improve decision-making practices, underlines the advantages of more diversity and viewpoints, therefore emphasising the necessity of varied communication styles (Wei-Lin and Clark, 1999). This approach deviates from the influence of the English way of thinking. Additionally, it opposes the viewpoint that the limiting of effective communication is based solely on the understanding of the language. In this regard, Dehghani and Strandberg (2015) posit that in a multicultural environment—especially global corporations—“language is a source of power” and jargon tends to be developed to represent the formation of an organisation, based on various cultural influences.

Therefore, in a case that I researched, the use of English as a lingua franca is especially difficult for French stakeholders because it does not align with their cultural styles and perceptions. In addition, they are even less familiar with Nigerian English as a language variant. The pronunciation of this variant is very distinct and has many local inflections. Meanwhile, French nationals often resort to using French, ignoring the fact that most stakeholders do not speak it, which I likely the source of many misunderstandings and suspicion. Holden (2008), and Harzing and colleagues (2011) looked for a way to resolve misunderstandings that result from the use of different languages. They found it in increased understanding of the cultural values expressed. This might appear to contrast with Cohen and colleagues’ (2015) suggestion of a “multilingual turn”, where the interplay of different languages is deemed acceptable in diverse culturally business contexts. Yet, they argue that using English as a lingua franca, which is still a common practice, does not guarantee perfect understanding as English is influenced by the different practices and cultural backgrounds of its speakers. This conveys different values and connotations, despite the use of the same words. This is what happened in the IJV of the Company. Similarities in business practices stemming from the use of the same language, are not the same as similarities stemming from having the same culture (Brannen et al., 2014). Adopting one common language may therefore have either a unifying or a dispersing effect—via

miscommunication and exclusion—depending on many other factors (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2014).

Furthermore, communication is not limited to language alone. Hence for a successful understanding, and above all, the possibility of transferring tacit knowledge between the international stakeholders, preference was always given to face-to-face (F2F) interactions where factors other than language play a significant role. These factors are non-verbal, vocal, and physical cues. Thus, F2F facilitates relation-building, intensive interaction, joint operation and observation, the use of joint recourses and material artefacts. It is argued however, that computer mediated communication (CMC) can replace, to certain extent, the need for F2F interactions and even further promote collaborative behaviours (Bathelt, and Turi, 2011). Communication within IJVs—or any other international environment for that matter—can be made through various channels and media. F2F interactions were traditionally deemed necessary for developing collaborative behaviour, but this idea is changing, and F2F is slowly being replaced by new computer-mediated communication means. To claim that virtual interaction will eventually eliminate the need for geographic proximity is unrealistic. However, claims that local over non-local networks are superior and are foster integration better can no longer be made. The organisations that can best take advantage of both communication possibilities will be more flexible, and will develop the best co-operation—which also applies to the decision-making practices considered in this thesis.

In the literature, there seems to be a consensus (Wei-Lin and Clark, 1999; Brannen et al., 2014; Tenzer and Pudelko, 2014; Cohen et al., 2015; Bathelt, and Turi, 2011) on the importance of learning how to use language and other means of communication in diverse cultural contexts. When working in multicultural teams, communication is a more important factor than simply having technical proficiency in the foreign language.

Good communication builds bridges between diverse stakeholders in multicultural environments and allows different values and viewpoints to be expressed not only in different languages but also through different cultural lenses (Meyer, 2014; Gray, 2002; Wilkinson, 2011). This significantly impacts decision-making and mutual understanding, leading to more collaborative practices and organisational success.

5. Knowledge-sharing and knowledge-creation in a culturally diverse environment: Impact on decision-making practices.

Tacit and explicit organisational knowledge is widely regarded as a critical Company resource, indispensable for efficient decision-making and connecting individuals to the organisation. This is evidenced in both older (Schein, 1993; Volberda, 1996) and very recent research (Kucharska and Kowalczyk, 2016) which stresses the process of increasing companies' diversity and complexity. In examined IJVs, this process is extremely complex and unclear. Information is a source of knowledge, and knowledge is power under any circumstances. Therefore, the need to encourage information-sharing behaviours is linked to knowledge-sharing. In different cultures, protective attitudes that lead to the avoidance of sharing might develop through fear of loss of control or power. Information and knowledge sharing requires understanding, co-operation, and mutual trust, which do not always prevail between stakeholders. This aspect of a knowledge management theme is illustrated in research by Buvik and Rolfsen (2015).

Given the importance of knowledge-sharing for company development, including successful decision-making, Kucharska and Kowalczyk (2016) suggest that some knowledge-sharing behaviour (KSB) measures be introduced. These measures can make it possible for managers to reward, enhance, and encourage knowledge-sharing behaviours. Kucharska and Kowalczyk (2016) developed a model to test the relationship between tacit knowledge-sharing and trust, allowing the intensity of such behaviours to be measured. The results of their research support the hypothesis that a collaborative culture has an important effect on trust, and therefore knowledge-sharing. Further investigation of this phenomenon reveals that knowledge-sharing enhances working practices as well as decision-making techniques because collaboration and co-operation are part of human nature (Sloman and Fernbach, 2017).

Co-operation can be a feature of formal networks but is more prominent in informal networks of interest within a group of stakeholders. Informal networks are a positive phenomenon, as they enhance the formation of collaborative practices, often based on trust and understanding (Nnamdi et al., 2018). Informal networks are crucial for knowledge-sharing and transfer—especially in the case of tacit knowledge. They serve as a mitigating mechanism in cases of the negative effects (e.g., cultural

differences and hierarchical organisational forms) that are sometimes not acceptable to a group of stakeholders. They also facilitate learning and knowledge acquisition within an IJV company. In addition, according to Nnamdi and colleague (2018), existing studies demonstrate that knowledge transfer is context-specific, affected by various national cultures, industry structures, and educational systems. Therefore, in IJV companies in an African context, knowledge-sharing and transfer will look different to how it does in a Western environment.

Furthermore, the importance of knowledge-sharing has been identified, and supported by empirical evidence (Lindström et al., 2015; Park and Lee, 2014). These authors agree that while expert knowledge is an important company asset, it is mostly tacit. Sharing tacit knowledge is even more complicated and individual-oriented than sharing explicit knowledge. However, this critical process can be facilitated by collaborative practices and an enhanced culture of trust within the complex environments of companies with diverse national cultures. Developing such a culture to ensure knowledge-sharing (both explicit and tacit) is a real challenge in the competitive world of today (Koriat and Gelbard, 2014).

The literature states that the way to encourage knowledge-creation and sharing is through establishing a collaborative and trustful corporate culture (Schein, 1993; Park and Lee, 2014; Buvik and Rolfsen, 2015; Kucharska and Kowalczyk, 2016). Concepts such as “self, means and external efficacy; human resource management practices; [and] perceived organisational support” (Koriat and Gelbard, 2014, p. 577) are considered key aspects to developing collaborative behaviours in a complex modern organisation. Moreover, recent studies indicate that the behaviours, knowledge, and intelligence of a group are not simply the sum or average of its individual participants, but its *collective* intelligence, which can be measured by the so-called c-factor. This phenomenon stems from collaborative practices and group interactions, and is strongly correlated with the group members’ average sensitivity, which constitutes the tendency of members to contribute to conversation and build organisational performance. Interestingly, the “proportion of females [sic] in the group” is also an important factor (Woolley et al., 2010). This c-factor is therefore culturally determined, which means that national values and the organisational values of a group or

organisation are connected. However, further research is needed to identify the determinants of the c-factor.

Based on the existing literature, a proposition can be formed that a collaborative culture, and by extension collaborative decision-making practices, have a positive impact on knowledge-sharing, creation, transfer, and use (David and Fahey, 2000). This culture may even give rise to the creation of collective group intelligence (Woolley et al., 2010). By the same token, positive attitudes towards knowledge-sharing and creation have enhanced collaborative attitudes, informal knowledge-sharing and transfer, and networks, therefore improving the quality of decision-making.

6. Negotiations and conflict resolution using collaborative decision-making approaches in the culturally diverse environment of an IJV company

Negotiations constitute critical elements and integral parts of collaborative decision-making. They are indispensable in culturally diverse environments, in which people have different value systems and cultural leanings. In fact, many companies' mundane operations can be considered as negotiating practices. The subject of negotiation theory, skills, and practices has been extensively covered. I based my research on findings from Raiffa (2007) and further by Scavarda and colleagues (2015), Larsson, (2015), Wachowich and colleagues (2016), and Eden and Ackerman (2014).

However, none of these authors touch specifically on the African versus European business context. Nevertheless, observations related to "two party" integrative (win-win) negotiations, and the idea of converting a dispute into a deal are universally accepted as necessary (Raiffa, 2007). The proposition that deal-making tends to be more collaborative than combative provides a useful perspective for this thesis, with its primary interest in the plural and normative, descriptive and prescriptive processes of decision-making, and when and where collaborative decision-making is necessary, advantageous, or possible. Voss and Raz (2016) posit that in the process of negotiations, negotiators take various different attitudes. They can be roughly classified as "analytic", "accommodating", and "assertive", and the author's claim here is that while very individualistic, these characteristics depend to a large degree on the nationally determined culture and predispositions.

In relation to negotiations, Walden and colleagues (2014) examined members' experiences in environments that apply collaborative practices. They highlighted the role of conflict and its resolution. Ideally, collaborative decision-making requires shared power in a setting that involves many stakeholders who are geared towards a common goal, while "constructive conflict resolution strategies" (Walden et al., 2014) in such settings are primordial to facilitating power-sharing.

Hammer (Hammer, 2003, 2005, 2009) gives useful information on the successful resolution of conflict and misunderstandings within a multicultural environment. Although he does not concentrate on national culture issues, their impact on work-related behaviours is evident.

National and cultural differences significantly affect people's ability to handle situations of increased uncertainty, in which emergencies arise and conflicts erupt. Conflicts can be considered as more than a simple disagreement over a problem. They can be perceived as arguments about values, objectives, worldviews, and other issues (Hammer, 2009). Therefore, various nationals' approach to the conflict situation might be diametrically different.

Furthermore, conflict is emotional—related to distress and upset. In this sense, conflict resolution requires different styles and approaches, which are culturally determined (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) illustrate that argument with the Dual Concern Model, underlining the fact that conflict approach is also "culture learnt" (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000; Hammer, 2005). Furthermore, drawing from Gray (2006) and Hammer (2005), a concept of Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) was developed, as shown in Figure 3. Along with this model he develops the ICS Inventory as a reliable and cross-culturally valid assessment of an individual's core approach to conflict resolution.

Figure 3

Intercultural conflict style model

DIRECT → discussion

→ Engagement

INDIRECT → accommodation

→ Dynamic

EMOTIONALLY RESTRAINED

EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE

The ICS concept allows for an understanding of how conflicts escalate in culturally diverse environments, even if individuals genuinely try to reach agreement and understanding. The way stakeholders frame conflict is culturally determined and affects their response to situations (Gray, 2006).

Closely related to conflict resolution and negotiations, although seen from the opposite angle, is the question of collaborative ambivalence. Rorty (2016) examines this ambivalence and argues that collaborative decision-making is the best way to resolve ambivalence. Unfortunately, ambivalence tends to appear in multicultural environments, when misunderstanding turns to rejection and apathy.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is useful to observe that Hammer (2007) places the Nigerian cultural style in the “engagement” quadrant and the French/most of European in the “discussion” style, which already creates cultural incompatibility. Proposed by Hammer (2007), an inventory of 18 items on a self-scoring questionnaire is a useful instrument for furthering insights. A similar questionnaire was used in this thesis. This was, however, explored more in depth through an action-research, qualitative methodology. Embracing collaborative practices as a way out of problems in multicultural relationships constitutes an important and largely unexamined concept in the theory of negotiation and conflict resolution. When documented empirically, benefits from using this concept may include more effective decision-making, and improved intercultural relationships (Hammer, 2007).

Furthermore, Verhezen’s (2010) suggestion to develop genuine dialogue-oriented decision-making training, in addition to the formal codes and compliance programs that currently exist in multinational organisations is a valuable contribution to this discussion. Most of the literature studied supports the claim that collaborative decision-making practices using intercultural conflict style meters, mindful awareness of cultural differences, and ethical values can help to manage conflicts, resolve disputes, and combat ambivalence in a culturally diverse environment (Verhezen, 2010).

7. Hierarchy and power perceptions: Leadership models in cross-cultural environments of IJVs

A review of scholarship on collaborative decision-making practices in culturally diversified environments cannot be complete without examining the impact of leadership styles and hierarchy perceptions in different national cultures. This subject is closely related to the concepts of decision-making under different leadership styles and practices described above. It is excellently examined in the seminal works of Hofstede (1983, 1985, 2001, 2010), as well as works by Hammerich and Lewis (2013), Meyer (2014), and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011). Each of these researchers has a different approach to classifying leadership styles and hierarchy (power distance) in different national cultures, but the categories are nevertheless broadly similar. These classifications are based on extensive empirical evidence from across many, albeit not all, countries. Unfortunately, West Africa was not considered.

A more analytical approach is exemplified by Ambec and Poitevin (2005), who relate leadership models and decision-making styles not just to cultural constructs but also to the foundations upon which decisions are taken and the relationship between costs and controls. Supovitz and Tognatta (2013) underline the advantages of distributed leadership, such as the promotion of collaborative decision-making, which, in a multicultural environment, means more information can be exchanged. It also means more diverse approaches can be considered and implementation is more efficient, as decisions are inclusive and reached jointly by those involved. Marquardt (2014) offers excellent practical insights into how leadership can be distributed and supported by questioning organisational culture.

Brett and colleagues (2006) identify many problems that can obstruct efficient decision-making in culturally diverse teams. These authors see barriers to collaborative decision-making in such constructs as “conflicting decision-making norms” and “differing attitudes to hierarchy” (Brett et al., 2006, p. 87) across different national cultures, values, and traditions. However, I draw from Chandler (2016), who posits that diversity, under group thinking, may create “collective intelligence” (Chandler, 2016, p. 6). This is distinct from the mere sum of individual knowledge, and forms a basis on which creative, high-quality decisions can be taken. An African context, once again not

considered in these findings, is considered during the subsequent qualitative research in this thesis.

Trehan and Pedler (2009) applied the methodology of critical action learning to the problem of leadership, by emphasising deliberation, transformation, and a repetitive spiral of reflection, using this method in the context of a practical knowledge paradigm. This approach is deeply rooted in the power and control issues that can affect the development of leadership in political and cultural contexts. The novel practice of shifting from top-down approaches towards collaborative, consensus-oriented decision-making requires change from a hierarchical leadership to one that is more distributed (Wasson, 2016). Furthermore, modern decision analysis tools are needed to examine both processes and content holistically. Examples of such tools include conversational analysis and issue framing (Wasson, 2016).

There is also a consensus in the literature that the role of an organisation's leader can change from one of wielding the power to one of exerting influence and inspiring trust. Frequently, the best decisions and results are achieved in IJVs when the leader's key characteristics are collaboration and the ability to inspire (Markowa, 2015).

8. Ethical considerations in cross-cultural environments, as related to the concept of collaborative decision-making

Ethics and ethical practices are troubling considerations for today's businesses and are particularly difficult to determine owing to the hypocrisy, misinformation, sycophancy, and double standards that proliferate in business, socio-political life, and the media. A situation in which unethical practices, blithely considered, affect strategic decisions is becoming increasingly common, although it is not always apparent, and is often concealed when documentation and records are hidden or destroyed.

It is therefore my hope that collaborative decision-making practices in our work will facilitate and contribute to additional ethical stances and behaviour within the system. This hope stems from my moral principles and philosophical leanings, which draws from eminent figures such as Aristotle, the concept of "phronesis", "pragmatism", and "utilitarianism" developed by John Stuart Mill (1863), as well as neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics based on a MacIntyrean conceptual framework (Moore, 2012).

There is an extensive body of knowledge dealing with work-oriented ethical behaviour. I connected this body of literature with research that deals with international working practices and multicultural interactions in IJVs, examining these issues through the framework of “phronesis”. Ethics is a learned practice, involving experience, consideration, the balancing of different points of view, adaptations to different situations, learning from people and from mistakes, reorganisation, precautions, and other practices in human interaction. All these aspects are culturally induced and could differ from one national culture to another.

Fernando and Moore (2015), used a similar framework and similar theoretical underpinnings in a multicultural context, examining the generalisability of “virtue ethics”. They investigated problems associated with organisational virtues in different national cultures, finding empirical evidence that some categories are generalisable, while other categories are more prone to “practice like conduct” (Fernando and Moore, 2015, p. 186) and are determined more by national values.

Furthermore, Li (2007a) establishes a distinction between a Western “either/or” (absolutist) logic and Eastern duality (relativism) regarding ethical issues—especially trust—and argues that the concept of trust is geocentric. This is quite clear in my working environment. In a multicultural IJV business context, mutual trust is considered indispensable to successful collaborative decision-making, and clearly depends on different cultural influences.

Gong and colleagues (2005) systemically analyse some human relationship problems—in an IJV—that are aggravated by cultural differences. They identify two distinct, but interrelated, sets of human resources that function within an IJV. These are: “set within IJV HR” and the “relational HR set— relative to parent companies” (Gong et al., 2005, p. 506). Both sets are interrelated and have an impact on IJV performance. Their objectives sometimes differ, as various interests and ambiguous ethical issues are involved. The parent companies’ employees might, for instance, focus more on protecting the interests of the parent organisation, which are sometimes distinct from the interests of the IJV. Gong and colleagues also underline that the culture of a multisystem, hybrid organisation, such as an IJV, produces contradictions that are difficult to overcome, possibly creating ethical issues, where one system wants to

exploit the other. This leads to a lack of trust, a situation that, as mentioned, was identified as the root cause of the problems in the Company, the subject of this thesis.

The literature that posits that ethical concepts should be treated in a holistic manner is in alignment with my worldview and is a good piece of practical wisdom reflected in interpersonal relationships within the IJV.

Hofstede (1983), Schein (2010), and Gerhart (2008) examined the interaction between national and organisational value systems, which results in different working practices that are the key to producing ethical intercultural behaviours. While collaborative decision-making can be regarded as one instrument for promoting these behaviours, literature regarding the specific ethical aspects involved in collaborative decision-making in a culturally diversified environment, including Nigeria and European values, was not found. Therefore, this thesis will draw on literature that deals with various aspects of ethical approaches in working environments, extrapolating the findings of this literature to the issue under examination.

Verhezen (2009, 2010) and Arjoon (2005) investigated various codes and compliance procedures, and pointed to the value of developing a culture of integrity in order to ensure true compliance, rather than merely declared compliance. Guiso and colleagues (2015) distinguish between real and advertised values, and argue that proclaimed ethical values are irrelevant to company performance and working practices. However, employees' perceptions of upper management positively impact an organisation's performance. When upper managers and leaders are perceived as trustworthy and ethical, introducing distributed leadership and collaborative practices will, more frequently, be possible and advantageous. Norms and codes, therefore, will more likely be embraced by employees.

Some of the literature offers practical advice on how to deal with ethical issues in a multicultural environment, also referring to the generality of working processes. This is the case with Badarocco (2001, 2002) and the Ethics Member Advisory Group (2014), who promote the image of the ethical and quiet leader who does not see situations as conflicting tests of ethical principles and company benefits, but rather looks to find compromises that are satisfactory to all culturally diverse stakeholders. This exemplifies ethical and professional conduct, while promoting collaboration between team

members. This approach can be achieved by building trust, implementing ethical and co-operative/collaborative practices (Ethics Member Advisory Group, 2014), distributing leadership, delegating roles, and so on, which are all found to generate enthusiasm and thus improve organisational performance (Ethics Member Advisory Group, 2014).

One interesting contribution to the extant literature was the “opacity study” conducted across 41 countries by Kurtzman and colleagues (2004). The study covered a period of four years and featured degrees of opacity that indicate the extent to which countries “lack clear, accurate, easily discernible and widely accepted practices governing the relationships among businesses, investors and governments that form the basis of most small-scale, high frequency risks” (Kurtzman et al., 2004, p. 38). This study featured both Nigeria and Europe/France, making it extremely relevant to this thesis. Its approach should be distinguished from Hammer’s (2007) intercultural conflict inventory, because opacity is a concept that represents unforeseen costs to businesses resulting from bribery, fraudulent transactions, contracts that cannot be executed or enforced, and legal and regulatory opacity and complexity (Kurtzman et al., 2004). These are genuine costs to businesses that must be managed. However, they might also be sources of distrust and misunderstandings between IJV partners, who could approach them from different positions and identify different solutions based on their relevant understanding and past experiences. Zhong (2011), however, warns against the simplistic application of rational decision-making principles in this respect. He argues that a rationalistic approach towards decision-making could reduce altruistic and intuitive moral behaviours, which may feature prominently in collaborative practices.

Overall, literature on HR issues appears sparse. However, Gong and colleagues (2005) have shown that less than 5% of the total time spent within an IJV is spent on resolving HR issues. This figure is very low and may go some way to explaining IJVs’ generally disappointing performances. More research linking HR-related ethical issues within IJVs and their performance is still needed.

Strict and normative ethical principles, corporate codes, compliance policies, and norms introduced in business organisations are easily circumvented in practice, while lapses and abuses are covered up. Despite this, such features have, for some time now, become intriguing research topics, studied by many investigative publications.

Scandals and scams appear so frequently in today's media that they can hardly be overlooked. The issue is even more complex and glaring in multicultural environments, where misinterpretations are much more likely. The complexity of such an environment clearly affects administrative and managerial processes, including decision-making processes. Overall, there seems to be a consensus that collaborative decision-making enhances ethical behaviours in multicultural environments. This will be examined in this thesis.

9. Support system for collaborative decision-making in an IJV environment: new tools and techniques

Forms and styles of decision-making play an important role in maintaining company competitiveness. There is a plethora of propositions, frameworks, methods, models, techniques, and tools to support this process, with computer-assisted technologies proving ever-present.

Volberda (1996) underlines the importance of the role played by managerial characteristics like flexibility and responsiveness in decision-making. He considers the paradox between change and preservation, which he closely relates to decision-making concepts for revitalising organisations. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) approach the subject by generally considering dynamic capabilities and resource allocation approaches as sources of company competitive advantages. In tacit agreement with their analysis, I propose here that in culturally diversified environments, collaborative and distributed decision-making processes enhance organisational agility and resilience, and so can constitute a comparative advantage.

With the rapid development of new IT technologies, there are lots of descriptions in the literature of technologies that support collaborative decision-making in culturally diverse contexts. Indeed, it is clear from the literature that most decision support systems are taking advantage of this rapidly expanding industry. One example is the SPELLIT methodology designed by Schmieder-Ramirez and Malette (2009), which is an interactive software system connected to direct, real-time communication devices. There are also computer-oriented tools (Bragge et al., 2007; Zaraté, 2013, Berglund et al., 2017), through which various participants can participate in discursive processes,

and consider the perspectives of other participants, wherever they are in the world. Zaraté (2013) offers the interesting perspective that, in some cases, ever-developing AI (artificial intelligence) techniques can also be considered as a participant and contributor to collaborative decision-making.

Roy (1993, pp. 184–203) believes that all “decision science” should be in fact considered as “decision-aid science”. According to this view, many different decision-making tools can support collaborative decision-making processes. However, this support does not take the decision-making away from participants, who interact with reality by often using very different theoretical models and concepts. As an example, Long (2016) developed a “flow-based three-dimensional collaborative decision-making model” (Long, 2016, pp. 101–110), but this model was limited to supply chains.

Along these lines, Kersten and Noronha (1999) also discuss model-based methods and software that provide a scientific-aid approach to decision-making processes. Nevertheless, contrary to Roy (1993), and in a practical sense, the application of scientific methods to decision-making remains limited and should be investigated further. Kersten and Noronha (1999) suggest that ever-growing and ever-evolving electronic methods, information networking technology, and computer-based decision technologies are most suitable in complex, multicultural environments, enhancing collaborative practices. Bhargava and colleagues (1997) also support this claim, recommending the intersection of computer-based technologies and networking information technologies towards the broader application of scientific methods in decision-making.

A few of these tools are also described by Antunes and colleagues (2013, 2014) who present convenient and easily applicable handheld collaborative decision-making instruments. They give examples of six mobile applications, while discussing their shared foundation. These tools utilise mobile devices and help participants collaborate in the field by prioritising ideas that are then discussed in an office. Bragge and colleagues (2007) introduce the concept of collaborative engineering, using “thinkLets”, powered by a group support system, as effective tools for enabling communication, expertise, and information-sharing.

Mark (2002) makes another interesting contribution to these debates, arguing physical location and technology can be combined to enable extensive collaboration within a team, with complex decisions considered in an extremely short time. These decisions can be taken where and when needed, as newly available technologies mean that the relevant information can be shared using virtual reality (Berglund et al., 2017).

