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Role of Organization Culture on Kuwait's Construction Industry Management: An Employee Perspective

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ABSTRACT
Many of stakeholders in construction projects make the construction industry prone to disputes. Communication breakdown, frequently, is the first sign of problems, notably in the relationship between the Contractor and the Consultant. Where, the construction industry in Kuwait is increasing due to market needs, large number of private and public construction projects. The high demands in the market have led to a competition in the construction market. Organization culture has become one of the construction strategies plan to enhance organization management performance and productivity. This present work investigated and analysed the role and impact of organization culture on Kuwaiti construction organization management. This paper represents the first research on this area and contributed to explore and identify cultural-chractersitics that play a role on construction management.
*Keywords***:** organizational culture, Construction industry, Kuwait.

I. INTRODUCTION

The common mode of procuring construction projects in Kuwait as well as many other countries could be explained using a model termed 'tripartite system'. The main three parties in a construction project are the Employer, the Consultant and the Contractor whose mutual responsibilities are defined by contractual and professional obligations. The formal nature of this relationship dates back to a long time in Kuwait, and is regarded by its practitioners as the key to prudent project implementation in a market economy. It is designed to secure value for money through commercial competition, while protecting the legitimate interests of public finance and all concerned.

The relationships between the Employer-Consultant and the Employer-Contractor are governed by a formal contract. However, the Consultant-Contractor relationship is only a functional relationship which does not have contractual implications. This historical separation of design and construction is well documented and considered as a prime cause for problems encountered in the construction industry (Egan, 1998; Bennett et al., 1996; Seymour and Rooke, 1995; Latham, 1994).

Kuwait's construction industry has expanded and developed after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. There are several factors that have contributed to increase in number of construction organizations in Kuwait and increase in number of projects in Kuwait. These factors can be summarised

in the following; (i) there is a large number of State construction buildings destroyed during the Iraqi invasion, the State is still in the re-building process to its infrastructure. (ii) There are a high needs and demands in the private and public construction market. This includes large, medium and small construction projects. (iii) The sharp increase in oil industry and relatively low State population has led to high revenue that can be invested in the State construction process and (iv) Kuwaiti authority commitment towards the Kuwaiti people by meeting their need and satisfaction through improving the quality of living environment.

1.1. National and Organization Culture

One of the first steps in understating role of culture on organization is to identify appropriate and clear definition of culture. The literature survey provides several definitions of culture and culture organization. The definition usually reflects the scholar own background, discipline and understanding. Organizational culture is identified as collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organization from another (Hofstede, 1980). There is no doubt that different organizations develop different cultures. Sometimes it is fragmented and difficult to read from outside. Clan culture is in the upper-left quadrant of the figure. It values emphasizing openness, participation and discussion. The objective is to get everyone involved in activities and decisions of the organizations. Members of the organization have a

concern for other members and the organization has a commitment to its members and their morale. Rewards are based upon group and organizational performance rather than individual performance. The organization comes before the individual, who is a member of a team committed to the advancement of the organization. The Clan emphasizes flexibility and individual differences. It is characterized by teamwork and information sharing. The main characteristics of the role power culture are formal and functional culture with limit space for the staff to take decisions at their own working area.

1.2. Role of Communication in Organization Culture

One of the main investigation is to investigate how the organization values and norms influenced by other cultures. This can be understood in how values and norms cross the boundary of the culture and how influence the culture. Communication in the organization represents a complex system of the flow of information, orders, wishes and references made out of two partially complementary systems: formal communication network and informal communication network (Fox 2001). Communication is vital to the effective implementation of organizational change (Lewis and Seibold, 1998). The general importance of communication during planned change has already been empirically demonstrated and generally agreed among practitioners (Lewis, 2003). Poorly managed change communication results in rumours and resistance to change, exaggerating the negative aspects of the change (DiFonzo et al., 1994)

1.3. Construction Industry Management Cultural

The common observed in construction industry is still using of traditional communication system. This is part of the cultural issues that needs to be changes to cope with pressure to improve performance and delivering project on time; the common example is the receipt of drawings to be confirmed in writing (Alshawi and Ingirige, 2003). The industry still uses hard copy documentation in communication and records (Deng et al., 2001)

