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ABSTRACT

In an environment of global open-ness when Multi National Companies (MNCs) are required to send staff to foreign environment for international assignments, the need to provide cross cultural training to such expatriates is increasing. There are various issues related with cross cultural training like identifying need, designing, evaluating effectiveness and so on. Through review of literature, this research paper focuses upon the importance of cross cultural training giving an insight into the issues that have been considered and need to be considered while designing a cross- cultural training program. It also analyses the features of a successful cross cultural training program. An attempt has also been made to identify the current practices and trends that are prevalent in MNCs for preparing their employees for foreign assignments.

Introduction

In today's business environment there is a great global openness where national borders are becoming more transparent than ever before. There is an increasing acceptance of ideas and products from other cultures and companies are getting more and more eager to get engaged in multilateral actions. The trend of globalization is providing opportunities for firms to reach to foreign markets and more and more companies are earning their revenues from operations in foreign markets. The business model of many industries is dependent heavily on international operations. Companies are becoming transnational and this increases the need for their managers to work in foreign cultural settings. They are getting more and more engaged in cross border acquisitions. Due to this reason, Multi National Companies are facing challenges to develop competent managers who are able to work in new environment efficiently and can act as a bridge between parent company and its subsidiaries. They need to train managers not only for expatriate assignments but also to handle cultural diversity as globalization also brings employees to parent companies, the one with different origin, language, and national culture adding complexities to their organizational culture. Therefore a proper cross cultural training program can help employees in coping up with the stress and cultural shock while dealing with a new culture. Traditionally, multinational firms have used cross-cultural training to increase the knowledge and skills of international assignees to help them operate effectively in the unfamiliar host culture (Mendenhall, Kuhlmann, Stahl & Osland, 2002; Morris & Robie, 2001; Kealy & Protheroe, 1996).

Cross Cultural Training and its Importance

Murray and Murray (1998) believe that besides managerial and technical skills, effectiveness and coping skills are very important for expatriate success. These may be developed through training. Therefore training is important for expatriate. Training is the process of altering employee behaviour and attitudes in a way that increases the probability of goal attainment (Hodgetts, Luthans, Doh, 2008). "Any intervention which increases the capability of an individual to cope and work in different culture" is defined as Cross Cultural Training (CCT) (Tung, R.L., 1981; Zakaria, N.,2000). Even in the decade of nineteen ninetees, the concept of CCT was

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becoming popular (Solomon, 1994).

Roberts, Kossek and Ozeki (1998) advocate that training is particularly important in preparing employees for overseas assignments because it helps ensure that their full potential will be tapped. For the organization, international training and development activities can help improve crossnational competencies among international assignees (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004; Dowling & Welch, 2004; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Evans, Pucik, & Barsouk, 2001).

CCT involves methods like lectures, simulations etc., aimed at making an individual familiar with a different culture. Training can be provided in any area like language abilities, business etiquettes, beliefs and values, social system negotiating styles etc. of any culture. Mendenhall et al. (1987) distinguish between three types of training, namely, (1) information giving approaches, which have a relatively low level of rigour; (2) affective approaches which address people's feelings as well as 'facts'; and (3) immersion approaches which are indepth methods covering a broad range of topics and methods. Several studies have found positive correlations between cross-cultural training and: improvement in participants' interpersonal relationships; changes in their perception of their own and other cultures; a reduction in their experience of culture shock or intercultural conflict; increased capacity to recognise and negotiate any differences arising from cultural background so as to achieve a positive outcome; and improvement in their performance on the job (Black & Mendenhall 1990; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003; Bawhuk & Brislin 2000; Martin & Nakayama 2004). Thus, Cross cultural trainings also make people effective in interpersonal relationships while interacting with individuals from cultures other than their own. This helps in establishing good relations with people with other cultures which later becomes a source for success in business. Zakaria, N. (2000) has given the following advantages of cross cultural training:

- *1) A help in coping with* cultural shock
- 2) A means to reduce uncertainty of interactions with foreign nationals.

