The effects of cross-cultural training on the acculturation process of the global workforce

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Abstract Cross-cultural training is fast becoming a recognizably important component in the world of international business. This paper discusses the effectiveness of cross-cultural training in facilitating the process of acculturation, and in developing the culture-specific and culture-general skills needed to increase the sociocultural and psychological adjustments of sojourners and expatriates when they encounter a foreign culture. A new cross-cultural training model is created by integrating acculturation and training effectiveness models. This new model suggests that providing two different types of training program prior to cultural contact will help recipients to effectively modify existing culture-general and culture-specific skills. As a consequence, they will achieve a higher degree of sociocultural and psychological adjustment. Experiential training should trigger affective and behavioral responses, which are the basis of intercultural effectiveness skills, and thus enhance psychological adjustment. By contrast, cognitive training should trigger cognitive responses, especially cultural awareness and interpersonal skills, and enhance sociocultural adjustment.

The globalization of markets, increased diversity of the workforce, and use of Third World nationals by transnational organizations have made issues of training important in the remainder of this decade (Bhagat and Prien, p. 216).

Globalization and aggressive foreign direct investment, combined with domestic restructuring, have dramatically changed the workforce of many companies. As the world gets “smaller”, more and more people are spending time living and working away from their home country, giving rise to greater face-to-face contact among people from very different cultural background (Brislin, 1981). Globalization not only requires the adoption of a cross-cultural perspective in order to successfully accomplish goals in the context of global economy; but also needs a new and higher standard of selection, training, and motivation of people (Bhagat and Prien, 1996). As a result, cross-cultural training is fast becoming a recognizably important component in the world of international business.

Cultural differences exist at home and abroad but, in many cases, international interaction creates problems, since people are separated by barriers such as time, language, geography, food, and climate. In addition, peoples’ values, beliefs, perceptions, and background can also be quite different. For instance, in business scenarios, the expectations for success or failure may differ, which can be very frustrating and confusing to sojourners and expatriates. Intercultural differences influence international business in many ways. For example, consider the matter of punctuality or the time factor. In some cultures, e.g. the Germans, Swiss, and Austrians, punctuality is considered extremely important and lateness is not tolerated. By contrast, in other European and Latin
American countries there is a different, somewhat “looser” approach to time with some degree of tolerance for lateness. Sojourners or expatriates who lack sensitivity or awareness of this “time” orientation can make severe interpersonal blunders, and then need cross-cultural training to avoid culture shock.

**The need for cross-cultural training**

Chen and Starosta (1996) believe that people have to develop their intercultural communication competence in order to live meaningfully and productively in the global village. According to Landis and Brislin (1983), as the workforce in various countries becomes more culturally diverse, it is necessary to train people to become more competent and thus to deal effectively with the complexities of new and different environments. Thus, the issue of cross-cultural training in developing intercultural communication competence can no longer be neglected. People who are sent abroad must develop such competence in order to be successful.

Cross-cultural training has long been advocated as a means of facilitating effective cross-cultural interaction (Bochner, 1982; Harris and Moran, 1979; Landis and Brislin, 1983; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1986; Tung, 1981). The importance of such training in preparing an individual for an intercultural work assignment has become increasingly apparent (Baker, 1984; Lee, 1983; Tung, 1981). As Bhagat and Prien (1996, p. 216) put it, “as international companies begin to compete with each other in the global market, the role of cross-cultural training becomes increasingly important.” A comprehensive literature review by Black and Mendenhall (1990) found strong evidence for a positive relationship between cross-cultural training and adjustment. In addition, another survey revealed that 86 percent of Japanese multinationals report a failure rate of less than 10 percent for their expatriates who have received training (Hogan and Goodson, 1990).

Numerous benefits can be achieved by giving these expatriates cross-cultural training. It is seen as:

- a distinct advantage for organizations;
- a means for conscious switching from an automatic, home-culture international management mode to a culturally appropriate, adaptable and acceptable one;
- an aid to improve coping with unexpected events or culture shock in a new culture;
- a means of reducing the uncertainty of interactions with foreign nationals; and
- a means of enhancing expatriates’ coping ability to by reducing stress and disorientation.

