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INTERCULTURAL COLLABORATION IN A CREATIVE PLATFORM

AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY OF THE CREATIVE PLATFORM AS A PROCESS TOOL
TO REDUCE CULTURAL PATTERNS IN INTERCULTURAL COLLABORATION WITH A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

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Abstract

It is in no doubt that the workforces of international companies are characterized by diverse cultural identities with diverse experiences and training from around the globe. This adds to the availability of knowledge that could be used to achieve organizational objectives. Having diverse cultural identities in some way affect the manner in which collaboration occurs within an organization since some workers could be stuck if following the same approach to realize organizational goals while neglecting the contributions from different departments within the same organization. Our approach to knowledge stems from Byrge and Hansen's study on creativity (2014). They define creativity as "the unlimited application of knowledge" (10). Their idea towards intercultural collaboration intern is to give room for all cultural identities to be open and flexible while sharing their information. To them collaboration should not be limited to one department or culture because of their direct relations. Byrge and Hansen therefore claim that collaboration of cultural identities could be done in a creative platform where knowledge could be applied unlimited. Thus, this study seeks to address the extent to which the creative platform influences intercultural collaboration. The aim of this research is to create a platform whereby cultural identities could benefit from diverse experiences and cultures.

In order to gain personal in-depth understanding of the complexity between intercultural collaboration patterns, cultural identity and creativity, we adopted case study because it is considered suited for exploratory investigation addressing the question as action research. (Yin, 2003., pg 22). Our choice of action research is to optimize intercultural collaboration in a practical manner which will encompass the assortment of knowledge each participant in the group brings and improves on the way information is exchanged.

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1. Introduction

“A lot of things [improvement on intercultural collaboration]. We have a lot of different departments slash silos in NEAS. And I would say it starts with leadership. That leaders should be more aware of their role in enhancing their cross organisation of collaboration. But it is in a high...to a high dependent on people’s prioritization and also the time for working. Because there has been under a huge growth under the past years. Due to that huge growth, it has been very... very busy. People have to focus and solve problems on their own priorities.” (Senior Business Performance Manage, DNM5; 10 May 2017; Pg., 8; timestamp 16:04)

NEAS was established in 1998 and the organisation started to moved fast forward throughout the 2015 (NEAS Annual Report, 2015, pg., 4). The performance in 2015 saw an increase of 82% in revenue from 2014 and lifted the international company to a new heights. Consequently, the convincing results of the international company received significant new investments from Danish pension fund ATP and it’s private equity entity VIA VEnture Partners. This has made it possible to ramp of growth even further and the overall increased in the level of activities subsequently spread across the organisation (ibid, pg., 8). The impact of rapid growth together with the constantly changing business environment on NEAS can be seen in how the management portray the corporate culture. In the company’s website, the motto ‘We bring out our best’ is aim to create a company culture that can maintained NEAS at the very forefront of the new markets, can drive NEAS ahead in a constantly changing environment and support the corporate’s strategy for 2018. One of the main element of the strategy is to increase the

geographical reach of their power and gas activities. To support the rapid geographical expansion, agility is chosen as an essential element (NEAS Annual Report, 2015. Pg., 12). The agility then is supported by a working culture that promote NEAS as a friendly, informal atmosphere in which the management defines collaboration as working together to reach a common goal. Thus the motto represents the management's expectation towards the employees to be able to think and work in new ways while adapting in a fast-paced business working atmosphere. The management's view above portrays that intercultural collaboration is critical to NEAS business model.

However in an employee standpoint, the rapid development led to the central issues in relation to the value of prioritization and time when collaborating across NEAS. As DNM5 interperate on the quote above, the growing demand turned each departments at NEAS heavily occupied in achieving their respective departmental goals. In adapting to the fast change, the result driven departments mainly focus their limited amount of time and energy in solving their own departmental issues. The prioritization of the department's respective processes resulted in a silo mentality. The silo mentality is defined by Business Dictionary as a "mindset present when certain departments or sectors do not wish to share information with others in the same company. This type of mentality will reduce efficiency in the overall operation, reduce morale, and may contribute to the demise of a productive company culture". DNM5 further points out that the silo mentality influenced the employees' prioritization and time. Consequently led to the lack of intercultural collaboration, which NTR2 experienced as " Daily operational level as long as they work, as long as things run, we don't have any personal collaboration with them [other departments]. Unless when they upgrade the system. Is there anything that you guys need or request for improvement? That will be a project and gather everybody. We will sit together with IT [Information Technology]. Apart from that we do not interact on the daily basis" (NTR2; 16 April 2017; timestamp 30:11). Similarly, NSW3 have the same point of view (10 May 2017; time stamp 8:22).

Clearly, NEAS management were not prepared to deal with the complexity of collaboration across organisation. And most of all it was of necessity to get the support from the leaders and to highlight their leadership role in driving the value of cross cultural collaboration within NEAS. Therefore improvement in the intercultural collaboration is vital as expressed by DNM5 in the quote above.

The present study aims to explore, collaborate, describe and explain the phenomenon of intercultural collaboration of a diverse workforce and to what extent creative platform can influence cultural identity and intercultural collaboration across different silos within an international organization. Drawing on with samples from the diverse workforce at the headquarters of the international company NEAS Energy, this study investigate the participants interpretations and experiences of collaboration among the employees and to examine the impact of the creativity platform facilitated by us in relation to intercultural collaboration. In the present inquiry, the notion of creativity is the ability to apply knowledge unlimitedly (Byrge & Hansen, 2014 pg., 10). We assume that the insight gained from this research would lead to a new understanding in which the approach of creative perspective could perhaps reduced the issues of cultural patterns when collaborating with diverse people.

The investigation was prompted by our previous knowledge and experiences from collaborating with Lego, Novo Nordisk, Arla and Grundfos for our previous semester projects about intercultural communication in the context of leading change towards sustainability in a multinational company. The puzzle starts after multiple interviews with the above mentioned multinational companies. After the research, we discovered intercultural communication is not what they needed but the understanding of oneself and others when collaborating interculturallly was the issue for further research. Thus, this present study gathered its momentum to explore the role of cultural identity and its influence on intercultural collaboration patterns with NEAS Energy as a case study.

In this study, we utilized hermeneutical mode of understanding and action research approach on a qualitative design case study to illuminate the phenomenon to be investigated. What follows is the literature review in order to gain a better understanding and framing of the study. Thereafter, we present our assumptions as a researcher. We close the introductory chapter with the development of problem, the statement of purpose and the formulation of research question.

1.1 Literature reviews

Diversity in this paper is perceived as the “varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring” (Thomas & Ely, 1996: 80). This different view and ways of carrying out task within the organizations adds to the innovative and creative benefits of the company. However, the organization can only profit from their creative abilities if there is an effective means of collaborating their unlimited applicable knowledge across the organisation setting and reduce their cultural patterns of understanding intercultural relations (Byrge & Hansen, 2014, 19).

Cox (1994 : 242) postulates that excellence in managing a diverse workforce will require a change in culture for many organisations, meaning a change in mindset pattern and behaviour throughout the organization (Munn, Allen & Neck, 2005: 2). According to De bono (1969) the mind normally reacts to a given task by pattern thinking. Patterns assist people in their daily lives, it also has power over our understanding, control our perception and thinking in any given situation which makes it a challenge to accept new information (De bono, 1990). Therefore, optimizing diversity in intercultural collaboration usually require a lot of effort to avoid pitfalls such as judgmental discussions, misunderstandings or just the lack of skills to understand each other (Byrge & Hansen, 2009).

In the context of intercultural communication (ICC), diversity has led to an increase in intercultural interplay across continents in multinational companies (MNC) and has made ICC

more pragmatically relevant nowadays (Lily A. Arasaratnam, 2015 : 1). Within ICC studies, it is often presumed that certain situation can go wrong because two cultural groups react differently, which makes communication between them uncertain and complicated. 'Culture' is thus seen as creating and maintaining an unfavourable climate for ICC and subsequently problematic for a diverse workplace (Robert & Sarangl, 1993). According to Holliday (2010), there is an aspect of 'othering' to address the issue of culture diversity. The aspect of othering put group of people with perceived similar identities under the 'foreign other' (26). Similarly, to Knippenberg and Mel (2016) the differences that exist in a diverse workforce are socially categories as 'ingroup' and 'outgroup'. This can promote prejudice and bias among employee and as such, reducing the intercultural collaboration and interpersonal relationships among diverse individuals (137). For example, the emphasis of national cultural variations in working environment as factors in managing intercultural collaboration might lead to misunderstandings between collaborators and a gap in connection. The focus on national differences in making the managing diverse collaborators can result problems that hinder progress and permit more problems to develop (Sills, 2014, pg., 47). A problem such as stereotyping may develop. Stereotyping is a specific extension of the basic cognitive processes of categorization. We tend to inflict structure and make sense of events, objects and experience. Consequently, the emphasis is on certain alike identifying attribute or distinctives characteristic, as opposed to many other differences (Holliday, 2010, pg., 215). The grouping of a person as a member of a group influences on how we categorize their behaviour (pg., 216). One reason for this phenomena can be the emphasis in cultural differences that are frequently promoted in intercultural training (Riley, P., 2007:231-3 as cited in Holliday, 2010:209). Holliday (2010) further argue that an organisation which foster simplistic models of culture classification, has had a direct and negative effect on intercultural perception and subsequent working collaboration.

Thirty two years ago, Barbara Gray (1985) wrote an article on the “Conditions Facilitating Interorganizational Collaboration”. Her study emphasis on interorganisational environment and inter-sectoral environment where her analytical stance focuses on the set of relationships present across interorganisational domain. For her, all of the relationships in the organisation are vital.

She also focuses on “underorganized domains” (Gray, 1985, pg., 912); individuals that are not engaged in the collaborating structures. This allows her to point out the conditions that might permit the development of collaboration structures. Most importantly Gray also investigates the relationships and behaviours that develop within the working environment, from the premise that the present collaboration relationships defines the organisation, rather than assuming that the type of organization present controls the behaviours and relationships present. (Gray, 1985, pg., 913). Her early work about collaborations in the stream of journal Human Relations, arguably proved to be the foundational piece. Later she fully developed her arguments and propositions offered in the earlier article, where a series of case studies were utilized to illustrate her arguments in her book called *Collaborating* (1989).

Morris and Katrina (2016, pg., 3) presupposes that Gray’s research opened a floodgate for scholars who began to explore new research in a more theoretical and practical implications of her initial work. The literature progresses significantly and has brought many diverging perspectives from the study of collaboration. Many of the articles were from the perspective of collaborative management, accountability mechanism, goal setting, collaboration as governance and other (ibid, pg., 4) but none from the perspective of creativity. The term of ‘collaboration’ being widely used but the conceptualization and operationalization is still not clear. In 2012 Morris and Katrina invited students to review about 30 journal articles in collaboration as an exercise in definitional clarity. The research studies range from Gray (1985) to articles released in 2012, and the articles were chosen based on their important contributions to the literature. The aim of the exercise was to collect all the definitional elements that were included by the authors. The finding shows that there were more than 60 various definitional elements (many of which were added by only one author). Although there were many various elements that were considered, there was no single element included in more than one third of the reviewed literatures. The broad variability was acknowledged as an endemic to the academic literature and thus a challenge in definitional clarity (Morris and Katrina, 2016, pg., 5). They argue that one possible reason can be that we do not yet understand the behaviour well enough to arrive at a well defined, clear and practical definition. On the other term, they postulate that it is not about the definition of

collaboration, but the findings emphasize the limits of general frameworks, as the fluidity and dynamic of collaboration over time may considerably depending on the history, experiences and the cultural identities of the individuals (ibid., pg., 29).

As collaboration researches rapidly arises, it moves into several directions, resulting in confusion in regards to what collaboration is and how it can be used to achieve goal (Ibid, pg., 1). However, collaboration is crucial for any organisation that wants to move forward, to be productive, adaptable and creative. Barfield (2016, pg., 222) defined collaboration as “working their goals together with others, sharing responsibilities and working to together to achieve more than could be achieved by an individual on their own”. The increase in collaboration within an organisation (Bird & Osland, 2005 pg., 115) can be explain by the positive outcome that it has shown. Collaboration permit employees to connect with colleagues, allows information to be shared and ideas to be generated, uncover colleagues working on the same issues, and increase productivity. Employees solve problems in new ways which they would not otherwise have solved, effective in getting the work done, feel engaged and connected because they are collaborating together toward a common goal (Schwemmer & Havrilla, 2011, pg., 28). Unfortunately, grouping people with diverse perspectives in the same room does not guarantee effective collaboration will happen. Although organisations invested in modifying their physical spaces to allow mixing between different departments, researcher suggest that even in the most unstructured social settings, there is a tendency that people collaborate mostly with others similar to themselves (Joyce, et. al. 2010, pg., 57).

As scholars' points to the necessity of effective intercultural collaboration and managing diverse workers, Noel, Yashima and Zhang, (2011) argued a high range of theories and methodologies have been put forward to curb the transfer of knowledge through intercultural collaboration. To them this can be seen on paper but the practical outcome of intercultural collaboration has not fully been exploited and some organizations still faced difficulties in practicing the theoretical solutions (49). Hansen and Milburn (2015, pg., 232) suggest that one possible reason for this phenomenon is, how individuals critically reflect their cultural identities to enable collaboration

still remains concealed in what others might call the “black box of collaboration”.

The concept of cultural identity disregard specific definition and extend across traditional boundaries between disciplines in the social sciences. Progressively growing, there has been an emphasis on the correlation between culture and identity (Holliday, 2010, pg., 92). Synonymous with the present study’s constructivist stance, the view on the relationship of culture and identity is best described by Giddens (1991). He posit that the conceptualization of an ‘individual’ varies across cultures (ibid., pg., 53-5).

Although collaboration is vital for an organisation that wants to be innovative, why then, do many organisations struggle to provide collaboration techniques that their employees will actually use? (Schwemmer & Havrilla, 2013). The notion of implementing a practical solution to solve issues surrounding intercultural collaboration while optimizing employee’s performance led us the use of the theory of creativity. The utilisations of creative studies to education, arts and sciences, innovation, business and society as a whole, accelerated the flourishing of creativity research (Runco & Albert, 2010,pg. 3). However not long ago there were only a few scholarly articles about creativity. Later, the percentage in relation with creativity in the Psychological Abstracts raised from .002 percent in the 1920 to .01 percent in the 1980’s (pg., 5). Starting from the end of 1960’s until 1991, nearly 9,000 creativity citations have been added to the literature and almost every major twentieth-century some psychologist such as Piaget, Freud, Rogers, Skinner has explored the meaning of creativity and has taken the discipline sternly. Currently, the field can be outline only as explosive. These can be seen in the development of journals in professional interest and the magnet of attention “creativity” gets when it comes to media and popular press (ibid., pg 5).

The burgeoning interest in creativity continues to extend within organisational settings, whereby Hitt (1975, 283) lamented on the scarcity of research in the field of creativity within an organisation. His article “The creative organisation” was published in 1975 where he points out that little has been done in relation to organisational creativity and it’s necessity (ibid, p.283).

Later in the 1990's, "Creativity and Innovation Management journal" was established in order to bridge "the gap between theory and practice imagination and innovation" (Pucca and Cabra 2010, 145). Interestingly, we did not find any articles which hold the keywords intercultural collaboration and creativity.

Indeed, creativity is vital to the survival and advancement of organisations (Joyce.et.al., 2010, pg., 57), and the attempt to improve the innovativeness among employees by many organisations continued through creativity training, however there has been a lack of evaluation of the impact of such training (Birdi, Leach & Magadley, 2012, 315). To examine the impact of the training, Birdi, Leach & Magadley used cross sectional, longitudinal and multi-source assessment strategies. These were employed for creativity training evaluation within a major international engineering company (ibid., pg. 317). The results showed that participation in the training led to a short-term improvement in both creative problem-solving skills and the motivation to innovate (ibid., pg.322).

The creative process is sufficiently complex when carried out by an individual alone such as the musician, artist, writer and so on; imagine the amount of dynamism reached which individuals aim to create within the complexity of an organisation system (Puccion and Cabra 2010, 145). Taking the system approach as their stand, Puccion and Cabra (2010) explore the underlying factors that influence the manifestation of creativity in an organisation. They conclude that an organisation that are richer in ideas and more imaginative has the highest possibility to be more efficient at meeting's society's demands and more agile at adapting to changing circumstances (ibid., pg.166). Undeniably, there are many factors that need to be examined when dealing with creativity in an organisation. As scholars have closely researched collaboration practices found in the organisation, more particular constructs have emerged and one of them is national culture. (ibid., 151).

The phenomenon of the reinforcement of cultural differences between nations often leads to a communication problem in an international company (Gut, Wilczewski & Gorbaniuk, 2017,

issue 43). One reason of the visible occurrence can be the widely use of Geert Hofstede's (1994, 2001) research on culture within organisational settings (Knorr, 2016, 21). His perception of culture mainly focus on that national culture has a strong influence in determining people's preferences as for communication styles in intercultural business collaboration (Gut, Wilczewski & Gorbaniuk, 2017, issue 43). Consequently, this current view on culture can have important implications concerning cross-cultural deployment of creativity research. Westwood and Low (2003, 235) found three challenges in relations with the utilization of creativity concepts across cultures. One problem pertains the likelihood to muscle universalistic interpretations of creative processes, designs and functions. Second is the inclination to glorify one approach to creativity and innovation in a specific culture while devaluing a view on creativity that is already available in another. The third and last problem relates to misleadingly and uncritically fortifying differences through simplified explanatory models. In their critique of intercultural issues in regards to creativity, Westwood and Low (2003) argue that culture can and does have implications in the utilization of creativity and innovation processes. On the other hand, the correlation should not be assumed as universal, simple or unreflexive.