According to Srivastava (2005), cited by Antunes and colleagues (2014), electronic tools in collaborative decision-making settings improve knowledge sharing and management, enhance distribution of recent information, and extend information access regardless of time and location. They therefore improve decision-making practices in these environments owing to the ease of parallel and anonymous mind-mapping, discussions, and priority setting (Austin et al., 2006 quoted in Bragge et al., 2007; Berglund et al., 2017). Various interactive and immersive virtual reality technology systems, which can enhance collaborative processes, have also been proposed (Berglund et al., 2017; Kulik et al., 2011; Menck et al., 2012).

Similarly, Haythornwaite (2017) posits that computer-mediated collaboration in modern business organisations is gradually emerging as an important issue in organisational operations and practices. This is especially true for nationally diversified and even geographically distant environments. Collaborative decision-making by cross-functional and cross-cultural teams can also be enhanced by this increased accessibility, and decisions can be taken in real time, at various managerial levels, with minimal delays. However, cultural differences, more than ever, must be accounted for in this situation. Haythornwaite discusses how collaboration evolves with digital media, with nationally and culturally distinct stakeholders located both remotely and locally. The use of support tools has evolved for both formal and informal activities, as well as technical analysis and working practices, thus overcoming cultural and geographical boundaries. Some tools that were originally informal—instant messaging for instance—have now been fully adopted into organisational practices and decision-making processes. Working across cultural divides is a challenge even when the nationally induced cultural differences are obvious. However, over the Internet these differences in culture, language, backgrounds, working attitudes, and work-related behaviours might not be seen at all. As for the Company, which operates in geographically distributed

units, these technologies give its stakeholders, who often travel outside Nigeria, the chance to provide their feedback and opinions from any place and at any time. Therefore, especially salient in this discussion are all the different types of mobile devices that enable long-distance collaboration.

Antonczak (2019) discusses collaborative practices through the lenses of mobile IT devices, and the incredible development of mobile telecommunication technologies. There was an unprecedented influx of modern technologies in the 21st century, especially communication technologies that have parameters that were previously unimaginable. These parameters—namely, velocity, scope and impact systems—can redefine space and time.

A chief objective of the work by Antonczak (2019) was to investigate whether mobile technologies promote a co-creative space between people and processes. New technologies, it is posited, enhance collaborative methods of interaction between organisational stakeholders through the “connectivity and exchange of intangible resources” (Antonczak, 2019, p. 1). Antonczak goes on to explain how mobile technologies impact the re-organisation of working practices, and how they introduce new forms of creative work, fostering co-creative spaces between people and processes. Mobile technology thus enhances knowledge-sharing benefits by closing the gap between meta-knowledge and situated practice. People can work from any geographical location and environment, which enhances the availability and creativity of people involved.

For the most part, I agree with the arguments presented in the extant literature but there is a lack of consideration of how these technologies are applied in multicultural environments—especially in collaborative decision-making. Drawing from work by Berglund and colleagues (2017) and from previous experience, I observed time and time again the assistance IT tools bring to planning and optimising systems and operations collaboratively, allowing the various skills and expertise of the stakeholders that exist within a company to be used fully. I therefore posit that a broader range of experts, operational and tacit knowledge, individual unique skills resulting from cultural tacit knowledge, and training are leveraged, through IT tools, to enhance the process of decision-making.

In recent years, models and tools to support decision-making have become increasingly interactive (Goran et al., 2018), based on software that helps decision-makers to compile and process the information necessary to solve business, management, and production problems. Even though these technologies might take some cultural issues for granted, they facilitate communication and accelerate decision-making. Alongside the considerable proliferation of various mobile infrastructures, even in Nigeria, e-collaboration and applied distributed collaborative decision-making is becoming increasingly common, although perhaps not as much as could be desired or expected (Abrahamyan et al., 2017). Further Abrahamyan and colleagues (2017) posit that mobile technologies allow decision-making teams to interact and collaborate with each other from distant locations in real (or delayed) time and even outside traditional office environments.

Some such tools, primarily used for formal governmental systems, are already available and proposed by regulating authorities, making their use almost obligatory. Other tools remain optional. Computer mediated communication, paired with IT, allows for new forms of interpersonal interactions such as email, instant messaging, packaging of information to databases, on-line editing of files and presentation, etc. For example, in working practices in Nigeria, such tools are utilised to support collaborative work in cross functional, decentralised, and distant teams through Zoom, Webinars, WhatsApp groups, instant messengers, and so on. Ideally, these should provide our managers with adequate real-time information to enable distant, common, strategic goal-oriented decision-making at various managerial levels. More and more of these tools are anticipated as technology develops.

It is clear from the literature that collaborative software is becoming rapidly popular, with new and improved versions arriving daily. Widespread use is being made, in particular, of web-based conferencing and other real-time, multimedia communications, which greatly enhance collaborative decision-making practices, and improve the speed and quality of decisions.

Summary: conceptual framework derived from the subject literature, based on similarity concept (Fisher, 2007)

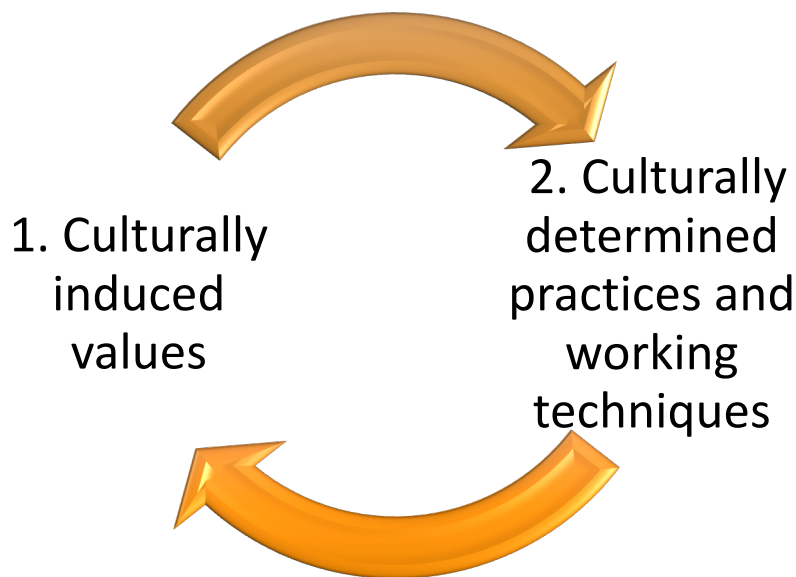
The analysed literature reflects a body of knowledge on collaborative decision-making. It was compiled from two different perspectives: (i) worldviews and values and (ii) practical approaches.

I posit here that though upper management may influence practices and techniques through direct instructions and applied policies, it is ultimately cultural values, which are mostly tacit by nature, that have greater influence on working culture and collaborative behaviours. They are also much more difficult to change.

Furthermore, the reviewed literature has been divided into the previously described nine themes, each of which falls conceptually into one of the two perspectives, while also reflecting the process of collaborative decision-making in diverse cultural environments. Figure 4 gives the conceptual framework for this thesis.

Figure 4

Conceptual Framework



Culturally induced values

1. National versus organisational values

2. Mindfulness, judgement, trust, emotions, influence, and bounded rationality concepts
3. Knowledge sharing and knowledge creation
4. Ethical considerations

Culturally determined practices and working techniques

5. Concept of collaborative decision-making applied in IJV in Nigeria
6. Communication in cross-cultural environment as part of effective decision-making—role of collaboration
7. Negotiations: conflict resolution using collaborative decision-making approaches in the culturally diverse environment of IJV company.
8. Hierarchy and power perceptions: leadership models in the cross-cultural environment of IJVs.
9. Support system for collaborative decision-making in IJV environment: new tools and techniques

I contrasted these nine themes with Hofstede's (1993, 2010) six cultural work-oriented dimensions, both approaches constituting different ways of examining the researched subject. Different cultural groups perceive these concepts differently, so they can be considered either jointly or in isolation and their impact on overall results is always entwined and manifold.

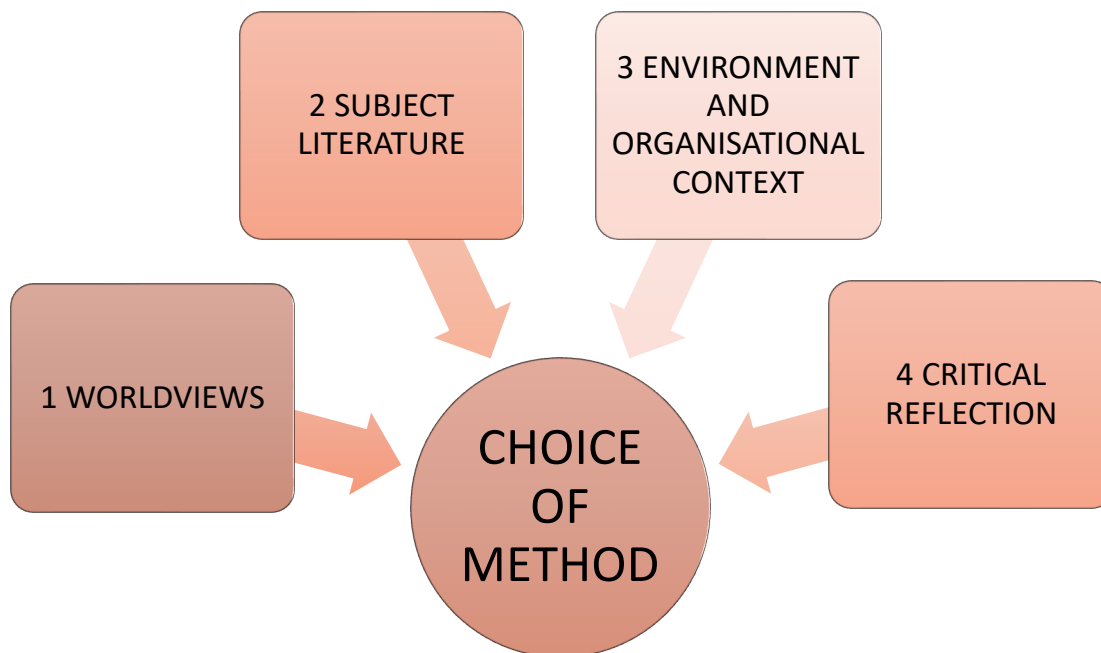
The overall process of the literature review was very revealing and stimulated my research. It allowed me to identify the gaps in the present knowledge. As such, in this thesis, I shall build on some of the views expressed, and make my own contribution to the literature. In Chapter 6, I shall emphasise this by contrasting my findings with those of extant literature.

Chapter 4: Methodology, data collection, and analysis techniques

Before explaining the research method and techniques adopted for this thesis, it seems important to establish the ideological position from which the research will be conducted (Creswell, 2014), and how my worldviews have impacted the choice of methodology and techniques. The choice of research methodology, techniques, and even formulation of research question reflect the researcher's worldview (Felizer, 2010). The research methodology further resulted from reflexive awareness of the researched problem, extant literature, and critical reflection on possible choices. The process is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Factors affecting choice of methodology



Worldview and research philosophical underpinnings

My life and research philosophy that underpin this study can be identified as pragmatism. Pragmatism is an alternative paradigm to positivism or constructivism. It focuses on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 26). This concept—employed in life, business, and research—goes even further, arriving closer to a “utilitarian” treatment of ethical and

practical issues (Mill, 2001). The foundation of this perspective is the salient observation that all humans are hard-wired to pursue happiness.

Regarding the business context in which my research is situated, I deeply believe that all the Company stakeholders, from upper management and shareholders to the employees lowest in the organisational hierarchy, initially wanted the IJV to be successful. To achieve that success, they needed to contribute to their working reality, to feel safe, secure, and somehow in control of their fate and professional futures. Such a philosophy takes into consideration both the short- and long-term consequences of management's actions, and treats the consequences for each person involved as equally important. In fact, the concept of general good is considered as a final and ultimate objective, while belief in the importance of co-operation/collaboration practices is emphasised so that there is close correlation between our own interests and interests of others (Mill, 2001). Thus, for successful decision-making to encompass all cultural nuances, people from different national contexts and diverse working cultures must embrace the fundamental pre-condition of collaboration (Vince, 2004).

Pragmatism is applied here as an oriented practice of discursive communities and as a means to generate useful, actionable knowledge. The method used in this thesis answers the dual criteria: (1) that the method is practical such that it gives a reasonable response to the problem at hand, as specified in the research question and sub-questions; (2) that the method is convincing to relevant reviewers and evaluators (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009). I agree with Friedrichs and Kratochwil (2009, p. 726) that when there are no inconvertible foundations of scientific knowledge, the obvious alternative is a pragmatic strategy of knowledge generation, which is the approach I adopted in this research, conducted in my own IJV organisation and conceptualised from the inside (Chavez, 2008). Mixed methods, as applied in this thesis, consist of a quantitative method—a short survey serving as the starting point of the research—and a qualitative methodology, which consisted of interviews that were intended to expand on the findings from the survey. The goal of this mixed-methods approach was to achieve profound insights into the complex organisational problems related to decision-making practices.

In my pragmatic/utilitarian approaches, strongly influenced by critical social theories, I attempt to prove the validity of moving away from formulaic, largely technical decisions to adopting a reflective, critical, independent, and collective thinking, reflective judgement, and problem solving in decision-making.

It could be argued that this type of methodological approach is “second best” and the issue of the findings’ generalisation could be considered problematic. However, as demonstrated by MacIntyre (1985) and Thomas (2010), generalisation in social sciences differs from the natural sciences: it is always limited by contingencies of social life and the unpredictability of human agency (MacIntyre, 1985; Eisenhart, 2009; Thomas, 2010; Stake, 2005). In fact, a qualitative approach owes its legitimacy to the experiential knowledge of phronesis.

The research was conducted in my own Company; therefore, naturally my character as a person and a researcher had an impact on my research attitude. However, I intentionally attempted to withdraw from the role of CEO/shareholder and critically examine my own personality as a leader and manager. I see myself as a researcher and an accommodative type of leader (Voss and Raz, 2016), prepared to sacrifice substantial amounts of time, resources, and effort to build and sustain relationships. I normally strive for mutually beneficial situations and bridge-building between stakeholders, regardless of their national or cultural background. My flaw is sometimes a naïve optimism and trust in the apparent good intentions of others but that is in line with the idea of “phronesis” underpinning research.

However, rather than using significant time, and discrete, formal data to prepare for discussions and meetings—as prescribed by an analytical approach—or pushing forwards for quick results under the understanding that “time is money”—as in an assertive method—I believed that mutual understanding and relationships will allow for deeper probing and discoveries that are more imbedded in real life. With this approach, most of the stakeholders of the company, are, in fact, invisible supporters of the researched project. They willingly and enthusiastically participated in the data collection stages and offered a significant number of insights and suggestions, which can be clearly visible in transcripts from the mind-mapping sessions.


The approach adopted in this study can thus be called both observational and clinical (Schein, 1987, 2008). It is drawn from academic, theoretical knowledge, and quantitative methods. The initial step was the administration of a survey, which was later followed by practical experience, interviews, and discussions in three cycles.

As a first step, I engaged in reflexive awareness in relation to the present decision-making system in the IJV, and the possible impact of the proposed changes. This was to articulate and explicate the tacit knowledge embedded in organisational fabrics—fractured into various diversified concepts because of the diversity of the organisational system and of the IJV, which was also influenced by various national cultures. Next, I identified various possible sources of information that might provide useful data aiming to answer the research question. Table 1 shows in concise form the methodology and analytic technique adopted.

Table 1

Methodology and analytic technique

METHODOLOGY	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
TECHNIQUE	Survey	Pragmatism based— analytic technics abduction
DATA SOURCES	Response to e-mail survey	-Mind-mapping sessions -In-depth interviews with selected managers -Transcripts from online meetings -Narratives from selected managers -Analysis of results of selected decisions -formal company documentation

DATA ANALYSIS	Standard descriptive statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Critical reflection - Coding similar themes - Templates analysis - Tabulating results - analysis of results
RESULTS	Conclusions for further explication and reflexive awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Converging of results from different sources - Analysis through qualitative techniques - Analysis of coded themes and critical reflection

Mixed research methodology is largely based on live data collected through qualitative techniques. This methodology was chosen because it enables limited quantitative and extensive qualitative techniques to be triangulated and converged (Jick, 1979). It provided an extremely rich description of complex organisational behaviours resulting from cultural diversity, which could hardly be examined and described, solely, by quantitative methodology.

Four distinct interventions have been attempted at intervals of approximately 4–6 months, and the results of each were analysed and reported separately before the comprehensive, triangulated patterns could be attained and reported.

Quantitative techniques: First stage of data collection

After I had met the ethical requirements on transparency and respondents' wellbeing, as well as several prior consultations and discussions with participants, an atmosphere of interest in the research was created within the IJV. Participants believed that the research would improve interpersonal relationships at the Company. This understanding and attitude meant the survey had a good response, as most of the interviewed subjects

shared the researcher's dissatisfaction with the existing situation and believed in improving decision-making processes and working habits through more collaborative practices.

The first stage of data collection began in July 2017 with the dissemination of the survey. The survey was conducted using the questionnaire shown in Figure 6. Survey questions were formulated in consultation with my primary supervisor and then approved by the University of Liverpool ethical committee prior to application. They were constructed using insights from Hofstede's (2010) six cultural dimensions.

The survey consists of 15 questions that deal with various aspects of decision-making practices. It was administered to stakeholders at all organisational levels in my own IJV Company. It was distributed by email to all stakeholders at all managerial levels, irrespective of nationality, and with a time limit of two weeks for response, rendering the received reply sample random.

Questions 1–4 deal with the way decisions are taken. Aspects of power and distance and authority are clearly illustrated. Responses are on the scale from 1 (autocratic) to 5 (collaborative) practices. Question 5 refers to decision-making tools and support, including their use (as it is) and desired use (as it should be). Again, scores are on the scale from 1–5, where 1 represents “not used” (or “not needed”) and 5 “very much used” (and “needed very much”). Questions 6 and 7 refer to information and communication flows, including whether they are clear and properly understood by the stakeholders. Questions 8 and 12 refer to the importance of staff welfare versus the importance of profit-making in the organisation, as perceived by the stakeholders (femininity/masculinity). Question 9 illustrates the importance of long-term versus short-term Company goals. Values closer to 0 show a preference for short-term goals while a score closer to 5 shows a preference for long-term objectives. Questions 10 and 11 refer to the attitudes of stakeholders/respondents and perceptions regarding readiness to take risks or an aversion to risk. Values closer to 5 in Question 10 reflect the necessity of taking risk to gain comparative advantage, while scores closer to 1 prefer risk aversion in any case. In Question 11, attitudes favouring risk avoidance are

Figure 6

Survey administered to participants



QUESTIONNAIRE:

Tick appropriate:

(1) POSITION : TOP MANAGEMENT __ - MIDDLE MANAGEMENT__ - LINE MANAGERS__

(2) SEX : M__ F__

(3) NATIONALITY

- NIGERIAN
- EXPATRATE (EUROPE)
- OTHER – EXPATRIATE (AFRICA)
- OTHER - EXPATRIATE (ASIA)

In the scale from 1-5 (where 1 describes - don't agree and 5 - fully agree) describe / assess following processes in your Company :

	Question	WHAT IS	WHAT SHOULD BE
1	<i>Decision-making process in your JV involves the managers of all levels.</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2	<i>I am fully aware how decisions are taken and who take ultimate decision.</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3	<i>I am fully aware what factors are considered when decisions are taken.</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4	<i>Decisions are taken after analysis and presentation of all views</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5	<i>Decision making support tools including electronic means are widely applied in our organization</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6	<i>The stakeholders are fully aware of company goals and objectives.</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7	<i>Communication channels are clearly defined</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8	<i>Decisions considering investments not profit bearing but welfare and prestige boosting are considered desirable .</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9	<i>Decisions affect future of the company, are more important than immediate profit considerations.</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10	<i>Certain element of risk is always necessary for maintaining company comparative advantage</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11	<i>Stakeholders avoid risk always whereby don't take opportunity of changes and new environment</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12	<i>Staff welfare and well-being of all stakeholders is more important than ROI and the bottom line of all decisions</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13	<i>Ethnic / national culture constructs are considered while decisions are taken</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14	<i>The company is nationally / ethnically diversified and this creates lots of problems in decision-making process.</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15	<i>The company is nationally / ethnically diversified but decisions are trust- based and therefore diversity is the source of Company competitive advantage</i>	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

closer to 1, while those favourable to certain risk taking as a necessary element of Company strategies are closer to 5. Questions 13, 14, and 15 refer to stakeholders' perception of diversity, including its desirability and usefulness, versus undesirability

and its detriment in decision-making practices and managerial controls. In Question 13 and 15, a respond with a score closer to 1 regards diversity as an obstacle to decision-making practices and efficiency, while values closer to 5 reflect a positive attitude toward the benefits of cultural adversity to the quality and processes of decision-making. The opposite is the case in Question 14, where 5 and values closer to it see diversity as the source of problems and values closer to 1 take the other view.

These questions are constructed to ensure that by replying to each, respondents align themselves with a particular attitude in each cultural dimension. The questions also measure the intensity of respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards collaboration. These questions also aim to capture how respondents regard the influence of cultural diversity in decision-making and the quality of its practice in the IJV.

In creating the survey questions, I considered characteristics of the targeted population of decision-making personnel within the IJV (managers). I aimed to avoid the following four common errors (Dillman, 2007, Thorpe et al., 2009):

1. A Sampling error occurs when the sample based on which the research is carried out does not reflect the population. This can occur when the sample is incorrectly chosen, or when the response rate is insufficient.
2. Coverage errors occur when the list from which the population is drawn does not include all elements of the population. In this way, samples do not provide an equal opportunity for all demographics of the population to express their views.
3. A measurement error is the result of poor question-setting, resulting in inaccurate or ambiguous responses.
4. A non-response error occurs when a significant number of people to whom the questionnaire is directed do not respond.

As the examined population was already small, some generalisation will be needed to relate these experiences to a larger context. Avoiding non-response errors (4) also meant that other types of errors were minimised or even eliminated. A high response rate precludes potential coverage and sampling errors. In addition, respondents could contact me if they had any doubts regarding the research questions.

Preliminary conclusions can be drawn regarding how different work-related cultural dimensions are linked to respondents' nationalities, and which behaviours and attitudes prevail in the Company. Of course, this is a simplified rationality, because the respondents' answers may result from factors other than their national culture.

My intention was to further explain and describe survey findings using rich qualitative data. This critical analysis and reflection was based on a theoretical framework borrowed from Hofstede and colleagues (2010). His six nationally induced cultural dimensions are presented below.

Cultural dimensions in the survey questions:

1. High power distance—low power distance

This dimension of culturally induced attitudes to work considers questions of power dynamics: Who wields the ultimate power over decisions taken in the organisation? Where do decisions originate? Which group in the organisation dominates decision-making activities, and how, and through which channels and procedures, are decisions determined, communicated, and implemented?

High power distance requires a substantial number of protocols and procedures before the most senior person takes a decision and moves it down through a strictly predetermined chain of command. A strict hierarchy and top-down flow of decisions is observed. In such systems, lower-level managers may not even be able to consult higher level managers and may be obliged to pass through several intermediaries to be able to communicate their findings, problems and suggestions.

In the case of low power distance, decisions can be made at various levels, whereby everyone has access to the ultimate decision-maker, if such an individual exists. It is easy for all participants to communicate across all levels. There are no barriers to the flow of information. Depending on the level of accepted distributive practices, decisions may often be made at lower levels and communicated laterally—as opposed to a top-down fashion—within the organisation.

2. Individualism–collectivism

This dimension refers to the procedure of decision-taking and the way such decisions are taken. A decision-making process might be individual, concentrated in the hands of a senior manager, specialised experts, or directors; it might also be distributed more collectively: decisions are then taken by a group of stakeholders, with extensive consultation taking place within the organisation.

This dimension answers the question: who participates in decision-making process and to what degree? In the case of individualism, only selected stakeholders can take decisions while in the case of collectivism, decisions are consensual, and involve many consultations and collaborative actions.

3. Masculinity–Femininity

The next dimension refers to the ideology/attitudes prevailing in organisations, especially during decision-making processes. Masculinity is an approach that is tough, straightforward, and decisive, while femininity is a soft touch, providing care, and nurturing. This dimension tackles salient social issues in the organisation: how much do decision-makers consider the welfare and well-being (including psychological comfort) of all stakeholders in their decision-making process? If these considerations are prioritised, the prevailing ideology within the organisation is considered to have feminine characteristics. If they do not, and the only interest is profits, returns on investments, and aggressive market policies, the ideology behind all decisions will have masculine characteristics.