1.4. Cultures for Change

One of the major questions that can be raised is how to change organization culture. The literature does not have a straight answer in how to change organization culture. There is a research expressed the need of not to stress too much in organization culture. Wilson and Rosenfeld (1990) stated the pervasive nature of organizational culture

cannot be stressed too much. It is likely to be affecting virtually all aspects of organizational life. In the other hand there is a large number of publications that emphasises the important and role of organization culture on organization performance. Schwartz and Davis (1981) stated the culture is capable of blunting or significantly altering the intended impact of even well-thought-out changes in an organization.

1.5 Leadership in Construction Management

Leadership has become one of the main factors in organization success. Organization today needs appropriate and competence leadership to ensure its success in a competitive in the market. There are several leadership characteristics related to cultural beside the personal characteristics. These may include the leadership vision, motivation skills, good decision making, ready to change in what they believe is right to the organization. In the other hand, Gregory et al. (2009) argued that there a few empirical studies to support the argument of that organizational culture influences firm effectiveness. They believed this assumption mainly implicitly on held by the organization mangers and management researchers.

1.6. Problem Statement

As a result of population increase as well as increase in number of construction projects in Kuwait and high demands in the market has led to competition in the construction market.   The competition in the construction market and the high demands of high quality projects led to pressure on the construction organizations to improve its performance to stay competitive and successful market. Also, organizational culture plays an important role in promoting organizational performance and sustaining a durable competitive advantage.

1.7. Importance of Study

The importance of this case study stems from the following perceptions: (i) Kuwaiti construction market has become competitive due to entrance of several construction organizations to the market Lack of Research in the project area, (ii) As far as the author aware, there is a lack of studies in the area of role and impact of organization culture on the Kuwaiti construction organizations, (iii) National and organizational culture of the construction industry has become raised as important factors for organization performance, (iv) Culture is perceived as the engine which powers the organization.

1.8 Research Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this research is to investigate and explore organizational culture factors on Kuwaiti construction organizations management performance. The present work needs to achieve through completing the following objectives. (i) To explore role and impact of Kuwaiti national culture on the construction organizations performance. (ii) To investigate construction organization main working values and norms and their role in managing construction projects. (iii) To investigate leadership and management style in the construction organizations and their role on organization performance. (iv) To explore the main drives for organization change (v) To provide recommendations and suggestion to construction organizations authority to improve construction projects management through promoting productive organization culture.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a case study approach in construction companies employees were surveyed. According to Leithwood and Musella (1991), the best environment for knowing the culture of an organization is the case study. Thus, case studies represent the methodology, which is located in the analysis of the advantages of a cultural focus for the understanding of an institution. The use of survey strategy in this research is help in providing quantitative and qualitative data for describing the research subject trends, perception and attitudes towards the research main issues.

2.1. Selecting Appropriate Research Strategy

One of the main steps in the research process is to identify the appropriate strategy. Yin (2002) explored five different research strategies. These strategies are experiment strategy, case study, survey strategy, archival research and historical research strategy. After careful consideration survey strategy is the most appropriate strategy for this research. This is mainly due to the nature of the research. Survey strategy can be defined as system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour (Fink, 2003).

2.2. Data Collection Methods

The present work adopts on mix methods; multiple methods and approach in collecting the research data. This type of approach helps in providing data and information from different resources to achieve the research aim and objectives, answering the research main questions (Denscombe1998, Sekaran 1992). The mixed approach used in this work includes qualitative and quantitative data. As described earlier, the Competing Value Framework, developed by Quinn and Cameron was used as a model for measurement of organizational culture. The focus of the research was on entire construction companies. The sample was selected with the aim of representing all types of consultant and contractor organizations who are engaged in construction work. Hence, selection ranged from small scale to multi-disciplinary construction organizations.

2.3. Quantitative Data

Quantitative data is needed in this research in order to provide a numerical data to investigate and analyse the Kuwaiti construction industry opinions, perceptions and attitudes towards the role and impact of culture on the organization management performance. This type of data can be used to survey a large number of the construction industry population.

