

Role of Cross - Cultural in Human Resource Management

Jayaprashanth S
Lecturer
Department of Commerce
Mangalore University.

Meenakshi S
Lecturer
Department of Commerce,
Mangalore University.

Harichandra
Student, 1st year MHRD
Department of Commerce,
Mangalore University.

ABSTRACT

In this present competitive world of business each HR leader recognizes the importance of innovations. HRM always sees issues arising from the companywide implementation of the new procedure or process. The HRM innovations usually change the current model of policies and procedures. Innovations will make human resource management more valuable for employees, managers and the company. The paper presents a detailed study of Indian Multinational Corporations and the present managerial calibre in these firms. The objective of this paper is to study how expatriate adaption occurs using the lens of experimental learning in a cross – cultural environment. “Cross cultural training” refers to a variety of different training courses. Each in essence aims to develop awareness between people where a common culture framework does not exist. Expatriate is an individual living in a country other than their country of citizenship often temporarily and for work reasons. The specific competencies needed for effective global leadership can be gleaned from this research on participants and educators in cross – cultural training programmes. Globalisation is creating new cross cultural work environment. Globalisation of business has lead to increase in cross cultural interactions. Cross – cultural training has long been advocated as a means of facilitating effective cross cultural interactions. This paper has been prepared by collecting information through secondary data like text books, journals, research papers, etc. Modern global managers are required to possess a set of competencies or multiple intelligences in order to meet pressing global challenges. Hence, expanding global managers competencies in becoming an important issue. Many scholars and specialists have proposed different sets of competency models containing list of required competencies. Sending people on important assignments with no training increases the risk of failure. Cross – cultural training has also shown that it increases the perceived competence and self confidence of the individuals faced with cross – cultural interactions. A major objective of intercultural training is to help people

cope with unexpected events in new culture. There are many techniques that are used for imparting cross – cultural training depending upon the length and depth of assignment and the novelty of culture. Many firms are now beginning to spend more money on cross – cultural training for their expatriates. Cross– cultural training is also conducted by many Indian IT organisations and other sectors as well to equip their employees with skill to do business in a global environment. Cultural awareness training is not just for the employees going overseas. It has numerous applications domestically that will increase organisational effectiveness. The realities of more pluralistic society and a diverse workforce make this a necessity for the business organisations today. The goal is to help people onwards more appropriate, sensitive and consistent behaviour in their human interactions.

Keywords: Cross – cultural training, expatriate, knowledge management, experimental learning, cross – cultural work environment

I. Introduction:

Cross-cultural training has generally been defined as any interaction designed to increase the knowledge and skill of people to help them operate effectively in an unfamiliar culture. As the world is moving towards globalization employees will no longer work solely in the comforts of their own national cultures but will be motivated to work across cultures. There is a growing body of literature in management on the globalization phenomenon that highlights the global corporations need to plan for such cross-cultural work environments. The cross-cultural experiences can occur in various forms.

Cross- cultural training could switch attitude from home-cultural management mind-set will improve competitiveness and global fit compared with the home-cultural management mind-set, and helping expatriates adapt better compared with expatriate in other organizations. Cross-cultural training will reduce culture shock, the effects that people feel unfamiliar and shocked to be confronted with a new culture. Expatriate given cross-cultural training experience less cultural shock and better fit for the new environment compared with the expatriate without cross-cultural training. Cross-cultural training is also a means of reducing pressure and uncertainty, such as being anxious and having negative attitude towards work, thus better enhance the expatriates' ability to fit in the new environment and prevent failures. Cross cultural awareness training deals with the manifestations of culture in the workplace

and has many applications. Its main purpose is to evaluate and constructively tackle the challenges cross cultural differences can bring to the workplace.

A few examples of the courses we cover can illustrate the different applications of cross cultural awareness training: [Cross Cultural Team Building Training](#) will aim to raise team members' awareness of each other culturally in order to foster mutual trust, respect and understanding. The result of which will be clearer lines of communication.

[Cross Cultural Management Training](#) aims to equip management staff with the knowledge and skills to effectively supervise a multi-cultural staff. Cross cultural awareness training results in a more convivial and understanding work environment.

[Cross Cultural Negotiation Training](#) assists negotiators involved with foreign clients or customers with whom they are discussing possible terms and conditions.

[Cultural Diversity Training](#) offers HR staff support in helping them understand their responsibilities to ethnic minority staff and/or look at ways of nurturing harmonious interpersonal relationships at work.

[Culture Specific Training](#) is generally aimed at individuals or teams that regularly visit a foreign country or who frequently interact with overseas clients or colleagues. Such training usually focuses on areas such as values, morals, ethics, business practices, etiquette, protocol or negotiation styles with reference to one country. This better equips participants with the key skills that will help in building successful business relationships.