3) A means for enhancing expatriates coping capabilities.

It improves the corporate culture and practices by constantly learning and also helps to reduce psychological stress and cultural shock which can lead to failure of expatriates.

Cross cultural training is important for an organization particularly because of following reasons: high cost of expatriate failure, assessing the effectiveness of CCT, and increasing workforce diversity in organizations. These factors are discussed as below:-

? High Cost of Expatriate Failure

When expatriate employees embark on their foreign assignments, they face many difficulties because of issues concerning foreign culture (Littrell, Lisa et al, 2006). In the past years the number of MNCs has increased and number of employees, primarily managers sent on foreign assignments has also increased. According to a survey of GMAC (Global Relocation Services, 2003) expatriate employment is continuing to increase (Littrell, Lisa et al, 2006). With 10% to 50% of expatriates returning early from their assignments (Eschbach et al., 2001), it costs MNCs significantly, ranging from \$ 250,000 to \$ 1 million (Eschbach et al., 2001). Lost opportunities, delayed productivity and damaged relations may result in failure of expatriates' assignments and they may decide to leave their organization within one year. Thus work needs to be done on CCT to reduce the financial losses associated with the failure of expatriates to sustain in a particular culture (Mervosh & Mc Cleniahan, J.S., 1997; Morris & Robie., 2001)

? Evaluating effectiveness of CCT

A well-designed cross-cultural training initiative may enhance the learning process of the international assignee and thus facilitate effective cross-cultural interactions and cross-cultural adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Burgi, 2001).

MNCs are not paying adequate attention to the fact that CCT is necessary to increase the probability of

success rate of foreign assignments (Tung, R.L., 1981., Zakaria, N., 2000). It has been found that 70% of MNCs in United States of America do not provide CCT to their employees (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Chew, J. (2004) suggests that majority of the firms do not use comprehensive cross cultural training programs.

Reasons for neglecting of CCT includes short length of time between selection and expatriate departure, belief that technical competence is the main factor in determining the success, the costs associated with training and the lack of conclusive answer regarding effectiveness of CCT (Baumgarten, 1995; Black & Mendenhell, 1990; Deshpande & Viswesvaran, 1992; Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Selmer2001). Certain studies have also shown that cross cultural training do not always improve the expatriate performance (Kealy & Protheroe, 1996; Mendenhall et al., 2004).

? Increasing Workplace Diversity

With increasing diversity of workforce in organizations, multicultural teams are being used more and more and economy is increasing beyond national boundaries thus multicultural training is gaining importance. Multicultural training is one solution that has been offered to alleviate the frustrations and problems associated with multicultural team work because they make decisions in complex and uncertain environment. Certain studies have shown that more and more MNCs are trying to give CCT (Benett, et al.2000).

Issues in Designing Cross Cultural Training

Studies revealed that certain forms of preparation, for example, briefings, shadowing and preliminary visits are more frequently used than formal training programs (Scullion 1991, Brewster & Pickard 1994) and considered by management to be cost-effective.

The issues are important as it is required to choose between culture specific and culture general training i.e. which areas of the culture to focus on and what are the personal requirement to deal with a situation when shifting to different culture for work. The study by Hun and Jenkins (1998) mentions following issues:

? *Different aspects of time like punctuality*- time factor involves punctuality and relationship dimension.

? Linguistic barriers- pronunciation may vary from culture to culture. Certain terms may have different meanings in different cultures. In case of countries with different language, the expatriates must be trained in opening dialogues and the dialogues with the help of translators.

? *Different business practices* like conduct in meeting and open discussions. Hofstede's (2001) dimensions like power distance can play an important role in situations like conduct during the meetings. Hence developing a first hand knowledge about the practices is very important.

? Cultural stress (ambiguity and difference of perceptions) - training should also involve methods to counter stress and to interpret situations. The expatriates will have to understand the situations on their own and then form perception. The culture may broadly explain value system of a community or country but every individual is different. Hence any individual with a pre-formed notion about the culture will be shocked to see people different from his beliefs leading to a lot of confusion and stress.