Rather than focusing on what makes the employee different, emphasis should be on the cultural background of an employee's knowledge and acts as a stimulus for new ideas to be established. In addition, the more diverse ideas that are communicated is a guarantee for an organization to develop effective decisions (Byrge and Hansen, 2014 pg. 10). Similarly, to their work in 2009, Byrge and Hansen added that for creativity to occur in an intercultural organization the collaboration barriers of culture should be removed (238). Thus, creativity entails letting go of existing patterns and it is defined by Byrge and Hansen (2014) as the unlimited application of knowledge (pg.10). For this study, the collaboration barrier of culture pointed out is stereotyping (Holliday, 2010:215). Byrge and Hansen (2014) pointed out four creative principles which could be used to facilitate intercultural collaboration in groups and could prevent stereotyping or prejudices. These principles are; horizontal thinking, task focus, parallel thinking and no judgement (12). These principles establish an understanding for the communication of diversified knowledge and for the enhancement of group processes. Finally to reduce some

amount of cultural, social or economic standards which may constrain the application of knowledge (pg.,20).

1.2 Assumptions

We have started our research at a place of knowledge and experience based on our previous semester project collaboration with various stakeholders dealing with intercultural communication. Therefore, this study is guided by our assumptions on intercultural communication from one of our 7th semester projects on leading change towards sustainability. Upon observations and interviews from this project, it was noticed that there were communication issues among intercultural employees and the methods with which decisions were made which seemed to portray a particular cultural dominance over other cultures. This being an interest of further studies, the same problem was continued to our 8th semester project in the aspect of communicating strategic change beyond borders and across cultures. The concept of advocacy with inquiry was used to solve this problem of cultural dominance. This concept claims that, organizations communicating change across borders should explore and understand the different cultures within their cultural standards. This therefore implies that organizations have to communicate their intentions on the changes they want to make and give room for other companies across borders to question these changes based on their cultural values (Friedman and Antal, 2005, pg., 79-80), also supported by Eisentat and Beer, (2004, pg., 84,) Johnson et. al. (2010, pg., 51) and Holliday et. al. (2010, pg., 228) and yet this was not practical within the cases of our research. The approach to intercultural communication indicated by Antal and Friedman demands moving away from a model-based viewpoint whereby people are recommended to view behavior and communication based on pre-taught cultural templates and cultural models.

Throughout the 9th semester, with the notion to establish a new understanding of organizational processes, we enrolled into a creative genius course. The premise of this program is the use of unlimited application of knowledge in providing solutions to problems through a process called

the creative platform. This theory creates solutions to problems through an intercultural or interdepartmental collaboration where everyone has the free will to contribute his thoughts and ideas despite his cultural background. In a nutshell, the theory brings together a diversity of knowledge without presenting culture as an issue for intercultural communication or collaboration. Throughout the study of the creative program the problem of ICC was presented with the quest to find new solutions which relate to organizational practices. Thus, the knowledge gathered and the impact on creativity among students from various academic backgrounds during the Aalborg University's Case Competition had a lasting impression on how organizations could adopt some creative practices to improve on their aspects of intercultural collaboration

1.3 Problem development, purpose and problem formulation

Our pre-understanding is that the increase in diversity of perspectives and knowledge enables organizations to access a greater dimension of variety in information and decisions to accomplish the organizational objectives (Daniels, Neale, and Greer, 2017, 92). Seeing that the majority of ICC research are concerned with culture differentiation strategy in order to collaborate, little is known about the influence of the creative platform on intercultural collaboration in an international company with a diverse workforce.

Initially, we contacted the Chief Strategy Officer (CSO) of a Swedish based multinational company called Securitas. We offered the CSO the possibility to creatively engage with us in finding the blind spots for our initial problem formulation on optimizing diversity in the context of intercultural communication. After a brief talk with the CSO, we have been made aware that though Securitas focuses on diversity, there seems to exist some aspects of misunderstanding in intercultural communication of the workforce. According to the CSO, misunderstandings are bound to occur when diverse employees are grouped to work together in order to reach a consensus. To him this is as a result of their different cultural approach to phenomena which has

a negative effect on their output when involved in decision making. Therefore, the initial research problem was; “How can Securitas optimize intercultural communication of its diverse workforce?”. After waiting for almost a month to get access in collecting empirical data from Securitas, we decided to move forward to get the project moving and therefore we approached NEAS Energy as an alternative. In the process of iterating, we found that there is a need to explore the intercultural collaboration patterns of NEAS. The initial findings showed that effective communication happened within the department, however as the intercultural collaboration took place across the organisation, the diverse workforce struggled to communicate due to the diverging collaborating patterns of the respective departments. This led to the research problem:

In which ways and to what extend does the creative platform influence intercultural collaboration at NEAS Energy?

Guiding questions:

1. What are the current conditions of intercultural collaboration at NEAS?
2. How does cultural identity influence intercultural collaboration?
3. How does the ‘creative platform’ influence the perception of cultural identity and thus, intercultural collaboration at NEAS?

To answer these questions from an action research point of view, this present study conducts a qualitative research in order to explore the field of intercultural collaboration in the real world of organizational practices by collaborating with NEAS. We examine the collaboration conditions of its diverse workers by empirically investigating intercultural collaboration processes. We look at the cultural identity’s influence on the intercultural collaboration patterns and then we explore

the influence of the creative platform on intercultural collaboration in an international organisation with a diverse workforce. And employed facilitating and observing a one hour and thirty minutes of creative platform among the diverse employees from various departments across NEAS.

1.4 Thesis structure

This section presents an overview of the whole thesis all the chapters are interrelated to answer the research problem. This thesis investigates the cultural identity in NEAS and its influence on intercultural collaboration and the extent to which creative platform can influence its intercultural collaboration pattern through an action research. This research consist of six chapters. The first chapter, presents an introduction and a review of literatures to intercultural collaboration, cultural identity and creativity platform. This is followed by our pre assumptions which guided us to our problem formulation and explained the first part of our hermeneutical loop. Subsequently, we presented our problem and three guiding questions to answer our main question.

The second chapter is based on the methods and methodologies. First it presents the case of NEAS energy. This case is qualified for our study because; it is an international organization which brands itself as nationally diverse and having a culture which accommodates new methods of thinking. This is followed by a philosophical consideration on how meaning is constructed, methods explaining research design and the action research. A general view of the creative platform is also presented to demonstrate the task and components which guided our action strategy. In addition, this chapter presents the validity and reliability of the qualitative research pertaining to this study and concluded with the limitations of the study

The third chapter presents concepts on the and results on first segment of the hermeneutical loop. The importance of this chapter is show the hermeneutical circle which tis research has undergone

that led to the change of problem formulation. Therefore we present an overview on diversity and intercultural communication.

The fourth chapter is based on concepts and theories. This is divided into three; understanding collaboration, an exploration of cultural identities and the creativity theory. Within the creativity theory there is an explains the creative platform to explain how cultural patterns are reduces to enhance an effective collaboration between cultural identities.

The fifth chapter comprises an analysis and finding to answer the problem formulation; In which ways and to what extent does the “creative platform” influence intercultural collaboration at NEAS Energy. This chapter presents an empirical analysis from coding semi-structured interview qualitative, participant observation and action research based on the creative platform. The theories presented in chapter fourth were the center for the analysis. The analysis describes the general understanding of cultural identity and collaboration with the use of the creative platform to reduce cultural patterns which could is perceived to limit flexibility of employees in collaboration

Lastly we ended we a conclusion of our overall findings

2. Methodology and Research methods

Before selecting theories and going further with this social research, it is important to know the necessary research tools that guides the research and how knowledge is obtained and meaning constructed in the aspect of intercultural collaboration. With a sample of employees from different departments in NEAS Energy were selected with the purpose to investigate and analyse the extent to which the creative platform influences intercultural collaboration of cultural identities. This chapter discusses the philosophical consideration of the research, and the research methods which guide the study. It also throw light on the hermeneutical approach and the action

research strategy which are the centre methods of our research including an overview of NEAS as our case study organization.

2.1 Philosophy of science.

The philosophical perspective of this project is classified under two different paradigms used to study the assumptions on social reality and how knowledge is acquired. These are referred to as ontological and epistemological philosophical paradigms to understand how knowledge can be seen as socially constructed.

According to Blaikie, the ontological perspective is an assumption of what is known to be social reality. This assumption examines our everyday activity which can be understood as socially constructed and how we interact with one another through our perception about society. This explains why there are different views and standpoints from different social researchers on how knowledge is obtained in a social research. The divergent standpoints explain that in a cultural context, the existence of different cultures provides different understandings of the world through their approaches to social inquiry (Blaikie, 2002, pg. 177; Blaikie 2007, pg. 13). Under the ontological perspective there exist a numbers stands as presented by Blaikie, but this study briefly consider looking into ; objectivism and constructivism to understand the nature of social reality. From an objective stand, meaning is constructed independently from social actors. The social actors have no control over the nature of social reality. While the constructivist stand claims that social actors create meaning about social phenomena through social interactions. This meaning produced by social interaction are also in constant change (Blaikie, 2002, 177). Thus, in this study our ontological perspective is the constructivist stands aimed at exploring in which ways and to what extend does the creative platform influence intercultural collaboration at NEAS Energy.

The epistemological paradigm deals with how knowledge is acquired, accepted and meaning constructed. The construction of meaning in this study stems from the social constructivist approach which explains that knowledge is created from our observation of our society (Blaikie,

2007, 19). The knowledge created is a product of the interaction among social actors through their encounter with the physical world and interactions with one another (Blaikie, 2007, 22-23)

This research will take the hermeneutical interpretation of meaning to use the diversity of interpretation from the outcome or response of the interviewees to provide an analysis of the theories and possibly create new understanding “Jedes Verstehen ist ein Besser Verstehen” (Every understanding is an understanding better)”. The interpretation of meaning will be free of logical contradictions, which imply that the interpretation of meaning will only end when there is a good grasp of the text based on various theoretical understandings. Unlike a scientific research where the differences in interpreting meaning are based on the differences of the interpreters, this research deals with a subjective approach which allows plurality of interpreting a single text in an analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, 239-241).

2.2 Qualitative design in an action research

Most of our practical approach to creativity has centered around students from different educational backgrounds and cultures. The successful outcome of bringing diverse students from various educational backgrounds to collaborate effectively with one another gave us the zeal to use the creative theory in organizations if they would have the same outcome using the creative platform. As Byrge and Hansen (2009, pg. 249) point out, the creativity platform has proved to be effective in a number of settings which have one thing in common; Either in educational institutions or in companies, the creative platform manages to bring students and professionals with diverging backgrounds to meet for a fixed period of time to solve a problem.

This research aims to study what we encounter in the real world of organizational practices and to identify the challenges organizations face when optimizing the intercultural collaboration of its diverse workforce. Thus, this will convey interdepartmental and intercultural groups in NEAS Energy to collaborate effectively and efficiently on a creative platform (Parson, Hewson, Adrian,

Day, 2013, 21). Our choice of action research is to optimize intercultural collaboration in a practical manner which will encompass the assortment of knowledge each participant in the group brings and improves on the way information is exchanged.

In line with action research, the qualitative method suits for this study because it permits for in-depth exploration of the elements within each interaction (Morrison and Katrina, 2016, pg., 83). Furthermore it provides an overview of diverse opinions and actions to explore social phenomena and describe them rather than counting as in the quantitative methods. In addition, this research will equally provide an analysis with a detailed report of the information gathered while conducting the research in NEAS Energy, thus the interpretation of the analysis stems from the data collected (Parson et al, 2013, 30). This qualitative method is characterized by open-ended questions guided by a semi-structured interview to welcome the interviewees' subjective views and experiences on the problem area (31). It also takes into consideration the meaning and understanding of empirical data which deal with the analysis of employee's attitude and response towards the practical examples of creativity through a creative workshop and interviews. Thus, focus will be based on the quality of the data rather than the quantity (Bryman, 2012, 35). In addition to interviews, the method of observation is used to triangulate the data collected within the qualitative method. From this data triangulation within the same methods, sampling was done at different times and in different locations which involved several employees from NEAS Energy (Denzin, 1978 as cited by Parson, Hewson, Adrian, Day, 2013, pg., 26)). Within the observation process, we observed the interviewees as they were being interviewed including the collaborative process through the creative process. This sort of observation was interactive because the interviewees were aware of the presence of researchers to observe how they collaborated with one another (Parson et al, 2013, pg., 102).

2.2.1 Case study

In order to gain personal in-depth understanding of the fluidity and the complexity between intercultural collaboration patterns, cultural identity and creativity, we adopted case study because it is considered suited for exploratory investigation addressing the questions of “why” and “how”(Yin, 2003., pg 22). Furthermore in an action research lense, case study focuses with great detail on a specific person or group which is therefore ideal for examining the complex of social processes in their real life context (Parson et al, 2013, pg., 6.)

In our case, we choose to consider the problems that multicultural organizations still face in our contemporary society and thereby provide applicable solutions that will boost their productivity and reduce collaboration obstacles. This study started with Securitas where the problem of intercultural communication in a diverse environment was defined. Since then there was no continuous access for further information in Securitas, so the study took a different turn to NEAS Energy where the questions on intercultural communication were framed by the interviews. In the latter organization, intercultural communication seemed be to be something to worry about, but it was discovered that they had issues on intercultural collaboration with cultural identities in their workforce. This case study approach not only allowed us to search for loopholes in existing literature but to inquire and trace the source of the problem intercultural organizations face, and in effect working on an actual problem in a natural setting. Although the solutions provided to solve the problem of intercultural collaboration could be applicable to other companies with similar intercultural collaboration problem (Flybjerg, 2006, 225), in action research generalization is not the center issue but similar results from studying an effective organization could be applied to other similar cases. In other words, the context of the research applies to specific categories within a specific organization (Parson et al, 2013, 36). In this study, new understandings and information are developed from the new information and this makes our process iterative. From the new understanding, the research question was then adjusted. This is because the research started with a pre-knowledge on intercultural communication which was a problem faced by Securitas. After designing the problem, it was challenging to get further access into the company to conduct an interview. Thus, the interviews were conducted in another company NEAS Energy where it was discovered that they had less problems in terms of

intercultural communication, but their problem was on collaborating with the diverse employees in the company. (44).

2.2.2 Description of the case

We have purposely selected NEAS Energy as our second choice as a backup strategy to avoid suspending our research incase Securitas have problems in proceeding forward to collecting our empirical data. We have chosen NEAS based on their description on their website that the company is international with employees from diverse background. It is suitable for the Culture, Communication and Globalisation framework for our master thesis. In addition NEAS supports new ways of thinking and doing things, therefore we had an assumption that there could be a high possibility that the management would allow us to do the creative platform with the employees apart from conducting the interviews in order to collect our empirical data. We were aware that the time frame in entering into a collaboration with NEAS might show to be too short due to the drop out of the Securitas management in the last minute. Also, we needed to interact with our potential data in the field in order to explore and get closer to the reality of NEAS intercultural collaboration practices. This basically meant that conducting an action research project might consume a lot of the time in NEAS. The chances of being rejected again was adding up. However in our presentation persuasion strategy, we made sure to address these probabilities by bearing in mind and making sure to acknowledge that time was not a privilege and that time was money for them. Therefore we needed to be very clear and concise with our purpose and the possible contribution we could give back to NEAS. We also included in our presentation persuasion strategy on how we could provide a fresh perspective from a student's point of view and how we could explore and maybe contribute bringing in new perspectives in relation to NEAS environment as an international organisation that gives employees the opportunity to put their ideas into play.

On March 7th 2017, one of us visited the Aalborg Career day at Gigantum with a sole purpose and determination to humbly approach a NEAS human resource employee. Presented our action research project that heavily leans on creativity platform in order to reduce the cultural patterns in intercultural collaboration. The human resource person agreed to do the collaboration for our master thesis project on the spot and from there on, she became our contact person. Headquartered (HQ) in Aalborg, the case company is an international organisation that operates in power, gas and energy certificate markets throughout Europe. Established in 1998, NEAS is active in 20 European countries with approximately 250 employees.

We decided to focus our studies on the intercultural collaboration practices and cultural identities since the group interaction with diverse identities comprised all elements for us to conduct the creative platform. The reason for this decision is because we found a plague of significant problems in implementing the intercultural communication and diversity theories in the field and also after finding a new pre-understanding from the first interview with four of the employees from various departments. In particular, when NTR2, said that ‘Even though we are just not only from different background, nationality, but we also have different experiences from previous jobs, and workplaces and such. So..you know we are very diverse..’ (16 April, 2016, timestamp: 8:20). Thus, it led us into gaining a better understanding of to what extent the cultural identity influenced intercultural collaboration at NEAS. Three and half years ago, the case company struggled to drive the collaboration process across the organisation in order to support the agility identity imposed by the management. As the Senior Performance Manager DNM5 points out in our second interview ‘I am the only one working and conceptualizing and driving the performance management through cross organisational way’ (DNM5; 10 May 2017; timestamp 8:25) and that ‘Yeah I tried to [coordinate an intercultural collaboration] as much as possible but some of the difficulties and challenges regarding that is different departments in the business life, they have different priorities, they have different focus areas’ (ibid; timestamp 6:25).