Increased internationalization of business has led to greater frequency of cross-cultural interactions in all sectors. These interactions occur in a variety of work related situations including short term business trips to foreign countries, long term overseas assignments, and even at work within the multicultural workforce in the same multinational organisation. However work related cross-cultural interactions are not always successful due to which there is low use of cross-cultural training. Various reasons have been cited by organisations for the low use of cross-cultural training.

There are four general reasons given by companies for not offering such training:

1. A belief that such training programs are ineffective.
2. Past dissatisfaction with such training programs on the part of trainees.
3. Lack of time between selection and departure.
4. The expense of training.

It strongly indicates that failures tend to ensue in absence of such training. And therefore cross-cultural training plays an important role.

II. Objectives of the Study:

- To know the importance of cross-cultural training in Indian MNCs.
- To have the knowledge about the cultures that are being practiced in the organizations.
- To identify the effect of cross-cultural training on the carrier development of employees.
- To know about expatriate work culture.
- To know about various problems faced by the employees when shifted to the new work environment.

III. Methodology:

The information regarding this paper is a secondary data that was been collected from various text books, research papers, journals and internet. The analysis has been made by the study of cross-cultural training in various organizations like Infosys, Wipro.

IV. Concept :

Need for Cross-Cultural Training:

The importance of preparing an individual for an inter-cultural work assignment has become increasingly apparent. Today's world is characterised by the globalization, ever improving information and transportation systems, multicultural communities and work places, as well as changing political systems. The process of globalization facilitates operation across cultures. However, it also creates new obstacles that the companies have to deal with in order to be successful. The amount of cross-cultural interaction, loaded as it is with potential difficulties rooted in cultural differences, grow steadily in frequency and intensity, bringing about the necessity of cross-cultural training. This program, like cross-cultural programs in general fill many needs above and beyond learning about another culture. A few goals of this program as well as other cultural training programs include:

- To gain confidence in interacting with many kinds of people: Cross cultural trainings offer a context to another view of life. In this case, interactive sessions prepare the participants for building relationships through learning the cultural rules in professional environment for small talk, business conversation, corporate etiquette and other related topics.
- To improve communication skills: Effective culture programmes including this one prepare the participants to communicate casually and professionally. Such programs offer a

glimpse to the do's and don'ts of small talk, where to use small talk, how to use small talk, and how effectively communicate business concepts in a convincing and culturally appropriate manner. While some of these concepts may appear to be common sense, several are based on cultural use of language.

➤ To help us find common ground, while appreciating diversity: Culture strategy sessions not only expose to – be expats or onsite colleagues to learn about the expected differences, but also expose them to the similarities. Many breathe a sigh of relief when learning about things that are the same. Piecing together the difference, slight differences and similarities through simulations, mocks and role plays make the sessions much more interactive, problem solving and interactive.

➤ To help us gain empathy and widen our world view: It's only the human nature to view the world through our own, often narrow lens. However in cross – cultural brainstorming sessions, we learn how to widen our view point and patiently try to understand situations from other people's point of view. This builds empathy not only across cultures, but within dispersed teams and even within our local team. Being empathetic, having an open mind, and listening to others improves communication regardless of the background of the person we are interacting with.

➤ To expose ourselves to different problem solving techniques: These cross – cultural skills are an asset. Dipping into our cross cultural tool box at any given moment can allow us to take a step back, be objective, see things from others point of view and communicate about the problem and how to reach a solution in new and different ways. With continuous exposure to diversity training and interacting with people from different walks of life, we can take a step back and try to analyse problems and find solutions that are creative and 'out of the box'. Cross – cultural trainings can help us to see things from different perspectives, helping us learn more about the world, hence more about ourselves.

Learning cross-cultural competency allows us to be gentler in ourselves and others, giving others more benefit of the doubt. Learning and applying lessons from cross-cultural trainings break down stereotypes, increase understanding and promote goodwill.

V. Objectives of Cross Cultural Training:

A major objective of cross – cultural training is to help people cope with unexpected events in the new culture. An individual overwhelmed by a new culture will be unable to perform required work duties effectively. Thus an objective of such training is to reduce conflict due

to unexpected situations and actions. The generalized trauma people experience in new and different cultures because they must learn and cope with a vast array of new cultural cue and expectations is referred to a cultural shock. Cultural shock reduces the ability to function in a cultural setting because of perceived discrepancy between an individual's expectations of how events should proceed and how they actually occur. The various other objectives are as follows:

- To journey into the world of multiculturalism.
- To comprehend the global aspect of interculturalism.
- To understand different cultures in this era of global environment.
- To comprehend the challenges and opportunities of intercultural negotiation.
- Invite to see opportunities and innovative strategies in a diverse workforce.
- Manage to interact fruitfully with people of unique values and backgrounds.
- Enhance your competitive positioning through understanding the different values of the people.
- Expatriates: learn the tips for adaption in an intercultural environment.
- Enrich your organizational strategies and outcomes.

