International Assignee Selection and Cross-Cultural Training and Development

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Multinational firms today compete on the effectiveness and competence of their core human talent around the world. Increasingly, these core individuals are being required to operate effectively across a variety of national borders and in a greater number of cross-national job assignments. These international assignees, including all employees working outside of their own national borders (e.g., parent country nationals, third country nationals, host country nationals), have collectively become vital for the success of multinational firms. These international assignees fill critical staffing needs in subsidiaries, manage key projects, transfer knowledge and corporate culture across geography, work on multinational teams, and perform many other critical tasks for their firms.

International assignments can be very challenging personally. While immersed in new cultural environments, international assignees are out of their own comfort zones and are susceptible to a variety of challenges such as the inability to speak the host national language, the inability to cope with the stress of culture shock, the inability to interact effectively with host nationals, and the like. Past research suggests that individuals who are not predisposed or prepared to confront these challenges may perform poorly, be maladjusted, etc.

Given the criticality of their roles and the associated challenges of living and working in another country, maximizing the cross-national effectiveness of international assignees has become an increasingly important function for researchers and human resources (HR)

practitioners alike. From a strategic perspective, optimizing the effectiveness of international assignees – core talent for most multinational firms' is a significant HR activity. Within an entire HR system, two specific functions which promote cross-cultural effectiveness among international assignees will be the focus of this chapter: (1) selection and (2) training and development. Other HR activities, such as compensation, performance management, and repatriation, will not be discussed in this chapter yet should be integrated into a comprehensive HR program for managing international assignees.

Within the selection and training functions, there are three major areas that have emerged in both the research and practice of managing international assignees. The first includes the *individual-level antecedents* of international assignee success, such as personality characteristics, language skills, and prior experience living in a different country. The second includes the *process* issues for effectively selecting global assignees, such as realistic previews, self-selection, and assessment. The third includes training and development issues for preparing international assignees to live and work in new cultural environments such as designing effective cross-cultural training programs. This chapter will cover these important areas and offer some suggestions for future research.

Individual-level Antecedents of International Assignee Success

Personality Characteristics

Researchers have found that successful and well-adjusted international assignees tend to share certain personality traits (e.g., Black, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000a; 2000b; Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985, Stening, 1979). Certain personality characteristics enable international assignees to be open and receptive to learning the norms of new cultures, to initiate contact with host nationals, to gather cultural information, and to handle the higher amounts of

stress associated with the ambiguity of their new environments (Black, 1990; Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) – all important for international assignee success. While many personality characteristics exist, research has found that five factors provide a useful typology or taxonomy for classifying them (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992, 1993; McCrae & Costa, 1987, 1989; McCrae & John, 1992). These five factors have been found repeatedly through factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses across, time, contexts, and cultures (Buss, 1991; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992, 1993; McCrae & Costa, 1987; McCrae & John, 1992) and are labeled "the Big Five." The Big Five personality factors are: (1) extroversion, (2) agreeableness, (3) conscientiousness, (4) emotional stability, and (5) openness or intellect. Each of the Big Five personality characteristics has some relationship to international assignee success (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997; Caligiuri, 2000a; Caligiuri, 2000b).

Some personality characteristics predispose international assignees to form stronger social bonds, which can encourage a higher level of cross-cultural adjustment (Caligiuri, 2000a). International assignees who are able to assert themselves enough to establish some interpersonal relationships with both host nationals and other international assignees tend to be more likely to effectively learn the social culture of the host country (Abe & Wiseman, 1983; Black, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000a; Caligiuri, 2000b; Dinges, 1983; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; 1988; Searle & Ward, 1990), therefore, *extroversion* is important to help international assignees learn the work and non-work social culture in the host country relates to international assignee success. *Agreeableness* may also be important given that the ability to form reciprocal social alliances is achieved through this personality characteristic of (Buss, 1991). Expatriates who are more agreeable (i.e., deal with conflict collaboratively, strive for mutual understanding, and are less

competitive) report greater cross-cultural adjustment -- and greater adjustment on the assignment (Caligiuri, 2000a; Caligiuri, 2000b; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997; Black, 1990; Tung, 1981).

