Cross-cultural training as a transformation tool: A conceptual framework

H Waseeha Firdose and Dr. K Ramachandra

Abstract
Culture is what makes them what they are and their cultural backgrounds influence everything they do at all time and in all places (Boakari, 2004). Expatriates learn about and live their local cultures through the processes of socialization and acculturation that begin in childhood. Now, in order to be functional in a different culture, they need to appreciate its values, norms, beliefs, and behavior patterns and learn to adjust to them as much as possible. Culture is what people identify them with. Understanding of culture is the first step in learning to utilize cultural differences to get a strategic benefit, and mainly anthropologists have consensus that culture is learned, not inborn. It is collective, and the various aspects of culture are interconnected. Intercultural training (Cross-Cultural training) is one application within the domain of intercultural relations which is comprised of cultural anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, sociolinguistics, multicultural education, intercultural communication, and international business management. The present study is conceptual in nature in introspecting a Cross-Cultural Training as a transforming tool.

Keywords: Training, cultural pluralism, perceptions

1. Introduction
Cross-cultural training is a formalized approach to developing trainees intercultural skills. Possessing the skills necessary to cope with and appreciated cultural differences among others has been found to lead to a variety of positive outcomes, with the most important for expatriate employees being adjustment to the new culture and job performance. After participating in a focused, theoretically-based cross-cultural training course, trainees are expected to develop the skills necessary for adjusting to a new culture and performing their job overseas more effectively. Increasing economic globalization has urged the expansion of multinational corporations (MNCs) and has multiplied the numbers of the human capital moving across the globe. In order to maintain and enhance their global competitiveness, the MNCs rely on finding the right people who can effectively manage and operate their overseas businesses (Dowling & Welch, 2005).

Working in a culturally different environment is always a challenge, so it is not surprising that the lack of cultural knowledge and language ability, as well as a difficulty to adjust to the local culture, are major factors contributing to expatriate failure (Briscoe & Schuler; 2004; Dowling & Welch, 2005). Consequently, learning about cultures, becoming aware of cultural differences, and having competence in cross-cultural communication are a must for expatriate our contemporary world is one of cultural diversity and the MNCs normally operate within diverse cultural environments. For the expatriates, then, cultural issues of all sorts, whether at home or in the host country, become basic concerns.

2. Cross Cultural Training-Meaning
The term cross-cultural training’ refers to all modes of training and education aimed at developing cultural competence. It includes workshops, seminars, training courses, and coaching, mentoring and formal qualifications. While the terms cross-cultural and inter-cultural are either used interchangeably or seen to carry different connotations, this report
uses the term cross-cultural and does not make a distinction between the terms. The term culture is used in this report in the anthropological sense and refers to the total learned and transmitted cultural domain of a social group, including social differences stemming from nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, arts, language, gender and generational differences, histories and socioeconomic status.

3. Cross Cultural Training - Behavioral Domain
Under cross cultural training, various mechanisms are employed to transform certain behaviors of employees who are assigned job positions in the host country. The adaptability parameter of cross cultural training acts as the fulcrum. Hence the following are the variants of behavioral training associated with cross cultural training

3.1 Intercultural Phenomena
Capacity to promote learner acquisition of skills, knowledge and personal qualities relevant to intercultural experience, to induce a cultural-adjustment experience and provide a culture-general conceptual framework to assist learners cope. Capacity to present theories and concepts: culture shock, intercultural communication, intercultural competence.

3.2 Intercultural Training
Ability to articulate a clear theory and philosophy and statement of central training-program assumptions, to make appropriate claims for what training can and cannot accomplish, to design, implement and evaluate integrated programs with appropriate mix and sequencing of experiential and didactic methods and learning activities.

3.3 Ethical Issues
Capacity to incorporate ethical standards into training.

3.4 Culture-Specific Content
Capacity to obtain appropriate information and resources, to assess situational factors affecting participants and to provide instruction on target culture.