It is worth noting that traditional Western economic thought has a strict masculine and individualistic approach, as do Western habits, work-oriented practices, and behaviours. African attitudes are much more community-oriented. With the effects of globalisation and the merging of different national cultures in global working practices, the strong and aggressive (masculine) orientation is slowly giving way to softer ones, which provide inclusion and nurturing.

4. High risk avoidance–low risk avoidance

The questions selected in this category are designed to illustrate respondents' attitudes and feelings towards taking risky decisions. They concentrate on the respondents' perceptions of what constitutes risk, how it is perceived, what precautions are taken, and if they are necessary. They also assess to what degree projected future benefits explain risk-taking. These questions illustrate whether stakeholders are prepared to take a higher level of risk for higher reward, or if the protective attitude in the organisation is prevalent, and they prefer to play it safe for a lower level of reward.

5. Short-term perspective–long-term perspective

This dimension deals with the perception of time and its importance in a business context within organisations, and for various cultural groups. Respondents identify whether short-term, immediate gains or long-term, future gains are more important to them. Future gains, even if much greater than immediate gains, might not be acceptable for some people if they have a short-term perspective. On the other hand, others might easily forfeit immediate small, short-term gains for larger gains they have to wait longer for. These perceptions are nationally/culturally dependent. In most cases, local respondents are more concerned with future, long-term gains, while Westerners look for quicker returns, especially when involved with an IJV. Stakeholders' cultural national values come into play here as different nationalities relate differently to the issue of time. Respondents identify which aims are considered to be more important: long-term development or immediate profits.

6. Indulgent–frugal

This last dimension contains questions that also refer to respondents' readiness to spend time on non-tangible gains or to prioritise only the size and speed of profit-making. This includes decisions made that relate to investments that do not immediately bring profit, but instead constitute intangible benefits through staff welfare and enhanced prestige. The results derived from this group of questions aim to show if respondents consider non-profit making investments desirable or indulgent, and to what extent. If such investments are not acceptable, the attitude of respondents is considered

to be frugal; if they are, the respondents are said to be indulgent. Frugal or indulgent attitudes and tendencies are of course related to the individual character of respondents, but they can also result from value systems and behavioural habits prevailing in the respondents' national cultures.

To glean further insights into what stakeholders consider to be a desired outcome and what exists or is achievable in the organisation, the structure of the questionnaire deals with two aspects of stakeholders' perceptions. These two aspects are: "what exists" and "what should be". Values are placed on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 represents the notion "don't agree" and 5 "fully agree"). This approach is in line with the position of Argyris (1980; quoted in Schein, 2010), who says that desired organisational practices differ from those in use (espoused values and values at use). It was interesting to evaluate the extent to which nationality impacts the differences between respondents' desirable values and their values as they are used in the business environment under study. Most stakeholders seem to be seeking an ideal situation, in line with their nationally induced cultural beliefs and lived-in values, but often are ultimately satisfied with what is achievable and practicable within their working reality.

For the purpose of clarity, summary sheets from the survey have been collated for the two groups: Nigerians and Expatriates. The results were tabulated in Excel sheets, compared, and presented graphically. This has been done from two perspectives: (1) from the point of view of how the participants perceive the existing status and (2) what respondents desire or consider optimal regarding decision-making practices in a culturally diversified environment. These observations are later enriched by qualitative data gathered from additional sources.

The division of the participants into two groups is a simplification for the purposes of clarity: it assumes that Nigerians (as a group) have different national cultural values from Europeans (Westerners).

This, of course, does not clearly illustrate Nigerian cultural specifics as a group because, fundamentally, a Nigerian nationality does not exist. Nigerian citizens represent various tribes and ethnic groups that are very distinct culturally and are sometimes very different in their approach to issues, working practices, and culture

generally. However, for the purposes of this study, which deals only with work and decision-making in the working environment and related cultural attitudes, this simplification is appropriate. Likewise, when we speak about expatriates in this study, we also speak mainly about French or other European nationals. Even though this group is perhaps more uniform in terms of working culture, it is also by no means the same. Not all Europeans have the same working culture; there are even differences among French nationals. In an IJV, there are some individuals who have previously worked in international environments and some who are working abroad for the first time, meaning their attitudes and understanding of cultural issues differ greatly.

In any case, the research intended to re-confirm that both groups analysed here are very different/distinct from each other in more than one aspect. These differences were analysed not only in light of the fact that the respondents come from different nationalities but also from different continents. I attempted to pinpoint if they are just the result of drastically different spheres of cultural influences or if other factors are at play.

Correlation

Another objective of the study was to ascertain if there is a correlation between the ethnic background of participants and their attitudes towards collaborative practices, especially in decision-making. To simplify the quantitative analysis, with its many diverse nationalities, the stakeholders were divided into just two groups: Nigerian and Expatriates. This was done to identify the clear distinctions in national cultural differences, if any. The findings in this respect will be further explained during the qualitative analysis and critical reflection stages.

This division into only two groups is a considerable simplification because among the Nigerians examined, at least five ethnic groups can be identified (Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Isham, and Efik) and among the Expatriates at least two (French and Polish). Periodically, other nationals also participated in IJV activities at the managerial level but only one (who was Indian) was given a survey to complete.

When correlation values derived from the survey are close to +1, it demonstrates a positive and strong correlation between the respondent's nationality and agreement with collaborative practices, while negative values demonstrate a negative correlation.

Values close to 0 show a very weak correlation between nationality and attitudes towards collaborative practices. The presentation of results and a discussion of how, if at all, they correlate, is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Qualitative techniques

As a part of the mixed methodology explained above, and to further interpret the findings from the survey, I critically analysed the propositions derived from survey data and contrasted them with findings from several qualitative approaches. Where suitable, they were subjected to qualitative techniques of examination and analysis (in some cases, they were rejected).

In this approach, detailed narratives from interviews with the participants were analysed. The analytic objective was to understand how their attitudes affect collaboration in decision-making within the IJV and to which extent they are moderated by national cultural values. These approaches are substantiated by extant literature, providing points of reference and a theoretical framework where possible (Friedrich and Kratochwil, 2009). The purpose of this method was to answer the research question: do collaborative practices enhance the quality of decision-making practices in the multi-ethnic and multicultural environments of the IJV Company. Additionally, this method could elucidate the role played by the different national cultures of the stakeholders within the IJV.

I adopted a decision-making model that can be seen as a repetitive four-step iterative process (Figure 7). Observations focused on strengthening/feedback loops from the review stage to the choice, and intelligence stages. Likewise, loopbacks from the choice/design stage to the intelligence stage were reinforced.

Three such iterative processes based on this model were undertaken and the findings in each were described and analysed.

Data sources and data collection techniques: General considerations

The collection of data posed several challenges owing to the active work processes in which data were captured, and the wide variety of available sources. A list of the classification of the data sources used in this thesis is provided here.

Data sources:

- Individual consultation with stakeholders
- Mind-mapping sessions: agendas, memos, minutes, transcripts from discussions
- Matters arising from mind-mapping sessions—transcripts from discussions after the sessions
- Transcripts from discussions in interactive hubs created as a result of AL and AR (i.e. “operational groups,” “consultative groups”, and “operational hubs”)
- Transcripts from interviews with individual stakeholders
- Official company documents
- Tacit knowledge—researcher
-

Description of the data collection techniques and acknowledgement of challenges

Figure 7

Iterative Decision-making Model

STEP 1 STEP2 STEP3 STEP4 STEP 1a
Observations → Design → Choice → Review Observations→ etc.

Four mind-mapping sessions were marked as separation points between the observation cycles and other information, and data from various sources were collected within these limits. A considerable number of sources of raw data were scripts and transcript narratives, which I obtained from my conversations with stakeholders at various managerial levels with different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds.

Fortunately, the process was facilitated by easy access to the Company’s internal documentation and records. Access to these data was fully granted not just because of my dual role as CEO and researcher, but because most, if not all stakeholders were aware of the purpose and objectives of the research and actively and enthusiastically supported it. Apart from access to Company official records, other advantages of being an “insider” in the process of data collection were insights into the emotional, linguistic, sensory, and cognitive principles of the participants, knowledge

and pre-knowledge of historical and practical happenings in the organisation, and the ability to identify unusual behaviours and situations (Chavez, 2008).

Furthermore, as a “native” researcher (Brannick, 2007) in my own Company, I possessed some tacit organisational knowledge, enjoyed the privilege of already understanding certain occurrences and practices, had the ability to navigate organisational politics as well as enjoying influence in adopting new methods and administrative practices.

The major pitfalls of this dual role, which I tried to guard against, were selective reporting, difficulty with recognising patterns owing to familiarity, bias in selecting participants, and obscured representation. As a result, frequent checks with other stakeholders and long periods of critical reflection were necessary to avoid these problems and biases. Several impromptu meetings, interviews, and dialogs with randomly selected employees were also called to examine their views and compare their observations with mine when I was unsure. The aim of this process was to identify and remove any biases I might retain as an insider, CEO, and IJV shareholder. Transcripts and notes from these meetings constituted additional, supportive source data to this study. Finally, a considerable amount of data was also gleaned and extracted from official sources inside and outside the Company wherever possible. With prior knowledge of the inner workings of the Company, I also knew that insight into the results of the Company’s activities, particularly in sensitive areas relating to personnel, required a great deal of diplomacy and tact when talking, discussing, and interacting with stakeholders. Furthermore, the conclusions that emerged after each specific decision required patience and perseverance; they involved some of the stakeholders’/employees’ personal feelings, which were varied and not always explicit.

Among the techniques used for data collection, but primarily for making better sense of said data, I adopted an ORJI (observation, reaction, judgement, intervention) system, following Schein (1999), and used my journal entries that contained collated ad hoc data and insights from all the above-described sources. As stated, four interactive sessions in the form of mind-mapping meetings were carried out at intervals of about five to six months. Many of the concepts in these sessions were based on frameworks inspired by Coghlan and Brannick (2014). They were attended by managers of all levels

and different geographical locations, although the frequency of attendance varied as participation was voluntary. The collaboration of nationally diverse groups and the suggestions and analysis of the results of new actions (changes) were introduced and discussed.

Data from “operational groups”, “consultative groups”, and “operational hubs”— IT applications

Despite the conceptual division of this process into four mind-mapping sessions, in reality, the process of data collection was continuous in nature and changes to the internal organisational culture were ongoing and very subtle. From the beginning of the project, after the start of my DBA program, I encouraged questioning attitudes, leading to Action Learning on the part of stakeholders. As a result of interactive discussions, conceptual tools such as “online meetings”, “WhatsApp groups”, and “on-line real-time virtual hubs” were gradually introduced and used on an operative level. These tools enhanced collaboration between diverse cultural and geographical groups (as the Company has branches in various parts of Nigeria and managers also travel abroad as part of their jobs and for training). Interviews, discussions, and transcripts from these meetings formed a very useful source of continuous research data.

The creation of these groups was possible and largely facilitated by the introduction of additional conceptual IT tools and staff training on their use and application. From a practical point of view, and taking into consideration advancements in IT, various techniques and decision-support tools (Filip et al., 2017, Zaraté, 2013) exist that are suitable (workable), vital even, for applying to an IJV organisation to improve communication and interaction between stakeholders.

Some of these tools were already employed when the research started, but many were introduced during the process. They now became indispensable, enhancing geographically distributed collaborative decision-making practices. More may be needed in future, as advances in IT greatly enhance organisational practices and habits through computer-mediated collaboration. Use of these support tools, especially mobile devices, co-evolves with formal and informal activities and that situation is currently acceptable within our organisation. There are no stringent controls on confidentiality as

it is considered that the loyalty and integrity of stakeholders are sufficient guarantees. Some tools that were originally used informally (instant messaging for instance) have penetrated fully into organisational practices and decision-making processes and are used to create real-time operative "consultation groups".

Official company sources and archives

Official and confidential Company documentation and records such as internal reports, memos, minutes, transcripts from various training meetings and discussions during the study period (2017–2019) were consulted and used. However, some records from earlier periods were also deemed useful as they helped to create a basis on which problems were illustrated and the context of the research was explained.

Research materials were collected from various, often confidential official documents since, along with ethical approval papers, the researcher also obtained the Company's authorisation to use (without prejudice) its official documentation for this research. These included minutes of meetings, reports, PDF documents, data sets, video recordings, audio recordings, pictures, memos, and HR records. The researcher was granted access to these data, largely as a result of her position in the Company and personal recognition, but also and perhaps mainly owing to the high level of expectation from stakeholders, including board members, that the research would provide tangible, actionable assistance to solving existing problems.

Duration (time factor) of data collection and processing

It is clear that the amount of unstructured or semi-structured data collected from the sources described above was enormous, and both its collection and processing became an overwhelming task and took lots of time to make sense of. Although it may appear that the time taken to complete the research was too long, I believe it would be impossible to notice changing patterns in staff collaborative behaviours during shorter periods. Each mind-mapping session was planned in the space of five to six months to allow changes to be identified, and patterns of behaviours to be observed from one session to the next.

This is perhaps one of the disadvantages of my method, as compared to an inductive or deductive approach. However, as often happens in social science research,

abductive thinking was applied to arrive at valid results, rich and meaningful data patterns from observed complex organisational behaviours and phenomena using lots of unstructured data. These had to be sorted out and coded over an adequate period of time in which social changes related to decision-making and collaboration practices might be identifiable and visible. It is worth adding that observations and reflections continued to take place, even after the research data had been collected and while it was being processed. This is especially true in the Company, where the results of some decisions might not be seen until long after they were taken, affecting not only the selected or researched components (in this case, decision-making practices) but also various other aspects of organisational life.

Analytic tools and techniques applied to qualitative data

The analytical tools used to make sense of the vast amount of unstructured data included, but were not limited to, thematic analysis through coding, tabulations or matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994), summaries, and patterns drafting. Processes were both manual and used IT tools. In particular, template analysis—a very useful technique of thematic data analysis—was used (King and Brooks, 2018; King, 2012).

This technique involved the development of coding templates. Based on my observations, an a priori template relative to conceptual themes was developed. These themes were largely derived based on my hypothesis that collaboration is a necessary tool for successful decision-making in IJVs where national cultural work-oriented values can interact in various ways. Then, I developed new templates post-hoc, based on the coded data.

The use of a “Matrix” involves data tabulation in such a way that they reflect different connections, interdependence, and comparison within different levels of data. My templates underwent changes as the data was analysed. However, most of the changes in the templates took place after each mind-mapping session, which provided significant new data. The templates were based on the nine main categories identified in the extant literature and from Hofstede’s (2010) six work-oriented cultural dimensions. The final templates encompassed the main themes, allowing the research questions to be assessed.

Furthermore, for qualitative analysis, I used the NVivo 12 software. This tool was used to assist in the organising, storing, and retrieving of some of the data from different media and formats, while helping to ascertain the common themes within said data. However, most of raw data were totally unstructured and not very suitable for using this software. Frequently the software failed to provide convergent themes. The summaries from the program appeared like a selection of unrelated data items. Ultimately, I made a decision to use manual analysis working with templates, summaries, tabulation, and common-sense analysis.

I kept the nine themes and six cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010) in mind during discussions and interviews with participants, so resulting answers could be aligned and triangulated. Questions were not given directly, but in a dialogue form or during discussions, with transcripts of these discussions later prepared. Sometimes these discussions were recorded, but on observing respondents' discomfort in many cases, I limited myself to note-taking and descriptive narratives immediately after the discussion. Examples of some of the questions are presented below.

Main themes and templates emerging from interview, dialogues, discussions, and questioning techniques data

Preliminary questions:

1. How would you describe the power distance in decision-making in our Company? Do you have easy access to decision-makers? Is it a desirable situation?
2. Are decisions taken collectively? How many participants are present? Do you ever just receive decisions without earlier deliberation on them and are just expected to follow them?
3. Do most company decisions take into consideration staff comfort and well-being, or do they rather prioritise the Company's performance in terms of profit and returns on investment?
4. Is management, in their decision-making, ready to take some risks through experimental, novel ways of problem solving, or rather do they play it safe

- while taking decisions, avoiding unpredicted and unsure methods. Why do you think it is so? How do you assess this behaviour?
5. Do you perceive decisions taken in our Company as strategic and long term, or rather seeking immediate results? Is the Company's long-term interest considered equally important or more important than immediate gains? Are you aware of perspectival long-term plans of company development?
 6. How indulgent are managers (you) in carrying out the decisions and assessing results? Is the issue of cost and spending critical in every decision-making situation.?

The a priori template is presented below:

Collaboration in decision-making serves as a tool for addressing problems of different cultural work-oriented attitudes between European and Nigerians especially in decision-making routines in IJVs

Collaboration practices in working environment

Decision making routines

European–Nigerian work-oriented practices

IJV–national versus organisational culture and working habits

Examples of other templates were developed after data analysis. They evolved through iterative application of templates against the data. They are also the result of aligning the themes with the research questions. Furthermore, they were formulated around the nine themes identified in the literature, derived from various discourses related to the research question:

1. National cultural work-oriented habits and behaviours—similarities and differences between Nigerian and expatriate stakeholders affecting decision-making processes in IJV
2. Multiple stakeholder collaboration allows the Company to benefit from fully exploiting the potential of the explicit and tacit knowledge of its many multinational stakeholders and improve decision-making process.
3. Different cultural approaches to decision-making—role of collaborative practices in sense making, mindfulness, trusts, emotions, and processes.

4. Communication—language and narratives relative to decision-making affected by different national cultures. Does collaboration help?
5. How national cultures affect knowledge creation and sharing in IJVs – especially relative to collaborative or not decision-making.
6. Conflicts can be mediated, negotiated, and managed through collaboration in decision-making
7. Power perception and resulting from national cultures leadership models as they affect decision-making processes.
8. National cultures depending Ethical issues perceived differently and affecting collaboration.
9. Resulting from national cultural values attitude towards various tools and technologies aiding decisions and collaboration.

The templates also included various operating routines that respondents commented and elaborated on. As such, I collected this information as seen through the cultural lenses of the participants.

Consequently, significant management routines were identified and evaluated from the point of view of co-operative/collaborative approaches to decision-making (Meyer, 2014; Wei-Lin and Clark, 1999). These operating routines are related to decision-making, and all require some degree of co-ordination or collaboration. The type, degree, depth, and frequency of such practices are affected by differences in national/ethnic culture-induced values, and how these values impact working practices routines and habits. Table 2 presents a combination of the matrix and the template that was applied to the data along eight cooperative/collaborative work-oriented routines. A distinct cultural dimension (determinant) was given to each of them. Using the multifaceted aspects of Table 2, the most common operational routines were selected and discussed with stakeholders during the interviews, mind-mapping sessions, and through other communications. This was done to assess the stakeholders' feelings about and impressions of the types of decision-making practices that were prevailing in our organisation.

I attempted to assess which mode is perceived—according to different nationals—as more suitable for achieving more tangible, long-term, and short-term

results, and why. In my notes, I continually reflected on the nationality of each person interviewed, to observe whether some patterns were indicative of national cultural values, and in what ways. I did that by marking an N (Nigerian) or E (Expatriate) against either code names, source documents, or observations. During the analysis, I would therefore always know whether a particular opinion or pattern was relevant to both or only one nationality.

Obtaining truthful responses was often an issue, as questions sometimes troubled respondents, particularly if their answers appeared different from prevailing practices, generally accepted norms, or even perceived by the “correctness” of the answer. This might have been because they were uncomfortable in their opposition to our consensus-based environment. However, I succeeded in convincing respondents, in most cases, that the research was being conducted with the objective of adapting routine stakeholders’ requirements, hence constructive criticism was very much needed.

Table 2

Title

OPERATING ROUTINES	CULURAL DETERMINANT	
Communicating	low versus	high context
Evaluating	direct versus	Indirect negative
Persuading	principles versus	application -first
Leading	egalitarian versus	hierarchical
Deciding	consensus versus	top –to-down
Trusting	task versus	relationship based
Disagreeing	confrontation versus	compromise
Scheduling	linear time versus	flexible time

Additional findings, as derived from the survey-based and conceptual culture map (Meyer, 2014), regarded the perceived best situation—in decision-making (as it is and as it should be) and as related to national culture.

Another similar model, which was the basis of my thematic templates, was drawn from the work of Brett and colleagues (2006)—an approach much like that of Hofstede

and colleagues (2010) and Meyer (2014). The most important organisational processes (management routines) that might be affected by different nationally induced cultural dimensions were identified and are presented in Table 3. This matrix enriched my observations and helped clarify attitudes to decision-making that were based on the respondents' cultural behaviours.

Communication and communication channels in various business environments—including my own IJV Company—closely reflect national culture as presented by in Hofstede's (2010) concept of various cultural dimensions affecting decision-making and other working practices. These cultural dimensions reflect whether high power distance or low power distance, individualism or collectivism, masculine or feminine tendencies, or frugal or indulgent tendencies are prevalent in the organisation. These dimensions were examined first through the survey and then explained through rich qualitative data collected and thematically processed for this purpose.

Use of languages can be a matter of technical proficiency in expressing general and technical themes. However, languages are also used to express a deeper cultural understanding of the interlocutor's culture. Often, proficiency in a language alone suffices for individual situations, but mere proficiency is not enough for maintaining good relationships or building understanding and co-operation. Different cultures perceive the need to learn others' languages differently in comparison to their lingua franca. This aspect was examined and explained as it played a quite important role in the Company.

Table 3

Title

CONSTRUCT	CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND NUANCES
(1) Communication	Direct versus Indirect
(2) Language	Understanding of nuances of expressions and technical jargon (French/English/local speakers)

(3) Hierarchy	different attitudes towards authority and status
(4) Decision making	conflicting norms—strict chain of command distributed—collaborative decision-making

As suggested by Hofstede and colleagues (2010), hierarchy and its impact on decision-making practices can be analysed within cultural dimensions, especially power distance, degree of acceptable collaborative practices, time perception, and the importance of organisational objectives (indulgence versus frugality).

Critical Reflection

I reflected critically on all findings and results, aided by my observations, research diary, and notes (Nadin and Cassel, 2006). Reflexivity involves considering the way in which research is conducted and attempting to understand how the process of research shapes the research's outcomes (Hardy et al., 2001). It is considered to enhance the quality of mixed methods research by improving the data's trustworthiness and helping the researcher get a better understanding of their role. I therefore engaged in reflexivity and considered it one of most important elements of the analysis process. Despite having factual data, templates and matrices, the real sense-making could only be made through deep critical reflection over the themes that emerged. In my opinion, different attitudes and social phenomena could be interpreted differently, often incorrectly—subjectively, or even in a biased way—hence the need to frequently revisit and reflect on findings and integrate other points of view before drawing conclusions. The purpose of these analyses was to permit observations from different perspectives, while finding common points of reference regarding the impact of national culture on decision-making practices in the Company.

Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of results

I shall begin to present the results of my research using the discrete data collected from surveys and analysed using simple descriptive statistics. This will act as a starting point, before moving on to deeper levels of research and detailed and qualitative explanations of it.

The first processed source document—a complete set of coded and collated survey data in Excel sheets, along with the participants' information sheet and ethical declaration—is included in Appendix 1.

The Company is medium size, with about 35–30 managers of different levels who were survey participants and who could be involved in decision-making. Lower line managers and supervisors and a few stakeholders from outside the organisation were included into research. In total, 35 survey forms were distributed by email to this entire population. However, only 26 respondents returned the survey, resulting in a 74% response rate, which made the obtained data a random sample acceptable for further research. Three replies came after the deadline, and one was not valid as it was wrongly completed. These were all excluded.

The total number of valid questionnaires, therefore, was reduced to 22. All four common survey errors described in Chapter 4 were avoided, moreover, the survey's significance in the overall research was lower than the results from qualitative techniques. The survey results were used to direct the qualitative part of the study. This approach was taken because even if this sample was representative of my own IJV Company, it cannot be used for a larger generalisation.

As expected, the survey reflects some work-related values, patterns of behaviour, and attitudes towards decision-making practices in my own IJV, and is useful for drawing conclusions about how to improve relationships between different nationals working together in the organisation. However, these findings are very sketchy and are based on an insufficient amount of data. Therefore, they still require further, deeper explanation via other methodologies and techniques so that they are more descriptive, dependable, insightful, and meaningful.

As stated in Chapter 4, to identify the impact of nationally induced work-oriented behaviours and habits, the respondents were artificially divided into two different national groups. These groups were labelled “Nigerians” for local partners and “Expatriates” for the foreign partners and other non-Nigerians in the IJV. Of course, this was a simplification of the real situation but useful conceptually, and was adopted to give a general picture of the existing societal patterns within the IJV.