2.3.1. Semi-structured Questionnaire

Semi-structured questionnaire used in this research because the questionnaire can survey a large number of subjects, relatively cheap to carry out, can be carried out at a reasonable time and effort. Completing the questionnaire can be completed by the participant own convenient time, date and place.

2.3.2. Questionnaire Design

This research designed a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 1). The questionnaire designed for the Kuwaiti construction industry to identify the industry opinion and perception towards the role and impact of culture on the organization management performance. Both open-ended and closed ended questions used in this questionnaire design. This needed to get the benefits of the two types of questioning. In the other hand, the closed-ended questions to direct the participants towards specific issues, (Frazer and Lawley 2000,) the questionnaire designed to four sections with set of questions to each section.

Section A	Personal Details
Section B	Leadership Style in the Organization Management
Section C	Organization Culture
Section D	National Culture

2.3.3. Questionnaire Distribution

The designed questionnaire (Appendix 1) will be distributed to the three selected Kuwaiti construction organizations. The questionnaire will be distributed with the self-addressed envelope for the questionnaire returns.   The questionnaire will be distributed in person with the help and support the three organizations.

2.4. Qualitative Data

Qualitative data is necessary in this research in order to provide in-depth information and explanation in the research main objectives. This is critical in this research due to the nature of the work topic, cultural issues. Face-to-face interview will use semi-structured interview approach.   Structured interviews is not appropriate in this project due to the need to give the interviewees the opportunity to explore their opinions and perception towards the cultural issues freely based on their experience, knowledge and understanding and collect statements from the interviewees opinions and perceptions (Drever, 2003).

2.5. Research Sample
2.5.1. Semi-structured Sample

It is important and critical to select appropriate sample process to ensure reliability of the data and avoiding any error in the data collection process. These samples include simple random sample, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and clustered sampling, (Robertson and Dearling 2004). Simple random sampling in this research by giving all the selected organizations subjects equal chance to select and the sample selected to the homogenous populations of the three selected organizations. Forty subjects selected from each organization to make a total of the research sample of 120 (Table 1)

Table 1: Semi-structured questionnaire sample

	Organization	Sample	Position
Semi-Structured Interviews	Kuwait Arab Contractors	40	Project Managers Managers Administrators Engineers
	Al-Kharfi Group	40	Project Managers Managers Administrators Engineers
	Gulf Spic General Trading Contracting Company	40	Project Managers Managers Administrators Engineers
Total		**120**	

2.5.2. Interview Sample

A semi-structured interview designed in this research aiming to explore and discuss key management subjects in Kuwaiti's construction industry opinions and perceptions towards the role and impact of culture on the construction industry management performance. One senior manager selected from each selected organization. The total number of the interviews is three subjects. The low number of interviewees is mainly due to lack of time available to carry more interviews. Table 2 shows the semi-structures interviews sample, selected organizations, sample of the interview and position of the selected interviewee. The three construction organizations were selected due to the organizations size, establishment in the Kuwaiti and international market

Table 2: Interviews Samples

	Organization	Sample Size	Position of the interviewee
Semi-Structured Interviews	Organization 1	1	Project Manager
	Organization 2	1	Project Manager
	Organization 3	1	Project Manager
Total		**3**	

2.6. Pilot Study

The designed questionnaire, questionnaire distribution and analysis take time and effort. It also has financial cost. Therefore it is important and critical the questionnaire design tested and evaluated well before the actual distribution to the research population. Therefore it is critical and important to carry a pilot in this work. One of the main purposes of the pilot study is to ensure the appropriate of the questionnaire wording. In this work a sample from within the Kuwaiti's construction industry selected to participate in the pilot study. Table 3 shows the main sample for the pilot study. Two subjects from construction industry, project managers, selected for the pilot study as the interview targeting the construction industry senior managers.

Table 3: Project pilot study sample size and justifications

	Sample Size	Targeted Sample	Reasons
Semi-structured questionnaire	5	Kuwaiti subjects from construction industry	To en sure wording and structure of the semis-structured interviews
Semi-structure Interviews	2	Project managers from Kuwaiti construction industry	To en sure wording and structure of the semis-structured interviews

2.7. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows, release 15 (Chicago, IL. USA). Different statistical tests will be used based on the main variables of the questionnaire design.   This is including frequency, cross tapping, standard deviation, Chi square tests. The qualitative data, semi-structured interviews will be analysed manually based on the project issues.

