UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

SCHOOL OF ARTS, HUMANITIES, DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (SADS)

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

MDP 520: PROJECT LEADERSHIP

DATE: 31ST JULY 2026

DURATION: 3 HOURS

MAXIMUM MARKS: 60

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Write your registration number on the answer booklet.
2. **DO NOT** write on this question paper.
3. This paper contains **FOUR (4)** questions.
4. Question **ONE is compulsory.**
5. Answer any other **TWO** questions.
6. Question **ONE** carries **30 MARKS** and the rest carry **15 MARKS** each.
7. **Write all your answers in the Examination answer booklet provided**

QUESTION ONE

Read the Case Study below carefully and answer the questions that follow:

EAST AFRICA INTEGRATED WATER AND SANITATION PROJECT

The East Africa Integrated Water and Sanitation Project (EAIWSP) was initiated through a partnership between the governments of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania in collaboration with an international development agency and several private sector contractors. The project aimed to improve access to clean water and sanitation services in rural and peri-urban communities across the East African region. With a budget of USD 120 million and a project duration of five years, the initiative was viewed as one of the most ambitious regional infrastructure and community development projects in East Africa. The project objectives included construction of water treatment plants, expansion of pipeline networks, establishment of sanitation facilities, community capacity building, and implementation of sustainability programmes for long-term maintenance and environmental conservation.

At the beginning of the project, the steering committee appointed Eng. David Mwangi as the Regional Project Director. David was a highly qualified engineer with over fifteen years of technical experience in infrastructure development projects but had limited exposure to multicultural leadership and stakeholder engagement in multinational project environments. Upon assuming office, David inherited a diverse project team composed of engineers, environmental scientists, financial analysts, procurement officers, sociologists, communication experts, and field coordinators from different cultural and professional backgrounds. Team members were drawn from multiple countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, India, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Although the project had a technically competent workforce, several leadership and management challenges began to emerge during the first year of implementation. One of the earliest issues involved communication breakdowns between the regional headquarters in Nairobi and field offices located in remote project sites. The project managers in different countries adopted varying communication styles, reporting systems, and decision-making approaches. Staff from European partner organizations preferred formal communication procedures and structured reporting systems, while some local field coordinators relied heavily on informal communication and verbal agreements. This inconsistency created delays in project approvals, misunderstandings among teams, and tension during virtual coordination meetings.

In addition, cultural differences significantly affected managerial behavior and team dynamics. Some expatriate managers perceived local staff as resistant to timelines and accountability measures, while local employees felt marginalized from strategic decision-making processes. In one instance, a disagreement emerged between the procurement team from Germany and local contractors in Tanzania regarding contract implementation procedures. The expatriate procurement officers insisted on strict adherence to contractual clauses and procurement timelines, while local contractors argued that community engagement and local administrative approvals required flexibility in implementation schedules. The disagreement escalated and resulted in delays in the delivery of construction materials, eventually affecting project milestones and increasing operational costs.

As the project progressed, the issue of leadership style became increasingly evident. David adopted a highly centralized leadership approach where most decisions required approval from his office. While he believed that centralized control would enhance accountability and reduce misuse of project resources, team members increasingly complained about bureaucratic delays and limited empowerment. Junior project managers expressed frustration over the lack of delegation and autonomy, especially in responding to urgent field challenges. Some senior managers proposed the adoption of a more participatory and transformational leadership style that would encourage collaboration, innovation, and team ownership of project activities.

The management of contracts and commercial relationships also became a major concern within the project. Several contractors raised complaints about delayed payments and unclear contract variation procedures. In Uganda, one contractor suspended construction activities due to disagreements over revised project specifications that had not been formally documented. In Kenya, allegations emerged that some suppliers were receiving preferential treatment during procurement evaluations. These claims attracted media attention and prompted donor agencies to request an independent audit of procurement processes and commercial relations management within the project.

During the second year of implementation, the project experienced significant pressure from community groups and environmental activists who argued that some construction activities were negatively affecting wetlands and local ecosystems. Community members in certain project areas protested against relocation plans and accused project leaders of inadequate stakeholder consultation. The situation attracted political attention, with local leaders demanding immediate intervention and threatening to suspend project operations. The donor agencies insisted that the project leadership team integrate sustainability principles more effectively into project planning and implementation.

