

# THESIS

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## TITLE

A study of the interaction between cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship in relations to conflicts within cross-cultural organisations: Sample from housekeeping departments in two Norwegian hotels.

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## BY

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## **Statement of Authorship**

This work has never previously been submitted for a degree or diploma at any university and to the best of our knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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## Executive summary

This paper is a small pilot study and is attempting to look at *the interaction between cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship, and how this may influence the managing of conflicts in a cross-cultural working environment*. This paper will look at the phenomenon conflict within a cross-cultural working environment. The study in this paper is taking a qualitative approach, therefore, the results cannot be generalised outside the population chosen, but it may give an indication on how things works in a cross-cultural working environment.

The aim of this study is to provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of employees in a cross-cultural organisation – in this paper a group of housekeepers and managers in two different hotels in Norway, by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories when it comes to conflict, communication, cross-cultural work environment and culture differences.

The paper tries to look closer into the importance of positive interaction between employer and employees, and communication when it comes to a cross-cultural work environment in managing conflict. The intention is to gain an enhanced understanding of the managing of conflict in a cross-cultural organisation, what the employees and the manager view as important in preventing and managing conflict and if the opinions and views between the employees and the manager compares.

The scope of this study is limited to the hotel industry in Norway, and the sample population was employees and managers who work in the housekeeping department in two different hotels. The respondents varied in age, nationality, and work experience. One facility and service manager from each of the two hotels were interviewed; in addition five employees from one of the hotels and six employees from the other hotel.

As this study is following an explorative design, communicating directly with the object is one of the most common research methods. Interviews were therefore chosen to collect primary data – the questions asked were open-ended and semi-structured. Secondary data has been used to establish the key issues relating to the concept of interaction between employees and manager, communication, conflict management and cross-cultural work environment, to compare responses from the interview to the theory, and to back up findings to gain the best result possible.

In this study it has been discovered that the two organisations looked at do not consciously adopt strategies for managing conflict. The study indicates that language

problems, misunderstandings and other communication problems are some of the main reasons for conflict in both of the hotels. The managers in both hotel 1 and hotel 2 said that they try to resolve a problem as soon as they get to know about it as an effective tool. They try to resolve small disagreements and misunderstandings while they are small preventing them to become big problems. Feedback was said to be another important tool in the attempt to prevent and manage conflict.

When it comes to the conclusion of this paper it is difficult to suggest a concrete answer to the research question. As this is a qualitative study, the sample population in this study is small, and the findings are only opinions and views of the employees and managers interviewed in this particular study. If there was a bigger or different population, the results, and the comparison of the findings and the theory might look different. Furthermore, if different questions were asked, the findings could be different. Further research is needed to be able to generalise, confirm or reject the findings of this study. However, the findings may give an indication on important aspects in managing conflict in a cross-cultural working environment such as in a housekeeping department. A conceptual framework and the limitations of this study are used to suggest further research on this phenomenon.

## Acknowledgments

Frustration, success, joy, disappointment, curiosity and passion are just a few of the emotions that describe the journey we have experienced for the past six months. These emotions have contributed defining this experience and helped us go through a process that has resulted in this final work. However, we would not have come to this end-result without some much appreciated help from different people:

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Our thanks go to the persons who has helped us reading through the paper giving us valuable comments, and correcting the grammar and the English language. At last but not least, we would like to thank each other for mutual support, valuable comments and collaboration throughout the process.

*“Let my house not be walled on four sides, let all the windows be open, let all the cultures blow in, but let no culture blow me off my feet.”*

**Mahatma Gandhi**

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# 1 Introduction

The society today is becoming more and more influenced by cultural variety. People with different cultural backgrounds in organisations are becoming a bigger part of our society (Dou & Clark Jr, 1999; Guirdham, 1999; Tjosvold & Leung, 2003). Cross-cultural management is rapidly becoming everyone's challenge. For employers it can be a challenge to integrate the cultural variety into the working environment (Tjosvold & Leung, 2003). The cross-cultural issue brings the challenge how people from different cultures attempt to effectively communicate in the workplace daily (Dou & Clark Jr, 1999; Guirdham, 1999). Cultural differences make effective global communication essential (Spinks & Wells, 1997).

To make it easier to meet with persons from foreign cultures, one should be aware of one's own culture first. This forces managers and employees to be more concise about how they work and communicate with persons with different behaviour and communication patterns. For a work environment to be able to exist and grow with as few conflicts as possible and to manage conflict, it is important that the communication between the manager and staff is on a level where everyone understands each other. Communication is an important keyword in all organisations but especially where the employees are from different countries and cultures (Dou & Clark Jr, 1999). Moreover, good working environment in an organisation is dependent of good interaction between the manager and employees.

This paper will look at the phenomenon conflict within an organisation. However, conflict in a working environment is a vast area spanning across many different theories and factors. This study is therefore limited to conflict within a cross-cultural working environment. The paper will be a small pilot study that looks into the interaction of two factors that are known (from having read existing literature) to have an impact on conflict separately; cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship. Under these factors there are found to be sub factors or variables that are also important in understanding conflict in organisations, such as; distributive- and procedural justice and culture. This paper will attempt to look closer into the interaction between cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship and possible effects of this on the appearance of cross-cultural conflict and what can be done to manage conflict.

Previous study conducted by one of the researchers in this study and having read other research papers conducted on this phenomenon have picked further interest in the topic. Haraldsen's (2007) study looking at communication as a motivation factor to create a cross-cultural work environment that includes all employees within the organisation, has been a

motivator for this study who looks at how communication and effective management of employment relationship can help managing conflict and contributing to a positive work environment in a cross-cultural organisation.

Since the data collection method in this research is in-depth interviews, this paper is qualitative. As the paper is taking a qualitative approach, the results can not be generalised outside the population chosen, but it may give an indication on how things works in a cross-cultural working environment.

### **1.1 Thesis structure**

The structure of the paper will be as followed: Firstly, the aim of the study and the study question is stated. The paper will then look at the relevant theory for the study – existing models and previous research conducted on the phenomenon. Next, the method and design of the study is discussed. The validity and reliability of the study is also accounted for. The paper has its own section for the analyses of the results and the discussion of the results and the theory used. Furthermore, limitations of the study are highlighted. Finally, a conclusion of the study is presented and suggestions for further research are provided.

### **1.2 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of employees in a cross-cultural organisation– in this paper an example of housekeepers and managers in two different hotels in Norway, by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories when it comes to conflict, communication, cross-cultural work environment and culture differences. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between conflict and the underlying factors in a cross-cultural organisation.

### **1.3 Research question**

*“How may the interaction between cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship influence the managing of conflicts in a cross-cultural working environment?”*

- In what way can interaction between cross-cultural communication and management and employees relationship have an effect on conflicts?
- What kind of interactions can one find between cross-cultural communication and management and employees relationship that affect conflicts in a multicultural working environment?

## 2 Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework presents literature that has contributed to meeting the purpose and objectives of this study. The framework provides an overview of some of the most important theories and models associated with the research question of this paper. This part of the paper will present relevant theory that is linked to the exploratory and quantitative study conducted. This is a study primarily on conflict and management in cross-cultural work environments and is looking at theories relevant to this.

### 2.2 Conflict

Conflict is a complex expression, and because of that this paper will only look at the topics that are relevant to the research question in this study. This chapter will look at the definition of conflict, the types of conflicts, conflict level, and management of organisational conflict such as managing disagreements and conflict prevention. This study will not include managing disputes and managing litigation as the people responsible for managing these types of conflicts are human resource managers, middle managers or corporate counsel. The paper is mainly focusing on the first-line supervisors and managers' responsibilities. The framework that guided the design of this chapter is drawn from several theories of management and organisational behaviour such as theories of *rational decision making* that dominate much of the thinking in economics, game theory, and other social sciences. In these models, managers of organisations are capable of weighing the expected costs and benefits of alternative courses of action and choosing a course of action that efficiently and effectively achieves the organisation's objectives (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991; Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992).

One important form of the conventional model of decision making is contained in the literature on *risk management*. In risk management models managers must take account of uncertainty in making their decisions, and managers' decisions are affected by their risk preferences (Doherty, 2000; Marrison, 2002). It is suggested that risk management is an useful tool in understanding the management of organisational conflict. Furthermore, in the past decade there has been an intense debate in the management literature over the meaning and relevance of strategic thinking in an age of globalisation and other forces of transformation (Hammonds, 2001; Porter, 1980, 1985, 2002).

There remains an open question as to whether an organisation should adopt relatively long-term conflict management strategies or, instead, nurture a more flexible approach that stresses the development of organisational capabilities and capacities for dealing with conflict. The utility of a systems approach to conflict management is also discussed in this chapter. The concept of a system, as initially developed by Bertalanffy (1951), Boulding (1956), and others, requires elements such as inputs, outputs, and feedback loops. Understanding the differences between the establishment and operation of an authentic integrated conflict management system and policy of routinely using mediation (or any other dispute resolution technique) to resolve workplace conflict is (as suggested by Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006) critical to understanding the contemporary management of organisational conflicts (Gosline, Stallworth, Adams, Brand, Hallberlin & Houk, 2001; Lipsky, Seeber & Fincher, 2003).

### **2.2.1 What is conflict?**

Conflict is viewed as a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between oneself and another individual or group about interests, beliefs or values that matter to them – they feel negatively affected by another person or group (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 2000; De Dreu, Van Dierendock & Dijkstra, 2004). Another definition of conflict is that it can be seen as “*an expressed struggle between at least two dependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other party in achieving their goals*” (Knapp, Putnam & Davis, 1998, p. 415). Conflict occurs at work when an employee is irritated by another person or group. Conflict or negotiating parties attempt to further their own interest, their opponent’s interest, or both. Conflict behaviour is viewed as personally effective to the extent that an individual succeeds in realising the benefits desired for oneself (Janssen et al., as cited in Van de Vliert, Nauta, Giebels & Janssen, 1999). How individuals respond to conflict issues depends on their concern for their own outcomes and for the opposing party’s outcomes. Conflict management is a function of high or low concern for self combined with high or low concern for others (De Dreu et al., 2004).

Conflict is a factor that affects the way employees carry out the work. There are different levels of conflict, and different ways of handling conflict, but there is no certain answer to what conflict resolution tool works for the different conflicts in different organisations. However, it is important that the management in an organisation treat

employees with respect and thoughtfulness (Nordhaug, 1990). When the word conflict is mentioned, it is often focused on how conflict arises and how it evolves. Einarsen, Skogstad and Hellesøy (2000) suggest that conflicts in a work environment can arise because of work processes and the way work is organised, how the organisation is built up and the organisational culture in the workplace. It is easy to forget how organisational culture and personnel policy influence managers' and employees' behaviour, attitudes and ability to cooperate (Einarsen, Skogstad & Hellesøy, 2000).

In this paper, by conflict it is meant *workplace conflict*, this is conflicts that can arise in relationships between supervisors- / managers and employees, employees and employees, and within work teams, including managerial or supervisory teams. In other words, it is focused on *intraorganisational*, and not *interorganisational* conflicts. This paper is not concerned with, for example; business-to-business or business-to-government conflicts, or the conflict that may arise between an organisation and a stakeholder such as a customer or supplier. This paper looks at conflict from an organisational perspective, focusing on conflict management at the *individual* level.

Most people dislike conflict because of its negative consequences. Their natural reaction is to avoid conflict and get it over with as soon as possible. Yet avoiding and suppressing conflict is sometimes a mistake and not always in the best interests of the individuals and groups concerned. In fact, growing evidence suggests that conflict may be beneficial to performance in groups and organisations, and that avoiding and suppressing conflict reduces individual creativity, decision quality in teams, product development, and communication between work groups. Moreover, it can be argued that stimulating conflict sometimes enhances individual, group or organisational performance. Too much emphasis on the negative consequences may detract attention from the beneficial effects that conflict may have (De Dru & Van Vliert, 2000).

There exists conflict when there are differences in views and opinions, goals, actions or differences in other ways. There are many types of conflict, human problems and conflicts can occur at different levels such as within a single human being, between two persons, between several people within the department or between departments in the organisation (Ellmin 1992; Markham, 1996). The term conflict is applicable in situations where individuals are in conflict with themselves as well as conflict with other individuals or with the organisation or a society in general (Ellmin, 1992).

## 2.2.2 Levels and types of conflict

Conflict can occur *within an individual*. Conflict on this level can have a positive or negative outcome. Conflict within individuals can arise from different motivations. In the everyday there can be conflicting needs. Conflict arises when different goals are set because of different needs, and it is hard to know which goal to choose, or which need to satisfy (Ellmin, 1992; Markham, 1996). If the conflict how to achieve results and how to analyse and choose the right method, this can lead to innovation and creativity. However, it can be negative if the person worry about unrealistic expectations of him/her, or that the person is asked to do something against his/her own principals. Both types of inner conflict can cause a human being to become quiet while looking for resolutions, the main difference of the conflict types are the outcome of the conflict (Markham, 1996).

Furthermore, conflict can occur *between two individuals*. Conflict between individual can arise from different goals and interests, and can lead to emotional situations. Conflict can be caused by competition, wrong perceptions of others' reality, language problems and misunderstandings or other communication problems. The conflict could be about big contrasts in assessment of a job's content, adjustment or practical implementation, or it could be about lacking ability to understand and accept individual differences (Ellmin, 1992). This type of conflict can hurt the relationship between the two persons. It will not only make it difficult to work with each other for the two persons involved, but it will also make it hard for other persons who have to work or interact with any of the two persons. It can create awkward situations, and in worst case people in the organisation start to take sides of the conflict. Because of this it is necessary to start treating the problem as soon as possible (Markham, 1996).

Conflict *between several people* within the department can occur if there is a department with human beings working creatively together. With a group of people working together it is inevitable that different opinions between ideas appear. When groups consisting of two or three persons have isolated conversations, misunderstandings and confusion easily appear, and this can contribute to conflict (Markham, 1996).

Finally, conflict *between departments* in the organisation can occur. Some organisations actively trigger conflict and competition between groups or departments within the organisation, believing that it will result in each group working more effectively and they will achieve higher results when they compete with each other. Sometimes this strategy

works, but other times the feeling of competition gets more important than achieving results of the work completed (Markham, 1996).

There are several common types of conflict within an organisation. One of the common types of conflicts is conflict about the organisation's or department's goals which can occur when one or more persons have different goals in mind. Different goals could be created from misunderstandings, the objectives of the organisation might not be clear or conveyed properly to all the employees. Moreover, change can be implemented in order to achieve the organisation's or department's goal. This can lead to resistance of change from the employees who do not agree to the goals (Markham, 1996; De Dreu et al., 2004).

The second type of conflict is conflict of ideas. Because of each human being's background, different interpretations can occur of the same statement. This is why it is important to give feedback in the way of giving a message in different ways or asking questions. Conflict of ideas can also occur when a new person enters an existing group. No matter how skilled the person is, it is inevitable that the new person will have different ideas and views. This can be positive in that the new person can bring new innovative ideas. However, it becomes negative when old members of the group resist the way the new person speaks and proposes the new ideas, or they simply do not like the new ideas (Markham, 1996).

The third type of conflict is attitude conflict. This is far the most difficult type of conflict because it consists of feelings and opinions which are deep rooted in one or more persons. These feelings and opinions can be based on values, cultural or political background. Persons involved in attitude conflict are convinced they are right and can not understand why others do not see the situation as they do. They do not intend to change and are likely to demonstrate resistance to everyone who tries to change them (Markham, 1996; De Dreu et al., 2004).

Lastly, behaviour conflict can occur when one or more persons that are involved behave in a way the others see as not acceptable. For example, always being late for meetings, not wanting to cooperate or not doing their share of work (Markham, 1996). To prevent conflict, it is important to manage organisational conflict.

### **2.2.3 Managing organisational conflict**

Many scholars and practitioners do not recognise that conflict is inherent to social interaction and common to organisational life for example Katz and Kahn (1978); March and

Simon (1958) (as cited in De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 2000). They search for optimal ways of managing conflict to prevent its destructive effects on interpersonal perceptions, the social climate within teams, and the interaction between groups. However, it is also a need to search for conflict management strategies that help conflict to be productive (De Dreu & Van Vliert, 2000).

There is evidence that managing organisational conflicts is receiving increasingly attention by managers and policy makers. Major corporations and organisation are more inclined now than ever to adopt a proactive, strategic approach to managing organisational conflicts. The trend is now also reaching smaller companies. In a bygone era, most managers assumed that conflict was not a phenomenon that could be easily managed. Almost all organisations took a reactive or passive approach to conflict. They would wait for conflicts to arise before taking action. But the growing costs of disputes as well as dissatisfaction with the traditional means of managing and resolving conflict have motivated many organisations to try a new approach to conflict management.

Organisational conflicts manifest themselves in three forms: *latent* (unexpressed) or *manifest* (expressed) disagreements among and between members of the organisation; disputes including formal grievance and complaints and; litigation including lawsuits. As mentioned earlier, this paper focuses on the pre- and early stage of workplace conflicts – misunderstandings and disagreements among members of the organisation. A typical organisation waits for small conflicts and disagreements to evolve into disputes and then for disputes to evolve into litigation, and only then begins to manage “conflict”.

Medina, Muduate, Dorado, Martinez and Guearra (2005) found that conflict decreases the job satisfaction and sense of wellbeing of staff, and positive working environments can be achieved by avoiding such conflict. It is proposed that improving leadership skills can reduce these conflicts and improve team cohesion. Almost (2006) found that conflict within teams are typically ante ceded, on one hand, by differences between individuals’ opinions, values or demographic origins and, on the other, inadequate communication, trust or respect between individuals or teams. Conflict may also occur within teams that, for example, have high levels of workload or in which staffing levels are too high or too low.

If managers are to avoid facing the same conflicts among their staff, they must take steps to manage their relationships. One of the first of these steps is to encourage staff to gain insight into their own behaviours. The employees can learn how, by making small adjustments to their reactions to events or altering the ways they communicate with each

other. They can make their working lives easier and produce favourable outcomes for everyone involved (Covey, 2004).

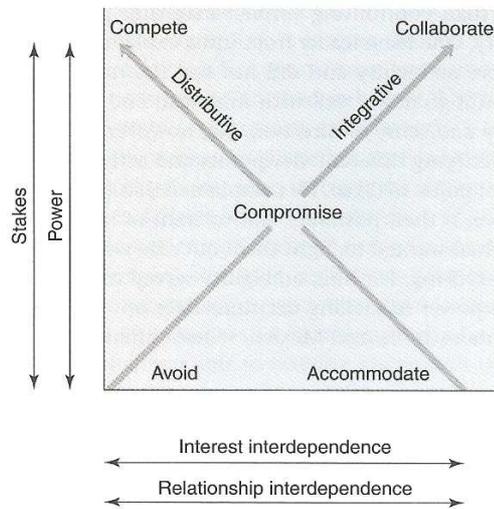
### **2.2.3.1 Managing workplace conflict: Latent and manifest disagreements**

Differences in goals, objectives, values, and opinions between two or more members of the organisation are an everyday occurrence in most organisations. Lipsky et al., (2003 p.8) describe these disagreements as: “any organisational friction that produces a mismatch in expectations of the proper course of action for an employee or group of employees”. These differences or frictions can be latent or manifest. By *latent*, it is meant disagreements that are not directly expressed and do not necessarily surface in the day-to-day operation of the workplace. Latent or unexpressed conflict, however, can clearly have an effect (usually negative) on the performance, productivity, and climate of the workplace (Kolb & Putman, 1992; Mechanic, 1962; Pondy, 1967). By *manifest*, it is meant disagreements that are expressed by the members of the organisation or work unit. Employees can express disagreements with their supervisors or fellow employees, for example, how a work should be performed, who should perform it, and when it should be performed.

The relationship between employers and employees is governed by a complex “web of rules” that deals with every facet of the workplace. For example: the rate of pay, the scheduling, assignment and pace of work; standards of performance. Each of these facets is a potential source of conflict. Moreover, the interpersonal relationships on the job are another source of conflict. Unhappiness with these relationships can lead to disagreements, complaints, accusations, recriminations, and other forms of negative behaviour. However, these frictions need not and usually do not become formal complaints or grievances.