It can reduce or prevent failure in expatriate assignments (Giacolane and Beard, 1994). Furthermore, in a survey of 200 corporate clients, Berlitz International found that companies needed cultural orientation training programs more than foreign language training (Lubin, 1992).
However, it is difficult to develop the appropriate mental frame of reference for dealing with different cultures worldwide. Bender’s (1996) suggested frame of reference includes a basic awareness of cultural differences, which exist between the “home” culture and those with which people are doing, or would like to do business. Tom O'Brien (1998), the Former Division Vice President of international operations of Polaroid in the US, supports this: in his view, in order to achieve intercultural competence, one must be able to shift mind set.

The main purpose of this study is to highlight the effects of cross-cultural training on the acculturation process of the global workforce on meeting a foreign culture. Specifically, this study has the following objectives:

1. To understand the role of cross-cultural training in the expatriates’ adjustment process.
2. To analyze the personality and situational characteristics signifying the success of sojourners’ and expatriates’ psychological and sociocultural adjustments.
3. To present a refined model of cross-cultural training incorporating individual and situational variables along with intercultural competence variables.

**Conceptual definitions**

In this section, the concepts used are defined to show the relationships more clearly. The concepts are reflected in the model below, which is called the Cross-Cultural Cycle (Figure 1). This model is based on the concept of “cultural change,” which represents a transition between one’s own culture and a new culture. Cultural change is part of a problem-solving process undergone by users (Havelock, 1963; Conner, 1993). Here, the users are identified as sojourners and expatriates who experience a new culture which is unfamiliar and strange. In the initial stage of confrontation with the new culture, the user experiences a culture shock. Then, full or partial acculturation takes place, depending on factors such as former experience, length of stay, cultural distance between home and new culture, training, language competency among other factors. The greater the users’ ability to acculturate, the less the impact of culture shock on them. The ability to acculturate and reduce the impact of the culture shock can be developed through an appropriate and effective cross-cultural training. Apart from that, training can also help the users to develop intercultural communication competence, which is needed to adapt better and perform well in the new environment. As a result, once sojourners and expatriates have succeeded in completing the cycle, they will be more familiar with it the next time they confront a new culture. The change process will be improved and becomes less complicated. However, the success or failure of the users to adjust and perform depends on how they respond to the cycle.

**Sojourners and expatriates**

Overseas personnel can be defined as expatriates. Bechtel Group Inc. based in San Francisco has defined “expatriate” (expat) as an employee relocated from
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one country to work in another country, rather than defining it traditionally as an “American” who is sent abroad. By contrast, Gudykunst and Hammer (1984, p. 104) define a sojourner as “a traveler, a visitor, not a person who has come to the host community to reside”. The stay is temporary as they do not intend to stay permanently in the host culture. However, it is difficult to give a clear distinction between both terms as there are no major difference in the length of stay between the term expatriates and sojourners. Sometimes, the terms are used interchangeably to describe international personnel.

Culture

There are many abstract definitions of culture, most of which have been suggested by anthropologists. They define “culture” as “that complex whole, which includes belief, knowledge, art, law, morals and customs and any capabilities and habits acquired by a . . . (person) as a member of a society.” However, the most appropriate definition for this paper is the one cited by Triandis (1972, 1977) in the context of “cross-cultural” research. He defines
subjective culture as a “man-made part of the environment, or a group’s characteristic way of perceiving its social environment.” Another interesting definition is the classic one offered by Hall (1959), that “culture is communication and communication is culture.” It is important to understand the characteristics of a culture and its values, its influence on many aspects of people’s lives.

**Acculturation**

Acculturation is defined as, “Changes that occur as a result of first-hand contact between individuals of differing cultural origins” (Redfield *et al.*, 1936). It is a process whereby an individual is socialized into an unfamiliar or new culture. In short, it refers to the level of adoption of the predominant culture by an outsider or minority group. According to Gordon, 1967; Garza and Gallegos, 1985; Domino and Acosta, 1987; Marin and Marin, 1990; Negy and Woods, 1992, the greater the acculturation, the more the language, customs, identity, attitudes and behaviors of the predominant culture are adopted. However, many sojourners and expatriates experience difficulty in fully acculturating, only adopting the values and behaviors they find appropriate and acceptable to their existing cultures. It is a question of willingness and readiness.

**Culture shock**

Many expatriates experience what is called “culture shock” when they first confront or come into contact with a different culture. Adler (1997) defines this as the frustration and confusion as a result of being bombarded by too many new and uninterpretable cues. Culture shock is also the expatriate’s reaction to a new, unpredictable, and consequently uncertain environment (Black, 1990). Ratiu (1983) found that the most effective global managers often suffer from the most severe culture shock. By contrast, less effective global managers suffered little or no culture shock.