Other personality characteristics may also predispose international assignee for success. For example, trusted and *conscientious* employees are more likely to become leaders, gain status, get promoted, earn higher salaries, etc. In the domestic context, this has been supported through studies demonstrating a positive relationship between conscientiousness and work performance among professionals (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Day & Silverman, 1989). This finding has been generalized to international assignee performance (Caligiuri, 2000a; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997) and has been found to be a predictor of those who will be effective in international assignments.

In addition to the three personality characteristics described above, *emotional stability* may also be important for international assignee success. Emotional stability is the universal adaptive mechanism enabling humans to cope with stress in their environment (Buss, 1991). Given that stress is often associated with living and working in an ambiguous and unfamiliar environment (Richards, 1996), emotional stability is an important personality characteristic for international assignees' adjustment to the host country (Abe & Wiseman, 1983; Black, 1988; Gudykunst, 1988; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1984; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) and completion of an international assignee assignment (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997).

Perhaps the most intuitively useful personality characteristic, as it relates to international assignee success, is the characteristic of *openness* or intellect. For an international assignee, the ability to correctly assess the social environment is more complicated given that the host country may provide ambiguous social cues (Caligiuri & Day, 2000). Successful international assignees will likely need to possess cognitive complexity, openness, and intuitive perceptual acuity to

accurately perceive and interpret the host culture (Caligiuri, Jacobs, & Farr, 2000; Dinges, 1983; Finney & Von Glinow, 1987; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). Openness is related to international assignee success because individuals higher in this personality characteristic will have fewer rigid views of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, etc. and are more likely to be accepting of the new culture (e.g., Abe & Wiseman, 1983; Black, 1990; Cui & Van den Berg, 1991; Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978).

Collectively, these personality characteristics could be included in a valid selection system for prospective international assignees. It is important to note however, that the absolute level of each personality characteristic would be contingent upon the type of international assignment under consideration. For example, the necessary level of openness and extroversion would be much higher for an executive in a networking role than it would be for a technician working predominantly with a system or machine. A better understanding of the level of necessary characteristics for given international contexts would be useful focus for future research studies.

Language Skills

There is a logical consensus with regard to the positive relationship between language skills and international assignee adjustment (e.g., Abe & Wiseman, 1983; Church, 1982; Cui & Van den Berg, 1991). There is some disagreement, however, to the relative importance of language compared to other factors, such as personality characteristics (e.g., Benson, 1978; Cui & van den Berg, 1991; Dinges, 1983). The disagreement in the importance of language skills has its roots in whether interpersonal contact between people from different cultures leads to increased cultural understanding. Those who support contact theory believe that language skills, given that they are necessary for communication, are critical for cross-cultural adjustment. Others (e.g., Cui & Van den Berg, 1991) suggest that merely interacting with host nationals is not enough to

produce cross-cultural adjustment. They suggest that cross-cultural adjustment only occurs when international assignees have the cultural empathy to be open to different norms and fully acceptant of their host cultures (Cui & Van den Berg, 1991). In other words, one could both speak the host language fluently and know the "correct" behaviors to display, and yet only superficially be immersed in the host culture (Cui & Van den Berg, 1991). Since it would be difficult for the opposite to be true (i.e., that one could be immersed in a culture without language skills), basic language skills should, at very least, be a minimum precondition for success as an international assignee. At a minimum, in most circumstances an attempt should be made to find a qualified candidate with language skills – while for some positions the language skills may be more critical than with others.

