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Cross-Cultural Training: A Crucial Approach to Improve Success of Expatriate Assignment in the United Arab Emirates

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Biographies

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ABSTRACT

Expatriate training and development is progressively turning into a crucial human resource development issue for the multinational corporations (MNCs). The motivation for this study is to explore the impact of cross-cultural training (CCT) on the adjustment challenges of Western expatriate managers in the UAE. The findings indicate that the expatriate managers, who were provided with CCT, adjusted more rapidly in their international assignment in the UAE than the expatriates who were not provided with any CCT. This research has nevertheless demonstrated that not only are MNCs in the UAE failing to provide adequate CCT and support for their expatriates, but they are also providing inadequate CCT and support to the expatriate's accompanying family members. The present study contributes to the discussion about whether MNCs routinely provide their expatriate managers with sufficient CCT. Furthermore, this study has substantial implications for managers and proposes areas for future research in this field.

Keywords: Multinational corporations (MNCs), cross-cultural training (CCT), expatriates, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

1. INTRODUCTION

Expatriate development has lately emerged as a crucial issue for multinational organizations (MNCs). One of the significant indicators of expatriate success is how well they adjust and how efficiently they operate in the host country. Past research (e.g., Black & Mendenhall, 1990) has found that a figure in the region of 16% to 40% of all expatriate managers (generally Americans) leave their overseas posts prematurely, without finishing their international assignments, because either their performance is below expectation or they are unable to adjust to the new host country and culture. However, even though there is a growing feeling that the failure rate of expatriate managers is not as high as at first indicated, it is still considered to be a critical issue (Harzing & Christensen, 2004). This figure becomes even more significant if expatriate manager failures are considered alongside the cases of expatriate managers who remain at their overseas postings and subsequently, perform inadequately (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Harzing & Christensen (2004) also contended that the total cost linked with expatriate failure, along with their poor performance, is more likely to be much higher, and it is, therefore, critical to pinpoint the approaches that can decrease and eradicate such failure. Academic scholars and human resource professionals have been looking for ways of tackling this much-neglected field

of research and practice into how to help expatriate adjustment during international assignments (Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009).

Cross-cultural training (CCT) has been highlighted by many scholars (e.g., Dowling & Welch, 2004) as being one of the most crucial and fundamental fields of both study and practice for international human resource management (IHRM) in the new global economy. The purpose of the CCT is to teach managers of one culture to interact successfully with the citizens of another culture and to support them in their progressive adjustment in their overseas assignments. However, in past studies (e.g., Kealy & Protheroe, 1996) there has been uncertainty about its effectiveness. Consequently, the practice of CCT is not yet widespread throughout MNCs, and the most often repeated and compelling reason alluded to by MNCs for not offering CCT is that they are not convinced that CCT is either useful or effective (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has lately emerged

as a prospective location for overseas expansion for MNCs. As a newly emerging and increasingly successful Arabian country, with a strong religious identity and culture, it has unique characteristics, and it is considered to be a difficult location by many Western expatriate managers. Therefore, this is the kind of posting where cross-cultural training is needed.

The motivation behind this study is to explore and investigate the impact of CCT on the adjustment challenges of Western expatriates in the UAE. Given that no study could be found regarding this area of research, specifically on this fundamental issue in the context of the UAE, there is unmistakably a research gap here. The present study endeavors to fill that research gap and to extend our comprehension on this underlying theme. Results of the present study may help global HR executives to produce effective CCT methodologies that can assist expatriate managers and their families to adapt and conform to the UAE cultural setting. It may likewise energize further research on this pivotal theme.

This paper is structured as follows: In the next section, we provide information about the historical setting of the UAE in order to set the context for the present study and after that, we move into the literature review section that investigated the existing theories in the areas of expatriate management. Following this section, we describe the methodology and the sample of the present study. In the next section, we present and discuss the results of our empirical analysis. The paper concludes with an investigation into its main

findings and we highlight our suggestions for future research.

2. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE UAE

The UAE is a small Middle Eastern nation located on the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring the Persian (or Arabian) Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, Oman, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Created in 1971, after the British pullout from the domain, the UAE comprises of seven Emirates including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Um Al Quwain. The nation is estimated to possess around 4% of the world's natural gas reserves and approximately 10% of its oil reserves (AlMazrourei & Pech, 2014). The Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which is also the name of the capital city, accounts for over 80% of the land, and produces 90-95% of the country's petrochemical output. In the light of its petroleum wealth, Abu Dhabi is one of the wealthiest cities on the planet. The Emirate of Dubai does not have such an abundance of oil wealth. It is, however, better known and it has transformed itself into a business and tourism hub for the whole of the Middle East. Abu Dhabi and Dubai are the most powerful and wealthy partners within the union of the UAE. There is no fear of exaggeration in stating that during the last quarter of the twentieth century, the UAE experienced an enormous transformation (Heard-Bey, 2004).

The UAE's vast oil reserves have brought with it unparalleled growth opportunities. However, in spite of what the newly founded nation possessed with respect to oil and gas reserves, there was a glaring deficit in the area of human resources. To develop on an ambitious scale, the UAE still needs to import significant numbers of foreign workers with the required knowledge and international expertise. In 1971, at the time of the creation of the UAE, the entire population of the country was about 500,000 and 35 years later, in July 2016, the population was estimated to be in the region of slightly more than 6 million (UAE-Interact, 2016). This rapid development has had the knock-on effect of considerably altering the young nation's fragile demographics. There has been a vast expansion of low-paid, contracted manual laborers (usually single men on fixed-term contracts) and foreign experts (often accompanied by their families, on longer contracts and with competitive packages). However, the figure for Emiratis as a proportion of the overall population of the UAE has been on the decline. At present, over 80% of the population are expatriates (Hutchings, Michailova & Harrison, 2012). From this figure, more than half of the population is estimated to come from South Asia, around 25% are from other Arab countries

and from Iran, and roughly 10% are from Western and East Asian countries (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016).