One of the main criterion for a good case of utilizing creativity platform was made explicit: there seemed to be boundaries that existed around the cultural ways of thinking and patterns where agility should have been presented but in reality it appeared to be feeble. Therefore, this led us

into obtaining a better understanding on to what extent the creative platform influences cultural identity and the present intercultural collaboration pattern at NEAS.

The following description of the case company is based on interviews, participant observations and informal conversations made at the HQ. Throughout our action research field studies, we developed a better understanding of how the diverse employees from various departments collaborated with each other and the role that the cultural identity played. This gave us a more cohesive insight into the intercultural collaboration which took place across NEAS.

We collected qualitative data on observation as we entered the the HQ building for the first time. We also saw a giant monitor screen showing images of how the company culture is. The case company portrayed a repeating video showing the working atmosphere at NEAS on how the case company is informal and conceptualizes collaboration as working together reaching a common goal. We also observed the video emphasized that NEAS has young employees with an average age of 35 years, a total of 20 nationalities, academic working environment with more than 50% of their employees holding a master's degree. Clearly we can see that the case company groups their employees' cultural identities by nationality, education and demography. The cultural identity categorization can be seen not only in their marketing and recruitment video, but also in the cultural identity 'test' conducted by the management. As pointed out by NSW3, ' It's a test where you get question and then you get the personality type for yourself' (NSW3; 10 May 2017; timestamp 12:55) and 'I mean they do it to like how you works fit and from which team and from which work'(ibid; timestamp: 13:38). The general frameworking not only limits the fluidity of cultural identity but it also dismissed the complexity and dynamic of intercultural collaboration which deemed it relevant to explore the influence of cultural identity.

2.2.3 Creative platform workshop method : outline tasks

On our first task as a facilitator in creative platform one and half hour at NEAS, the responsible to make the facilitation clear and concise depended on us as it is vital in executing the process. Detailed preparation should be planned ahead properly because the preparation it will influenced the participants mentally for the creative process. Below is our outline task for the creative platform and for a more detailed minute to minute outline, we have attached it in the appendix;

1) Preparation

a) Preparation all in detail

b) Process, physical room and materials

- i) No computers, watches and phones

- ii) Preventing external interference

- eg: (1) Posters (2) Noise (3) Windows

- iii) Divide room on 2 sections

- (1) Floorspace and tables along the sides, chairs facing the walls

- (2) Tables in group formation (center of focus in the middle of the table)

- iv) Lots of paper, pens, post its and stimuli props, tape to write names

2) The Red Carpet (reminder for the facilitator)

- a) No person focus i) Avoid person introduction

- b) Quick getting on the platform

- c) Forget what we have been just doing

- d) Run small games that everyone can play

- e) Engagement and reflection Yes, Yes and Accepting making mistakes

- f) Creativity training, energizers, 3d cases

- g) No person focus

- h) Remove the responsibility from the the participants

3) Problem Presentation

- No background information

-Only necessary information

-Put posters with the problem

- Precise concrete related + abstract non related
- No problem that points towards participants
- Context specific and context unrelated

4) Idea generation + Idea development (Facilitator)

4.1 Idea generation Individual 3D case (1+1+stimuli)

4.2 Idea development Group Collaboration (new choice, start over, what happens next)

5) Selection of ideas

6) Professional and academic input

7) The Blue Carpet

2.2.4 Data collection method

Starting from the notion that intercultural workforce faces the problem of misunderstanding when communicating ideas, to our current problem which addresses cultural identity, collaboration and creative platform, we made use of different qualitative methods to collect data which directly involved the researchers. The methods of data collection included interview, informal discussion, participant observation and the organization's website, emails and skype calls and interactants from different departments within NEAS.

This study uses the hermeneutic spiral to analyze the nature of intercultural communication and later changed the problem to intercultural collaboration and identity based on the responses from the interactants. The first segment of the interviews had 4 interviews which was a face to face interview at NEAS and the second part of the interviews was through skype with 3 employees.

The second interviews was followed after an understanding of the context in the first interviews. To ensure interactants confidentiality, we concealed their names by abbreviations consisting of the letter “D”, which stands for Danish and the letter “N” which stands non-Danish. The order of data collection will be presented as they occurred followed by a table with their timeline.

Data collection in the first hermeneutical loop was on the April 06, 2017 at the canteen in NEAS Energy at about 9 AM with the use of a semi-structured interview guide. The next interview was at the conference room, followed by an interview in the human resource personnel's office and lastly the conference room again after lunch. During lunch, we observed how the employees interacted with one another to get an overview of their social climate. After examining and analyzing the first part of the research, a creative exercise was conducted on the April 18, 2017 in one of the meeting rooms in NEAS with five employees, two of which were new to our study. The second hermeneutical loop later flowed via skype, in the Month of May, on the 8th, and 10th, 2017 with three employees. The last interview which was scheduled to be on the May 11, 2017 was cancelled and a mail was send pertaining to the feedback of the creative platform. Following the social constructionist view, we observed how individual reacted both as individuals and groups during our entire project.

	Departments	Years in NEAS	1st interview	The creative platform	2nd interview
DPM1	Business process manager	2 months	6 April	18 April	8 May
NTR2	Trader	2 yrs	6 April	-	-
NSW3	Scheduler	4 months	6 April	18 April	10 May
DMR4	Human resource	1 yrs	6 April	18 April	Rejected
DNM5	Senior business performance manager	3 ½ yrs	-	18 April	10 May
NEN6	Business development manager	-	-	18 April	Rejected

Figure 1: Participant's table of activities

2.2.5 Data coding

Coding involves breaking down a text into small portions and adding keyword to each portion to ease further retrieval process (Kvale and Brickman, 2008, pg. 323). This involves "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing" the data collected (Kvale and Brickman, 2008, pg. 202). This codes were not quantified but presented in a qualitative approach to analyze the relationships codes. The transcripts for the codes were derived from listening to recorded audio interviews, previously transcribed interviews and observation. The purpose of the codes was not to test the theories but to present a short description of the interviews collected and to get whole of the activities during the action research. From a social constructionist stance, coding played an important role in this study by guided us in the way we present each idea stated by the interviewees in order to avoid a repetitive presentation of the same code when providing our subjective analytical understanding. This codes were later used to in analysis to describe the response of the interviews using a theoretical frame.

This study also made use of "code memos" but the names of the researcher who did the coding was not mention but the ideas relating to materials coded was described in the coded sheet. (Kvale and Brickman, 2008, pg. 202). The coding used in this study was "data driven" (ibid). This implies that the codes were developed from the interviewee's response. Thus the interviews started without codes, but questions that guided the employees toward responding to the theories. We provided four categories which all came from the responses of the second hermeneutical loop; patterns, cultural identity, reality alignment and openness. The codes on reality alignment was based on the what we observed that seemed contrary to what the interviewees expressed. While the other codes reflected the response of the interviewee to the theories of creativity, cultural identity and collaboration.

Transcript		Meaning Condensation	Code	Themes
	Breaking pattern		Pattern	
	Collaborating (across dep) challenges		Cultural identity	
website	Collaboration expectations		Reality alignment	
	Collaborating conditions/process		Pattern	
	Deeply rooted cultural pattern		Pattern	
	Being open minded/new ways of thinking		Openness	
	Contradictions		pattern	
	Conform to NEAS environment		Inflicting identity	

Figure 2: Meaning condensation board of discussion

2.2.6 Triangulation

The concept of triangulation is widely used by the researcher but it first emerged from the daily practice of surveyors and sailor. Measuring positions in reference to another place where location was best understood by looking at it as the intersection of three points. Utilizing appropriate tools and equipment for measurement, sailors were able to navigate in the vast sea and surveyors manage to accurately draw lines and boundaries. In researcher's reality, triangulation is the use of various sets of data, different types of analysis, and different theoretical perspectives to examine a specific phenomena (Denzin, 1978 as cited in Parson et. tal, 2013, pg., 9).

In the present study, we use different sets of data collected from our two semi- structured interviews and as a participant observant we conducted a creative platform facilitation at NEAS. We chose triangulation because it strengthens the validity of the information gathered (ibid., pg., 110). The different point of views from triangulation helps us situate our research because

thoughtful considerations and agreement is our keystone to judgment. For example when we started to create our research method plan, we carefully considered and choose a set of data-collection methods that will optimize the triangulation of exploring the reality of intercultural collaboration practices at NEAS. In the first loop of our hermeneutical understanding, we learned from our literature reviews that diversity and intercultural communication theories were plagued with challenges in applying the solutions suggested in reality. We then compared our literature findings with the themes that emerges from our first semi structure interview. When we found that intercultural communication was not an issue when collaborating with the department, rather the problem occurs when collaborating across departments within NEAS. The interpretations of the employees situates us to our research into looking at cultural identity and intercultural collaboration. Therefore triangulation gave us a more comprehensive overview of what we are investigating.

Referencing to Sagor (1992), Parson et. al (2013., pg 206) describe perspectives as “independent windows” on a problem under investigation. We have adapt the following concept in our present study. As we analyse our data in understanding the conditions of intercultural collaboration practices in NEAS, we allowed different perspectives to be shared from the various background as well as the management. If all these “windows” interpreted a similar picture of intercultural collaboration then that would be likely valid. However, during our analysis the management rated their intercultural collaboration as agile but the employees saw them differently, that difference triggered a further line of enquiry in cultural identity. Allowing various perspective to be told is synonymous with our stand as constructivist where researcher should allow subjectivity and reflexivity. The triangulation our data resources provided us more confidence in our findings and gathering the multiple independent windows on our present study was essential for credibility.

2.2.7 Ethical consideration

The plans and decisions that influence action research are practical and most importantly ethical (Parson et. al. 2013, pg., 55), because the purpose of action research is to address a problem in a workable manner (pg. 56). Meaning one of the most critical aspect of our research plan is that our work did not cause harm to others (pg.,23). Throughout the whole process, we tried to commit in conducting the action research study ethically as the best we can. Meaning to “tell the truth” of what we are studying, to stress common sense and to take a lot of considerations for others.

In the present study, we started to collaborate with Securitas company for two months, however due to unforeseen circumstances they withdraw. We respected their rights to non participation and moved on to NEAS. Although we were pressured by time to obtain a new company for this action research, we approach NEAS at Aalborg Career day guided by ethics to tell the truth of our situation. We presented the purpose of our master thesis project clear, concise and being honest with collaboration advantages and disadvantages that may occur. The honest persuasion strategy worked and NEAS trusted us to use their time and energy. As we gained accessed, we needed to collect our empirical data. We then conducted interviews to allow participants to share their meaning, interpretations and to give the an opportunity to each participant's to be heard. Guided by ethics, we seeked permission to ask questions and to record the conversations before we proceeded the interview. In the creativity platform workshop, there were two participants that could not make it and respected the participants’ right to privacy and non participations.

As an ethical researcher we never disclosed the identity of our interactants, their personal information or their specific answers unless we ask for their permission in writing to do so.

There was only one particular incident that occur which we deemed unethical. In order to conduct our second interview via Skype, we have arrange an online scheduling where everyone can just select the date and time appropriate to their busy working schedule. Acknowledge and

confirmed one of us was scheduled to interview her experienced and feedback on the creative platform process. Few minutes before the online interview started the researcher only realised that an interview is about to take place. However, the participant waited for over an hour before one of the researcher manage to get through to her. She sent her constructive feedback via email (attached). What we have learned from here as a researcher is that to have a discipline in work ethics and be mindful of others that allowed us to enter their personal lives. Research should be fun, however we are working with participants who must be protected, therefore a researcher is ethically bound to conduct the research with empathy and respect.

2.2.8 Evaluating reliability and validity

Looking into the readability and validity of our interviews, this section discusses the nature of "trustworthiness and credibility, " of the qualitative semi-structured interviews and the action research we conducted with employees from Neas (Kvale and Brickman, 2008, pg. 244). Validity in this study is referred to the capacity of a statement to be true and correct (246). Validity is often measured in a positivistic approach to social science but in a qualitative research, measurement is not valid. Thus in producing an acceptable scientific knowledge validity in this study involves our methods of investigation (interviews, participant observation and action research), and its relation to our theoretical understandings to develop a better a interpretation of our methods and the interviews we conducted. Reliability pertains to the consistency of the truth if our findings (102). With the use of the qualitative interviews, some question were leading to check if the response of the interview were reliable. To kvale and Brickman (2008), the leading question does not reduce the reliability of an interview (172)

2.2.9 Limitations

This study is based on qualitative empirical data gathered in an action research case study design analyzed by employing triangulation approach with a coding style from meaning condensation.

The limitation of this study is on the case study design whereby the focus has been on embedded case and the specific contexts which makes generalizability somewhat impossible. Although generalization is not the main issue in this action research study, it addressed Flyberg (2006, pg., 225) that one can generalize from a single case study. Thereby the solutions presented to reduce the problem of intercultural collaboration can be employed to other company with similar intercultural problems.

Also, the key limitation rest mainly on the researcher's reflexivity and subjectivity which restricts all qualitative studies. Hence, the main concern in qualitative studies such as our research is the researcher's bias. Bias shapes and affect the underlying assumptions, perceptions and interest brought to the research. For this reason, our potential bias in relation to our identification as a creative facilitators and how we assume creative platform can solve the intercultural problem. In order to minimize these limitations, we took measures by persistently adapting the constructivist stand in being reflective and subjective in ensuring the study's trustworthiness. Second we tried to limit the researcher's bias by discussing diverse points of the interviewees' responds. And also conducting a team evaluation on each researcher to come to get a consensus on the overview of our research structure, in other words we cross check each other.

In addition, this research was limited in literatures addressing creativity as a social constructivist approach. According to Byrge and Hansen (2009), could relate to all cultures and discipline who need diverse sources of knowledges to be shared (235). Based on their interest to encourage unlimited application of knowledge across cultural identities, very few research could be found sharing similar views and a host of other literatures completely presented creativity in the lens of a functionalist.

Another point of limitation was the time factor. Time is a vital aspect in our study and it appeared to most challenging aspect. Working on a project which needed an intercultural organizations to carry out interviews and solve certain organizational problems, finding an organization to collaborate with was time consuming. Most of the organizations we approach had

busy schedule and NEAS Energy was open to collaborate with us within a short time frame, thus the time to plan the research was limited for gathering sampled participants to for the interviews. This however affected the whole action research and hermeneutical approach to our problem because after our first finding, the we had to restructure the whole research to fit our new findings (see chapter 2 and 3)

3. Brief description of hermeneutic loop

Following the hermeneutical understanding and the our qualitative design methods in chapter two, this section presents an overview of the first hermeneutical loop which we guided our research. The centre issue here considered diversity and intercultural communication concepts and brief summary to explain the our reason for change of the research problem and to present a credible shift from this hermeneutical circle to our present problem which address collaboration, cultural identity and creative platform.

3.1 Hermeneutical Pre understanding on diversity and intercultural communication

The aim of this section is to provide an understanding of the hermeneutic circle of our study which started with problem “How can Securitas optimize intercultural communication through a creative platform of its diverse workforce?”. it approaches the concept of intercultural communication and diversity in NEAS and the findings that arose which led to the second phase of the hermeneutical loop. This first loop was based on our pre-understanding from a practical company which still faces misunderstanding in the interpretation of meaning when communicating with employees from different nationalities. This problem was originally presented from Securitas but due to some unforeseen circumstances NEAS Energy was chosen

as a case company to present the problem. Therefore, this chapter will present a conceptual understanding and findings on diversity, and intercultural communication to discuss a shift from this first circle to the current problem formulation.

3.1.1 An overview on diversity in the workplace

To solve the problem related to diversity in international companies we provided a clear grasp on how diversity could be optimised in an intercultural organization by looking into national diversity. Our definition of diversity portrays differences in mindset and we defined diversity as; “varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring” (Thomas & Ely, 1996: 80). The purpose of looking into national diversity was to investigate the potential benefits NEAS receives since it brand itself as under the banner as a nationally diverse company.

Researchers claim that the notion of diversity in the labour market and the workplace have been characterized by complaints on discrimination from immigrants and ethnic minorities in European member states (Wrench, 2002, pg. 7) and the willingness of the employees to communicate their knowledge to the rest of its members depend on how they managed diversity as a group (Jo and Joo, 2011, 353). According to Silverthorne (2005), national diversity is an important aspect in multinational workforce. In modern workforce, research suggest that national diversity has an influence on social interaction and communication among employees. It creates a workforce environment where the employees from respective cultures becomes more aware of their national differences bounded by their history, beliefs, and traditions (182).

Diversity according to Braedel-Kuhner and Muller (2016), is a social reality represented with communication (8). They considered diversity as a value which will foster the understanding of social and cultural differences. Therefore, an understanding of diversity will however facilitate the formation of new perspectives for treating and reducing conflicts and misunderstanding

which may arise by the individual perception and interpretation of diversity (16).