VI. Problems In Culture Shock:

Culture shock is the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, a move between social environments, or simply travel to another type of life. One of the most common causes of culture shock involves individuals in a foreign environment. Common problems include:

- Information overload
- Language barrier
- Generation gap
- Technology gap
- Skill interdependence
- Formulation dependency

There is no true way to entirely prevent culture shock, as individuals in any society are personally effected by cultural contrast differently.

VII. Phases of Culture Shock:

A culture shock can be described as consisting of at least one of four distinct phases.

1. Honeymoon phase:

During this period, the differences between the old and new culture are seen in a romantic light. For example, in moving to a new country, an individual might love the new food, the pace of life, and the locals' habits. During the first few weeks, most people are fascinated by the new culture. They associate with nationals who speak their language, and who are polite to the foreigners.

2. Negotiation phase:

After sometime, differences between the old and new culture become apparent and may create anxiety. The most important change in this period is communication. The language barrier may become a major obstacle in creating new relationships.

3. Adjustment phase:

Again after sometime one grows accustomed to the new culture and develops routines. One knows what to expect in most situations and the host country no longer feels all that new.

4. Adaption phase: In the mastery stage individuals are able to participate fully and comfortably in the host culture. Mastery does not mean total conversion; people often keep many traits from their earlier culture such as accents and languages. It is often referred to as bicultural stage.

VIII. Approaches to Cross Cultural Training:

Information or fact-oriented training:

The most approach to cross cultural training in the business world the is to present expatriate candidates with briefing lectures about the country to which they will be assigned. In addition, video tapes, reading materials, pamphlets and panels of returned expatriates or host nationals can relay information about a country's culture.

Attribution training:

This approach is aimed at helping trainees understand why the host nationals behave as they do. The goal is to learn the values, norms and perceptual maps by which the host nationals evaluate behaviour in their own country, so that the expatriate can better understand how host nationals think, evaluate the behaviour of others , and respond to various cross cultural scenarios. Once a culture is understood, the trainees are encouraged to adapt their behaviour to the norms of the home country.

Cultural awareness training:

The focus in this approach is to teach trainees about the values, attitudes and behaviours that are common in their own culture; this has the effect of making the trainees more aware of how their own behaviour is culturally determined. Once this occurs, it is assumed that the trainees can better understand how culture affects the behaviour of host nationals.

Cognitive-behaviour modification training:

The goal of this approach is to help trainees link what they find to be rewarding and punishing in their own culture and then to learn about the reward/ punishment norms of the host country. By comparing reward and punishment in the two countries the trainees are assisted in constructing their own personal strategy to obtain rewards – and avoid negative experience – in the host culture.

Experimental training:

The purpose of this approach is to expose the trainees to real life in the host country through field trips, visit to host country, complex role plays, and cross – cultural simulations. This approach gives the trainees the opportunity to practice the skills learned from the other types of training. By practicing cross cultural skills in hypothetical situations, the trainees can get a sense of what living and working overseas might really be like, instead of extrapolating what it would be like from information gained in other training approaches.

For field trips managers are sent to a specified ethnic community to conduct a community exploration. Participants are instructed to spend three to four hours in an ethnic neighbourhood and to learn as much as possible about the community during the time. Typically, the community chosen is significantly different from the participant's own. This field trip is followed by discussions on critical incidents that took place during the visit.

Training for the spouse and the family:

Another factor that is overlooked in preparing the manager for an overseas assignment is the family. While the expatriate is trying to adapt to his new working environment, his spouse is often left to fend for herself and her children in a foreign country. In many ways the adjustment for the spouse and family to an expatriate assignment may be more difficult than that of the expatriate. Many of the adjustments required to accommodate to daily life in a foreign country fall more heavily on the children and spouse than on the expatriate. Given the importance of spouse and family adjustment for long term expatriate success, the

development of adequate training and support, both pre-departure and post arrival, is clearly warranted.

Language training:

English is spoken in many countries, however there are 7 billion people on this planet, and to communicate effectively with them and to penetrate their markets, global managers will need fluency in more than English. Learning a language does not mean trying to become fluent in four weeks! However, one should learn basic expressions and vocabulary which will help them to survive - the focus would be more on communication oriented in everyday situations. People who have good communication skills (use gestures, speak slowly, are open-minded) are more likely to succeed than those who speak a foreign language perfectly.