III.   QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire distributed to the construction companies in Kuwait to analyse the role of orgnisation culture on the Kuwiti construction management.

3.1.1 Sample Subjects

The three companies that have thes atregories are Al-Kharfi Group, Kuwait Arab Contractors and Gulf Spic General Trading Contracting Company. The questionnaire distributed to three companies equally, 40 questionnairee for each company. Number of responses are presented in **Table 4.** The total number of the questionnaire distributed to the three companies was 120. The total number of valid returned questionnaire wa 95 completed questionaire.

Table 4: Surveyed organizations

Organization	Sample	Response	%
Al-Kharfi Group	40	37	92.5%
Kuwait Arab Contractors	40	34	85%
Gulf Spic General Trading Contracting Company	40	24	60%
Total	120	95	

The questionnaire distributed to all the disciplines in the companies. This is due to fact all discipline contribute to the organization culture of the company. **Figure 1** shows number of responses for each diesoline. The majority of the responses are administrators (38 out of 95) followed by engineers (21 out of 95). Only 7 out of 95 were senior managers. The vast majority of the respondents' years of experience have more than 10 years' experience (11-12 years) 64 out of 95 of the respondents (**Figure 2**).
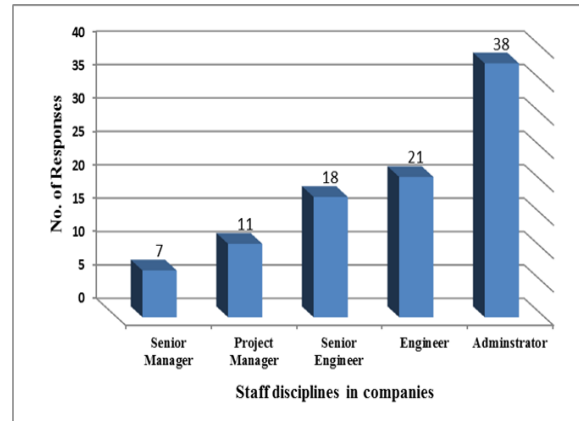

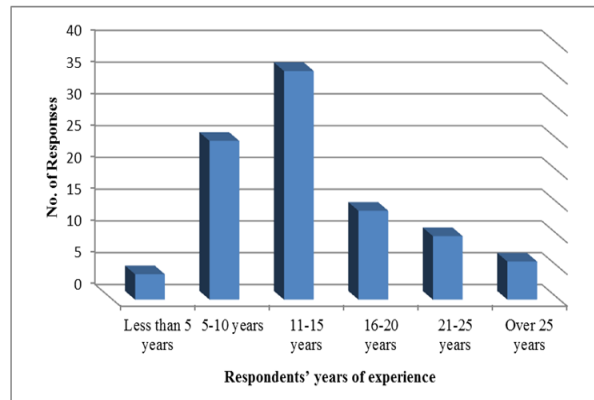**Figure 1:** Surveyed staff discipline

Figure 2: Respondents experience

3.1.2 Role of the Employees in Management

The three survey construction companies asked to express their views on the statement Organization takes the employee ideas and input on upcoming plans and projects. **Figure 3** shows that the majority (60%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement with only 21% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statement and 19% were neutral for Employees idea in planning. While in Employees vision on their jops, the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed was (73%) with the statement with only 13% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statement and 14% were neutral.
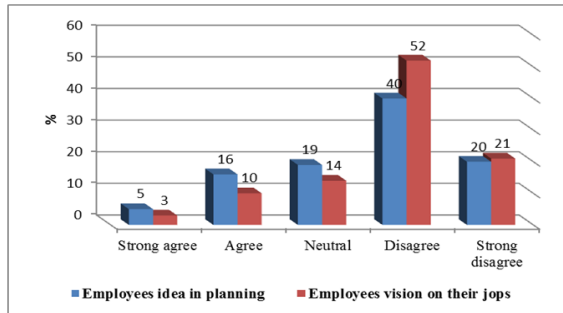
Figure 3: Construction management and employees views.