? Body language and greetings- the way emotions are expressed in the various cultures may differ. CCT should have components related to both general orientation and specific skill development. (Harrison, 1994). General orientation consists of self assessment and cultural awareness while specific development consists of knowledge acquisition and skills training.

Nicola (1993) suggests following issues for CCT:

- o Feedback
- o Getting beyond culturally determined stereotypes
- o How to raise and deal with cultural stereotypes
- o How to counsel employees
- o Coaching and team building
- o Resolving conflicts

 Counseling so as to go beyond all kinds of stereotypes and perceptions

One of the most important factors while design of training programs is the information about employee length of the stay in host country, type of functions needed to be performed, degree of socialization required by the employee and personal characteristic of employee. Hence cross cultural training needs to be customized for each employee to a certain extent. Along with the employee his family members also need to be trained on issues like cultural differences.

Features of Cross Cultural Training Programs

Many scholars have discussed the attributes of effective cross-cultural training in some detail (Landis,Bennett & Bennett 2004; Paige 1993; Porter & Samovar 1991).

Purpose

Three components are indicative of success on an international assignment: the degree of personal adjustments to the new host environment, the degree of professional effectiveness in accomplishing businesses responsibilities, and the degree of interpersonal adjustments (Baumgarten, 1995; Bennett et al., 2000). Thus CCT aims to provide expatriates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for completion of an assignment in foreign land.

Goal

Benett (1986) and Brislin & Bhawk (1999) have identified the main goals of CCT as 'learning how to learn'. Expatriate is taught how to learn and acquire information about another culture and to judge new situation and responsibilities. Other goals are

- ? To equip expatriates with the knowledge to make isomorphic attributions regarding host national behavior.
- ? To assist expatriates in overcoming the difficulties that may hamper their effectiveness, aiding the individual in developing positive relationships with host nationals, helping

expatriates to complete work related tasks, enabling them to cope up from cultural shock (Cushner and Brislin, 1997).

Components in Training Program

Before the commencement of training program need assessment should be done. This should include collection of information regarding assignment objectives, past international experience, job responsibilities, spousal interests, and family dynamics (Bhagat & Prien, 1996).

Second element that CCT should contain is the customization of training program to meet individual's need. Content should be tailored to each individual's situation and also customization should be done in regard to skill development (Bennett et al., 2000).

MNCs should also consider program quality. Researches say that especially MNCs should ensure that program is designed and delivered by individuals who are regarded as experts on the country of destination as well as on the expatriation process.

MNCs should also include an element of evaluation in the program. This should include assessment of expatriate's performance and should consist of his opinions regarding the relationship between training experience and level of preparedness.

Delivery of CCT

Researches have identified several approaches in the delivery of CCT. These are discussed as follows:

? Attribution training

It focuses on the development of the attitude and skills necessary for comprising explanations of host national behavior from the host-culture point of view (Befus, 1998). Expatriates learn to make behavior attributions that are similar to those made by host nationals and learn to interpret the behavior in a manner similar to host nationals.

? Cultural awareness training

It is based on the assumption that an individual who has a better understanding of his own culture will

be more effective in an overseas assignment (Benett, 1986). Expatriate is educated on his own culture so that he will appreciate the differences between his culture and the culture of host national. Expatriates also learn how to apply what was learned in an effort to improve the outcomes of their interactions with host nationals (Benett, 1986).

? Cognitive behavior modification training

It was proposed by Black & Mendenhall (1990), this training helps in developing the habitual behaviors desired in the host culture (Bhawuk & Brisling, 2000). It helps to identify the behaviors which need to be avoided in the host nation and to practice the behaviors that are rewarded in the host culture (Befus, 1988).