Shore et al (2008), points out that, in a group of nationally diverse workforce, individuals with similar nationality have high regards to those from that same nationality over other nationally diverse group members. The division over what group should be the most important is a source of distraction on the group's performance since it may lead to the formation of in-group and generate an in-group bond. On the other hand, a positive view on national diversity ease the possibility of information processing, learning and the capacity in which problems are solved. This also reduces the rate at which a group might make faulty decisions (groupthink), thus, adding benefits to the group performance (124).

The interpretation of national differences that exist among individuals could create a stereotypical bias which may arise from a comparative perception of the cultural identity to which the individual belongs and other cultural identities. As a result of this comparative views the employees may turn to group themselves based on the common identity which they share, thus creating categories. These categories are characterized by the way they act and communicate with one another which is an aspect of the nationality. Our stands on national diversity is 'the number and distribution of different national background of the workgroup members' (Posthuma and Posthuma, 2007, pg, 182).

As scholars point to the necessity of effective intercultural communication and managing nationally diversity, Noel, Yashima and Zhang (2011), points out that there has been an increasing significance on theories and methodologies, though the practical outcome of communication in organizations has not been fully exploited and some organizations still faced difficulties in practicing the theoretical solutions (49). Therefore, the manner in which intercultural communication is carried out in a diverse workforce could have a huge impact on decision making, planning, power and the quality of products produced. This implies that in the case of misunderstandings among members on the quality of information exchanged, the performance rate and work relations could be negatively affected (Silverthorne, 2005, 217). Thus, a negative performance and work relations could determine whether the employee are

being open and honest enough to establish some degree of mutual understanding among themselves. Also, it is important for employees to welcome the differences that exist among cultures to be able to eradicate their already bias perception about a fellow employee because of their national differences. In line with Posthuma (2007), eliminating bias and the stereotypical perception among employees should be important as people with different nationalities could be excluded from relevant information and network. For instance, in a group setting, diverse minorities often feel that their voice are not being heard and this may reduce their individual contribution to the group. In case an opportunity for minorities to address the group or in the case of decision making, they may express their accumulated feeling of bias to fellow employees. Thus, resulting to longer time invested to reach a decision (184).

To conclude, this concept on diversity acknowledges the fact that, in a nationally diverse workforce communication is one of the centre key which binds employees together and facilitates the way information is shared from one culture to the other. Though minorities in an intercultural organization could be inevitable, managing diversity by considering every employees as vital and could contribute positively to the realisation of the organization's objectives is a vital tool to encourage flexibility across nationals.

3.1.2 Hermeneutical summary of diversity in NEAS

This section provides an analytical relation between the concept of diversity and responses provided by employees in NEAS through semi structured interviews as well as observations. The aim is to provide an understanding that national diversity in the context of communication is not an issue in NEAS. From the interviews conducted in NEAS Energy, the respondents had multiple views on the aspect of diversity. We therefore summarized their different responses to diversity and the necessity for diverse to be communicated to the rest of the employees in NEAS.

As mentioned earlier, our definition of diversity considers the differences in approaches organization workforce benefits for being diverse (Thomas & Ely, 1996: 80). Finding from our analysis of diversity highlighted the fact the employees shared similar views on diversity as the various experiences and cultural differences which exist within an organization.

According to DNM5;

“uhmm the diversity I think the diversity has definitely increased the last three, four years. since I came here uhmm we have much broader uhmm many more international employees and we are also now part of a niche cooperative in England so of course that also influence diversity, we are also much more aware of hiring people locally we have sales companies outside of Denmark, we try to hire the local people”. (NM5; 16 April 2017; timestamp 17:45)

From the statement above she brings to light the lens with which NEAS uses in regards to diversity. From her point of view diversity is presented in the aspect of recruitment. Recruiting internationals is an aspect of diversity, which is not visibly observed in our definition of diversity, but it's a point where various new perspectives could be drawn from as we seek to explore the benefits which diversity bring to play in an international organization. However, in relation to NEAS, their notion of diversity is directly related to the number of nationals present in the organization. This could also be confirmed by an observation on the screen in their lobby as having a sum of 20 different nationalities. Thus, to optimise their intercultural workforce, NEAS could shift from the numerical value of diversity and highlight its potentials diversity.

From our observations, their sceptical response to diversity could imply that the employees do not pay much attention to what makes them different, but are instead more involved in carrying out their specific tasks. Though Silverthorne (2005), points out that differences among employees could encourage employees to group themselves based on their similar identities (182), there was no finding tracing social categorization in NEAS. It is therefore clear that when

it comes to diversity and social categorization, the responses of the interviewees reflects their awareness on national differences, but it's not a source of stereotype or categorization.

3.1.3 Intercultural communication and the concept of culture

The academic discussion on culture, in the last fifty-five years or so has been about challenging models of culture which emerged from the field of anthropology. Such as a model of culture from Tylor (1871), where the complexity comprises any abilities and patterns obtained by men as a member of a society. These capabilities include knowledge, art, customs, belief, morals and law (Holliday, 2010:69)

Culture, as the origin for the development of meaning, "signifies historical evidence transmitted pattern of meanings incorporated in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions conveyed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards reality" (Geertz 1973:89). The profoundly correlated nature of culture and communication is explored by Ting-Toomey (1999). Communication is evidently vital for the development of culture, whereas culture work as an engine that generates the meaning that underlies communication. Ting-Toomey (1999:15) further postulates that cultural communication contributes an ideal set of meanings that permit individuals to have social interaction with other members of their own community. In reality these meanings indicate a value judgment concerning one's own and others' behaviors. Inevitably and by default, 'normality' is construct and, besides normality, every single thing is interpreted. The expedite and uncritical assimilation of this supposed normality is a plain example of how the adoption of ethnocentric attitudes exist (Rodrigo-Alsina & Medina-Bravo, 2016). Rodrigo-Alsina & Medina-Bravo (2016) posit that we tend to perceive the world, even those unknown to our own cultural reality, from an ethnocentric stand, but persistently continue to not able to recognize this. The ethnocentric attitude in many cases are concealed by the application of the "ethnic" label, consequently portraying the ethnocentric division and contrast of normal versus ethnic. That is, other groups are ethnic, on the other hand our own group is the norm that sets the standards. In the pursuit to understand social reality, we simplistically prioritize one set of meanings over

others unaware that this is in itself a kind of value judgment. Therefore, when one say that someone is "different", there is a tendency to forget in regard to what they are different (Rodrigo-Alsina & Medina-Bravo, 2016). Seeing culture as socially constructed (Holliday, 2010:74), Holliday argue that this visible phenomenon is a form of classification that perpetuate stereotypes of difference and inferiority (Holliday, 2010:68). It is not easy to modify our mindset pattern, our classificatory routines and to change our outlook, because according to De bono (1969) the mind usually reacts to a given task by pattern thinking. And culture is a pattern that support people in their daily routines, moreover it has control over how we see the world in any given situation such as collaboration. Thus, it will challenge on how we conceptualize a new knowledge (De bono, 1990). However, managing a diverse workforce will acquire a change in culture for many organisations, in other words a change in mindset pattern and behavioural practices throughout the organization (Cox, 1994, pg., 242; Munn, Allen & Neck, 2005: 2).

Subtle prejudices not only exist in the concept of culture, it is also visible in intercultural communication. Similar to Samovar and Porter (2003), Lustig and Koester (2003) posit that intercultural communication in a business environment relies on creating awareness of cultural differences which has proposed that it can considerably improve the effectiveness of employing business policies in different cultural environments (Browaeys and Price, 2015: 31, 339-341). For example, the distinction between ‘collectivism’ and ‘individualism’ to explain how cultures and communities are constructed is that these constructs are elucidated as facts and they are seen as basic and sometimes sole determinant in cultural identity by intercultural trainers, writers of textbooks on intercultural communications (Holliday, 2010:216). In addition, superficial knowledge about a national culture cultivates stereotypical mentality that may be off target in a particular intercultural engagement (Antal and Friedman 2005:76). It is risky and even offending to adopt a particular orientation as means of adapting to the ‘typical American’ or ‘typical Japanese’ behaviour expected of one’s counterpart given the multiple identities and personal aspects that contribute to shaping a person’s worldview and behaviour (ibid). The culture speak phenomenon is best described by Hannerz as below;

“We have an old habit of speaking about ‘cultures’ in the plural form, as if it were self-evident that such entities exist side by side as neat packages, each of us identified with only one of them.” (Hannerz, 1999:393-407)

An intercultural organisation with simplistic models of cultural difference often promote an intercultural training that has a direct and negative effect on intercultural understanding and subsequent working practice (Riley, P., 2007:231). The concept of stereotyping has been conceptualized as a specific extension of the fundamental cognitive processes of classification, whereby we inflict structure and make sense of events, objects and experience (Holliday, 2010:209). Thus, the focus is on certain alike identifying characteristics or distinctive features, as opposed to many other differences (Holliday, 2010:215). The classification of a person as a member of a group influences on how we characterize their behaviour. The same behavior carried out by a member of another group will be categorized in different ways on the assumption of the structure of beliefs we have earlier developed about these groups (Holliday, 2010:216). In the context of NEAS energy’s case, should the cultural differences or stereotyping mentality exist among the employees, how can it influence the present intercultural collaboration? More importantly will the employees be aware it?

In reference to Gee (1999), Holliday (2010) further explains that culture do not communicate with each other; individuals do, and for that reason all communication is can never be intercultural communication instead interpersonal communication (pg., 110).

3.2 Summary

Apart from there is a major disagreement on concept of culture, we also explored how diversity and ICC theories are plagued by extensive problem when applied in the real world as outlined earlier in the chapter 3. Which is why we considered to turn to creativity platform theory as a new solution for intercultural collaboration. These two main theories will be the analytical tool for making sense of our empirical data on to what extend does the creative platform influence

intercultural collaboration at NEAS.

4. Concepts and theory

From our first hermeneutical loop new concepts emerged from the our analysis which continues to our second and main finding.

4.1 Understanding collaboration

In the lense of organisation studies, collaboration is defined as diverse relationships between individuals and social groups aspiring for a common objective (Kozuch, 2009, pg., 17). Collaboration is vital for an organisation because it is situated in the heart of what uniquely shape groups and organisations (Caldicot, 2012, pg., 1).

Caldicot (2012) identifies the concept of collaboration as a diverse group of people or an organisation with various skills and characteristics (ibid, pg.,1-2). Adopting from Caldicot's (2012) conceptualization of collaboration, this present study identifies intercultural collaboration as a group of diverse individuals with the diversity of knowledge, skills and characteristics involved in a cross organisational collaboration. The employees connect together to share and utilize their various knowledge while addressing the role of cultural identity in intercultural collaboration (ibid, pg, 83) which could act as a positive influence to an organisation (ibid, pg.,1-2). Caldicot points out Carnegie's perspective on collaboration with special attention on the combination of individual knowledge which adds potentials to a collective action. Furthermore, she identifies that there is a difference between collaboration and teamwork. Her views on teamwork is seen as playing a role in the accomplishment of a collective task while collaboration deals with maximizing the myriads of cultural identities of each individual in a group or team (ibid, pg., 8 - 83). Similarly, Schwemmer and Havrilla (2013) define collaboration as bringing people together. In their book *Dynamic Collaboration: How to share information,*

Solve problems and increase productivity, they aim to explore on questions like what tools do an organisation need to support and facilitate collaboration? Collaboration is important for any organization that wants to be adaptable, productive and creative. It permits diverse workers to network and socialize with their colleagues, connect and share ideas, bond with other employees whom they just noticed, and increase productivity. Schwemmer and Havrilla (2013) point out that business fails or organisations suffer when group members fail to put their heads together or attempt to group their heads together yet lose important components of the puzzle due to being paralyzed in the tangle of emails, laptops, phones and instant messaging (IM) (ibid, pg., 20).

In a world where we have no control of the social world and where individuals construct their own reality through social interaction, our view is that each employee of NEAS Energy develops their own meaning. Based on the constructivist view, we wanted to make use of the divergent perspectives from various cultural identities of NEAS Energy's employees. Therefore being aware of the cultural identities and the differences in knowledge that a diverse collaborators can bring, are of significance in order to obtain a better understanding of the world (Blaikie, 2002, 177). Hietajärvi and Aaltonen's (2017, pg., 1) approach in harnessing the full potential of cultural identities, fits our ontological stance. They conducted a case study on Finnish infrastructure and identified six key activities supporting the development of collaboration:

1. Articulating a joint vision for collaboration
2. Converging on shared understandings of collaboration
3. Obtaining a common collaborative mentality
4. Developing methods of working with cultural identities
5. Obtaining distinctiveness
6. Legitimizing activities. The result shows that identity formation

Their findings highlight that the capability to collaborate emerges as the most important personal skill, beyond even a person's education. Besides the ability to collaborate, attitude towards collaboration is seen to be a key success factor (ibid, pg., 11).

Equally important to highlight is about collaboration in the context of creativity. Schulze & Hoegl, (2008., pg., 50) collected empirical data from various respondents in 33 companies and take a behavioral perspective to posit a positive correlation between socialization as well as internal collaboration and the originality of ideas. They found negative findings in relationships for external collaboration. It is possible to see that both external parties and colleagues may be a valuable influence that an organisation need for ideation collaboration. On the other hand, Bergendahl and Magnusson (2015, pg., 88) suggest that question to which is more challenging to get a clear answer is what type of collaboration is more fruitful. To them diverse employees throughout the organisation can contribute significantly to the development of ideas as a result of idea collaboration process (ibid, pg., 87). They suggests that any management should emphasize that collaboration across different departments is undoubtedly crucial for exploiting ideas. However, their finding shows that there is a surprising lack of idea generation resulting from cross departmental interaction (pg., 95) and in order to optimize the organisation's collective creativity, the collaboration patterns need to be fundamentally changed (ibid. Pg., 88). They also discovered that there is a lack of observation studies concerning correlations between cross departmental collaboration and ideation (pg., 98). They claim that in order to facilitate a fruitful collaboration process, managers need to explore more on how to optimize the full potential among their employees (ibid, pg., 99). New processes and systems need to be initiated, engaging more diverse employees whilst ideas are generated together with their colleagues in a socialize and networked manner, something that has been discovered to benefit and enhance the idea creation process (Bjork & Magnusson, 2009, 70). In like manner, Sawyer (2007, pg., 3) concludes that collaboration is the secret to breakthrough creativity because a creativity group process is the purest form of collaboration which he also calls 'group genius.'

In the present study, this means that collaboration in NEAS Energy is viewed as a creative process optimizing the diverse perspectives and knowledge assets that represent cultural identities within the organisation.

4.1.1. Collaborating with cultural identities

As described earlier in section 3.2, Holliday (2010, pg., 240), affirms that various authors from the intercultural communication field have divergent perspectives and stances on the nature and extent of influence of culture upon individual actions. There is a tendency to generalize, reflect binary oppositions (pg., 220), inherently problematic that is filled with stereotypical nature of intercultural collaboration training strategies that can lead to prejudices (pg., 209). On the other hand, Holliday (2010, pg., 235) asserts that culture is undeniably a phenomenon which involves individuals sourcing their cultural identities from commonly held ‘group’ resources. Correspondingly, Arasatnam (2015, pg., 294) postulates that individuals are formed from various features of cultural identity; personal relational identity, national identity, immigrant identity and so forth. Arasatnam further concludes that cultural identity reflects the impetus for intercultural collaboration (ibid. Pg., 302). It means diverse workforce from various departments across NEAS have a huge range of cultural identities, where some individuals might draw parts of their identity from their respective departments that also have it’s own distinctive collaboration patterns. In a constructivist view, NEAS’ diverse workforce cannot be simplistically homogenized into a singular culture, because that will ignore on how we see reality that each employee has his or her own independent character in mind that is separated and distinctive from others (Wetherell and Maybin, 1996, pg., 221; Giddens, 1991, pg., 53-55). Thus, it will limit an individual collaborator to draw potential knowledge from other cultural identities they possess within them. Holliday (2010, pg., 228) suggests that the key element is to encourage employees at Neas to reflect on and analyse their own cultural identities and to see themselves as others might view them . This encouraged us to do an iterative study on what underlies intercultural collaboration by looking at cultural identities.

The relevancy of cultural identity issue is significant because in practice, collaboration entails both focusing on and crossing social boundaries (Beech and Huxham, 2003, pg., 29). Their study on Cycles of identity formation in collaborations focus on the forces for and against persistency and disruption of cultural identity while collaborating, and the process of how cultural identity is

constructed and assigned to one self and others. Based on emergent theorizing utilizing data from a collaborative setting in regards with health promotion, their findings indicate that the process of cultural identity formation will affect almost every aspect of a collaboration practice (ibid, pg., 28).

