

Analyzing the effectiveness of expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training in Finland

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<p>Globalization has resulted in companies engaging more and more into international operations. During recent decades the focus of international growth opportunities has been in emerging economies which share substantial cultural differences with Western companies. The cultural differences can create obstacles in day-to-day business and this requires companies to develop the cultural competencies of their employees.</p> <p>Especially the expatriates that are chosen for long-term international work assignments must be culturally trained in advance. The pre-departure cross-cultural training (CCT) of expatriates should effectively prepare the employees to encounter cultural differences. However in many cases there is a lack of sufficient pre-departure training in companies. This purpose of this study is to research how to ensure the effectiveness of expatriate pre-departure training offered in companies.</p> <p>The theories were selected to provide knowledge on the research problem and investigative questions. The theoretical framework includes presenting the need for cultural training which is caused by countries' varying cultural dimensions and expatriate failure. Followed by description of background concepts that have high relevance in cross-cultural knowledge and cultural adjustment. The theory part of the study ends by gathering cross-cultural training methods and content together.</p> <p>The qualitative research was conducted as a face-to-face interview of an expatriate, spouse and their cross-cultural trainer in Helsinki Metropolitan area in Finland in October 2012. The interviews were semi-structured and included open ended and follow-up questions. The answers were recorded, transcribed and analyzed by using coding method.</p> <p>The expatriate and spouse experienced the cross-cultural training and support from company positively. The trainer emphasized that training should be individually designed and implemented. The findings give proof for the usefulness and importance of CCT and suggest many development actions for companies to ensure the effectiveness of their CCT program.</p>	
<p>Keywords Expatriate, cross-cultural training, cultural adjustment, cultural intelligence, cultural differences</p>	

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1 Introduction

The fast globalization of economies during the past decades has resulted in companies pursuing more and more international operations. During the last century emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China have gain fast economic growth and the Western companies have acknowledged their potential. However developing long-term business relationships and gaining market share in these economies might not be quite simple. Majority of the emerging economies have significant cultural differences and require Western companies to obtain strong cultural competencies and adaptation in order to build strong business relations and produce profit. The key of building more culturally intelligent companies is training those who are in the front line of international business interactions, the individuals who are sent abroad for long work assignments. These employees are referred as expatriates.

The number of expatriates has increased since operations and personnel have been relocated abroad due to various reasons such as pursue of growth. The increase of international operations and the high number of expatriate assignments requires the companies to manage the expatriate process effectively. The process includes various aspects to help accomplish a successful expatriate assignment. The expatriate candidate should be carefully chosen and the work assignment description needs to be clearly defined. Many practical matters need to be arranged such as making a proper contract and giving assistance in tax, housing and logistic issues. An essential part of the expatriate process is also preparing the expatriate and the spouse to face the various cultural challenges in front of them by offering appropriate cross-cultural training (CCT).

In many cases offering a proper and in-depth CCT for an expatriate prior departure is neglected by the sending companies. This study is focusing on researching how to ensure the efficiency of the expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training. Furthermore this research provides reasoning through theories and empirical research of the importance of CCT. The pre-departure training should include supporting the expatriate's spouse and thus improving the overall cultural adjustment and work performance.

The reasons that inspired this research are explained by the author's interests and studies on the field of international human resource management. Additionally cultural curiosity has increased due to experiences from living overall ten months in Indonesia during exchange studies and work placement. Certain interest towards Asia's cultures has grown when studying cultural differences and the basics of Chinese language.

1.1 Key concepts

The key concepts when concerning expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training are briefly explained. These concepts have high relevance in the report and are closely linked together.

Expatriate

Expatriate is an employee or a manager who is sent abroad for a work assignment for a longer than one year's time period after which the expatriate returns (Sinkkonen 2008, 13). A returning expatriate is called a repatriate. The expatriate has a sending company and a receiving company. The sending company is referred as a home company and the company operating in the location abroad as a host company.

Expatriate process

The expatriate process includes all the steps that occur when an employee is chosen, prepared, sent and returned from a work assignment abroad. The process involves training and supporting the expatriate prior to departure, during the assignment and when repatriating. (Sinkkonen 2008, 194.) A successful expatriate assignment demands effective and continuous management of all of the parts in the process.

Cross-cultural training (CCT)

Cross-cultural training or CCT strives to improve cultural awareness and behavior in situations that are characterized by cultural differences (Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley & Riedel 2006, 356). Cross-cultural training can focus on training expatriates or training employees or managers who are working for example in multicultural teams. CCT is presented in chapter 2.4.