As a consequence of globalization, there is an insatiable need to fill key positions with expatriate managers due to the perceived deficit of skills, qualifications and experience on the part of UAE nationals, whose profiles in most cases do not match those that are required to operate successfully and autonomously in senior positions of responsibility (Al-Kharzraji, 2009). The current UAE model is dependent upon a long-term commitment to an expatriate workforce and this blend of workforce comes with an additional cost because of the higher rates of turnover. As demonstrated by a report (Gulf News, 2008), there is a 21% yearly turnover among the expatriates, which is a drain on the UAE economy to the tune of around \$3 billion a year. Thus, the cost of this attrition to the UAE economy is the driving force for the present research, which is both timely and relevant. The main focus of this research will be to investigate the effectiveness of CCT programs in facilitating Western expatriate adjustment in the UAE.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Cross-cultural adjustment

Adjustment in an overseas posting has been characterized as being a multi-dimensional procedure. It incorporates the individual's ability to function effectively within the differing realms of everyday living, work-related duties and cooperation with the people of the host country (Takeuchi, Yun & Tesluk, 2009; Alshanbri, Maqsood & Khalafan, 2016). This encompasses the level of psychological contentment and understanding that a man has when working in a different culture. As proposed by Black (1988), there are three variables of expatriate manager adjustment: (a) "work adjustment", that consists of duties, administration and execution; (b) "relational adjustment", that incorporates dealing with people from the host nation; and (c) "general adjustment" that includes the social life environment in an overseas country. Those factors focus on the individuals, the company and contextual factors. Variables linked to the individual tie a person's capacity for change in a new culture with past overseas experience. Contextual factors involve the duration of the time expended in the host nation, the company's logistical support and the spouse's moral support. Company related factors incorporate elements identified with company support (for example: bosses, colleagues and parent-company organization support) and work-related variables, (for example; role discretion and role clarity). They

also encompass corporate cultural differences that exist between the host-nation subsidiary and the home-nation, parent company. Finally, company related factors include preparations and CCT.

3.2. CCT and its viability for cross-cultural adjustment

The main purpose of CCT is to teach individuals from one culture how to interrelate with the general population from other culture and to assist them to adjust expeditiously in their host country. Brislin (1979) distinguishes three main ways of delivering CCT: cognitive, affective and behavioral. The cognitive approach endeavors to share information and relevant materials on the new, overseas culture, utilizing conference sessions or non-participative gatherings. The affective approach is more interactive. Its purpose is to elicit individual feedback so that the person can make sense of how to manage critical inter-cultural scenarios. The behavioral approach aims at enhancing an individual's ability to modify their style of communication and to develop positive relationships with people of other cultures. Various scholars have made use of Brislin's framework and have incorporated further, specific, situational factors. Those include: hardness of communication and hardness of culture (Tung, 1987), task and supervisor's job (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992), length of overseas assignment (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) and individual variables; for example, learning and education goals (Ronen, 1989) and level of contribution (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991) in order to understand the challenges of adjustment more thoroughly.

CCT is one of the MNC's most important activities, and the potential advantages of adequate training and development are extensively recognized (see, e.g., Okpara & Kabongo, 2011; Tung, 1981). Dowling & Welch (2004) argued that one of the principal challenges facing MNCs is the ability to retain and leverage their personnel so that properly qualified expatriate managers are available to work effectively during their assignments abroad. Once a manager has been given an overseas posting, then pre-departure CCT is delivered to guarantee that the candidate has acceptable levels of ability and skill to operate successfully abroad.

The multifaceted and ever-changing international environment necessitates adaptability. The MNC's capability to formulate an effective, strategic response may be hampered by the absence of appropriately skilled and qualified, globally oriented managers. Mendenhall, Dunbar & Oddou (1987) and Tung (1981) found

a negative relationship between the rigor and thoroughness of an MNC's CCT processes and its expatriate failure rates during the overseas assignments. Early (1987) observed that CCT enables managers to adapt more swiftly to the different culture and to be more successful in their new overseas assignments. Caligiuri, Philips, Lazarova, Tarique & Biirgi (2001) found a positive relationship between the delivery of CCT and how the assignment met the expatriate's expectations. They additionally argued that the better that the CCT was, the stronger was the likelihood that the future expatriate employee would have either realistic expectations or expectations of the challenges they would face before the start of their international assignment.

CCT can likewise be considered to be a pre-requisite for MNCs because of its key role in developing a multi-cultural, organizational culture and in amalgamating global subsidiaries. Similarly, Barlett & Ghoshal (2000) argued that MNCs have the ability to enrich their ties between their subsidiaries by developing a global team of executives with citizenship from any country around the globe. The fundamental challenge is to determine what level of conduct and behavior is demonstrated within different CCT programs, and how adaptable those are to the needs and requirements of various overseas assignments. Pucik (1984) contended that the major challenge facing many MNCs is the development of a cohort of potential expatriates, who have a keen awareness of global markets; bearing in mind that the end goal of the MNC is that their expatriate employees function effectively during their international assignments. Apparently, given the astronomical costs of expatriate failures, it is a fundamental principle that emphasis must be given to suitably and fiscally smart CCT programs (Dowling & Welch, 2004).

