



A REVIEW ON THE IMPACT OF CROSS CULTURAL TRAINING ON ADJUSTMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF EXPATRIATES

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Abstract

Multinational organizations need expatriates who can be representatives, ambassadors and have knowledge of coordination, integration of operations, knowledge transfer, and global managerial skills as they are investing in foreign markets to establish some subsidiaries in foreign countries. During this process, many of expatriates are not able to complete their overseas assignments. The main aims of Cross Cultural Training (CCT) are to develop managers for better understanding of cultural differences, to minimize culture shock, enhancing the managers' cross cultural experience, especially improving the functional skills of managers on overseas assignments. This review identifies suitable policies of personal management in general and it might improve factors like selection-criteria, cross-cultural training programs to develop the success and decrease the failure of expatriates. Conversely it might help to find out the ways of optimizing expatriates' performance and yield. The main objective of this review was to find out "the effects of CCT on adjustment and performance of expatriates in the business organizations" and to identify the gaps that are present in the recent literature although numerous research studies have been carried out on CCT and expatriates.

Keywords: Expatriates, Culture, Cultural Awareness, Cross Cultural Training, Culture Shock.

Introduction

Progressively more business operations are expanding beyond countries' boundaries. This situation creates challenges for multinational corporations (Selmer, 2000a, p. 269). Investing in foreign markets and to take advantage of opportunities, organizations try to establish some subsidiaries in foreign countries. During this process, multinational organizations need expatriates who are representatives, ambassadors and have knowledge of coordination, integration of operations, are capable of knowledge transfer, and possess global managerial skills.

This is critical to the success of multinational organizations as expatriates play pivotal role in managing and coordinating the operations of firms (Morgan, Nie, and Young, 2004, p. 1247; Yavas and Bodur, 1999, p. 267b). For successfully establishing and managing such subsidiaries, some expatriates are sent to manage business operations in foreign countries and bridge up gap between home office and host country office. The other reason why it is needed to send expatriates is to get other alternative resources in undervaluing countries, is because in less developing countries sometimes it is not possible to find enough talented staff (Tung, 1987, p. 118). On the other hand, owing to limited size of the local market, many business enterprises also venture in establishing their subsidiaries in the foreign markets (Tung, 1987, p. 122; Qi & Lange, 2005, p. 1). However, operating business in a host country is not only complex but expensive as well due to variety of reasons primarily the variation in cultures (Toh&DeNisi, 2005, p. 132). At the beginning of assignment it may not be possible to engage local employees as they may not have enough managerial experience and technical skills, corporation culture. That is why global organizations require expatriates to be assigned around the world (Qi and Lange, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, performance of the foreign subsidiaries heavily depends upon the performance of expatriates, that is, an expatriate manages the foreign offices so as to create and sustain competitive advantages in different countries (Russell, 2006, p. 23).

Expatriates

Various experts have defined "expatriate" in many ways. Noe, et al. (2007) has defined it as the employee who is sent (abroad) to manage operating in different host countries (p. 301). It can be said that an expatriate is a national of one country who is working in another country (Hill, 2002, p. 623; Weber, 2004, p.1) or simply "a person living outside of his or her country of citizen" (Ball, et al. 2002, p. 627). The definition of an expatriate in business context is, expatriate is an employee who is either transferred or hired to engage in work assignment while living in overseas country so he or she is a controller, coordinator, and knowledge transferor (Russell, 2006, pp. 18-22).

Culture

According to Bennett, (1996) and Black, et al. (1992) it is the set of beliefs, perspectives, motivations, values and norms shared by the most of the inhabitants of a particular country (p.115) while Ball et al. (2002) defines culture as whole of



beliefs, rules, techniques, institutions, and artifacts that characterize human populations (p. 303). Similar definition is given by Nas(2000); culture is a thing that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (p. 5). Zakaria, (2000) defines culture as communication and according to her communication is culture (p. 496). As a result, it can be concluded that culture is the way of life.

