

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides details about the research methodology used in this study. Here, the variables are defined in a more systematic way. After that, a description of the population and sample size of the study are given. Onwards, the chapter shares the interview questions and data found. Towards the end of this chapter, a discussion of the validity, limitations, and ethical considerations of this study is shown. Table 8 summarizes the variables.

3.2 Research Design

This research attempts to explore cultural diversity and its impact on organizational performances, and therefore, for a more concrete measurement of the results, qualitative research will be used. The interest here is to explore the relationship between various variables, namely, the determinants, of cultural diversity and organizational performance. The characteristics of these variables are defined on Table 8.

Table 8 - Summary of Major Components of Organizational Workforce

Homogeneous Organizations	Heterogeneous Organizations
Employees share similar:	Employees have differ in terms of:
- Gender;	- Gender;
- Background;	- Background;
- Age;	- Age;
- Nationality;	- Nationality;

3.2.1 Research Strategy: A Qualitative Analysis

In this section, the research method is outlined, and a brief description of the organizations that are the objects of this thesis is provided. In addition, a discussion about the validity and limitations of the research will be given. Primary data will be collected throughout the use of a qualitative research approach.

The reasons why the researcher chose to conduct a qualitative research are: the logic informing qualitative research designs is often inductive, which affects how specific and complete the research design and process will be (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The qualitative researcher's task often consists of describing and understanding people and groups' particular situations, experiences, and meanings before developing and/or testing more general theories and explanations. Secondly, qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The qualitative method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, when (Cooper & Schindler, 2006) Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed, rather than large samples. Thirdly, qualitative research designs are often emergent and quite dynamic (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The researcher and research subjects, their relationship, and the research setting are all subject to development and change. Not all aspects of the design can be managed or controlled by the researcher.

3.2.2 Qualitative Approach: Strengths and Weaknesses

Qualitative methods provide results that are usually rich and detailed, offering many ideas and concepts to inform the researcher. Qualitative methods can tell you how people feel and what they think about a certain aspect. There are various research methods available to researchers for data collection. Babbie (Babbie, 1992) says that qualitative methods are especially appropriate to topics that appear to defy simple quantification and for which attitudes and behaviors can best be understood within their natural setting. Modes of qualitative research include case studies, grounded theory, action research, and autographic research. This proposal consists of a mix of grounded theory and case studies which were put together to make a basis of the literature review.

Due to the complex nature of the research topic, as well as the research objective, which is to prove the relationship among the variables, the researcher has adopted the qualitative method. The advantages of a qualitative research include:

- a) It explores topics in more depth and detailed than quantitative research.
- b) It offers flexibility as far as location and timing, as there is no need to interview a large number of people.

c) Flexible to the extent that the research design can be modified at any time, thereby permitting the research to follow intuitive paths (Babbie, 1992).

Among the weaknesses, it was found that:

a) Some contend seldom yield precise descriptive statements about a large population (Babbie, 1992).

b) Conclusions are often regarded as suggestive rather than definitive due to a certain reliability and generalizability problems (Babbie, 1992). The overall implication is that qualitative research, in general, is difficult to replicate, making generalizations non-applicable to other settings (Babbie, 1992).

c) Studies based on fieldwork techniques may also suffer from the biases of the researcher in terms of recording observations, data analysis, and sampling (Babbie, 1992).

Within the social sciences, anthropologist and ethnographers are particularly associated with the qualitative methods discussed and have contributed to their developments legitimate scientific techniques (Babbie, 1992). This approach was chosen due to its strength in giving the researcher a comprehensive perspective and an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon. Furthermore, field research is especially appropriate to the study of social processes and reveal what would not otherwise be apparent (Babbie, 1992). According to Edwards (Edwards, 1995), qualitative research can generate generalizable knowledge about the employer-employee relationship within organizational structures. And most important, the value of qualitative research is that it is frequently a theory-generating activity (Babbie, 1992).

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study is the foreign-owned export companies in Chiang Mai. The sample was chosen from the researcher's knowledge of each company: the sample is composed of three foreign-owned export companies within The Chiang Mai Metropolitan Area with at least one employee being from a country other than Thailand. One manager from each company was interviewed (either Human Resources or General Manager). The researcher was aware of the existence of each one of the three companies and also was aware of the fact that each company fit the proposed population for the study. Therefore, each company was chosen based on the fact that it fits the criteria of the population of the study.