3.5 Trainer Issues
Capacity to articulate, model and orient learners to a clear philosophy of the trainer’s role and to serve as a resource. Ability to handle the stress and pressures of training. Ability to conduct training in one’s areas of strength and to use skilled trainers for activities where one’s skills are limited.

3.6 Multicultural Issues
Capacity to provide instruction about cultural pluralism, diversity, cultural interaction, racism, sexism, prejudice and discrimination, the history of oppression, discrimination and intergroup relations of groups being trained, to provide supportive social and psychological mechanisms for dealing with cultural marginality and multiculturalism.

3.7 Personal Attributes
The personal attributes required for expatriates are - Tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive and behavioural flexibility, personal self-awareness and strong self-identity, cultural self-awareness, Patience, enthusiasm and commitment, interpersonal sensitivity, tolerance of differences, openness to new experiences and people who are different, empathy, sense of humility and sense of humour.

4. Need and Importance of International Assignment
Traditionally, only parent-country nationals were sent to fill expatriate position. As companies have become more international, the role of expatriates from other countries like third-country nationals has been increasing. Various researches have also emphasized the growing importance of bringing “Inpatriates (i.e., employees from other countries), to company headquarters. In recent years, assignments have become shorter, and new categories of expatriates have emerged, such as “commuter” and “frequent flier” executives and “international itinerants”. The companies sends expatriates on international assignments basically for three reasons:
- To fill positions when there is a skill gap in the location
- For the management development purposes
- For organizational development. While the emphasis may have shifted somewhat from filling a skill gap to management development.

5. Elements of International Assignment Success
International assignments success is more complex than what the literature usually proposes. Individual success during expatriation and repatriation involves:
- Career success
- Job success
- Development success.

5.1 Career Success
Success lies at the center of individuals’ concerns during each stage of the international assignment – before, during, and after repatriation to retain career satisfaction, promotion, and pay increases.

5.2 Job Success
Job success during the expatriation and repatriation stages can be defined by the criterion of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is “an affective attitudinal response to the work environment”. A positive general job satisfaction is an important indicator of adjustment to new jobs. Individual must adjust to new jobs during expatriation as well as during repatriation. Thus, it considers job success to be a criterion of individual success during both expatriation and repatriation.

5.3 Development Success
The success criterion of marketability during the repatriation stage echoes the criterion of the acquisition of international knowledge, skills, and abilities, during the expatriation stage. Network and relationship building can be considered an essential criterion of individual success. Expatriation allows individuals to develop a network of contacts around the world. Networks help individuals perform at work and develop their skills through shared experience.

6. The Importance of Developing Expatriates For Overseas Assignments
One of the main reasons for effective cultural training is to help control the failure rate of expatriate managers. As the premature return by an expatriate from an overseas assignment, failure rates are between 25 and 40 percent when the expatriate is assigned to a developed country and a whopping 70 percent when the expatriate is assigned to a still-developing country. An overwhelming majority of these failures is attributed to the expatriates and/or spouses inability to adapt to the new culture.
Costs associated with expatriate failure run high. Depending on the job or the location, estimates of the direct cost of premature returns by expatriate managers is between $250,000 and $1 million. Taken as a whole, expatriate failure in MNCs runs in the billions of dollars. In addition, there are unknown and indirect costs associated with expatriate failure in terms of the disruptions and missed opportunities in developing markets and revenues abroad. The importance of developing expatriate managers for their overseas assignment through the utilization of cross-cultural training seems apparent.

7. Basic Purposes Of Cross Cultural Training
The needs for the training of employees are

7.1 To increase productivity
Instruction can help employees increase their level of performance on their present and Future assignment. Increased human performance often directly leads to increased operational productivity and increased company profit. Again, increased performance and productivity, because of training, are most evident on the part of the employees who are not yet fully aware of the most efficient and effective ways of performing their jobs.

7.2 To improve quality
Better informed workers are less likely to make operational mistakes. Quality increases may be in relationship to a company product or service, or in reference to the intangible organizational employment atmosphere.