**Cross-cultural training**

According to Kealey and Protheroe (1996), “training” in general can be defined as any intervention aimed at increasing the knowledge or skills of the individual. This can help them cope better personally, work more effectively with others, and perform better professionally. Another definition of “training” is an organized educational experience with the objective of helping expatriates learn about, and therefore adjust to, their new home in a foreign land. Training can involve many techniques and methods, ranging from the experiential (role-playing) to the documentary (reading literature) (Shear, 1993).

In general, cross-cultural training may be defined as any procedure used to increase an individual’s ability to cope with and work in a foreign environment (Tung, 1981). There are many types of training that can be given to people to be sent abroad depending upon their objectives, the nature of their responsibilities and duties, the length of their stay, and their past experiences. As Kealey and Protheroe also point out, “The effectiveness of the various types of training will
naturally depend to some extent on the time and resources available for undertaking them, the quality of trainers, and the possibilities for in-country training” (p. 149). Some of the types of training available to expatriates are technical training, practical information, area studies, cultural awareness, intercultural effectiveness skills, and interpersonal sensitivity training. This paper will focus on two different types of training – experiential and cognitive training. The objective of experiential training is to develop intercultural effectiveness skills, while cognitive training aims to develop cultural awareness and interpersonal skills.

**Intercultural communication competence**

In this study, “communication competence” and “intercultural communication competence” are considered identical, even though “intercultural communication competence” is often looked at in a cross-cultural context. Many theorists have wrestled with the exact nature of the definition of “competence” in the context of cross-cultural adaptation. However, one of its most common definitions is “effectiveness” (Hawes, and Kealey, 1979; Abe and Wiseman, 1983; Gudyskunst and Hammer, 1984). This effectiveness is generally described in terms of skills, attitudes, or traits which the sojourner and expatriate use to build a successful interaction (Ruben, 1976). Scholars have also argued that the concept of communication competence can be broken down into three broad sets of skills: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Chen and Starosta, 1996). Wiseman and Koester (1993) examined the relationship between intercultural communication competence, knowledge of the host culture, and cross-cultural attitudes. As a result, they conceptualized intercultural communication competence as:

- culture-specific understanding of the other;
- culture-general understanding; and
- positive regard of the other.

**A model of the acculturation process**

The acculturation model (Figure 2) is largely guided by the general work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which shaped Ward’s early research on stress, coping, and change (1988) and was updated with ideas from models proposed by Berry (1994) on cross-cultural transition and adjustment. This model integrates the clinical and psychological perspectives on culture contact and change; makes a distinction between two outcomes, psychological and sociocultural; and incorporates selected predictors of adjustive outcomes of acculturation (Ward, 1988). In this model, Ward adds that acculturation can be defined as both a process or a state. As an ongoing process, first hand contact with a new culture leads people from different cultures to modify their behaviors, emotions, and cognition (Moyerman and Forman, 1992). It considers the antecedents, mediators, and adaptational consequences of the dynamic acculturative process.
The acculturation process begins at the societal (macro) level, where cultural contact and cross-cultural communication take place between the society of origin and settlement. The difference between the two societies is called the cultural distance. The societal variables for both societies consist of four main dimensions, which affect the acculturation process: social, political, economic, and cultural. The acculturation process is further influenced by the variables at the individual level, which may be divided according to two moderating factors; characteristics associated with:

1. the acculturating individual (e.g. personality, previous training and experience, language competency, and acculturation strategies); and
2. the acculturation situation (e.g. amount and length of cultural contact, perception of cultural distance, and amount of life changes).

This model considers culture contact as a major life event. It is characterized by elements such as stress, disorientation, and learning deficits; it demands cognitive appraisal of the situation, behavioral and affective responses for stress-management, and the acquisition of culture-specific skills. All the cultural contact factors, together with the psychological and sociocultural outcomes, are influenced by both the societal and individual-level variables (Ward, 1988). Ward (1988) further points out that researchers may also conceptualize acculturation as relating to the of acculturated individual state in which acculturation is defined and measured in relation to the three markers: cognitive, behavioral, and affective. However, she did not define these states further because her model is framed as an ongoing process.
A model of intercultural training effectiveness

This model developed by Bhagat and Prien (1996), called intercultural training effectiveness (Figure 3), was produced on the assumption that a precise assessment of the various needs associated with intercultural training needs could be conducted. Basically there are three main attributes which have an impact on both training effectiveness and individual success in overseas assignments, job-specific, and organizational strategy and culture.