Cultural Awareness

Zakaria (2000) defined cultural awareness as providing the structure for communication capability in a dissimilar society, learning something about other culture, values, beliefs, perceptions, and beginning to understand the cultural map (p. 503). As a result, cultural awareness is cultural feeling, learning, and understanding (Deresky, 1997, pp. 63-64). Multinational corporations provide CCT in order to make expatriates more culturally aware on their overseas assignments (Luthans and Farner, 2002, p. 780). It is vital for expatriates to understand the culture of the host country. The more they learn about the culture of the host country, the more they will become self-aware, and learn how to act effectively when they are on overseas assignment.

Training

It can be said that training is a series of activities and projects to prepare trainees in order to increase effectiveness and productivities regarding performance at trainees' future jobs (Qi & Lange, 2005, p.4) or the process of changing employee behavior and attitudes to increase the probability of goal achievement (Chew, 2004) as a planned effort to facilitate the learning of job related knowledge, skills, and behavior by employees (Noe, et al. 2007, p. 71). With detailed literature review it has been examined that the literature includes sufficient evidence that CCT is reasonably an important priority and challenge for expatriates who are sent on overseas assignments. It is suggested CCT to be given before pre-departure, upon arrival to the overseas post arrival and for the duration of the assignment (Russell, 2006, pp. 26-27). Organizations operating overseas pay more attention to the training of expatriate managers (Qi & Lange, 2005, p. 24) and successfully manage numerous special training matters in order to meet up the competitive challenges of sustainability, globalization, and technology.

Cross Cultural Training

CCT is the procedure to prepare staff and families in order to better understand the work and non-work environment, culture and the host country norms in which they are assigned (Noe et al.2007, p. 34). It is a practice used to enlarge an individual's skill to cope with work in a foreign environment (Zakaria, 2000, p. 496) and seeking to foster a gratitude for the culture of host country (Hill, 2002, p. 574). According to Morris and Robie (2001) CCT is educative procedures that are intended to promote intercultural learning behavioral, cognitive and affective abilities related to effective interaction across cultures (p. 115). CCT refers having the possibility to supply expatriates with the capabilities, skills and knowledge that can be required for such as cross cultural adjustment, and integration in order to develop performance of expatriate, and decrease the failure of expatriate such as premature return and low performance (Shen& Lang, 2009, p. 372). Nowadays, a growing number of multinational corporations give importance to CCT. It is thought that MNCs provide some kinds of CCT, at least such as pre-departure, and orientation (Jones and Emmanuel, 2007, p. 4). Organizations require providing CCT in order to prepare and sensitize the expatriates and candidates for overseas assignments to the local culture, customs, language, tax laws, and government (Noe, et al. 2007, p. 302; Gomez-Mejia, et al. 1998, p. 528). Multinational corporations need to provide some CCT as they encounter different combinations of cultural differences (Selmer, et al., 2007, p. 156). During providing CCT, it would be better if CCT can be chronological. It should be started from pre-departure CCT to post arrival CCT (Selmer, et al., 1998, p. 835).Adjusting to a foreign culture "may lead to feelings of fear, helplessness, irritability, and disorientation" (Griffin &Pustay, 2013, p. 519). Cultural differences and spousal adjustment can adversely affect expatriate effectiveness. Up to 40% of expatriates return early from assignments in developed countries. Almost 70% of expatriates do not complete assignments in underdeveloped countries. Research indicates that an important reason for expatriate failure is the spouse's failure to adjust. It is suggested the spouse and even children, if possible, receive cross-cultural training (Hill 2011). Cross-cultural training is intended to improve culture-related skills of the expatriate and family (Cullen &Parboteeah 2011).In a study conducted by Max Y.C Lo (2015) in regard of expatriates' attitudes toward the importance of CCT, all of the participants held rather positive attitudes toward the provision of CCT. The participants mentioned that CCT had or would have positive impacts such as giving them more confidence and better understanding of the assignment in a different cultural context; CCT allowed expatriates to differentiate the host country and how expatriates need to adjust themselves to the challenge and prepare a new mindset. All the participants believe in the value in providing such training to their expatriates.