The reasons for focusing on the export-oriented companies are two. First, it is widely accepted that Chiang Mai is characterized for being the main city in Northern Thailand that has export companies. Second, such companies have a higher chance of dealing with cross-cultural situations, due to the fact that employees have to interact,

at one point or another, with foreign partners. It is assumed that there is a high competition among those companies in terms of quantity and quality. Also, as previously mentioned, exports in the area have risen and therefore, the choice for such market and area. A brief overview of each company is given below, and a more detailed description of them is given on chapter 4.

3.3.1 Company A

Company A is localized in the Chiang Mai Metropolitan Area. The Company (BCM) was founded in 1999 in Lamphun. BCM is a medium-sized business with 100% German ownership and German management, supported by the Thailand Board of Investment. The company produces customer-specific circuit boards, LCD modules and special-purpose electronic goods. This company has a workforce of 180 employees, which are German, Thai, Romanian, and American. The majority of the employees are Thai citizens, as they work at the operational level. The corporate level and managerial level has both foreign employees and Thai ones.

3.3.2 Company B

Company B is localized in the Chiang Mai Metropolitan Area. The company works with craft of hand knitting since 1998. Working for the company are 250 employees, and the company can also have up to 3500 women knitters that are outsourced seasonally in order to knit pieces for exporting. . The manufacturing of the cloth takes place in Chiang Mai, and after that, the company ships the end product to Europe, Australia, and The Americas. Ownership and upper-level management is Canadian, whereas operational level is Thai.

3.3.3 Company C

Company C is a subsidiary of a Tokyo-based world leader in the development and manufacture of high-quality, reliable power conversion products (power semiconductors, custom AC/DC power supplies, DC/DC converters, telecom rectifiers, automotive electronics, and solenoids). This company is one of the 16 consolidated subsidiaries: eight in Japan, one each in the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, the Philippines, China and Hong Kong, and two in Thailand: one in Bangkok and one in the Chiang Mai Metropolitan Area, which is one of the 3 companies that the study was based on. Upper-level management is both Japanese and Thai, and operational level is mainly Thai.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using a cross-case analysis, where datasets are cross analyzed between each other. The end result is a more compact summary that would have been difficult to accurately discern without the preceding steps of distillation.

The drawback of such method is that the final conclusions are several times removed from the underlying data. While it is true that poor initial summaries will certainly yield an inaccurate final report, qualitative analysts can respond to this criticism. They do so, like those using coding method, by documenting the reasoning behind each summary step, citing examples from the data where statements were included and where statements were excluded from the intermediate summary.

3.5 Research Method - Interview Questions

This research consists of 3 interviews, with a length of approximately one hour each. In order to be able to interview the informants, a consent letter was sent to the company, via email, where the researcher specified the nature of the research, for the companies to approve. Once the letter was sent to the company, the researcher waited for the company's reply. After each company replied, the researcher was able to go to each location and interview one employee from each company. All interviews were taped and if any questions needed to be clarified, this was done by way of telephone calls back to the project, to ensure that comments of groups were accurately recorded and interpreted. Together with the interviews, observations were made in two of the three companies. These observations took approximately two hours each, and during this process, the researcher could see the interaction between the employees.

Interview questions were drawn based on the innumerable articles, studies, papers, books, and thesis from the theoretical review. Questions were separated into 4 areas to better capitalize all the subjects involved in the study. The following table presents the 4 main areas, which include the researcher's introduction (researcher's background and the reasons for this interview), overview of cultural diversity, managing cultural diversity, and the impacts of cultural diversity on organizational performance. The questions were asked to Human Resources Manager and/or General Manager of the companies interviewed. Appendix one brings the first part of interview questions, also called "Respondent's General Information" and Appendix two presents the all of the interview questions that were asked.

Table 9 - Interview Questions

<i>Part 1</i>	<i>Researcher's Introduction</i>
<i>Part 2</i>	<i>Cultural Diversity</i>
<i>Part 3</i>	<i>Managing Cultural Diversity</i>
<i>Part 4</i>	<i>The Impact of Cultural Diversity on Organizational Performance</i>

3.6 Propositions

Due to the fact that there are many performance measurements, there were built five main propositions. The proposition was drawn from the theoretical review, which includes innumerable articles, cases, researches, and data. A summary of theoretical review is presented on figure 4 and further on, table 11 presents the hypotheses.