The individual attributes associated with overseas success include: cognitive flexibility, adaptability, tolerance for ambiguity, non-ethnocentrism, positive self-image, outgoingness, cultural sensitivity, intercultural competence, and extroversion. The job-level attributes include: level of technical skill, need for information about the host country and of the operations headquarters, and complexity of interpersonal and administrative activities. The authors felt that these attributes were likely to have profound complicating effects. At the organizational-level, strategic and cultural factors have the highest relevance in designing effective training. They ensure that the training objectives are consistent with the design of the training program. In addition, cultural differences or “cultural distance” between the country of origin and the host country also impact on success in overseas assignments. Following training, the success of overseas assignees is conceptualized at three levels: intercultural competency, especially effectiveness in the work role; organizational success, reflected in the impact of the training programs; and training effectiveness from the point of view of the host country (Triandis, 1994).

Source: Copied from Bhagat & Prien, 1992
The models

The acculturation model

The theory of acculturation represented in the first model (Figure 2) also addresses some essential issues that have been brought up by intercultural trainers. For example, Martin (1986) regrets the lack of conceptual clarity about what constitutes cross-cultural orientation and which outcomes should be considered. In response to this, the model offers a basic distinction between psychological and sociocultural adjustments and suggests that adjustment outcomes can be integrated with training objectives. Further, this model also supports Martin’s claim that both culture-general and culture-specific training are relevant to cross-cultural orientation programs.

However, the model has some drawbacks. For example, although Ward includes macrofactors, such as politics, social, economics, and culture in both the society of settlement and society of origin, which undoubtedly affect individual acculturation, the macrofactors are given less attention than the individual-level factors. The individual-level variables, but not the macrofactors, are shown to be moderating factors in the acculturation process. Furthermore, Ward concluded that situational factors were more relevant than the individual factors. This implies that, although both factors can moderate the process of acculturation, the degree of impact each factors has on the process is different. This may be true, but the implication can be confusing because, in the model, both variables were shown to be equal moderating factors. The model also suggests that adjustment outcomes can be integrated with training objectives. The model, however, does not explicitly show how a training program can play a critical role in ensuring successful acculturation outcomes.

The training effectiveness model

In the training model (Figure 3), successful adjustment in overseas assignments is greatly affected by cultural differences between the country of origin and the host country. Again, this is similar to the acculturation model, which suggests that the culture of origin and the culture of settlement modify cultural contact and psychological and sociocultural adjustment in a number of ways based on overall cultural similarities and differences. The unique significance of the training model lies in its focus on organizational attributes. These help to highlight such key questions: whether training is seen as a strategy to gain competitive advantage, and is incorporated into the “work-cultures” and whether the organization invests heavily in training and development (T&D). In essence, the training model succeeds because it explicitly explains what constitutes training effectiveness in the cross-cultural context and defines various variables affecting it.

However, the model also has some limitations. It assumes that learning is based on the acquisition of knowledge, rather than on changes of attitudes. In a cross-cultural setting, training requires not only recognition, but also acceptance of differences. This helps the expatriates to make the necessary changes in attitudes, which may be the most difficult part of training in a
cross-cultural setting. In their review of cross-cultural training, Hesketh and Bochner (1994), addressed some of these shortcomings. They suggested that the training model of Bhagat and Prien (1996) should be modified and expanded, specifically in the context of cross-cultural settings. People should be taught how to learn by developing specific skills, which, in turn, can be used to adapt and transfer to the demands of changing jobs in a dynamic environment. Lastly, they suggested that the focus of training should be on the trainee, and not on the trainer or the training method.

On the contrary, Bhagat and Prien (1996) believed that overall effectiveness can be enhanced only with an explicit, articulated strategy, which is then incorporated into the design of training. Thus, some parameters for training design must be provided. This is because effective and appropriate training design can have beneficial consequences for the individuals, organization, and members of the host country coming into contact with expatriates. Nevertheless, they also feel that more research is needed on the links between training and organizational outcomes, especially in the commitment of firms towards training resources, in order to develop training in more meaningful programs for expatriates.

While the acculturation and training models are based on two different concepts: the acculturation process and the effectiveness of training, the factors affecting the success of the two models are similar. For example, the individual factors predicting success in the training model in overseas assignments involve similar competencies as the individual characteristics moderating successful adjustments in the acculturation model.