4.2 An exploration of cultural identities

The understanding of cultural identity ignore particular explanation and expand over conventional limits between disciplines in the social sciences. Gradually developing, there has been an emphasis on the relationship between culture and identity (Holliday, 2010, pg., 92). Equivalent with the present study's constructivist view, the perspective on the correlation of culture and identity is best portrayed by Giddens (1991, pg 53-5). He postulates that the understanding of a 'person' differs across cultures (Giddens, 1991, pg., 53-5). Wetherell and Maybin (1996) point to some crucial presumptions that correspond to Giddens perspective (pg., 221). These are:

1. An individual is a person with an independent mind and awareness: a distinctive human being who is isolated and distinct from other people.
2. Everyone has one distinctive character or a constant set of traits, features, liking, or capabilities that summarize that individual's personality.
3. Each person holds his own ideas and feelings. These are personal, self-constructed and systematized within the inner self that can be articulated publicly through language, actions and other means such as collaboration. Their words mirror almost precisely their internal states.
4. A person is the focal point and source of his or her own experience. Individuals initiate actions and strive to realize meaning in constructing their reality in the world. (ibid) .

Hansen and Milburn (2015, pg., 224) predicate that actual practices in regards to creating and maintaining intercultural collaboration can be particularly challenging given cultural differences. They conducted a study on the construction, negotiation and the management of cultural identity during cross cultural collaboration. The focus was on the ways individuals with various backgrounds enact and manage cultural identities when collaborating. Their findings show that individuals manage cultural identities in part by challenging fixed membership categories as they go about collaborating. They also suggest that future research should continue to examine cultural identities in collaboration contexts by concentrating on the enactment and management of cultural identities (ibid, pg., 232). Thus for this present study, each employee should be seen as a diverse individual with myriads of identities that can constantly change and can be managed in order to improve the efficiency of intercultural collaboration.

Rocque, Posick and Paternoster (2016, pg., 48) predicate that identities are persistent with behavior, meaning there is a correlation of self-identity and behavioral intention. Does this mean that if an employee in NEAS Energy is inflicted with a creative collaborator identity or viewed as one, can that be one of the reasons to engage knowledge openly with diverse colleagues in a creative collaboration process? Or is it vice versa? Should an employee decide to adapt the creative collaborator identity, will she or he continuously act to optimize the intercultural collaboration?

Rise, Sheeran and Hukkelberg (2010) suggest that identity may be a distinctive target for persuasive strategies as they concluded in their findings that identity is a vital predictor of intentions and behaviour.

They predicate that the issue for including self-identity as predictor in the theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour stem from theorists who have claimed that identity processes should be considered in the prediction of particular behaviours. After attitudes and norms have been taken into consideration, self identity foresee behavioral intention based on empirical evidence (e.g, Biddle, Bank & Slavings, 1987; Charng, Piliavin, & Callero, 1988; Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). Self-identity refers to important and enduring features of one's self-perception

(e.g., I think of myself as a ‘green consumer’; cf. Sparks, 2000). In regards to identity theory (e.g., Thoits & Virshup, 1997), individuals employ socially meaningful classifications to define and present themselves. For example, answering a question “Who am I?” is in terms of, professional roles, social roles (e.g., parents, father), social types (e.g., healthy eater, food blogger, exerciser) socio demographic characteristic (e.g., gender), and even personality traits (e.g., open minded, honest) (ibid., pg., 1087). As a result, self identities (or “me” identifications) are the views one chooses for oneself when adapting the role of particular or generalized others. This indicates that one integrates the meanings and expectations related with an appropriate classification into the self, in this manner constructing a set of identity standards that navigate identity-relevant behaviours (Stets & Burke, 2000, pg., 224).

Equally important, identity theorist Biddle et al. (1985, pg., 159) points out that attitudes, norms, and self-identity have divergent motivational roots. People comply to attitudes for instrumental reasons and to norms for fear of being rejected by such as external sanctions. On the other hand, an individual acts in a manner conforming with one’s self-identity for self-verification reasons. Specifically, individuals are motivated to keep and proclaim the sense of self and identity whereby individuals act to be persistent in their identity standard. On this condition, when the social categorization including the identity is activated, individuals behave so as to preserve consistency with the meanings grasped in the identity standards (pg., 159).

Rise, Sheeran and Hukkelberg (2010) explain that one of the reasons why self-identity may not predict intention relates to the probability that self-identity may simply mirror past performance of a behavior. The reason is that individuals understand what kind of people they are by concluding based on their past behavior. This perspective proposes that once the effect of past behavior has been contained, self-identity should have no direct result on behavioral intentions (pg., 1088). Referencing O’Keefe (2002), Rise, Sheeran and Hukkelberg (2010) pointed out two identity-based influence strategies or labelling strategies: to make the current identity readily activated, and to allow individuals with alternative identities (pg., 1100). Recruiting skilled

diverse workforce at NEAS energy is a way to promote itself as a working place that allows diversity of identities to collaborate creatively.

The argument above portrays a picture for this present study that identities of NEAS employees are generally made up of a combination of multiple cultural identities from social categories with different classification, so that any single employee may provide a distinctive sense of identity of any other single self on various occasions. For example in practice while conducting our interview to collect our empirical data, we have noticed that the interviewees select a particular story to interpret their reality based on their previous working identity and then can swiftly switch to the current working identity imposed by NEAS. Similarly, when we facilitated creative processes that permit employee utilizing their multiple identities as a stimulator to generate ideas, we have observed that the employees shifted from one cultural identity to another in order to draw various knowledge to generate and develop their respective ideas.

Thus, the justification above also propose that the employees' identities at NEAS will be continually shifting. Correspondingly, Beech and Huxham (2003., pg., 28) are consistent with the view that the constant change in cultural identities occur. However, they assert that sometimes cultural identities will become crystallized for periods of time because they may become rooted so deeply that they are a serious challenge to change (ibid).

On that note, we assume that intercultural collaboration is important because it is a creative process in which cultural identities and relationships can be optimized positively to benefit Neas (Hansen and Milburn, 2015, pg., 224).

4.3 Creativity theory

Employees in International organizations have unique identities and different sets of knowledge which could be beneficial when collaborating to attain the objectives of an organization (Easterby-Smith, 2011, pg. 581-2). However, these cultural identities act as a pattern which

limits employees in the manner with which information are being shared. The theory of creativity is displayed in a creative platform which allows individual with cultural identities to collaborate and share knowledge without an individual cultural attribute acting as a constraint to the flow of information. This creative platform requires individual employees to take the responsibility to be involved in a collaborative process which allows them to be open and flexible in sharing knowledge within a team. According to Giddens (1991) understanding individuals differs as a result of their cultural differences (pg. 53-5). Therefore, the creative platform has guiding principles which aid the manner in which knowledge could be extracted from these cultural identities while reducing their cultural patterns. This platform will be presented below, but first it will be good to have an understanding of creativity.

4.3.1 Understanding Creativity

From the word 'creativity, the first thought that comes to mind is innovation. Innovativeness is just one aspect of creativity. The word creativity relates to all human activities including knowledge collaboration (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 236). According to De Bono(2010), creativity is about improving on ideas and generate new information (pg. 8). Byrge and Hansen (2014), measure creativity by how new ideas are being formed to solve a given problem. These ideas could be gotten from different cultural backgrounds such as schools, workplaces, professional backgrounds and even our surroundings. To benefit from these diverse range of ideas and knowledge, it is necessary to avoid preconceived bias understandings about a person and culture, and be open to new thoughts and practices (139). Thus, for a person to be open to new thoughts, communication is inevitable as knowledge needs to be shared across diverse individuals and groups in a collaborative process (Easterby-Smith, 2011,pg. 583). This promotes an environment where there is no restrictions in the application information irrespective of a person's cultural background but instead exposes the organization to unique sources of knowledge (Cummings, 2004, pg. 352). However, the cultural identity of a person is not completely neglected because it acts as a stimulus for new ideas to be established. In addition, the more diverse ideas are present in a collaboration process the more guarantee it is for an

organization to attain a unique standard of their objectives. This could also benefit employees more by creating a scenario where diverse range of ideas from diverse experience and cultures could be contributed into their task (Byrge and Hansen, 2014, pg. 10). In addition, according to Stahl et al, (2010) diversity has a positive influence on creativity which is associated with differences in experience, differences in processing information and approaches to problem solving which reflects different cultural backgrounds.(442). Thus for creativity to occur in an intercultural organization the barriers of culture are expected to be removed (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 238). To De Bono (1990) "we cannot make the best use of new information unless we have some means for restructuring the old patterns and bringing them up to date" (De Bono, 1990, pg. 13). Thus, creativity entails letting go of existing patterns and it is defined as "the unlimited application of knowledge" (Byrge and Hansen, 2014, pg.10). Applying knowledge unlimited therefore requires workers to collaborate in order to have diverse access to knowledge which could integrate interdisciplinary and intercultural views, and how individuals and teams could affect an outcome (Wiig, 2004, pg.9)

According to Smith, Ward and Schumacher (1993), flexibility is essential when collaborating with cultural identities. However, being flexible in sharing ideas in a collaboration process could be stimulated or hindered by an experience or a previous knowledge which a person holds about certain people or ideas. These experiences act as an inspiration or constraint for employees to be effective and utilizing each other in coming out with unique performances. Smith et al refers to this as 'conformity'. Conformity relates to what we already know or what we see which makes the mind develop a bias perception which disrupts the process of constructing new ideas (pg. 838). However, the construction of new ideas can also be possible if members in an intercultural team continue to challenge each others ideas to improve on the way they think (Stahl et al, 2010, pg. 442).

4.4 Creative platform

The creative platform is a place which accommodates people with different cultural identities to share knowledge and establish new thoughts and actions without any limitations from cultural boundaries. This platform uses the brain, body and attitudes to access new forms of learning and substitutes brainstorming. The brain, body and attitude combine to form a 3D case which work in collaboration with the creative principles through a learning exercise which stimulates the functions and access to divergent flow of knowledge. This learning process is referred to as the creative process (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg.236).

In an intercultural work group, there are several constraints which could inhibit the flow of information among cultural groups. These constraints can be related to hierarchy, norms and values, and production blocking which could emerge from social relations. The creative platform however removes the focus from these constraints to what the person can offer to the group (ibid, 239). However, Caldicott (2012), argues that though individuals are embedded with a unique potential to contribute to a collective outcome, this will depend on the size of the group. Thus, the size of the group should be taken into consideration. To Caldicott, the harmony of the group is beneficial for coherence and it can be difficult to achieve coherence in a small group because some members would have a preconceived idea on what role to play (150).

Byrge and Hansen (2014) believes that the mind can be trained to accept new forms of knowledge. Creativity requires diverse understanding and quality of knowledge produced. That means, all kind of knowledge should be accepted (17) to allow individuals in a group to be fully engaged and be free to express their views on a phenomenon. The result of this is for the group to be able to produce an acceptable idea which includes all individual efforts. Therefore, for individuals to learn and share valuable knowledge it is necessary to organize the work process to benefit and make use of the individual's potentials as a culturally diverse team (Wiig, 2004, pg.49). Byrge and Hansen (2009) cites Csikszentmihalyi definition of a person who thinks creatively in relation to their work and not their personality. To him it is the mode and

devotedness to their work which welcomes every other individual (240). According to Tsoukas (2009), individuals take responsibility for participating and interacting in a group task to improve on a collaborative action. He refers to this individual engagement as rational engagement from which individuals become more open to one another, and tend to produce a high degree of idea generation (945)

Byrge and Hansen (2014) point out four guiding principles which could be used to facilitate intercultural collaboration in groups and could prevent stereotyping or prejudices. Tsoukas (2009), refers to these principles as analogies from which the source and target of variables are of similar output, and could be used to create additional knowledge. That is, comparing things which are different to show their similarities and to draw a surmise (947). These principles are; horizontal thinking, task focus, parallel thinking and no judgement (12). These principles of creativity establishes an understanding for individuals to be able to collaborate their diverse knowledge to enhance the group process and eliminate all cultural, social or economic standards which act as limitations to the application of knowledge (20).

4.4.1 Principles of creativity

1. Horizontal thinking

In line with Byrge and Hansen (2014) horizontal thinking is the process of generating ideas. In idea generation through horizontal thinking, the cultural background of a person can be used to form new ideas when combined with other group members. However, ideas can be accepted or rejected in a subtle way to encourage participants to generate more ideas (172). In addition, in solving a problem, the principle of horizontal thinking permits diverse group members to move their focus on persons and the current situation by interacting and solving a problem on a general level. That is, addressing the problem on a general phase while using the principle or analogies behind to find the solution that when applied the problem will be solved (Byrge and Hansen, 2014, pg. 172 and Tsoukas, 2009, pg. 947). In solving the problem three horizontal thinking

variables are taken into consideration; horizontal abstraction, horizontal search and horizontal transfer. Horizontal abstractions entail transforming a practical problem into an abstract or a general one. The reason for the abstraction is to remove any specific information related to the problem or a subject and make it easier to find solutions with all kinds of knowledge (173). Horizontal search looks for information across all angles in the mental library. It involves the utilisation of knowledge that is not directly related to the problem, but could provide solution to that problem (174). Once the solution has been found, it is transferred back to the problem. This transfer is known as horizontal transfer. Horizontal transfer is good at making new combination of diverse ideas (175). Therefore, the new idea that is generated from the process is a combination of two or more principles such that the solution could be a novel idea. This is supported by the perception that in solving a problem, intercultural communicating knowledge is essential for the development of new solutions , because the same set of people will likely produce the same set of ideas (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, 239, 245)

2. No judgement

In an intercultural setting where ideas are generated, most individuals are characterised by fear of not saying or doing the right thing at the right time and in the right way. This fear affects the way individuals open up to communicate to their members and as a result they judge their ideas on how it would be perceived by others (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, 237). Thus, the no judgement principle makes it possible for group members with diverse backgrounds to understand and communicate efficiently their individual knowledge and experience in a problem-solving state (ibid). However, in contrast to Byrge and Hansen, Tsoukas (2009) argued that the capacity for individuals to generate ideas is closely related to human judgement. He also added that the exercise of judgement is a self conscious act which enables an individual to establish new approaches to deal with a situation(942)

Sometimes, it could also be difficult to get members in a diverse group to communicate their ideas, especially if it has once been rejected. Therefore, being open-minded is an essential factor

in intercultural communication, to accept whatever ideas are communicated whether relevant or irrelevant to the problem (Byrge and Hansen, 2014, pg. 141).

In addition, mutual dialogue should be encouraged among nationally diverse members because through dialogue, the diverse information could be combined, whereby one member's ideas could act as an inspiration to guide the thoughts of the other member (ibid, pg. 238).

3. Parallel thinking

This principle creates an environment where all diverse members will be thinking of the same thing at the same time. Parallel thinking is defined as the state of mind which thinks of one task at a time. To successfully engage members in doing the same thing at the same time, a general task can be divided into sub categories with each category having a deadline (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, 241-242). This is to ensure that all diverse members fully exhaust their potential in communicating their individual ideas on the task. In addition, parallel thinking could be achieved when participants are given a set amount of time to finish their group collaboration. The group collaboration ensures that the members do not work with a person with a similar cultural background. Furthermore, in a decision-making process phones, watches and computers should not be allowed at the beginning of the process. This is because instead of communicating their ideas members might be busy looking at the time or e-mails, which is unhealthy for them to fully engage in an open communication from diverse angles. In coordinating this process, most of the responsibility lies on the team leader or the group facilitator (ibid). Thus, the facilitator should ensure that participants finish a task first before engaging in another task to avoid conflicting ideas (Byrge and Hansen, 2014, pg. 70).

4. Task focus

Task focus requires the facilitator to ensure that no member deviates from the process either by communicating to members on what is not relevant to the task or engaged in other activities. Dividing the task into subgroups makes it possible for participants to focus on one task. The facilitator ensures there is an increasing need to communicate with diverse members to lose track of time and the individual's cultural identity. In addition, the task should be prepared before

grouping members or employees. Therefore, the employees have to be clear about what they collaborate about (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, 243-244, Byrge and Hansen, 2014, pg. 41).

4.4.2 Creative process

The creative process entails a random combination of ideas by the participants. The participants do not know what is in the mind of one another but, one idea produced might lead to another. The dynamic nature of the mind allows different ideas from across disciplines including; culture and professions to connect and establish new ideas. The ideas generated is to provide solutions to problems and to Johansen (2004) the point where two ideas from diverse backgrounds meet is known as the 'intersection'. The point of intersection creates some original ideas which is referred to as the 'medici effect'. This effect reduces the barriers between cultures as well as disciplines (15-17). This process embodies six steps; preparation, red carpet, presentation of task, generating and developing ideas, academic and professional input and blue carpet (Byrge and Hansen, 2014, pg. 144). Preparation prepares the participants mentally for the creative process. This is followed by the red carpet where two to five 3D cases are used to train the mind in idea generation. (148). The task is later presented on a concrete and abstract level but, too much information about the task is not required.

In idea generation and development, the main idea behind creative thinking is to generate and explore new ideas. Generating new ideas involves the retrieval process and a mental transformation. The construction of ideas is in the form of visual patterns, verbal combinations or mental models. However, the ideas generated are for specific purposes and they are generated under certain categories (Smith, Ward and Schumacher, 1993, pg. 837). For instance, participants may be asked to generate ideas on how to establish a new business strategy. In this task, participants are aware of the existing solutions on business strategies. They commence by retrieving a representation of a specific category which could be a feature or a prototype of a new business strategy. Thus, it is necessary for participants to produce many new ideas within a limited time frame and this will require an effective communication of diversified knowledge.