Performance

According to Noe, et al. (2007) performance management means through which managers make sure those employees' activities and outputs are matching with the organization's objectives (p. 71). Managers in the United States are measured on profit and loss, rate of return on investment, cash flows, efficiency (input-output ratios), market share, conformity to authority, and physical volumes. These are common performance criteria for managers in the U.S. Good selection, training, adjustment and repatriation policies can be indicators of effective performance not only during global assignment but also after global assignment. They may also increase the motivation of the expatriates for accepting and doing well in overseas assignment (Black, et al. 1992, pp. 167-214). Post arrival CCT has potential effects on the global managers' performance. That is why CCT has been extremely recommended without much empirical investigation, because it is believed that CCT facilitate the achievement of cultural knowledge and new skills during not only preparatory stage but also during the expatriate assignment (Selmer, 2002, p. 39).

According to expatriates working for different MNCs in Pakistan, the effects of CCT are positive as majority of them agreed that expatriates who received CCT would show a higher level of performance than who hadn't. The performance of expatriates working for different organizations operating in Pakistan is quite high. It was stated that the performance rate was over 88.5 out of 100 (ZekeriyaNas, 2011, p.252).

SUCCESS

Success is the ability of an expatriate to accomplish and to perform effectively in terms of corporate objectives in a foreign country (Selmer, 2002, p. 42). The sociopolitical and socioeconomic environment in which international business survives has altered greatly (Toh&Denisi, 2003, p. 618). So the growing globalization of the world economy has forced MNCs to revise many of their policies and practices related to sending employees on overseas assignments. Sending expatriates costs organizations extremely high. Thus, the expatriates must be successful on their foreign work (Varma, et al. 2006, p. 112; Bonache, et al. 2001, p. 7). The success differs from person to person and from company to company. For example, some researchers consider success at the level of growth, and profitability as their prime objective is function of finance. Some of them consider success at level of completion of assignment; not to end prematurely. It means they consider success at level of the individual expatriate. Thus, researchers conduct surveys to find out the way and methods regarding how expatriates may contribute to the competitive advantage of multinational corporations through role of expatriates in the knowledge transfer process as expatriates play a crucial role in the knowledge transfer (Connelly, Hitt, DeNisi, & Ireland, 2007, 564). Nowadays, the most crucial issue for multinational organizations is to examine the way how they can increase the success rates of expatriates assigned on overseas assignments (Toh&Denisi, 2007, p. 281). There are several common denominators to successful performance among some MNCs. These are: "(1) Their long-term orientation regarding overall planning and performance assessment; (2) use of more rigorous training programs to prepare candidates for overseas assignments, particularly by Japanese multinationals; (3) provision of a comprehensive expatriate support system; (4) overall qualification of candidates for overseas assignments; (5) restricted job mobility; (6) international orientation; (7) longer history of overseas operations; and (8) language capability" (Tung, 1987, pp. 119). And "expatriates who are able to gather relevant information on local to succeed on their assignments than those who are unable to garner this information" ((Varma, et al. 2006, p. 115).

Failure

Almost all researchers defined failure as premature return (Hung-Wen, 2007, 3). Qi and Lange (2005) defined failure is an expatriate return to the home country or resignation from the job before overseas assignment is finished (p.12). According to Russell (2006) failure of expatriate is the inability of an expatriate to perform effectively on overseas assignment, and hence, the need for the expatriate to return back (p. 109). Black, et al. (1992) stated failure is returning from foreign assignment prematurely (p.11). The expatriate failure takes important place in assignments overseas. Because expatriates cost companies highly and when they are failure they may create problem(s) not only for themselves but for their companies as well. It would be better if companies try to solve the problems that may create failure in the future. One of the ways to minimize expatriates' failure is to be given CCT, and the other may be exempting from active managerial responsibilities at the beginning of her/his first few months of the global job as sometimes there are big differences between both the culture of the home country and the host country. The exemption during this period will help expatriate not to do mistakes and will prevent her/him to fail on overseas assignment (Tung, 1997, p. 118).