Prior International Experience

From a social learning perspective, the more contact international assignees have with host nationals and the host culture, the greater their cross-cultural adjustment (Bochner, Hutnik, & Furnham, 1986; Bochner, Mcleod, & Lin, 1971; Brein & David, 1971; Brislin, 1981; Guthrie, 1975). For example, past research has found that having friendships with host nationals greatly improves international assignees' ability to learn culturally appropriate social skills and behaviors (Searle & Ward, 1990). From this perspective, more prior experience with the host culture should produce greater cross-cultural adjustment. On the other hand, the social cognitive theorists contend that prior foreign experience with the host culture is positively related to adjustment provided that the experience does not serve to reinforce previously held stereotypical beliefs or foster negative, unrealistic expectations of the foreign culture. Social cognitive proponents agree that there is a direct relationship between foreign experience and cross-cultural adjustment when the experience provides an accurate and realistic representation of the host

countries' norms, customs, values, etc but the empirical evidence is inconclusive -- the relationship between previous international experience and cross-cultural adjustment is more complex as is commonly believed. There is some evidence that previous experience abroad does not always facilitate adjustment to a new expatriate environment (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Cui & Awa, 1992; Dunbar, 1992; Selmer, 2002). A recent study by Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak (in-press), however, found support for unique moderating effects of past international experiences on the relationship between current assignment tenure and general and work adjustment.

Process Issues for Selecting International Assignees

There are three key process issues in the research literature regarding international assignee selection. The first is the application of realistic previews to international assignments to help create realistic expectations during (or prior to) selection. The second is the concept of a formal self-selection process which enables international assignee candidates to determine whether the assignment is right for his or her personal situation, family situation, career stage, etc. The third is traditional candidate assessment that would include many of the dimensions identified in the previous section (personality, language skills, and past experience) in a structured organizational selection program. Each of these three international assignment process issues are discussed in greater detail below.

Realistic Previews for International Assignments

Preconceived and accurate expectations prior to an international assignment have been shown to influence the international assignment in many important ways (Caligiuri & Phillips, 2003; Searle & Ward, 1990; Weissman & Furnham, 1987). Studies comparing international

assignees expectations prior to going abroad and their actual experience after relocation suggest that having moderately accurate expectations facilitates cross-cultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990; Weissman & Furnham, 1987). Caligiuri and Phillips (2003) found that providing realistic previews prior to international assignments did not change candidates' interest in possible assignments, but did increase candidates' self-efficacy for an international assignment. This self-efficacy, in turn, could influence the outcome of the international assignment.

Both research and practice suggest that in the selection phase (or prior to it) it is useful for firms to provide information, even informally, to assist candidates in making realistic decisions on whether an assignment is right for them and to help them form realistic expectations about a possible international assignment (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Caligiuri & Phillips, 2003; Tung, 1988). Many firms have pre-selection programs which pair repatriates with international assignee candidates to give international assignees the opportunity to form realistic expectations (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992).

Self-Selection

Given that the demographic profiles and personal situations of the international assignee candidates will vary, self-assessment (or self-selection) has been found to be an effective method for encouraging realistic previews in a tailored and self-directed way (Caligiuri & Phillips, 2003). For example, an unmarried person who is a candidate for an international assignment might have a different set of concerns, compared to a married candidate with a family (Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998). Likewise, given the many personality characteristics related to cross-cultural adjustment, people who possess different personality characteristics may be differentially suited for certain types of international assignments (Caligiuri 2000a; 2000b; Dalton & Wilson, 2000; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1999, 1997).

Self-assessment provides a structured method for international assignment candidates to actively self-assess their fit with the personality and lifestyle requirements of the international assignment (Caligiuri & Phillips, 2003). Effective self-selection tools enable international assignee candidates to critically evaluate themselves on dimensions, such as personality and individual characteristics, career issues, and family issues (including issues of spouses and children). Self-selection instruments, in a structured way, help employees make a thoroughly informed decision about whether to accept an international assignment (Caligiuri & Phillips, 2003).

Firms using self-assessment tools have found that this step fosters the creation of a candidate pool of potential international assignees. This candidate pool can be organized to include information, such as the availability of the employee (when and to what countries), languages the employee speaks, countries preferred, technical knowledge, skills, and abilities, etc. The information retained based on self-assessment should be repeated and continually updated as much of the information (other than personality) can change over time. For example, language skills can diminish if not used, family situations change, etc.