Most organisations expect that the exercise of *formal authority* (sometimes called *forcing*) by a supervisor will be sufficient to resolve these types of workplace conflicts. However, both scholars and practitioners have observed that *avoiding* or *ignoring* workplace disagreements is a common practice in many organisations. Another approach used by some managers and supervisors is *accommodating* the workplace disagreements by yielding to the wishes of the employees. In some organisations *compromising* is the approach used to resolve many conflicts; it is expected that differences of opinion and disagreements will be resolved through negotiation, in which each of the parties is expected to compromise in order to reach an agreement. Finally, some organisations use *collaborating* as an approach to resolving disagreements; they foster a problem-solving approach to achieving a mutually satisfactory

solution to workplace conflicts (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 2003; Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2002; Fairhurst, Green & Snavely, 1984; Rahim, 1983; Gladwin & Walter, 1979).



**Figure 1:** Managing styles of conflicts (Gladwin & Walter as cited in Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 237).

Many organisations do not have clear policies or procedures for managing routine workplace disagreements. Top managers expect that middle- and first line managers will have primary responsibility for resolving these disagreements. They do not attempt to manage directly or systematically such disagreements but assume a *laissez-faire* attitude, hoping that the supervisors and employees involved in such conflicts will resolve their differences on their own or learn to live with them. However, Oetzel and Ting-Toomey's (2006) study suggests that a growing number of organisations are more actively managing conflict at this level because they have come to believe that the potential costs to the organisation that can result from a *laissez-faire* attitude to workplace disagreements can become too large to tolerate. Accordingly, many organisations have recognised that they need to manage the disagreements that affect the performance of their supervisors and employees.

Lipsky et al., (2003) states that many organisations; the hierarchical, bureaucratic organisation of work has been replaced by the use of teams. Disagreements among members of an organisation become much more critical in a workplace where participation, empowerment, and teamwork are valued.

A vanguard of organisations has adopted comprehensive policies, or systems, designed to address the roots of organisational conflict. There has been a recent development of so-

called integrated conflict management systems, which are expressly intended to allow an organisation to deal with the fundamental causes of conflicts and to prevent disagreements from growing into serious disputes (Lipsky et al., 2003). To reduce the level of negative conflict in an organisation, it is important to have management practices that work in place.

## **2.3 Management**

Management is a broad subject, and this paper will only look at topics that are relevant to the research topic. This chapter will look at what management is, employment relationship, personnel policy, organisational culture and motivation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs are included under motivation to help understand the needs of human beings. According to the literature cited, these are all important aspects in an organisation and in managing conflict.

There are two different concepts when it comes to management: leadership and management, or; leader and manager. A leader is a person who achieves the organisation's goals through the work of others without relying on their position power. Moreover, they have the ability to influence others (Dwyer, 2005). On the other side, a manager is a person who achieves the organisation's goals through the work of others (Dwyer, 2005; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). More or less every workplace has a leader and/or manager. A leader or a manager is important for a working environment to function and to have strong structure (DuBrin, Dalglish, & Miller, 2006).

### **2.3.1 What is Management?**

Management is a huge phenomenon and is too broad to explain in an easy way. However, the essence of management is that it is about people and human relationship. Since human nature has not changed in the past centuries and is unlikely to change in the present, the process of management will remain the same. Tjosvold and Leung (2003) argue that management differs less from period to period than from country to country. Management theories were developed in the West, mainly Britain and the USA. These theories were based on Western individualistic assumptions, which do not necessarily apply for the majority of the world's population in other continents. The present century is expected to bring alternative theories for these other parts of the world. These will leave room for more collectivist values and for an orientation on the long term rather than the short. For those involved in managing

across cultures, meta-theories stressing the relativity of any single cultural orientation will become more accepted (Tjosvold & Leung, 2003).

Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2003) define management as using social influence to organise work so that the organisation achieve their goals (Dwyer, 2005; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003). A good manager possesses great competence within the area the person works. As part of good professional qualities, those people have the ability to influence other people. If the business has lacking management, this can make people believe that the business takes no responsibility or do not have the ability to make good decisions. Poor management often leads to lack of well-being and motivation for the employees and this again leads to large turnover (DuBrin et al., 2006).

There are two different types of manager; formal and informal. The role is assigned to a formal manager. When a person is assigned as a manager it is clear what responsibility area he or she have to focus on and what grade of authority they have. An informal manager can be an employee with a big grade of impact. They can have just as big of an influence as the formal leader. It is important for the formal leader to get along and cooperate with the informal manager. This is because an informal manager has to cooperate with both the employees and the other managers in the business. An informal manager can often have a bigger influence on the employees than the formal manager because he or she does not have the manager title. The formal leader can get many good advises from the informal leader about what the employees say and do when he/she is not around (DuBrin et al., 2006).

There are different ways a manager can behave; some managers are very concerned about how their employees do their tasks. Others are more concerned about their welfare. Therefore, it is separated between task-orientated managers and relationship- orientated managers. A task-orientated manager focuses on the tasks rather than the results the employees makes. But the relationship-orientated manager shows consideration and care for their employees (DuBrin et al., 2006).

### **2.3.2 Interaction between manager and employees**

Employee relations are the process of building a strong relationship between managers and employees based on fairness, trust, and mutual respect. It takes time and energy and sometimes money to create a good working environment; however it is worth the effort. Good employment relations lead to motivated, loyal, and high-performing employees (Daniel, 2003). There are many different leadership theories (House, 1971; Bass & Valenzi, 1974;

Wynne & Hunsaker, 1975; Osborn, 1975). However, of the many contingency theories, the contingency model of Fiedler (1964, 1967) deserves mentioning.

### **2.3.2.1 Fiedler's contingency theory**

Fiedler's contingency theory is the most controversial of all leadership theories. It is one of the most widely researched theories, having an empirical background extending over two decades. The contingency model hypothesizes that certain leadership styles (as measured by Least Preferred Co-worker - LPC) are effective, depending on 'situation favourability' as measured by three variables called; leader member relations, task structure and position power (Sahal, 1979). There are no topic which has received more attention in the management literature than the concept of leadership and its relationship to productivity and satisfaction. Despite the scope and magnitude of efforts to examine the concept, little is know about what makes a supervisor effective or why a supervisor is effective in one situation but not in another (Hill, 1969).

The recent work of Professor Fred Fiedler, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, however, holds promise of bringing some coherence into the search for a theory of leadership effectiveness. The first assumption in Fiedler's model is that groups can be classified into those with interacting and counteracting tasks. There are two basic leadership styles in this model: *relations-oriented* and *task-oriented*. The relations-oriented leadership style is denoted by a high score on the Least Preferred Co-worker questionnaire, and is characterised by – a person who is motivated to seek prominence in interpersonal relations, who is concerned with good relations with others, who is considerate in his/hers interactions with group members, and who tends to reduce anxiety and increase the personal adjustment of his/hers co-workers (Hill, 1969).

The task-oriented leadership style (a low LPC score) is characterised by – a person who rejects those with whom he/she cannot work, and obtains need gratification and self-esteem from performance of the task. The person is, therefore, concerned with performing the tasks and is willing to relegate interpersonal relations to a secondary position. The most attractive element of Fiedler's model is that it predicts which style of leadership will work more effectively as the ease of exerting influence varies (Hill, 1969).

Motivation and awareness of employees' needs influence the quality of the interaction between managers and employees.

### 2.3.3 Motivation

Motivation is an important factor in an organisation. There is no right and wrong for what kind of motivation should be used on different people. Everyone has different views and needs which have to be considered when deciding what kind of motivation to use. Motivation is a way of making the employees feel important and to show them that the work they do is significant (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2003) defines motivation as the biological, psychological and social factors that activates, give direction to, and maintains behaviour in different levels of intensity when it comes to reaching a goal (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003). Another definition of motivation is the process of arousing, directing, and maintaining behaviour toward a goal. The definition suggests that motivation involves three components: The arousal component which has to do with the drive behind our actions. For example when we are hungry we are driven to get food. The second, the direction component, involves the choice of behaviour made. For example a hungry person makes different choices; eat an apple, have food delivered etc. The third component, maintenance is concerned with people's persistence, their willingness to continue to exert effort until the goal is met. For example the longer the hungry person searches for food, the more persistent the person is (Greenberg, 2005).

Motivation is a highly complex concept. This is reflected that people often are motivated by many things at once, sometimes causing conflicts. For example, an employee may be motivated to make a positive impression on his/her supervisor by doing a good job, but at the same time, the employee may be motivated to maintain friendly relations with his/her co-workers by not making them look bad (Greenberg, 2005).

In modern organisational psychology, there are four types of motivation theories; need theories, cognitive theories, social theories and job characteristic models in relation to motivated behaviour within the work environment. The need theories see motivated behaviour as something that is triggered because of different types of basic needs which are either biological or a product of learning over a long period of time. Cognitive theories see motivation as a result of an individual's expectations of goal achievement, reward and remuneration and its own performance. Social theories especially give attention to the individual's experience of similarity vs. difference, and justice when it comes to co-workers and procedures of dividing rewards in the workplace. Finally, the job characteristic model is more practical oriented. It attempts to map which factors are motivating and which are not motivating in a job situation. The model tries to organise the factors in relation to each other

in a way so it is possible to calculate a job's motivation potential (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003). This paper will look closer into the need theory; Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as this is the original need theory formulation. However, Clayton Alderfer and David McClelland have later built on Maslow's theory to improve weaknesses and to provide new insights to the topic.

### **2.3.3.1 Need theory: Maslow's Hierarchy of needs.**

The need theories and motivation have a long tradition within psychology. An aim has been to find a set of needs which explain most of what human being undertake. Abraham Maslow developed a new theory of motivation that correlated with the views arriving from the Hawthorne studies that were conducted between 1927 and 1932, and the Y- formula developed by Douglas McGregor (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

Maslow's theory was built on the thought that a need-hierarchy exist constituting five categories of need. Within these five categories there are two main types of motivation; need for deficit coverage and need for growth opportunities. The *physiological needs* are the first stage in Maslow's hierarchy of need. As the figure shows (see figure 2), these needs are basic biological needs such as food and accommodation. In relation to the workplace it is minimum salary and wage that is necessary to cover the basic needs (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Greenberg, 2005). Furthermore, this is about working environment conditions and the needs the employees have when they are not working. It is important that the employee have breaks during the working day and do not work too long hours so he/she has time to have a life outside work (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Maslow shows that the lowest step in the pyramid of needs has to be fulfilled before the next stage can be fulfilled. The motivation of the employees will most likely improve if all of the five stages in the hierarchy of needs are satisfied (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Greenberg, 2005; Kotler & Keller 2006).

The next stage is *the need for safety*, the need to avoid danger and threats (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Greenberg, 2005; Kotler & Keller, 2006). It is important that the employees feel safe at work, and that they can trust each other. The employees should not have to be scared when they are working and should feel that they can speak out if they feel that something is wrong (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2003) suggest that this is the need for basic safety measurement in the physical work environment, as well as the need for assurance that the employee has a steady job. These are fundamentals so the individual

can move up the hierarchy of needs in the direction of growth and well-being (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

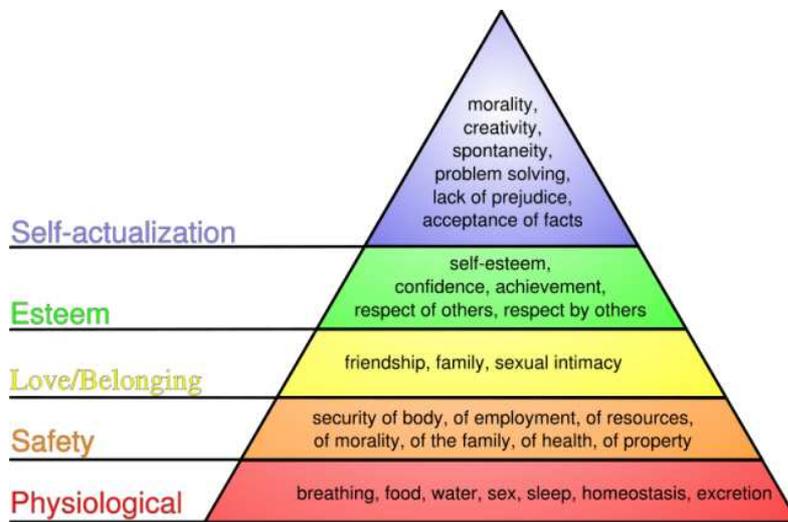
At the third stage is *the social need*; the need for love and belonging. This is about human relationships – the need to relate to other people and the need for mutual respect. It is important to get along with colleagues and make friendships (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Greenberg, 2005; Kotler & Keller, 2006). This creates a better working environment and makes it easier to talk about problems that may appear (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2003) states that organisation can help to satisfy this need by accommodate for teamwork, as well as organising social events and activities outside work hours (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

The fourth stage is *the need for esteem*. This is the stage of excess- or growth motivation. The hallmark of this stage is that it is not aimed to cover the deficit conditions as the previous stages. This stage is about the opportunities for personal growth and developing personal qualities to the maximum. Employees should respect each other as well as having self-respect (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Kotler & Keller, 2006). Maslow assumes that the first step in the personal growth process is developing self-respect and receiving recognition from others. The desire to achieve, to have prestige, enjoy success in life and other's respect, are needs within this stage. At work, this means positive feedback e.g. when goals are achieved or someone has done outstanding performance (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

When these needs are met in stated order, the highest level of needs can be met; *the need for self-actualisation* (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Greenberg, 2005, Kotler & Keller, 2006). This is the need for releasing capacity to developing talent, abilities and qualities a person have - realisation of potentials. By giving employees opportunities to experience this in their job, this can be a great motivating factor. Normally people perform their best under conditions such as these, and it benefits both the individual and the organisation (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Greenberg, 2005; Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Maslow's theory provides guidance with respect to needs that employees are motivated to achieve (Greenberg, 2005). It is the first to classify and put human needs in a system where both deficit motivation and excess motivation are included. The theory has received great practical importance for discussions about which conditions are important to promote positive motivation in a workplace (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003). Many organisations have taken action that are directly suggested by the theory and have found them to be successful (Greenberg, 2005). Moreover, the theory has had a large influence on practical measures for organisational development. The use of this theory in organisations helps remove self-

actualisation barriers for employees (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003). For a manager it is easier to arrange for the personal needs at the workplace suggested by Maslow if there is a personnel policy already existing in the organisation.



**Figure 2:** Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Nelson Harvey, 2007; Kotler & Keller, 2006; Greenberg, 2005; Dwyer, 2005; Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

### 2.3.4 Personnel policy

Personnel policy concerns those roles and those norms a business sets for their organisation. By having those kinds of guidelines the business shows who they are and what kind of values they want their employees to follow and be a part of. Personnel policy gives the employees something common to work against. Lack of personnel policy can lead to big problems and conflict can arise in the business if they do not have any guidelines of how to fix them (Nordhaug, 2003)

Managing and management responsibility are two important elements in personal policy. The requirement of the manager is often clearly stated in the policy. This is to give guidelines and direction how the manager should behave and work. Every business should have a personnel policy, and this policy should be available for everyone in the business. This is because policies such as these, can work as a guideline for all the work that is being done

within the business, and it makes the business look serious and responsible and helps create an organisation culture (Davidson, 2006).

### **2.3.5 Organisational culture**

Values, norms and attitudes are a big part of an organisation, and these are known to be a part of the organisational culture. An organisational culture should be present when a business starts up to make sure the culture benefits the organisation. If the culture is not organised it might cause trouble for the organisation (Beech, 2006).

Bang (1998, p. 198) defines organisation culture as ‘the common norms, values and reality views that is developed in an organisation when employees cooperate with each other or with the environment’. Scientists define organisational culture as a cognitive framework consisting of assumptions and values shared by organisation members (Schein, 1985, as cited in Greenberg, 2005). For example, organisations tend to have different absence cultures, the employees share different understandings about the appropriateness of taking off from work. Organisational culture also reflects different values that are shared by employees in the organisation, as indicated in the definition. By values it is referred to stable long-term beliefs about what is important. Where people do not feel valued, the organisation is considered having a toxic organisational culture. On the other hand, organisations that treat their employees well are said to have a healthy organisational culture (Greenberg, 2005).

An organisation culture says something about who the organisation is. The organisation’s culture can be identified by looking at the way the employees work together and how they solve assignments and arguments. Moreover, an organisation culture shows how the manager of the organisation works and how he/she cooperates with the employees, and how he/she arranges social gatherings or meetings (Beech, 2006).

Despite widespread differences in organisational culture, in all companies organisational culture serves three important functions; it provides a sense of identity for members – the more clearly an organisation’s shared perceptions and values are defined, the more strongly people can associate themselves with their organisation’s mission and feel a vital part of it; it generates commitment to the organisation’s mission. Sometimes it is difficult for people to beyond thinking of their own interests. However, a strong, overarching culture reminds people of what their organisation is all about; and finally, it clarifies and reinforce standards of behaviour. A culture guides employees’ words and deeds, making it clear what they should do or say in a given situation, thereby providing stability to behaviour (Greenberg, 2005).

Socialisation is the process by which new employees absorb the organisational culture and become acquainted with the values and behaviour expected of them. These are transmitted in a variety of ways; they may be learned through training programs; or they may be absorbed informally by observing other members, and learning the company language and folklore. Socialisation practices, however, may not be eagerly embraced abroad. Embedded in these practices are cultural assumptions regarding, for example, the nature of peer and hierarchical relationships. Furthermore, how they are transmitted, to what degree they are made explicit, is closely tied to use of language, high-context/low-context – these differences can become a source of friction (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003).

Large organisations often have several cultures operating within them. In general, people tend to have more attitudes and values in common with others in their own fields or work or their own company units that they do with those in other fields or other parts of the organisation. These various groups may be said to have several different subcultures – cultures existing within parts of organisations rather than entirely through them. These typically are distinguished with respect to either functional difference (i.e. type of work done) or geographic distances (i.e. the physical separation between people). Indeed, research suggests that several subcultures based on occupational, professional, or functional divisions usually exist within any large organisation (Greenberg, 2005).

However, there also may be a dominant culture, a distinctive, overarching ‘personality’ of an organisation. An organisation’s dominant culture reflects its core values, dominant perceptions that are generally shared throughout the organisation. Typically, although members of subcultures may share additional sets of values, they generally also accept the core values of their organisations as a whole. Thus, subcultures should not be thought of as a bunch of separate cultures but rather as ‘mini’ cultures operating within a large dominant culture (Greenberg, 2005).

Organisational culture exerts many effects on individuals and organisational processes, some dramatic and others more subtle. Culture generates strong pressures on people to go along, to think and act in ways consistent with the existing culture. An organisation’s culture can strongly effect everything from the way employees dress and the amount of time allowed before tasks should be completed. It can also effect how long each task should take, to the speed with which people are promoted, and the way the communication works within the department (Greenberg, 2005).

## **2.4 Communication**

Communication is the processes through which people send information to others and receive information from them. Fundamental communication skills are a basic ingredient for organisational success. Everyone involved in organisations, from the lowest-level employee to the head of an organisation, need to be able to communicate effectively (Greenberg, 2005; Bakka, Fivelstad & Nordhaug, 2004; Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

For organisations to function, individuals and teams must coordinate their efforts and activities carefully. Without communication employees would not know what to do and groups and organisations would not be able to operate effectively. Given the importance of communication in organisations, it is found that managers spend about 80 percent of their time in one form of communication or another e.g. writing reports, sending e-mails, talking to others in person etc (Greenberg, 2005).

### **2.4.1 LMX theory**

Theories such as the Leader-Member exchange (LMX) provide a logical connection between constructs such as managerial actions and employee empowerment (Gómez & Rosen, 2001). According to LMX theory, those employees who are considered part of a manager's in-group have a high-quality exchange (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975). This implies that when managers trust their employees, they give these employees preferential treatments such as increased information and latitude and discretion. The LMX theory builds in the constructs of managerial trust and subsequent employee empowerment. Although these construct may somewhat overlap in both theory and practice, the validation of measures of these constructs provides researchers the tools to empirically tease out important relationships.