? Interaction training

In this expatriates learn from the expatriate whom he or she is replacing. They are a form of onthe-job-training commonly known as overlaps. During the overlap period, the experienced expatriate can facilitate hands-on-training regarding business practices and life in general (Brewester, 1995)

? Language training

It is not important to be fluent in language but it is essential that expatriates exchange common courtesies in the host language. It leaves favorable impact on the host's culture. This training is also essential as relying on one's native language reduces the speed with which individual can process data written in the foreign language and important information may be missed out.

? Didactic

It involves the provision of factual information regarding working condition, living condition, cultural differences, travel arrangements, job characteristics, and dress code for work, political, economic, and social conditions of the country (Bennett, 1986; Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Morris & Robie, 2001)

? Experiential

Individual can learn by practicing what they learn during training. They learn by participating in activities that are likely to be encountered during the foreign assignments. A wide variety of training techniques are available for experiential learning which includes look-see visits, role plays, intercultural workshops and simulations etc.

Table 1 : Summary various delivery strategies.

Focus of Training Intervention	Potential Strategies
Developing the skills required to make isomorphic attributions	Attribution training
Imparting the knowledge needed to understand cultural differences	Culture awareness training
Assisting in development of host -culture appropriate behaviors	Cognitive-behavior modification training
Promoting successfu adjustment via on -the-job training	Interaction training
Developing the language skills required for everyday interactions	Language training
Providing the expatriates with information r egarding living and working conditions	Didactic training
Giving the expatriate the opportunity to practice potential situations to be encountered in the host culture	Experiential training

Reflecting the emphasis on interactivity and experience, two recent studies (Berardo & Simons 2004; Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006) found that the main tools used by cross-cultural trainers are: models for understanding culture; case studies; exercises; simulations; role plays; games; and intensive group activities. Although no single study has been able to determine which method of cross-cultural training is most effective or which methods are most effective for particular situations, the literature uniformly points to the superiority of the experiential and interactive approach over the didactic approach (Bennett 1986; Bhawuk & Brislin 2000; Black & Mendenhall 1990; Kohls & Brussow 1994; Paige 1993).

Role of Cultural Theories in CCT

It has been found that using theories in crosscultural training programs make a layperson an expert, whereas not using theory makes him a novice. Theories like Social Learning Theory, U curve of Adjustment Theory, Culture Shock Theory have been useful in providing CCT. In Social Learning Theory experiences and observed consequences of behavior shape learning. When individuals observe others performing a behavior, then new behaviors emerge. CCT is also viewed as a social learning process in which expatriates acquire social skills through observation and practice. U curve of adjustment theory tells that expatriate adjustment is described as a function of time. An expatriate is first of all optimistic about the new environment, then with the passage of time he becomes confused in understanding the norms of an alien environment and at last he completely adjusts himself according to the situations. This theory is also useful in CCT as it focuses on the fact that expatriates have different experiences at different times in other culture so CCT has to be tailored to the period of adjustment that an individual is encountering. Culture Shock Theory says that CCT programs can be enhanced if treatments and training approaches address the problems associated with culture shock defined as feeling of confusion and anxiety that individuals develop on encountering a different societal environment. Expatriates should be provided with coping skills for dealing with psychological, behavioral, emotional and intellectual effects of culture shock.

Bhawuk (1998) studied the Role of Culture Theory in Cross-Cultural Training where the findings show promise for theory-based culture assimilators. Thus many theoretical frameworks have been proposed to aid in designing CCT programs but all of them are not empirically tested with respect to CCT.

Practices in MNCs

Different countries focus on different aspects of CCT. For example, Tung (1988) found that in UK the areas of training include technical & management development training, language training, cultural orientations and it is focused only at expatriate, not his family. In USA (Tung, 1982; Black, 1989) there are no pre-departure training programs. In Japan (Tung, 1982, 1984a), training areas mainly include environment briefing, language training, special preparatory programs which take care of expatriates as well as their families.