Candidate Assessment

Once the requirements of a given international assignment have been determined, many possibilities exist to assess the candidates on job-related dimensions. Given that international assignments are job contexts, rather than job descriptions, they require different levels of relevant attributes (e.g., language fluency, openness, technical skills). For example, greater emphasis would be placed on personality characteristics (such as sociability and openness) when assessing a candidate for a developmental or strategic assignment – requiring much more host national contact, compared to a more technical international assignment (Caligiuri 2000a; 2000b;

2004). In a best case, a thorough assessment can be conducted through a variety of valid formal selection methods: paper and pencil tests, assessment centers, interviews, behavioral observations, and the like.

While comprehensive, the reality of international assignment selection is not nearly as sophisticated. Most international assignee selection generally happens using the most informal methods – recommendations of peers or supervisors (Brewster & Harris, 1999) on basic dimensions such as work experience and willingness to relocate. That said, future research should attempt to close the gap between research and practice. For instance, two aspects of the international assignee selection process have shown promise for practical application but warrant further investigation. The first is to better understand ways to engage employees early – even before an international assignment is even available. The best candidates could potentially build their efficacy for the assignment when their decision-making processes are engaged before a position becomes available (Caligiuri & Phillips, 2003). The second promising application for practice is to better understand ways to effectively involve the family as early as possible in the selection process. Research suggests that family members can greatly influence the assignment outcome (Caligiuri et al., 1998) so their motivation and interest in the international assignment should not be disregarded in the assessment phase. It is generally accepted that the best selection decision will be mutual among the employees, their organizations, and their families. While the best case for international assignee selection is understood, the dynamic interplay among employees, families, and organizations -- in terms of international assignment selection decisions -- is not yet thoroughly understood and warrants further research.

Training and Development for International Assignees

In addition to comprehensive self-selection and selection programs, success in international assignments may be facilitated through the training and development of cross-national competencies (e.g., cross-cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities). For example, providing an international assignee with knowledge of general dimensions on which most cultures differ and the impact of these differences may provide the individual with some awareness regarding expected norms and behaviors in the new culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). This awareness may lower anxiety, reduce culture shock, and encourage appropriate behaviors when living and working in a host culture. For the organization, both international training activities and international development activities will help improve cross-national competencies among international assignees (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004; Dowling & Welch, 2004; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Evans, Pucik, & Barsouk, 2001).

International Training and Development Activities

Organizations recognize the importance of international training and development activities and increasingly use them to prepare individuals for the challenges and opportunities associated with living and working in new cultural environments, with diverse teams, across national borders, etc. (see Windham International & National Foreign Trade Council, 2003, 2002; Csoka & Hackett, 1998; Gregersen, Morrison, & Black, 1998). The terms *international training activities* (ITAs) and *international development activities* (IDAs) tend to be combined to signify the set of activities used by firms to develop the competency base of their internationally-oriented employees. The objective of both ITAs and IDAs is to foster learning among the organizational members and develop enriched and more capable workers who, in turn, can enhance organizational competitiveness and effectiveness internationally.

While similar in objective, the specific goals of ITAs and IDAs are, in fact, different. In general terms, ITAs *focus* on the competencies needed to perform more effectively on one's current job. In other words, ITAs tend to be oriented towards solving short-term performance concerns. In contrast, *IDAs* refer to the acquisition of competencies needed to perform in some future job. It is, however, important to note that certain activities such as cross-cultural training can be used for both for training purposes (e.g., Earley, 1997) and for developmental purposes (e.g., Lievens, Harris, Van Keer & Bisqueret, 2003). Some of the various international training and development activities are listed below.

- Cross-cultural Training (Specific and General)– The most researched and most used in practice, when used as an ITA, the goal of cross-cultural training is to increase an international assignee's specific cross-cultural knowledge of a given country. When (albeit, less commonly) used as an IDA, cross-cultural training will be geared for individuals who must work across a variety of cultural contexts – without any one cultural context in mind.
- Predeparture Cross-cultural Orientation – As an ITA, the immediate goal of cross-cultural orientation is to help an internationally assignee learn the basics (e.g., currency, public transportation, working hours) to comfortably live and work in host country.
- Diversity Training – Depending on the immediacy of the need, diversity training can be either an ITA or an IDA. The goal of diversity training is to increase one's ability to understand and appreciate multiple cultural perspectives.
- Language Training- Depending on the immediacy of the need for fluency in another language, language training can be either an ITA or an IDA – but in practice is most often offered when an international assignee will be moving to a country where different

language skills are needed. Sometimes, organizations offer language training in the corporate language for all who are interested. In this case, language training may be viewed more developmentally.