Cultural adjustment

The cultural adjustment happens when an expatriate is sent abroad to a new cultural environment. The expatriate begins adjusting to the new culture in the areas of general life, work culture and social interaction (Ang & Dyne 2008, 74). Cultural adjustment is further discussed in chapter 2.3.

Cultural intelligence

Person with high cultural intelligence is extremely well able to understand and get along with people from different cultures (Ang & Dyne 2008, xi). The four dimensions of cultural intelligence are cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioral capabilities (Ang & Dyne 2008, 11). They are further described in chapter 2.2.

Cultural distance

The cultural distance measures how different cultures are from each other in terms of dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism (Ang & Dyne 2008, 77). High cultural distance can more easily cause misunderstandings and conflicts due to significantly different behaviors. Cultural dimensions and cultural distance are discussed in chapter 2.1.

1.2 The objectives of the thesis

The number of international operations and thus expatriates has increased yet the focus on managing the expatriate process has not followed the development. In order to successfully accomplish the set assignment objectives effective and supportive expatriate management is required (Romero 2002, 73). It has been stated that the number of failed expatriate assignments is high amongst companies. Expatriate failure is very costly and therefore appropriate and effective cross-cultural training of expatriates is essential in order to prevent failure in the job assignment. (Lee 2007, 403–405.) An issue which has related high costs should be further researched (Rubin & Rubin 2012, 47). In many cases expatriate failure is due to the lack of cultural adjustment to the new environment. Appropriate cross-cultural training prior to departure helps the expatriate and his/her family to be prepared and understanding of the cultural differences and thus improve the capabilities for cultural adjustment.

Furthermore, there are not enough competent expatriates in companies, which demands efficient cross-cultural training (Suutari & Burch 2001 in Lee & Crocker 2006, 1188). In many cases the expatriate pre-departure training offered by companies is not sufficient, complete or in worst case it's missing completely (Wessler 2009, 418; Waxin & Panaccio 2005, 51). Insufficient knowledge and understanding of the host culture can create obstacles in assignment performance especially if the host culture is remarkably different from that of the expatriate's home culture.

Majority of the previous researchers have studied the selection process of competent expatriates and their cultural adjustment (Romero 2002, 73). In Finland the topic of expatriate training has not studied enough compared to the increasing amount of expatriate assignments. The purpose of this research is to collect valuable information for companies on how to make the expatriate training effective. It also gathers the relevant theory together to build a comprehensive framework for planning and executing pre-departure cross-cultural training. Through this research the companies can add more value in creating an effective expatriate management process and thus prevent expatriate failure and gain cost savings. This study can also contribute to future expatriates to ensure the quality of the training they and their spouses receive.

1.3 Research problem

The main research problem and the investigative questions are presented below.

The investigative questions divide the general problem into more detailed and related themes which are a base for the theoretical framework and the qualitative research.

The main research problem:

How to ensure the effectiveness of expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training offered by companies in Finland?

The investigative questions:

1. What is the context and methods used in expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training?
2. Is the CCT considered useful and appropriate?
3. Does the CCT increase expatriate's cultural adjustment?
4. What is the role of pre-departure training in supporting the expatriate's spouse/family?
5. Does the pre-departure CCT affect expatriate's work performance?
6. Do the results of the questions 1-4 implicate proof for the importance of pre-departure training and reveal areas of improvement for companies?

1.4 Overlay matrix

The overlay matrix demonstrates the relevance of each investigative question to the relevant theory chapters, qualitative interview question numbers and the findings of the qualitative research (table 1).

Table 1. Overlay Matrix (Pessala 2012)

The main research problem: Is the expatriate pre-departure training offered by companies in Finland effective and appropriate?				
Investigative questions:	Theory	1st Interview	2nd Interview	Results
1. What is the context and methods used in expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training?	2.4	3.	4.	4.2.1, 5.1.1
2. Is the CCT considered useful and appropriate?	2.1.3, 2.4.1	4, 5.	3, 5.	4.2.2, 5.1.3
3. Does the CCT increase expatriate's cultural adjustment?	2.3	6.	5.b	4.2.3, 5.1.3
4. What is the role of pre-departure training in supporting the expatriate's spouse/family?	2.1.3	3. d	4.d	4.2.1, 4.2.2, 5.1.2
5. Does the pre-departure CCT affect expatriate's work performance?	2.4.1	7.	6.	4.2.4, 5.1.3
6. Do the results of the questions 1-4 implicate proof for the importance of pre-departure training and reveal areas of improvement for companies?		3.-8.	3.-7.	5.1.3, 5.1.4.