Below is a short description of both groups, which was derived from my lived working experience, my observations, transcripts from narratives, and my discussions with participants. Opinions of the company stakeholders gleaned during the research were categorised by drawing from theoretical frameworks in the literature, as set out in Chapter 2 (Hofstede et al., 2010; Meyer, 2014).

First group—Nigerians

This group includes supervisors, lower-level managers, and Nigerian members of management (higher-level managers). It is much larger than the Expatriates group and operates at all managerial and employee levels. During the period of AR, the number of managers in this group fluctuated between 18 and 22 and constituted roughly two-thirds of the number of employees. As mentioned earlier, the group is far from ethnically uniform, comprising ethnicities such as Yorubas, Hausas, Igbos, Efiks, and Ishams.

No local language is used in official communications; however local languages are spoken sometimes in informal communications. Nevertheless, English is treated as the lingua franca, mainly because English is an official language in Nigeria. Even though the Company’s Nigerian managers hail from different ethnic groups and parts of the country, I feel that they possess certain national and organisational cultural similarities that give them a common identity and a feeling of belonging together. This makes them distinct from the group of foreign managers. Most of the members of the “Nigerians” group were long-time employees of the local Company before it was made into an IJV.

Second group—Expatriates

In this study, when I refer to an “expatriate manager”, I am referring to an employee (manager) of foreign origin—non-Nigerian—and with foreign training. This is a clearly distinct group of stakeholders/managers, which in Nigeria is popularly called “expatriates” or “aliens” [sic]. This nomenclature is officially used by all, including authorities, and underlines an existing distinction from the “locals”. The term “expatriates” may refer to different nationalities but in the examined Company, these stakeholders were predominantly Europeans—mostly French but also Polish, Belgian, Egyptian, and Indian. Within this group, there were also cultural distinctions but as with the Nigerian group, these are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The “expatriates” examined here had specific work-oriented habits and behaviours and, with a few exceptions, they did not blend easily with the Nigerian group. I happen to belong to this group, so in order to avoid bias, my description of this group is mostly based on opinions from other interviewed stakeholders and, where I state my own opinion, it takes the form of detached, critical observations. As one of the Company’s shareholders, I am immersed in the local context and culture. Thus, my “expatriate” outlook is greatly tempered by my position in the IJV company.

The expatriate managers were mostly experts in their discipline, had good education and work experience, some international exposure, and professional skills in their field. Most of them were employed by a foreign partner company and posted to the Nigerian IJV. Only a few were employed by the IJV directly.

Figures 8 and 9 show how these two groups—Nigerian and expatriates—perceive collaborative and collective decision-making practices in the company, with the values derived from the questionnaire. These values show what the stakeholders perceive to be the current situation in the organisation and what they think it should be. The x axis presents survey questions (1–15) and the y axis, the percentage of high scores.

The Nigerian group’s assessment of existing decision-making practices seems to be in line with what was expected. The values in use seem to strongly resemble espoused values, which could be expected given that Nigerian managers had an impact on working practices within the Company. It is also worth noting that the desired values

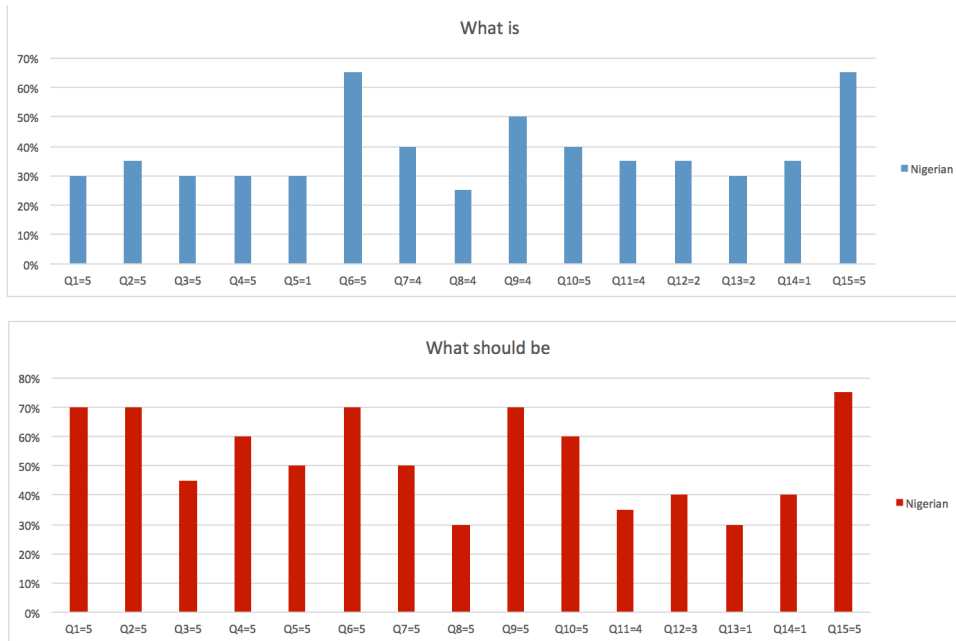
are, in each case, much stronger compared to those that were assessed as already existing. The Nigerian group, therefore, seems to desire more collaborative and collective decision-making processes in the future.

The Expatriate group's assessment of existing decision-making processes in the Company is that it is considerably more collaborative than the Nigerian group believes. Therefore, the expatriates see less of a need for changes that increase collaboration in decision-making. There was, however, one exception. This related to awareness of the person who makes the decision (the chief decision maker), and how clearly communication channels are identified. Strangely enough, expatriates saw the need for reduced collaboration in certain respects, such as in consideration of the importance of staff welfare in relation to profit-making. This is perhaps to be expected, as they are probably more concerned with short-term benefits, and their period of employment in Nigeria might be limited, whereas the Nigerians are in their own country and consider a longer perspective.

After a general comparison of the perceptions of different aspects of decision-making in the Company, analysis of each survey question followed. This information was also enriched by calculating the correlation coefficient between the nationality of a participant and their desire for collaborative practices. Descriptions of findings and summaries from this survey are presented in Figures 10 to 27.

Figure 8

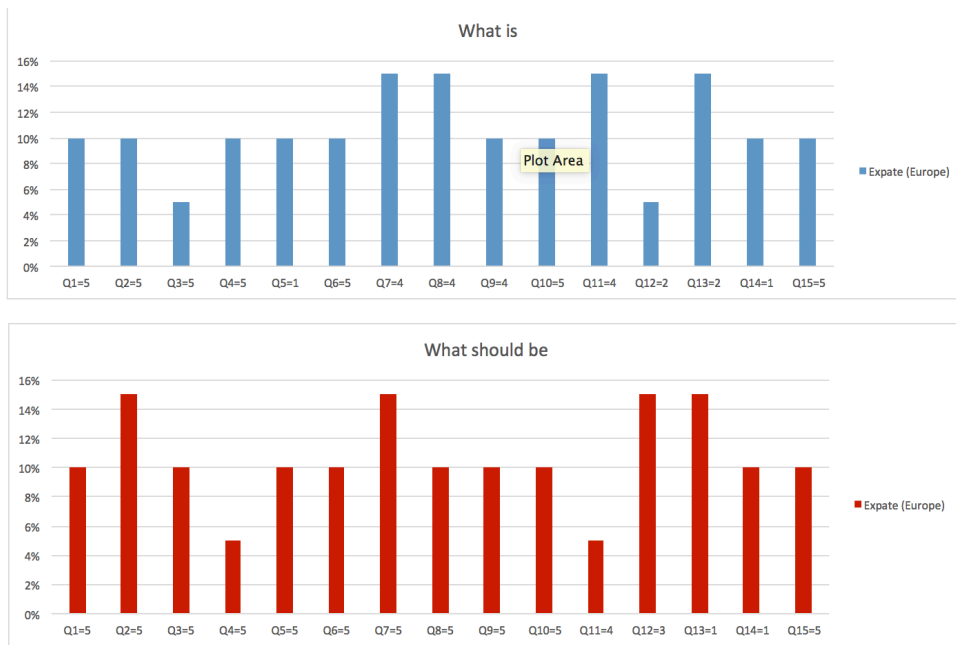
Nigerians and their responses to the survey questions



Note.

Figure 9

Expatriates and their responses to survey questions



The survey assessments show that the Nigerian group is more inclined to view decisions taken at different levels collaboratively. Nigerian managers also feel this is a desirable practice. They support decisions being made at various levels.

An overwhelming majority of Nigerian participants feel that decision-making should be distributed and collaborative, significantly more than was the case at that time. The expatriates seem to be more conservative and reticent in this respect. They prefer decisions to be taken at a particular, strictly defined level. Expatriates viewed this approach as already in operation at the Company, and to an even greater degree feel it should continue to be so.

It is important to note here that all the expatriates in the analysed case are actually at higher management levels, levels from which, according to them, decisions should originate. These results highlight that Nigerian and Expatriate opinions are contrary. We can therefore further test the claim that nationally induced cultural differences affect managers' opinions about which managerial-level decisions should be taken. Moreover, contrary to my expectations, Nigerians were more inclined (than Expatriates) to desire more distributed decision-making practices (Figure 10).

The results in Figure 11 refer to awareness, information, and understanding. This includes an awareness of how the decision-making process in the Company appears to employees, and who is ultimately influencing decision-making processes. For this metric, the Nigerian group appears more interested in the process, more informed about procedures, and keener to know how and when decisions emerge. The Expatriate group seems to accept the status quo and decisions and have no significant need to dwell on how these decisions arise and who makes them. They seem to be satisfied with a decision when it is communicated to them by their immediate superior.

Figure 10

Procedures and systems of decision-making in the company as perceived by Nigerians and expatriates

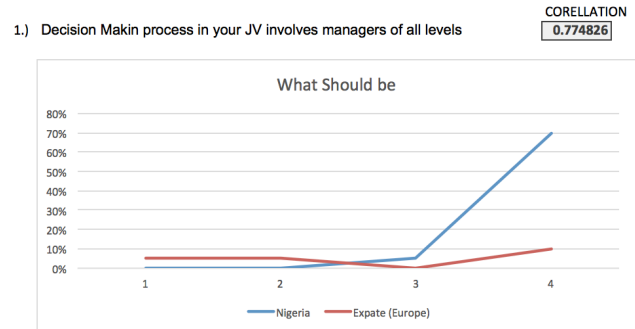
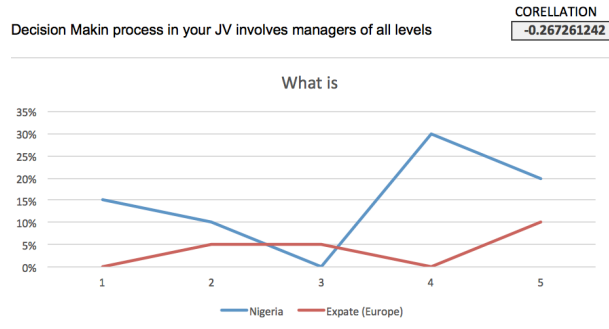


Figure 11

Title

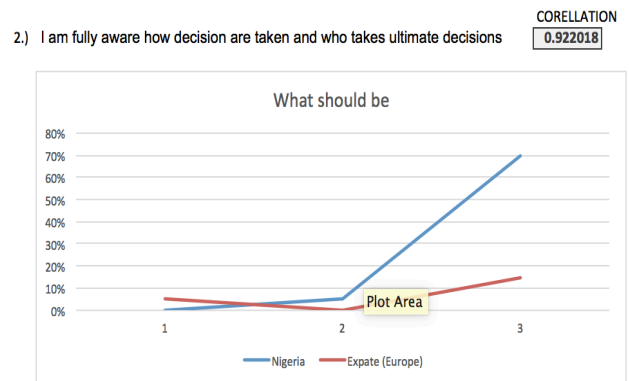
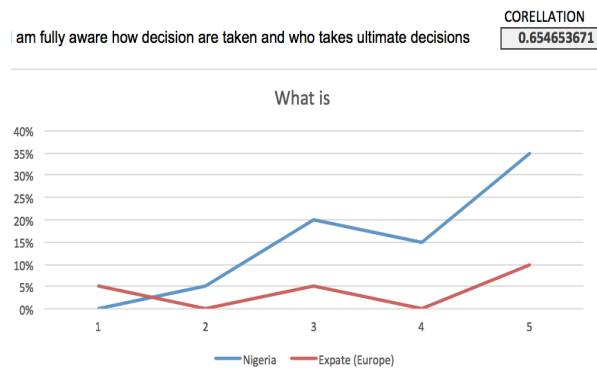


Figure 12

Title

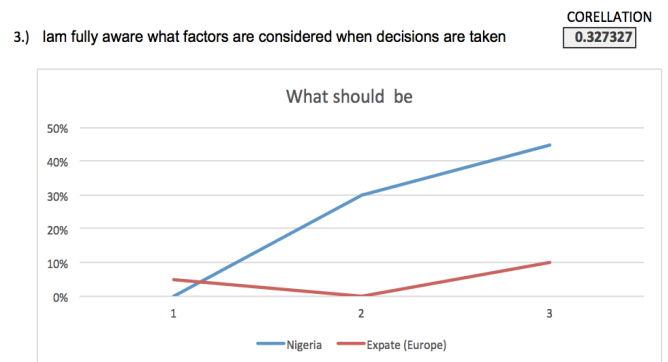
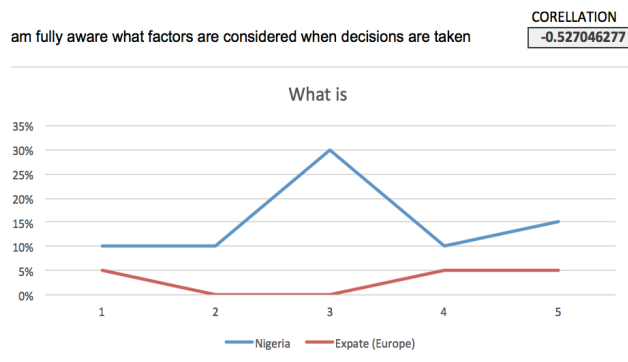


Figure 13

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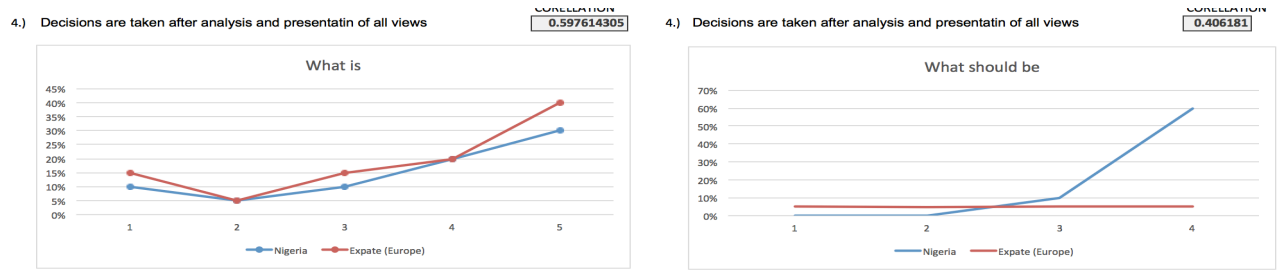


Figure 14

Question 5: Decision making supports

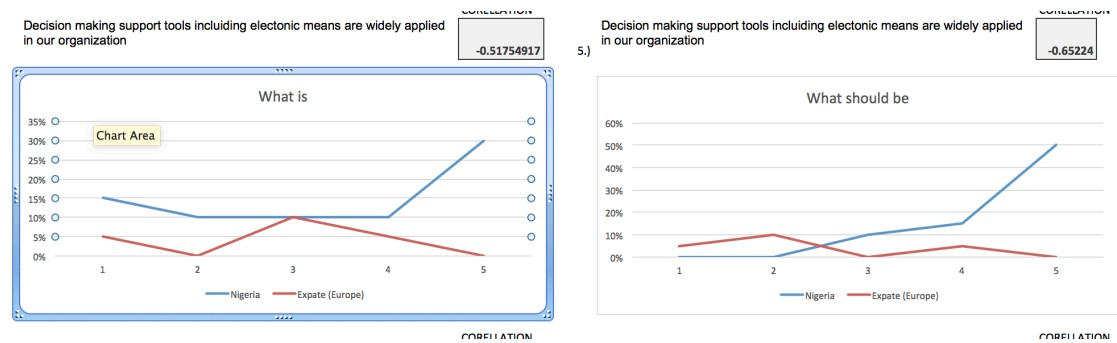


Figure 15

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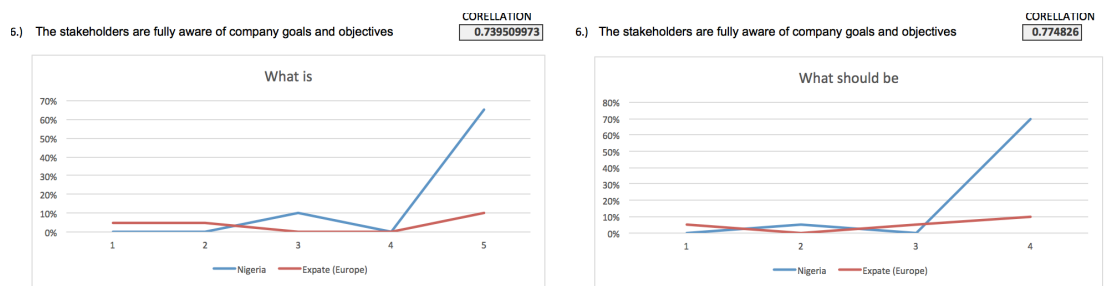


Figure 16

Title

7.) Communication channels are clearly defined

-0.120526106

7.) Communication channels are clearly defined

0.956325

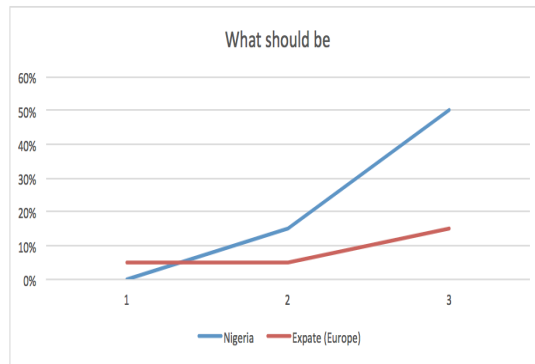
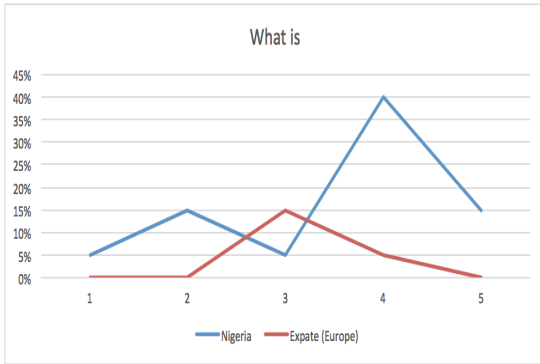


Figure 17

Title

8.) Decisions considering investments not profit bearing but welfare and prestige boosting are considered desirable

CORRELLATION
0.155126307

8.) Decisions considering investments not profit bearing but welfare and prestige boosting are considered desirable

CORRELLATION
0

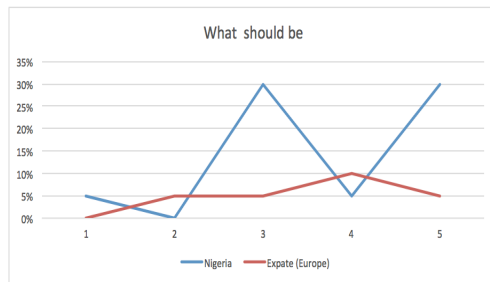
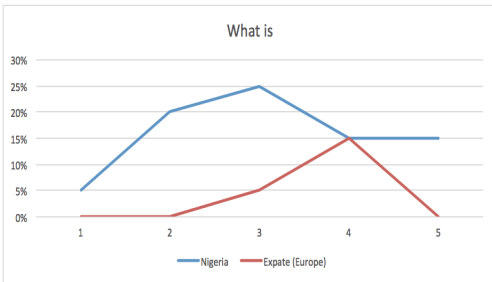


Figure 18

Title

12.) Staff welfare and well-being of all stakeholders is more important than ROI and the bottom line of all decisions

CORRELLATION
-0.140859042

12.) Staff welfare and well-being of all stakeholders is more important than ROI and the bottom line of all decisions

CORRELLATION
-0.36274

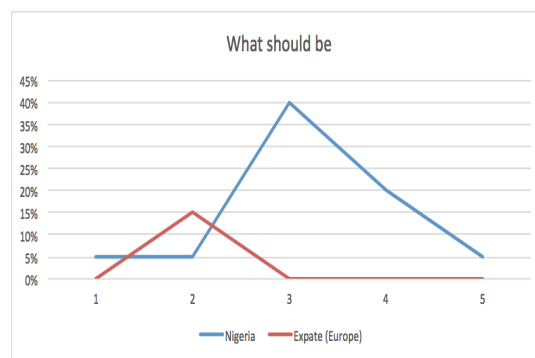
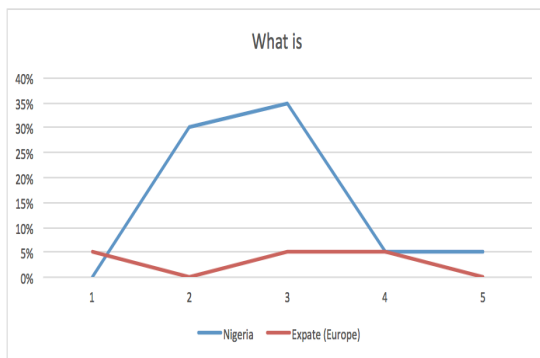
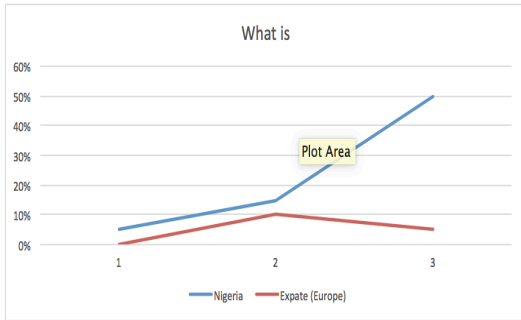


Figure 19

Title

9.) Decisions that affect future of the company are more important than immediate profit considerations

CORELLATION
0.211603685



9.) Decisions that affect future of the company are more important than immediate profit considerations

CORELLATION
0.997949

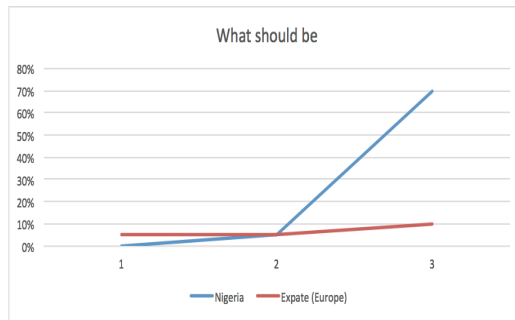
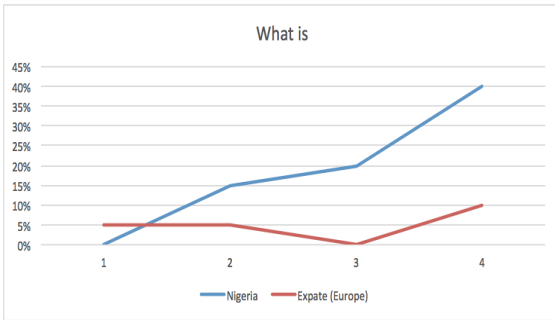


Figure 20

Title

10.) Certain element of risk is always necessary for maintaining company comparative advantage

CORELLATION
0.494241651



10.) Certain element of risk is always necessary for maintaining company comparative advantage

CORELLATION
0.467257

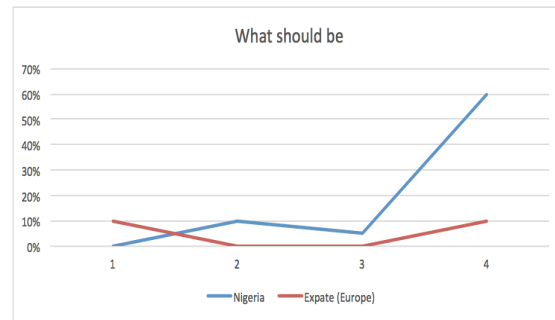
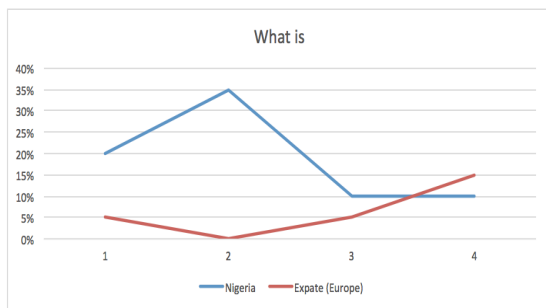