The quantity of ideas produces is a guarantee for a quality idea to be developed (Smith, Ward and Schumacher, 1993, pg. 837). However, Smith, Ward and Schumacher (1993), argued that the main purpose of idea generation is not to produce large quantity of idea but few original ideas which can be further developed and implemented. The process involves both individuals as well as groups where by participants brainstorm and generate ideas independently. This process uses stimulus as a guide to produce abstract ideas and reduces patterns (837) and encourages participants to let go of what has been installed in their mental library and inspires new formation of ideas. After idea generation, an idea is selected for development by the group. This idea can be combined with the other ideas generated for more elaboration.

Based on the idea developed, the participants identify the knowledge that need to be verified and tested as the tentative solution. If proven to be the solution, the ideas are later adopted and implemented (Osborn, 1963, pg. 86).

5. Findings: Conditions, Interpretations and experiences of intercultural collaboration across NEAS

The purpose of this research is to explore in which ways and to what extend does the creative platform influence intercultural collaboration at NEAS Energy. Confirming the general belief that social reality is complex and multi-layered, various samples of multicultural workforce embedded in the context of intercultural collaboration in an international company was gathered. The action research case study was applied in order to explore the employees' interpretations and experiences of intercultural collaboration together with their perceptions of cultural identity. During the iterative process of collecting the data, we found that there is a need to investigate the intercultural collaboration patterns of NEAS. Our data indicate that effective communication happens within the department, but as the intercultural collaboration process takes place across

the organisation, the diverse workforce struggle to communicate due to the diverging collaborating patterns of the respective departments.

We argue that the critical understanding of cultural identity can enhance intercultural collaboration, and how using the creative process can reduce the present cultural patterns across NEAS and subsequently enable the optimization of intercultural collaboration. Earlier in chapter 4, we critically discussed the academic conceptualization of diversity, intercultural communication and collaboration, cultural identity and creativity. As a result of this discussion and to acknowledge the complexity of human interplay, our definition of diversity as the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring. This led to the conceptualization of collaboration in a group of diverse individuals that acknowledge the role of cultural identity and connecting together to share their divergent knowledge in order to positively influence an organisation. In other words, collaboration in this present study deals with reflecting the myriads of cultural identities of each individuals in a group while interacting to bring their various knowledge together.

The notion of collaboration presented in this study remains primarily on the understanding that collaboration is a group of diverse individuals that draw on various aspects of their multiples identities that constantly develop and change. The concept of cultural identity is grounded on the argument that individuals draw on combinations or cultural patterns such as gender and profession, hence all are distinctive in our cultural identities. The focus on cultural identity is pertinent because in practice, collaboration processes necessitate both concentrating on and cutting across cultural patterns. In other words, cutting across various cultural boundaries. And since cultural identity formation will influence almost every facet of collaboration practices, thus it is of relevance to critically understand and explore to what extent cultural identity can influence intercultural collaboration at NEAS. The utilization of the creative platform is important because of the argument that NEAS is a result oriented and fast pace moving company which would require limited amount of time to be productive. This implies that being a company with diverse cultural identities, they could bring these identities in a collaborative process to

generate ideas to respond to their trading demands within a limited time frame. Since each cultural identity is characterised by a pattern which influences their manner, they will respond and adjust to new perspectives and solution. The creative platform is therefore vital to reduce these cultural identities, in other words the departmental silos and act as a medium where ideas could be freely expressed.

In the following analysis it is important to investigate and discover the intercultural collaboration patterns which are influenced and affected by the social actors' disposition of cultural identity. In order to capture the complexity of our contemporary world, we explore, describe and analyze the relationality and interdependence of cultural identity together with the creative platform and their influence on the intercultural collaboration at NEAS. In order to better understand the reality of the employees, we use triangulation where we employ different sets of data, different sets of perspectives "independent window" and different sets of theories.

The following six is our interrelated findings emerged from our observation in semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and creative platform facilitation. These findings are;

- Finding 1 : Diverging views of cultural identity
- Finding 2 : Smooth collaboration within department but struggling to collaborate across NEAS
- Finding 3 : The value of supporting intercultural collaboration development and the role of prioritization and time
- Finding 4 : Deeply rooted cultural patterns and stuck in departmental patterns
- Finding 5 : Challenging existing patterns
- Finding 6 : Cultural identities adapting to change
- Finding 7 : Maximising the potentials of cultural identity on the creative platform

To correspond with the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, we present the correlation of our analysis findings as below. Findings 1 primarily represent the analytical aspect of condition

for ‘intercultural communication’ and therefore mainly supply answers to research questions 1; Findings 2, 3 and 4 correspond with the aspects of ‘Intercultural collaboration unfolding situation’ and ‘the interactants agency’ that provides answers to research questions 2; Findings 5, 6 and 7 address primarily the analytical question that provides answer to ‘individual approach to changing patterns’.

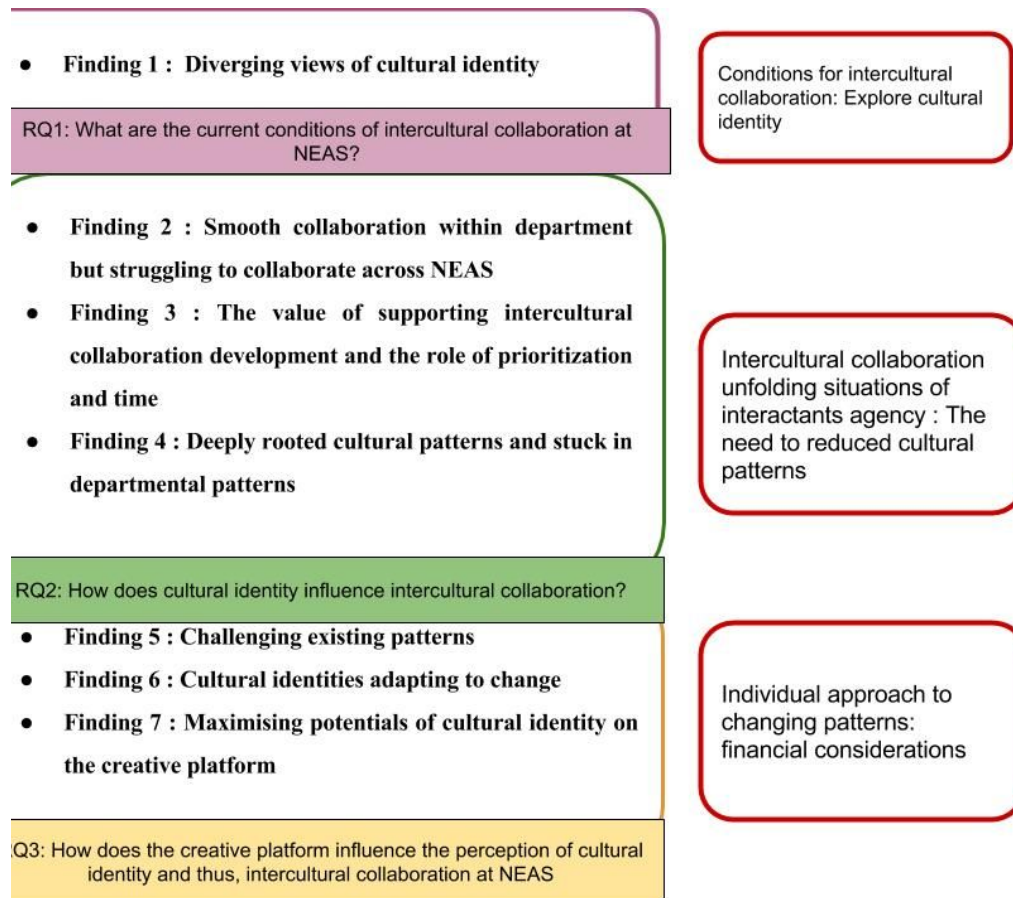
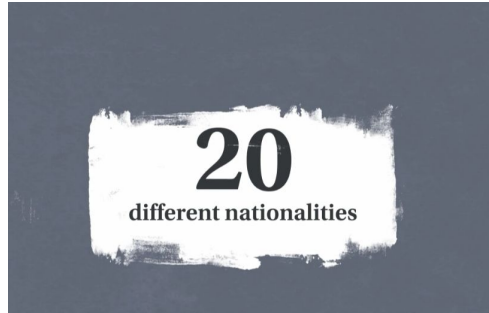


Figure 3: Structure for Analysis: The connection between Findings, Research questions and analytical aspects

5.1.1 Finding 1 : Diverging views on cultural identity



An image caption from a video in NEAS

The image above is what we first noticed from an introduction video from NEAS Energy being played in the main lobby. The video also showed that Neas is an international company that manage energy asset across Europe and was established in 1998 and headquartered in Aalborg, Denmark. Due to a primary focus on European markets, many employees are from various nationalities as expressed by the image above and confirmed from the diversity analysis section earlier. Lastly, the introduction video seem to exhibit how diverse the organisation's workforce is in terms of nationality and how nationality plays an important role in the working culture. Our data points out that there are a lot of opinions on how things should be handled and it's moving very fast.

We took note from our observations that NEAS takes pride in the international working environment due to the emphasis on the number of nationalities they have in their organisation. The stressing of the amount of employee's nationalities can be seen in how they communicate. Apart from their introduction video marketing from the lobby, we also detected it was an important employer branding during Aalborg Career Day at Gigantium. It was on the 7th of March 2017 when we first presented our action research idea to our human resource contact person at one of the booths. We clearly noticed NEAS' focus on the amount of nationalities they have from their brochures and from our dialogue with them. NEAS seems to understand diversity as head count of nationalities. They seem to have focus on certain alike identifying attribute, a distinctive characteristic as opposed to many other difference (Holliday, 2010, pg., 215). According to Thomas and Ely (2001, pg., 233) and Wrench (2002, pg., 7), this would

situate NEAS in the lowest category of diversity management. On the other hand, DPM1 explained this phenomenon as below;

Uhhh and, they have hired because of their nationality. But actually, but in a, in a good way. Like they, they are expert in their own country and that's uhmm or in other countries they have lived in. Uhmm so, I think in Neas, the diversity is sort of, of ahh, other nationalities other than Danish is used as a competence of your CV that, you know something about a country that, you know, if your a native from a country, then you will be the best expert you can find (DPM1; 6 April 2017; timestamp 8:41).

DPM1 points out from the above quote that nationality is used by NEAS as a strength in knowledge about a certain country. It is seen as a geographical competence in knowledge and therefore he does not see it as a bad way of how NEAS utilize nationality. However, DPM1 contradicts himself when he made a comment below about diversity;

I think the word diversity kind have been ruin for me, to me it's kind of corporate bullshit word that you put up on your website, diverse company hiring women and men from all religions and colors or whatever. Too many company used it as marketing. It's kinda cheap shot to used it as ah kind of ah...Look, we have ah Asian people or native american (DPM1; 6 April 2017; timestamp 19:48).

On the above quote made by DPM1, he was criticizing how other companies using diversity in religion, gender and ethnicity being used a marketing tool in a recruitment process. What made us ponder is that what is the difference in using national diversity done by NEAS? It seems to us the actions of these companies he mentioned have similarity with NEAS action, which is

categorization. Reducing the employee's cultural identity by framing them into national identity. On the other hand we tried to consider our judgement that DPM1 has just recently join NEAS two months ago. The behaviour can be explained by Biddle et al. (1985, pg., 159), he points out that individual comply to certain cultural identity for instrumental reasons and to norms for fear of being rejected by such external sanctions. In DPM1 case, it can be assumed that he acts in a manner conforming himself to NEAS cultural identity because it seems to be the standard identity accepted by the company. DPM1 being new to NEAS, may not want to say what he truly means for fear of being judge by the management or fear of being different from the rest. Therefore the validity of his interpretations is questionable.

On the other hand, NTR2 represent the views of other interviewees, she points out *"I said it's not black and white. It's ah, there is so many things that comes to play. So for example you know, this sort of personality differences"*(NTR2; 6 April 2017; timestamp 12:07). The views of the employees correspond to Arasatnam (2015, pg., 294), she posits that individuals are shaped from their various features of cultural identity. The employees perspective seem to imply that they are not limited national identity and that they have multiple identities (Chao and Moon, 2005, pg., 1128). The differences in these cultural identities is that they have their own pattern derive from history and experiences, thus knowledge varies from one cultural identity to another. In other words if the management limit an employee to national identity, then the employee may not be able to optimize the knowledge from the various cultural patterns that an employee already posses.

A summary of this part could conclude that cultural diversity from the views of the individual employees clashes with a that of the management in NEAS. cultural identity in the management level is limited just to nationalities. This is just an aspects which makes a cultural identity different. On the other hand, the employees seems to know more aspects of what constitutes their cultural identity. The general notion behind the aspect of cultural identity was to provide an understanding that it influences every aspect of collaboration s enhancing collaboration. From the points of Thomas and Ely (2001, pg., 233) and Wrench (2002, pg., 7) representing an

organization is the lowest category to manage . Thus for NEAS to advertised itself as nationally diverse limits the room to which individual employees could cross collaborate with their colleagues from other departments.

5.1.2 Finding 2 : Smooth collaboration within department but struggling to collaborate across NEAS

As we waited patiently to be ushered to the meeting room in order to conduct our interviews, the reminiscence from our earlier observation stage consequently reminded us of our pre understanding from the previous turbulent discourse of intercultural communication. The traces of national stereotypes were evident both in theories and from our previous semester project experiences. This made us wonder on how the diverse workforce would perceive each other and how effective the organisation's intercultural collaboration process was,. Below was one of the responses we collected;

“No not really [collaboration problem] . We had, there is like team building. Where we talk a bit about, how do I see my colleagues. Their strengths and where they can get better. In that situations I was very aware of speaking to anyone, like to my international colleagues, and to speaking to them, so I know they, there is no communication problems. Because it's, I am telling you like, you maybe not performing that well at that point or this point, but I know you can get better. Then, I was more careful about how I did it, how I put it. But in my daily work, I don't really have any, any problems” (DPM1; 6 April 2017; Pg., 8; time stamp 23:27)

Apparently, NEAS Energy's intercultural collaboration success seems to rely on how employees perceive their international colleagues and subsequently lead to a smooth collaboration process. On the quote above, it points out that NEAS has no collaborating complications. DPM1 who

happens to be a local, has been with NEAS for over two months, further describes that the team building that takes place once a year, helped him understand his colleagues on a personal level. He points out that the team building process has a purpose in targeting new and current employees to get a chance to know their colleagues. The understanding was vital for him as he uses ninety percent of his time collaborating across the organisation. The process of knowing colleagues was performed by knowing the colleagues strengths and weaknesses, the up's and down's of their lives through different exercises that highlight things about themselves on a personal level. After going through the team building, the outcome of how he sees his international colleagues are as below;

“Even though like people are originally from other countries here [Neas] , they [international colleagues] are still pretty well educated. So we have kind of, go with very close to a Danish culture.” (DPM1; 6 April 2017; Pg., 2; time stamp 2:55)

The quote above portrays division and contrast (Medina-Bravo, 2016). The utilization of ‘even though’ as the first word to describe his international colleagues, depict negativity as if non Danes are expected or can have some problems. While leaning on to national culture to navigate around his colleagues identity, he manages to segregate himself with the use of the word ‘they’, suggesting a need for his international colleagues to be put in a “box”, hence categorization. He then chooses the word education to frame the non Danish colleagues by applying the word ‘still’. It implies that people from outside Denmark are somehow preconceived as less educated. This represents a “standardized opinion on certain social groups or representative of these groups” (Kotorowa, 2014, pg., 187) and thus, the quote above seems to entails a functionalistic view (Holliday, 2010, pg., 215).

He then switches to the word ‘we’ or in other words ‘one of us’ as he concluded that Danish are no doubt a well educated culture therefore it ‘kinds of’ naturally ended going the Danish way. As pointed by Medina-Bravo (2016), sometimes it is unknown to an individual and may not be able to recognize that an ethnocentric attitude conceal itself in a way that their own group is the

standard set for the norm. Although earlier DPM1 confirmed that the team building conducted by NEAS assisted him to become more aware about his colleagues' identity and help his approach in intercultural collaboration, entails that he is unaware that this is like a value judgement as he simplistically prioritize one set of meanings over others. This form of classification is a visible phenomena that upholds stereotypes of differences (Holliday, 2010, pg., 68).

They are all very honest and we are all very straightforward [owned department] and with my managers as well people that are high up in the hierarchy. It works fine with other departments. Again because we have a very specific tasks. Everyone knows what we are talking about, everyone knows the issues on hand. So I don't think so [to experienced collaboration problems].
(NTR2; 16 April 2017; time stamp 17:19)

No, none [collaboration problems] that I have experienced and no not from NEAS.
(NSW3; 16 April 2017; Pg., 3; time stamp 7:33)

Similarly to DPM1, NTR2 who are both non-Danish and both agree that there is no indication that it was a challenge collaborating based on her two years experience working with NEAS. They both point out that they can communicate openly and express what they feel. Furthermore both state with the same style and make no differences in approach towards everyone.