In essence, LMX theory suggests that supervisors determine which roles subordinates will hold (Graen, 1976, as cited in Kacmar, Zivnuska, Witt & Gully, 2003). These assigned roles define the quality of the relationship subordinates enjoy with their supervisors and help subordinates determine the appropriate behaviours to enact (Lind & Zmud, 1991, 1995). Subordinates who share a high-quality LMX relationship with their supervisor are afforded several advantages not provided to those in a low-quality LMX relationship, such as ample resources, premier assignments, emotional support, and cooperative interactions with the supervisor (Liden & Graen, 1980). Exposure to these advantages has been demonstrated to result in a variety of positive outcomes, such as greater levels of motivation and superior

performance ratings, for high-quality as compared with low-quality LMX subordinates (Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne, 1997).

The LMX theory developed by Graen and his colleagues, proposes that leaders develop qualitatively different types of relationships with various employees (Dansereau et al., 1975). Some employees will feel that they belong to an in-group; whereas other will perceive that they are members of an out-group. In-group employees have a high-quality exchange with their managers, whereas out-group employees have a low-quality relationship. In-group employees receive preferential treatment such as higher amounts of information, influence, involvement, latitude, confidence and concern from the manager (Dansereau et al., 1975; Liden & Graen, 1980).

LMX suggests that supervisors may afford differing treatment and thus possibly use different communication tactics with subordinates in higher quality exchange relationships than with those in lower quality relationships. This literature, however, leaves unresolved whether supervisors should treat employees differently. In contrast, much of the communication literature has emphasized development of ‘best’ practices which, presumably, should be used with all employees. Yrle et al., (2003) looked at whether there are consistencies between leader communication practices and the perceived quality of the Leader-Member exchange. They found evidence that employees perceive differences, especially in level of participation-related communication, depending upon whether they believe they are in a higher or lower quality LMX relationship (Yrle et al., 2003).

In the research of Yrle et al., (2003) the authors have considered linkages between LMX quality and supervisory communication practices and have found evidence that subordinates report a direct relationship between increasing quality of LMX and the communication practices of coordination and participation. Some evidence was found that supervisors’ and subordinates’ reports of LMX quality are related; suggesting that something beyond the subordinates’ perceptions may be being captured. In effect, these findings suggested that higher-quality supervisor-subordinate dyads, meaning those dyads where subordinates are seen as ‘trusted insiders’, are characterised by communication patterns where the supervisor provides a high quality of information and permits participation by the subordinate. From a prescriptive perspective, these are the patterns which are recommended by the communication literature. Yrle et al.,’s (2003) findings, therefore, suggest that supervisors in high-quality dyadic relationships should be guided by the prescriptions of the communication literature (Yrle et al., 2003).

Regarding lower-quality dyads, the findings suggested that these dyads differ from those of higher-quality primarily in participation. Subordinates in these dyads appear to feel that the information they receive is adequate, but that they are not allowed to participate. This finding may indicate that their supervisors are coaching rather than counselling them. Moreover, the result suggested that supervisors and subordinates agree about the quality of the dyadic relationship, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that relationships are objectively poorer in the lower-quality dyads (Yrle et al., 2003). From the perspective of contingency theory, however, it is entirely possible that supervisors in lower-quality dyads would be justified in using a less participative, coaching style if their subordinates need coaching. For example, this would be the case for subordinates who are not fully trained.

The key issue which arises from questions of fitting communication practices to subordinate needs becomes evident from concerns the division into lower- and higher-quality dyads may not occur on objective grounds. Rather, it could be based upon non-objective grounds such as demographic similarity. However, Yrle et al., (2003) did not find that higher-quality dyads were more similar than the other in terms of the limited demographic considered, but further studies need to be done (Yrle et al., 2003).

#### 2.4.2 One-way communication

Figure 3 below shows how one- way communication takes place and the factors that have to be involved to carry out such a process. There are three different factors that have to be considered: sender, message/medium and a receiver.



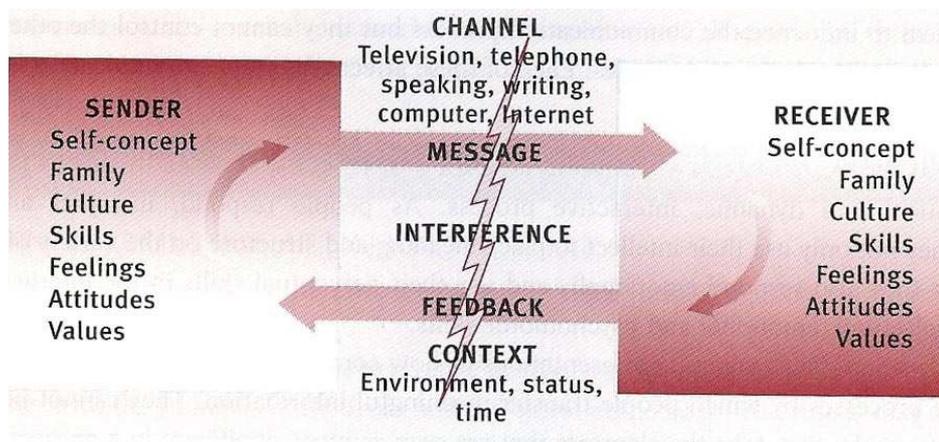
**Figure 3:** Communication model for one- way communication (Bakka et al., 2004; Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003)

There are different ways to convey a message/ medium. The most normal is to do this by using language, but a message/ medium can also get conveyed face to face by using body language, phone, verbal, Internet or letters (Bakka et al. 2004; Kaufmann & Kaufmann,

2003). In the phase where the receiver registers and understands the message/medium, there are different parts that play a role. How does the receiver understand what is being sent from the sender? This is known as decoders. It is important that the sender is clear when he or she sends their message, and it is important that there are as few disruptions as possible so the receiver can understand the message properly (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003).

### 2.4.3 Two-way communication

Communication is defined as the process by which a person (the sender) transmits some type of information (the message) to another person (the receiver) (see figure 4).



**Figure 4:** The communication process (Dwyer, 2005; Greenberg, 2005, p. 257)

The communication process begins when one party has a message it wishes to send another party. It is the sender's mission to transform the idea into a form that can be sent to and understood by the receiver. This is what happens in the process of encoding – translating an idea into a form, such as written or spoken language, that can be recognised by a receiver. For example, information is encoded when the words used to send an e-mail message or to speak to someone in person are selected. After a message is encoded it is ready to be transmitted over one or more channels of communication to reach the desired receiver. Because of modern technology, people sending messages have a variety of communication channels available to them for sending both visual and oral information. Whatever channel is

used, the communicator's goal is the same – to send the encoded message accurately to the desired receiver.

Once a message is received the recipient must begin the process of decoding – that is, converting that message back into the sender's original ideas. This can involve many different processes, such as comprehending spoken and written words, interpreting facial expressions, and the like. To the extent that a sender's message is accurately decoded by the receiver, the ideas understood will be the ones intended. A person's ability to comprehend and interpret information received from others is far from perfect. This is the case for cross-cultural work environments, where people speak different languages and lack the skills needed to understand the speaker. Once a message has been decoded, the process of communication can continue but in reverse. In other words, the person receiving the message now becomes the sender of a new message. This new message is then encoded and transmitted along a communication channel to the intended recipient, who then decodes it. This part of the communication process is known as *feedback* – providing information about the impact of messages on receivers. Receiving feedback allows senders to determine whether their messages have been understood properly. Once received, feedback can trigger another idea from the sender; initiating yet another cycle of communication and triggering another round of feedback – hence, the communication process is continuous (Greenberg, 2005).

Despite its apparent simplicity, the communication process rarely operates flawlessly. There are many potential barriers to effective communication. *Noise* is the name given to factors that distort the clarity of messages that are encoded, transmitted, or decoded in the communication process. Whether noise results from unclear writing (i.e. poorly encoded messages), a listener's inattentiveness (i.e. poorly decoded messages), or static along a telephone line (i.e. faulty communication media), ineffective communication is inevitably the result (Greenberg, 2005). Pettit, Goris and Vaught (1997) have shown that the quality of several aspects of communication could be used to predict job satisfaction. The underlying idea is that the 'best' behaviours can be identified and, if used by the manager, will improve the manager's effectiveness (Pettit et al., 1997).

One perspective coming from the literature proposes the perceptual differences between supervisors and subordinates may distort communication, suggesting that perceptual differences held by a subordinate may cause distortions to the supervisor's message. Conversely, of course, the distortion may be the supervisor's. Many studies have indicated that superiors and subordinates have differing perceptions of factors which may affect their relationships (Yrle, Hartman & Galle, 2003). Furthermore, similarities, especially those

related to demographics, attitudes, and/or values, have been shown to reduce the potential for distortion (Cheryl, Ravlin & Meglino, 1996; DiSalvo & Larsen, 1987; McCroskey, Richmond & Daly, 1975, as cited in Yrle et al., 2003).

The communication literature has historically taken a classical approach to supervisor-subordinate communications and has attempted to identify ‘best’ practices which apply across situations. However, a discussion by Dansereau and Markham (1987) suggested that an alternative model for understanding communication between supervisors and subordinates may arise from the dyad tradition, which examines the distinctive supervisor-subordinate relationship as a pairing between two individuals. The dyad tradition represents a contrast to the group tradition, where the supervisor is understood to use the same style with all subordinates. Under the dyad tradition, supervisors use different communication styles with different subordinates (Yrle et al., 2003).

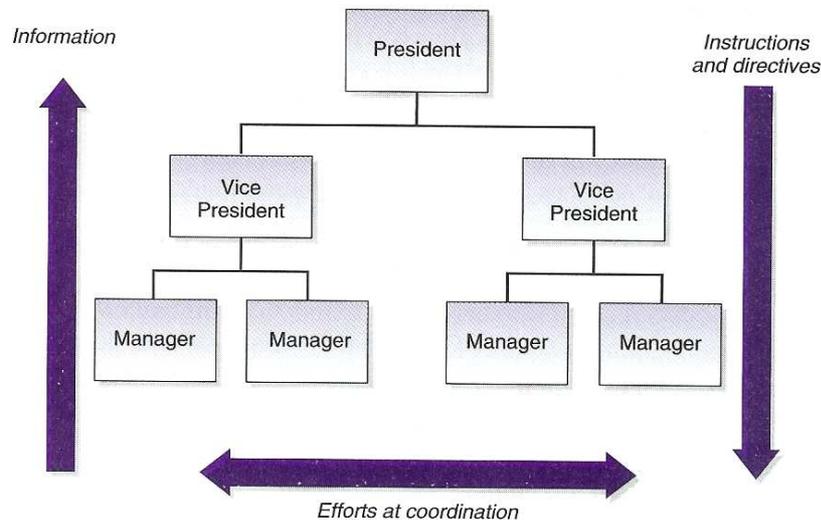
#### **2.4.4 Communication types**

There are several types of communication: *Formal communication* consisting of downward communication, upward communication, horizontal communication; and *informal communication* consisting of rumours, verbal communication and non-verbal communication. The different types of communication are described below. The way the employees and manager communicates with each other impacts the level of conflict and the work environment (Greenberg, 2005).

##### **2.4.4.1 Formal communication**

Imagine a CEO of a large hotel announces new routines for housekeeping to the supervisor of the housekeeping department, and then the supervisor telling her subordinates what to do. The examples describe situations in which someone is sharing official information with other who need to know this information (Greenberg, 2005; Davidson et al., 2006). This is referred to formal communication. The formally prescribed pattern of interrelationships existing between the various units of an organisation is commonly described by using a diagram known as an organisation chart (see figure 5). Such diagrams provide a graphic representation of an organisation’s structure, an outline of the planned, formal connections between its various units – that is, who is supposed to communicate with whom. This particular organisation chart is typical of most in that it shows that people communicate

formally with those immediately above them and below them, as well as those at their own levels (Greenberg, 2005).



**Figure 5:** The organisation chart: A summary of formal communication paths (Greenberg, 2005, p. 259).

#### 2.4.4.2 Downward communication

Formal communication differs according to people's position in an organisation chart. Downward communication consists of instructions, directions, and orders – messages telling subordinate what they should be doing. Furthermore, feedback on past performance flows in a downward direction. It is important that the information is clear and accurate, so everyone understands the message (Greenberg, 2005; Davidson et al., 2006) A supervisor for housekeeping department, for example, may tell the housekeepers that the rooms should be cleaned with more attention. However, even a message like this can get twisted if the message has to go through many links before it gets to the receiver (Greenberg, 2005). Another example of this is that the facility and service manager gives a message to the assisting manager. The assisting manager will understand the message and consciously or unconsciously change the message that is passed on to the housekeepers (Davidson et al. 2006). As formal information slowly trickles down from one level of an organisation to the next lowest level – as occurs when information is said to 'go through channels' – it becomes less accurate. This is especially true when that information is spoken. In such cases, it is not

unusual for at least part of the message to be distorted as it works its way down from one person to the next lowest-ranking person. To avoid these problems, many companies have introduced programs in which they communicate formal information to large numbers of people at different levels all at one time (Greenberg, 2005).

### **2.4.4.3 Upward communication**

Upward communication is when information flows from lower levels to higher levels within an organisation such as messages from subordinates to their supervisors. Typically, such messages involve information that managers need to do their jobs such as data (suggestions for improvement, status reports, reactions to work-related issues and new ideas) required to complete projects. Although logically upward communication is the opposite of downward communication, there are some important differences between them resulting from difference in status between the communicating parties. For example, it is found that upward communication occurs far less frequently than downward communication, and when people do communicate upward, their conversations tend to be far shorter than the ones they have with others at their own level. More importantly, when upward communication does occur, the information transmitted is frequently inaccurate. Given that employees are interested in putting themselves in a good spot when communicating with their bosses, they have a tendency to highlight their accomplishments and downplay their mistakes, and as a result, negative information tends to be ignored or disguised. This tendency is known as the MUM-effect. There is a concern about this phenomenon because supervisors can only make good decisions when they have good information available to them. When subordinates are either withholding or distorting information so as to avoid looking bad, the accuracy of the information communicated suffers (Greenberg, 2005).

### **2.4.4.4 Horizontal communication**

Within organisations messages do not only flow up and down the organisation chart but also sideways, this is horizontal communication (Greenberg, 2005; Davidson et al., 2006). Messages of this type are characterised by efforts at coordination, attempt to work together. Unlike vertical communication, in which the parties are at different organisational levels, horizontal communication involves people at the same level. Therefore, it tends to be easier and friendlier. Moreover, it is more casual in tone and occurs more readily given that there are fewer social barriers between the parties (Greenberg, 2005; Davidson et al., 2006). However,

horizontal communication also comes with pitfalls. People in different departments sometimes feel that they are competing against each other for valued organisational resources, leading them to show resentment toward one another (Greenberg, 2005).

#### **2.4.4.5 Informal communication**

Employees casually speaking and gossiping to each other are also examples of organisational communication. But because they involve the sharing of unofficial information, it would be considered informal communication. Such information is shared without any formally imposed obligations or restrictions (Greenberg, 2005). When people communicate informally, they are not bound by their organisational positions. Anyone can tell anything to anyone else without following the formal constraint imposed by the organisation chart. It is not unusual for some messages to reach everyone in a large organisation in a matter of a few hours. This happens not only because informal communication crosses organisational boundaries and is open to everyone, but also because it generally is transmitted orally, and oral messages not only reach more people but also do so more quickly than written messages. However, oral messages run the risk of becoming inaccurate as they flow between people (Greenberg, 2005; Davidson et al., 2006). Informally socialising is not always bad. It may provide excellent opportunities for the pleasant social contact that make life at work enjoyable. Greenberg (2005) suggest that informal communication remains one of the most efficient channels of communication. Poe and Courter (as cited in Greenberg, 2005) states that about 70 percent of what people learn about their organisations is picked up by chatting with co-workers during breaks and in the corridors (Greenberg, 2005).

#### **2.4.4.6 Rumours**

Typically, rumours are based on speculation, someone's overactive imagination and wishful thinking, rather than on facts. Rumours spread fast through organisations because the information they contain is usually so interesting and vague. The ambiguity leaves messages open to embellishment as they pass orally from one person to the next (Greenberg, 2005).

#### **2.4.4.7 Verbal communication**

Verbal communication can be either oral, using spoken language, such as face-to-face talks or telephone conversations, or written such as fax, letters or e-mail messages. However,

the sender and receiver do not necessarily have to see each other in this situation. Despite their differences, these forms of communication all use words. Given that people in organisations spend so much of their time using both oral and written communication, it makes sense to ask which is more effective. It is known that communication is most effective in organisations when it uses multiple channels, both oral and written messages (Jablin & Putnam, 2000).

Oral messages help get people's immediate attention and written follow-ups are helpful because they provide permanent documents to which people later can refer. Oral messages also have the benefit of allowing for immediate two-way communication between parties, whereas written messages often are either one-way or take too long for a response. The matter of how effectively a particular communications medium works depends on the kind of message being sent. In general, managers prefer using oral media when communicating ambiguous messages e.g. directions on how to solve a complex problem, but written media for communicating clear messages e.g. sharing room lists. Managers who follow this particular pattern of matching media with messages tend to be more effective on the job than those who do not, suggesting that demonstrating sensitivity to communicating in the most appropriate fashion is an important determinant of managerial success (Greenberg, 2005).

#### **2.4.4.8 Non-verbal communication**

Communication is also the way a person moves, behaves, or conveys important information between the persons that are involved. People communicate a great deal without words, nonverbally; for example by way of facial gestures, body language, the clothes worn (De Vito, 2001; Greenberg, 2005). It has been estimated that people communicate at least as much nonverbally as they do verbally (Hickson, Stacks & Moore, 2003, as cited in Greenberg, 2005). A few examples of nonverbally communication in organisations; despite the general trend toward casual clothing in the workplace, higher-status people tend to dress more formally than lower-ranking employees (Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail & Mackie-Lewis, 1997, as cited in Greenberg, 2005), higher-status people such as managers and executives tend to communicate their organisational positions nonverbally by keeping lower-ranking people waiting to see them (Greenberg, 1989, as cited in Greenberg, 2005), higher-ranking people also assert their higher status by sitting at the heads of rectangular tables, which

enables them to maintain eye contact with those for whom they are responsible (Zweigenhaft, 1976, as cited in Greenberg, 2005).

More or less the half of the information that is being transferred happens by using non-verbal signals. Non-verbal signals change from culture to culture. What is understood as a smile and friendliness in one culture is not necessarily perceived the same in other cultures. For example Japan uses a smile as a cover to hide their real thoughts and feelings (De Vito, 2001)

#### **2.4.5 Cross-cultural communication**

Cross-cultural interactions are often complex and have the potential to communicate a disrespect for others' identity and values. Although there are often significant gains when people of diverse cultures work together, research is needed on how they are able to overcome barriers and collaborate effectively (Tjosvold & Leung, 2003).

Knotts and Thibodeaux (1992) support Dou and Clark Jr (1999) in that because of insufficient experience and training in managing subordinates from different cultures, a majority of today's managers may be considered culturally disadvantaged. One of the striking problems that occur in communication is problems involved in managing another culture (Knotts & Thibodeaux, 1992). Furthermore, many companies have overlooked the relationship between quality management and effective communication in a culturally diverse workplace. It's often assumed that human communication patterns are universal. However, the same words, tone and gestures often have different meanings in different countries (Charlton & Huey, 1992).

Three key factors make communicating with people from different cultures a difficult task. First, different words may mean different things to different people. Second, different cultures sometimes have very different cultural norms about using certain words. For example a simple word as 'no', although the term exist in Japanese language, the Japanese people are reluctant to say no directly to someone because doing so is considered insulting. They often rely on other ways of saying no that can be difficult for foreigners to understand. Third, cross-cultural communication is made difficult by the fact that in different languages even the same word can mean different things (Greenberg, 2005).

### **2.4.5.1 Communication barriers in a cross-cultural environment**

The idea that face-to-face communication is imperfect and can lead to misunderstanding and even conflict is based on common experience. Miscommunication arises from ‘noise’, in the technical sense of interference whether physical or psychological, which prevents messages being received; poor encoding by the sender; distortion by the medium; and selection, inaccurate decoding or interpretation by the receiver. It is true that the two-way nature of face-to-face communication creates possibilities for reducing miscommunication by feedback – the sender can find out how well the receiver understands. In the case of communication with people from different backgrounds the sources of miscommunication are of two kinds: those such as the general problem of intergroup communication, stereotyping and prejudice which are ‘universal’ barriers, but which apply with particular force in intercultural situations; and those arising from the fact that differences of backgrounds do affect how people communicate (Guirdham, 1999).