3.3. Motives for not delivering adequate CCT

Although numerous management scholars have stressed the effectiveness of CCT; it is frequently overlooked and inadequately taken care of in many MNCs. Similarly, Lainer (1979) argued that in addition to the fact that many MNCs don't deliver any formal CCT to their expatriate managers, most MNCs do provide some language and cultural training and

brief environmental summaries before the start of international assignments. In most MNCs, the primary focus has been on the advancement of the technical skills and other job-related competencies of their expatriate managers. Tang (1981) found that barely 32 percent of the US MNCs examined delivered some

form of CCT. Similarly, Torbiorn (1982) found that European MNCs deliver more CCT programs than MNCs from the USA. Around, 50 percent of European MNCs offer formal CCT and this may be a reason why the expatriate failure rates in the European MNCs are relatively low. The figures vary from between 5 and 10 percent as indicated by Brewester & Scullion (1997).

The proposition of Dowling & Welch (2004) has been reinforced by a survey of the practices of USA MNCs in the 1990s by McEnery & DesHarnais (1990). Their analysis shows that between 50 and 60 percent of the USA MNCs during that era did not provide any pre- departure CCT to their expatriate managers. The 1997-98 Price Waterhouse study discovered that 13 percent of the European MNCs reviewed offered their expatriate managers access to courses identified with cross-cultural understanding. Nevertheless, an additional 47 percent of MNCs gave some short courses and briefings before the culturally “challenging” worldwide assignments. To shed more light on the circumstances of the CCT, most of the preparation that was offered was brief in duration and it generally lasted just a couple of days (Baumgarten, 1995).

- The standard reasons laid out in the previous studies (see, e.g., Baumgarten, 1995; Tung 1982) to explain why MNCs disregard CCT for overseas assignment are:
- CCT is not considered to be viable [L][SEP]
- Lack of time [L][SEP]
- The temporarily nature of most of the overseas postings, which did not warrant budget allocations for CCT expenditure [L][SEP]
- Lack of ability concerning how to conduct CCT and lack of knowledge about which specialized subjects ought to be taught [L][SEP]
- Absence of training specialist and expertise [L][SEP]
- No need for CCT in the light of the way that there is a conviction that superior technical abilities are the fundamental pre-requisite for success in the overseas posting [L][SEP]
- The right people don't require training [L][SEP]

3.4. Sequential CCT [L][SEP]

The intention of CCT is to expand the range of appropriate behaviors that are suitable and acceptable to the host national culture. Consequently, CCT ought to be dynamic, progressive, and carefully structured in logical, sequential

phases; beginning at pre-departure and ongoing to the post-arrival periods. Sequential CCT would offer the expatriate manager regular, structured learning opportunities. Those would have the aim of altering the familiar frame of reference of the expatriate manager and raising their awareness of the cultural expectations of the host nation. [SEP]

The content and timing of the CCT ought to coincide with the conformity stage. To this end, training happens as the expatriate manager begins to critically question the operant frame of reference and extend his or her international perspectives. This process should lead to the shaping of another new frame of reference and the ability to adapt to new social circumstances. This, in turn should bolster his trust and confidence in his association with the nationals of the host country at work. Specific contents and methodologies are suggested for [SEP]the four stages of sequential CCT: pre-departure CCT, CCT at the ethnocentric stage, CCT at the culture shock period and CCT at the conformist stage (Selmer, Torbiorn & Leon, 1998).

In the fourth and final stage of cross-cultural adjustment, the expatriate manager ought to have adapted to a reformed frame of references and to have developed greater awareness of the host culture. This should lead to more confidence, trust and certainty in the appropriateness of new behavior and practices. Eventually, having achieved the feeling of being “at home” in the host nation, the expat manager is directed towards “independent self-learning.” The requirement for formal CCT is less than in the earlier stages, because constant learning happens, without the need for much introspective reflection or overt guidance.

3.4.1. Pre-departure CCT

During the ethnocentric stage, the managers are not yet psychologically prepared for their new assignments. Their inability to come to terms with unfamiliar aspects of a culture that they have still not experienced is partly due to the fact that they are unable to find a common frame of reference with which to relate it. This absence of a familiar setting and the brevity of the preparation can impede the process of assimilation with the new culture.

An individual’s risk-taking tendency can be characterized as his or her orientation towards taking risks in indeterminate decision-making environments (Koh, 1996;

Tajeddini & Muller, 2009). Bird (1989) distributes risks into five categories – which are plainly related to the potential expatriate managers: risks in social relations, financial risks, risks in career advancement, in addition to health and psychological risks. Pre-departure CCT ought to lay emphasis on structural information drawn from familiar, local surroundings. Grove & Torbiorn (1985) argued that in the buildup to departure, an overload of specific factual information about the distant overseas country is unlikely to drastically alter a person's habits. Indeed, it may be useful to reduce the risks by forewarning the candidate of the probable stages of adaptation that they will most likely go through. To this end, CCT materials ought to incorporate a didactic introduction to the adaptation process, emphasizing the ordinary and constructive stages that they will probably have to deal with after the early traumas of cultural shock.

CCT can be used to combat familiar adaptation challenges. Grove & Torbiorn (1985) indicated that there were fewer early returns or incidents of grievance from those Swedish expatriate managers in Saudi Arabia who had been given candid, pre-departure CCT to prepare them for potentially distressing cultural encounters. The more thorough the level of CCT preparation is, the less likelihood there will be of disillusionment, misunderstanding and conflict in the host nation. The expatriate manager will take up the new post armed and ready for most eventualities and less prone to cultural infelicities and misunderstandings. With such well-planned and focused preparation, the expatriate manager will be less anxious and more able to deal with deviations in the operant frame of references (Selmer, Torbiorn & Leon, 1998).