Actually I haven't [experienced collaboration problems]. I don't think there is a problem for example when you are in group and it's only Danes then you speak Danish so communication flows Easier. (DMR4;
16 April 2017; Pg., 3; time stamp 5:31)

In Neas Aalborg headquarter, 75 % of employees are Danish. The support functions or back office such as admin office and human resource are mainly local and communicate in Danish. Whereas front office functions such as trading, weather forecast and analytics are more diverse

in nationalities and communicate in english. As described by DMR4 from the above quote, collaboration problems have not yet occurred on her. She believes that being a local in an all Danish department makes the communication smoother due to the similarity in their language. Implicitly pointing out that she would expect issues in cross cultural collaboration when saying that speaking Danish with Danes makes it easier and smoother to collaborate.

Although unanimously all the interviewees made it clear that there is no collaboration problem, we have observed that they hesitated to communicate honestly and openly to express what they felt during the the creative platform process. Before the actual date of the creative process took place, we sent an email to everyone that each person may bring their own problem formulation or task that needed to be solved on the actual day of the process. When we asked on the day of the creative process, everybody was looking at each other as if they were waiting for someone else to speak out. We noticed that DPM1 was almost raising his hand but hesitated when he saw others looked sceptical. During the feedback stage, we asked the participants on how we could improve the creative process. Two participants; NSW3 and NEN6, who are not local and was not involved during the first interview, suggested that it could have been better if they had worked on a more concrete problem from their respective department. In contrast, DPM1 did not share to us truthfully that he also would have preferred to bring his own problem task from his department, yet he only shared his true experience with EN6 who then later conveyed it to us via email.

Obviously, it is a clear indication that they were not articulating what they really meant during the intercultural collaboration creative process. Thus, it is unavoidable to question the validity of their interpretations because there are clear evidence they had challenges collaborating directly. The findings show that the intercultural collaboration in the context of our study can only be effective within their respective departments. And that the collaboration complications occur when intercultural collaboration happens across the organisation. A general point for the interviewees is their uniformity to their responds to collaboration. Unanimously the individuals employees expresses a clear understanding to the understanding of diversity which has nothing

to deal intercultural communication and collaboration. However, communication in collaboration is in their flexibility and openness to communicate their ideas. Coming from different departments and their experiences employees could have a broader range of ideas to communicate to other colleagues but this aspect of communication is seen to be limited to familiarity.

5.1.3 Finding 3 : The value of supporting intercultural collaboration development and the role of prioritization and time

Bergendahl and Magnusson (2015,) claim that in order to conduct a fruitful collaboration process, managers need to explore more on how to harness the full potential among their employees (pg., 99).

“Yeah I tried to do that [coordinate an intercultural collaboration] as much as possible but some of the difficulties and challenges regarding that is different departments in the business life, they have different priorities, they have different focus areas. So even though people think it might be fun to take part in creative process for concept development or something like that, often they don't have the time to really invest some time to focus into, they would like to participate in maybe an hour or two and then afterwards they go back to their normal practice and then it's up to the project man to really implement, to really conceptualize changes.”(DNM5; 10 May 2017; timestamp 6:25)

The quote above by DNM5 who happens to be a manager, points out that she tried multiple times in driving the cross cultural collaboration in NEAS yet departmental silo was the main barrier in hindering the smooth process. Due to the deep cultural pattern that the employees possessed

within their respective departments, her drive for over 3 ½ years to push collaboration process across NEAS was impeded. DNM5 further describe that if employees tries to go out from their cultural pattern, they will always be drawn back to their old pattern. And eventually, the person in charge with the project end up reflecting on whether to develop the project further or proceed to implement it. The possible reason for this phenomena is the rapid growth led to the issues in regards to prioritization and time when collaborating cross culture as outlined in chapter one. DNM5 further points out in chapter one that the increasing demand from the market, transformed each departments at NEAS into result oriented heavily prioritizing their respective departmental goals. In order to adapt to the rapid change, departments prioritize their time and energy in according to departmental objectives. The prioritization of the department's respective purposes led to these departments being stuck in their own pattern. This resulted to the lack of intercultural collaboration and more focus on individual work, which was confirmed by NTR2 (6 April 2017; timestamp 30:11) and NSW3 (10 May 2017; time stamp 8:22).

Seemingly, NEAS management were not yet ready to reduce the complexity of intercultural collaboration. Most importantly, DNM5 (10 May 2017; timestamp 16:04) highlighted the essential key in overcoming the the intercultural collaboration challenges is to get the the leaders awareness and to emphasize the leadership's role in driving the value of cross cultural collaboration within NEAS. DNM2 seems to imply in her quote that an improvement in the intercultural collaboration is of significance as pointed out by DNM5 in chapter one (10 May 2017; timestamp 16:04). In order to support DNM5 initiatives in developing collaboration across NEAS, Hietajärvi and Aaltonen (2017) suggested that leaders and management of NEAS must articulate a joint vision for collaboration, converge the shared understandings of collaboration, obtain a common collaborative mentality, develop ways of working with cultural identities and most importantly is to legitimize the collaborating activities (pg., 1). Henceforth, the management needs to support the collaborating development in order to inflict a new collaborating identity. Particularly, legitimizing the time and activities for intercultural collaboration as one of the main priority in the departmental goals. Inflicting new cultural identity in intercultural collaboration through legitimization of time and prioritization is vital

because collaboration was recently considered as the most valuable personal skill, beyond even the employee's' education. Therefore inflicting and supporting the development of a new cultural identity in intercultural collaboration is seen to be a key success factor (pg., 11).

5.1.4 Finding 4 : Deeply rooted cultural patterns and stuck in departmental patterns

In this section we present our finding 4, deeply rooted cultural patterns at a departmental level. As outlined in chapter 5.1.2, the employees at NEAS developed a silo mindset. This pattern of thinking and behavior have assisted employees in carrying their daily working lives within their department. The employees' mind responded to a given task by pattern thinking in order to help themselves to go through the day (De Bono, 1969). On the other hand, the downside of patterns is that it influence the employee's' perception and understanding when collaborating with other departments that have divergent patterns of doing things in particular collaboration. Thus it is difficult to gain new changes in intercultural collaboration, because each of the departments conceive differently, think differently and do things differently in a given context (De Bono 1970). These structuring pattern then develops the working cultural identity (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg., 236) that are deeply stuck in their departmental routines. And each department has it's own discipline and priorities that varies from one department to another. The diverging disciplines and cultures in each department have created boundaries between these departments and affected the intercultural collaboration activities (ibid). As NTR2 pointed out below;

Uhhh sometimes [problems or challenges on intercultural collaboration]. It's more from where you from. As in like department wise. Ah for example you know Trading and Sales, we are naturally, we will have, we will ah discussed. Because that's the natural course of the job. Because they want to provide a good price for their customers, whereas we are optimizing these assets and trading these assets. So we don't want to pay that much. So obviously it's a natural sort of ah discussionary. Uhm other things would be more on a personal level. Not like personal per say but

departmental personal levels. For example people in Product development is very use to writing proper reports about everything. You know like a master thesis like you know with executive summaries. And you know like very properly build with the right headings and the right things you know. If you do that all day, and you ask a trader to make a description of the market trading, obviously they will not get the same sort of report. They will obviously get a piece of paper, very specific this is what we do, this is what we offer, you know this is the part where we trade or from, this is the exchanges that we used, this is the fees, other wise boom boom boom. Uhm and then it happens that, they will like; “Yeah yeah we would like you to do but a report structure, you know with all this nice topics and uhm parts and sub titles and all these things. And then from a Front office perspective, sometimes that’s hard to communicate. Because we don’t, for us that is not a task. So for example, in my situation, for me to spend a day writing a report where my main task is actually execute trades on the exchanges. It doesn’t really makes sense to me. Does that make sense? So it’s more of the culture because they do that, you know on a regular basis. From there that’s how the culture, you know that how you present a case. Whereas you know in other departments is more straight to the point. This is what you need to know. For us, it is a very big difference between ah need to know and good to know (NTR2; 16 April 2017; time stamp 18:11).....I mean the reason that we have the [problem on intercultural collaboration] can be culture different in ways of doing things (ibid; timestamp 32:20)

The intercultural collaboration routines described by NTR2 and DNM5 in chapter 5.1.2 indicates an establishment of a deeply rooted cultural patterns within each department at NEAS. As these formed patterns are widely recognize and constantly used within their respective departments, they become more firmly established (De Bono, 2010, pg., 9). In detail, the cultural pattern using system is very effective way of handling information. Once established the patterns develop a sort of code, for example each department form their own collaboration code (ibid). The advantage of a code system is that instead of having to collect all the information on the

understanding of intercultural collaboration, NEAS employee can collect just enough to identify the code of intercultural collaboration pattern (ibid, pg., 9). This is because the employees' mind are like a special surrounding that permits information to organize itself as patterns and efficient in creating patterns. In other words, that is the effectiveness of the mind. Although it is quite easy to add and combine patterns in their respective departments, it is however extremely difficult to escaped and restructure them for the patterns have the power over focus and awareness (pg., 10). As DPM1 pointed out on a quote mentioned in chapter 5.1.2, the reality in NEAS for her as a Senior Business Performance Manager based on is that despite the management's initiative in creating one code of intercultural collaboration across the organisation, each departments ended up in storing diverging informations due to the differences in collaborating patterns they possessed.

Henceforth, employees were stuck in their own embedded cultural routines that affected the employees' divergent understanding of intercultural collaboration. Thus this explains NEAS struggle to collaborate interculturally.

5.2 The creative platform's influence the perception of cultural identity and, thus intercultural collaboration at NEAS

This section explains how the creative platform was used to reduce the cultural patterns of the intercultural workforce in Neas through a collaborative facilitation process. The aim of this is to show how the creative platform influences the perception of cultural identity which could lead to intercultural collaboration among employees from different departments representing diverse cultural identities. This platform acts as a substitute to brainstorming which includes diverse

perspectives from the intercultural workforce of Neas to enable collaboration across cultural identities and acts as an added advantage to the NEAS as first movers and result oriented organization. Thus, this reduce fear and judgement among members and allows the flow of information across cultural identity and in addition this platform is intended "build up social competences" among individuals (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pgs. 248-249)

5.2.1 Findings 5: Challenging existing patterns

According to PM1, being creative is about challenging the current traditions of thinking by providing solutions which are distant from the usual approaches of solving problems.

“I think I am being creative in my work by, if I have problem in one of my projects and, and people say ahh we usually do this. But if, I don't know. Pose another solution or we can also do this or we can just go round up do, or we can live with the problem or something. Uhmm so, to challenge the existing ways. Uhmm but it's not, to my, in my mind it's kind of...” (DPM1, 06, April 2017, timestamp; 27:30)

To DPM1 being creative could be perceived as not welcomed by other employees. From his statement above, he expresses the fact that the other employees have a usual way of carrying out their projects which they expect their newly employed employees to conform to that format.

Being aware creativity present new approaches to a task, the existing standards acts as challenges which limits they way new ideas could be introduced into their daily task. According to Byrge and Hansen (2009) this supposed usual way of performing their task could be seen as a pattern which disrupts creativity (235). To DPM1 their usual way of performing a task correlates with the financial expenses and implementing new approach to solving problems could be perceived as a financial burden depending on the cost it will incur. This he stated “If you're creative, it's, you kind of, you are bad at your job” (DPM1, 06 April, 2017 timestamp 28: 05). This statement implies that there is a limit to which the financial department allows creativity, which could mean that there could be an assumed amount kept aside for projects.

On the other hand, he explains that some of the employees in the marketing unit are creative, which he implies the work setting affects the extend of creativity. He added that because he is new in NEAS and not aware on how projects are handled, his level of creativity could be perceived to be high (DPM1, 06 April, 2017 timestamp 29:11). This therefore insinuates that creativity can be highly attained in Neas with an employee who is new to the organization. The reason for this is that he is not fully accustomed to how things are being done in Neas. However, DMR4 believes that the main goal in NEAS is to deliver results rather being creative (DMR4, 06 April, 2017, timestamp 16:23). This could imply that they are less concern on how their diverse cultural identities could possible provide unique solutions to provides. Thereby, depicting the employees as embedded in a routine task rather than gaining from their diverse potentials. Therefore, NEAS according to Thomas and Ely (2001) is portrayed as a company which is most interested in the headcounts than the benefiting from their pool of knowledge and experiences the cultural identities represent to aid their result driven objective (233).

NSW3 agrees with the notion that being creative generates new ideas.

“Creativity I think that is a big deal because here in Neas they are always looking for new ideas, new ways of doing things ... At my workplace, I think is not that important. creativity always comes up with new ideas on how to improve the way to improve and stuffs like that” (NSW3, 6 April, 2017, timestamp, 13:30),

From her statement above, Neas is open for creative ideas. This contradicts DMR4 (06 April, 2017, timestamp 16:23) who presented creativity as a less important factor in NEAS. However, NSW3 believes creativity is not an important aspect in her work. This implies that though Neas is open to new ideas to improve on the their productivity some of the employees are not willing to challenge their patterns and be open to new ideas that could positively influence a group or personal task within the organization. Challenging patterns confirm to the claim of De Bono

(2010) who points out that sticking to the old patterns disrupts the construction of new ideas (pg. 13).

On the aspect of working with teams to benefit from creative ideas, DPM1 stated teamwork,

“We had uhmm, there is like ah like team building. Where we talk a bit about what, what you, how do I see my colleagues’ ah their strengths, and the, where they can get better” (DPM1, 06 April, 2017, timestamp, 24:28)

His statement reveals that working as a team in Neas is not in the aspect of sharing ideas but to better understand their colleagues based on their strengths and to improve on their weaknesses. Nothing was mentioned on exchange of ideas to accomplish a task.

The MR4 reveals;

“...so often it’s emm say 5 or 4 involve in a project so that way you will get not all the way round but at least 4 or 5 opinion on the project ...I haven't seen where we go out and ask employees would you like this, ..., it’s not the culture of this company the culture is more I have an idea and I will make sure it happens and I will implement it and that’s it.” (DMR4, 06 April, 2017, timestamp, 17:13)

This presents teamwork as benefiting from the opinions of their team members. The last part of the sentence reveals that though they work in groups it’s more brainstorming on individuals ideas to get diverse opinion. This implies that other employees in the group are therefore seen as playing a role in to generate ideas to accomplish the set task which is different from a complete involvement of the employes on every step of the project to enable a full display of their individual strength or skills to add potentials to the collective realisation of the task (Caldicott, 2012, pg. 8)

It is rather ironical that though Neas is open to new ideas and new ways of carrying out their task, some of the employee's could be depicted as being resistant to change, while others especially DPM1 believes new ideas could be introduced to when carrying out his projects. He expresses a positive attitude about being creative in his task, but there are financial challenges to which limits the level of creativity. This is however could be presented in the form of their current existing patterns on financial consideration which could allocate a minimum to which new ideas could be funded. As a result, the cultural identities which exist in Neas could have less significant role to the enhancement of the organization's objectives.

5.2.2 Findings 6: Cultural identities adapting to change

Collaboration in an intercultural workforce of Neas through a creative platform requires the employees to be aware of the individual identities and the way these identities join forces with other employees to have unlimited access to knowledge which could accommodate diverse cultural views. Gaining access to diverse cultural views from different identity is to facilitate the working of a new project whereby the diverse collaboration could create a new range of ideas that could limit the timeframe allocated for the project. In Neas, each worker had a different understanding to cultural identity which reflected on their individual pattern. These individual patterns could be beneficial because it saves energy and time but it hinders the way new information is perceived and to think and act differently according to changing circumstances. Thus, adjusting and accepting new perspectives or new solutions from different cultural identities (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 235)

From the interviews gathered from six different departments in Neas, the results revealed that Neas is results oriented and is open to new forms of ideas (DMR4, 06/April/2017, timestamp, 16:10). Being a company with diverse cultural identities, with each department having its own its own identity and embedded routines, these new forms of ideas could be achieved through a creative collaborative process which generate ideas that cut across departmental silos. However,

in NEAS, the various identities have their individual pattern which guides them through their task and increase the rate at which they could adjust to new forms of thinking and collaborating.

According to NSW3, reducing her individual pattern and adjusting to new ways of thinking is a process which requires a long duration to be achieved. From her point of view, the mindsets of individuals are diverse and each individual mind is framed in a way that reacts to a task based on their thinking pattern. To her (NSW3) the mindset of those working in NEAS adjust to a pattern which acts as routine and would not need to change because it fits into the identity of the company.