Figure 21

Title

11.) Stakeholders avoid risk always whereby dont take opportunity of changes and new environment

CORELLATION
-0.756745004



11.) Stakeholders avoid risk always whereby dont take opportunity of changes and new environment

CORELLATION
-0.33333

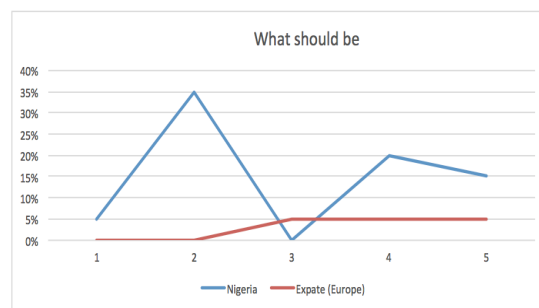
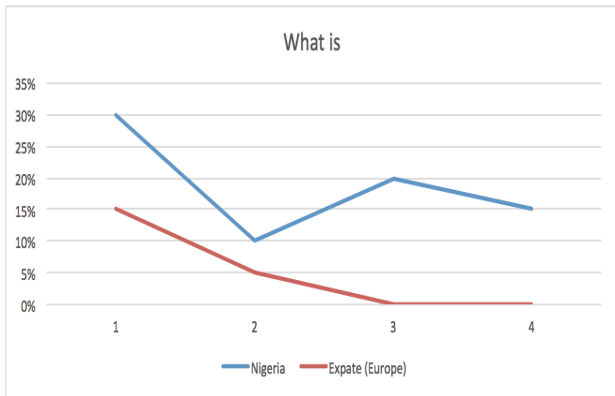


Figure 22

Title

13.) Ethnic national culture constructs are considered while decisions are taken CORELLATION
0.690065559



13.) Ethnic national culture constructs are considered while decisions are taken CORELLATION
0.671094

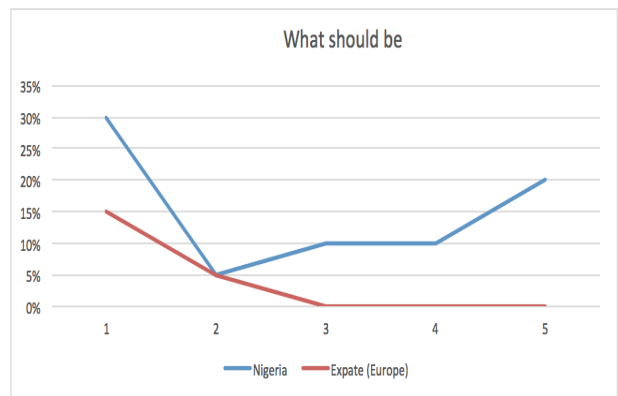
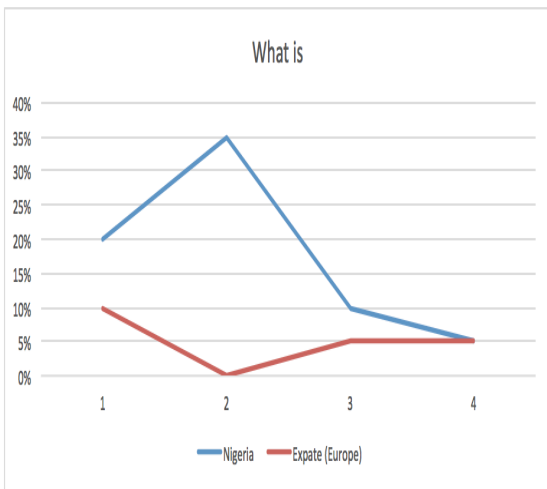


Figure 23

Title

The company is nationally/ethnically diversity but this creates lots of problems CORELLATION
-0.46291005
4.) in decision-making process



The company is nationally/ethnically diversity but this creates lots of problems CORELLATION
0.349927
14.) in decision-making process

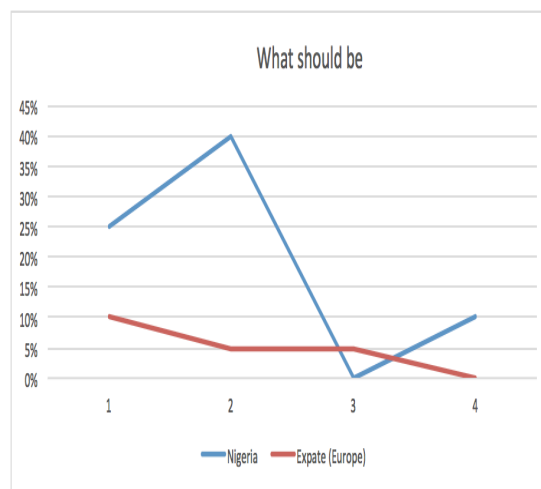
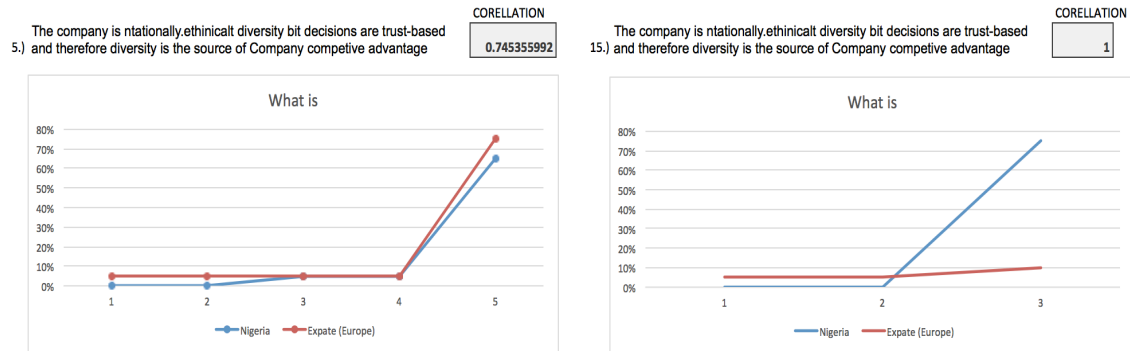


Figure 24

Title



The correlation coefficient in both the Nigerian and Expatriate groups is moderate and positive, which signifies similar tendencies in both groups. A greater correlation appears when examining the construct of “what is desirable” than “what should be desired”. It appears that Expatriates, more so than Nigerians, agree with decisions without considering where they come from. However, both groups would like to be more informed about where and how decisions are made, even though this desire is stronger in the Nigerian group (Figure 11).

Figure 12 shows the results of whether respondents feel it necessary to be informed about how and why certain decisions are taken. The Nigerian group appear to need to know about the processes and factors that affect the decision-making process more than the Expatriates. Expatriates seem to be satisfied with a decision’s communication and are less concerned about the reasons and factors behind it. A negative correlation between the attitudes of Expatriates and Nigerians is seen in “what is” situations, while a positive correlation is evident in questions that address “what should be”. The coefficient is negative when the present state of the Company is assessed. The Nigerian group is more interested, and feels that they are aware of how decisions are taken; the Expatriate group feels otherwise. Regarding desirable situations, both groups appear to agree that there should be greater awareness of the decision-making process than in the current situation (Figure 12).

Question 5 refers to the participation of stakeholders in decision-making processes, or at least the possibility of them presenting their views before the decisions ultimately made. Both Nigerian and Expatriate groups felt that most decision-makers do

participate in the process to certain extent. The Nigerian group felt that this should be the case, but the Expatriate group felt, and strongly so, that this level of involvement was not necessary. Correlation for the “what is” situation is strong, meaning that both groups’ feelings were aligned. The views on the “what should be” situation were very weakly correlated (Figure 13).

It appears that Nigerians and Expatriates have different views on the support tools used for decision-making in our organisation. In the current situation, the Nigerian group felt that enough support tools were used, while the Expatriates felt that the use of decision-making support tools was significantly limited. Curiously, the Nigerians felt that we should use these aids more, while the Expatriate group seemed to think this was not necessary. We can observe, therefore, a negative correlation between the approaches of both groups (Figure 14).

The positive and strong correlation observed in Figure 15 illustrates the fact that both groups feel the need to improve the communication procedures and information flow systems. This refers both to the “what is” and “what should be” states. Specifically, this question reflects that the Nigerians feel they are well aware of the plans, prospects, and objectives of the organisation while also feeling that they should be informed about them even more. The Expatriate group does not feel they are adequately informed; however, they do not attach great importance to this information. The correlation between both groups is moderate and positive, which can be interpreted as indicative of the fact that as Nigerians’ desire for more information grows, so does that of the Expatriates, and vice versa (Figure 15).

Both groups deem it necessary to clearly define flows of information and communication channels. However, Expatriates view them as defined inadequately, while Nigerians believe they are sufficiently defined (low positive correlation). In the Nigerian group, a higher number of respondents assessed this dimension as good (a score of 4), while the Expatriate group viewed it mostly as adequate (a score of 3). Both groups felt it should be improved (positive and close correlation) (Figure 16).

Question 8 was one of the most salient questions on strong national feelings and cultural factors. Further analysis also revealed that the Nigerian group felt very strongly about this issue. They felt that profit affects most of the decisions taken in the IJV and

profit is a driving factor for most of decision-making processes. This was not the opinion of the Expatriates, who saw that while profit is a significant factor, it is not the main one affecting decision-making. The correlation between the Nigerian and Expatriate groups on their views of “what is” is positive but very weak. In terms of “what should be”, the results are the opposite. The Nigerian group want other considerations to be more prominent in the decision-making processes, while the Expatriates are satisfied with the status quo. There was no correlation for “what should be” between the two groups (Figure 17).

Question 12 is a follow up to Question 8 but from the opposite point of view. However, the results suggest analogical observations of the “what is” situation. Nigerians feel that, during decision-making processes, only the objective of profits is considered while Expatriates believe that other factors are also taken into account. Nevertheless, both groups feel that both of these objectives are important in decision-making processes: both return on investment and profits, and staff welfare and well-being. For “what should be”, Nigerians feel much stronger about the need to consider staff welfare and well-being as factors in decision-making processes. The correlation observed for these relations is negative but very weak (Figure 18).

Question 9 refers to long-term versus short-term perspectives of decision-making. The majority of respondents from both groups felt that strategic decisions affecting the future of the company are very important. Both groups consider the “what is” situation as adequate. However, in terms of “what should be”, the Nigerian group are much more inclined to consider decisions affecting the future as more important than immediate profit considerations. The correlation between the two groups is strong in the case of “what should be”, but weak in the case of “what is” (Figure 19).

Question 10 concerns the respondents’ readiness to take risks in expectation of future benefits. The survey shows that respondents’ attitudes towards risk-taking is similar for both the Nigerians and the Expatriates, with both groups viewing it as actual and desirable. The correlation between the two groups is positive but weak (Figure 20).

Risk-taking and change, as a reflection of diversity, was analysed in Question 11. It appears that the Nigerian group felt that changes of approach and risk-taking—in order to gain comparative advantage—are never really explored in the Company. On

the other hand, the Expatriate group felt that risks are taken. For “what should be”, Nigerians are somewhat keen to undertake risks and try new approaches, while Expatriates are more ambivalent towards this issue. The correlation between the approaches of both groups is negative, and is stronger for “what is” compared to what “should be” (Figure 21).

To answer Question 13, respondents were required to consider their awareness of ethnical and cultural diversity and different work-related values in the Company. They were also expected to assess the impact of diversity on decision-making processes and efficacy. Most respondents felt that these issues were not important considerations in the decision-making process. Notably, fewer Expatriates than Nigerians considered ethnicity or national backgrounds to be important. Expatriates, furthermore, felt that this *should* be the case—that ethnicity and culturally impacted differences should not have any impact on decision-making. Around 20% of the examined population of Nigerian managers, however, felt strongly (a score of 5) that ethnicity should be considered and that it has a strong impact on the decision-making process and the quality of decisions. There was moderate correlation between the opinions of Expatriates and Nigerians (Figure 22).

Conversely, in Question 14, respondents were asked to assess whether ethnic diversity is a source of problems, and whether the impact of national and ethnic diversity on decision-making is a positive or negative factor in the quality and efficacy of decisions. In the “what is” situation, Nigerians mostly believed that ethnic diversity creates problems and does not increase the efficiency of the decision-making process, while expatriates were more ambivalent towards this construct. For “what should be”, survey findings underlined this tendency. Nigerians saw diversity as a hindrance to smooth decision-making, while Expatriates did not observe any problems (Figure 23).

In the final question, respondents are confronted with two constructs: diversity and trust relationships. Normally, trust between stakeholders should mitigate misunderstandings attributable to cultural perceptions, different value systems, and behaviours. Both groups agreed that trust is an important element that enables problems in decision-making that arise as a result of various cultural biases to be navigated and resolved. The correlation between the perceptions of the two groups.

Both felt that national diversity increases the Company's comparative advantage. However, for "what should be", while Nigerians felt that trust is very important to decision-making to maintain a comparative advantage, the Expatriate group felt that it is not a significant concern (Figure 24).

In all the survey questions, a distinction was made between the perceived "what is" situation and respondents' feelings about "what should be". The comparison of data for the situation "as it is" and "as it should be" was intended to highlight whether a difference exists between the two groups' perceptions of an actual situation and a desired situation.

The survey results show the existence of differences in most of the questions (representing cultural dimension approaches). It is also apparent that stakeholders' perceptions for what "should be" do not correspond with what "it actually is", supporting the theoretical frameworks previously discussed (Schein, 2010; Argyris, 1976) as well as my perceptions and propositions in this respect.

One exception to this was Question 9, where Nigerians generally considered that the future interests of the Company were more important than immediate profits (a proposition that was later supported by the qualitative study) They also felt that decision-making processes should promote this type of policy more. Thus, for Nigerians, values in use were analogical with espoused values in this respect. The Expatriate group was more conservative in this case, perceiving the existing situation to be appropriate – specifically, that there is no need for improvement, and existing decision-making processes need not consider the future.

Qualitative techniques: Further explication and development based on survey findings

The survey-collected data and their analysis gave rise to some propositions. As the next step in data analysis, a qualitative study was conducted. These resulting data are voluminous and mostly unstructured, or in the best case semi-structured. They also presented some mixed and complex data and themes.

For instance, the same Expatriate respondent "FC-1" supported the introduction of collaborative decision-making processes while at the same time requiring "approval

of the decisions from his French Head Offices”. This latter response causes significant delays in actionable decisions and reduces the utility of collaboration. Thus, the assessment of this respondent’s stance on the matter remains ambiguous. In the same vein, another respondent, this time a Nigerian, “OM”, supported the concept of collaborative decision-making but wondered how collaborative decisions could be enforced. This clearly illustrates his misconception of a major concept of collaboration: that it should be voluntary if expected to succeed. It seems that both of these respondents were so acclimatised to top-down chains of command from their own working experience that the Nigerian respondent could not even conceptualise collaboration in decision-making.

The summary in Table 4 shows the connection between the survey questions to each of the six identified cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1993). The table explains which survey question was intended to provide insights to respondents’ attitude towards each cultural dimension.

Based on the cultural difference dimensions, Table 5 includes the constructs from the survey and connects them with qualitative findings. This data illustrates the general cultural inclinations of the examined stakeholder groups—Nigerians versus Expatriates (with my view included as a control)—regarding decision-making concepts in the IJV. Specific values based on my observation notes and critical reflection were assigned to collected data.

Table 4

Survey questions as related to the six cultural dimensions

	Cultural dimension	Survey Question
1.	Power distance long versus short	1,2,3,4,
2	Individual versus collectivism	6,7
3	Masculinity versus femininity	8,9,10,11,12
4	Uncertainty avoidance	5, 9, 10, 122
5	Long term/short term	9, 10, 11
6	Indulgence	13, 14, 15

Table 5

Cultural Differences in an IJV; six dimensions based on Hofstede (1993)

Cultural dimensions	Nigeria	France (EU)	Controls Self-assessment change agent
Power distance	High	High	Low
Individualism/Collectivism	Collectivism high	Individualism high	Collectivism
Masculinity/Femininity	F	F	Femininity
Uncertainty avoidance	Low	High	Medium
Long term/Short term	Short	Long	Long
Indulgence	High	Low	Medium

Chapter 6: Discussion

Power distance: Both the Nigerian and Expatriate groups presented attitudes accepting high power distance. While it might appear that these similar attitudes would make co-operation easier, the two groups' approach to hierarchical differences varied, with the Nigerian group being more paternalistic and the Expatriate group more officious.

Individual/Collectivism: In this domain, the groups are different. Collectivism is close to Nigerian societal structures, and it is also preferable in a working environment. For the Expatriates, individualism is a part of a traditional Western philosophy and a source of development.

Masculinity/Femininity: Both groups supported nurturing, caring attitudes (femininity). It may appear strange that the Expatriates were also individualistic, but likely stems from their deeply felt principles of social responsibility, which were expressed in the discussions and even correspond to general company principles.

Avoiding uncertainty: While the Nigerian group is characterised by low uncertainty avoidance, the Expatriate group always exhibited high risk avoidance attitudes. Nigerians seemed to be ready to try out many new concepts while the Expatriates preferred to rely on old, proven methods and schemes.

Long-term/short-term orientation. The Nigerian group has clearly exhibited a short-term orientation with long-term visions that are vague and sometimes grandiose. For instance, one of the respondents claimed, "With these changes [the change to an IJV], we shall, within a year, become the leading Company, not only in Nigeria, but in the whole West Africa." At the same time, the orientation of the Expatriates was long term and related only to structures and practices.

Indulgence. The Nigerian group demonstrated indulgence, as they were more enthusiastic about the IJV project and saw their personal future within it. This was also reflected in their striving for quicker and more operative decisions. This attitude greatly influenced their support for the perceived values of new collaborative decision-making processes. The Expatriate group was most concerned about time and speed of profit-making and was, therefore, very resistant to any investments that did not bring

immediate profits. This could be the result of how they perceived their careers within the IJV, taking a more short-term view, in most cases, than the Nigerian group.

Frameworks for further data collection and analysis

Collected data were collated, tabulated, and compared, before being grouped into nodes and coded into sub-groups with similar patterns. Research was divided into three stages.

Each stage commenced with a mind-mapping management meeting approximately five months apart (in June 2017, November 2017, May 2018, and October 2018). The first and last meetings were held in the Company’s corporate headquarters in Lagos, while the second and third were held in branch offices in Abuja and Calabar respectively. At each stage, participation exceeded 50% of managers (Table 6).

Table 6

Participation in mind-mapping management meetings

Date	June 2017	November 2017	May 2018	October 2018
Expatriates	6	6	4	3
Nigerians	10	12	12	14
Total participation	16	18	16	17
Total number of managers invited	27	26	25	26
Attendance as percentage of total population	59%	69%	64%	65%

The number of IJV managerial staff invited varied at different times. Therefore, to assess the attendance of stakeholders and comparing interest in mind-mapping sessions by the end of each of the AR cycles, the managers’ attendance was expressed as a percentage of the entire managers’ population at that time in question.

Participation in these sessions was not compulsory or obligatory as part of official activities. However as the CEO, I had the necessary access and influence to organise these meetings and invite managers; moreover, these sessions had a dual character: (1) a normal management meeting aimed at improving the overall performance of the Company, (2) a mind-mapping session as a data collection source for my research. Rather than the usual instructions to attend the meeting, invitations were sent to the

managers indicating that important issues regarding the IJV's performance and future were to be discussed. (A sample of this kind of memo can be found in Appendix 3). Attendance was thus voluntary, but the response was excellent.

At each stage, prior to the interactive sessions, reports and minutes from the last session were sent to respondents via email, forming the basis for further analysis and discussion. Most of the deliberations were related to action undertaken in previous stages and their outcomes, quality of decisions, and reasons for failures, if any. Mistakes and errors were identified, and lessons were drawn for the future.

Observation and discussion from the meetings

The rate of participation was very good, always more than 50%, showing that managers were indeed interested in improving decision-making practices and the overall performance of the system. The rate of participation gradually improved, suggesting that the managers' interest in sharing their views and involvement in collaborative decision-making was growing. The lower participation of foreign managers does not necessarily show their lack of interest but might have resulted from the reduced number of expatriates based locally. As time went on, many expatriates in managerial positions stayed abroad and participated in Company management via IT and telecommunications channels.

The results from all available and usable sources were triangulated within this practice-oriented framework and according to the practical constructs as presented in Figure 6, in Chapter 4. The main findings are presented below.

Communication

The biggest problem perceived by most of the participants (especially Nigerians) was inadequate communication. Indirect communication seems to prevail even though direct communication is suggested and repeatedly proposed as the better technique. This demonstrated that espoused values and desired values do not agree. The Expatriate group was satisfied with existing communication channels and did not consider it desirable to discuss much with the Nigerians. From the Nigerian side, the perception was that many problematic issues were caused by information that was provided late or not at all.

Language

All stakeholders/managers claimed to have a good command of English, even though the Expatriates, in many cases, were hardly proficient. Additionally, Nigerian English has its own peculiarities, and while words might have seemed perfectly clear to most stakeholders, some of the nuances are often lost. The Expatriate group that was carefully selected for the foreign assignment consisted of people who, when expected to speak English, were able to do so, but who routinely preferred to speak French between themselves. Furthermore, even if English could become the lingua franca, it would have to reflect the international and national nuances based on the cultural environment and the interaction between the stakeholders using it. Very often in this case, organisation-specific jargon is formed despite the apparent use of English, especially if the collaboration between the stakeholders is good. That was not, however, the case in the Company.

It was, on the other hand, observed that the same ethnic/national groups tended to speak their own language between themselves, with French managers doing this more often than Nigerian managers. If the French managers found themselves in a group in which some of the individuals could speak French, they immediately switched to the French language without considering the fact that many of the Nigerians present might not have been able to understand the conversations. This unfortunately increased distrust and suspicion on the part of the Nigerian stakeholders. The common language—English—was intended to facilitate understanding between stakeholders, but it was not always used. Both the informative and unifying aspect of this lingua franca was totally lost. This was a complaint often made during the interviews: One operational manager stated, “They will start speaking French and we are totally kept outside the discussion” (OM 2). In interviews with French managers, it was underlined that by one technical manager that “Nigerian English is difficult to understand” (TM 1).

As I underlined earlier, use of a common language would have conveyed some cultural values and nuances for this IJV group, binding them together, and failure to use it at all times often nullified this. Instead, it was only used for formal occasions. Some written documents and communications were even produced in French. During informal situations, IJV local stakeholders often used their native languages but it was very

limited, and not used in official communications at all. Therefore, differences between those groups were enhanced rather than effaced by language issues. Distrust grew based on misunderstandings, rendering collaborative practices more difficult.

Hierarchy

While a strict hierarchy traditionally prevails (both among French stakeholders and their Nigerian counterparts), status and position are revered and protocols judicially observed in both groups. Some management efforts to soften those differences and direct the hierarchy towards horizontal and multilevel discussions and decision-making were initially met with little support. The Expatriates, many of them French, thought themselves to be historically very egalitarian and inclusive, but in reality—in the sphere of decision-making— followed the principles of a strict chain of command.

During interviews with French managers, they often emphasised that they needed instructions from their direct bosses in France. They were very reluctant to take any decisions locally within the IJV hierarchy, until they were confirmed and accepted by France. In some cases, decisions that had already been made and confirmed for implementation had to be reversed because the hierarchy in France had not agreed. This caused considerable negative feelings, and often a loss of time and resources. Therefore, it was observed that the collaborative decision-making, proposed to sort out intercultural issues, was better supported and understood by senior Nigerian managers and was more difficult for French managers to understand and implement.

Mind-mapping sessions proved to be a good idea. They were used to encourage a more questioning culture and more collaborative practices. However, they also had some impact on the formation of more trusting and democratic practices—at least on the part of those managers who attended. According to some of the managers interviewed, their attitudes towards hierarchy changed, and they gradually perceived that the environment was friendlier for collaboration and co-operation, despite existing national differences.

Decision-making

The decision-making processes and practices in the Company were obviously affected by both language problems and the different attitudes towards the hierarchy of the two groups.