- Traditional Education in International Management – University or specific training programs are often offered as a part of a larger developmental plan and therefore more likely to be an ITA. The goal of the traditional program is to increase international business acumen and knowledge.
- Cross-National Coaching or Mentoring – Generally viewed as an IDA, cross-national coaches and mentors help international assignees build cultural awareness, work on cultural "blind-spots and help develop competencies for becoming effective in an international environment. Occasionally, cross-national coaches are assigned for a specific task (e.g., delivering an important speech in another country, negotiating an international joint venture) and, in those cases, would then be considered more of an ITA.
- Immersion Cultural Experiences - Generally viewed as an IDA, the goal of immersion is to – with a rather quick experience – produce culture shock for the developmental purpose of increasing one's ability to recognize and appreciate multiple cultural perspectives.
- Cross-Border Global Teams (with Debriefing) – Both an ITA and an IDA, individuals are debriefed after a multicultural team experience (e.g., a meeting) to receive feedback, and hopefully improve their skills, on how to be a better leader, team member, etc. in a multicultural context. The feedback is an ITA for the purpose of the immediate team and an IDA for long-term skill development.

- International Assignments – International assignments can be the means by which people develop cross-cultural competence – and the outcome that the more immediate-focused ITAs hope to influence. In the developmental context, as an IDA, living and working in another country may have a long-term effect on an individual's cross-national competence. Believing in their developmental power, many firms view successful international assignments as the indicator of cross-national competence.

We encourage future research to investigate the various ITAs and IDAs with their specific goals in mind. Research, to date, has overgeneralized the short-term and long-term outcomes of these diverse training and development interventions. An investigation of the various interventions, relative to the short-term and long-term goals would help organizations better understand the implications of the activities in which they engage. In some cases, long-term benefits may be present as a direct result of a short-term intervention (e.g., a language course gives an individual some cultural exposure and appreciation). The concern, however, is that the opposite may also be the case – that a long-term intervention (such as an international rotational assignment) may have only a short-term gain. In the case of an international assignment, this concern suggests that an individual has learned to be competent within one particular culture, but has not developed any international competencies that could generalize to other cross-border contexts. This is an open, and very important, area for scholarly investigation.

Cross-Cultural Training

As the non-exhaustive list suggests, there are many types of ITAs and IDAs with different goals and objectives. From this list, the most frequently used and researched activity is *cross-cultural training*. 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).

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). To understand the systematic approach to designing cross-cultural training initiatives, Tarique and Caligiuri (2003) propose a five-phase process as a general strategy to follow in designing effective cross-cultural training initiatives. The five phases are:

1) Identify the type of global assignment for which cross-cultural training is needed;
2) Determine the specific cross-cultural training needs (from the organization-level, assignment-level, and the individual-level);
3) Establish the goals and measures for determining cross-cultural training effectiveness;
4) Develop and deliver the cross-cultural training program; and,
5) Evaluate whether the cross-cultural training program was effective.

The *first phase* includes identifying the type of global assignment for which cross-cultural training is needed. Research has shown that there are different types of global assignments (e.g., Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001; Hays, 1974; Oddou, 1991) and cross-cultural training will differ based on the goals required for the successful completion of each assignment (Tarique & Caligiuri, 2002; Tarique 2002 . The *second phase* determines the specific cross-cultural training needs. This involves conducting a cross-cultural training needs analysis across three levels: the organizational-level, the individual (or international assignee) level, and the assignment-level. The organizational-level analysis determines the organizational context for cross-cultural training. This analysis considers how cross-cultural training can assist both headquarters and

subsidiaries in supporting the firm's strategy. The individual (or international assignee) level analysis identifies any special needs that have to be addressed in cross-cultural training for the individuals, who are on the receiving end of the cross-cultural training, the international assignees themselves. This analysis includes examining the international assignee's prior international experience, his or her existing levels of cross-cultural competencies, how he or she perceives the issues the cross-cultural training initiative is designed to address, and the needs of the international assignee's entire family. The assignment-level analysis determines the cross-cultural competencies required to effectively complete the given assignment. This includes identifying the important tasks required on the global assignment and the type of cross-cultural competencies needed to perform those tasks effectively.