Before departure, expatriate managers possess insufficient knowledge or experience to engage meaningfully with the fundamental challenges that they will face in adapting to the host nation culture. They often do not fully engage with the CCT as they fail to relate to it in a practical and realistic way and they are unable to engage meaningfully in the process. They perceive it as an abstract construct and struggle to deal with its “foreignness” and plausibility. Furthermore they may lack confidence in their trainers. In spite of all this, Grove & Torbiorn (1985) concluded that pre-departure CCT ought to shake up and challenge the embedded ethnocentrism of mono-cultural individuals and encourage them to reconsider and reevaluate how individuals relate to each other in different cultures.

3.4.2. CCT during the ethnocentric stage

Upon their arrival in a foreign country, expatriate managers are faced with a hectic schedule of adjustment and socialization. If the expatriate managers can be encouraged to take time off to attend sessions of post-arrival CCT, they will be able to contribute a significant number of relevant worries and concerns to be discussed during this training. This timely contribution will further enhance the quality of the CCT process. Expatriate managers will commit to this training if it helps them to assimilate to their new surroundings and improve their understanding of the new cultural environment. If they see its value, they will be more committed to it and also motivated to contribute to the enhancement of this process of adaptation in foreign countries (Selmer, 1995b).

More precisely, it can be argued that CCT, soon after arrival in the host country, ought to lessen the tendency towards ethnocentrism and narrow the gap in cultural awareness. CCT would be a suitable platform for emphasizing the similarities and differences between the ways of life at home and in the host countries (Steward & Bennett, 1991; Selmer, Torbiorn & Leon, 1998).

The conditions for learning are presumably going to be most effective when the expatriate manager's dependence on the opinions of the home country culture have declined, and his openness towards the host culture have been enhanced. In the light of cultural relativism, the cultural contrast method of training presents both the notion of culture and a depiction of the differences in cultures (Brislin, Landis & Brand, 1983). Similarly, the role of fact-oriented training is significant, as it deals with the pressing concerns and ramifications of day to day living in the host culture and how to deal effectively with issues relating to work and home.

3.4.3. CCT during the cultural shock stage

CCT would make a positive contribution to expatriate adjustment to a new culture if it were introduced during the cultural shock stage. Grove & Torbiorn (1985) argued that the operant frame of reference at this critical phase promotes the different behaviors. Consequently, the seeds of doubt that are planted and the discrepancies that are revealed concerning one's familiar frame of reference can enhance the motivation to develop one's global perspectives. At this stage, self-confidence in one's cross-cultural abilities is still low, given the absence of "instruments" with which to organize the numerous host-culture

components into a logical frame of reference.

CCT during this critical, transitional phase ought to encourage cognitive reformation by shedding light on real cross-cultural encounters. CCT ought to inspire the modeling of the new behaviors, and that could eventually develop into improved interpersonal interactions or superior performance at work. That can result in expatriate managers working more proficiently in their new environment. They can do this without having first to understand and see everything about the host nation and furthermore, it helps them to figure out how to read and understand different nuances of the new culture that they find themselves in (McCaffery, 1986; Selmer, Torbiorn & Leon, 1998).

CCT during the cultural shock stage ought to provide the expatriate managers with the tools for understanding the experiences and cultural norms of the new host cultures. Intercultural challenges generally come about when one is oblivious to the local norms and standards of the host country. Thus, actions should be taken to enhance and increase the expatriate managers' repertoire of social proficiencies (Fumham & Bochner, 1986). Both experiential

and didactic methods of training would be reasonable, as argued by Harrison (1992, 1994) who suggested the adoption of a blend of techniques. Experiential learning is one of the best strategies as it encourages the practical application of appropriate behavior patterns while in the new host culture. Similarly, Brislin *et al.*, (1983) argued that learning is particularly high during experiential learning, because situations, exercises, simulations and role-plays are even more realistically demonstrated when in the host-culture setting.

3.4.4. CCT in the conformist stage

The conformist stage is another appropriate time for the application of CCT, however it should be presented alongside other core interests and not in isolation. In spite of the fact that new behaviors have been encouraged and promoted by an evolving frame of references that has adapted to the host nation's cultural values, the person has not yet developed sufficient confidence in behaving differently with respect to his everyday habits. CCT at this stage ought to concentrate on "learning by doing as the host-culture individuals do." Culturally sensitive skills would be productively absorbed through real exposure and practice at work, which would similarly, enable the learner to interact appropriately with other managers from the host country.

The interaction method of learning often takes place in unstructured conditions relating to the coordinated efforts among learners, host country nationals and experienced expatriate managers (Brislin, Landis & Brand, 1983). The long-term impact of CCT at the conformist stage is apparent, because of the proximity of its application (Selmer, Torbiorn & Leon, 1998). The instant transfer of learning to practice has the effect of strengthening the behavioral aptitudes up to a point where the cross-cultural skills are immediately consolidated in the individual's behavioral pattern. Sorcher & Spencer's (1982) longitudinal review discovered that further beneficial outcomes occurred after a period of twenty weeks than immediately after the CCT. Thus, this demonstrates how the new behavioral patterns were absorbed after exposure to routines in an unstructured process that involved further contemplation and eventual comprehension.

Cross-cultural adaptation involves the reformulation of one's operant frame of references, because of the bona fide experiences of cultural differences. Achieving an agreeable method for relating to a new culture on a regular day-to-day basis does not involve "going native". One does not have to mirror or practice the local norms and values. However, one develops situational sensitivities that enable one to understand and empathize with one's colleagues. This know-how includes better approaches for thinking about and looking at both others and oneself without passing judgment on the one or the other's cultural origin. CCT expands the expatriate manager's behavior repertory and his ability to acclimatize in different settings. Furthermore, the new conduct will not be applied inappropriately when among the nationals of the home country or after repatriation (Bochner, 1996; Selmer, Torbiorn & Leon, 1998).

4. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative data on which this research is grounded was acquired through semi-structured interviews with Western expatriate managers in the UAE from January 2016 to January 2017. From the databases of Expatriate Associations in the UAE, thirty Western expatriate managers were selected for interviews. Participants were selected from a range of companies in different industries in order to avoid the likelihood of industry-specific CCT confusing the findings. Of the thirty expatriate managers contacted in December 2015, twenty-five consented to participate in the research. The high response rate was credited to the author

having insider standing within the UAE expatriate community because of earlier research (for relevant points of interest and the advantages of insider status see Siu (1996)). Random sampling was excluded as a means of gathering data due to the fact that the return rate is often very low. Instead of that, snowballing sampling was used. This entailed the leveraging of cooperation from established individual contacts. This is a system that was also utilized by an international panel of scholars and which is now considered to be one of the leading practices in IHRM (Von Glinow, Drost & Teagarden, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews were scheduled, in advance, to take approximately 50 minutes. However, most of the interviews lasted between one and two hours in duration. The questions on CCT and CCT support were compiled by using the main elements of cross-cultural proficiency that were extracted from the latest literature and research findings. Participants were requested at the beginning of the interview to give UAE-specific examples, if possible, when reacting to the questions. Occasionally, when requested by expatriate managers, interviews were not sound recorded. At all stages, throughout the research process, participants were assured that all data gathered during those interviews would be kept strictly confidential.

In this study, we describe “Western” expatriate managers as the people who have nationality in, and association with Anglo-Saxon countries and who have been selected for our research. We observe that there is considerable diversity in those countries and they don’t exemplify a homogenous group. For instance, since the 1950s, all six of the nations in the study had encountered high levels of immigration, and in this respect, are considered to be multi-cultural societies. (Hutchings, Michailova & Harrison, 2012). In order to have a diverse sample of interviewees, in term of age, gender and experiences, purposeful sampling was used as a method of selecting the participants (Seidman, 1998). Purposeful sampling encourages the scholars to select interviewees who can provide an abundance of information for an exploratory study like ours. The participants of our study were general managers, departmental heads, project managers and all were managers in MNCs operating in the UAE. Our participants came from different backgrounds and displayed a diversity of gender, age, marital status, family type, professional experiences and education. The average age of the respondents was around 50. On average, they had been working with their companies for almost eight years. Of the participants that were selected, 40% (n=10) were British, 24% (n=6) Americans, 20% (n=4) were Australians, 20% (n=4)

were New Zealanders, and 4% (n=1) were South Africans. A sample of expatriates of various nationalities was sought, as it was normal that more cross-cultural differences may arise. In addition, their cultural backgrounds were probably going to affect their approach towards everyday life.

Table 1: Background of the participants of the present study:

Cases	Industry	Years as an expatriate in UAE	Designation	Age	Gender	Home country
Participant 1	Hospitality	2	Department Head	45	M	UK
Participant 2	Construction	3	Project Manager	62	F	UK
Participant 3	Tourism	1	General Manager	53	M	Australian
Participant 4	Hospitality	2	CFO/Departmental Head	58	M	UK
Participant 5	Engineering	4	Senior Manager	55	M	USA
Participant 6	Construction	3	Vice Presidents	41	M	Australian
Participant 7	Real Estate	2	Managers	48	M	UK
Participant 8	Consulting	5	Senior consultant	57	F	USA
Participant 9	Education	2	Departmental Head	51	M	Australian
Participant 10	Hospitality	1	Manager	39	M	UK
Participant 11	Engineering	1	Production Manager	46	M	New Zealander
Participant 12	Engineering	2	Logistics Manager	63	M	USA
Participant 13	Tourism	3	CEO	61	M	UK
Participant 14	Hospitality	2	General Manager	54	M	South African
Participant 15	Construction	4	Project Manager	37	M	Australian
Participant 16	Consulting	1	Manager	44	M	USA
Participant 17	Finance	2	Manager	42	F	UK
Participant 18	Tourism	5	Departmental Head	49	M	New Zealander
Participant 19	Accounting	3	Manager	58	M	South African
Participant 20	Engineering	1	General Manager	53	M	UK
Participant 21	Construction	1	Manager	52	M	USA
Participant 22	Real Estate	3	Manager	59	M	New Zealander
Participant 23	Engineering	1	General Manager	53	M	New Zealander
Participant 24	Training	3	Manager	54	M	UK
Participant 25	Construction	3	Manager	46	M	UAS

Triangulation was used in the current research with the objective of enriching the precision of the results (McEvoy & Richard, 2006). The interview protocol was left intentionally wide open, in order to allow participants to expand on the matters that they considered to be crucial in connection to their CCT and to their

expatriate experiences in the UAE. The author of the present study carried out all the interviews. When possible, the participants were audio recorded. In the few cases where respondents did not agree to be audio recorded (six individuals), extensive notes were taken during the interviews. In addition, brief observational notes were made regarding the interviewee's working environment, outside communications and facial expressions. It enriched the quality of the data and gave better analysis quality.