Moreover, written language problems may exist in cross-cultural communication. A written document appropriate in one culture may not be appropriate in other cultures. The formality expected in written documents may vary from culture to culture (Spinks & Wells, 1997). Moreover, international workers may have grammar mistakes or misapply the (Norwegian or English) language structure. Creative and talented employees may be disregarded if a manager does not recognise communication difficulties or even stereotyping of a culture. The employees may be self-conscious of communication problems and therefore they are not active in, for example, meetings (Knotts & Thibodeaux, 1992)

Slang words, acronyms, multi-phrase combinations and idioms may also act as barriers in communication (Spinks & Wells, 1997; Knotts & Thibodeaux, 1992). These factors are usually difficult for persons from different countries and cultures that are unfamiliar with a dialect to understand and interpret. Furthermore, poor listening skills and lack of understanding can create communication problems for a manager or subordinate when words are misunderstood or portions of sentences are ignored. Differences in semantics and imperfect translations may also cause difficulty when dealing with foreign languages, or even dealing with similar languages but different cultures (Knotts & Thibodeaux, 1992).

One of the most widespread and most common misconceptions restraining effective communication is that the message sender’s mind is limited to the persons own personal feelings, desires and needs when ending the message. The message is fully understood by the sender but has no effect to the receiver. This can also lead to misreading of the verbal and

nonverbal communication signals (Dou & Clark Jr, 1999). The potential and the largest barrier between divergent cultures exist in the misunderstanding between the sender encoding a message and receiver decoding the same message. Therefore, the message sent is not always the message received (Dou & Clark Jr, 1999).

Finally, body language can also be seen differently in different cultures. An example is two American white individuals are talking, when the subordinate talks he/she will tend to look away from the boss more than the boss will look away from the subordinate. Two African-Americans would have similar eye contact but with the roles reversed. In many Asian cultures it is disrespectful to look a superior directly into the eyes. And in contrast a person would be considered untrustworthy in the US if the person does not look another person directly in the eyes when talking (Charlton & Huey, 1992).

#### **2.4.6 Improving cross-cultural communication**

One basic step to interact productively in today's cross-cultural society is to accept that believing there is only one effective way to communicate, is no longer true. A second step is to respect other cultures and create new ways of integrating diverse groups to form a cohesive and responsible society. Individuals should also be willing to become a cross-cultural communicator (Charlton & Huey, 1992).

Problems resulting from poor listening skills or speaking skills can be overcome by obtaining frequent feedback and an authentic two-way communication exchange. As mentioned earlier, numerous communication problems can be eliminated by providing more than one communication channel; spoken and written (Knotts & Thibodeaud, 1992).

To be an effective communicator, Charlton and Huey (1992) suggest that no matter who a person is dealing with in a work force, the person should try to be aware of individuals and cultural differences. It is important to learn about the major cultures in a workplace, especially the communication patterns. Furthermore, avoiding cultural stereotyping is a step to effective communication. Stereotyping can cause people to filter information inappropriately. Finally some good advice is to clarify a message, paraphrase and summarise what others say. The meaning of a message is in the response the sender receives, not in the sender's intent (Charlton & Huey, 1992). To improve the communication in a company, the management can decide to implement a cultural diversity program (Charlton & Huey, 1992; Spinks & Wells, 1997).

## **2.5 Cross-cultural work environment**

Managers and researchers alike increasingly recognise the limitations of traditional organisational theories and management approaches that assume individual and cultural homogeneity. They want to move away from reliance on Western ideas and approaches to incorporate those from Asian and other cultures. They are experimenting with new ways of organising and managing that are effective for today and responsive to the diversity of employees (Tjosvold & Leung, 2003).

A cross-cultural work environment can have different meanings, but the main point is that there is a working environment within a society where there are people from different nations and ethnic groups (Lillebø, 2001). Cultural differences are expected abroad, but at home it is often assumed that the foreigner will take the effort to adapt to our customs to fit in with the dominant culture. Taking this view can alienate others, but more importantly fails to capitalise on the potential benefits of recognising diversity and the unsuspected value added which outsiders can contribute from their different experience, skills, and perspective (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003).

For managers to be effective across cultures require the ability to simultaneously recognise the need for differentiation while understanding the need for integration, at multiple levels within the organisation (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). A truly cross-cultural organisation can be defined as one wherein diversity is valued and utilised rather than just contained. The strategy of utilising cultural differences can create competitive advantage. Thus, rather than one culture overriding another, or compromising to find 'safe' solutions that will antagonise neither, the challenge is to discover solutions that capture the differences in creative ways so that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003).

Cultural diversity can have both positive and negative effects in organisations. On the negative side, a culturally-diverse workforce can add to the complexity of decision making in an organisation because of problems of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, and may increase the incidence of conflict stemming from differences in values and norms. On the positive side, however, cultural diversity can result in more creative and higher quality human resource management decisions. Research on minority influence has shown that the expression of alternate views by culturally different organisation members may raise the quality of decision making and problem solving by increasing the attention of that the organisation pays to the decision making process (Nemeth, 1992, as cited in Tjosvold & Leung, 2003).

### **2.5.1 Handling Problems and Misunderstandings**

In a work environment with different cultures and nationalities some level of misunderstanding are inevitable. This could be caused from employees not understanding each other and each others' culture. If a problem takes place in a cross-cultural work environment, it will most likely take place more than one time. Therefore, guidelines on how to solve different types of problems could be helpful but it is important to look at each situation separately. In addition, the employee should be included in the process so he/she can be a part of solving the problem (DuBrin et. al. 2006).

There are different ways to win respect from the employees. To have daily contact with the employee and show interest in their personal life is one of them. To gain respect one also has to give respect. This can be as easy as to give a smile to the employee, have a short conversation with them and show that they are appreciated. Small things like this can “save” a persons day, and make them feel more secure (Quinn et. al. 2007).

Feedback is another important tool that affects the welfare in a working environment. People like to get feedback on the work they have been doing. Feedback means constructive criticism and praise. This makes it easier for the employee to do the right job and gives them motivation to improve if that is necessary (Witsel, 2008).

### **2.5.2 Preventing Cultural Misunderstandings**

Lack of friendliness and politeness can lead to a negative response from people from foreign cultures. Friendliness, on the other hand, can create motivation for the employees. Motivation can be created to avoid hurting people and by smiling and showing helpfulness. Openness between colleagues is important and affects the relationship they have. It is important to be wanted to solve problems and conflicts, instead of keeping quiet and just displacing the problem. It is important to have access to appropriate information to do different assignments, and to show people respect. A manager has to make sure such information is accessible, and the employees have to make sure they read it. Information like this can help prevent misunderstandings and conflicts.

Moreover, flexibility is something that is important in cross-cultural environments. This is because they might have different needs than what is normal in the prevailing culture (DuBrin et al., 2006).

## 2.6 Influencing variables

After reading different literature on conflict, cross-cultural organisations, management and communication, the researcher found different variables that are important in the management of conflict; justice and culture; attitudes, and behaviour. When it comes to justice it is important that the employees feel they are treated fairly. If they feel they are treated unfairly this can lead to dissatisfaction and then conflict. Moreover, it is important to be aware of each others attitudes and how people with different cultures behave to eliminate negative conflicts.

### 2.6.1 Justice

Organisational behaviour scientists have recognised that organisational justice takes several different forms; distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice (see figure 6).



**Figure 6:** Forms of organisational justice (Greenberg, 2005, p. 37).

*Distributive justice* is the form of organisational justice that focuses on people's beliefs that they have received fair amounts of valued work-related outcomes e.g. pay, recognition, etc. (Greenberg, 2005). For example, workers consider the formal appraisals of their performance to be fair to the extent that these ratings are based on their actual level of performance (Greenberg, 1996, as cited in Greenberg, 2005). Fairness involves consideration

of not only how much of various outcomes you receive i.e. distributive justice, but also the process by which those outcomes are determined – *procedural justice*. Research has shown that workers consider for example the ratings on performance appraisals to be fair to the extent that certain procedures were followed, such as when they believed that the standards used to judge them were applied to everyone (Greenberg, 2000, as cited in Greenberg, 2005). Maintaining procedural justice is a major concern of people in all types of institutions. In organisations, people reject decisions based on unfair procedures. In fact, following unfair procedures not only makes people dissatisfied with their outcomes (as in the case of distributive justice) but also leads them to reject the entire system as unfair. Not surprisingly, procedural justice affects people's tendencies to follow organisational rules: Workers are inclined to not follow an organisation's rules when they have reason to believe that organisation's procedures are inherently unfair (Greenberg, 2005).

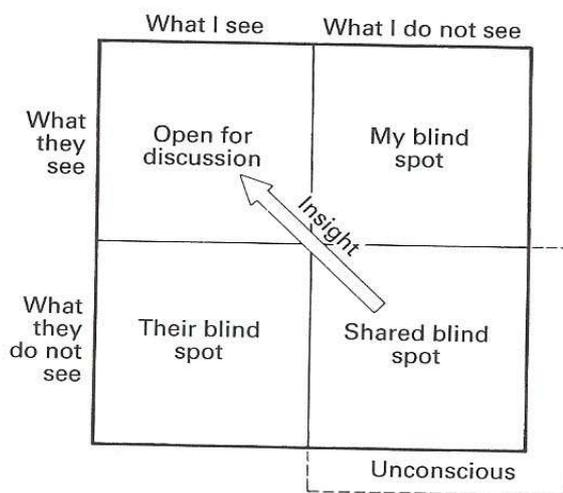
*Interpersonal justice* refers to people's perceptions of the fairness of the manner in which they are treated by other people. For example when an employee is laid off work and is not happy about it, but the supervisor explains the situation to the subordinate in a manner that takes some of the sting out of it. Although the supervisor cannot do anything about higher-level corporate decisions, he or she is sensitive to the problems this causes the subordinate and expresses his or her concern in a highly dignified manner. People experiencing situations such as this tend to accept their layoffs as being fair and hold positive feelings toward their supervisor (Greenberg, 2005).

Finally, *informational justice* refers to people's perceptions of the fairness of the information used as the basis for making a decision. Informational justice prompts feelings of being valued by others in an organisation. People believe that they are considered an important part of the organisation when an organisational official takes the time to explain thoroughly to them the rationale behind a decision (Greenberg, 2005).

Employees who believe they are fairly treated are less inclined to respond negatively which could start a conflict and is more inclined to respond positively such as by adhering to organisational policies. Simons and Roberson (2003) analysed employees from 783 departments in 97 different hotels and found that departments composed of employees who felt unfairly treated suffered higher rates of turnover and lower levels of customer satisfaction than those composed of employees who felt fairly treated (Simons & Roberson, 2003). And, of course, these factors have enormous impact on for example a hotel's success. This suggests good reason for managers to go out of their way to promote justice and manage disagreements in the workplace (Greenberg, 2005).

## 2.6.2 Culture

A common definition of culture is; a set of learned social behaviours that develop over time. It is our values, attitudes and beliefs that are shared in a society (Pressey & Selassie, 2003; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Spinks and Wells (1997) define culture as the way people relate to the world they live in, and the behaviours are passed from one generation to the next. On the other hand, Markoczy (as cited in Pressey & Selassie, 2003) states that a growing number of studies suggest that culture does not show all aspects of belief and values that an individual possesses.



**Figure 7:** Johari window (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 12).

Recognising cultural differences is the necessary first step to anticipating potential threats and opportunities for managers. But in order to go beyond awareness and to create useful interaction, these differences need to be open for discussion. One model known as the 'Johari window' provides as a way of discussing and negotiating the different perspectives, as shown in figure 7 (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). The Johari window tries to shed light on what 'I know and do not know about myself and what others know and do not know about me'. Through self-disclosure and feedback, individuals can become more aware of the potential blind spots in how they see themselves and how others see them that may interfere with effective interaction. This technique may be helpful in making cultural differences open to discussion (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003).

For many people, discussing cultural differences is considered to be dangerous since differences are believed to be a source of conflict. Discussions of cultural differences are thus avoided. Another reason for avoiding discussions about cultural differences is the fear of stereotyping, of not considering the other as a person in their own right but as ‘representative’ in rather limited and perhaps negative ways of their culture. However, if cultural differences cannot be discussed then they cannot be managed, neither to avoid misunderstandings nor to develop productive strategies (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003).

Culture is not static, but evolves over time. The dynamic nature of culture has important implications for human resource management policies and practices, particularly in work places characterised by a high degree of ethno-cultural diversity. When individuals live for long periods in a new country, they gradually acculturate to it. As individuals go through this process of acculturation, they develop attitudes and beliefs that embrace many of the concepts in their new environment (Berry, 1990). Additionally, the presence of people who have different culturally based attitudes, values and beliefs gradually changes the shape of organisations and society as whole (Tjosvold & Leung, 2003).

### **2.6.2.1 Attitudes**

Attitudes are feelings about people and things – and represent an important part of people’s lives, particularly on the job. Indeed, people tend to have definite feelings about everything related to their jobs, whether it’s the work itself, superiors, co-workers, subordinates, or even such things as the food in the cafeteria. Feelings such as these are referred to as work-related attitudes. Attitudes toward jobs or organisations have profound effects not only on the way employees perform but also on the quality of life experienced while at work (Greenberg, 2005).

*The attitudes toward other people* are important when it comes to understanding behaviour in organisations. Such attitudes are highly problematic when they are negative, especially when these feelings are based on misguided beliefs that prompt harmful behaviour. These feelings can be termed as prejudice and may be defined as negative feelings about people belonging to certain groups. For example, members of racial or ethnic groups are victims of prejudice when they are believed to be lazy, disinterested in working, or inferior in one way or another. Prejudicial attitudes often hold people back, creating an invisible barrier to success. Prejudices can be based on age, physical condition, sex, sexual orientation, and

race and national origin. Today, differences between people in the workplace are not the exception but the rule.

When people are prejudiced, they rely on beliefs about people based on the groups to which they belong. Beliefs such as these are referred to as stereotypes. Moreover, prejudicial attitudes are particularly harmful when they translate into actual behaviours. In such instances, people become the victims of others' prejudices – called discrimination. Prejudice is an attitude, whereas discrimination is a form of behaviour consistent with that attitude.

One way to eliminate prejudicial attitudes could be using diversity management programs. In recent years, organisations have become increasingly proactive in their attempts to eliminate prejudice. Their approach is not just to hire a broader group of people than usual but also to create an atmosphere in which diverse groups can flourish (Ragins & Gonzales, 2003). These programs recognise that diversity is a business issue. An organisation's success will increasingly be determined by a manager's ability to take advantage of the potential of a diverse workforce (Greenberg, 2005). Research has shown that there is, in fact, an advantage to having a diverse workforce (Richard, 2000). Diversity programs provide efforts to promote diversity by creating supportive work environments for both women and minorities. The programs consist of various efforts to not only create opportunities for diverse groups of people within organisations but also to train people to embrace differences between them. Although most companies have been pleased with the ways their diversity management efforts have promoted harmony between employees, such programs are not automatically successful. For diversity management activities to be successful, experts caution that they must focus on accepting a range of differences among people. That is, they should not treat someone as special because he or she is a member of a certain group, but because of the unique skills or abilities the employee brings to the job. To the extent that managers are trained to seek, recognise, and develop the talents of their employees without regard to the groups to which they belong, they will break down the stereotypes on which prejudices are based. This, in turn, will bring down the barriers that made diversity training necessary in the first place (Greenberg, 2005).

Feelings reflecting *attitudes toward the jobs* are known as job satisfaction. Because job satisfaction plays an important role in organisations, it makes sense to identify the factors that contribute to job satisfaction. Although there are many different approaches to understanding job satisfaction, four particular ones stand out as providing insight to this attitude – Herzberg's two-factor theory, value theory, the social information processing model, and the dispositional model (Greenberg, 2005).

### **2.6.2.2 Behaviour**

There are theoretical and practical reasons for attending to individual behaviours in a group: theoretically, behaviours are the public building blocks for the social and interpersonal constructions individuals fashion about groups and about fellow members (McArthur & Baron, 1983, as cited in Tjosvold & Leung, 2003). Those constructions sustain the interactions that promote processes enabling social units to facilitate goal attainment for individuals and their social units. To change the nature and quality of those constructions, and enhance their process, an understanding of what behaviours link to those constructions and those processes is needed (Tjosvold & Leung, 2003). The perceptions control behaviour, therefore, human beings act differently in different conflict situations (Ellmin, 1992).

The field of organisational behaviour (OB) deals with human behaviour in organisations. One definition of OB is the multidisciplinary field that seeks knowledge of behaviour in organisational settings by systematically studying individual, group and organisational processes (Miner, 2002, as cited in Greenberg, 2005). There are four characteristics of organisational behaviour; it is firmly grounded in the scientific method, it studies individuals, groups and organisations, it is interdisciplinary in nature, and it is used as the basis for enhancing organisational effectiveness and individual well-being.

Specialists in the field of OB agree that there is no one best approaches when it comes to such complex phenomena. When it comes to studying human behaviour in organisations, there are no simple answers. Instead, OB scholars embrace a contingency approach, an orientation that recognises that behaviour in work settings is the complex result of many interacting forces. This orientation is a hallmark of modern OB. Consider, for example, how an individual's personal characteristics such as personal attitudes and beliefs in conjunction with situational factors such as an organisation's climate, relations between co-workers etc. may all work together when it comes to influencing how a particular individual is likely to behave on the job. In explaining OB phenomena, it is usually necessary to say that people will do certain things 'under some conditions' or 'when all other factors are equal'. Phrases such as that provide an indication that the contingency approach is being used (Greenberg, 2005).

That more people from different cultures in the workforce than ever before is not just an idle sociological curiosity. It also has important implications for OB. After all, the more people differ from each other, the more challenges they are likely to face when interacting with one another. How these interactions play out is likely to be seen on the job in important ways. For example, differences in ethnic groups, as mentioned earlier, are likely to bring with

them differences in communication style that must be addressed for organisations to function effectively. Furthermore, as employees adjust to a wider variety of people in the workplace, issues about their norms and values are likely to come up, as well as their attitudes towards others who are different from themselves. This again can have important implications for potential stress and conflict in the workplace (Greenberg, 2005).

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

According to Halvorsen (1993) method is a systematic way to look at the reality and can be defined as being the knowledge about the tools, which can be used with the intention of accumulation of data. The most suitable design and method for the study depends upon the chosen theme, problem definition and the time and resources available for the researcher. Walter (2006) defines methodology as a theoretical lens through which the research is designed and conducted.

The purpose of the methodology chapter is to provide the readers with a framework of how the study was conducted, and to justify the choice of research method used for researching the phenomena chosen. In an attempt to provide the necessary insight into the research question: “*How may the interaction between cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship influence the managing of conflicts in a cross-cultural working environment?*” the authors of this study found that qualitative approach would be the most appropriate method. This will be more comprehensively described in the following chapter. Moreover, a description of the study’s quality will be presented.

### 3.2 Qualitative vs. Quantitative research method

First it is important to underline the differences between qualitative and quantitative design, and this will also help in understanding why qualitative design is chosen for this study. The term *qualitative research* is often used in contrast to *quantitative research*. There are some key differences between qualitative and quantitative research. Firstly, in qualitative studies sampling sizes are usually smaller and typically not random but purposive in design. Secondly, the role or position of the researcher is given greater critical attention. This is because in qualitative research the possibility of the researcher taking a 'neutral' position is seen as more problematic in practical and philosophical terms. Thirdly, while qualitative data analysis can take a wide variety of forms it tends to differ from quantitative research in the focus on language, signs and meaning as well as approaches to analysis. Quantitative research is concerned with describing and measuring, whereas qualitative research is about explaining and understanding (Veal, 1997). According to Veal (1997) the qualitative approach to research is generally not concerned with number, but it involves collecting a lot of

information about a small and unrepresentative number of people rather than limited amount of information and a large representation of people (Veal, 1997).