Phase three involves establishing short-term goals and long-term goals for determining cross-cultural training effectiveness. Cross-cultural training goals should be stated in detailed and measurable terms (e.g., Noe, 2004). Short-term cross-cultural training goals can bring about cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes (Gudykunst, Guzley, & Hammer, 1996). Cognitive goals focus on helping international assignees understand the role of cultural values on behavior in the destination country, in both social and business contexts. Affective goals aim at helping international assignees effectively manage their attitude toward the new culture and successfully handle negative emotions. Behavioral goals help international assignees form adaptive behaviors by emphasizing the transnational skills international assignees require in order to successfully interact with individuals from other cultures. While the short-term goals of cross cultural training will vary from assignment to assignment, the long-term goal of many cross-cultural training initiatives is to improve the rate of cross-cultural adjustment. Improving cross-cultural adjustment is important for all international assignees and would generalize across assignments.

The *fourth phase* develops and delivers the cross-cultural training initiative. This phase involves determining the specific instructional content needed in order to achieve the stated goal and the methods to deliver the instructional content, and the sequencing of the training sessions. Based on the cross-cultural and intercultural communication research (e.g., Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Harris & Moran, 1991), Harrison suggests that content structure should follow an integrated approach consisting of both general cultural orientation (to understand factors that may influence one's receptiveness to effective cross-cultural interactions and to understand how cultures differ and the impact of these differences on international assignees) and specific cultural orientation (to help international assignees understand more about the specific culture to which they are being assigned).

Gudykunst, Guzley, and Hammer (1996) suggest that the methods to deliver the instructional content can be categorized into four categories:

1) Didactic culture general;
2) Didactic culture specific;
3) Experiential cultural general; and,
4) Experiential cultural specific.

Didactic culture general methods provide cultural general information to international assignees and include lectures, seminars, reading martial, discussions, videotapes, and culture-general assimilators. Didactic culture specific methods, in contrast, present information on a particular culture. Methods used in this category include area studies, videotapes, orientation briefings, case studies, and the like. Experiential cultural methods help international assignees experience the impact of cultural differences on their behaviours. Methods in this category include immersion programs or intensive workshops. Experiential culture-specific methods, in

contrast, help international assignees experience and learn from interactions with individuals from the host culture. This approach generally includes methods like role-playing, look-see trips, in-country cultural coaching, and language training (Gudykunst, Guzley, & Hammer, 1996).

Lastly, *phase five* evaluates whether the cross-cultural training initiative was effective. Cross-cultural training evaluation refers to the systematic process of gathering information necessary to determine the effectiveness of cross-cultural training. Cross-cultural training effectiveness is generally defined in terms of the benefits the international assignees receive from cross-cultural training and is determined by the extent to which international assignees have changed as a result of participating in cross-cultural training. The evaluation process involves establishing measures of effectiveness, and developing research designs to determine what changes (e.g., cognitive, affective, and behavioral) have occurred during the training. Results from the cross-cultural training evaluation should help the organization decide whether cross-cultural training should be continued in its current form or modified.

Future research on these proposed phases and the various categories of cross-cultural training content (proposed by Gudykunst, et al., 1996) is an important area for investigation. The optimal combination of delivery methods and content for producing the desired outcome has not yet been determined. For example, are some content areas better covered before (or while) an individual is experiencing a culture? Currently, many cross-cultural training programs are delivered prior to the international assignment – with questionable influence on adjustment (Mendenhall et al, 2004). Also, a better understanding of the limits and generalizability across organizational, cultural, national, and individual contexts for cross-cultural training is an important area to explore in future research.