Culture Shock

Culture shock refers to the expatriate's first confront to a different culture and expatriate's reaction to a new, unpredictable, and consequently uncertain environment (Zakaria, 2000 p. 496). It is a psychological and social progression in which people

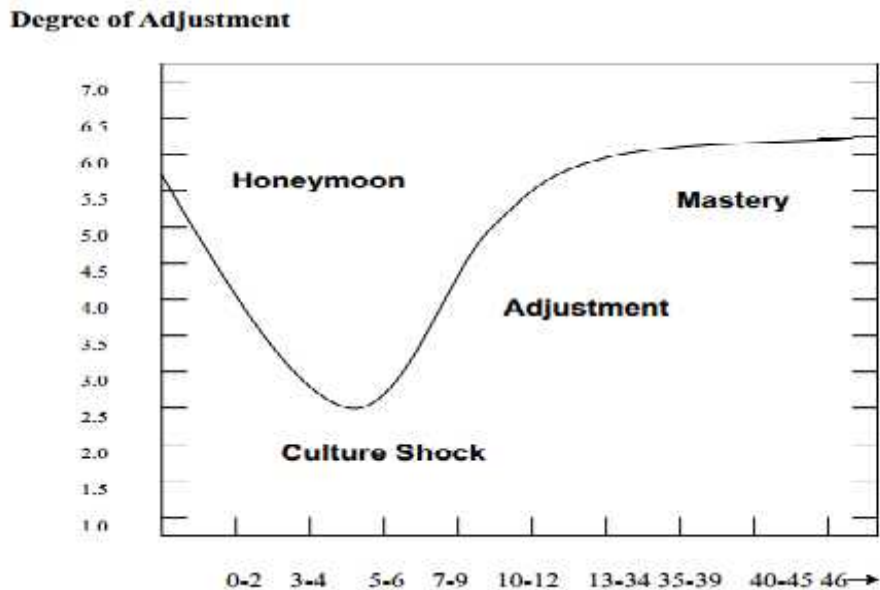


can feel homesick, depressed, irritable, worried and furious (Qi & Lange, 2005, p.4). It is well known that expatriates will experience some difficulties when they are faced with a new environment, an unfamiliar cultural environment such as different expectation, language, foods, and ways of eating in different country. The other factors may be education, age, past experience, the cultural distance between the expatriate's parent country and the host country. These difficulties are referred to as culture shock as they are often stressing producing. Some expatriates may not understand differences or may not see them ethically correct, either (Russell, 2006, p, 44; Kaye & Taylor, 1997, p. 499). Culture shock means feeling lost, confused, and anxious. The principal reason why people feel these things is due to unfamiliar situations and different cultural norms and values. When expatriates are sent on overseas assignments, of course, they take their own values, beliefs, behaviors and whatever they have regarding their culture, they cannot leave them in their home countries, so when they face different culture environment they may experience culture shock. It can be said that it is often psychological to feel homesick, unhappy, ill-tempered, anxious and furious (Qi & Lange, 2005, p. 13). As mentioned earlier, culture shock is the first time entering into new environment and new surroundings. And many expatriates who are sent on overseas assignments cannot adjust to different surroundings. Almost all expatriates whether less or much suffer from the culture shock and the level of culture shock an expatriate faces is connected with the expatriate's need to adjust to a new environment. Figure 1 explains how the expatriates face four stages in the host country when they enter and during staying there.

