

Innovative Performance in African Technical Projects – A Multi-Level Study

H. TITILAYO SERIKI
CIELARKO – International Management Consultants
2 Hampstead House, 1 Fraser Road
Muizenberg 7945
Cape Town, South Africa
Tel: +27 78 547 1105
Fax: +27 86 543 2870
Email: layo.seriki@cielarko.biz
(Corresponding author)

MARTIN HOEGL
WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management
Chair of Leadership and Human Resource Management
Burgplatz 2
56179 Vallendar, Germany
Tel: +49 261 6509 310
Fax: +49 261 6509 319
E-Mail: hoegl@whu.edu

K. PRAVEEN PARBOTEEAH
Management Department
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater
Whitewater, WI 53190
Tel: (262) 472-3971
Fax: (262) 472-4863
Email: parbotek@uww.edu

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we discuss how the societal context of sub-Saharan Africa is related to the innovative performance of project teams. We developed propositions based on previous literature while also using insights from experts from the sub-Saharan section of Africa. We then tested these propositions using a case based approach. Specifically, we examined the propositions through interviews with team leaders in three companies located in sub-Saharan Africa (two located in Nigeria and one located in South Africa). This empirical examination of real-life project teams in sub-Saharan Africa led us to an improved understanding concerning the consequences of African societal characteristics for the innovative performance of teams. Essentially, our findings suggest that managers of African projects need to adapt their methods 1) to incorporate and utilize the diversity inherent in society, 2) to (re)direct the focus of entire projects towards creating value for human beings, and 3) to maintain acceptable and security-giving hierarchies. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings.

Keywords: diversity, innovation, project management, sub-Saharan Africa, teamwork