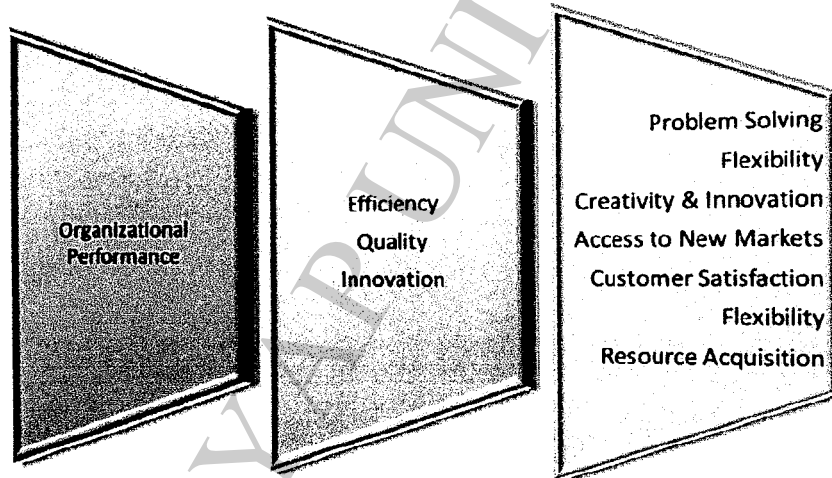


Figure 4 - Relationship between Measurements and Propositions

Table 10 - Propositions and Their Relation to the Interview Questions

H#	Propositions
H1	Heterogeneity will be positively related to efficiency.
H2	Heterogeneity will be positively related to quality.
H3	Heterogeneity will be positively related to innovation.
H4	Heterogeneity will be positively related to performance.
H5	Heterogeneity in cultural dimensions will be positively related to performance.

3.7 Data Collection

of thought) (Cooper & Schindler, 2006), done by the researcher and were taped and then transcribed in paper in order to facilitate content analysis. In addition, observations were done in The data was collected through pre-scheduled, face-to-face interviews and observations by me to each company. This data collection took place between the months of June, July, and August of 2010, in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Interviews were semi-structured ones (started with a few specific questions and then follows the individual's tangents such companies to prove my hypotheses. A semistructured interview differs from a structured one in several ways, including: semistructured interviews rely on developing a dialog between interviewer and participant; it requires the use of skill of the interviewer to extract more and a greater variety of data; and uses interviewer experiences and skills to achieve greater clarity and elaboration of answers (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done through recursive abstraction, and this took place between the months of July, August and September of 2010. Audiotapes of the interviews were fully transcribed into written form. The transcripts were coded according to the different themes from the problem areas. Presentation of the evaluation findings were made in the form of description and analysis together with diagrams, and other figures from the interpretation of data.

3.9 Limitation of the Study

In addition to the limitations arising from the qualitative nature of my research methodology discussed in the previous section, there are other limits worth mentioning. These are mostly due to the theoretical framework and contentious nature of the nature problem. They include:

a) Untested theoretical framework: it is important to notice that different strategic approaches to managing diversity in the workplace are not based on any extensive empirical research. I also found that theories of many of the authors were not entirely sufficient or appropriate, since they did not take into account such specific variables I am interested in studying. For example, some authors only mention certain variables and not others. Other authors mention the impacts of diversity of workplace as a whole and do not mention the impact of cultural diversity specifically.

b) Contentious nature of the research problem: issues concerning prejudice, stereotype, racism and discrimination in the workplace remain taboos, thus people are afraid of expressing their true opinions and feelings, especially when they may be incriminating and seen as socially undesirable.

c) It has been already proved that culture plays a major role in the workplace. Several studies in Western countries have proved this theory, but the lack of research in such field in Thailand comes as a limitation to this study.

d) Several literature reviews were found to be in Thai language, therefore making it impossible to this researcher to understand it, and consequently, this comes as a major limitation to this study.

e) As this is a qualitative study, the population is narrowed to 3 companies in the Chiang Mai Metropolitan Area. This comes as a limitation since it does not cover the entire population of the study, although these companies were carefully studied, and an in-depth analysis of each of them was conducted in order to learn the most from the scenario they operate in.

3.10 Research Validity

This evaluation involves interpretations of local meanings, which constitute the realities occurring in the project. To ensure the internal and external validity in this evaluation in such context, consideration has been given to the following: (1) credibility and authenticity; (2) explicitness; (3) creativity; (4) thoroughness; (5) congruence; and (6) sensitivity. Details are as follows.