In presenting the results of the data analysis, we endeavored to introduce an account of the thoughts that were shared instead of a consolidation of data into the quantitative counts of measures. Essentially, there are two leading clarifications for this. Firstly, we didn't seek to examine the connection between independent and dependent variables. We just desired that the participants should enlighten us concerning the effects of the CCT programs on their adjustment challenges in the UAE. Secondly, we wanted the results to illuminate the full richness of the insights contained within the stories that we had compiled from these Western expatriates. As Miesel & Karlawish (2011) commented, the strength of the narrative is in deciphering the participant's account of the information in such a way that a neutral observer can easily comprehend. Evidently, it is impractical to convey everything that was understood from the interviews and a degree of selectivity was required when presenting the findings. Along those lines, we have extracted the principal, recurring, major themes and observations, from which there was agreement amongst all the participants.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Concerning CCT preparations, expatriate managers were asked to discuss the nature of pre- departure and post-arrival, practical and language training, CCT and executive briefings. There was compelling evidence presented in the literature of academic studies, highlighting the importance of CCT in contributing positively to the subsequent success of the expatriates and their companies. In spite of that, the MNCs that were selected in the present study were still offering minimal and unsystematic CCT preparation and opportunities to their expatriate managers.

5.1. CCT and challenges:

Of the twenty-five participants in the study, only nineteen received some formal

CCT either prior to their arrival or during their stay in the UAE. Six of those who didn't receive any CCT from their companies work for relatively small scale MNCs. It would be normal to expect that those companies would not give any CCT because of the monetary costs. On the other hand, our findings demonstrate that medium and large-sized MNCs are more inclined to provide some form of CCT to their expatriate managers. Most of the participants felt that some form of CCT was necessary to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the expatriate experience in the UAE.

A clear majority of the participants in this study (twenty-three) were confronted with challenges of both a professional as well as a social nature. Most of those expatriate managers were of the opinion that those challenges could have been partially circumvented or dealt with if they had received more CCT than they did. A significant amount of those challenges can be predicted or anticipated. They are brought about by transition and conformity challenges and adjustment stresses and are clearly displayed in both work and social settings. Reaction to this question included remarks, for example:

The former subsidiary head left the UAE out of the blue, and therefore there was no possibility for a proper changeover. It meant a lot of challenges for me as the incoming subsidiary head. So, a ton of problems for us like where to shop, how to bargain, where to find things, schools for the kids, etc. I realize now that these social needs must be taken care of before you start working.

All participants who had encountered issues during their adaptation to living and working in the UAE contended that the adjustment challenges would have been somewhat lessened had they received some CCT. Although a number (n=9) believed that CCT could never completely set you up for another culture until you experience it, most suggested (n=15) that some CCT would have provided them with some understanding of what was in store. The real day-to-day issues that they were confronted with included challenges of where to find essential services and food that they were used to having at home, as well as work issues connected with different cultural etiquettes. The majority of the participants (n=14) expressed sentiments of frustration and alienation, identified with cultural shock, during their first few months of working and living in the UAE. One of the interviewees summed up the remarks of many in proposing that:

I have discovered that I should be straight, legitimate, and amenable

and don't criticize anybody before others – it is simply an issue of what is considered culturally incorrect. When you have the wastaa [acceptance into the social circles], you can function effectively in the UAE.

All the interviewees conceded that their MNCs did not have any comprehensive framework for the developing the expatriate managers for the important assignment like UAE. Certainly, the practice is by all accounts ambivalent on the effectiveness of CCT, evidently expecting that “right person always manages” favoring a learning by doing approach.

5.2. Pre-departure CCT

None of our participants had been given any training about the unique aspects of the Arab and the UAE culture. Most of the participants (n=18) thought that their underlying acclimation to the UAE and their intercultural effectiveness at both work and social levels would have been enhanced by having received some pre-departure CCT that focused on the issue and challenges of cultural awareness.

However, a few participants (n=3) were skeptical about whether any CCT could have prepared them for the challenges and experiences of managing in such a unique cultural environment as the UAE. A majority of the respondents (n=17) argued that there was a definite need for some exposure to the UAE’s unique culture prior to their arrival in the country. This would have given them a head start at work and a positive professional advantage in familiarizing themselves with the accepted local business practices. It was contended by most of the respondents (n=15) that a thorough understanding of those differences in cultural practices could lessen the probability of committing severe cultural blunders because of their obliviousness to what was viewed as inadequate and unsuitable conduct in particular situations. It was noted that a considerable number of participants (n=19) had some pre-departure CCT. Still, the issue of CCT training for family members tended to have been neglected by the MNCs. As one interviewee remarked:

My wife was not working, had left her excellent job to be in the UAE with me and she was having bigger challenges of adjusting than I was. I was away on the work most of the time, and she was the one who

was expected to do all kinds of negotiations outside of work. At that point, there was no help made accessible to her, and I now think that some help would have had a remarkable effect on her adjustment in UAE.

Previous studies (e.g., Wilson, 2011) on the international assignment over the last decades have demonstrated that the most well-known reason behind the failure or “brownout” of an expat is the disenchantment of his partner or spouse with the everyday encounters of living abroad. This is particularly correct if the partner or spouse was working back home, yet can’t find a suitable job in the UAE. This pre-departure CCT must incorporate sections dedicated to partners or spouses, and it must give careful consideration to the day-to-day challenges of the spouses and their approaches for adjustment and possible fulfillment with living in UAE.

Support in relocation and short exploratory visit before commencing an assignment:

Out of the many forms of training that were analyzed, the one concerning help during the relocation process was given the most attention by the MNCs. All our participants (n=25) received some help with relocation and resettlement. Relocation, for the most part, secured financial support for the expatriate manager and his/her family if needed. For some expatriate managers (n=5), their companies assisted helping them to settle into the UAE by giving information about housing, hospitals, schools and shopping. One of our interviewees was used by his MNC to act as an on-going liaison consultant to new expatriates and their families.