This indicates that the construction industry is not involving their employees on their planning. Involvement of the employees is critical in construction industry due to the competition in the market and the views of the employees are important on the employees' individual performance and this will be reflected on the construction projects success. The other issue raised and asked the construction industry was whether the construction industry takes group vote on what to do next part of the organization leadership style.

3.1.3 Organization Leadership Characteristics (Sharing Power)

One of the important characteristic of organization is their vision and opinion in sharing power with the employees. This is need to make the employees feel that they are part of the organization and play role in the organization decision making process within the organization. **Figure 4** shows the Kuwaiti construction organization responses towards the Organization share power with employees and Organization delegates tasks in order to implement a new procedure or process." statements. The majority of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed for both statements 50% for delegates tasks and 67% for sharing power sharing power and only 33% strongly agreed or agreed with first statement and only 26% strongly agreed or agreed with the second statement.
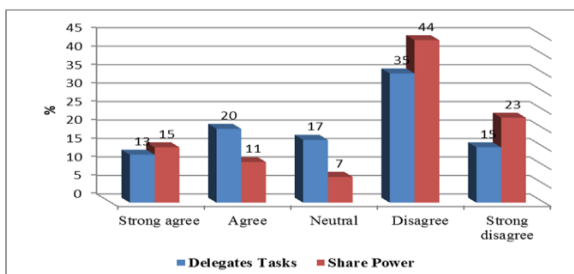

Figure 4: Construction delegates management tasks and share power with their employees.

3.1.4 Role of National Culture on Construction Management Leadership

The present work investigates the role of national culture on construction management leadership. The vast majority (two-third) of the respondents (70%) and (60%) strongly agreed and agreed and 19% and 25% of the respondents in national culture leadership and national culture decision making respectively with 11% and 15% were neutral. This explored the role of national culture of the leadership style and behaviour within the organization. This can be observed and practice within the organizations management activities.
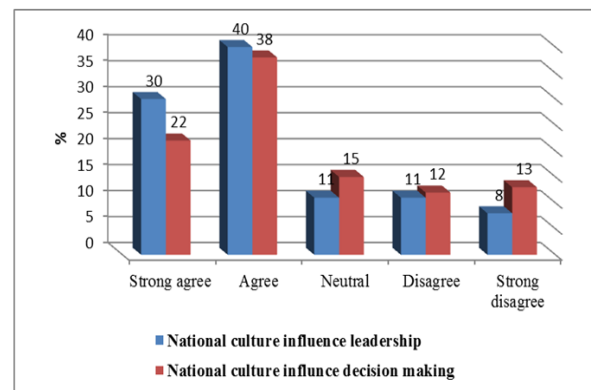

Figure 5: Role of national culture on leadership.

3.1.5 Role of Communication System

The organization use effective communication system to enhance knowledge sharing. Communication is an appropriate tool that can be used to enhance knowledge sharing. **Figure 8** shows that the vast majority of the respondents 60% of the respondents strongly disagreed/disagreed that organization use effective communication system to enhance knowledge sharing and 27%, of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed and only 13% were neutral on the statement.
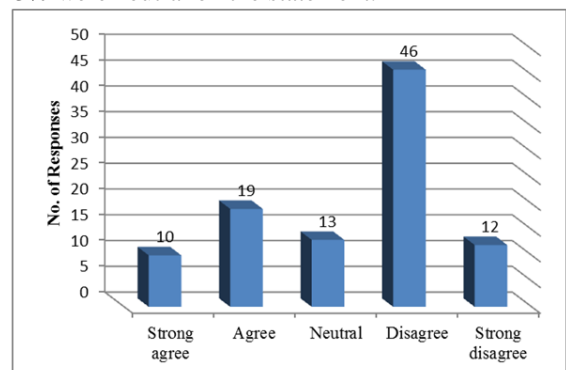

