EXPATRIATES’ CULTURE SHOCK AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL TRAINING TO ENSURE SUCCESS IN THEIR INTERNATIONAL CAREER

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CHAPTER OF INTRODUCTION

Culture is a shared system of social behavior which directs and guides people to lead their life in a certain way as such, people feel and perceive homogeneous in their own group whereas they perceive other groups as heterogeneous because of diversity in the group Linville & Jones in [4], Triandis, McCusker and Hui in [1]. when they are among their own groups it is easy for them to realize their individual differences like code of contact, behavioral reactions, attitude, taste and preferences, life style etc., however all these factors are less probable hence there would not be much challenges in getting along with their own ethnic people because of similarities in their cultural behaviors in the form of communication, includes both verbal and non-verbal, emotional judgment. On the other hand what happens when they are exposed to totally different groups of people or other groups of people from their own national origin, exactly at here the cross-cultural subject crops up, people by nature have an inclination towards fear of strangers or other group members, it forms ethnocentrism, prejudice, aggression, and even war [5] from the citation we can understand people are naturally not having the patience and trust for the other group of people, incidentally there is a huge difference in their etiquettes, behaviors right from their communication style to their way of doing things, henceforth when we, the companies, send an expat manager abroad, they have to consider all these cross-cultural issues in detail in order to equip the expat manager with different skills to handle his/her international assignment well.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE NEW CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The world of business is rapidly changing, thanks to globalization, and its attendant workforce ‘diversity management’. One result of this development is that companies such as BMW can build cars in South Carolina, McDonalds can sell hamburgers in China and Mercedes can produce its Sport and Utility Vehicles in Alabama. These, and other, TNC’s are able to successfully carry on their business in such culturally diverse parts of the planet thanks, in large part, to having an effective HRM training system in place. Some components of this manager training are a combination of the usual managerial training and cultural sensitivity training. For example, trainee managers learn about the specifics of the cultures in which they are going to operate, as well as the intricacies of intercultural communication. This gives them a much broader understanding of the mindset of their future subordinates, thus enabling them to draw out the best efforts and qualities from these people. The results of this intercultural training can be seen in the company’s end of year profits, among other things. Intercultural training covers, the host country, its people, political, economic, business, legal and physical environments, as well as other aspects of its culture and customs [6]. The success, or otherwise, of the international assignment, depends in large part on preventing, or at least ameliorating the effects of, ‘culture shock’.
1.1 The scholars identified four stages of cultural shock. Each stage is shortly described below.

**Simulation stage**
At first, the expat will be with full of excitement at the prospect of going to a new location. He/she will feel curious, excited, and fascinated by the new country upon their entry to a totally new environment. This period often lasts from a couple of weeks to half a year.

**Culture shock**
At this stage the expat will interact with the host culture actively. Culture shock manifests itself as homesickness, boredom, irritability, hostility to the host culture disappointment, frustration, confusion and anxiety.

**Adjustment stage**
After the passing of the initial settling period, the expat will start to feel more ‘at home’ in his/her new environment as his/her understanding of, and empathy with, the host culture grows and develops hence the expat starts to feel more comfortable about his surroundings.

**Enthusiasm stage**
At this stage the expat will be more enthusiastic about living in his/her host country, as his/her stress and fear diminish and disappear. In fact, the expat comes to look upon his/her host country as a ‘home from home. His/her earlier feelings of culture shock will be replaced by feelings of genuine enjoyment of the new location. One result of this process is that of the expat adopting the host culture’s behavior, as well as loss of the tendency to criticize the host culture.

2. IMPACT OF CULTURE SHOCK AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE COMPANY

If culture shock not managed properly by the expat, it will mean that his/her otherwise perfect work skills are unusable because of cultural differences. For instance, if the expat feels it hard to get along with his/her colleagues, then he/she loses motivation, which leads to him/her feeling more acutely the workplace stress. Furthermore, if the expat’s family fail to adjust to the new country, it will put even greater pressure on him/her, thus reducing his/her value to the company which sent him/her in the first place.