None of our participants had been sent to the UAE for a short visit before the start of their assignment, although most of them had been to the UAE beforehand whether on short working visits with other companies or as tourists. All participants (n=25) contended, nonetheless, that it was appropriate and desirable for the MNC to send expatriate managers on such a short trip to the host country to ensure, as much as was possible, that they would have some cultural understanding of that country before the start of their international assignment and be less prone to the effects of cultural shock. One interviewee commented:

No, I was never asked to go on a short trip to the UAE before my

posting, but rather I would have loved it. I had just only two-week's notice for this assignment in the UAE – more time, preparations and training would have provided me much better understanding of UAE unique culture, and this would have obviously helped my initial transition enormously.

Expatriate relocation training programs can immensely improve an expatriate's understanding and effectiveness when working and living in a foreign country. Support and training assist in preparing expatriate managers and their families for the overseas relocation and furnishes them with a comprehensive worldwide understanding of norms, values, and cultures in a host foreign country.

Executive briefing:

Of the twenty-five interviewees, fifteen (n=15) received some form of executive briefing about the operations of their company in the UAE. However, only four (n=4) of these employees received a further detailed presentation about the economy, the political situation and the history of the UAE. Of the remaining ten interviewees, three (n=3) were given some presentations about the UAE's economic and political history, but they were given few relevant details about the subsidiary's operations in the UAE. Of the fifteen that received a briefing about their subsidiary's operations in the UAE, most of them felt that the presentation had been genuinely far-reaching and that it had depicted the MNC's long haul strategies within both the UAE and the Middle East region; with particular emphasis on the crucial role that the expatriate manager was expected to play during his/her assignment in the UAE. Nevertheless, other interviewees asserted that, while they had received some presentation about the general, strategic, long-term plan of the MNC, there was a feeling that the presentation focused more on the day-to-day operational side of the subsidiary's activities. As argued by Alshanbri *et al.*, (2016) that the employee substitution procedure is a crucial issue that may cause loss of learning which is thought to be a significant form of intellectual capital for the MNCs. Thus, HR departments have a significant role in transference of this knowledge to new expatriate manager and this implies changing essential actions.

Period of notice given about international assignment:

The majority of the participants maintained that they had been given very short notice of their international assignments and consequently, there had been

insufficient time for their company to thoroughly train and prepare them for the unique cultural environment of the UAE. Out of twenty-five interviewees, only three received two months' notice, five received five weeks' notice, and thirteen received three weeks' notice, and the remaining four received approximately two weeks' notice of their assignment in the UAE. Similarly, Klaus (1995) noted that there is often a rush to send an expatriate manager to the overseas country to fill an urgent opening in a principal subsidiary. As expected, a majority of the interviewees complained that they had not been given sufficient time to organize themselves for the relocation or to prepare themselves emotionally. Additionally, they had insufficient time to receive a satisfactory level of CCT that would have enabled them to adjust to the new work and social environment in the UAE. For example, one interviewee stated:

I was only asked as to whether I would like to take an assignment in Dubai for three years and I replied, "maybe." I was then asked to attend a three-day training workshop about Arab culture and history, and four weeks later I arrived in the UAE.

5.3 CCT and support during the International Assignment

Participants were questioned about whether they were provided with any CCT or support by their parent company during their assignment in the UAE. They were likewise asked whether they thought that their companies could have given more CCT or support and, if this was the case, what it should have involved. Very few of the expatriate managers in this sample received any support during their international assignment, be it from the parent company or less formally from another fellow expatriate in the subsidiary in the UAE. None of our interviewees had any formal CCT after their arrival in the UAE. Indeed, only five (n=5) of the participants said that they had received some support after the start of their assignment, and in all cases, that was taken care of by the appointment of a former expatriate manager to be their mentor. Those expatriates, who were provided with formal mentor support, communicated that the main role of the mentor was to pass on information about the parent company and performance expectations. The mentor also gave some help with practical local information; for instance, about schools, shopping, and medical facilities. It is astounding to see that none of those expatriate managers and their accompanying spouses in this cohort had received any CCT training after their arrival in the UAE to help them adapt to this transition of living and working in such a unique Arab and

Muslim culture.

Most participants (n=22) contended that some post-arrival CCT, even if only on a casual basis was required. The greater part of expatriates (n=24) also concurred that in any event having another experienced expatriate manager to facilitate the move and to assist during the settling-in period was needed in order that people could adjust on a social level and to help them to understand the cultural sensitivities in business and social circles. With regards, as to whether they considered that their MNC should provide them with formal CCT and support during their assignment in the UAE, most participants (n=24) agreed that this was highly desirable. One interviewee commented:

In the case of expatriates, there is always an issue of “out of sight and out of mind”, and it is believed in my company that they give the international posting to the best people and so, as an expatriate manager, you ought to know how to deal with the challenges in a foreign country. However, I think that there is a genuine need for a support hotline in corporate headquarter with someone who has lived in the UAE understands the challenges here, and it would help.

CCT expects to expand the applicability of new practices that are more suitable in the host country. Subsequently, CCT may ideally be sequential, advancing in steps beginning at pre-departure and proceeding to the post-arrival period. Selmer (2002) argued that sequential CCT proposed that content and timing ought to be coherent with the psychological receptivity of the expat, as it progresses during the international assignment.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the present study demonstrate the significance of CCT to Western expatriate managers traveling to a different and unique culture like the UAE. The UAE has a very multi-cultural environment and it is governed by a unique cultural and traditional structure (AlMazrouei & Pech, 2014). The Western expatriate managers may end up managing staff from different cultures and nationalities. They, therefore, require an in-depth and functional understanding of both the local and the various other cultures of the neighboring countries. They must reach a stage where they are able to win the trust of their local and foreign colleagues in order to be able to function efficiently in a respectful and professional environment. Without developing such awareness, an expatriate

manager may perceive life in the UAE to be somewhat perplexing and infuriating. When local norms of behavior have been comprehended, absorbed and taken on board, the expatriate manager will be significantly more productive and valuable to his or her employer and in addition to the UAE.