As mentioned above, for quite a long time, decisions used to be based on a strict chain of command. This was also required by the French work culture, where French partners are expected to hold superior positions to their Nigerian counterparts. This did not resonate well with the Nigerian group. Many of them are very well-trained and educated, and could not accept the situation whereby the foreign managers could not share information with them and include them in the decision-making process. Many conflicts arose over the delegation of responsibilities and prerogatives. The need to collaborate and co-operate in the IJV is obvious but this scenario created intercultural clashes and problems. These were the reason for seemingly low-quality decisions due to delays as well as a failure to communicate orders and instructions. This caused many administrative problems and built hostile attitudes. For long periods of time, the IJV French partners were not even on the ground in Nigeria but expected to be able to manage and control the IJV operations from a distance. It soon became apparent that they could not efficiently handle administration from France, despite modern communication devices and software. They could not exert their desired effective controls, and also lagged in job schedules; therefore, collaboration with local managers did not improve.

Realising these failures, and learning from them, the Company's management started to see more value in distributed decision-making and collaborative practices. Some changes to decision-making practices were introduced, leading to a greater distribution of decision-making to lower-level managers, and the enhanced participation of stakeholders in decision-making processes. Based on the observations and opinions of the stakeholders, positive attitudes started to return.

Recently, consensus-based, and middle-level management-based decision processes occurred. This change was brought about because I was able to propose this new approach to decision-making practices, supported by the observations of the results, which gave rise to a new way of seeing collaboration. I also realised that the

Considering those two constructs, organisations can be conceptually divided into four distinct groups in which different attitudes prevail: discussion and engagement, and accommodation and dynamic. Observations and data collected during interviews indicate that a conflict-addressing style within my own IJV Company can be described as “dynamic”, where, despite prevailing emotionally expressive attitudes, problem-solving approaches have an indirect character.

Responses to questions about which method is preferable in resolving conflict ranged from direct confrontation of the conflict to indirect handling through mediation. Some of the Nigerian staff felt that direct, straightforward approaches bring quicker and better results in conflict resolution. However, they also complained that the inaccessibility of the other side of the conflict makes this method often longer and even redundant. The Expatriate group seemed to prefer mediation—a very indirect mode—as a method for resolving conflict. However, they felt that in our IJV Company, we resolve the conflicts in a direct, emotional fashion, “through lots of unnecessary discussions and quarrels” (FM opinion).

Table 7

Tabulation of interviewed staff attitudes towards conflict resolution

Conflict resolving	Expatriates	Nigerians	Author
Direct	1	8	
Indirect	4	12	*
Attitude detached and restrained	5	5	*
Emotional attitude	0	15	

Note. Number of considered respondents: 25 (5 expatriates, 20 Nigerians)

The placement results from the way decisions are taken most effectively and collaboration in this process proved most suited. Most of the stakeholders saw the conflict-resolving approaches in the organisation as inadequate and resulting from the “conflict avoidance attitudes of some managers”. However, these findings also supported my estimation that our IJV Company is placed in the “Dynamic” part of the model and more collaborative practices would therefore lead the system towards the

“discussion” style. This style is less volatile and possibly more beneficial to IJV development.

Cultural dimension features like diverse nationally enabled values, conflict-resolving modes, and their possible impact on the introduction of collaborative practices into decision-making schemes are seen as a way of navigating cultural diversity. However, investigation of one of the most important constructs in this subject—the desired qualities of IJV managers—seemed the natural next step of the analysis.

Discussions and interviews with managers regarding desired future situations prominently included concerns regarding “what could help in improving decision-making processes, [the] quality of decisions and inter-ethnic diversity problems”.

Therefore, identifying desirable features of IJV managers seemed important.

Information in this respect was gleaned from narratives, interviews, and one-to-one discussions with selected managers. This exercise was intended to reflect on respondents’ attitude towards certain managerial behaviours and how these behaviours impact collaboration within the IJV, especially in decision-taking.

The desired features of managers operating in a multicultural environment were listed based on the views of the Company’s employees/stakeholders, and my reflections.

They also relate to stakeholders’ willingness or not to adopt more collaborative practices within organisational decision-making processes (see Table 8). The findings were analysed from the perspective of Nigerian and Expatriate managers. Minor differences between these two groups were noted. Since all the identified characteristics are normally expected from managers as a matter of course, the responses were therefore judged for their intensity: how important these desired features were to the managers.

As the findings were derived through qualitative techniques, primarily through discussions and dialogues, I grouped answers into three levels of intensity: not important (N), important (I), and very important (V). The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Desired Personal features and characteristics of IJV Managers, which will help or hinder collaborative decision-making practices in the IJV Company

s/n	Characteristics	Expatriates	Nigerians
1	Well, educated	I	V
2	Experienced professional	I	V
3	Self-assured/confident	N	I
4	Pragmatic	I	V
5	Unintimidated by national barriers and different cultures	I	I
6	Democratic and participatory	N	I
7	Inclusive	N	I
8	Flexible and open to new ideas	N	I
9	Mobile and connected	V	V
10	Trustworthy and trust building	I	V

Discussion of results

Both groups expected IJV managers to be educated and well informed. This is the usual requirement for managers—that they should be more knowledgeable than the people they guide. A high level of formal education was, however, more important for Nigerians than the Expatriates, who seemed to attach less importance to formal education, and more to general knowledge about the world and international affairs. The respondents felt that a well-educated person will be more willing to engage in collaboration with others, not fearing their inadequacy, and were hopeful for the development of organisational knowledge.

Professional experience—practical knowledge and expertise—seemed much more important to the Nigerian group. In fact, this is something they expected from their Expatriate partners, in the hope of being able to learn from them. The Expatriates also considered this feature to be important, but for everybody, within their relevant position. They were not interested in training and knowledge transfer. Hence, we can say that they were less inclined towards collaboration in the field of decision-making. They were

also much more time-conscious and found long meetings—where knowledge sharing could take place—to be tiresome.

Self-assurance and confidence (especially to excessive degrees) are features that do not enhance collaborative practices, and often managers possessing these characteristics are autocratic and dictatorial. In my IJV, both groups did not attach much importance to these features, although the Nigerians regarded it as more important than the Expatriates.

Pragmatism is the feature of favouring practical results, while sometimes overlooking established procedures and practices. Here, Nigerians appeared more pragmatic than the Expatriates, who were strict adherents to protocols and established procedures. It appears, then, that pragmatic people will adapt to collaborative practices more readily, identifying a better way to attain practical results.

The ability to easily navigate international environments and remain unintimidated by cultural differences, rules, and different habits were also listed as important to various stakeholders. This feature is indispensable for managers to function in a collaborative environment. Both groups recognised its importance.

Respondents also wanted to see the manager as participatory and democratic. Obviously, a person with such an attitude will promote collaborative processes, including in the decision-making processes. In this domain, the Nigerian group considered this feature to be significantly more important, while Expatriates thought it was irrelevant to improving company decision-making processes.

Inclusiveness refers to embracing others in one's scheme of ideas and resulting actions. This feature is crucial to promoting collaborative behaviours and practices such as collaborative decision-making. Expatriates felt there was no need to involve too many people in decision-making deliberations and practices. They generally saw inclusiveness as less important than Nigerians, although Nigerians also did not see it as fundamental.

Openness and flexibility refer to how easily managers express their views and listen to the views of others while accepting even controversial opinions of others if they are convincing and make sense. This is a very important feature of democratic and humble attitudes, with the interests of the organisation placed above an individual's ego.

Openness and flexibility are very important features in a manager, as they enhance and greatly improve collaborative decision-making practices.

Respondents desired managers who are easily available and often online or available via a mobile device, favouring real-time modern communication. This avoids lengthy presentations and long waiting periods for replies, which are evident in strict chain-of-command and rigid hierarchy systems. Nigerians expressed themselves about this concept much more. Expatriates, who valued their private time more, did not feel it necessary. Of course, frequent online availability makes collaborative practices much easier and faster. Nigerians therefore seem to be more inclined towards collaborative, real-time-oriented operations, and thus collaborative decision-making practices.

Trustworthiness is one of the most important features respondents mentioned. Both groups underlined its importance as a condition for the smooth functioning of the IJV. Both groups saw trustworthiness as exceptionally salient: Nigerians felt that collaborative practices would help to build more trust between stakeholders, while Expatriates felt that stakeholders should be trustworthy a priori. They believed in a set of controls and precautions that should be enforced, thus showing their initial, fundamental distrust.

Reflections

The above analysis shows that both groups looked for managerial features that can improve collaboration and interpersonal relationships within the IJV. Both favoured management on an individual basis, with the possibility of developing collaborative decision-making practices and other areas of my own IJV operations.

Local managers were more inclined towards these practices, both now and when considering the future. Nigerians were also more open and enthusiastic about collaboration and co-operation within the IJV, viewing it as a contributing factor to making better quality decisions and consequently improving the Company growth's as well as helping their own personal development.

Expatriates accepted the possibility of more collaborative decision-making and more democratic processes within the IJV in principle, but were more reticent about it. For instance, statements like "We need to get confirmation from H [a superior in

France]” (FM-1) and “we need to confirm from France” (TM-1) were regularly made. The Expatriates often preferred applying plans and instructions from their direct superiors abroad, perhaps because it meant they did not have to take responsibility themselves. However, this did not always correspond well with the actual situation on the ground, which they were more familiar with than their superiors in France. The Expatriate group was more reticent, albeit not hostile, towards introducing more collaborative practices. Their European management, however, completely failed to see the proposals as beneficial.

Leadership

The characteristics desired by IJV managers reflected perceptions about which leadership model would be preferred if the company was to evolve towards adopting collaborative practices in decision-making and other practices. All the interviewed managers agreed that different leadership models were required, although they could not clearly specify which model would constitute an improvement. When asked about the perceived characteristics of new leadership, respondents mentioned a plethora of different qualities, some of which were quite surprising and revealing.

I listed the results of the discussions with 25 managers who spoke about preferred types of leaders. This summary, as seen in Table 9, reflects how many managers mentioned each quality. In addition, respondents mentioned qualities such as understanding, consideration of different viewpoints, tact, diplomacy, connections, and learning ability.

It is worth stating here that these data were collected in the third AR cycle, by which time some organisational changes towards collaboration had already taken place. Some general observations from the data include that leadership should preferably refer to a system and not just to individual leaders. In addition, most of the respondents felt that leaders should represent all groups and nationalities within the IJV, and that they should lead and collaborate in such a way that each undertakes a leadership role where and when most appropriate.

Table 9

Preferred leadership qualities as voiced by IJV stakeholders

	Leader quality	Scores - Number of times mentioned
1.	Integrity	20
2	Respect	20
3	Communication	18
4	Knowledge and experience	15
5	Co-operation with others	15
6	Ability to delegate	12
7	Professionalism	11
8	Empathy	5
9	Influence	5
10	courage	3

It is worth noting that the above described and preferred new leadership model resembles the leadership model drawn 2,500 years ago by Lao Tzu (Heider, 2015): “Leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled they will say—we did it ourselves “ (Lao Tzu, 565 BC)

Reasons for resistance and opposition to change (transition to collaborative decision-making) among some IJV stakeholders

1. Nationally induced differences in business habits (e.g., outsourcing)

Although the French partners claimed they were accepting towards more democratic and collaborative practices, most of the resistance to collaborative decision-making came from that group. These managers were much more time-conscious, and collaborative practices require more time spent together to share views and exchange ideas. Besides, their culturally embedded belief in a strict chain of command was relevant. Unknown or not, and very popular in Nigeria, is the practice of outsourcing to the French partners of the IJV. When processes are outsourced, the final responsibility for some processes can be passed on to a third party. Thus, it was evident that they wanted to be detached from the actual activities carried out locally, while remaining in control. Expatriate managers seemingly felt that outside service providers (often other

multinationals) will provide more objective and favourable solutions for the foreign partner company.

However, in the Nigerian reality, this practice is not so readily acceptable because the company operates in a strictly regulated mining industry. Therefore, outsourcing was not a viable alternative, and in some cases was even prohibited by the national authorities. Moreover, in Nigeria, outsourcing has rarely been cost-effective. There are not many entities that can provide locally effective and cheaper options than company departments and administrative structures, who have had years of experience in these operations. Local managers thus felt disregarded and alienated from important decision-making within the IJV Company. One of the senior Nigerian managers (OM) said: “They [Expatriate managers] make decisions without informing or considering us. They don’t even feel we should be involved. Imagine [the] calling of [a] management meeting in Cotonou! What is the reason for that? Is the IJV situated in Benin Republic? They are changing decisions at will, and we are just to look and obey without even understanding?” (OM, 2014).

2. Distrust owing to cultural differences

Some Nigerian stakeholders felt offended by what they perceived as apparent distrust from the French stakeholders, while French stakeholders did not feel that was the case. They often just expressed frustration about time wasted. Occasionally, even when decisions were reached in a consensual manner—through long consultation and discussions within the IJV—they were annulled when the French stakeholders returned to Paris.

When asked his opinion about the introduction of more collaboration in decision-making, an expatriate manager (PM) said, “How do you want us to make joint decisions? Everybody wants to speak at the same time. Nobody can allow the other one to talk! Those people do not value time—these conferences and meetings last forever—without tangible result[s]. It will imply foregoing rules and procedures[.] The system you propose borders on chaos and will lead us nowhere and anyway our team in Paris may not accept these proposals.”

3. Different culturally determined approaches to Company responsibilities vis a vis staff and community

In a more traditional community-sensitive Nigerian context, lower-level managers expected to perform leadership roles and receive decision-making input from the top management. They craved inclusion, interaction, collaboration, informal networking, and knowledge transfer and sharing. The Expatriate group was ambiguous regarding this matter. Some foreign managers, like FC, felt that problems were not dealt with effectively, and collaborative processes could have mediated the situation. She stated, “We need far more than minimal co-operation and basic compliance. It looks like we need everybody’s support and contribution. All should put [a] hand on deck to look for solutions [on] how to do things better, cheaper, and more efficiently—that will be real collaboration! For now, we are just talking and passing memos, which have different meanings for different groups.”

4. Perceptions of controls, influence, and strategic decisions

This aspect is extremely important and was very controversial, particularly for the Expatriate group at the senior management level. They were not ready to introduce collaboration and discussions into company processes. One of the higher-level managers (SL) often spoke about the impossibility of taking the decision quickly, locally, and collaboratively at lower levels: “This is controversial and different to our customary practices and procedure. We need to be able to pass these new suggestions across to France, explain to our shareholders, and get their approval. In any case, final approval of any decision must always come from France.” It is therefore evident that he was not conceding the possibility of collaborative decision-making but only of collaborative proposal-making, which would then be decided in France.

Such an attitude was consistently detrimental to the IJV because managers on the ground better understood the local context, and decisions taken by superiors in Europe were often impossible to implement owing to the Nigerian institutional and regulatory context. At the same time, Nigerians wanted to be part of a joint project and joint vision, and included the decision-making processes. One of the Nigerian managers stated, for instance: “When I feel that I am a part of joint effort towards [a] common

meaningful goal, I key into Company's vision. When we discuss it and analyse jointly, use joint efforts to achieve breaks through, we progress. I think only then real collaboration is born and very serious individual commitment" (OM).

Collaborative practices in decision-making should therefore consider all local and foreign implications.

5. Internal politics between main stakeholders and the impact of external circumstances

The main reason I identified this as an obstacle to the introduction of collaborative decision-making practices was due to dynamics of resource control within the IJV. The foreign partner was supposed to bring in more equity—55%—while the local partner contributed 45%. The equity structure had an impact on the prevailing voice in decision-making. French managers felt they should have the final say in decisions taken in the IJV without the need to consult lower levels. Furthermore, since they were also contributing technical know-how, they occasionally adopted a patronising attitude towards many of the local stakeholders, who felt they occupied a secondary role in the partnership. These feelings (on both sides) made the introduction of collaborative practices into decision-making very problematic.

One of the higher-level Nigerian managers expressed this clearly: "Of course we all want to be adequately compensated for our job and are all looking for some material benefits. However, this is not the only thing that matters, at least to me. I think that real motivation comes from belief that our work has a purpose, meaning, and it matters on larger scale as much to me as to other stakeholders" (PM).

In the end, the foreign partner did not fulfil their financial and technological transfer obligations. This was most probably due to the political changes in Nigeria, coupled with Nigerian Naira currency devaluation and increased security challenges—both insurgency and growing criminality. The local partner, to present, financed most of the project when the alliance failed. Subsequently, new alliances were sought.

Regardless of these obstacles, many stakeholders/managers, especially at the middle and lower managerial levels, supported the new, collective, collaborative methods introduced by me at the beginning of my studies. Despite the looming failure of the alliance with the French partners, many understood the objectives of collaboration

and desired more modern interactive and inclusive practices within the system. Some advanced the theory that if this method of decision-making had been applied earlier, the IJV in its previous iteration would have developed rather than deteriorated.

Thus, despite the above-described problems, caused by external factors, I observed that during this study and thereafter, the system had already evolved towards more interactive and collaborative structures.

Observed changes in decision-making

Decision-making process appear slightly different now than before my research began. Decisions are preceded by increased consultation with numerous stakeholders involved at lower managerial levels. There is an effort to make decisions in a timely manner, with an evident tendency towards real-time decisions.

Some managers, especially at a lower level, feel operatives' decisions have become more and more dispersed, and have taken on operative management levels to become timelier and more relevant. Stakeholders take ownership of these joint decisions taken at their operational level. The consultations do not delay operative decision to the detriment of their validity. Decisions can be taken where and when problems occur. Technological tools facilitate this process and IT has also improved documentation and reporting at all levels. Increased telecommunication between the staff members, especially via mobile devices, further promotes collaborative practices. Established after the first mind-mapping session, "online working groups", "operational hubs", and "consultation groups" significantly improve decision-making processes, while also making them more collaborative and efficient.

Strategic decisions and controls

Even though strategic decisions were still taken at a higher management level, wider consultations, the inclusion of more stakeholders, and detailed documentation available to all managers have improved this process. In this way, common IJV objectives were propagated and shared. This constitutes a great improvement in comparison to the earlier situation, in which instructions were communicated to managers without an explanation of their reasons and objectives. However, the level of consultations with

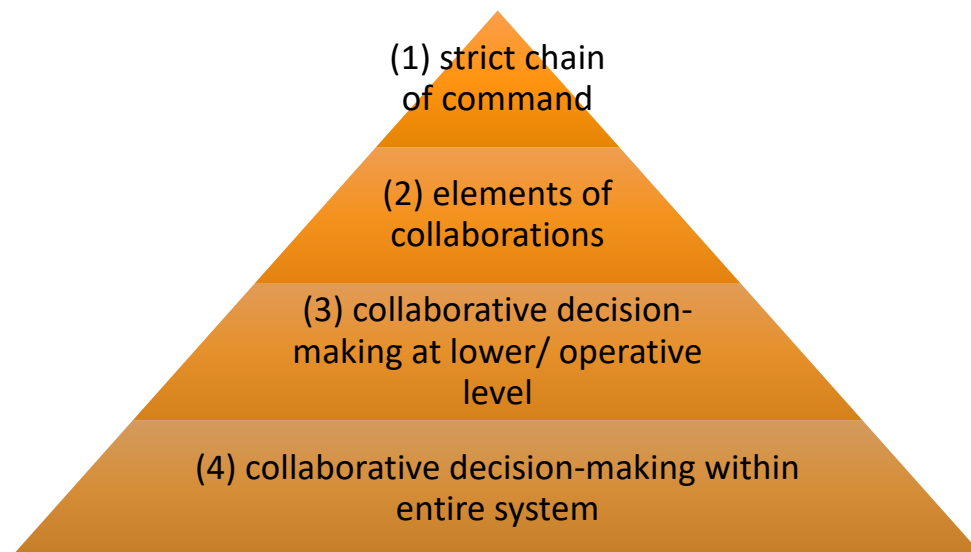
branches and at an operational level, as well as inclusion of more different opinions and stances, can be observed, even here.

Now, the company decision-making system is positioned somewhere between a direct chain of command and collaborative/distributed decision-making. As illustrated in Figure 26, the Company is situated at position 3. The conceptual model presented below is based on the findings from pragmatic research performed in the Company. It describes the process of establishing a collaborative decision-making culture within the IJV, resulting in better quality decisions, and the improved performance of the IJV.

The research project in my own Company and my critical reflexive analysis led me to the conclusion that it is difficult to achieve an error-free process of decision-making—or at least one in which errors are minimised—in an IJV owing to the ethnically diverse environment and its different cultural leanings and assumptions.

Figure 26

Evolution of decision-making system within own IJV



MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION OF DECISION-MAKING SYSTEMS IN INTERNATIONAL JOINT VENTURE FROM STRICT HIERARCHICAL DECISION-MAKING SYSTEMS INTO MORE COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

Culturally determined decisions from the partners regarding forming and operating the IJV are affected by joint perceptions of complementary resources, and

capacities towards a perceived common goal. This decision-making process has highly complicated and diverse inputs, resulting from various cultural constructs:

Inputs →

1. main national and organisational values, which differ between the stakeholders.
2. general perception of collaborative processes by the partners
3. mindfulness, judgement, trust, and emotions influence perceptions and are bounded by the partners
4. relationships in communication both language proficiencies and deeper meaning
5. attitudes towards knowledge sharing and creation were both tacit and explicit
6. conflict management and approaches in negotiations'
7. attitudes towards hierarchy and leadership, preferable models by different stakeholders
8. culturally determined ethical considerations
9. use of various support tools both IT technology and conceptual

→ processes →

In this phase, all above mentioned constructs interact, align, or even clash in stakeholders' daily working routines. Some stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes change, evolve, or become even more rigid in interaction with other views. New cultural values emerge, accommodating or rejecting those of the partners. Feedback loops after each decision is made, as during interactions values are assigned to decisions outcomes. This process is repeated several times.

→outcomes

A new, predominant IJV culture results in enhanced collaborative practices through newly shaped decision-making routines and attitudes. It becomes constructive, promoting the growth and development of the IJV or persisting in stringent, unilateral attitudes, strict hierarchy, and each side clinging to their own values and routines. It will then emerge as destructive and controversial, where decision-making routines are the source of problems, misunderstanding, and negative attitudes—thus resulting in the IJV's collapse.

The model presented below reflects my perception derived from thematic analysis of the source data and reflection on the processes happening in the IJV as far

as decision-making is concerned. It underscores the moderating role of this practice on the overall functioning of the IJV. The process presented here is simplified into four discrete stages. This is done for clarity purposes only. In real life, the process of forming and evolving of an IJV organisational culture is continuous by nature. The length of any of the stages depends on the interaction of many constructs—different or similar—between various nationally distinct stakeholders. As the quality of decisions had a direct impact on the Company's performance, this process determines the extent of the success—or otherwise—of the IJV.

The process of evolving the collaborative culture of an IJV, relative to decision-making, is therefore complex, and for this reason I adopted several heuristics and simplified the approaches to make it clearer. Research findings resulting from qualitative techniques were analysed through the prism of nine themes resulting from the literature and underscored as inputs phase in the first decision-making step. At all times, I also kept in mind six cultural dimensions derived from Hofstede and colleagues (2010), as most of discussions reflected them.

The below diagrams present simplified, data-derived concepts of the evolution of decision-making routines in the process of forming and operating IJV underscoring the role of collaboration. These are broken up by stages.