Although there are several differences between the quantitative and qualitative design, there is no competition between the methodologies, but rather complementary support if one of the methods is insufficient (Creswell, 2003). Which method to choose, depends on the nature of the study, the type of information needed, the context of the study and the availability of resources such as time and financial resources.

The most traditional division in the way qualitative and quantitative research have been used may be that qualitative methods have been used for exploratory (i.e. hypothesis-generating) purposes or explaining quantitative results, while quantitative methods are used to test hypotheses. This is because establishing content validity – “do measures measure what a researcher thinks they measure” - is seen as one of the strengths of qualitative research. Qualitative research can answer certain important questions more efficiently and effectively than quantitative approaches. This is particularly the case for understanding how and why certain outcomes were achieved (not just what was achieved) but also answering important questions about relevance, unintended effects and impact. Qualitative approaches have the advantage of allowing for more diversity in responses as well as the capacity to adapt to new developments or issues during the research process itself. It is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviour, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles.

Quantitative approach to research involves the gathering and analysis of numerical data and it relies on numerical evidence to draw conclusions. Quantitative often involves a large number of cases and seeks to generalise the whole population (Veal, 2005). This type of method focuses on structure and often has pre-defined answers. The respondents have no possibility to go beyond the alternatives given (Creswell, 2003). There are different ways of collecting data in quantitative research, and the most common is questionnaire and experiments. Researchers formulate and interpret data through analysis.

Qualitative approach does not involve numerical data, and it generally involves a small number of cases and the findings of these types of studies are typically not generalisable (Veal, 2005). Qualitative method is using methods which usually involve close contact between the researcher and the people being studied, this means that the researcher and the research object need to have a direct subjective relationship (Holme & Solvang, 1998; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). A qualitative method focuses more on flexibility in the answers as they are not pre-defined.

For this specific thesis, a qualitative method was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the aim of the study was to try get an in-depth understanding of a complex topic, conflict, how and why conflict occur in a cross-cultural working environment, and if communication and interaction between employees and manager is important in managing conflict. It is attempted to gain insight into the employees' and managers' motivation, attitudes, behaviour and values. Secondly, open and unstructured interview was chosen as data collection method so the interviewees had the opportunity to fully express themselves, and go deeper in their explanations and descriptions of the topic and their views, values and beliefs.

The research in this paper has a qualitative design; however, it is important to recognise that there is no single way of qualitative research. How researchers carry out the qualitative research depends upon factors such as their beliefs about the nature of the social world and what can be known about it, the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired, the purpose and goals of the research, the characteristics of the research participants, the audience for the research and so on (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

### **3.3 Design**

The purpose of research design is to structure the research and to illustrate how all the major parts in the project work together by addressing the central research question (Trochim, 2002). In other words, the design is the blueprint of the study, with the intention to guide the researcher through the process and ensure that the research will be relevant to the problem. The research design can therefore be defined as "*the logic that links the data to be collected to the initial question of a study*" (Yin, 1994, p.18).

Just as different types of problem statements or research questions exist, different types of designs are available in order to match the research question chosen. Consequently, choosing the wrong design would have considerable effect on the validity of the outcome of the research. In order to prevent poor validity, the following question should be asked: *Is the type of design chosen capable of providing insight into the problem or phenomena under investigation?* (Jacobsen, Dirdal, Fossum & Gautesen, 2002)

In order to find the appropriate design for this paper within the qualitative method, a short presentation will follow of the three main research designs available; exploratory, descriptive and casual. There might sometimes be a combination of the three (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004).

Firstly, the *explorative* research design is used in order to clarify the problem and become more familiar with it. The advantage of the exploratory research is the flexibility, as it lets the researcher change the course of action while defining the problem. It is common to review existing published information and data, interview well-informed people or carry out focus groups in explorative studies (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004).

Secondly, a *descriptive* design requires knowledge about the studied phenomena and is less flexible than the explorative design requiring specifications about the research. This kind of design is characterised by the intentions of confirming the occurrence by where something takes place or the correlation between two variables. There are, however, various types of descriptive studies ranging from panel studies to longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. In general the descriptive study is directed by an initial hypothesis (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004).

Finally, *casual* research design can help determine cause and effect relationships. This kind of design is relatively complex and explores a casual connection between two or more casual variables. Experimental studies are common in this case (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004).

Based on the descriptions of the three designs above, this paper will follow the explorative design. This study is not going to say anything about the cause or effect, but have a clear defined problem. This paper tries to look into the importance of positive interaction between employer and employees, and communication when it comes to a cross-cultural work environment, in managing conflict. The intention is to gain an enhanced understanding of the prevention and managing part of conflict in a cross-cultural organisation, what the employees and the manager view as important in preventing and managing conflict and if the opinions and views between the employees and the manager compares.

### **3.4 Sample**

The purpose of sampling is to select a small number of units from the population in a way that the sample is representative of the target population being investigated (Hill, 1996). A sample that is not representative of the population is described as biased (Veal, 2005). The process of random sampling seeks to provide a representative sample and to minimise bias. Veal (2005) defines random sampling as a selection process that gives the population an equal chance of inclusion of the sample. The problems of achieving random sampling vary with the type of research being conducted (Veal, 2005).

The boundary of this study is limited to the hotel industry in Norway, and the sample population was employees and managers who work in the housekeeping department in two different hotels in two widely known hotel chains in Norway ('Thon Maritim Hotel' and 'Radisson SAS Royal Hotel'). The respondents varied in age, nationality, and work experience in the housekeeping department. To the best of our knowledge there exist no complete lists of all employees in the housekeeping departments in the hotels in Norway, so no initial sample frame was available for the researchers. Schaw (2000) define a sample frame as "a list of all the members of the population from which you can then draw your sample".

When it comes to sampling design several probability and non-probability designs exist, but in this study the choice was to use a *non-probability purposive* (or *judgement*) sample. The sample that appeared to the researches to represent the population was targeted. In explorative research such as this study, the time limitations and financial resources available for travelling influenced the decision, and the sampling efforts were therefore decided to be covering the nearby area – Stavanger.

When it comes to *sample size* the question is "how many respondents do the researchers need to talk to in order to reach the study's objectives?". This question is answered with 'the law of diminishing returns' (or *saturation*), which means that the interviewing stops when the answers get too repetitive. This criterion have led to that in today's interview studies, it is normal to use a sample size from 10 to 15 interviews (Kvale, 1997). For this reason, one facility and service manager from each of the two hotels were interviewed, in addition five employees from one of the hotels and six employees from the other hotel were interviewed – which is a sample of 13 all together. Six employees from each hotel were targeted, but the researchers in this study were only able to get five interviews from one of the hotels.

### **3.5 Methods of data collection**

According to Pizam (1995) there are three ways of collecting data. The data can be obtained by observing the phenomenon, communicating directly with the objects studied, or the data can be obtained from secondary resources.

In explorative design, communicating directly with the object is one of the most common research methods; an interview was therefore conducted. Further, a review of published data and existing research on the topic was conducted in order to find existing theory, compare responses from the interview to the theory, and to back up findings to gain the best result possible.

One of the objectives in this study was, as mentioned earlier, to try to get an indication of how interaction between employees and manager, and cross-cultural communication influence in managing conflict, and understanding the variables underlying this. Therefore, the questions asked were open-ended and semi-structured. Only a small number of respondents who had information to provide in relevance to the phenomenon studied were interviewed. In-depth interviews were chosen as the researchers of this study thought that it was important to have close interaction to the interviewee in order to make it easier to shine light on a complicated topic such as conflict. The researchers felt it was important to get a complete detailed description of the problem in order to understand the phenomenon. The term 'qualitative interviewing' is usually intended to refer to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

### **3.5.1 Data collection - Searching for information and data required**

This section establishes what information was required to assess the main research problem in this study and how the information was obtained. Both primary and secondary data were used in this paper.

#### **3.5.1.1 Secondary sources**

Secondary data is the information that already exists – knowledge collected by others. Most research will include an element of secondary data collection to discover what work has already been done on the particular subject (Veal, 1997). Additionally, a review of the secondary research will prevent duplication of work and provide points of comparison with similar studies.

With reference to the theory part of this paper, this is where the majority of the secondary research was identified and used in this study. The information in this paper is collected from different peer reviewed books and academic articles – also known as document analysis, providing a theoretical framework for the research, which is vital for a comprehensive study. Secondary research was used to establish the key issues relating to the concept of interaction between employees and manager, communication, conflict management and cross-cultural work environment. Evaluation of the secondary data helped to formulate the primary research element of the study through consideration of methods used in similar studies.

### 3.5.1.2 Primary sources

In contrast to secondary data, primary data is new data collected by oneself in the current research study, where the researcher is the primary user (Veal, 1997, 2005). Primary data may be qualitative or quantitative in nature. As mentioned earlier, a qualitative approach in the form of personal interviews was chosen for this study, as we were interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the opinions and views of the employees and the manager in the cross-cultural departments chosen.

The topics included in the interview guide were a compilation of information and questions from the literature read for the theory chapter in this study. The questions for the interview was created and improved from a previous study on this topic conducted of one of the researchers of this study, as well as from this study's theory chapter. The interview guide was improved during meetings with the researchers' supervisor and her colleague. A few questions were deleted and some were re-formulated to be more unambiguous and neutral. The questions were reviewed and changed until a consensus was made on the contents of the interview.

The primary data of this research is all the information obtained during the interviews. Before the interviews were conducted, the researchers decided on *what* to find out in the study, *why* this was interesting, and *how* to attain the information needed (Kvale, 1997). For the type of interview used in this study, it is important to use open-ended questions and use language that cannot be misinterpreted. Moreover, it is important to avoid leading questions, implicative alternatives and suppositions, generalisations and questions with several possible interpretations (Gripsrud & Olsson, 2000). According to Kvale (1997) a successful interview should:

- Answer from the respondent should be spontaneous, comprehensive, specific and relevant to the topic at hand
- The interviewer's questions should be short; the interviewee's answers should be extensive.
- The interviewer should follow up and clarify the meaning of relevant parts of the answer immediately
- The interviewer should verify his/her interpretations of the respondent's answers and interpret continuously during the interview.
- The interview should be self-communicating; it is in itself a story which should not need extra commentary and explanations.

There are some possible sources of error when conducting interviews which it is important to be aware of (Gripsrud & Olsson, 2000). First of all, the questions can be poorly developed so that it does not cover all aspects it is intended to cover. Then, during the interview other errors may occur. The respondent may not understand the meaning of some questions; he/she may not be inclined to answer truthfully, or may not be sure how to respond to certain topics. The interviewer may misinterpret answers, or lack empathy to understand the interviewee's position. The location and timing of the interview might not be ideal if there are interruptions or the interviewee is stressed and not paying complete attention (Gripsrud & Olsson, 2000).

### **3.5.2 Conducting the interviews**

The interviewer needs certain preparations and qualifications. The person needs to know enough about the topic to keep the conversation going, be structured (arrange meeting time and place, be on time with the necessary equipment), be clear and unambiguous, be friendly, sensitive, empathic, open, control digressions, be critical (do not accept everything as the complete truth and the full picture), have a good memory, and be able to interpret meanings (Kvale, 1997).

The interviews in this study were held at the two hotels. The interview with the housekeeping department manager from hotel 1 was held in the manager's office and the interview with the housekeeping department manager from hotel 2 was held in a conference room in the hotel. The interviews with the employees were held in the rooms they were cleaning. The housekeeping department managers answered a few phone calls throughout the interview; however this did not interfere with the quality of the interviews. The interviews were conducted on April 29<sup>th</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup> 2009. The interview guide was used to steer the conversations so that all the main topics were discussed in all the interviews. The respondents clearly had different "favourite" topics, therefore, the time used to talk about different topics varied somewhat throughout the process. Moreover, the time spent on the interview varied between the employees as their language skills varied.

### **3.5.3 Practical procedures and equipment**

Prior to the interviews, the researchers made a phone call to the two hotels requesting the interview – information was given and the purpose of the study was explained. One week before the interview the managers were reminded of the interview by e-mail. The facility and

service managers were provided with the research question and the main topics (not the questions) for the interview so they would get a sense of what the research is about.

Both the facility and service managers were positive towards participating in the research and both of them were available on the two dates the researchers had planned to conduct the interviews. The interviews were recorded on two digital recorders that worked flawlessly through the process. The recordings were done with the consent of the respondents. The recordings were later transferred to a laptop via USB and the software needed was downloaded free from the Internet. The interviews were then transcribed from digital sound into a word-document format. As far as possible, the interviewees' response was written in the form it was spoken. If something was said that had absolutely no relevance to the study, it was not transcribed but still kept on the recordings. These transcripts became the basis for the study's analysis.

#### **3.5.4 Techniques for analysing data**

Although there are several techniques for analysing qualitative data, there are no explicit rules. The process therefore challenges the researcher's abilities in creative thinking, how the connections are seen and how the information is extracted from the interviews. The researcher might have gathered a lot of interesting data but this is no guarantee for a successful contribution to the topic's research area. It is therefore necessary to gain methodological knowledge and analytical abilities before the research process begins (Mehmetoglu, 2004). During the evolution of qualitative research, some topics are discarded, some are refined, and new topics can be introduced. Data analysis in qualitative research is in other words an ongoing procedure throughout the process (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004). Some analytical approaches are described here (Kvale, 1997):

- *Contents crystallisation* – Reduces long interview texts and creates concise formulations without losing important information.
- *Contents categorisation* – The interviews are coded in categories, indicating occurrence or non-occurrence of a view, and the strength and direction (positive or negative) of the phenomenon. The categorisation can be used to reduce a lengthy text and structure it in figures and tables. The categories can be pre-developed, or they may appear during the analysis.

- *Narrative structuring* – A timely and social structure of text, which aims to grasp a story and courses of action if such exist. Normally the text will be reduced, but sometimes more text is needed to create complete accounts.
- *Contents interpretation* – This technique goes further than just structuring the immediate meanings of the text. It seeks to find the true meaning of the text, used in e.g. critics of a play or a psychoanalyst's interpretation of a patient's dream.
- *Meaning generation through ad-hoc methods* – An eclectic method using several analytical methods and common sense in breaking down the findings in the material. The results may be presented in words, numbers, figures, diagrams or combinations of these.

This study focused mainly on the respondents' perspectives on different subjects. Thus, *contents categorisation* and *contents crystallisation* were meaningful tools in order to organise and make the responses ready for findings, discussion and conclusions that are presented later in this paper. Most findings were "top-down", which interacted with the presented theory as expected, however, some "bottom-up" findings not earlier discussed appeared during the respondents' elaborations. The "top-down" findings support earlier findings and strengthen the reliability and validity of the research, while the "bottom-up" findings represents new findings which contributes to the body of theory.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Interview research may influence the interviewee, the interviewer and the readers view on several topics. It is therefore of outmost importance that the findings are presented truthfully after having considered all possible moral implications (Kvale, 1997). The goal of the research should not only be regarded as a scientific contribution, but also to improve the human aspect of the topic at hand. The ethical considerations begin with gaining the respondents' informed consent – the respondents are informed about the goal of the research, possible pros and cons when participating, and that the participation is voluntarily. Furthermore, it is important to ensure confidentiality (when needed), and reflect on the possible consequences the participation may have.

Before each interview, it was ensured that "who said what" would not be revealed in the presented material in case something would reflect badly on their boss, the work environment or themselves. Moreover, permission was asked for recording the conversation and it was ensured that no one else would listen to the recordings except from the two researchers.

Furthermore, it was ensured that the recordings would not be used for any other purposes than this study. The confidentiality question was adhered to and continually considered throughout the study.

### **3.7 Criteria of evaluation**

Objectivity, reliability and validity are the three main criteria to evaluate the research (Mehmetoglu, 2004).

#### **3.7.1 Objectivity**

According to Mehmetoglu (2004) objectivity is the question – to what degree a study's findings and results are neutral. In short, it is how certain one can be that the findings of the study truly reflect the views of the respondent, and not the researcher's own assumptions (Mehmetoglu, 2004). In this study, one of the researchers had already conducted a similar study, this might have lead the way questions were built up as the researcher already had made up a view on the topic from the findings of the similar study previously conducted. However, the researchers tried to be as neutral as possible and to start from a bare ground. Although total objectivity is almost impossible in social research (Troye, 1994), there is no reason not to strive for it – which has been attempted throughout this study.

#### **3.7.2 Validity and reliability of measurement**

The concepts of reliability and validity were developed in the natural sciences. Measures of reliability and validity in their broadest conception – reliability meaning 'sustainable' and validity meaning 'well grounded', have relevance for qualitative research since they help to define the strength of the data. This is especially of concern in the context of generalisation where the ability to transfer findings to other contexts or wider theory will be restricted by the accuracy of the evidence (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

##### **3.7.2.1 Validity**

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2004) *validity* is concerned with the question "am I measuring what I intended to measure?" (Zikmund, 2003; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004). The problem with validity occurs because measurement in social

sciences is often indirect and under such circumstances the researcher is never certain that they measure what was intended to measure (Frankfort- Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004).

The validity of the findings is understood to refer to the precision of a research reading. It is often explained as a concept with two dimensions; internal validity which concerns whether the researcher has investigated what is claimed to be investigated, and external validity which concerns the extent to which the abstract constructs generated, refined or tested are applicable to other groups within the population or to other contexts or settings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

#### ***3.7.2.1.1 Internal validity***

The *internal validity* measures whether the study in fact measures what the study is supposed to measure. Prior to the interviews, the available theory on cross-cultural work environments, cross-cultural communication and conflict was studied. One of the researcher had done a similar study earlier, and after studying research methods in social sciences and some help from the researchers' supervisor, it is argued that the research proposal, the construction of the interview questions and the carrying out of the interviews were the right method to look at the phenomenon the study aimed for. The questions for the interview were made by the researchers of this study; the questions were as unambiguous and neutral as possible. The methods chosen for analysis were derived directly from theory, and thus should be correct and secure credibility.

#### ***3.7.2.1.2 External validity (Generalisation)***

*Generalisation* is whether the findings from a study based on a sample can be said to be of relevance beyond the sample and context of the research itself – the extent to which it is possible to generalise from the sample data to the broader population. Generalisation is discussed in two linked but different contexts; empirical generalisation concerns the application of findings from qualitative research studies to populations or settings beyond the particular sample of the study (also called external validity), theoretical generalisation involves the generation of theoretical concepts or principles from the findings of a study for more general application (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Veal, 2005).

This study has only a small sample and the result could vary if a different sample was taken. The generalisability of the findings in this study is therefore very limited. The

conclusion may apply in general, however as the sample is small and the list only consisted of hotels in the Stavanger region, caution must be applied in generalising the outcomes of the study to all hotels or organisations with a cross-cultural work environment. It might not be possible to gather the same respondents from this study again; however, it might be interesting to replicate the study with respondents from a different segment or another business sector.

### **3.7.2.2 Reliability**

*Reliability* estimates the *consistency* of the research. It is generally understood to concern the replicability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study using the same or similar methods was undertaken. A first requirement is to have a clear understanding of what features of qualitative data might be expected to be consistent, dependable or replicable. Essentially, it is the nature of the phenomenon that has been generated by the participants and the meanings that they have attached to them what would be expected to repeat. There need to be some certainty that the internal elements, dimensions, factors and so on, found within the original data would recur outside of the study population. Moreover, a secondary consideration is whether the constructions placed on the data by the researcher have been consistently and carefully derived. Thus the reliability of the findings depends on the likely recurrence of the original data and the way they are interpreted (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Veal, 2005).

In this study, the sample design was developed through finding a list of the hotels in the Stavanger region. Two different hotels (from different chains with similar number of rooms) were randomly picked from the list. All the interviews used for this study were digitally recorded and were saved on the researchers' laptops, along with the transcripts and the interview guide. During the interviews the researchers did their best not to influence the respondents in any way in order to avoid gaining support for a specific viewpoint, and to keep the researchers' views neutral. During transcriptions, the respondents' views were written as they were meant. The researchers did not angle the statements in order to gain support for own assumptions. During the analysis of the responses, the researchers were as true to the original meanings of the respondents as possible, and they were careful not to over-analyse the material in order to find new theories, meanings and support for any pre-determined views. These measures secured the reliability of the study (Ritchie, 2003), and it means that a replication of the study is possible.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

As described earlier, *contents categorisation* and *contents crystallisation* (Kvale, 1997) were the techniques chosen for the analysis in this study. The findings from these analyses will be presented in the following section. In the section for the results of the interviews with the facility and service managers, the research proposal and its supporting research questions indicate findings in four areas; cross-cultural communication, conflict, organisational culture and management. Thus, the findings are separated and organised in these four areas. In the section for the results of the interviews with employees, the research proposal and its supporting research questions indicate findings in three areas; cross-cultural communication, conflict and organisational culture.