Figure 6: Effective communication system to enhance knowledge sharing

3.1.6 Role of Social on The organization Culture

Data presented in **Figure 11** indicates that the vast majority, 71%, of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Employees social interaction has helped to improve project performance with 20% strongly disagreed with the statement and only 9% were neutral toward the statement. Construction industry is also asked regarding the social problems of the groups within the organization play a role in the organization management. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 45%, with 36% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, and only 9% were neutral.
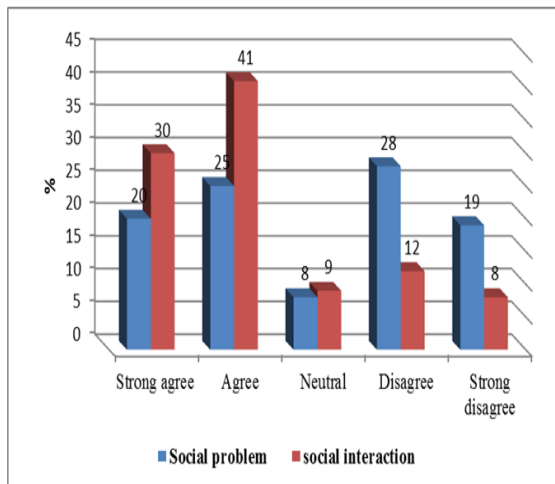

Figure 7: Role of national culture on construction management

3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

This section presents the qualitative data, namely of the semis-structured interviewed carried out with key personnel of the Kuwaiti construction industry.

3.2.1 Leadership in Kuwaiti Construction Management

The interviewees stated lack of any process within the construction organization processes and procedures that take in consideration to share power especially at their own working area such as on site activities. This issue has been explored by several interviewees.

One of the interviewee stated: The Company lacks process for sharing power with the company's employees. I have not seen or heard about any process (**Company C**)

One of the interviewee stated this issue clearly: The power within our company is centralised with no real power shared with the employees. All the instructions, decisions' come from the top management (**Company A**).

The growth and development came through the right vision and belief of the leadership and their prediction and the need of market and identifying the main competitors in Kuwaiti, Arabian Gulf states and the region.

Role of Kuwaiti National Culture on Organization Leadership management

The interviewees stated that the Kuwaiti national culture observed on the leadership management approach. This observed on their decision making, organization mission and preferred interaction with employees in motivation process.

One of the interviewees stated: The Kuwaiti culture can be observed and identified in the organization leadership. The leadership style is Influenced the leadership decision making, organization mission and preferred interaction with the employees in motivation process. (**Company A**)

The organization lacks any processes or procedures for promoting working values and norms within the organizations. It mainly based on the employees initiative (**Company B**)

The interviewees indicated that the organization management are not aware the importance and role of organization culture on the company's performance and productivity.

I can stress that the company's management are not aware the importance and role of the organization culture on the company's performance and productivity (**Company A**)

Role of Technology on Organization Culture

The first outcomes of the interviews regarding role of technology on promoting organization is the positive and awareness of the constructions industry toward use of technology.

One of the interviewees stated this role by stating: The technology is critical and important in creating productive and homogenous organization culture. Technology needs to be used as a tool in developing organization culture (**Company A**)

One of the interviewee stated: Technology can be used to promote trust and understanding between the organization leadership and the employees as well as between the organization employees. The technology also can used to share knowledge (**Company B**)

Despite the company pressed for use of technology as the main tool for compunction processes throughout of the company, the company is

still using the traditional communication, use of papers in communication (**Company C**).

One of the interviewees explored this issue by stating: I believe the company's management behaviour clear reflects the Kuwaiti culture. This is clear on their decision making and management style (**Company A**).

IV.   DISCUSSIONS

One of the main objectives of this project is to identify the main drives for cultural change in the Kuwaiti construction cultural change. This is needed to help in providing a practical solution for the current organization cultural situation. The research explored several drives for cultural changes in Kuwaitis construction industry.

1. Main Drives for Organizational Cultural Change

The field work visit and data analysis indicated that the Kuwaiti construction industry has a large number of employees with different cultural backgrounds. This has created several cultural groups within the organization with their own working cultural values and norms. Therefore multi-cultural employees' backgrounds represent an important cultural drive for a change in the organization management culture.