The Intersection between Selection and Training: Future Research Directions

As mentioned earlier, many international organizations provide ITAs and IDAs to their employees in order to improve their global work performance. However, despite the plethora of research advocating the use of ITAs and IDAs as mechanisms for improving global work performance, the current research has generally assumed that everyone benefits equally from ITAs and IDAs. Given the extraordinary high costs (e.g., financial and emotional) of developing global managers, it is important to understand who will benefit the most from ITAs and IDAs. Caligiuri (2000a), for example, notes that academics and practitioners, alike, should identify those individuals with the requisite individual characteristics (e.g., personality), and then offer cross-cultural training to those identified. Cross-cultural training may only be effective when trainees are predisposed to success in the first place (Caligiuri, 2000). Certain personality traits, in particular openness to experience, extroversion, and agreeableness, and early international experiences may provide the conditions under which ITAs and IDAs will lead to greater learning of cross-national competencies.

Personality, Training, and Development

There is some evidence in the domestic training and development literature that personality traits are related to learning outcomes (e.g., Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Colquitt & Simmering, 1998; Barrick & Mount, 1991). Barrick and Mount's (1991) meta-analysis found that the personality traits of conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness were related to training proficiency. In another example, Salgado's (1997) meta-analysis of 36 studies found that the personality traits of openness and agreeableness were valid predictors of training proficiency.

The contact hypothesis or association hypothesis (Allport 1954, Amir 1969, Zajonc 1968) can provide theoretical justification for personality traits as predictors of learning through a

training or development intervention. The contact hypothesis or association hypothesis was originally developed to examine the race relations in the United States in the 1950's and 1960's, and suggests, in brief, that the more interaction (i.e., contact) a person has with people from a given cultural group, the more positive his or her attitudes will be toward the people from that cultural group (Allport, 1954, Amir 1969, Zajonc, 1968). Church (1982) suggested that the principles of the contact hypothesis could be applied to the interpersonal interactions between international assignees and host nationals. More recently, Caligiuri (2000a) used the contact hypothesis to suggest that international assignees often learn cultural appropriate norms and behaviors through cross-cultural interactions and that international assignees vary on the personality traits necessary for relating to others.

The predisposition for cross-cultural interactions can facilitate the learning of cross-national competencies during international training and development. This is based on the assertion that interaction with people from different cultures will affect the extent to which an individual is able to use the learned skills and behaviors. The more an individual interacts with people from different cultures, the more likely he or she will be to use and apply the learned skills and behaviors. In addition, extensive interpersonal interactions will help individuals experience the consequences of using behavior or skills and to observe others and seeing the consequences of their behaviors. Such consequences would assist them to determine which behaviors result in positive outcomes and to prevent the development of unwanted or inappropriate behaviors. The dynamic interplay between individual differences and international training and development activities for improving is cross-national competence is an area which warrants additional scholarly research.

Early International Experience, Training, and Development

One type of experience that has not been given much attention by researchers is early international travel experiences or experiences gained from living outside the country of ones citizenship as a child (Cottrell & Useem, 1994). This form of international experience has been extensively discussed in the "third country kids" (TCKs) literature (e.g., Lam & Selmer 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Eidse & Sichel, 2003) which can provide theoretical evidence that individuals, by developing extensive early international experiences, are more likely to have learning or information processing advantage that should facilitate the learning of new behaviors and skills. Third country kids (TCKs) are individuals who have spent a part of their childhood in countries or cultures other than their own (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). According to Pollock & Van Reken (2001: 6)

> "TCKs are raised in neither/nor world. It is neither fully the world of their parents' culture (or cultures) nor fully the world of the other culture (or cultures) in which they were raised……In the process of first living in one dominant culture and then moving to another and maybe even two or three more and often back and forth between them all, TCKs develop their own life patterns different from those who are basically born and live in one place."

Early international travel experiences allow TCKs to develop a learning or information processing advantage, which should facilitate the learning of new behaviors and skills. From a social learning perspective when children travel to other countries, they learn behaviors, customs, and norms of that culture through direct experience or through observations of the host nationals' behaviors (Bandura, 1997). Children with extensive travel experiences in other countries may have developed more comprehensive prior knowledge structures or sets of cognition maps about people, roles, or events that govern social behavior. The literature on the additive effect of prior knowledge (e.g., Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) and cognitive learning theories (e.g., Bower &

Hilgard, 1981) suggest that accumulated prior knowledge increases both the ability to put new knowledge into memory and the ability to recall and use it.