2 Theoretical frame of reference

The theories relevant to expatriate cultural training are from the field of international human resource management and cross-cultural studies. The theories applied concentrate on different themes starting by presenting the background of cultural differences and need for cross-cultural training. Next chapters continue by further examining the concepts of cultural intelligence and cultural adjustment. Finally the objectives and methods of CCT are discussed.

The researcher's goal was to research and combine different theories to build an overall picture by applying theories that are up to date. When researching it became clear that there is a lack of consistency and quantity in the theories and studies related to expatriate cross-cultural training. This is surprising considering the amount of international companies and expatriates world-wide. Therefore this further indicates how important it is to conduct more research on the topic. The business world is only getting more global and costs related to expatriate assignments are high.

2.1 Background for the need of cross-cultural training

World's cultures have developed during many centuries to their own unique sets of various behaviors, norms, values and languages. In each culture there are rules and beliefs underneath the surface that affect everyday manners and interactions (Hofstede 2010, 347). Cultural clashes often occur due to not understanding these various underlying meanings for behaviors. Culture can be described through different approaches from which the most applied is Hofstede's (2010, 31) cultural dimensions. Furthermore it can be said that there is a large gap between world's business cultures. (Gesteland 2005, 21). It should be noticed that the national and organizational cultures are two different concepts thus a nation's culture cannot be implied directly to an organization's culture. Organizational culture is more to do with practices while national culture is to do with values. (Hofstede 2010, 47, 346–347.)

2.1.1 Cultural dimensions and cultural distance

Hofstede (2010, 31) describes the cultural dimensions as a measurement method when comparing cultures. The dimensions include power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term versus short-term orientation. These dimensions can be measured for each national culture in order to compare their cultural differences. When describing the dimensions Finland and China are used as an example due to their significant cultural differences.

Power distance measures the inequality and power present at a particular society. For example in Finland and in other Nordic countries the power distance at work is relatively low compared to that of China and most of Asia. This means that in the working culture as well as in the family life in Finland power is distributed rather equally. However in China the power is unequally distributed which can be seen in companies' hierarchical systems where power is centralized and linked with high status and authority. In addition in Chinese families the elderly are respected and looked after by their children whereas in Finland children are taught to look after their selves. (Hofstede 2010, 54–61, 67–73.)

Collectivism versus individualism refers to the extent that a group is more important than an individual. Most of the world's cultures are more group oriented than individualistic. In Finland individualism is high compared to majority of countries, including China. In China during social interactions creating and maintaining harmony inside the group is desired and therefore for example declining, criticizing and questioning is avoided since it is considered rude. However in individualistic societies such as Finland being direct, critical and opinionated is appreciated. There is a correlation between power distance and collectivism versus individualism since countries with low power distance also are individualist and countries with high power distance tend to be collectivist. (Hofstede 2010, 90–91, 103–107.)

Femininity versus masculinity dimensions refer to the presence of gender roles in a society. Masculine society has distinct gender roles for man and woman whereas in feminine society the roles are not clearly separated but share similar expectations. Fin-

land is one of the most feminine countries whereas China is one of the most masculine. (Hofstede 2010, 140–144.)

The uncertainty avoidance measures how much unpredictable situations or future are considered as a threat in the society. When measuring these dimensions, Finland is in the medium range and China in the low range of country rankings. In weak uncertainty avoidance countries such as China uncertainty is accepted as part of everyday life. In general life the difference can be seen in that Chinese shouldn't show their aggression and anxiety emotions yet in Finland it is more common. (Hofstede 2010, 191,195, 203.)

Long-term orientation refers to the society to be oriented towards the future, whereas short-term is oriented towards the past and the present. The difference of China being a long-term oriented country and Finland being a short-term can be seen in the Chinese pursuit of building relationships that last for life-time even in business. Yet in Finnish society business relationships often change accordingly. (Hofstede 2010, 239, 251.) All of the described five cultural dimensions were scored from 0 to 100 for 76 countries in the IBM research and the results for Finland and China can be seen in figure 1. (Hofstede 2010, 34). The difference can be clearly seen in each dimension and thus it can be said that Finland and China have high cultural distance.

Based on Hofstede's (2010, 31) dimensions a cultural distance can be calculated by using a mathematical formula. (Ang & Dyne 2008, 77). The cultural distance determines how considerate the differences are (Waxin & Panaccio 2005, 55). The more significant the differences are between the home and the host country of an expatriate the more essential is the role of cross-cultural training since expatriate is required to have high cultural intelligence in order to adjust and perform well (Ang & Dyne 2008, 78). Therefore the cultural distance should be considered when developing and conducting the cross-cultural training. The direction between two different cultures affects the cultural adjustment which should also be taken into account (Selmer, Chiu & Shenkar 2007, 150). For example a Chinese expatriate going to Finland cannot be expected to face similar cultural obstacles than a Finnish expatriate going to China would.