Impact of CCT on Adjustment of Expatriates

Generally, cross-cultural adjustment is conceptualized as the degree of psychological comfort with various aspects of a host country (Black, 1988; Oberg, 1960; Nicholson, 1984). In the past, most researchers have conceptualized cross-cultural adjustment as a unidimensional phenomenon (Gullahorn&Gullahorn, 1962), much as job satisfaction (Wanous& Lawler, 1972) and organizational commitment (Reichers, 1985) originally were. However, like these two constructs, recent research suggests that cross-cultural adjustment is also a multifaceted construct (Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989). Expatriates adjust to work, to interacting with host nationals, and to the general environment, while spouses adjust to interacting with host nationals and to the general, foreign environment (Black & Stephens, 1989), although the exact type of host country nationals and general environmental factors spouses confront might vary somewhat by individual.

Figure 1: The U-Curve (degree) of Cross Cultural Adjustment



Source: Qi & Lange, 2005, p. 14; Liu & Lee, 2008, p. 181).

In the first stage, it is the time of entering into a totally new culture environment. So during this stage it is possible for the expatriates to feel curious, excited, and fascinated by the new culture. It happens within several weeks-half a year. Expatriates generally think and have ideas as they will have a better life and a better work environment, salary, living standards. That is why it is called "Honeymoon" stage. But unfortunately, that is after the honeymoon stage when culture shock happens. During this stage expatriates may feel disappointment, frustration, confusion and also anxiety. This is the time for the expatriates to understand and realize that there are different life styles, customs, values, and beliefs between home country



and host country. The time for this stage is between several weeks-months. But after this stage the adjustment stage comes. During this stage expatriates gradually try to understand and realize the new culture environment. They also know that they will live in a different culture so they try to learn the norms, values and beliefs of new culture. After that, they are ready to live in host country culture as they try to change their old culture; behaviors, attitudes, foods, customs, etc. The last stage is adaptation stage. In this stage expatriates are ready to live in different culture environment as they can adapt to the new culture and customs of locals. This is the stage for expatriates to understand why there are some differences between the home country and host country so they are ready to try absorbing these aspects to their own mental system. But it cannot be said for all expatriates and their spouses that the situation is the same. Because of culture shock, inability to adjust to the new job environment and failure rate of expatriates is still quite high (Qi & Lange, 2005, pp. 14- 15).

Impact of CCT on the Performance of Expatriates

While many studies, researches have been done related to aspects of management of expatriate such as selection, pre-departure, post arrival, cross cultural adjustment, there are not enough studies correlated to expatriate performance management (Fenwick, 2005, p. 2). CCT refers to any endeavor made in order to prepare expatriates to be effective interpersonal interaction from different work environment and culture. Expatriates can develop awareness of cultural differences, positive outcomes, cross cultural skill development, adjustment, and performance, confidence by successful, adequate CCT because it is believed that CCT has strong effects on variables mentioned earlier (Kalfadellis, 2005, p. 2). Multinational corporations aim at providing CCT to better prepare both expatriates and host country nations to be better effective while working, and doing business overseas (Neupert, Baughn& Dao, 2004, p. 178), and the worldwide quick progresses in technology, desire of investments in different parts of the world, intercultural differences, and the competition among MNCs make CCT necessary. This issue can no longer be ignored.

It is vital for MNCs operating overseas in order to be successful as it facilitates effective work assignments (Zakaria, 2000, pp. 492-493). Inadaptability of expatriates to the new work environment is a crucial problem for MNCs because without adaptability expatriates cannot operate effectively. Multinational firms can solve these kinds of expatriates' problems by providing especially pre-departure CCT, such as sensitivity and language training (Shih, et al., 2005, p. 168).

So MNCs aim to provide CCT in order to teach their staff how they can interact effectively with host country staff, and to influence them to a rapid adjustment to their new job environment. For this kind of training, organizations can use three different methods; the first one is cognitive, the second one can be affective, and the final one is behavioral. With the first one, organizations aim to give information about host country culture by giving conferences. MNCs should select the training method regarding the type of overseas assignment, and they should take care of two different cultures, home country culture and host country culture as well (Waxin&Panaccio, 2005, pp. 52-53).