**An integrated cross-cultural training model**

The two previous sections presented two models of acculturation and training effectiveness. However, both models have certain limitations. Consequently, both models are combined to create a third model, the “Integrated Cross-Cultural Training Model,” which links the effectiveness of training programs to the process of acculturation (Figure 4). Cross-cultural training can help expatriates adjust more successfully and decrease distressing experiences during the confrontation of uncertainty in foreign cultures. This model defines acculturation as both a process and a state.

This suggested model maintains the same societal-level variables that were examined in the acculturation model (Figure 2), with slight but important modifications in the individual-level variables. In the original model training and experience was one of the individual-level characteristics. However, in this model, training is explicitly shown as a sub-process to stress the importance of providing training prior to cultural contact and before the acculturation process. Some individual and situational characteristics have also been added to the individual level of variables by integrating relevant attributes from the training effectiveness model (Figure 3). For individuals, these added characteristics are family support and willingness to acculturate. The new situational characteristics are type and length of assignment and training. The major enhancement in the integrated model is the addition of another critical
process before cultural contact takes place, both of which are antecedents to the acculturation process. This new process is called the moderating process and it requires effective training programs.

The objectives of the moderating process are: to modify the individual and situational characteristics; to reduce such factors of culture shock as stress, disorientation, and learning and skills deficiency; and to achieve better acculturation outcomes than by the unmoderated process alone. Training is the critical component. Global experts recommended that when the need to send people abroad arises, overseas personnel and their families must be given adequate preparation ahead of time for their new cultural experiences (Laabs, 1993). The training will help to bring about a continuous learning process to help them to adapt better. In fact, it is critical for them to get adequate preparation, both socioculturally and psychologically, if they are to acculturate successfully.

There are many training programs available today, but two best enhance situational and individual characteristics: experiential and cognitive training. Both types of training add new characteristics to the situational variables since the types and durations of training programs have different effects. Length of assignment is used to classify a person as an expatriate or visitor, since they need different types of training programs. As illustrated in the training model (Figure 3), the particular job attributes also give rise to the particular training needs. Therefore, before designing training, all these factors must be carefully examined. If an organization provides inappropriate training programs to its expatriates, these individual and situational characteristics will negatively affect cultural contact factors and acculturation outcomes.
Looking next at individual characteristics, it is important to provide training for both the individual and family. It is not effective to prepare only the affected individual for an overseas assignment since family support has a paramount impact on the success of adaptation. The acculturation model (Figure 2) presented failed to include this element in the acculturation process, whereas according to Tung (1988), one of the most frequent reasons for failure relates to the inability of the family to adapt to life in the host country. Over 80 percent of the firms surveyed found that training is only given to the employees and not to the spouse and family (Arvey et al., 1990). As a result, many employees return prematurely because of the spouse’s failure to adjust to a dissimilar culture (Briody and Chrisman, 1991; Solomon, 1994; Tung, 1987). Both individuals and their families have to adapt. Hence, for successful acculturation, they need to go through a training process first. In addition, another new individual characteristic is willingness to acculturate. Sometimes expatriates refuse to fully acculturate because of the many difficulties they face. Instead, they become bicultural, adopting only those cultural traits or values they think are relevant to their work performance. By providing appropriate and effective training programs before cultural contact, sojourners and expatriates can develop greater intercultural communication competence and thus enhance the ability to acculturate. Once both the situational and individual characteristics are modified and enhanced by appropriate training programs, individuals develop intercultural competence and are prepared to confront the new culture. Borrowing from Chen and Starosta (1996), intercultural competency is a three-part process that leads to cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural adroitness.

**Cultural awareness**

This cognitive process consists of two main attributes, self-awareness and cultural awareness. These attributes provide the framework for communication competence in a diverse society. Once people become more self-aware, they tend to be better at predicting the effects of their behavior on others. After they learn something about other culture and begin to understand the cultural “map” they know how to modify their behavior to meet the expectations of the new society.

**Cultural sensitivity**

A sojourner must be able to incorporate values, such as open-mindedness, high self-concept, non-judgmental attitudes, and social relaxation, in order to understand the value of different cultures and become sensitive to the verbal and non-verbal cues of people from the foreign culture.