More precisely, the results of this exploratory study of Western expatriate managers in the UAE reveals that the managers who were given CCT adjusted more quickly in their assignments and were relatively happier and more satisfied than those managers who were not given any CCT. Furthermore, CCT decreases the severity of cultural shock and reduces the time required to adjust to and feel comfortable in the new culture. It also shortens the time required to become more productive on the job during the assignment in the UAE. Our results are in tune with previous studies, which have contended that CCT has a substantial and positive impact on the process of expatriate adjustment (see, e.g., Okpara & Kabongo, 2011; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005).

Most the MNCs chosen for this study did not give sufficient pre-departure CCT to their expatriates, their partners, spouses, and accompanying family. Those companies do not appear to be convinced about the effectiveness of CCT. Their collective mindset suggests that they expect that a “competent person always knows how to manage himself”. This attitude favours the “learning by doing” approach. None of the MNCs selected for this study provided any formal CCT during the overseas assignment. However, a few of them gave some unstructured or informal support during the assignment in the UAE.

It has been argued by Selmer, Torbiorn, & de Leon (1998) that if CCT were provided during the ethnocentric, cultural shock and conformist stages of adaptation, it would help bring together the practice and theory. This, in turn would facilitate an immediate connection between the learning and the expatriates’ practical, day-to-day, operational experiences. Experiential and interactional strategies ought to provide a large body of practical information from which to be able to comprehend the fundamentals of the host culture. Furthermore, the dialogue in the group would provide inspiration for a shift in the person’s frame of reference as well as bolstering their new social skills.

We believe that the findings of the present study have substantial ramifications for the practice of CCT as well as for its theory. We propose three key recommendations that have emerged from this current study. First, the present study demonstrates that specific components of CCT that enhance the training

of an expatriate manager can naturally raise the overall quality of the whole CCT program. More precisely, as our research concentrated on the viability of all kinds of CCT, a conceivable practical ramification is that future expatriates should get sequential CCT as prescribed by Selmer et al. (1998). CCT in the host country may enhance the effectiveness of CCT, since it permits timely interventions in real life and real-time circumstances. Accordingly, future studies ought to analyze the adequacy of sequential CCT in home and host countries.

Secondly, we believe that MNCs may need to develop additional tools, based on local practice, to help their expatriate managers adjust to the unique culture in the UAE. Possible advances in CCT could incorporate MNC-wide management information systems designed specifically to help managers in the UAE, as well as in other Arab countries also. Managers coming back from the UAE may likewise record their encounters in both work and life circumstances. The HR department ought to gather this data, process it and summarize its key points for incorporation into CCT for its future expatriate managers in the UAE. Our last recommendation is for the MNC to provide more than simply CCT to enhance the expatriate manager's pre-departure expectations about the host country. For instance, MNCs can also provide a trip to the host country before the manager undertakes the international assignment. The purpose of this would be to give them both a formal and a casual opportunity to talk about their move with the other expatriates in the overseas subsidiary. As discussed previously, the MNCs ought to think carefully about the way the information that they provide to the expatriate manager, before his overseas assignment, will impact his/her adjustment process once in the host nation. Finally, for the MNCs assigning expatriates to the UAE, the conclusions of the present study are twofold. First, providing CCT to the expatriate manager is a better option rather than not to provide any CCT and second CCT ought to be sequential. Meanwhile the adequacy of the sequential CCT was observed to be limited, it might be fitting to apply complementary means to fortify expatriates' ability.

7. AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A weakness of the current research is the dependence on the subjective readings of a small number of expatriate managers in the UAE. However, qualitative studies contribute to a profound comprehension of the subject prompting innovation and theory-building, blended-method research studies can accommodate opposing demands of theory advancement and the

utilization of rigorous research methodologies (Srnlka & Koeszegi 2007; Tajeddini & Mueller 2011). In the present study, only expatriates from Anglo-Saxon countries were chosen; namely British, Americans, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans. Given its importance, we suggest that future research may study more expatriate managers from different nations, as with the expanded pace of globalization, MNCs from many countries have now invested in the UAE. The present study can likewise be replicated in other Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and so forth, to compare the similarities and differences with these results, and in this manner endeavor to develop a broader theoretical model for the Gulf countries.

Future research may likewise incorporate other appropriate issues, (such as organizational culture, size, and so on), in studying the impact of aspects of CCT that have not been covered in the present study. This will help us to expand this research further and it will ideally give more information to HR managers in designing and planning more suitable CCT programs with the aim of ameliorating the way expatriates acclimatize to different cultural environments.

In addition, more demographic variables (such as language proficiency, the age of the expatriate manager, the age of the spouse, the number of children, etc.) ought to be investigated in the future. It would likewise be intriguing to empirically examine the responses of HR managers, consultants and non-managerial employees about the CCT and its impact on expatriate adjustment.

Furthermore, additional extensive research may be undertaken in the future by utilizing quantitative research methodologies to add more variables, and this will give more insights into the findings of the present study. More precisely, quantitative empirical research could likewise be utilized for analyzing the different variables and their relations with CCT and its impact on expatriate adjustment.

Finally, at this point, this is the first qualitative study undertaken for recognizing the connections between CCT and expatriate adjustment in the UAE. It is hoped, that this present study will prompt more research interest around this area in future.

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