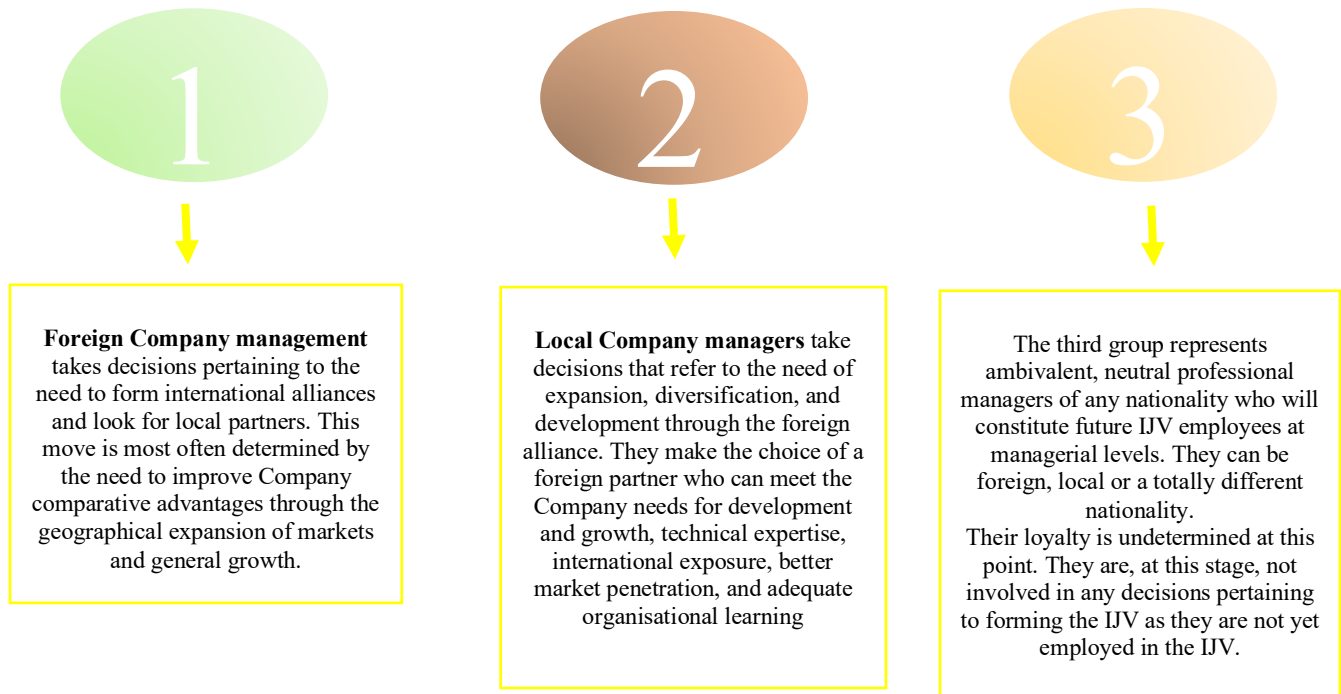
Stage I

International partners' decisions on forming the IJV are taken by upper management and shareholders of respective business entities (foreign and local)

At this initial stage, there are three distinct nationally groups of top echelon decision-makers (CEOs, senior managers, shareholders, and other significant stakeholders) as shown in Figure 27. At this first phase, where the idea of IJV formation is emerging, the future considerations of stakeholders from different national backgrounds are considerably different. Stakeholders' nationalities influence their values and cognitions as well as their perceptions of possible benefits from an eventual alliance, but neither party has any impact on the considerations of the other. They scan, identify, interpret, organise, and utilise information filtered through their national cultural lenses and determined to be relevant to a future alliance.

Figure 27

Title



Even at this point, stakeholders' goals should already be convergent. They all strive for their own organisations' progress, and development that they perceive in future international alliance with a complimentary partner. National culture attitudes towards "foreign" habits and cultures notwithstanding, they all want, at this time, to enhance their organisations' competitive advantage, market position, and growth through internationalisation and increased global exposure.

The greater the cultural distance between the foreign and local (host) environment, the more ambiguous the prospect of IJV success will be. Constructs such as work-oriented values and the resulting attitudes towards collaboration, communication, trust, knowledge sharing, perceptions of power, leadership hierarchy, and ethical consideration might considerably differ but are not very relevant at this stage. Principal considerations are complementary conditions for organisational growth.

At this initial stage of IJV "conceptualisation", decision makers' considerations determine with whom—and where—to enter into an international, constructive alliance.

This is assuming that they have already determined that an international alliance is necessary for the company's development. It is worth noting that even at this initial stage, the decision-making process has already been influenced by individuals' national cultures. The values embedded in national cultures have a profound and enduring effects on stakeholders' decisions and the manner in which they reason. These values may unconsciously affect the selection of an international partner.

National culture affects the working practices and habits of all of the three above identified entities, albeit in different ways. At this early stage, the conflicts, preconception, biases, or misunderstandings that could result from the interaction of different national cultures are irrelevant. Choices occur, and decisions are taken in a uniform manner within a uniform national group. In addition, according to the behavioural theory of internationalisation (Hambrick and Mason, 1984), past experiences greatly influence managers' decisions on the choice of international partners. Their background, experience, and national cultural values will therefore govern their decisions. Thus, decision makers' cognitive foundations are based on their experience, knowledge, assumptions, and awareness of alternatives and subsequently, their consequences. Individuals' values, resulting from national culture, are often based on the experiences of the group. They will have an impact on preferences and priorities. As such, managers may prefer to remain in the vicinity of other businesses or cultural environments with which they are familiar. Managers can perform a fairly accurate evaluation and interpretation of their business context, using their existing cognitive schemas and heuristics in decision-making process. These schema and heuristics are based on, among other things, the decision-maker's national culturally determined background and experience. For example, in the IJV examined, these principles could mean that French executives are more positively inclined towards Francophone countries. They may be more comfortable with the alliances in groups of countries that speak French. This would mean they could speak their own language and apply other French habits and practices, which may also be acceptable and understood by their new partner. Similarly, as evident in the case examined here, Nigerian decision-makers may seek a West African or African partner to reduce cultural distance and feel more

comfortable in general. There is also a general belief that cultural distance between foreign and local (host) countries increases uncertainty and the cost of operations.

However, at this initial stage, within each decision-making group, there are ideally no major biases or preconceptions resulting from different national cultures since they are of the same nationality. Decisions taken by (1) and (2) in Figure 27, separately but referring to the formation of the IJV, will impact this homogeneity. After the IJV formation, the stakeholders will have to interact in their working practices, while taking decisions with others who hold different national perspectives, approaches, and cultures.

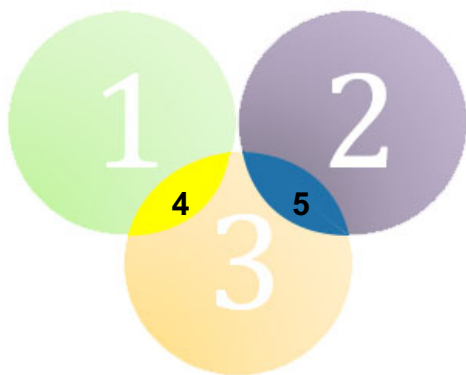
This description is greatly simplified. Even within a nationally uniform group there might be many different stances and worldviews. In addition, for the purpose of this model, the dominant influence is those work-oriented attitudes and habits that are influenced by national culture, and are generally uniform within a national group.

Stage II—Forming the IJV

At this stage, decisions are taken separately and co-operatively: building new practices and new administrative and sociocultural structures (Figure 28).

Figure 28

Title



1. Decisions taken by foreign company managers
2. Decisions taken by local company Managers
3. Decisions taken by IJV managers (neither from the local nor foreign company but recruited specifically for the proposed IJV, either by local or foreign partners)
4. Decisions taken collaboratively between 1+3
5. Decisions taken collaboratively between 3+2

At this stage, the first collaborative practices begin to occur, once the IJV starts operations as a defined entity. Culturally distinct groups are formed by members who share similar perspectives, and they begin to work together to make decisions informally. Firstly, collaboration will most often be established between two (out of three) less distinct groups, such as new employees and the foreign partner (4), or new employees and local managers. The group of managers employed specifically for the IJV will align either with the local or foreign company, most probably with the one responsible for their recruitment or with which they share more similarities.

The foreign and local partners' managers often have some different objectives when engaging with the IJV. Initially, each might want to play a major role in decision-making, with biases towards their own particular objectives. In addition, their approaches also differ based on the organisational working culture of the country they come from. Based on the results of this thesis, the group of managers employed specifically for the IJV, irrespective of nationality, will most likely attempt to adjust to either of the two, as their expectations regarding personal objectives are tied to the new IJV as an entity rather than any of the original IJV parent companies. It is very unlikely that, at this point, they can be independent in decision-making processes, despite the individual level on which they might present their national cultures and habits. Of course, these managers may have their own biases and attitudes that are also culturally determined, but upon entering the IJV they will, from inception, understand that they need to play a part and adapt. Since a specific organisational culture for the newly established IJV has not yet emerged at this stage, they will tend to support one or the other tendency, whichever is closer to their own objectives and worldviews.

At this stage, collaborative decision-making practices are at an emerging phase. Even though they are seen as a method of finding common ground, improving decision-

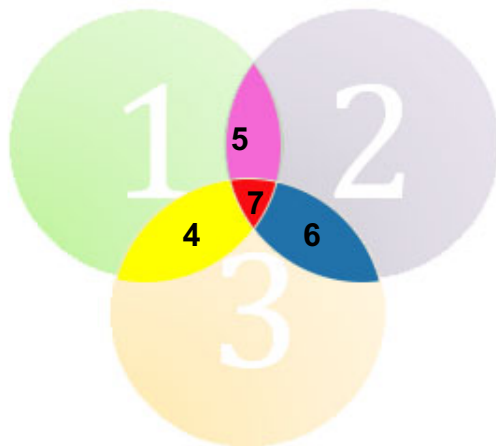
making processes, and helping the IJV's growth, they are not yet established and operative.

Stage III

This stage involves building a common platform for strategic and operational decision-making within an IJV. This is accomplished by gradually introducing and accepting collaborative decision-making processes and forming a common culture based around this concept (Figure 29). At this stage, distinct common collaborative decision-making practices (7) commence and common culture and habits begin to form within the IJV. An organisational, collaborative decision-making culture begins to emerge, and while it might only concern a small portion of the decisions made within the IJV, its success or failure will determine its subsequent development.

Figure 29

Title



1. Decisions taken by Foreign Company managers
2. Decisions taken by Local Company Managers
3. Decisions taken by IJV managers (neither from local nor foreign company but recruited specifically for the JV)
4. Decisions taken collaboratively between 1+3
5. Decisions taken collaboratively between 1+2
6. Decisions taken collaboratively between 3+2

7. Decisions taken collaboratively between 1+2+3

Drawing from the extant literature, I assumed that diversity in cognitive foundations and values—resulting from stakeholders' different nationalities—greatly influence decision-making styles, processes, and outcomes. It also affects interpersonal relationships during the decision-making process. Therefore, to promote collaborative and common decision-making patterns in modern IJVs, non-traditional approaches and the use of tools characterised by great flexibility and non-hierarchical structures are required.

Further development of collaborative processes and thus a better decision-making performance requires investment in communications systems and trust building. This will gradually eradicate differences in stakeholders' values and inter-agency discrepancies, or at the very least help reduce them. The widespread adoption of new IT tools and techniques in most of the IJV organisations will assist this process (9th theme). When decisions taken collaboratively lead to success and provide good results, there will be an incentive to expand collaborative decision-making practices into other areas. The area represented as (7) in Figure 29 will continue to expand and develop.

The practice of collaborative decision-making will become justifiable, increasingly desirable, and will gradually be embraced by all three groups of decision-making stakeholders. In this way, a specific organisational culture will emerge in the IJV collaborative decision-making systems. Thanks to this new phenomenon, the IJV will thrive, as decisions are of improved quality, and are easier to implement owing to their consensus base. With the same goal in view, these practices are owned by the stakeholders, are embraced, and understood throughout the IJV.

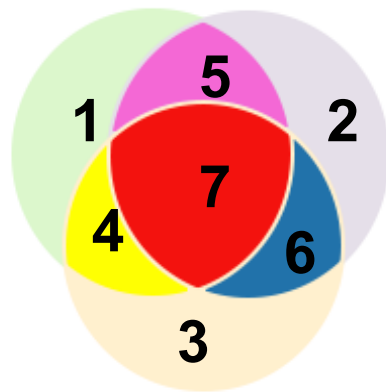
Stage IV

This stage involves building a common platform for strategic and operational decision-making within the IJV: (a) collaborative practices prevail ("success"; Figure 30) or (b) the IJV moves to dissolution or collapse ('failure'; Figure 31). When collaborative decision-making and other practices cannot be embraced owing to the various cultural differences of each group's nationally induced cultural working habits in decision-making, it will become apparent that diverse stakeholders cannot co-operate and

coexist within one corporate entity. Common goals and interests will be lost in the confusion of interests, fears, and mistrust.

Figure 30

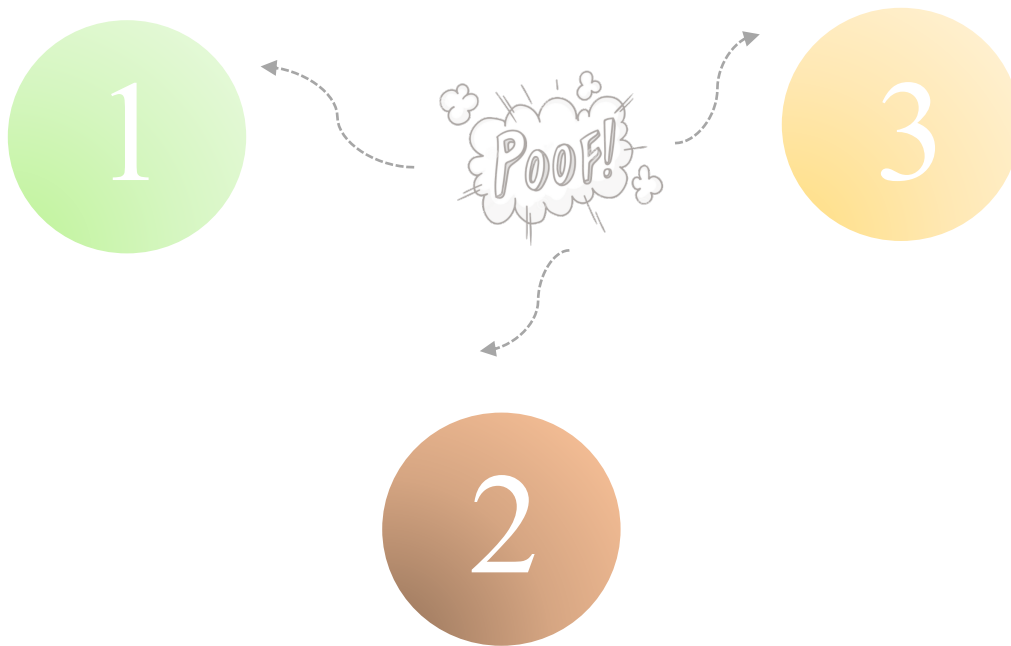
IJV success



1. Decisions taken by foreign company managers
2. Decisions taken by local company managers
3. Decisions taken by IJV managers (neither from a local nor foreign company but “others” recruited specifically for the JV)
4. Decisions taken collaboratively between 1+3
5. Decisions taken collaboratively between 1+2
6. Decisions taken collaboratively between 3+2
7. Decisions taken collaboratively between 1+2+3

Figure 31

IJV failure



At this stage, corporate collaborative practices in decision-making have been formed and integrated into the IJV organisational culture. Collaborative decision-making practices (7) now constitute the greatest part of all the decisions taken within the organisation (Figure 30). Collaboration allows cultural differences to be seamlessly navigated, and the different worldviews of stakeholders managed successfully, thus avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings. As all voices are heard and considered, trust develops. Furthermore, collaboration will penetrate into other working practices. Decision-making practices are connected to all aspects of organisational life. Organisational culture, which is now increasingly collaborative, permeates all aspects of the IJV. When most of the stakeholders have accepted these new practices, and after seeing their positive results, others will also begin to gradually accept new practices. The IJV will therefore thrive and adjust more easily to the complexity of the new economic reality and search for new opportunities for competitive advantage and development.

In contrast, if cultural biases and misunderstandings remain, decision-making processes will be insular, like they were prior the IJV's creation. Communication and understanding among the three groups will be poor. This often leads to controversies, and mistrust between stakeholders. The stakeholders will not be able to agree on vital issues or will find agreements extremely difficult to reach. In this situation, because it is impossible to reach a consensus on collaborative decision-making, each group will fall back on their own traditionally established practices. Owing to low-quality decisions, overall, the IJV company performance will deteriorate and be unable to achieve any of the goals of the various stakeholders. At this point, disaccord reigns, sides are taken. The IJV gradually collapses and disintegrates.

Summary

In the multicultural environment of an IJV, decision-making and the quality of decisions are critical to organisational performance. A large percentage of IJVs fail; more so than national businesses. To a great extent, this failure is caused by an inability to foster collaboration and understanding, resulting from the partners' incompatibility, unrealistic expectations, bad financing, inability to reach agreements, feelings of pride, greed, and so on. An inability to navigate different work attitudes, cultural differences, and habits are often key factors in this lack of collaboration and understanding.

There are many nationally induced cultural constraints that can obstruct the smooth operation of an organisation, but, if properly managed, these differences can become the source of new knowledge and can provide a competitive advantage. Collaborative decision-making, as part of a new organisational practice, means that many diverse viewpoints can be accepted and considered. As shown in this thesis, these collaborative practices can be great tool for engendering a new organisational culture that encompasses people from different backgrounds, which ultimately improves the quality of decisions taken in IJVs.

Chapter 7: Research findings compared with the literature, and the contribution to knowledge

A critical literature review contrasted with my research question revealed a gap in knowledge regarding nationally and ethnically induced cultural diversity and its implications for organisational culture and working practices, including processes of collaborative decision-making in Afro-European IJVs. This gap concerned the role of collaborative decision-making and its possible use to mediate problems, disagreements, and clashes attributable to differences in national culture and work-oriented values and attitudes within IJVs.

The research questions could therefore be answered based on the results and new theoretical and practical knowledge that emerged from my research.

Initially, I set out to examine this issue in depth, using my own company as the research subject. I aimed to:

- i. handle a complex problem within my own organisation—improving decision-making practices.
- ii. gain additional knowledge about this construct in a specific environment in which different national/ethnic cultures clash in a single organisation in an increasingly globalised world.
- iii. promote and understand collaborative and interactive behaviours and decisions
- iv. develop a common organisational culture within the Company.

Though my findings do not guarantee universal success, this research is highly pragmatic and applicable mostly to contexts in which African and European businesses interact. The perceived contribution of this research to present knowledge can be summarised as follows:

- (1) The thesis identifies collaborative practices (especially in decision-making) as tools for navigating various multinational cultural behaviours and habits. It ties the quality of decision-making in nationally diversified IJVs to collaborative practices that help create a joint organisational culture in specific multicultural IJVs.

- (2) The research focuses on the often-unexplored Afro-European context, which separates it from strictly Western-oriented ideology, idiosyncrasies, and perceptions.
- (3) The thesis constructs a conceptual model that outlines the transformation of decision-making systems in the IJV, from strict hierarchical decision-making systems to more collaborative practices. The conceptual model in Chapter 5 was developed based on the research findings. It outlines four different stages in the development of IJV decision-making culture through a gradual embracing of collaborative practices. In reality, the process is contiguous.
- (4) It provides practical guidance for effectively navigating ***work-related national cultural similarities and differences to enable collaborative practices in decision-making processes in an IJV Company in an Afro-European context.***
- (5) It adopts a specific mixed methodology underpinned by pragmatism and supported by a reflexivity approach, which I have not previously encountered in the available literature.

1. Collaborative practices (especially in decision-making) as a tool for navigating various multinational cultural behaviours and habits and the Tying of quality of decision-making quality in nationally diversified IJV to collaborative practices that help create a joint organisational culture in specific multicultural IJVs.

Most of the extant research on decision-making focused on measurable, rational attributes of proposed transaction/business decisions (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2011). Stakeholders' and decision-makers' personalities and their impacts on decision processes—which could be influenced by their national cultures—are rarely considered in the literature.

Existing literature concentrates either on the how to control and accommodate different national cultures in various international organisations, or on operational technicalities, routines, and tools in IJVs. I, on the other hand, looked at cultural differences as an opportunity to enrich organisational practices and structure.

For instance, Nnamdi and colleagues (2018) called for more research into IJVs from the point of view of organisational culture theory, particularly in situations in which the organisational culture clashed with various national cultures, ultimately affecting the performance of IJVs in Africa. Contrary to this, I found that the collaboration of various nationally diversified stakeholders in the decision-making process resolves possible conflicts and misunderstandings if it is properly mediated. It exerts moderating effects on conflicts and misunderstanding and improves the quality of IJV decisions.

Bearing in mind, in particular, the similarities and differences between the examined groups along cultural lines, I advanced the proposition that the IJV decision-making system—like the one observed in my own IJV, with many diverse multicultural stakeholders—should be negotiated between those distinct cultural groups and that in the long run, it will benefit from a change to collaborative decision-making practices. Specifically, the system should move away from the principle of having a single (central) decision-maker, or decision-makers towards an environment with multiple, multi-level decision-makers applying collaborative practices enriched by various cultural influences.

I aimed to build a “substantive theory” (Brannick, 2007, p. 60; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 9) based on the link between the quality of collaborative decision-making and culturally induced problems, demonstrating advantages and practical solutions evident in multinational IJVs in Africa. An in-depth study of the two groups within the IJV made sense, as the IJV attempted to find ways to navigate the culturally induced problems and take advantage of the original insights and fresh outlooks that collaborative decision-making and other collaborative working practices encourage.

2. Exploring the Afro-European context and separating the research from strictly Western-oriented ideology, idiosyncrasies, and perceptions.

While the ethnic cultures in Africa are plentiful and diversified, they have several similarities. There has been little analysis, nor even proper identification of this in the literature. Most importantly, it would have been expected that the clear distinction in values between Africa (Nigeria) and the Western world be more prominent. In this light, national African cultural values in an (Afro-European) IJV might contradict those of the arbitrarily imposed organisational cultures in the Western economic and managerial

tradition, along with the working norms and practices desired by the foreign IJV partners (French/European in this case).

Looking at cultural differences in the IJV partners through the prism of six cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1993; Hofstede et al., 2010), I adapted this concept to a Nigerian–French reality. In contrast to Hofstede, who worked mostly in Western or European contexts, other geographical dimensions were proposed. I collated and compared survey and qualitative data results through this prism. The differences between European and African attitudes across the six dimensions are obvious but are found to be manageable through collaboration, good will, and understanding. The differences between West African (Nigerian) and European cultural leanings were assessed along these six cultural dimensions.

While drawing on the concepts from Hofstede and colleagues (2010), the originality of my approach refers to changes in the comparison table, where subjects' nationalities are considered. The literature does not provide information on these two groups, as sub-Saharan Africa has been neglected in most theoretical analyses, and European (French) working culture is mostly considered in a distinct context. However, the subject literature occasionally considered France and Africa albeit, in very general terms.

Nigeria's factors were included based on the original data in my own IJV, which I consider my contribution to knowledge. While the literature sometimes discussed the relationship between Europe and Africa more generally, it does not provide information on the specific work-related cultural behaviours of these two groups (Nigeria and France).

3. Constructing a conceptual model that outlines the transformation of the IJV's decision-making systems from strict hierarchical to more collaborative practices

The conceptual model in Chapter 5 was developed based on the research findings and outlines four different stages to the development of IJV decision-making culture through an increasing embrace of collaborative practices. In real life, the process is contiguous. The model also provides a new insight into the fact that most of the senior managers had dual roles: within the IJV and within their parent companies. This meant they could

not be simultaneously answerable to their employers in the foreign company and to the IJV stakeholders. In the case of the local managers, they could not be simultaneously answerable to their employers in the local company as well as to the IJV.

4. Providing practical guidance for effectively navigating work-related national cultural similarities and differences to enable collaborative practices in decision-making processes in an IJV Company in Afro-European context

In an African context, interactions with other, geographically distant business practices and cultures present a great challenge. The difference between the existing literature and what was attempted in my research is the focus in this thesis on decision-making in a specific nationally diversified business environment and socio-economic context. This means it could focus on cultural differences between Europe and West Africa generally, and France and Nigeria in particular.

New practical knowledge in this regard, as well as the IT tools described in this thesis and identified in the literature review under the ninth theme, are in line with concepts of sustainability and dynamic capabilities (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Building on this concept, I realised, through this thesis, that national cultural differences may become the source of an organisational competitive advantage. These findings can serve not only my own organisation, but also other European companies entering into joint venture agreements in Africa. My research shows, contrary to my expectations, that Nigerians are more enthusiastic about using IT tools than French stakeholders.

Inter-ethnic values must be embraced, and culturally diversified environments need to be appropriately navigated. Antonczak (2019) observed that, in the past, knowledge management and other aspects of organisational knowledge research have mostly concentrated on procedures, frameworks, and existing technologies. Previously, “face to face (F2F) contacts and sharing” (Antonczak, 2019, p. 2) constituted the primary focus of research. Today, globalisation has had a significant impact, creating new areas for investigation in knowledge management, organisational practices, systems, routines, and other organisational constructs, including collaborative decision-making. These constructs are not as constrained by organisations operating in multiple locations, time zones, or national cultures.

I agree with Antonczak (2019) on the need for F2F contact, but this is an expanding area of research that requires further investigation. I wished to explore another gap in knowledge: if and how collaborative decision-making is able to harness diverse national and cultural behaviours and habits, and which tools can be employed under a common vision and objectives, so that a distinct IJV organisational culture emerges. This collaborative organisational culture will help IJV organisations thrive and improve their performance. The importance of explaining and developing shared objectives and visions within the organisation can be embraced by all, regardless of national culture.