**Cultural adroitness**

With respect to intercultural communication competence, people learn how to act effectively when in contact with the new cultural environment. When they know what to do and what not to do, they will be able to communicate effectively without offending any parties.
In this model, three types of intercultural competence have been explicitly incorporated as important processes for acculturation, as emphasized by Chen and Starosta (1996). These competencies are seen in another form as responses to culture shock. Training programs, which create better states after individuals are in contact with the culture, can moderate the responses of sojourners and expatriates. After the moderating process, the individual responses may be different because of intervening factors such as the situational and individual characteristics. Different training programs promote various aspects of competence. For example, while cognitive training should enhance a person's cognitive level (i.e. cultural awareness and interpersonal skills), experiential training should enhance a person's affective and behavioral levels (i.e. their intercultural effectiveness skills).

However it is also important to understand that although training is directly related to competence, the moderating factors, which consist of both the situational and individual characteristics, also impact and give rise to variations in the responses. Training moderates the initial state prior to cultural contact thereby optimising the state of cross-cultural competence. Looking at acculturation from a state viewpoint can explain a wider range of outcomes in the Integrated Cross-Cultural Training Model. On the other hand, training can also make the acculturation process easier and less stressful by developing both culture-general and specific factors as both training state and process have a positive relationship to the outcome. Thus, effective process of acculturation may achieve an effective state of response.

Discussion
The importance of the suggested integrated model has been clearly addressed through the description of the effects training can have on acculturation. The next step is to discuss how the model affects the contrasting skills developed by experiential and cognitive training affect responses and outcomes. Experiential training is expected to enhance personal and family adjustments, as well as work performance overseas because it tends to concentrate on individual characteristics rather than situational ones. Therefore, an experiential training program should aim to develop intercultural effectiveness skills – especially the three basic skills of adaptation, cross-cultural communication, and partnership. Furthermore, it should include other skills, such as work transition, stress-management, relationship building, and negotiation techniques. By going through an experiential program, individuals and family members become more sensitive and able to respect the differences between their culture of origin and the contact culture. In addition, they learn skills that will enable them to choose the “right” combination of verbal and non-verbal behaviors to achieve a smooth and harmonious relationship with their hosts in the foreign culture. These skills enhance both their affective and behavioral responses, which in turn, trigger more successful psychological
adjustments. Ward and Kennedy (1993) support this interpretation in their finding that locus of control, life changes, social difficulty, and social support variables are predictors of psychological adjustment.

By contrast, cultural awareness training is a cognitive method that aims to enhance interpersonal skills. Such training focuses on understanding the host culture in a more personally relevant way to develop performance-enhancing interactive skills. The best known technique for creating such cultural awareness is through the self-learning tool called the “cultural assimilator” which stimulates and enhances sojourners’ and expatriates’ cognitive responses. As a result of cognitive training, people understand host social systems and values better (Deshpande and Viswesvaran, 1992). These cognitive responses then lead to better sociocultural adjustments because they increase the level of satisfaction with the host national contact; reduce cultural distance; and help expatriates develop a more positive attitude towards the host culture. Ward and Kennedy (1993) also support this as they found that factors associated with intercultural awareness account for 52 percent of the variance in sociocultural adjustments.

The Integrated Cross-Cultural Training Model is an improved model of acculturation, the explicit effects of training have been shown prior to cultural contact and the acculturation process. By looking at the effects of training theoretically, the model successfully explains how different types of training can promote different competencies (both culture and culture-specific skills) and trigger different responses, which consequently result in different adjustment outcomes. The three models (acculturation, training, and integrated cross-cultural training) share many common traits or factors. Each model attempts to describe: a process, which reflects the personal development of expatriates who interact with foreign nationals within a specific environment (the foreign culture) by developing culture-specific and general skills through training. The first two models differ in terms of their emphasis, goals, and content; the third model attempts to reconcile these differences.

While numerous studies have responded to the issues raised in this paper in the affirmative, there are also some contradictory responses. According to Black and Mendenhall (1990), many people are not convinced that training can do much to resolve expatriates’ working problems, even when they are fully aware of them. For instance, companies such as IBM, require as many as forty-two hours of management training on topics such as managing multinational groups of people and internationalization. However, surprisingly, many studies concluded that expatriate employees in this kind of company still face cross-cultural obstacles and high failure rates in spite of the training efforts. Overall, the number of expatriate failures has been variously estimated at between 16 percent to 40 percent by Dowling and Schuler, (1990), 20 percent to 50 percent by Bird and Dunbar (1991), and approximately 30 percent by Tung (1987). Although many scholars agree that training is the best approach or tool for
developing intercultural competence, not everyone sees it as the principal solution to cultural problems (Kealey and Protheroe, 1996). Other people question the effectiveness of cross-cultural training more explicitly.