Littrell and Eduardo Salas (2005) have analysed the best practices in organizations in providing CCT. These are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Best practices in MNC	s in providing CCT
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Design	 Adjust the len gth of training based upon features of assignments. Determine whether CCT should be culture general or culture specific. Offer CCT to expatriates and accompanying family members. HRD should play an important role in planning and implementing the
Delivery	CCT intervention. Use multiple delivery strategies within one training program.
	 Tailor the delivery strategy according to the goals of the training.
	• Provide trainees with online real -time support materials.
	 Keep international staff members up to date on home organization issues by bringing them home for periodic meetings.
	• Provide expatriates with personalized coaches.
	Offer CCT prior to departure, immediately following arrival in the host country.
Evaluation	• Evaluate the program each time it is implemented.
	• Use numerous criteria to evaluate success/failure.
	• Conduct surveys to assess the expatriate's satisfaction with the training and overall assignments.

(Source:	Lisa	N.	Littrell	and	Eduardo	Salas,	2005).
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Recommendations

It has been proposed that first of all MNCs should develop a global mindset (Estieinne, 1997). CCT should be customized to match the expatriate's needs. Strengths and weaknesses w.r.t the individuals interpersonal, cognitive and self maintenance skills must be assessed (Black et al., 1992; Ronen, 1989). MNCs should apply and use strategies based on the science of training in designing CCT programs (Salas and Cannon- Bowers, 2001). Scenario- based training should be implemented. Controlled exercises should be usd to provide trainees with cues similar to those encountered in new environment (Cannon- Bowers and Kozlowski, 1997).Other factors ,besides culture , should also be considered while designing CCT (Littrell and Salas, 2005).

Organizations need to evaluate whether the learning from CCT is reflected in the work of employee (Baldwin and Ford, 1988). Organizations should also assess whether the investment in CCT yields positive organizational outcomes. Kealey and Protheroe (1996) proposed that a Return on Investment analysis of training must be conducted.

Scope for Future Research

A great deal of work has been done on Cross Cultural training but there are some areas where more research is required to be done. Cross cultural teams are becoming very popular in corporates. Team members of such teams face difficulties in interacting with each other so research should be done dealing with training requirements of such diverse teams. Research is also needed on the variables that influence individuals to adapt to the alien environment. A few researchers have worked on the reasons of failures of expatriates' assignments in new cultures. So there is a need of better and richer theories on how to increase the cross cultural effectiveness and how to improve the delivery of CCT. Additional research is needed to identify whether individual differences like selfmonitoring, self- efficacy and cultural sensitivity interact with training to influence expatiates' performance. There is a need to know that whether expatriates with different personalities require different training or delivery strategies. It has been noticed that expatriates with certain personality traits are more successful on overseas assignments so if those processes are identified which these successful expatriates adopt, then improvement in training content and delivery method can be made to improve the skills, knowledge and attitude of the trainees. Further, research is also needed to explore linkages between CCT and expatriate performance. There is a dearth of empirical data addressing the ability of CCT programs to influence organizational outcomes. In addition to empirical data further research must address the challenges faced by expatriate's employees in the novel culture. Research efforts need to investigate the issues and offer solutions to MNCs regarding the type of CCT techniques to be used, the type of human resource interventions that can be used to supplement the CCT program. Research is also needed on how various cultural theories like Social Learning Theory etc can be used or applied to CCT programs.

Conclusion

It is essential that employees who are to be sent overseas for assignments are well informed about the challenges that they might face in a new culture. Therefore, in order to cope up with the challenges, a well planned cross cultural training program is needed which can provide an insight of working conditions, styles, beliefs and values of new culture. Major concern for MNCs has been the huge costs which they are generally facing due to the failure of expatriates' overseas assignments. The purpose of this paper was to review the past research work on CCT for preparation of expatriate employees. Certain concepts were examined which included: the need for CCT, training components, training delivery, issues considered in CCT delivery, what MNCs are required to do for effective training. For effective CCT, a wise decision has to be made as to which employees should be sent on expatriate assignments as all can not be trained. Researches have done an excellent job in presenting the features of CCT, examining various delivery mechanisms but still many areas are left unexplored.

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