The above discussion suggests that individuals high on openness to experience, extroversion, and agreeableness, and early international travel experience will benefit more from training and development than individuals low on these traits. Future research, however, is needed to disentangle the mechanisms that underlie these associations. A major criticism of the existing literature on international training and development effectiveness is that it is based on anecdotal evidence or broad theories and models. There is a need to develop advanced theoretical approaches to better understand how individual differences influence the relationship between ITAs and IDAs and learning/performance outcomes. In addition, future research needs to examine how non-personality individual differences, such as individual learning styles (e.g., Kolb 1984) and age (e.g., Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000) influence this relationship. Moreover, a fruitful line of inquiry would be to examine the experiences of third country kids who are now of working age and experiences cultures in the organizational context.

An issue related to cross-cultural training effectiveness should be noted. In the realm of academic research, studies that have examined the likely success of cross-cultural training have shown that cross-cultural training programs have failed to meet performance improvement needs (Kealy & Protheroe, 1996; Mendenhall et al., 2004). Kealy & Protheroe (1996), for example, reviewed empirical studies used to assess cross-cultural training effectiveness and concluded that while cross cultural training seems to be effective in achieving immediate learning results, its impact on expatriates' performance on the assignment is not clear. Similarly, in a recent review of cross cultural training evaluation studies, Mendenhall et al, (2004) concluded that " cross-cultural training seems to be effective in enhancing knowledge and trainee satisfaction, but

seems to be less effective in changing behaviors and attitudes, or in improving adjustment and performance" (p:19).

The failure of cross-cultural training to produce a significant change in cross-cultural adjustment and in performance on the global assignment can be viewed from the classical "transfer of training problem" which is defined as the failure of the trainee to effectively and continually apply the knowledge and skills gained in training to his or her job (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). It is well known in the domestic training literature that training content often does not transfer to the actual work setting (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Saks, 2002). For this reason, domestic research examining the ways to facilitate or improve transfer has received much attention in the recent past (e.g., Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Meanwhile cross-cultural training scholars have largely ignored the transfer issue -- to date, no research has examined the transfer problem within a cross-cultural training context. Future research needs to expand our understanding of the transfer issue within the context of cross-cultural training effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides broad discussion for both academics and human resource specialists to better understand the topic of international assignee selection and assignee training and development. The discussion of international assignee selection included the topics of individual-level antecedents of global assignee success, such as personality characteristics, language skills, and prior experience living in a different country, and the process issues for effectively selecting global assignees, such as realistic previews, self-selection, and assessment. The discussion of assignee training and development discussed the various interventions used to prepare international assignees to live and work in new cultural environments – with special focus on

cross-cultural training programs, still the most commonly used intervention for improving cross-national competence.

It is important to note, from a practical perspective, that many of the selection, training, and development practices described in this chapter are known but not often practiced in multinational firms. The most apparent reasons for multinational firms' continued oversight of these practices are that HR (in most firms) manages international assignments *after* a selection has been made (Brewster & Harris, 1999) and then with a limited budget for cross-cultural training and development activities once selected. As such, the HR role in international assignment management has been relegated to administrative and tactical activities – rather than strategic ones. Using a scientist-practitioner frame of reference, it is important that the gap between theory and practice is closed through solid program evaluation studies providing concrete financial evidence for the strategic use of the practices described in this chapter.

We believe that the key to improving success of individuals on international assignments is to understand the interaction of selection and training and development, that is, to determine who benefits the most from international training and development activities. Future research should examine more accurate methods for identifying those individuals with the requisite individual characteristics (e.g., personality) to succeed in other countries, the optimal level of cross-cultural training needed for international assignment success, and the long-term development of global competence that could result from the international assignments. Clearly, this is an important area that will keep researchers and practitioners alike engaged for many years to come.

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