Fig.1: Source: Global relocation trends survey report 2013

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3. INTERCULTURAL TRAINING AS A PRECONDITION OF THE EXPATRIATE SUCCESS

Cultural awareness makes the expat think outside of his/her own cultural limitations. Normally cultural training emphasizes on the features of the host countries’ business culture, such as communication styles, etiquette, interpersonal communication, cross-cultural issues and familiarizing the expat’s family members as well in the areas of schooling, lifestyle and other aspects of the local culture in the new country. This will help them to have a more fulfilling life in the new country by teaching them the type and standard of behavior which is expected in the host society.

**Tab.1: Hofstede’s cultural Dimensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National cultural orientations</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>The extent to which a person in a group accepts hierarchical inequalities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>The extent to which a person feels they should be taken care of by the organization and the preference for the group achievement over individual achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>The extent to which people or organization avoids future uncertainties by way of rules, rituals and technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>The extent to which people cope with issues such as implication for the gender roles in organization and society.</td>
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Source: [4]

Cultural uncertainty in the multicultural team emphasizes patients or tolerance to handle different intercultural situations, the best way for the expat to work in a flexible manner with other nationalities in the team is by appreciating the different working styles, usually national cultures differ in their communication behavior, seeking motivation, disclosing information and self-categorization [1] to deal with all these factors at work place the expat manager have to adapt the cross-cultural communication skills which helps the expat to have cultural empathy to avoid work place conflict for the effective work performance.

[4] has emphasized four important dimensions in which the national culture varies such as power distance, individualistic or collectivistic, masculinity or feminism and uncertainty avoidance. The power distance determines how the power is being distributed to the different groups in the society unequally, for instance, India is a hierarchical society having a high control over their citizens people are honored based on their wealth, prestige and material possessions whereas Sweden believes in coaching leaders, empowering people and the power is decentralized allowing people to be participative in the decision making process in Swedish society, thus the multicultural team varies in power distance, which may cause difficulties while promoting communication and leadership patterns [5].

Individualistic and collectivistic societies varies from its nature of behavior like the collectivistic society tend to have large social network which influence the individual decision making process in terms of career decisions, economic decisions and also personal decisions, whereas in the individualistic society the individuals have loose-knit network, which encourages him to take his own decision with more autonomy. For example, the conflict between these kind between Russia and America are likely to have challenges in developing team roles and norms because of different senses of organizational and individual responsibility [5].
Uncertainty avoidance describes the way the society deals with the fact, to the extent to which the members of the society feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations [4]. High uncertainty cultures prefer to have structured life style, uncompromised expectations; countries like Sweden, Germany and America, whereas in some countries like Russia, Greece and Venezuela demand less rules and procedures. However in the multicultural team, uncertainty is present during the initial stage of cross-cultural interactions such as business meetings. Reducing uncertainty by developing the ability to predict how others in the group behave for a particular action is one of the critical factors for effective functioning of multicultural team [6].

Performance orientation the degree to which the society rewards its individual people for their performance, improvement and excellence [1]. It is a challenging task for the expat manager in developing a team norms or procedures in line with different expectations or difference of opinions among the multicultural group members, such as Russia is an masculine society values traditions, loyalty, belonging and family where in the case of Americans or Swedish people are feminine society they value performance, empowering people rather standing away from the crowd, multicultural team faces impediments in developing team norms because of differing expectation of cooperation[7].

4. CONSULTANTS VIEWS ABOUT CULTURAL TRAINING

Cultural needs varies depending on the tendency of the different cultural groups like Arabs tend to have less personal space and speak in confrontational type of body language while talking to others whereas Americans would like to have more personal space, usually in a lower voices[3]. Italian interact more closely either Germens or Americans or not [3] there are cultural variation among the emotional intelligence, Mind and Body Dynamics founder, Amal Loring [8] says she founded the company as a vehicle to change people’s view of the world. Her company achieves this by explaining to expats the intricacies of UAE customs and traditions, in order ease the stress caused by misunderstandings or misconceptions which may arise. This will greatly facilitate business and personal interactions between the expat and his/her UAE hosts. Examples of the areas covered by Amal Loring’s company are: meeting and greeting in UAE culture a woman manager should not shake hands with men, and vice versa. Dress code for business meetings is another area where intercultural training can help to avoid embarrassment, improve customer service and, in general, prepare employees for success in their business operations in the host countries. The great rewards to be reaped from the successful and effective execution of business activities abroad is worth the small investment which companies must put into intercultural training. Tendency for member in the cultural group to more accurate in recognizing the emotions of members of their own cultural group than of other, relatively more disparate groups [4].