At the same time, the project leadership struggled with ineffective meetings and coordination processes. Weekly management meetings frequently exceeded scheduled time, discussions often deviated from agenda items, and action points were rarely followed up effectively. Some managers dominated discussions while junior staff remained silent despite possessing valuable technical insights. Virtual meetings involving participants from different countries were equally challenging due to technological limitations, time zone differences, and language barriers. As project delays increased, the steering committee criticized the leadership team for poor coordination and weak stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

The project environment also became more uncertain due to changes in government regulations, inflation in construction material costs, and emerging political tensions in some project regions. The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated project implementation by disrupting supply chains, restricting movement of personnel, and increasing health and safety requirements at construction sites. The leadership team was forced to reconsider project schedules, risk management strategies, and communication mechanisms to ensure continuity of operations.

In response to growing criticism, the donor consortium commissioned an external evaluation of the project leadership and governance systems. The evaluation report concluded that while the project had strong technical potential, its success was being undermined by weaknesses in leadership effectiveness, multicultural communication, contract management, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability integration. The report recommended leadership restructuring, strengthening participatory management approaches, improving communication systems, enhancing transparency in commercial relationships, and integrating environmental and social sustainability measures into all project activities.

Following the evaluation, David was instructed to implement major reforms within six months. He was required to redesign communication channels, establish clearer meeting management procedures, improve delegation practices, strengthen stakeholder participation, and create a sustainability framework aligned with international environmental and social governance standards. In addition, he was expected to rebuild trust among contractors, donors, communities, and project staff while ensuring that project objectives remained achievable within the remaining implementation period.

Despite these challenges, the project still had the potential to become a transformational regional initiative capable of improving livelihoods for millions of East Africans. However, the success or failure of the project would largely depend on the effectiveness of project leadership, the ability to manage multicultural teams and commercial relationships, and the integration of sustainability principles into long-term project implementation strategies.

Required:

a) As the Regional Project Director, what leadership approach would you recommend David Mwangi adopt to improve team performance and project coordination? Explain your answer using examples from the case study.
(5 Marks)

b) Analyse strategies that could improve multicultural communication and managerial behaviour in East Africa Integrated Water and Sanitation Project.
(5 Marks)

c) Assuming you have been engaged on contractual basis in East Africa Integrated Water and Sanitation Project. Advice the management on the measures they should implement to strengthen contract management
(5 Marks)

d) Discuss how the project environment influenced the implementation of the East Africa Integrated Water and Sanitation Project.
(5 Marks)

e) Using evidence from the case study, explain how sustainability dimensions could be integrated into the project to improve long-term success. **(10 Marks)**

QUESTION TWO

a) A multinational organization is implementing a large infrastructure project in a developing country. During implementation, the project experiences challenges arising from political interference, economic instability, environmental concerns, technological changes, legal requirements, and stakeholder pressure. Analyse how the project environment can influence project success

(10 Marks)

A multinational project team is experiencing misunderstandings, reduced collaboration, and delays due to cultural differences among members. As a project manager, apply the cultural management framework to propose practical interventions to improve team performance. **(5 Marks)**

QUESTION THREE

a) Critically evaluate the relevance of different leadership and management theories in enhancing project success within modern organizations. Using practical examples, analyse how a project leader can apply these theories to improve project performance.

(10 Marks)

b) A donor-funded community health project is entering its final year. However, there are concerns about whether the project outcomes will continue after funding ends. Examine practical strategies you would apply to enhance project sustainability.

(5 Marks)

QUESTION FOUR

a) Using practical project management contexts, evaluate how a project manager can mitigate contractual risks to enhance supplier relationships and ensure value for money in complex project environments. **(10 Marks)**

b) A project team is experiencing unproductive meetings characterized by poor attendance, lack of focus, and unresolved decisions. As a project manager, examine practical actions you would take to improve the effectiveness of these meetings.

(5 Marks)