7.3 To help a company fulfill its future personnel needs
Organizations that have a good internal educational programme will have to make less drastic manpower changes and adjustments in the events of sudden personnel alternations. When needs arises, for organizational vaccines can more easily be staffed from internal sources if a company initiates and maintains an adequate instructional programme for both its non-supervisory and managerial employees.

7.4 To improve organizational climate
An endless chain of positive reactions results from a well-planned training programme. Production and product quality may improve, financial incentives may then be increased, an internal promotion becomes less stressed, less supervisory pressure ensures and base pay rate increases result. There may be an Increase in the morale of the Employees.

7.5 To improve health and safety
Proper training can help prevent more Job Stress. A safer work environment leads to more stable mental attitudes on the part of employees. Managerial mental state would also improve if supervisors know that they can better themselves through company designed development programmes.

7.6 Obsolescence prevention
Training and development programmes foster the initiatives and creatively of employees and help to prevent manpower obsolescence, which may be due to age, temperament or motivation, or the inability of a person to adapt himself to technological and Cultural changes.

7.7 Personal Growth
Employees on a personal basis gain individually from their exposure to educational experiences. Again Management development programmes seem to give participants a wider awareness an enlarged skill, and enlightened altruistic philosophy, and make enhanced personal growth possible. It may be insisted that the need for training arises from these reasons also
1. An increased use of technology in production.
2. Labour turnover/Attrition arising from normal separations due to death or physical incapacity. For accidents disease superannuating voluntary retirement promotion within the organization and change of occupation or job.
3. Need for additional hands to cope with increased production/Operations.
4. Employment of in experimented new or bad labor require detailed instruction for an effective performance of a job
5. Old employees need refresher training to enable them to keep abreast of the changing methods, techniques and use of sophisticated Systems and Soft wares.
6. Need for enabling employees to do the work in a more effective way, to reduce learning time, reduce supervision time, reduce idle time and develop their potential.
7. Need for reducing grievances and minimizing Error rates:
8. Needs for maintaining the validity of an organization as a whole and raising the morale of its employees.

A programme of training becomes essential for the purposes of meeting the specific problems of a particular organization arising out of the introduction of new lines of production, changes in design, the demands of competition and economy. Collectively these purpose directly relate to and comprise the ultimate purpose of organization training programmes to enhances overall organizational effectiveness.

8. Cross-Cultural Training Methods
Companies use a variety of methods to teach expatriates cross-cultural skills, aimed at facilitating interactions with a foreign culture. This section gives an introduction to the main methods, their focus, timing and activities used to convey the training. A summary of different training methods along with their attributes has been compiled and is presented in Table Below. The summary includes the training methods identified from the different academic sources presented in this section, as well as sequential training where different methods are combined. While some methods are more commonly used than others, they have all been included to give a comprehensive overview of the subject.
9. Overview of the Cross-Cultural Training Methods, Their Focus, and Timing of Implementation and General Activities Used To Convey the Training

Table 1: Training Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didactic</td>
<td>Factual information, culture general and/or culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Lectures, informal briefings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Practical learning, culture general and/or culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Look-see trips, workshops, simulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>Learning to think and act as a host national, culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure</td>
<td>Cultural assimilator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Facilitating specific intercultural communication</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Traditional teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Understanding culture as a concept, culture general</td>
<td>Pre-departure</td>
<td>Role-plays, self-assessment exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Learning from previous expatriates, culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Overlaps, on-the job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Behavior modification</td>
<td>Leaning to focus on rewarding activities, culture general</td>
<td>Pre-departure</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
<td>Synergies from combined training, culture general and culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure, post arrival, repatriation</td>
<td>Combining different training methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Conclusion
Globalization has done more than create a global market. It has forced companies to take a good look at who they employ, who they serve, and how they are perceived. It may begin with something as simple as producing documents and training programs in more than one language. Researchers may look into how training methods in the United States differ from those in European, Asian, African or Latin American countries. It begins with education and training. It begins with mutual respect and understanding. It begins today.

11. References