Denis Niedringhaus, a freelance expat coach [Intercultural expatriation training for business people working in china, published on 9 May 2014 in focus china network], says that preparing expats for their foray into China is, to say the least, challenging and interesting for him. He says that French expats are afraid to have any spontaneous interaction with Chinese people. He is coaching the expats to understand Chinese culture, as well as the basic rules for carrying on a conversation with a Chinese person. He also teaches the expats about the Chinese chaotic systems in his courses. This helps the Westerner to avoid culture shock, as well as to build trust [Guanxi] and a sense of belonging in China. Similarly certain groups like Japanese, touch less while talking or behaving than Americans, it is must for the expat to know this while talking to them otherwise they feel uncomfortable and pursue wrongly.

Methods of working vary from country to country. Some countries have a monochronic system of working. The monochronic system holds that working time working time can be controlled by having, for instance, a fixed schedule for coffee breaks, as well as for meeting people one after another. Punctuality is a dominant feature of this system. Still other societies follow the polychronic system. These societies believe
that time cannot be rigidly controlled and that schedules should be flexible enough to allow people to choose their own time to complete their tasks. This system can result in either more, or less, productivity at work.

CONCLUSION

Intercultural coaching helps the expat to develop the ability to deal with the uncertainty associated with moving to a new place. It also gives the expat certain flexibility in his/her emotional intelligence. It also helps the expat to behave in a way which enables him/her to build healthy relationships with colleagues. Intercultural training also gives the expat the socio-cultural skills necessary for managing their expectations, as well as for dealing with anxiety, depression, tension, fatigue, and so on. These states of mind, if left un-dealt with, can have a negative impact on the expat’s performance, as well as causing unprofessional behavior in the work place.

If handled well, foreign experience can be very rewarding. Apart from helping the expat in the work place, by exploring his/her adopted country, the expat will gain many new business contacts and networks, to make up for those he/she has lost since leaving his/her home country. Building strong a network is a must for the expat’s career development, as well as for giving him/her the psychological support he/she needs to survive, and thrive, in the new country. It also helps him/her to deal with different political systems, as well as the culturally diverse environment in the new country. The expat must make certain cross cultural adjustments, for example, in his/her over all attitude, negotiation and communication styles, as well as in the language and tone of voice which he/she uses. This is crucial, if the expat is to ensure an efficient and chaos free workplace, as well as building up smooth relationships between clients and suppliers, which are built on mutual trust. So, a proper cultural understanding, as well as a high degree of adaptability will make the expat more competent in the international market, as well as facilitating his/her much deeper understanding of market trends in the new country.

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Abstract

The paper discusses the ways in which the cultural environment affects Human Resource Management [HRM] practice in Trans National Corporations [TNC’s], by understanding the cultural environment in which they operate, or are about to commence operations. Then, the paper will attempt to find, based on the research results, the key areas on which the TNC’s must concentrate their expatriate manager training, before sending them abroad. Scholars identify four stages of experience the expat faces in the new country therefore the success of the international assignment, depends in large part on preventing, or at least ameliorating the effects of, ‘culture shock’, Intercultural training acts as a moderator for the expat successful career, This will help them to have a more fulfilling life in the new country by teaching them the type and standard of behavior which is expected in the host society, the research study conducted on cross cultural communication competence clearly explains Russia and America are likely to have challenges in developing team roles and norms because of different senses of organizational and individual responsibility and I have found in my study, in order to manage the multicultural team successfully the expat manager learning the performance orientations of different cultures, ultimately it helps them and resulted to form social network in the new country to learn new socio-cultural skills like negotiation skills make them more competent in the international market, provides them with career growth this can be achieved by reducing the uncertainty or conflict in the international work place.

Key words
Cultural shock, intercultural training, cross cultural communication, socio cultural skills

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