In this part of the paper there will be a summary of the results that has been found in relation to this study. Since the research hotels preferred to be anonymous in the findings, they will be separated by calling them hotel 1 and hotel 2.

### 4.2 Results – the facility and service managers

#### 4.2.1 General question

Hotel 1 is a medium large hotel on the west-coast of Norway, more specifically in Stavanger. This hotel has 221 rooms and the facility- and service department have 35 employees, out of them only three have a Norwegian background. Among the 35 employees there are eight different nationalities. Hotel 2 is also a medium large hotel in Stavanger and has 204 rooms and 20 employees in the facility- and service department. Only two of the employees in this housekeeping department were Norwegian. In both of the hotels the facility- and service managers were female.

#### 4.2.2 Main interview questions

The facility- and service manager is the one with the main responsibility in the housekeeping department in both of the hotels, but hotel 1 also has an assistant that assist her. Both hotels have relatively high experience with cross-cultural employees, and both hotels

have a long history with employees of a foreign background. The manager in hotel 1 was from Argentina and knew how it felt like to be a foreigner in a Norwegian working environment. She thought the fact that she was from a foreign background herself helped her to be more supporting and more patient towards employees that have language and cultural difficulties.

The facility- and service manager in both hotels said they found it very interesting to have so many different cultures among their staff members. The manager in hotel 1 thought it was really exciting and informative to have employees with different nationalities. *“It is exciting if you think about how different all the employees are as individuals and even more so when they are from different cultures, and all the different suggestions they give the department and me”*. Both managers also said that having so many different nationalities make some of the work harder. This was because some of the employees have language difficulties and it is hard to convey messages to them. Moreover, they said that many of the employees need to be followed up to make sure they understand the messages that are given and this takes extra time and effort.

The manager of hotel 1 pointed out: *“the communication takes more time because I often have to repeat myself, use body language or give the message in two languages for everyone to understand me”*. In hotel 2, the manager found the communication and conveying the messages a bit easier. Her employees had been working in Norway for a long time – a higher average of years than in hotel 1, and most of them understood her messages with no big problems. She said she makes an effort to speak Norwegian in written language instead of using dialect when she speaks with her foreign employees; this helps make it easier for them to understand her. Both of the managers said that they would often ask someone from the same country or someone who speaks the same language as the other employee to translate the message so it would be easier for them to understand what was being said.

As mentioned earlier, hotel 1 has a working environment with eight different cultures. However, when it comes to the different cultures’ holidays, the manager did not normally give special consideration for such days. But she tried to help the employees to change their work schedule to fit with these days or sustain the employees’ wishes to use days of their holiday during this period. The reason for not taking considerations to every culture’s holidays, the manager said: *“if my employees choose to live and work in Norway they should also follow and respect the Norwegian culture”*

Hotel 2, on the other hand, has five different cultures where everyone shows different attitudes towards their job and their young manager. Also in this hotel the manager did not

take any special considerations to the different cultures' holidays. However, the manager said she tries to be flexible and give the employees the requested days off when they ask for it and in some situations helps them change their shift.

### **4.2.3 Communication**

Regarding the communication within the department in hotel 1, the manager said that most of the employees speak Norwegian when they talk to each other during work hours, as not all of them speak the same language and not everyone understands English. However, when two from the same country work together on the same floor, they speak their mother language to each other. Furthermore, during the lunchbreak, cultural groups appear, and the employees from the same country tend to sit together. This leads to that other employees sometimes feel like they are being left out from the cultural groups. Despite of this, it was said that the employees gladly share their international food with each other for everyone to taste, and they discuss the different cultures' cooking. The communication with the manager in hotel 1 happens in Norwegian, or sometimes in English or Spanish if any of the employees having problems understanding Norwegian.

The Manager in hotel 2 also said that the employees that come from the same country often speak their mother language with each other while working. She said that this sometimes makes it hard to include everyone in the working environment because the employees who do not speak this language are excluded from the conversation. Moreover, the manager in hotel 2 said she felt it would be hard to split up the cultural groups within the department (such as during lunchbreak) as this was how it had been long before she started to work there, and most of the subordinates had been working there longer than herself.

In hotel 1, most of the communication between the manager and the employees happens in daily morning meetings. This is where the manager informs the employees about what kind of work they have to do during the day, if there is anything special they have to consider and both positive and negative feedback from guests are given. The manager said that the morning meetings give her the opportunity to say hello and to have a small chat to everyone and create an informal work atmosphere before the hard work starts. Moreover, the employees have daily contact with the manager as she often takes several walks through the hotel during the day to check on the rooms. In addition, the manager in hotel 1 also said she focuses on physical touching while communicating with her employees, such as patting the employees on the back for a good job, or just putting her hand on their arm while asking how

their day is. She said she did this to establish a personal relationship to the employees, and so they would feel she was there for them.

The communication between the manager and employees in hotel 2 is mainly when the employees pick up their work lists in the morning. They had no daily morning meetings. However, the manager said she tries to talk to everyone if they drop by her office during the day, or when she is walking around the hotel to check rooms and to see if everyone is doing well and have everything they need.

The manager in hotel 1 said that she thinks she has a good relationship to her subordinates. She said “...if any of the employees have personal issues, they come to me and I do my very best to help them out. I try to help them find a solution to the problem”. The manager in hotel 2 said she tries to earn trust from her employees, but she said she found it hard since the employees still look at her as “the new-comer”. However, the relationship with her subordinates was improving and she said she thought they just need time to accept her and get to know her. She said that in the attempt to establish a good relationship to her employees she offers them to talk to her if they experience any problems both work related and personal. She wants the employees to feel that they can talk to her any time. Both managers in the hotels said they strive to make a personal relationship with the employees as well as a working relation to gain trust from the employees. They both said they believe this will help motivate the employees and create a good working environment.

#### **4.2.4 Conflict**

In hotel 1 the manager said that when problems arise between the employees in the department they normally work it out amongst themselves. However, they have the opportunities to come to talk to the manager about the problem and she can help communicate between the conflicting parties as a neutral person. She also said that if she had to have a meeting with the parties involved she would also ask another supervisor or manager at the hotel to join as a ‘witness’ of everything being said.

The manager in hotel 2 said: “when a problem occurs between the employees, I summons all the people concerned to a meeting in my office. First, I talk to them one by one, and then everyone together. This gives me the opportunity to arbitrate and it makes it easier to understand the whole problem if I know all sides of the conflict”. Furthermore, she said that in the meeting everyone is allowed to repeat their view and opinion in relation to the case.

Both housekeeping department managers said that language difficulties and misunderstandings are the most common reason for conflicts to occur in the department. The manager in hotel 1 also said that just normal girl issues is the reason for a lot of the problems if they occur, as all employees but one is female. However, these problems do not occur because the employees are from different cultural background. She also underlined that there are very little conflict within the department; there are small irritations now and then, but never big conflicts that can not be resolved. Moreover, she said that if she heard of or saw the small irritations among her staff, she would grasp the problem right away before it would become a big issue.

To prevent conflicts within the department, manager in hotel 2 said she found communication to be important; *“If the employees learn to communicate both with me and each other in a good way, we might be able to decrease the amount of conflicts radically”*. She said she found it important to spend extra time when giving messages to the employees to make sure everyone understands her. She did this in effort to reduce the misunderstandings as this is one of the major issues when it comes to the conflicts that occur within the department. Moreover, the manager in hotel 2 said that she found motivation very important in preventing conflict. To motivate her employees she said she use feedback and incentive together with social gatherings. However, they had not had any social gatherings in a while, and this is something they could do more of. An example of the incentives were handing out ice cream on a hot day or giving them a big fruit basket at lunch.

In hotel 1 the manager highly values good atmosphere to prevent conflict. To create this she said she uses dialogue and makes sure she talks to all the employees during the day. Both the housekeeping department managers said if they can not solve the problem themselves, the opinion representative of the hotel becomes involved and helps solving it. The manager in hotel 2 said: *“it is important that the person helps solving the problem, not supporting the conflict”*.

#### **4.2.5 Management**

In hotel 1 the manager said that the department has mutual guidelines, rules and policies that have to be followed in the department. She said she thinks that these have a major effect on the welfare of the employees in the department. Furthermore, she thought it was important to clarify what is accepted (such as behaviour) and what is not accepted. She also said that she thinks it is important that everyone respect each other, when it comes to the

employees as well as the manager. Moreover, she thought it was important that she as the manager gives clear rules and guidelines that have to be followed: *“we are the one that make the rules, and the employees have to follow them, even if that means they have to go against their own culture...”*. As mentioned before she said she thinks it is important that the foreign employees follow Norwegian guidelines when they live and work in Norway.

In hotel 2 the manager said that the fact that some of the employees speak their mother language amongst each other, might affect the work environment in the department. However, she said that she finds it hard to make everyone speak Norwegian or English, but she thinks if everyone talked the same language, that would make a better working environment. In similarity to hotel 1, the manager in hotel 2 also thought it was important that all the employees follow the Norwegian cultures and guidelines.

Both managers agreed that the facility and service department is the department with most cross-cultural staff members and suggested that they had more communication problems than the other departments within the hotels. When asked in the interview, both managers thought it would be useful to hold language courses for the employees who struggled with the Norwegian or English language. However, they admitted that they had not really given this idea much thought before.

The manager in hotel 1 said that she expected the employees to learn Norwegian on their own. But she said she thought a language course at work would maybe help them learn the language faster. Especially the necessary words and expressions used at work. The manager in hotel 2 thought holding a language course at the workplace was a great idea, but she thought that it might be too costly as the employees who needed the language course were mostly the ones who only were casual employees, and it was hard to estimate how long they would work at the hotel. It would be a short-term investment.

#### **4.2.6 Organisational Culture**

As mentioned before the facility and service manager in hotel 1 thinks she has a great relationship with her employees. She thought the fact that she is from a foreign background herself, helps her connect with the employees easier. Because of that she also thought she contributes in making a better organisation culture in the department.

The manager in hotel 2, on the other hand, felt that she has a good relationship with the employees. However, since she is relatively new in her position she said she still feels that the relationship is improving as time goes by, and the employees get to know her better and

she gets to know them better. She said she thinks the relationship with her employees is much better now than when she first started. When she first started in the department she felt the employees had a hard time respecting her. Many of the subordinates had more experience in the housekeeping job than her, and they had been in this particular hotel for many years. She found it hard being younger than most of the employees in the department. At first they used to behave strangely around her and they gave her a hard time testing her limits.

To create a relationship with the employees both managers agreed that it is important to be friendly and to respect each other, smile, and greet when meeting. They also found it important to be positive towards the employees and show interests if they have suggestion to improvement or changes within the department. The manager in hotel 1 mentioned communication and the ability to talk to each other as a very important factor to create a relationship with the employees. The manager in hotel 2 said that she should be better to arrange social gatherings with the employees; *“this makes the employees get to know each other in a different environment, and this contributes to making a better work relationship”*.

The manager of hotel 1 said that her department have a very good organisational culture because of all the different nationalities in the department. The majority being international makes them understand each others situation and connect more easily. Moreover, she said that it gives them the ability to learn from each other and show respect to each other: *“We are like a family to each other; some of the employees sometimes even bring lunch to everyone and this show how much we care about each other”*. The manager in hotel 2, on the other hand, said that she feels that there is a big gap between the cultures in the department: *“The gap is not so visual when they are working since everyone are doing individual work, but it is easy to see during lunch. People from the same cultural background sit together in groups”*. As mentioned before the manger said that she could try to split the cultural groups, but she does not know how to do it. She was afraid it would cause conflicts between her and the employees.

## **4.3 Results – the employees**

### **4.3.1 General questions**

In hotel 1, six employees were interviewed. Out of these six employees, there were three different nationalities and all the interviewees were females. Although not interviewed, there was only one male working in this housekeeping department. The average employment period among the employees interviewed was two years. Their Norwegian language skills varied, some of them barely understood Norwegian and others understood almost everything.

Hotel 2 only had five employees available for interview on the day the interviews were conducted. The reason for this was that there were only a limited number of employees at work. The interview was voluntary and some of the employees chose not to participate. The reason for not participating was that they were busy and tired. Moreover, they did not feel like talking to strangers and having to answer questions regarding their job. Language difficulties were also given as a reason not to participate in the interview.

Out of the five employees interviewed there were three different nationalities and also here all the interviewees were females. In this hotel the average employment period was higher than in hotel 1 with approximately 10 years. Therefore, the employees at this hotel had better Norwegian language skills, and it was easier to conduct the interviews. Most of them understood everything that was being asked. One employee requested to be interviewed in English, as her Norwegian language skills were not so good. However, her English was fluent. Further in this part of the paper the results will be presented in the main topics from the interview to make it easier to see the essence of the results.

### **4.3.2 Main interview questions**

In hotel 1, when the employees were asked to describe a normal workday, the problems seemed to appear. This was a question most of the employees had big problems to understand, and they wanted to talk about what kind of routines they used while cleaning instead of the phenomenon the study was focused on. Two of the employees, on the other hand, did understand the question. Both of them focused on the morning meeting the manager held every morning when the work day started at 8am. They both thought these morning meetings were important because it gives the employees the opportunity to talk to each other

and talk to the manager. They specially focused on the fact that this meeting was very much about getting feedback on the day before from the manager. Moreover, they said that feedback is something they appreciate and value because they think it contributes to motivate them to do their job and actually enjoying doing it.

Most of the employees interviewed mentioned the lunch break. One of the employees said; “This gives us the opportunity to socialise with our colleagues since we are working on our own the whole day”. One of them mentioned that they enjoy the lunch break, but found it frustrating that there is a division between the different nationalities: “*Most of the people from Thailand often sit together during lunch. They speak their own language, and do not make any particular effort to include the rest of us in the conversation*”.

Several of the employees agreed that the language problems create misunderstandings between the employees, and the employees and the manager. They said it is normal that some sort of misunderstandings occur on a normal workday. This again sometimes led to disagreements or small conflicts in the department. All of the employees indicated that the cooperation and interaction between the manager and the employees are good. On any given day they can talk to the manager about what they want, both private and work related issues. They also said that the cooperation between the employees is good: “*We can discuss the work with each other, and swap tasks if someone is tired of for example cleaning bathrooms or making the beds*”.

The employees in hotel 2 had the same problem when it came to describing a normal day at work. They preferred talking about how the job were done, routines and the fact that they could go home earlier if they were working fast, and were done with all their rooms earlier than predicted. Many of the employees also mentioned that they had contact with the manger several times during the day, although this hotel did not have a scheduled meeting. In this hotel the employees met their manager when they were picking up the room lists in the morning. Moreover, they had the opportunity to communicate with the manager when she was walking through the hallways, or when she was taking the rounds to inspect the cleaned rooms. The employees all agreed that the manager is friendly and helpful. But they said they still feel that she is new in her job. However, the relationship with her is much better now compared to when she first started. One of the employees also mentioned that they are free to contact the manager at all times if something special has happened or if they are having problems at work.

The employees in hotel 2 agreed that on a normal working day they have a good working environment in their department. They can talk to each other, even if some of the

employees find it hard to talk to new employees at first. They have to get to know each other first before things loosens up. One of the reasons for this was said to be all the different cultures: *“It is hard to know how to approach a person you do not know from a different culture than your self”*. However, it was also said that the employees appreciate the fact that they can learn about other cultures: *“Sometimes we cook food for each other to learn more about each others cultural background”*.

To improve the working environment in the department two of the employees mentioned that it would be easier if everyone understood each other: *“It is hard to know if the other employees understand for example your jokes. I think it is important to be able to make jokes to create a good working environment, but people from a different culture can easily misunderstand what I am saying and that often leads to misunderstandings. Most of the employees in this hotel have good Norwegian language skills; however, the cultural differences are still there. You never know if the person with the different culture than you has the same comprehension as yourself on the conversation or if you are trying to make a joke”*.

Also in this hotel the employees agreed that on a normal work day the cooperation and interaction between the employees is good. The communication was said to be open and colleagues were helpful: *“We always help each other if someone needs help to finish cleaning their rooms before we go home.”* However, some of the interviewees mentioned that the casual staffs sometimes cause irritations as they are not into the daily routines and they have to borrow the fulltime staffs’ trolleys. Moreover, it was said that it is more difficult to work with the casuals as the fulltime employees found it harder to get to know them.

### **4.3.3 Communication**

In hotel 1, the languages that were used at work were mostly Norwegian or English, but some of the employees that are from the same country also speak their mother language when they are communicating amongst each other. The housekeepers in this department explained that the communication normally happens during morning meetings and lunchbreaks: *“We do not have time to talk while we work, because we normally work alone. But we are talking a lot during lunch”*. They also mentioned that if something special is going on during the day, they would go to her office to see her. Moreover, the manager walks through the different floor several times during the day. The employees can also give the manager a call if something is urgent: *“Sometimes it is easier to call our manager as she walks around and we do not always now where she is”*. The employees said that they feel like

they have a trustful relationship with the manager and often discuss private matter as well as job matter with her. This is something they appreciated with the manager.

The employees said they think the manager is doing a good job when it comes to motivation of her employees: *“She gives us feedback on the work we are doing and she shows us how to do things if we have problems understanding her when she explains things to us. She would try to give messages in different ways until we understand what she is saying”*. Some of the employees said that the fact that the manager is so nice to them and actually find time to talk to them help motivate them.

In hotel 2, the employees explained that the communication in the department happens in Norwegian, English or in the mother language of the employees. For many of the employees this is a rather big problem. One of the employees said *“It is important that everyone understand each other, the people working here should make an effort to learn Norwegian, but it is ok to use English if they are stuck on words”*. Some of the employees said the communication with the co-workers sometimes is limited. This was because some of the casuals did not have very good Norwegian skills.

When communicating with the manager the employees said she gives oral messages. But important and complicated messages she writes down as well as giving the message orally. One employee said that: *“Sometimes I have problems to understand the written notes, but then I go to ask my manager what the message means, the manager is then happy to translate the message into English, reword the message or use body language so I can understand”*. The employees who had been working at the hotel over a long period said that they think the interaction is good. The staffs that have been working there for a long time now understand each other, and they can joke and have fun without problems.

The employees said they expect the manager to make an effort to understand them when they have problems. They find it very important for a manager to show interest in the employees and accept the fact that everyone can make mistake. Moreover, they said that it is important to explain what has been done wrong and how to change: *“Our manager is a nice person. She helps me understand by translating messages and actually show me how to do things in real life. She also accepts that I can have a bad day, and give me feedback on the work I am doing. This is something I like very much about her”*.

Lastly, the employees mentioned that the manager is doing a good job when it comes to motivating the employees: *“She gives us good feedback. Also, if it has been a busy day she would come with a big fruit basket at lunch or on a hot day she would treat us to an ice cream”*. One of the employees said *“It can be difficult for the manager to motivate everyone,*

*because everyone is so different and have different cultures*". But the manager gives the employees the opportunity to manage their own time as long as they are doing what they are supposed to do. "This shows that she trusts us and the work we are doing".

#### **4.3.4 Conflicts**

The employees in hotel 1 have different views when it comes to conflicts within the department. Two of the interviewees did not remember any conflicts the last year. One of the interviewees said: "*There have been conflicts, but they do not happen very often, maybe once a year between the employees, and never with the manager. To argue with the manager is not accepted in my culture*". Another employee said if that she has been involved in any conflict, it has been small. It has been caused by misunderstandings, but it has been cleared up quickly.