Zakaria (2000) cited from O'Brien (1998) stated that the effectiveness of training depends mainly on how trainable expatriates are (p.507). Although top management of many MNCs do not believe in the necessity and effectiveness of CCT programs (Kline, 1994), and although the effectiveness of CCT for a positive relationship of performance is doubtful for a few scholars (Qi & Lange, 2005, p. 33), many researchers have found out that both adjustment and performance effectiveness in these kinds of global organizations can be developed by CCT programs, and with successfully functioning in other culture organizations can get quite good benefits by facilitating effective adjustment and performance (Kline, 1994). For example, according to Black and Mendenhall (1990), "cross-cultural training enables the individual to learn both content and skills that will facilitate effective cross-cultural interaction by reducing misunderstandings and inappropriate Behaviours. If it is accepted as the major objective of cross cultural training, it becomes necessary to understand how people learn to appropriately interact with others and how they use that knowledge for affective interactions" (p.120). Cultural training is mostly influenced by culture as it includes people, political, economic, business, legal, and physical environment of the host country. Cultural training helps expatriates to adjust easily to a new environment in the host country. It will also help expatriates to learn the future of the new culture. It means that it will facilitate to learn about values of the other culture, about significant political, economic, and historical information, and finally about Behaviours of the people of the host country in relation to their culture (Qi & Lange, 2005, p. 25). Review by A. Esther Joshua-Gojer examined the concept of CCT, expatriation, importance of CCT research, theories guiding the same and the effectiveness of CCT in increasing expatriate performance. However, despite the 25-30 years spent in researching on CCT and various factors surrounding it, as the workplace evolves and as the world gets smaller, there is still much to be explored in this field (A. Esther Joshua-Gojer, 2012, p.58).



According to Shen& Lang (2009) few studies of recent review of the past 25 years of literature have been conducted were empirically tested, most of them have been conducted theoretically that observed the effect of CCT on performance of expatriate. Thus more studies are needed for detailed empirical studies on the effects of CCT on expatriate performance (p. 372). According to Waxin&Panaccio (2005) although the CCT is an important factor especially for interaction and general adjustment, yet many MNCs ignore to provide any kind of it for their expatriates.

They believe that the main reason why they do not provide CCT may be that the maker of decisions on such training may not have any international experiences. So they think that it is not useful and necessary. They may also think that there is no need to spend a great deal of money on this matter (p. 64). On the other hand, it is true that some kinds of CCT provided by MNCs are not sufficient. As the CCT must be prepared in relation to the host country culture wherever the expatriate is sent. It is so important to provide CCT when both home country culture and host culture show crucial differences between each other as CCT will reduce the cultural distance between both countries (Waxin&Panaccio, 2005, p. 65).

Conclusion

CCT can aid and lead to expatriates working on overseas missions. This aid and leads can be related to realistic expectations, greater job satisfaction, adjustment, job performance, lower intentions of returning early, cultural interactions, bringing people together, reducing misunderstandings and inappropriate behaviors, and increasing employees confidence, and so on. It is crucial to select, and send the right candidates on overseas missions. And it is needed to provide relevant CCT for these staff. But the percent rate of training that is only thirty percent of expatriates get CCT before being posted on overseas assignments. The effectiveness of CCT has been approved by the researchers because; there are various effects of CCT on the expatriates' performance. It prepares them better for overseas assignments. They can learn how they should interact effectively with the other employees, facilitate adjustment, the knowledge and information such as climate, behaviors, laws, culture, values, geography, and etc. about the host country are given. The other benefits of CCT are that it improves expatriates' confidence, facilitates them to be familiar with new job environment, protects or minimizes culture shock, etc. But although there are many benefits of CCT, there are various MNCs that are not providing CCT. The main reason why the organizations are not providing CCT to their staffs is they believe that there is no effect of CCT on employee performance even though it incurs a great cost.

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