This thesis has demonstrated that, despite its impact on the individual behaviours of nationally diverse stakeholders, national culture can be harnessed for an organisation's positive development. When all stakeholders work in an interactive, collaborative manner, and are guided by the same objective and vision for success, achieving common goals attenuates individualistic tendencies and egocentric behaviours. The company's success is seen as their own, and this minimises national or ethnocentric tendencies. The tacit knowledge that results from national culture is shared and harnessed towards joined objectives; in this way, collective intelligence is developed within the organisation

Shared vision

Collaborative decision-making practices in a culturally diverse IJV leads to the development of a distinct organisational culture, drawing from different national cultural behaviours and habits and work-related behaviours. In this situation, all stakeholders share the same vision about the company's future and existing differences are only used to unite. Stakeholders also share assumptions regarding company goals, strategies, and missions, which are a fusion of diverse ideas and projections.

Nevertheless, stakeholders may have individual operational goals, which ideally do not preclude, and are not in conflict with, overall company goals. Where these individual and company goals are in conflict, compromises or mutually beneficial solutions must be sought. This can only occur in a collaborative environment in which there is a basis of mutual trust.

The selection of managers in an IJV is crucial. A significant error in the examined IJV was that most of the employees were members of the individual companies prior to the merger. They entered the IJV with a set of preconceptions and biases and were loyal to their old employers. Therefore, recruiting new managers who exhibit a preference for collaborative behaviours would be ideal.

Loyalties of stakeholders

A mistake we made was that most of the senior managers had dual roles: within the IJV and within their parent companies. Foreign managers could not be simultaneously answerable to their employers in the foreign company and to the IJV stakeholders, and local managers could not be simultaneously answerable to their employers in the Company and to the IJV.

Relatedly, trust between stakeholders is an essential construct to enable low-level decision-making and collective ownership of decisions. Working in groups that encourage the exchange of ideas across nationalities gives individuals the opportunity to observe one another and elicit and develop new ideas in response to emerging problems. Co-operation in collaborative groups creates a positive atmosphere for developing collective intelligence (Macleod, 2016), which, as stated earlier, is more than just the sum of the participants' individual intelligence. Specifically, "a team with complimentary skills is more likely to satisfy all the demands made by the division of cognitive labour" (Sloman and Fernbach, 2017). Therefore, decisions taken in such an environment will be of better quality and more appropriate to the situation. Nigerian managers working in the IJV and other local stakeholders are especially well-disposed towards this manner of operations, which seem to align with their native/ethnic culture and habits. "Nigerians are expert[s] [at] improvisation" was a statement expressed by many expatriates, and it might become a considerable advantage in moments of unexpected crises and failures, as they are able to act quickly and without fear. This can be juxtaposed with a European tendency for organised and predetermined actions, which carries the advantage of making decisions suitable for any situation. Moreover, collaborative thinking creates a rich intellectual environment within which decisions can be made more efficiently. Such an atmosphere creates a context and situation more

relevant to reality. Therefore, higher-quality decisions can be taken individually and these decisions are also better understood and implemented, as and they relate closely to stakeholders' perceptions since they collaborated with the decisions made. Thus, such decisions are performed more effectively, and subsequently transmitted to others.

The ninth theme in the literature review—use of the IT and computer-mediated communication support tools for collaborative decision-making—was also considered from a different perspective in this thesis than the leading discourses. A large part of the subject literature (Antonczak, 2019; Macleod, 2016, Goran et al., 2018), looked at the problem from a technical point of view, but did not consider the intercultural implications of adopting these types of decision-making tools. They concentrate on technicalities of use, and their rapidly growing acceptability and usefulness. I concentrated on how the cultural peculiarities of different nationalities impact acceptance of these tools for collaborative decision-making. I posited that collaborative strategies, using modern IT tools and techniques, contribute to the creation of flexible, self-adjusting, and effective decision-making processes in an IJV operating in Africa.

5. Adopting a specific mixed methodology underpinned by pragmatism and supported by a reflexivity approach – not encountered in this format in available literature.

With the objective of making sense of the rich descriptions found in the qualitative data, I worked within the conceptual framework of the nine themes identified in the literature review and related them to the six cultural dimensions drawn from Hofstede and colleagues (2010).

This is a novel approach that considers lots of cultural constructs that permeate social life in international environments. From the formal point of view, I also highlighted the possibility of combining several methods— in my case it was survey, template analysis, and matrix analysis— into organisational research. My method, though complex, time consuming and sometimes very cumbersome, is novel because the survey and descriptive statistics served as starting points for thematic analysis and matrices for the qualitative part, and the entire process was underpinned by reflexivity, to create the common proposition of the validity and importance of collaboration in the

specific multicultural context of my own IJV. This approach allowed me to make sense of the data not only from additional descriptions to encompass cultural values, but also from rituals, habits, heroes, symbols, and practices, wherever possible (Hofstede et al., 2010). Ultimately, I aimed to understand how some specific work-oriented national values were becoming part of a new organisational culture, (Schein, 2003) and if they were promoting the collaborative decisions practices that the Company was trying to build, while learning how they can be effectively navigated.

Therefore, I strongly believe, and my recent research supports this claim, that future decision-making practices in the IJVs will witness further development and evolution towards democratisation and distribution of decision-making resources in respect of multicultural IJVs. This process will be enhanced by both direct and computer-mediated collaborative practices, not only in respect to decision-making, but also in other areas, providing increased interaction between nationally and ethnically diversified stakeholders in our increasingly global business communities.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and final observations

“When we learn to see the world through cultural lenses, all kinds of things begin to make sense that initially were mysterious, frustrating, or seemingly stupid” (Schein, 2003, p. 7).

After completing this research, I became convinced that the integration of different national/ethnic cultures within an IJV organisational context is a genuine and inevitable process. It happens on a global scale, and our own IJV organisation is no exception. African businesses, just like any other, have become more and more multinational, with incredibly diverse cultural influences, attitudes, and business practices. If this diverse environment is to lead to success, benefitting all sides, new solutions to navigate this diversity must be sought. Diversity affects all organisational processes. In my study I focused on one process in particular: decision-making.

The findings presented here support the research hypotheses. I observed that in my own IJV, an environment dominated by Nigerian and French stakeholders, collaborative decision-making routines and co-operative/collective behaviours are indeed possible, acceptable, desirable, and deemed beneficial to the organisation by most stakeholders, who were guided by a common vision and shared objectives.

In my own IJV, these comparatively new circumstances were additionally influenced by the different working habits and attitudes of the stakeholders (Nigerian and Expatriate) which were determined by diverse national cultures. Changes occurred throughout most business processes, including approaches to decision-making. Such changes made it possible to evolve the organisational structures, vital to adjusting to the existing context, including embracing stakeholders' different behaviours and peculiarities that result from national diversity. New business structures encompassing collaborative practices and new processes have started to develop. Examples of such structures include IT-based virtual operational groups, operation hubs, and consultation units, as well as periodical mind-mapping sessions.

The experience of our IJV supports a previously formulated proposition: that nationally induced cultural differences can contribute to the evolution and formulation of a specific organisational culture, both with explicit and tacit knowledge generation and

transfers, biases, and undertones that greatly affect decision-making processes and practices, while, in the long run, benefitting general company performance.

The emergence of a specific corporate global culture stimulated a multinational environment in the IJV that prompted the emergence of a new type of employee: global managers. Critical reflection and analytical observation led to the bold suggestion that there appears to be an emergent cultural group in IJV companies and other international organisations. This group is quite identifiable and becoming homogenous. Even though members of this group do not share a common nationality, socio-economic class, religion, language, or geographical location, they do share a common set of work-related behaviours, values, norms, attitudes, and specific nuances of language. They use the same or almost the same IT technologies: various applications using rich media, including live-feed features such as WhatsApp, Monkey interfaces, Instant Messengers, and similar equipment and gadgets. In some observed cases, people working in this international environment appear to have even more in common with global culture than their own national culture. Such an emergent global culture is naturally inclined towards tolerance and inclusivity, collaboration, and co-operation.

The forces responsible for this situation are the same as the forces responsible for the globalisation of economic activities in general. They are the growth of international trade, multinational businesses, increased personal and institutional contact, dramatic improvement in telecommunications, data transfers and storage, international travel for both business and leisure, and so on. In addition, shared experience through different co-operative practices is also one of the determinants of the forming of new culture, as groups of people move across international/global regions. As a result, people attached to other environments outside their own national cultures might start evolving towards emerging and distinct cultural groups. Such people travel and work internationally, mostly because of expatriate assignments, and they actively embrace foreign cultures that they absorb through their lifestyles. Such people may be identified as “citizens of the world”. I feel that I am also becoming one of them. I, therefore, intentionally wrote this thesis through a lens of “global citizens”, as I tried to position myself in neither of the national groups considered (neither Nigerian nor Expatriates).

Limitations, problems, and difficulties in the course of research

After discussing the results and findings, and its addition to the body of knowledge in this respect, it is also important to mention problems and constraints I encountered during this study.

Complexity

While reviewing the extant research on collaborative and participatory decision-making in a multicultural context in an African environment, I was struck by the degree of complexity related to research findings in this respect. As one problem was analysed it became the source of another. The constant motion and fluidity of findings complicates the body of literature. The subject of this thesis became more and more complex, when tackled from the perspective of different nationally induced cultural dimensions.

I now know that I caused this situation on occasion because of being too meticulous and trying to get into the tiniest details of existing problems. I was also always too aware of the possibility of my cultural biases, pre-knowledge, and the pre-conceptions so I tried hard to reject them and to view most of the issues from different cultural perspectives relative to the respondents. This amount of critical reflection consumed a lot of time.

Objectivity/subjectivity

As objectivity was an aim of the thesis, it was at times impossible to achieve, particularly as I was emotional about the outcomes and felt strongly about the issues. The solution to this subjectivity was long periods of critical reflection. I used a lot of time to ponder issues and tried to see them differently and from different perspectives, irrespective of my own stance. This critical analysis and reflection were of considerable benefit, as were numerous dialogues and discussions with some stakeholders and friends from different cultural backgrounds, including some with people from outside the project who were supportive of its outcomes.

Time span

It was rather difficult to define the research time span, especially the end point. I arbitrarily delimited the research into four mind-mapping sessions but in practice, all activities in the IJV are continuous and ongoing, along with the research. There was a tendency of the research to go on as new organisational phenomena kept arising. Hence, the limits I had to place on the research time were arbitrary and limiting.

Another time-related problem was the complexity and time-consuming aspect of making sense of collected data. Even though this analysis was, to a certain extent, conducted parallel to data collection, it lasted a long time—over 5 years was needed for completion of this project.

Impact of the research on personal development and worldviews

Finally, to my own surprise, I realised how much I am the product of my own cultural tradition, which is Eastern European. It was at times difficult or even impossible to shed these influences for the purposes of examining one construct or another from a different perspective in the organisation to which I belong. I thought I was freed from my cultural background and had assimilated aspects of other cultures with an open mind and objectivity, having lived and worked abroad in multinational environments for most of my professional career, and, yet, during this research I became aware of how much my innate national cultural values affected the process of the research and the approaches to finding solutions. I realised that this must have been the case for every stakeholder, and therefore tried to adjust my cultural lenses during interviews, discussions, and other data-collecting interactions with nationally distinct stakeholder respondents.

Furthermore, I recognised more than ever the need for collaboration and understanding in decision-making processes in my own IJV Company and, I strongly believe this is also applicable in other similar IJVs.

Lasting several years, the research process changed me as a person. I became more open to other ideas—ideas that were seemingly incompatible with my own worldview ideas—and more open to collaboration. I became very wary of making definitive pronouncements unless they satisfied many conditions. I also became aware of the constant evolution of constructs and thought processes, which made no condition

permanent and no decision final. No matter how objective and universal one tries to be, it is impossible to be totally detached and isolated from one's culture, habits, past, and sentiments.

T. S. Eliot is reported to have said, "Although it is only too easy for a writer to be local without being universal, I doubt whether a poet or novelist can be local without being universal" (quoted in Kwame, 1993). It appears that the same can be said for a researcher in economic and social sciences looking for the universal, while seeing and respecting the particular. The research process had a great practical impact not only on my IJV Company analysed in this study, but also on all the decision-making stakeholders in the company, including myself, and on the evolution of its working procedures and organisational culture.

Proposed future research

Further research in the field is very much needed, particularly in view of the increasing number of multicultural ventures appearing in Africa and worldwide. New IJVs similar to mine have participants from diverse national and cultural regions. The dominance of Western universalism approaches is becoming a thing of the past and will become even less relevant as different stakeholders who have different philosophical underpinnings become more prominent in business. A notable impact of Eastern and other philosophical underpinnings and work-oriented attitudes is increasingly felt in various business environments. Indigenous cultural approaches will encounter new challenges related to other cultural concepts, and the way forward for the good of all must be sought. Collaborative, co-operative, and sometimes even collective attitudes should be researched as a solution to these possible controversies.

A lot of Asian (especially Chinese) businesses have developed in Africa in recent years, and Nigeria is no exception. Even though, initially, Eastern businesses and stakeholders tended towards insularity within their ethnicity, it was impossible for them to be independent from local structures. Hence, in several cases, they have formed IJVs with local companies and businesses. With new laws passed in China allowing for public/private co-operation, IJVs with local partners are now forming in Nigeria too, in addition to the intergovernmental JVs and consortia that were prominent up to this point.

These are composed of very culturally diverse people. Their worldviews, values, system habits, and their resulting work-oriented behaviours, especially around decision-making, are very different again. All these issues merit further observation, examination, and study.

Even though much of the existing literature dealt with internationalisation, globalisation, and cross-cultural interactions in the business environment, extant research is still largely insufficient. This is especially true in relation to national culture as a driving force behind organisational culture within various organisational processes in new environments, such as IJVs.

In my research, I touched upon only the tip of the iceberg: examining only one process—collaborative decision-making—and one organisation only. Both were viewed through the lenses of cultural diversity and national versus organisational culture issues, making the subject complex and unclear at times. Collaboration and collaborative practices are proposed as a solution to complex problems encountered in the decision-making of a culturally diversified organisation. The concept of a modern, global, multinational organisation still requires a substantial amount of study.

The areas identified for future research might include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. It might be interesting to determine which countries and cultures find it easier to co-operate with each other and identify reasons why.
2. The complementary skills of different cultures, and their potential to contribute to the organisation's collective cognitive performance and professional skills, could be mapped.
3. Decision-making "support tools" (Zaraté, 2013), enabling increasing collaboration and navigation in a culturally diversified environment, could be further explored and analysed. They play a unifying role in the IJV, stimulating ubiquitous communications and co-operation within the IJV.
4. It would also be interesting to look for collaborative methods that foster cooperation within organisations made up of seemingly incompatible national cultures, with a perspective of finding common denominators and ways of coping.

5. An interesting local problem to consider would be the degree to which—and in which context—Nigerian (West African) organisational culture can be treated as uniform as far as decision-making practices are concerned and how different ethnic influences can be navigated to work in collaboration. Division along ethnic lines is very apparent in Nigerian political and economic life, and will necessarily impact relationships within an individual company or organisation. There are many organisational problems that could be resolved if the issue of inter-ethnic problems and controversies could be understood and navigated accordingly.
6. The emerging concept of environmental/citizen participants—in this analysis, the term refers to local communities and the external environment—could be further considered. In co-operative/collaborative decision-making processes within IJVs, the issue of involving citizens and environmental communities in debates could be proposed and its merits could also be studied.

Final note

Culture is learned and acquired through common experience. When people share experiences about their day-to-day work, the commonality of what they discuss, see together, eat, drink, watch for entertainment, and listen to in the news brings them closer together culturally. Collaboration enhances these interactions and increases common perceptions and understanding of one another. I am grateful for this opportunity and for the actionable tacit and implicit knowledge that I gained during this research.

When one becomes a researcher and practitioner in one's own company, the learning seems to have no end. The company is like a living organism, developing and continually evolving, and so although the period under observation for this study is defined, I shall continue to observe, reflect, and react, looking for new, emerging constructs. As long as organisations exist, this cycle never ends.

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Appendix 1



PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION SHEET

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participation in a research study conducted in our organisation. The decision to participate is entirely yours and confidential and has no effect on our relationship and your carrier within the company or elsewhere. Before taking your decision on participation kindly read below information. This should help you to make up your mind in this respect. You may also wish to discuss these issues with your friends, co-workers, researcher herself or any other person the advice of whom you value.

Participation is not only voluntary but also anonymous. Results of the research if you wish will be made known to you.

Thank you for your attention.

STUDY TITLE:

COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING IN MULTICULRAL ENVIRONMENT OF AFRO-EUROPEAN JOINT VENTURES -IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY - CASE STUDY: MINING INDUSTRY, W. AFRICA NIGERIA

SHORT TITLE: (Collaborative Decision Making in multicultural organisation)

RESEARCHER: Mrs Malgorzata M. Nwaigwe DBA TEL 234 8034030380 MAIL: dynatrac.md@gmail.com ; malgorzata.nwaigwe@online.liverpool.ac.uk

SHORT SUMMARY AND EXPLANATION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

It has been observed that a lot of multinational joint ventures in Africa fail. The problem is thought to be in inadequate decision-making practices – resulting from cultural misunderstandings, different decision-making habits, cultural biases, misconceptions etc...

The purpose of the research apart from expected academic value about decision-making practices in culturally diversified environment, aims at introducing collaborative practices, improving working relationships, empowering and developing joint solidarity and feeling a part of the Company progress through evolvment of new collaborative decision-making practices.

Keeping in mind that our civilisation is based co-operative behaviours author wants to examine and prove

the need for adoption of collaborative decision-making practices in ethnically and nationally diversified Company. These practices are further on going to be tested in practice through action research approach. The purpose is therefore both theoretical and practical - testing collaborative decision-making practices in multicultural environment and improving Company performance through adoption of fully collaborative decision-making practices.

DESIGN AND METODOLOGY:

Research consists of short survey instrument, testing impact of different cultural values on decision-making practices and in-depth interviews and discussion sessions with stakeholders. Second part of research, more extensive is meant to explain why decision-making practices are failing and how they can be made more or fully collaborative. Three action cycles are previewed in a spiral of - observation and critical analysis of present situation, adoption of new methods, observation and reflection, adoption of new methods...

The researcher will administer survey, in written form.

The researcher will also carry out interviews, dialogues and discussions, with each participant on individual basis in strict confidentiality.

Recording and video- recording will not be used unless in specific particular situations and with acceptance of the participants obtained beforehand.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN CHOSEN?

You have been chosen because you are an important stakeholder in the Company and your opinion and experience matters to Company and has impact on its success or otherwise.

There are no other participation criteria otherwise participants are chosen randomly.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR TAKING PART?

There are no direct implications on the participant. However, if the project is successful, improved working relationship and staff empowerment resulting from them might increase job satisfaction and self-confidence of the participants being a part of expected success.

TIME SCALES

- The researcher will take minimum 15 minutes per each participant to explain the purpose of the study, implications and answer their questions and doubts if any.
- Time required for Survey part of the study is max 1 hour.
- Indebt discussions and interviews may take more time depending on participant's and the researcher's mutual agreement and understanding.

EXPENSES AND PAYMENTS

Participation is voluntary and no remuneration or fees are envisaged. However, in case there will be some expenses related to it from the part of participant – researcher will reimburse them.

RISKS

Research presents no risk for any participant.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY WITH UNFOLDING PARTICIPATION OR IF YOU WANT TO STOP PARTICIPATE.

You need to contact the researcher either for additional explanations or to inform her about your decision to discontinue the process. There are absolutely no consequences of this action.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Participation in the study is confidential. This signifies that survey forms are anonymous. Only the researcher knows participants' names. Participants need not reveal to third parties their decision to participate or not in the study. All the data collected during research are also confidential and securely stored. Likewise, the names of participants will be coded and placed in encrypted context not allowing easy identification.

Unless a participant will want explicitly, and confirm this in writing, that his or her opinion is revealed or quoted this will never be done. Opinions, findings, suggestions while published will be generalised and paraphrased in a way that does not allow for identification of the source person (s).

WHO CAN BE CONTACTED FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS:

Principal investigator - Mrs. Maria M. Nwaigwe, (tel.: 234 8034030380, email – malgorzata_maria @ may be contacted for further question at any point of the research, before and afterwards.

INFORMED CONSENT CONCEPT

Participants are invited to participation in the research on decision-making practices in the Company. However, they are by no means obliged to take part in this exercise. By giving consent to participate they express their free will to do so, after being fully informed about the purpose, methodology and their role in the research. They are free to discontinue participation without any explanation and repercussion at any point of time.

Appendix 2

Coded positions at the start of research

(Some managers were changing during the study)

	Researcher	E/N	Neutral
1. CEO/MD – researcher			
2. General Manager	MG	E	
3. Board member	HSP	E	
4. Operations Manager / Sales country Manager	OM,	N	
5. Factory Manager	FM	E	
6. Finance Controller	FC	E	
7. PRODUCTION MANAGER	MP	E	
8. Branches Accounting managers	BAM1	N	
9. Branches Accounting managers	BAM2	N	
10. Branches Accounting managers	BAM3	N	
11. Branches Accounting managers	BAM4	N	
12. Branches Accounting managers	BAM5	N	
13. Branches Accounting managers	BAM6	N	
14. BRANCH MANAGERS A	BMA	N	
15. BRANCH MANAGERS L	BML	N	
16. BRANCH MANAGERS E	BME	N	
17. BRANCH MANAGERS C	BMC	N	
18. BRANCH MANAGERS I	BMI	N	
19. Logistics Manager	LM	E	
20. Protocol Manager	MP	N	
21. Liaison France	LF	E	
22. Local Procurement	LP	N	
23. Importation Manager	IM	E	
24. HR Manager	KO	N	
25. Admin Manager	EO	N	
26. Maintenance Manager	MN	E	
27. IT Manager	TI	N	
28. Transports and delivery managers 1	TDM 1	N	
29. Transports and delivery managers 2	TDM 2	N	
30. Transports and delivery managers 3	TDM 3	N	
31. SAFETY AND SECURITY MANAGER L	SSL	E	
32. SAFETY AND SECURITY MANAGER A	SSA	N	
33. SAFETY AND SECURITY MANAGER C	AAC	N	
34. PROCESS COORDIATION PCO	PCO	E	

Appendix 3

Sample Mind-mapping session announcement

MEMO

To: All Management Staff
Subject: Invitation to Management Mind-mapping session
DATE: 2nd June 2017 (Friday)
TIME 11 AM (NIGERIAN TIME)
VENUE HO. Lagos - Conference room

AGENDA

- (1) Opening address / introduction of new approaches within the IJV
CEO
- (2) Opening Prayer HR Manager
- (3) Present situation in Nigeria ABJ Manager
- (4) Summary general situation—integration within the IJV– OM
- (5) Interactive session—Problems and issues arising from IJV
- (6) Interactive session solutions, mind-mapping/discussions
- (7) Summary and closing remarks by CEO
- (8) ADJOURNEMENT

Appendix 4

Sample of the first thematic template

Matters emerging from the discussions after first MIND-MAPPING SESSIONS:

Collaboration in decision-making serves as a tool for addressing problems of different cultural work-oriented attitudes between European and Nigerians especially in decision-making routines in IJVs

1. Collaboration practices in working environment
 - Not adequate—19 persons (N) 10 persons (E)
 - Because of prevailing organisational culture
 - Because of misunderstandings
 - Because of Differences in relationship to hierarchy
 - Because of negative attitudes of stakeholders
 - Very important but not adequate—majority of respondents
2. Decision making routines
 - Questioning existing decision-making_practices
 - Questioning emerging decision-making_practices
 - Communication and understanding as crucial construct to agree on decision-making
3. European - Nigerian work-oriented practices
4. Work attitudes perception—Same? Similar? Different? Very different?
(codes: S SS D VD)
5. Mediating cultural differences
Awareness, Inclusion, developing joint vision, understanding, informal setups

Integrative themes:

- ❖ Organisational routines inclusive decision-making influenced by national culture:
 - Differences in relationship to hierarchy
 - Differences in approach to hierarchy
 - Differences in time perception
 - Differences in taking risk readiness
 - Differences in conflict resolution approach
 - Differences in approach to change

❖ COLLABORATION—tool to overcome difficulties

Sample of the matrix resulting from analysis of thematic template assessing working routines from the point of view of the impact of national culture
 IJV—national versus organisational culture and working habits

Operating routines	Cultural determinant	
• Communicating	low versus	high context (N,E)
• Evaluating	direct versus (N)	Indirect negative (E)
• Persuading	principles versus (E)	application -first (N)
• Leading	egalitarian versus	hierarchical (N,E)
• Deciding	consensus versus (N)	top –to-down (E)
• Trusting	task versus €	relationship based (N)
• Disagreeing	confrontation versus (N)	compromise (E)
• Scheduling	linear time versus (E)	flexible time (N)

N: Nigerians; E: Expatriates