All the interviewees in hotel 1 said they could not recall any big conflicts in the department. They also said that if there is any conflict at all, they are very small and just trifles. All the employees said that they find it important to solve the problems straight away to have as little conflicts as possible. It was said that they did not have a specific procedure that is followed when conflicts appear or to prevent conflict from happening. This was because conflicts in the department did not happen often. If disagreements or conflicts appear, they communicate to solve them. But when real conflicts occur, they all agreed that it is nice to have a manager they can involve to help solve the conflicts: "*The manager is helpful if there is a person you do not get along with, and if there is someone in particular we like to work with, she tries to make the rooster that way. This helps to prevent conflicts*".

All the interviewees pointed out that communication is the key. Lack of communication, language problems or cultural problems is mostly the reason that misunderstandings occur and conflicts appear in the department. "*...I find it important that we as employees talk to each other, and confront each other if there are any problems, instead of making a big conflict out of it. In most of the cases the reason for conflicts is misunderstandings that we can solve by talking to each other*".

In similarity with hotel 1, the employees in hotel 2 also said that conflicts do not appear very often. However, from the findings, it seems to happen more frequently than in hotel 1. The interviewees all agreed that the work they are doing is hard, and that might be one of the reasons for the conflicts appearing. "*...when we get tired after a long day with hard work we get less patience, and small silly things might cause conflicts*". They agreed that the conflicts always are small, and easy to solve if they communicate with each other: "*Some*

*people just do not handle critic as well and that sometimes causes conflict especially on a busy and stressful day. I think it is important to let people know if they are doing something wrong, using the wrong equipment, or if I think they have not done their part of the job good enough. But some people take this the wrong way”.*

In hotel 2, three of the employees had been working in the department for more than 5 years. The three of them all said they think the “new people” and the casual workers are the ones who cause most of the conflicts in the department. *“They do not know the routines properly, and some of them also use ours cleaning trolley without asking or without refilling the trolleys after use”.* All the interviewees in hotel 2 agreed that the conflicts happen because of work reasons and not because of private issues.

Lastly, lack of variation in the work and dissatisfaction sometimes contributed to disagreements in the department: *“We have to do the same thing over and over every day, sometimes it would help to get a different floor, or swap tasks. Some areas are easier to clean than others such as business rooms vs. family rooms, and I think it would be fair if there was some kind of rotation plan for everyone to follow”.* Another employee said: *“Sometimes the manager has scheduled the common areas in the hotel to more employees than needed; it sometimes causes disagreement on who is going to clean it, and why the other employee is cleaning a part that is not her responsibility”.*

As in hotel 1, the interviewees in hotel 2 said that conflicts in the department are being solved with help from the manager. The employees said that it is normal to involve the manager if they can not solve the conflicts on their own: *“This makes it easier for us to find a solution everyone can live with afterwards, and makes us find a solution to the problem straight away”.*

#### **4.3.5 Organisation culture**

The employees in hotel 1 claimed that they have a satisfying relationship with their manager. They said they feel that the manager understands them and their cultural differences since she is from a foreign country herself: *“She knows what it feels like to be in our situation with language problems and cultural differences, so she is patient with us and uses extra time to include everyone of us in the working environment”.* All the interviewees agreed that the manager is a person that shows that she cares about her employees: *“She talks to us every day, and she treats us with respect, friendliness and politeness. She shows interest in us as persons not just the work we are doing for her”.* However, one of the employees suggested

that there would be increased well-being within the department if everyone had less room to clean and less heavy work and stressful days. Another employee said that the manager being so caring and nice was more than enough, that they had a very good working environment because of that, and this helps on a stressful day.

The employees in hotel 2 also said that they have a good relationship with their manager: “...*the manager shows interest in the work we do and in us as persons*”. Two employees said that the fact that the manager is new in her job has both positive and negative sides: “*She is really making an effort to make things work, and she is using a lot of time to motivate us to do a good job, this helps create a better organisational culture*”.

Moreover, they said that their manager is open, easy to talk to and polite. Three of the interviewees also said that she treats all staffs the same and with respect regardless of cultural backgrounds. Another interviewee said that she appreciates when the manager asks them for suggestions on new things they need in the department, even if those suggestions do not always follow through. One of the employees pointed out that in the start, when the current manager started in her job; there were many inconsistencies that the staff did not like. “...*she did a lot of changes without consulting us first. I think this was because she came straight from school and wanted to try out things she learned at school. But not everything is working in practise*”.

A couple of the employees in this hotel mentioned that more activities outside work are something that could create a better welfare and working environment in the department. Another employee said that the manager should use more time to talk to each and every one of the employees. However, she said that she could understand that sometimes the manager had a lot to do and did not always have time for that.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

Norway has become a multicultural country in today's society, with employees from all over the world. In particular, there are many multicultural workers in the service industry. To have cross-cultural staff can easily provide cultural and language- or communication problems. To manage these situations and to prevent them into becoming serious conflicts the managers have to be able to adjust to situations and be patient. Moreover, it is important that the manager includes every employee and creates a multicultural working environment. In this paper there are theoretical studies and a qualitative study with several in-depth interviews. This part of the paper will provide a discussion of the theory and the findings concerning the research question "*How may the interaction between cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship influence the managing of conflicts in a cross-cultural working environment?*"

### 5.2 Conflict

In this study, it has been discovered that the two organisations looked at do not consciously adopt strategies for managing conflict, in spite of Lipsky et al., (2003) suggesting that an increasing number are doing so (Hammonds, 2001; Porter, 1980, 1985, 2002; Lipsky et al., 2003). The two hotels have not adopted conflict management systems as suggested by Goseline et al., (2001) and Lipsky et al., (2003).

Einarsen et al., (2002) suggest that many conflicts in work environments can arise because of work processes and the way work is organised. This was said to be one of the reasons for disagreements or conflict arising in both the housekeeping departments looked at in this study. At both the hotels the employees said that they could disagree on the way tasks were done or disagreement in the way rooms and common areas were divided.

Ellmin (1992) stated that conflict can be caused by competition, wrong perceptions of others' reality, language problems and misunderstandings or other communication problems. In our study it was found an indication that language problems, misunderstandings and other communication problems were the main reasons for conflict in both of the hotels. One of the employees in hotel 2 even mentioned that wrong perceptions of the co-workers might sometimes be the reason for misunderstandings.

Markham (1996) states that conflict will not only make it difficult to work with each other for the two persons involved, but also make it hard for other persons who have to work with the two involved. This can create awkward situations and people can start to take sides of the conflict. Because of this it is necessary to start treating the problem. The managers in both hotel 1 and hotel 2 said that they try to resolve a problem as soon as they get to know about it. This was said to be an effective tool in both the hotels, resolving small disagreements and misunderstandings while they are small have prevented them to become big problems.

One of the types of conflict mentioned in hotel 1 is according to Markham (1996) behaviour conflict. Some of the interviewees mentioned that some of the co-workers wanted to get the job done fast so they could go home earlier. Some of the employees interviewed felt that this sometimes affected the quality of the job, that these co-workers sometimes took shortcuts or did not do their share of work. Markham (1996) suggest that behaviour conflict occur when one or more persons behave in a way the others see as not acceptable, such as not wanting to cooperate or not doing their share of work (Markham, 1996).

Almost (2006) found that conflict can occur because of differences between individuals' opinions and values, demographic origins or because of inadequate communication, or even because of high levels of workload. The findings in this study are consistent with this. For example, the employees said that high levels of workload and heavy work sometimes made them stressed and less patience towards the other employees. Sometimes the stress would make them snap at each other for small things. Almost (1996) also mention that lack of trust and respect between individuals cause conflict. However, none of the employees interviewed said they experienced this. Moreover, the interviewees in both hotel 1 and hotel 2 agree with Medina et al., (2005) in that conflict at work decreases job satisfaction and the sense of wellbeing, and they feel that a positive working environment such as good communication and feedback contribute to prevent and manage conflict.

Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2006) suggest that a growing number of organisations are more actively managing conflicts at a higher level because they have come to believe that the potential costs to the organisation that can result from a laissez-faire attitude to workplace disagreements can become too large to tolerate. They have concluded that unresolved and unmanaged conflicts at the workgroup level too often mature into serious disputes and expensive lawsuits (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006). From our findings, the two hotels in this study are not in the category of organisations that actively manage conflicts. The two hotels said they realise the cost of conflicts, however, they did not find it necessary to actively managing it as they thought the conflict levels were low and there were more

misunderstandings and small disagreements than big complicated conflicts. The two hotels also said that the disagreements are resolved by communication between the parties involved before they evolve into disputes. The findings of this study are more consistent with Oetzel and Ting-Toomey's (2006) acknowledgment that many organisations do not have clear policies or procedures for managing workplace disagreements. It seems from the findings in this study, consistent with Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2006) that the top managers expect the first line manager to have primary responsibility for resolving these disagreements. The top managers do not try to manage directly or systematically the disagreements but are hoping that the first line manager and employees involved in conflict will resolve the differences on their own.

### **5.3 Management**

As management theories were developed in the West (mainly Britain and USA), these theories were based on Western individualistic assumptions, which do not necessarily apply across different cultures (Tjosvold & Leung, 2003). The facility and service managers in the two hotels seem to use a western leader style, and when asked they said that they treat all employees the same regardless of their cultural backgrounds. It can be discussed that as both the hotels had many Asians working in the department, the managers should adjust accordingly to the culture they are dealing with and adopt to a leadership style that is compatible with their culture e.g. some Asians have more collectivist values rather than individualistic. Adjusting the leader style to the different cultures might help improve some of the foreign employees' job satisfaction and well-being at work. It could contribute to making them feel that they belong to the organisational culture in the departments and this again could help manage conflict.

DuBrin et al., (2006) define an informal manager as an employee with a big grade of impact. When it comes to the hotels in this study, there was no visible informal manager in hotel 1, but in hotel 2 one of the employees who had been working there for almost 19 years appeared as being an informal leader. She knew the routines and how the work should be done. Furthermore, she was also sometimes given the responsibility to train the new employees.

Greenberg (2005) suggest that large organisations often have several cultures operating within them. People tend to have more attitudes and values in common with others in their own company unit than with those in other parts of the organisation. Sub-cultures are

typically distinguished with respect to e.g. functional difference – type of work done. It can be argued that the employees in the housekeeping department of the two hotels in this study have a different organisational culture to the other departments in the hotel, e.g. the front office or the restaurant. However, as mentioned by the managers in both hotel 1 and hotel 2, they have a dominant culture in the hotel as well which reflects the hotel's core values and policies and procedures.

When it comes to the two manager's leadership styles according to Fiedler's contingency theory, the findings indicate that both of them would have a high score on the Least Preferred Co-worker questionnaire. There are two basic leadership styles in this model: relations-oriented and task-oriented. From the findings in this study, it appeared that both the managers interviewed follow the relations-oriented leadership style which is denoted by a high score on the Least Preferred Co-worker questionnaire. Hill (1969) defines this leadership style as a person who is motivated to seek prominence in interpersonal relations, who is concerned with good relations with others, who is considerate in his/hers interactions with group members, and who tends to reduce anxiety and increase the personal adjustment of his/hers co-workers (Hill, 1969). Both the managers indicated that they wanted the employees to like them, and they were interested in having a good relationship and interaction with their staff.

The task-oriented leadership style (a low LPC score) is characterised by a person who is concerned with performing the tasks and is willing to relegate interpersonal relations to a secondary position (Hill, 1969). From the findings it appears that the managers in the two hotels might be a mix of relations-oriented and task-oriented. The managers appeared to be concerned with performing the tasks they were given and had responsibility for; however, it did not seem from the interviews that they relegated interpersonal relations in order to get these tasks completed. It appeared that they rather took advantage of good interpersonal relations to get the tasks completed.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs show a set of need which explain most of what human being undertake. If these needs are not fulfilled dissatisfaction might occur. The physiological needs are the first stage. The two facilities and service managers both said they were trying to create a good work environment. The employees had 30 minutes break every day, and the working hours were said to be adjusted so the employees have time to have a life outside work (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Kotler & Keller, 2006). Moreover, although not asked in this study, Maslow also says that it is important that the salary and wage is high enough to

cover the basic needs such as accommodation and food to meet conditions to fulfil the physiological needs (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Kotler & Keller, 2006).

From the findings in this study it appears that the need for safety is met by the facilities and service manager in that they care about their employees. They want to make the employees feel safe at work and show that everyone can trust each other. From the findings in this study, most of the staff in the two hotels interviewed meets the social need in that they can relate to the other employees with the same culture, or even other employees in different departments because of the same organisational culture. The employees said that mostly all of them get along, and even if there are one or two persons they do not get along with, there are always some colleagues they are getting along with. Furthermore, the facility and service manager in hotel 2 said that she is trying to arrange social gatherings so the staffs get to socialise in a private setting and get to know each other in a different way than when they are working together. The manager in hotel 1 said that she thinks the morning meetings every morning is contributing to the social aspect of the work place.

When it comes to the need for esteem, the employees said they get this from receiving recognition from the managers. The managers from hotel 1 and hotel 2 both said they are trying to give feedback to their subordinates, not only negative but positive feedback as well. The employees in hotel 1 and hotel 2 all agreed that the managers were good at giving feedback and they appreciated that as they felt this was a factor of motivation. Moreover, it was mentioned that the employees have respect for each other. Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2003) states that the desires to achieve, to have prestige, enjoy success in life and other's respect are needs within this stage. It can be argued that maybe not all the employees have reached this stage. As stated earlier some of the employees just wanted to finish the work fast so they could go home early. Some of the employees may view the job as just a necessary thing to do to earn money to be able to survive. Not all employees necessarily feel the need to have prestige, or not everyone is actively seeking positive feedback and has the desire to achieve.

The last stage of Maslow's hierarchy is need for self-actualisation. It did not come forward that this stage is met in any of the two housekeeping department looked at in this study. Neither the managers nor the employees mentioned the opportunity of developing talent, abilities and qualities. Although, it can be argued that all the employees have the opportunity to work towards an assistant manager or even facility and service manager position in the department. The employees could also possibly think that they are developing talent as they learn new routines or procedures, or when they do the same task over and over

again they get better at doing it. The employees could also feel that working with people from so many different countries and cultures could contribute in developing their personal qualities such as being patient to understand each other, learn to know and respect different cultures and so on (Kaufmann & Kaufmann, 2003; Greenberg, 2005; Kotler & Keller, 2006).

#### **5.4 Communication**

As suggested by Greenberg (2005) a person's ability to comprehend and interpret information received from others is far from perfect. He states that this is especially the case for cross-cultural work environments where people speak different languages and lack the skills needed to understand the speaker. There was evidence of this in the findings of this study. All the employees interviewed and the facility and service managers in hotel 1 and hotel 2 said that the communication was the main cause of disagreements in the department. This was because of the different languages and cultures, and misunderstandings easily occurred. Greenberg (2005) suggests that once a message is received the recipient must begin the process of decoding, converting the message back into the sender's original ideas. This involves processes such as comprehending spoken and written words and interpreting facial expressions. With lack of language skills and a different cultural background than the sender of the message, this can be a challenge. Greenberg (2005) refer to the factors that distort the clarity of messages that are encoded, transmitted or decoded in the communication process as noise.

Moreover, Greenberg (2005) states that once a message has been decoded the process of communication can continue but in reverse – the person receiving the message now becomes the sender of a new message. This communication process is called feedback. In this study, the respondents said that they saw feedback as an important communication process in the departments. The managers in both hotels said they thought it was important for them to give and receive feedback to make sure messages were understood. They wanted to give feedback to make sure they have understood their employees the right way and they wanted to receive feedback to make sure that the employees had understood the messages given to them. The employees also said that they saw feedback as important. Feedback was important for them in understanding the messages given to them.

The findings in this study are not consistent with the LMX theory. The LMX theory suggests that supervisors determine which roles subordinates will hold. These assigned roles define the quality of the relationship subordinates enjoy with their supervisors and help

subordinates determine the appropriate behaviour to enact (Lind & Zmud, 1991, 1995). Liden and Graen (1980) state that subordinates who share a high-quality LMX relationship with their supervisor are afforded several advantages not provided to those in a low-quality LMX relationship, such as premier assignments, emotional support and cooperative interactions with the supervisor. Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne (1997) state that exposure to these advantages has been demonstrated to result in variety of positive outcomes such as greater levels of motivation and superior performance rating, for high-quality compared with low-quality LMX subordinated. The findings in this study were not consistent with this. Although this study has not been conducted to solely test out the LMX theory, there has been indication that the relationship between employees and the manager in the two hotels does not correlate with the relationships suggested in the LMX theory.

The manager in both hotels said that they try to do their best to treat all employees equally. Also the employees in both of the hotels said that their manager treat everyone the same, and they were given the same information. The manager in hotel 2 said that sometimes she would give some of the information to a few employees and ask if they could share the information with the rest of the staff. But the employees in hotel 2 did not like this, and wanted the manager to give the same information to everyone herself. However, there can be many various reasons for the deviation of employee – manager relationship in the hotels in this study and the LMX theory. First of all, this is only a small study with a small population, the answers might be different if more managers and employees were interviewed and other questions relating more to the LMX theory were asked. Moreover, the managers might have twisted the answers to make the reality look different to how it actually is. Saying that they have equal relationship to each employee sounds better than admitting that they have higher quality relationship with some of the employees and these are treated differently.

The communication in both the departments appeared in this study to mainly consist of downward communication where the manager gives instructions, directions and messages telling the staff what to do. Furthermore, feedback on past performance flows in a downward direction, and this was something that was used actively in the two departments (Greenberg, 2005; Davidson et al., 2006). Upward communication is when information flows from lower levels to higher levels. This form of communication also appeared to occur daily in both the departments. Typically such messages involve suggestions for improvement, status report, reactions to work-related issues and new ideas. Although, it is found that upward communication occurs far less frequently than downward communication (Greenberg, 2005). The findings in this study are consistent with the suggestion above. The employees in both

departments said that most often the manager would come to them to give them messages, but sometimes they would go and see the manager e.g. to give her room status reports or if they had problems they needed help with.

Greenberg (2005) and Davidson (2006) state that within organisations messages do not only flow up and down but also sideways, this appeared as true for the two housekeeping departments. The employees on the same level use horizontal communication when they communicate with each other. One of the employees in hotel 2 said she likes to make jokes and make the tone between her colleagues more casual. They would talk about private topics as well as work related topics. With the horizontal communication comes informal communication such as rumours. When it comes to the two hotels interviewed the employees in the housekeeping departments said that rumours and gossip happens almost daily. The employees would talk about each other, and tell stories they have heard from someone else. The manager in hotel 1 said that you get a lot of gossip and rumours going with so many female working in one place.

Both verbal and non-verbal communication were said to be used between the manager and employees in hotel 1 and hotel 2. Verbal communication is both oral and written messages (Jablin & Putnam, 2000). The managers in both the hotels said they try to use both oral and written messages to convey their messages. Moreover, they would use non-verbal communication such as facial gestures and body language to make it easier for the international employees to understand what they are trying to say (DeVito, 2001; Greenberg, 2005). When it comes to non-verbal communication and the clothes worn, the manager dressed more formally such as wearing a suit and the subordinates were wearing a more casual uniform. This is consistent with Rafaeli et al., (1997) who suggest that higher status people tend to dress more formally than lower-ranking employees.

Charlton and Huey (1992) and Spinks and Wells (1997) suggest that to improve the communication in an organisation, the management can decide to implement a cultural diversity program. Neither hotel 1 nor hotel 2 had implemented such programs. It had never been thought of but both the managers thought it could be an idea, and were willing to consider it.

## **5.5 Cross-cultural work environment**

Schneider and Barsoux (2003) state that cultural differences are expected abroad but at home it is often assumed that the foreigner will take the effort to adapt to our customs to fit in

with the dominant culture. The manager in hotel 1 expressed this view; she said that she thought the employees working in Norway should adjust to the Norwegian culture, and this was the reason why she would not take individual considerations to each culture's holidays. However, Schneider and Barsoux (2003) suggest that such view can alienate others, and fails to capitalise on the potential benefits of recognising diversity and the unsuspected value added.