Since prolonged international business travel is increasingly important in today’s global market, the need to develop successful training programs is also critical. Many first-time expatriates face cross-cultural adaptation problems stemming from the ignorance both of “self-culture” and “cross-culture” and from their tendency to depend on their previous set of ethnocentric beliefs (Smith, 1998).

Implications
Some of the important implications of inadequate adjustment to international assignments are:

- costly for both the organizations and individuals in terms of absenteeism;
- early return to the home country; and
- lower performance according to Tung, 1982; Copeland and Griggs, 1985; Black, 1988.

In order to reduce the numbers of sojourners and expatriates returning early, Japan Overseas Educational Services (JOES) provides training over a period of several months to the wives and families of Japanese businessmen being sent overseas to psychologically prepare the Japanese women for life in the new culture (Tung, 1988). In Great Britain, the Women’s Corona Society offers a similar program for families preparing to live abroad. Both these efforts emphasize the importance of giving adequate training prior to cultural contact to better prepare both expatriates and their families. O’Brien (1998) believes that the development of specific cross-cultural skills and competencies are also important. He adds that the two most important cross-cultural competencies are: “A mindset that observes successful people and the ability to modify one’s own behavior to work with that successful person in their culture.” Learning new habits of behavior is the outcome of successful observation and changes in mindset, which both are a great foundation for cultural awareness and skill building.

Mindset shift is like the concept of paradigm shift in change management. One must be able to be flexible and open to any changes in order to facilitate the adaptation process, even when it does not involve national boundaries. Letting go of the existing work culture, values, and norms, which can be a very difficult task in one’s own culture, is even harder if different national cultures are involved. Consequently, many organizations find the best way to manage change in order to achieve success, reduce resistance, and increase receptiveness is through continuous training. Courses should be given to employees on a regular basis to increase their skills and knowledge and
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maintain their mental flexibility. Employees on overseas assignments need even more support. Without such training, business exchanges involving different national cultures have often been difficult.

According to O'Brien (1998), the effectiveness of training depends largely on how “trainable” people are. He points out that many top management people refuse to receive training because they feel, that being at the top, they should already know about cross-cultural communication. However, O'Brien (1998) argues that, regardless of position or past experiences, training can always help people increase their knowledge and develop new competencies. One should not regard training as limited to a period of time; instead it should be a continuous education. Training should achieve the desired result if organizations and individuals put the same level of effort, commitment, and motivation into identifying and achieving common goals throughout the business person’s sojourn. The organization has a role to play in ensuring that people are given an adequate amount of knowledge and skills, strong support, and clearly communicated goals. Individuals also need to be willing to face the new culture, look forward to meeting a diverse group of people, and, most of all, be willing to make the necessary mental and social adjustments. Such individuals play an interface role in the confrontational organization and foreign cultures.

Conclusion

Cross-cultural training, however, has not always had the intended successful outcomes. Training can moderate both situational and individual characteristics, but long-term success requires commitment to a long-term process. Consequently, the methods, models, and techniques of cross-cultural training are continually being redesigned to achieve better outcomes, which are higher degrees of cross-cultural adjustment (Shear, 1993). Training is necessary to reduce the frustrations and international blunders faced by expatriates. But it is important to remember that, according to the integrated model, training can never totally eliminate the anxiety and stress associated with cultural contact.

Expatriates require more in-depth training, which involves better preparation and leads to distinct mindset changes. Language training must also be included, although it need not be emphasized as much as cross-cultural training. To be effective, training should be given one to two weeks prior to landing and starting the new job. As O’Brien (1998) puts it, “once you land and start, it’s too late.” The organization must take into account the resources, time, quality of the trainers, various types of training, and training costs into its business strategy to achieve the desired outcome of acculturation. The need to train people is unquestionable. With adequate knowledge and competencies, people will develop a more stable psychological sense of well being, and thus become better socialized to their new environment.
The globalization of business and proliferation of intergovernmental and non-governmental contacts involving expatriates make the need for cross-cultural competencies more important than ever before Mendenhall and Oddou (1985); Gertsen (1990); and Nauman (1992).

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