IX. Cross-Cultural Training In Indian Firms:

Cross-cultural training is conducted by many Indian IT organizations to equip their employees with skills to do business in a global environment. The Indian software industry is as global as can be. Geographically, TCS operates in all five continents with a presence in 43 countries. Infosys does business in over 30 countries; Wipro has clients in 54 countries. To succeed these companies should know how to manage their expatriates working in these countries.

X. INFOSYS:

Infosys ventures into a market only after it has studied it for close to a year for a 'cultural fit' with employees. Infosys starts early; cross-cultural training is part of the 3 month induction program for employees fresh off the campus. The training covers everything from geography to work culture, to dress codes to social etiquette.

Infosys conducts extensive cross-cultural training of staff covering:

- Cultural acclimatization.
- Client business and organization program.
- Technical environment and processes specific to the client.
- Creating non-intrusive interactions for the client.

Infosys effective process to cope with the cultural issues in a transition to the Global Delivery Model:

- Facilitates smooth functioning of cross partner teams.

- Promotes better understanding of work culture differences, awareness and appreciation of different cultural backgrounds.
- The organizational impact of offshore and near shore development leaves a footprint on process orientation, collaborative working styles and project management.
- Deals effectively with all 3 kinds of change.

XI. WIPRO:

Wipro's passport program ensures that most of its employees go through some cross-cultural training. Wipro uses the Hofstede Model to help its employees with cultural differences. Hofstede first identified 4 Dimensions and later added 2 more along which, culture differ from other cultures. These are:

- 'Power distance', all the acceptable equality or inequality between managers and the employees.
- 'Uncertainty avoidance', or the degree to which people can cope with ambiguity and uncertainty.
- 'Individualism versus collectivism'.
- 'Masculinity versus femininity related to the division of emotional world between women and men.
- Long versus short term orientation.
- Indulgence versus restraint or gratification versus control of human desires related to enjoying life.

XII. Findings:

From the above study the major finding are listed out:

- The cross-cultural training is gaining importance in the present business scenario. The paper presents about how it has scope in large organizations like MNC's.
- This kind of training has made the expatriates to easily communicate and learn the various work cultures.
- Paper concentrates on the scope of carrier development of the employees.
- This paper also elaborates about culture shock which says about the change that occurs when there is a shift in the work environment or while entering into an unfamiliar way of life.

XIII. Conclusion:

Company sponsored cross- cultural communication and management training programs can be highly effective in giving expatriates the skills to manage culture shock and work effectively in foreign countries.

Multinational organizations must provide a cross-cultural training component to not only those they send abroad, but also with the company's local host nationals who must learn to work effectively with internationals. Cross-cultural training is of growing importance to multinationals seeking to gain competitive advantage through global mergers and acquisitions. The challenge of increased workforce diversity in today's global organizations can be managed through such trainings. Savvy organizations are getting the message about the multiple benefits of cross cultural training. The Fortune 500 firms are beginning to include it not only in the preparation of the international personnel, but a regular part of all management and executive development.

In today's world of an ever growing global market, multinationals must make their expatriates aware of the culture differences surrounding them if they want to retain their position among stiff competition from other multinational companies. They should measure the cost of failure among their of the potential benefits of cross-cultural training. The key for tomorrow's success is in today's cross-cultural awareness.

References:

- Adler, Nancy. J., "Cross-cultural transitions: Expatriate employee entry and re-entry" in International Dimensions of organizational Behaviour, 1986, Kent Publishing Co
- Black, J.S. & Mendenhall, M., "Cross-cultural training effectiveness: A review and a theoretical framework for future research", The Academy of Management Review, 1990, V.15, No.1, pp113-116.
- Harris, Philip R. and Morgan, Robert T. (1979), Managing cultural differences, Houston: Gulf Publishing Co.
- Dowling, Welch & Schuler, "Training and Development" in International Human Resource Management: Managing People in a Multinational Context, 3rd Ed, 2001, pp 154-180, South-Western
- Early, C.P., "Intercultural Training for Managers: A Comparison of Documentary and Interpersonal Methods", Academy of Management Journal, 1987, Vol.30 No.4, pp 685-698

- Fisher, Schoenfeldt & Shaw, “Managing Human Resources in Multinational Organizations”, in Human Resource Management, 3rd Ed, 1997, pp 763-810, Houghton Mifflin Co. (New Jersey).
- Blog.authenticjourneys.info. post by authentic journals – cultural and lifestyle mentoring