"I think it would take a really long time because ah people are like...have their special mindset and they are kind of routines. So, it would take a long time to change your mindset and change the routine, and change the behavior to get a new identity. But I think NEAS has this identity, NEAS will like get employees who are fitting to their identities. So, I don't think that many workers have to change" (NSW3, 10, May 2017, timestamp 9:50)

This confirms to Byrge and Hansen (2009) opinion on pattern through which they present the creative platform to challenge the way individuals will be open to adjust to change (235). However, adjusting to an identity which fits into the company's profile implies that the management already have patterns which describes the kind of cultural identity they perceive to be needed in their company. This notion of identity supports Biddle et al 1985 views which represents the employees of NEAS as though they are comply to the identity NEAS requires for fear of facing external sanctions or rejection (159). As a result of this, the notion that they are open to new ideas is fuzzy since the cultural identity of the employees is connected to their experiences. Looking at the sentence; "so I don't think that many workers have to change" seems like the employees are static to a regular pattern, with the same set of people and are also faced with the same kind of problem. Change is inevitable and sticking to a pattern hinders the

acceptance of other identities and flow of new ideas which could be needed to achieve and objective, therefore, employees need to be open to accommodate diverse personalities (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 248). It is important to note that her response was taking after a collaborative session on a creative platform and for her to think they are not supposed to reducing their patterns because it fits into the organization implies that reducing patterns in NEAS needs to start from leaders or the management and how they could optimize their employees. However, DMR4 points out that NEAS is money making business and not a human business (DMR4, 06/April/2017, 10;51)

The point made by NSW3 on the identity NEAS has and needed employees to adapt to could be confirmed by the opinion of DMR4 who stresses that NEAS needs the right people to impact knowledge in them. Needing the right people could imply the right identity to fit into their organization to assimilate the kind of knowledge they want to put in them: "We have to have the right people so that we put knowledge in them very quickly"(DMR4, 06/April/2017, 4;22).

NEAS has diverse employees with knowledge from their diverse looking for people to train them on who NEAS want them to be could make them homogeneous in their contribution of knowledge which will not add anything new to their organization. Therefore, it will be beneficial to add the creative platform as a collaboration strategy from which they could gain access to knowledge that already exist in the organization. Besides, the employees are not objects that knowledge can be put in them.

The distinct cultural identity of the individuals could reflect on their adaptation to new roles (Thoits & Virshup, 1997, pg. 1087), the responds from DNM5 cultural identity perceived identity as a unique personality traits distinguishes a person from the rest (DNM5, 24/5/2017, timestamp, 7;56). She believes that her personality is distinct from the rest of the workers in NEAS and she makes out time to collaborate with the other departments and open to new source of knowledge from her colleagues. Being the only person in her area as a Senior Business Performance manager, and aware of the differences that exist across department within the organization, collaborating with diverse department is a form of being open to new ideas and

new ways of thinking (DNM5, 10/5/2017, timestamp, 8:23). Thus, involving other colleagues in her work is an aspect of challenging herself to adjust to new patterns since she encounters different employee with different working identity and pattern while striving to achieve results. Therefore, according to Byrge and Hansen (2014, pg.10) and De Bono (1990, pg. 13) she creates an atmosphere which allows diverse application of knowledge by restructuring her pattern to accommodate new information. The state of her identity can be supported by Stets and Burke (2000), who claims that for DNM5 to be aware of her identity gives her the notion that she could adjust to other individual depending on the role she has given herself which cut across other relevant identities (pg. 224). The notion of working across departments shows that she is not stocked in a pattern and is always ready to adapt to new changes. This work ethic has become a normal way for her which she declared stems from the fact that she had been through the creative genius course in Aalborg University (DNM5, 10 May 2017, timestamp; 05:56).

Adapting to a new pattern could be reflected on the respondent individual identity. Some of the employees' were noticed to be more comfortable around their colleagues while generating ideas. However, this did not imply they were ready to reduce their cultural lens to accommodate new identities to their work. NSW3 portrayed a stiff resis to the ideas of reducing cultural identity and to welcome other identities into the workplace. To her, her identity conforms to that of NEAS thus changing it will require a long duration of time. On the other hand, being open and flexible to new sources of information is not a problem for DNM5. This probably is because she has been in the creative platform as a student. Thus flexibility and openness to external output seem to her as a daily routine. This is the kind of output we expected for all the other employees to make as an impact.

5.2.3 Findings 7: Maximising the potentials of cultural identity on the creative platform

"The core of constructing the creative platform is to create a common focus outside the participants 'selves that is so strong that all their awareness is present on the task they are working on... And they let go of the professional, social, and cultural 'masks' that everybody is wearing in any social context like working in a group". This build up more self-respect and encourages participants to act more freely to act more freely (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 248)

An overview of the creative platform reveals that two out of three participants were quite aware on the nature of the creative process since it has been part of their educational studies. An hour and thirty minutes was allocated for the process in which we gave a brief introduction of the creative platform and the creative process. Before the problem to collaborate on was presented, the participants were asked to present their individual problems. DPM1 from observation was about raising his hands in response to the question, but after looking around and noticed the other participants were indifferent he put down his hands. We then presented a problem which was abstract from NEAS. The abstract problem was to divert the minds of the participants from their daily routine. It was used to demonstrate intercultural collaboration using a creative platform. It could be observed that collaborating with other employees uses less hours to generate ideas which will could solve the problem and a practical representation of the solution on paper.

Before collaborating on the problem, the participants were ask to switch off their phones and put away their watches in order to boost their concentration level. 3D cases were later presented whereby the body, brain and attitude of the participants was fully engaged in a exercises which reflected their daily activities. These exercises was done in groups of two and the participants constantly switch places. From the feedback of NSW3 she claims that on a normal working day she would rather not talk her personal information to others. However the use of this exercise which involves a little about personal information is also intended to display the fact that no matter the cultural identity of a person there still exist some similar attributes which could establish a friendly environment for diversity to co-exist. Thus eliminating their cultural differences and enabling them corporate with those other than them.

While the other participants were flexible in sharing their ideas on the problem, NSW3 was not open enough to let her ideas out. This was not strange to us because from the first interview we also observed her stiffness in responding to the questions. This could be part of her identity because the same behavior and pattern of response continued to the last interviews where we got their feedbacks on the process. It seemed like she is not ready to change her pattern since for her the creative process took a long time and her identity fits to the expectations of NEAS. (NSW3, 10/May/2017, timestamp, 9:50)

According to DPM1, the creative process was good, though he needed to get used to it. Nonetheless, it forces them to think in new ways to produce unique ideas which he called "crazy ideas". This was what he would never thought of if he was working alone or with people from the same department as him (10/May/2017, timestamp, 3:45).

During his feedback, he said the exercises which characterized the creative platform, that is the 3D cases could be included in their daily meetings. 3D cases are exercises that build focus on a present task and ignores old patterns with the use of the creative principles (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 245). But when it comes to his (DPM1) project, he would rather not include other departments (6/May/2017, timestamp, 8:27). Which implies he would rather stick to his old pattern of brain storming within his department.

NSW3 also confirms that the creative platform was fun and she got to know about some colleagues she has never spoken to before in NEAS; "I think it was fun. It was something new and because I have never tried something like that ... I learned some new colleagues to know, because I haven't talked to them before" (NSW3, 10/ April/2017, timestamp, 1:15, 1:42). This feedback added more value to the creative platform as not just a process for ideas generation but it builds a friendly atmosphere through their social interaction. Thus, a step to further unifies the workforce in NEAS.

To conclude, the creative platform could be seen to have a positive impact on the participants. For a while, the employees were really committed to learn new forms of brainstorming which did

not just ended up with a bulk of unique ideas but also established some level of social interactions among employees. Though some participants were hesitant to express themselves at the beginning of the process, the platform gave every participant the opportunity to be heard. However, the employees were less satisfied with the fact that the problem they collaborated on was not related to their individual projects. In addition, reducing their pattern and ensure a flexible cultural identity would have to start with the NEAS as a whole. Though some employees reveals that that identity in NEAS is developing, others reveals their assimilation to the Identity NEAS portray which could result to a homogenous cultural identity among the employees thus depicting diversity as head count and not actually benefiting from the differences they possess.

5.2.4 Practicing creative principle on the creative platform

This section present a discussion of the creative platform based on the creative principles and the participants approach to each principle.



Figure 4 : Creativity platform at NEAS

Parallel thinking

Byrge and Hansen (2009) points out that creativity through parallel thinking engages participants to place more attention on their work in a way that allows both individual and groups to think just about one task at a time (pg. 237). To ensure that all the participants worked on the same task at a time in approximately 5 minutes, the process of collaboration was divided into subtask. This subtask ensured that all the participants were working on the same task at the same time to create a flow which absorbed their cultural identity and their normal work patterns. However, upon observation, the participants were all engaged from the start but after a while DNM5 dashed out with her phone to answer a call. Phone calls was one of the potential restrictions to be removed from the creative platform to which the participants had to comply. Nonetheless, this did not completely disrupt the task per se but kept the other participants and us as the participant observant wondering whether she was coming back to continue the creative process.

However, at the beginning of the process when the guidelines were laid out on the possible distractions that needed to be taken away, DNM5 this time came in with some snacks and had to put out with an indifferent reaction. To an extent this affected her level of concentration on the task probably because she had preconceived herself taking some breaks to eat her snacks. However, she could go out to eat but not during the collaboration process. This could be the source of her indifferent behaviour which reflected all through the creative process. Thus, reducing the pattern of individuals highly need their time and dedication to learn new things.

Task focused

Task focus in creativity require full concentration on the task in the creative platform. (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 244). Task focus was executed in the creative platform by alongside with parallel thinking to ensure the participants were focus on a task at a time. During the facilitation process, the subtask presented to the participants were a step towards solving the problem we assigned to them. The task or the problem was about redesigning the NEAS canteen. We were aware that the problem of creating or designing a new canteen correlates with innovation, but the main idea behind this task engage the participant to what we felt they all could relate to since

their ideas could be communicated through conversation (Kvale and Brinkman, 2008, pg. 301). For a while, level of focus on the task was high such that the participants were more determined to know the outcome of the collaboration process. Not being aware of what arise after each task, their level of motivation dropped but DPM1 and NEN6 stayed focused all through and were inspired by each other's ideas. The process ended up with a strong bond between these two participants that continued after the end of the collaborative platform. It was later revealed by DPM1 that the creative platform was his first time to meet NEN6. In the creativity lens, the level of concentration which they established was a good means for them to diverge away from their normal routine and trying out new forms of knowledge. Some of the other participants were indifferent about the process at some point. DMR4 expresses her thought after the process. From her point of view she would have preferred the presentation of the overall agenda of the creative platform. This could be part of their normal routine but under the creative platform participants are not suppose to be aware of what will happen next after their current task as it could disrupt the level of focus on the task,

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the level of focus on each task which conforms to Byrge and Hansen (2009) notion of one task, one deadline (pg. 244)

No judgement

The principle of no judgement could be perceived as the main barrier to intercultural collaboration. This principle requires confidence and openness in the creative platform to reduce the level of fear of being wrong (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 244). Collaboration in this platform is different from the normal academic nature. The academic nature of interaction could warrant participants build a sought of relationships where they introduced themselves and the possible work position. In the creative platform, your name or job title is not the point interest. This is intended to avoid situations where individuals could see themselves under a neutral lens without the fear of being judged by hierarchy or individual expectations (244). Therefore, in the creative platform activities are presented from which the participants gets together base on a similar criteria. As observed in the creative platform with NEAS, the principle of no judgement cannot be hundred percent actualized. Traces of judgement could still be uncovered while the participants were collaborating among themselves. Though we did not introduced them to their colleagues, we could observed some of the employees knew themselves before meeting at the platform. However, this would not be strange since they all work in the same company. DMR4 actually brought the group together, thus it could be insinuated that she knew all the participants and their individual job title since she is a Human Resource manager. After a high concentration level into the task, some of the participants (NEN6 and DPM1) changed their sits to the person whom we presume they had developed some sought of connection. From an informal discussion with DPM1 we noticed he had not met NEN6, and the platform was their first meeting. This two continued to work with each other till the end of the platform. Working constantly a person during the creative process could be perceived as a form of judgment because these participants neglected the presence of other in the room and the instructions given required the participants to do regular rotation of persons. In addition while generating ideas in groups during the creative platform, it was also observed that NSW3 was not fluent in presenting her tough on a task with DMR5 and one of the us (the participant observant). Her hesitant attitude could be supported by

Tsoukas (2009) who claimed that the capacity to generate ideas is connected with the human judgement which is a self-conscious act to develop new approaches to deal with a situation (942).

Horizontal thinking

The principle of horizontal thinking is similar to what Tsoukas (2009) referred to as analogies (pg. 947). This principle, claims that a creative person can find connections to all disciplines and cultures by generate an unusual association which are less obvious to others. Producing ideas from connecting the cultural identities and discipline cuts across patterns (Byrge and Hansen, 2009, pg. 238). Thus, this encourages unlimited application of knowledge. The creative platform in NEAS had card which are designed to boost the mind of the participant to think in a new direction. All the participants expressed their joy to try something new and the unbelievable ideas the generated from the use of the card after they tough they ad no ideas to contribute. For a while this cards actually break the patterns and the ideas which they produced was what they could not have imagined. DPM1 revealed that the would practice this principle in with his colleagues during their morning meeting. The essence of this principle was to reduce their patterns and while making the participants aware that ideas could be generated from all culture given that they set their mind to see the analogy which exist between cultural identities

6. Conclusion and recommendation

The study aimed at investigating, describing and explaining intercultural collaboration condition in the context of an international company which was Neas Energy. We looked at the cultural identity influence on the intercultural collaboration patterns and then we explore the influence of the creativity platform on intercultural collaboration in NEAS, where we facilitated and observed for about an hour and 30 minutes with employees from different departments. The overall structure of the research was in the form of an action research and a hermeneutical approach to address the intercultural workforce. The first hermeneutical loop addressed intercultural

communication while the second and main problem of the research was on intercultural collaboration of cultural identities through the creative platform. Triangulation method was used for this present study, different sets of data gathered from semi-structured interviews, informal interviews and participant observation. We have applied Sagor's (1992, as cited by Parson et. al, 2013., pg., 206) concept "independent windows" to allow various perspectives to be shared from different background. We used content analysis in our study to evaluate text document and oral communication, interpreted coded and textual materials from our data.

Concluding to our findings, the creative platform is however an unfamiliar approach to solving problems in organization which seemed to reduce cultural identities and boost a productive output. In addressing our problem of the influence of the creative platform on intercultural collaboration, we examined three sub research questions to support our findings. The first questions addressed the current conditions of intercultural collaboration in NEAS, the second is on how the cultural identities of NEAS influenced intercultural collaboration and lastly how the creative platform influenced the perception of cultural identity and thus, intercultural collaboration at NEAS.

Our findings revealed that collaboration within departments of NEAS does not affect the flow of information neither do they have problems with national diversity. However, they are limited in the collaborating across departments. The need to collaborate across department could be questioned whether it is necessary. The responses from DPM1 reveals that as a project manager, he moves round departments to get contributions to his project. Going about the organization to get diverse input according to DNM5 is plague with time differences from each departments. Therefore, as one of the conditions upon recruitment into NEAS, they are able to work independently and according to their set routine. This routine describes the patterns which guides their work to achieve their objectives. Thus, the workforce gets limited contributions to reach their goal.

Our view on creativity is to identify an area which needs to be improved with the availability of knowledge rather than wait to fix what is already broken. NEAS is not limited in knowledge as DMR4 claims. Her understanding to the differences in identity that are present in NEAS is rather limited. NEAS brands itself as nationally diverse which could be neglecting their diversity in experiences and other aspects of cultural identities. In addressing the aspect of identity, we did not limit our understanding to nationality but we embraced all aspects of culture. We consider different dimensions of culture with their experience and training inclusive to present the diversity of information NEAS could acquire from its workforce. Thus, the notion of the creative platform is to accommodate all cultural identities and their unlimited knowledge towards achieving a set objective while increasing social interaction and building network.

The findings presented NEAS as an organization which is open to new ideas and approaches to accomplishing a task. From some of the interviewees (DMR4), being open to new ideas is rather in the form of recruitment. DPM1 revealed that as a newly hired employee he could have much to offer but he is financial limited as he claim there is a limit to which new ideas could be accepted. To him there is a pattern to achieve his objectives but being new to the NEAS his creative approach to problems are not entertained. After a creative collaboration with some of the interviews, some of the employees were amazed at the ideas they produced. DNM5 revealed that the being open minded and flexible is the identity she uses to cut across departments and reducing patterns. This was what we aimed at achieving after the creative platform but it seems she also acquired from her studies of creativity. However, the other employees especially NSW3 did not see the need to be change her pattern. She was indifferent to the idea of reducing her patterns and embracing a new identity welcome ideas other identities. We also observed her indifference from the interviews and the creative and the manner in which she retreated information. To her, her identity conforms to that of NEAS and it would require time to change.

In a nutshell, the creative platform to an extent had a positive impact on the participants. The interviewees were committed in learning new approach to collaboration which does not only ends at brainstorming but included a complete development of an idea. The participants were

amazed at their training exercise which stimulated their brains to produce new information. However, the problem which the participants collaborated on was not in anyway related to NEAS. Reason being that we were showing them the creative collaboration strategy and to reduce their patterns. We did not want to solve a problem which was related to them else they bring in their normal routine and approach to the ideas of other participants. Since some of them are new to the creative platform, adopting the whole process by collaborating with different was seen as time consuming but they could implement some aspects within their departments. In addition, they also created the platform for building their social network, since they were connected to colleagues they had never met.

Our finding portrays that, cultural identity could not be fully reduced in a social constructivist stance but with the dedication and flexibility of the employees the platform could be beneficial in producing diverse range of ideas when collaborating across department. Thus producing ideas which employees could not have imagined as solutions through problems. Therefore, we recommend NEAS to look into its intercultural management strategies and utilise their diversity of knowledge by improving their collaboration strategy and setting out time for departments to collaborate.

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