One of the main characteristics of Kuwait construction industry is the lack of national manpower. This has led to use several languages among the employees within the organization working environment. It explored in the interviews the different languages used in the working environment is one of the problems for instruction and flow of information.   It identified the management workload distribution and teams' structure did not take the language problem in consideration.

The current communication systems used in the construction industry is traditional. There is a need to use modern technology such as mobile technology in communication and management. The communication systems in industry are facing two challenges for change. The first is the employees challenge. The employees come from different cultural communication background, usually traditional based on papers and verbal communications. This type of system takes time and inefficient in the current construction market.

The construction organizations need to change their internal processes and procedures to reflect the changes in the organization. The surveyed organizations have several processes and procedures

on and off sites need to be considered for change. This includes flow of the construction material flow from the organization stores to the site. Flow of the machines and equipment to the site procedures needs to be changes in a way to ensure on time delivery to the sites without any delay to eliminate any wastes on site waiting for the equipment and to the construction materials.

2. Suggestion for Organizations Cultural Change

Lean thinking is one of the tools that has been used widely in various industries such as manufacturing industry, health services (Miller, 2007; Green; Leslie, M., et al,   (2006) and management.   The lean thinking principle evolved initially from Henry Ford production system in United Stated in 1900s. The critical element of lean thinking is the employees' role in eliminating wastes from the construction industry processes. The wastes include overproduction, transportation, motion, waiting, processing, inventory and defects.   The success of lean implementation is role of the employees in the implementation process (McCarron 2006).

The construction managements need to promote informal social interaction to help and enhance understanding among the employees. Informal social interaction needs to be promoted through creating the appropriate environment such as the lunch time break and tea time break as examples. In informal environment, employees will be more relaxed and willing to interact.   This type of interaction helps in knowledge sharing. Formal interaction can be achieved through formal meetings and seminars. These meetings and seminars help in promoting understanding and trust among the employees and between the employees and the management.

There is a need to shift towards use of the modern communication technology such as the mobile technology, on and off site video conferencing throughout the organization to replace the current traditional communication system. This helps in solving on-site technical and management problems as well as helps in planning and design processes. Currently, the discussions require transporting different people from different locations to contribute on the discussions. This is usually inappropriate and takes time and expensive.

There is a feeling that the organizations needs to change their management responsibilities and give more power to the staff as one of the interviewees stressed "Our organization needs to give more power to staff to help making decision at their

working area". Giving more power to the staff helps making the organization employees feel more part of the organization and its decision making process. It can be argued that due to the individual laser culture. One of the interviewees expressed this as part of the Kuwaiti culture keeping him/her in touch with every single decision. Palmer et al., 2006 stated that many organizations, employee are the biggest item of cost and potentially the biggest cause of bottleneck in responding rapidly to environmental change.

The organization leadership needs to have vision in reading the current and future construction market in Kuwait, regionally in the Arabian Gulf States and internationally. The research has shown evidence that the three surveyed construction organizations have clear vision on the current construction competitors. Adair (1990) argued that "leadership and motivation are like brother and sister. It is difficult to think of a leader who does not motivate others. It can be argued that the leaderships of the three organizations are great motivators to their staff.   This has been identified in three main areas. The first one is the organization leadership leading by example. One of the characteristics identified is the Kuwaiti construction leadership are brave in decision-making. This decision making ability may have influenced by the current surveyed construction leadership.

V.   CONCLUSIONS

It is important and critical for the Kuwaiti construction industry management to consider and take appropriate actions towards creating homogenous and productive culture based on the organizations vision. There is no agreement on a single definition, concepts and characteristics of organization culture.   However, there is solid evidence in the literature organization culture plays an important role in the organization management strategy and performance. Main drives for organizational cultural change: (i) construction organizations have multi-cultural employees; the employees have different national culture, different working values and norms. (ii) The employees communicate with different languages led to create sub-culture within the organization culture. (iii) Traditional Communication systems: The current communication culture need to change to improve communication among the employees and between the management and employees. This is critical as the organizations have several projects at different locations and lack of Effective Use of Employees Tacit Knowledge

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