The two facilities and service managers in the two hotels looked at in this study both said they used daily communication and showing interest in each employee to win respect from their staff. According to Quinn et al., (2007) these are ways to win respect from the employees. Quinn et al., (2007) states that to gain respect one also have to give respect - this can be a smile to the employees, short conversations, and showing they are appreciated. The facility and service manager in hotel 1 said she uses the morning meetings to have daily contact with all her subordinates. It was said that the meetings consist both of feedback and formal information, but she would also try to make the meeting informal so they could talk about fun things as well. Both the managers in hotel 1 and hotel 2 said that they thought showing the employees respect was important. They both thought it was important to smile and say hello to the employees when they for example meet in the hallway. The hotel 2, as mentioned earlier, would provide the staff with incentives such as ice cream or fruit baskets to show that they are appreciated on a busy day.

All the findings in this study should be treated with caution. As this is a qualitative study, the findings are only opinions and views of the employees and managers interviewed in this particular study. If there was a bigger or different population, the results and the comparison of the findings and the theory might look different.

## **5.6 Limitations**

One limitation in this study is the lack of Norwegian and English language skills of the interviewees. Norwegian or English often were the second language of the employees. Therefore, it was hard for some of them to be able to express themselves fully while answering the questions and it was hard for some of them to fully understand some of the questions asked in the interview. Moreover, the employees could choose if they wanted to be interviewed in Norwegian or English. The questions were therefore translated from Norwegian to English. The new questions in English might be understood differently or not be as open as the original or translated with a different meaning and that might affect the

answers. Because of the language problem, the interviewers had to try to reword the questions several times and sometimes the questions had to become a 'leading' question for the employees to understand what was meant by the questions, or we had to suggest answer alternatives and the interviewee said yes or no. As the questions in a qualitative interview should be open and unstructured and not leading, this might have affected the validity of the study.

Secondly, the time provided for this study was limited as there was a due date provided. Less than six months were given to complete the study, which is relatively short considering the amount of work that is involved in conducting research. Therefore only the most relevant theory is included and briefly explained, and limited amount of data is collected.

The third limitation of this study was knowledge limitation. The authors have limited experience regarding interviews, thesis design and analysis of qualitative data.

Another limitation is that only a small population is included in this study. Moreover, only females were interviewed as there were not many males working in the two housekeeping departments. None of the males were at work on the day the interviews were conducted. The study only looks at two hotels (because of the time and resource limitation), and therefore, comparisons with different hotels cannot be made. However, there are a large amount of similarities among the two. A guess can be made that the findings of this study could be something that is general for these types of working environments. However, further study is needed to confirm the findings. If there was a larger population, the result might be different and the findings could correlate more or less with the existing theory.

## 6 Conclusion

This study has tried to answer the research question “*How may the interaction between cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship influence the managing of conflicts in a cross-cultural working environment?*”

Choosing a theoretical framework for viewing conflict in organisations is neither easy nor obvious. The choice of a conflict management strategy by an organisation does not necessarily dictate the methods it uses to process disagreements or conflicts. The culture of a community or organisation consists of norms, expectations, and behaviours that reflect its core traditions and values. Thus, change in any organisation that rocks its fundamental routines, habits, and interaction patterns is difficult to implement. Few scholars would deny that communication is an essential feature of conflict. As Thomas and Pondy (1977, p. 1100, as cited in Putnam in Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006) noted in their review of conflict in organisations, “*It is communication with which we are most concerned in understanding conflict management*”. Communication shapes the very nature of conflict through the evolution of social interaction. When people are engaged in conflict, their communication is as much a function of the emotions they are experiencing as the arguments they are hearing or the situation they are facing (Putnam, as cited in Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006).

Many organisations in Norway have workers with other cultural background than Norwegian. With the different cultures and languages there are chances that communications problems, misunderstandings and conflicts occur. It is important that the organisations integrate the multicultural employees to prevent and manage conflict.

In this study it was found that language problems, misunderstandings and other communication problems because of the different cultures and original origin were named as the main reasons for disagreements and conflict in both of the hotels. Work processes and the way work is organised were also said to be reasons for disagreements or conflict arising in both the housekeeping departments looked at in this study. The managers in both of the hotels said that they are trying to resolve the problems as soon as they acknowledge them. This was said to be an effective tool in both the hotels, resolving small disagreements and misunderstandings while they are small have prevented them to become big problems. Conflict can occur because of differences between individuals’ opinions and values, demographic origins or because of inadequate communication, or even because of high levels of workload. It was indicated in this study that if disagreements or conflicts occurred, this was caused by work related issues and not personal or private issues.

From the findings in this paper it appears that the managers in the two hotels might use a mix of relations-oriented and task-oriented leader style. The managers appeared to be concerned with performing the tasks they were given and had responsibility for. However, from the interviews it did not seem that they relegated interpersonal relations in order to get these tasks completed. It appeared that they rather took advantage of good interpersonal relations to get the tasks completed, and create a good working environment to avoid conflicts within the department.

In this study it is suggested that effective communication, positive interaction between employees and employer, respecting the difference cultures in the organisation are factors which are important in integrating the multicultural employees. And in that way the factors are contributing in creating a good working environment. Having a good working environment and satisfied employees is a good starting point in preventing and managing conflict. All in all the findings in this study indicated that the employees in the housekeeping department in the two hotels looked at, are happy with their workplace and there is very little conflict. If there are any conflicts, these are normally misunderstanding or minor problems that get resolved by communication straight away before they evolve into big conflicts.

As mentioned earlier this is a qualitative paper with a small population and only limited amount of data collected. It is therefore difficult to suggest a concrete answer to the research question. Further research is needed to be able to generalise, confirm or reject the findings of this study.

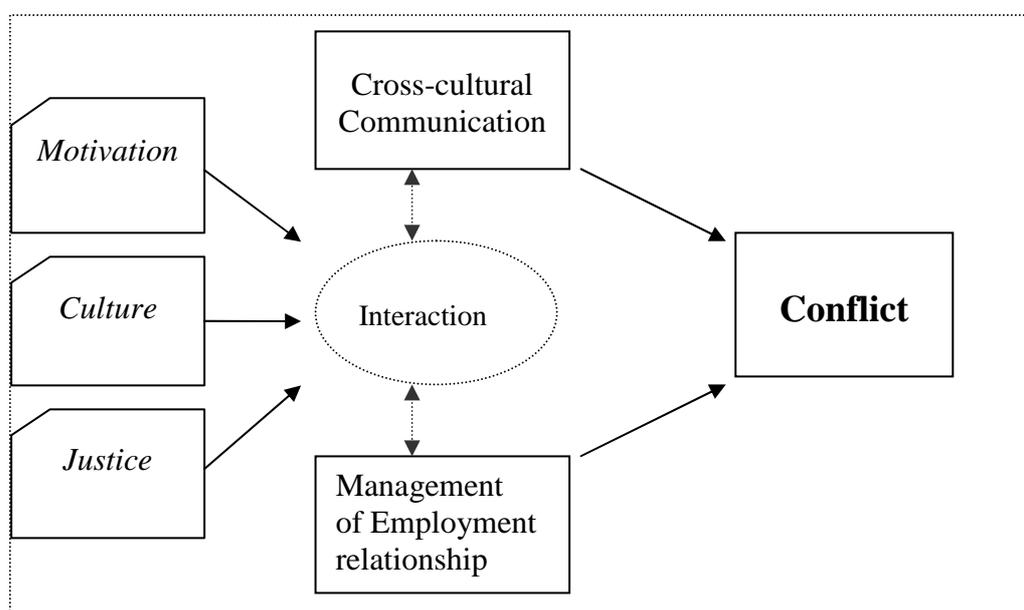
## **6.1 Future research**

To avoid the language problem and in order to create more validity in this study, further research on this subject should include interpreters while conducting the interview, so the respondents can speak their mother language. In that way misunderstandings can be avoided and it gives the respondents the opportunity to fully express themselves without the language barrier. Furthermore, it would be interesting to include other hotels in a similar study to see if the answers would correlate with the answers obtained in this study. Hotels outside Norway could also be interviewed, to see if the same views and opinions transfer outside the Norwegian border.

Finally, it could be interesting to use the findings from the present study, transforming it into a quantitative survey, with a random sample survey. This new research could be used to

see whether there is a consensus in the hotel industry concerning the findings in the present study. This method would also allow for generalising the findings to the service industry as a whole.

This paper is primarily research on conflict in cross-cultural working environments, and how cross-cultural communication, management of employment relationship influence conflict in such environment. A model can be drawn to give an overview of different factors and variables that was found to be important in this study, and to create a starting point for further research.



**Model 1:** Suggested conceptual framework for further research

This model predicts that cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship is the main factors in relation to conflict in a cross-cultural organisation. The model shows the different factors that will have significance on the conflict level within the organisation; cross-cultural communication and management of employment relationship. If the cross-cultural communication does not occur in the working environment it might lead to several problems and conflicts. Furthermore, it is predicted that management of the employment relationship has to take place to make the communication work within the organisation. A manager has to be a part of the working environment and make personnel policies or business guidelines for everyone within the department, and make sure that these are followed. The three important variables are found to be important in managing conflict and affect the factors in this study: motivation, culture and justice.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### E-mail sent to the facility and services managers previous to the interviews

Hei Jessica / Evy Karin

Viser til telefonsamtale i begynnelsen av april, og sender herved påminnelse om intervju som vi har avtalt til onsdag 29.april / Torsdag 30.april kl. 10.00.

Vi er to masterstudenter som studerer master i internasjonal hotell- og reiselivsledelse ved Norsk hotellhøgskole ved Universitetet i Stavanger.

Vår problemstilling i masteroppgaven er:

“Which opportunities do managers have to prevent conflicts in a cross-cultural environment?”

Spørsmålene som vi vil stille dere går derfor under overskriftene flerkulturelt miljø, konflikt, kommunikasjon og organisasjonskultur.

Vi takker på forhånd for at du tar deg tid til å snakke med oss. Dette vil bidra til et mer nøyaktig resultat av vår undersøkelse og vil hjelpe oss å fullføre masteroppgaven. All informasjon som blir gitt fra dere er konfidensiell, og vil bare bli diskutert mellom oss og vår veileder.

Det hadde vært fint om du kunne foreberede de ansatte ved husøkonomavdelingen som skal være på jobb den dagen at vi vil snakke med dem også.

Dersom du har noen spørsmål må du gjerne ta kontakt!

Trine Haraldsen - mob. 95176428

eller

Torunn Nordbø Thime - mob 45614361

Mvh,

Trine Haraldsen og Torunn Nordbø Thime

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview with facility and services manager (English version)**

#### **Questions to the manager:**

##### ***General questions:***

- 1.1) How many employees do you have in your department?
- 1.2) How many of the employees are of a foreign culture?
- 1.3) How many different nationalities are there in this department?
- 1.4) How many different cultures do you perceive in the department?
- 1.5) In what degree does this organisation have had any previous experience with multicultural cooperation?
- 1.6) Do you give the employees from the different cultures their culture's public holidays off from work?  
Why/why not?
- 1.8) What kind of languages are used when communicating within this department? (Written/ Oral)

#### **Main questions for the interview**

- 2.1) Describe a normal day of work?
- 2.2) What is done to create a multicultural work environment in the department?
- 2.3) Describe the work environment in this department?

Between the employees

Between you and the employees

#### ***Communication***

- 3.1) Describe how you communicate with each other in this department?

##### **Sub-questions:**

- 3a) Describe how you communicate with your employees?
- 3b) How do you communicate from culture to culture?
- 3c) How do you treat the different cultures when it comes to communication?
- 3d) How do you feel that communication works in the department?

Give examples:

### ***Conflict***

- 4.1) Do you experience conflict on your work place? In what way?
- 4.2) How does the conflict normally start in the department?

#### **Sub-questions:**

- 4a) What kind of conflicts is most common among the employees in the facilities and service department?
- 4b) Describe how you work with conflicts when or if they arise?
- 4c) Describe how communication works in these situations (such as the ones mentioned above)?
- 4d) Describe how you feel that the interaction between communication and relationship between management and employees have an impact on the management of conflict within the department?

### ***Management***

- 5.1) Describe what you think are the most important task as a manager?
- 5.2) How do you use the role as a manager to contribute to manage conflict?

#### **Sub-questions:**

- 5a) Describe the conflict management strategies that are being used in this department?  
Follow up question:  
Could you expand by describing this in the different types of situations? (or give examples)

### ***Organisation Culture***

- 6.1) Describe your relationship with your employees?
- 6.2) How would you build relationship with your employees?
- 6.3) How would you describe the organisation culture in this department?

#### **Sub-questions:**

- 6a) How are the different cultures integrated into the organisation culture?
- 6b) What do you do to motivate your employees?
- 6c) What do you as a manager do to maintain a good organisation culture?

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview with the employees (English version)**

#### **Questions to the employees:**

##### ***General questions***

- 1.1) Age:
- 1.2) Sex:
- 1.3) What kind of position do you have in this department?
- 1.4) For how long have you been working in this organisation?
- 1.5) What is your nationality

#### **Main questions for the interview**

- 2.1) Describe a normal day of work?
- 2.2) What is done to create a multicultural work environment in the department?
- 2.3) How would you describe the work environment in this department?

Between the employees

Between you and the employees

##### ***Communication***

- 3.1) Describe the communication in this department

##### **Sub-questions:**

- 3a) What language do you use when you are working?  
Between you and your manager?  
Between you and colleagues?
- 3b) How often do you have contact with your manager during a day at work?
- 3c) Describe your communication with your manager
- 3d) What are your expectations of a manager?
- 3e) How does the manager motivate you?
- 3f) Describe the way the manager communicates with you
- 3g) Describe the communication with your co-workers

## ***Conflict***

- 4.1) Have you experienced conflict in the workplace – in what way?
- 4.2) How do you think most conflicts start in this department?

### **Sub-questions:**

- 4a) What strategies does the department have to manage conflict?
- 4b) How do you experience the work environment in this department?

Between employees?

Between employees and the manager?

- 4c) What do you think the department could do to manage conflict in the future?

## ***Organisation culture***

- 5.1) Describe your relationship with the manager?
- 5.2) Describe your relationship with your colleagues?
- 5.3) Describe the organisation culture in this department?

### **Sub-questions:**

- 5a) What do you like about working here?
- 5b) In what way does the manager do to take considerations into the different cultures in the organisation?

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview with facility and services manager (Norwegian version)**

#### **Spørsmål til leder:**

##### ***Generelle spørsmål:***

- 1.1) Hvor mange ansatte har du under deg?
- 1.2) Hvordan mange ansatte har en fremmedkulturell bakgrunn?
- 1.3) Hvor mange ulike nasjonaliteter er det i avdelingen?
- 1.4) Hvor mange forskjellige kulturer ser du som ulike i avdelingen?
- 1.5) I hvilken grad har organisasjonen tidligere erfaring fra ansatte med flerkulturell bakgrunn?
- 1.7) Tar du spesielt hensyn til religiøse helligdager av annen kultur (fri på deres kulturs' helligdager)?  
Hvorfor/Hvorfor ikke?
- 1.8) Hvilke språk er brukt når dere kommuniserer i denne avdelingen? (skriftlig og muntlig)

#### **Hovedspørsmål for intervju**

- 2.1) Beskriv en normal arbeidsdag?
- 2.2) Hva gjøres for å skape et flerkulturelt arbeidsmiljø i denne avdelingen?
- 2.3) Beskrive arbeidsmiljøet i denne avdelingen  
Mellom ansatte:  
Mellom deg og de ansatte:

#### ***Kommunikasjon***

- 3.1 Beskriv hvordan dere kommuniserer med hverandre i denne avdelingen?

##### **Delspørsmål:**

- 3a) Beskriv hvordan du kommuniserer med dine ansatte?
- 3b) Hvordan kommuniserer du fra kultur til kultur?
- 3c) Hvordan behandler du de forskjellige kulturene når det gjelder kommunikasjon?
- 3d) Hvordan føler du at kommunikasjonen fungerer i denne avdelingen?  
Gi eksempler:
- 3e) Hva kan gjøres for å forbedre kommunikasjonen i avdelingen?

## ***Konflikt***

- 4.1) Opplever du/dere konflikt på denne avdelingen? På hvilken måte?
- 4.2) Hvordan oppstår konfliktene som regel?

### **Delspørsmål:**

- 4a) Hvilke typer konflikt er mest vanlig mellom de ansatte i avdelingen?
- 4b) Beskriv hvordan du behandler konfliktene når/dersom de oppstår?
- 4c) Beskriv hvordan kommunikasjonen fungerer i situasjoner som dette?
- 4d) Beskrive i hvilke grad du føler at samspill mellom kommunikasjon og forholdet mellom leder og ansatt er med på å styre konflikt nivå.

## ***Ledelse***

- 5.1) Beskriv hva du syns er den mest viktige oppgaven som leder
- 5.2) Hvordan bruker du rollen din som leder til å være med styre konflikt nivået?

### **Delspørsmål:**

- 5a) Beskriv konfliktstyrings strategier som blir brukt i avdelingen  
Oppfølgingsspørsmål:  
Kan du utdype dette ved å beskrive dette i forskjellige typer situasjoner (gi eksempler)?
- 5b) Mener du det er viktig med språkkurs tilbud og praktisering av norsk for å integrere dine ansatte med flerkulturell bakgrunn? I så fall hvorfor? Har dere slike tiltak på denne arbeidsplassen?

## ***Organisasjons kultur***

- 6.1) Beskriv forholdet ditt med dine ansatte?
- 6.2) Hvordan vil du bygge opp forhold med dine ansatte?
- 6.3) Beskriv organisasjonskulturen i denne avdelingen?

### **Delspørsmål:**

- 6a) Hvordan samkjører du de ulike kulturene til de ansatte, slik at de får en felles arbeidskultur?
- 6b) Hvordan motiverer du de ansatte?
- 6e) Hva gjør du som leder for å ivareta en bra organisasjonskultur?

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview with the employees (Norwegian version)**

#### **Spørsmål til ansatte:**

##### ***Generelle spørsmål:***

- 1.6) Alder:
- 1.7) Skjønn:
- 1.8) Hvilke stilling har du:
- 1.9) Hvor lenge har du jobbet i bedriften?
- 1.10) Hvilket land kommer du fra?

#### **Hovedspørsmål for intervju**

- 2.1) Beskriv en normal arbeidsdag?
- 2.2) Hva gjøres for å skape et flerkulturelt arbeidsmiljø i denne avdelingen?
- 2.3) Hvordan vil du beskrive arbeidsmiljøet i denne avdelingen mellom ansatte:

mellom deg og de ansatte:

#### ***Kommunikasjon:***

- 3.1) Beskriv kommunikasjons bruken i avdelingen?

#### **Delspørsmål:**

- 3a) Hvilket språk bruker du når du er på jobb?

Mellom deg og din leder?

Mellom deg og dine kollegaer?

- 3b) Hvor ofte har du kontakt med din leder i løpet av en dag?
- 3c) Beskriv hvordan du kommuniserer med din leder?
- 3d) Hva er dine forventinger til en leder?
- 3e) Hvordan motiverer lederen din deg?

- 3f) Beskriv måten lederen din kommuniserer med deg
- 3g) Beskriv hvordan du kommuniserer med dine kollegaer
- 3h) Hvordan mener du at du og dine kollegaer og lederen din kan kommunisere annerledes for at alle skal forstå hverandre bedre?
- 3i) Hva kan gjøres for å forbedre forholdet/samspeillet du har mellom deg og din leder?

### ***Konflikt:***

- 4.1) Har du opplevd konflikt på denne avdelingen? På hvilken måte?
- 4.2) Hvordan oppstår konfliktene som regel?

### **Delspørsmål:**

- 4a) Hvilke strategier har avdelingen for å styre konflikt?
- 4b) Hvordan opplever du arbeidsmiljøet i avdelingen?

Mellom ansatte?

Mellom ansatte og leder?

- 4c) Hva synes du avdelingen kan gjøre for å styre konflikt i fremtiden?

### ***Organisasjonskultur:***

- 5.1) Beskriv forholdet ditt til din leder?
- 5.2) Beskriv forholdet ditt til dine kollegaer?
- 5.3) Beskriv organisasjonskulturen i denne avdelingen?
- 5.4) På hvilken måte føler du at organisasjonskulturen er med på å bidra til å forebygge konflikt?

### **Delspørsmål:**

- 5a) Hva liker du ved å jobbe her?
- 5b) På hvilke måte tar lederen din hensyn til de forskjellige kulturene her på avdelingen?