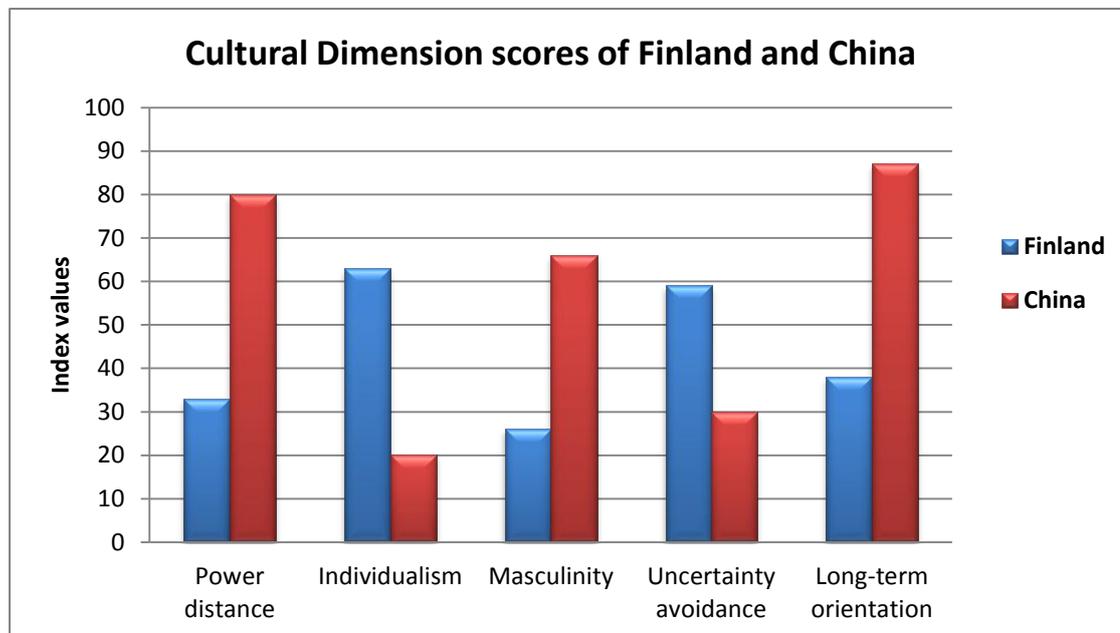


Figure 1. Cultural dimension scores of Finland and China (Modified from Hofstede 2010, 57–59, 95–97, 141–143, 192–194, 255–257, 282–285)

2.1.2 The Gap between world's business cultures

Another theory describes that there is a major distinction in between the world's business cultures. Business cultures vary greatly in their orientation and communication styles. When considering North-Europe companies their business focus differs from that of majority of world's markets (Gesteland 2005, 21). Some of the differences are described in figure 2. There is a distinction of job cultures based on their orientation on how to do business. Task-focused business cultures' people are more oriented to the deal making where as people-focused business cultures share an understanding that relationships are more important. This creates difficulties in the interaction and business manners between the two different orientation styles. Task-focused cultures such as Finland are ready to conduct business with strangers whereas people-focused countries such as China prefer getting to know the person first before business cooperation. Therefore in China using relatives, friends and contacts is preferred. (Gesteland 2005, 19–24.)

Task-focused and relationship-focused cultures also have their own way of communicating. Task-focused cultures use direct verbal communication whereas in relationship-focused cultures the language is more indirect and non-verbal. This causes significant

misunderstandings and a communication gap between the two different business cultures. Relationship-focused cultures want to preserve the harmony between the relationships and thus avoid being direct and offensive which might cause embarrassment to some party. In task-focused business cultures directness and clear expressions are appreciated. (Gesteland 2005, 35.)

Another distinctive feature of world's business cultures is the formality and informality. Formal business cultures have distinct hierarchies with great differences in the status and power whereas informal business cultures favor less hierarchical systems with less power and status distinction. This difference can cause problems in a way the two cultures perceive others' behaviors: informal culture's representatives can behave too familiar ways and formal culture's representatives can seem too distant and even arrogant. (Gesteland 2005, 47.) These three mentioned differences of business cultures makes the business interactions between Finland and China for example challenging and thus requires cultural understanding from both parties.

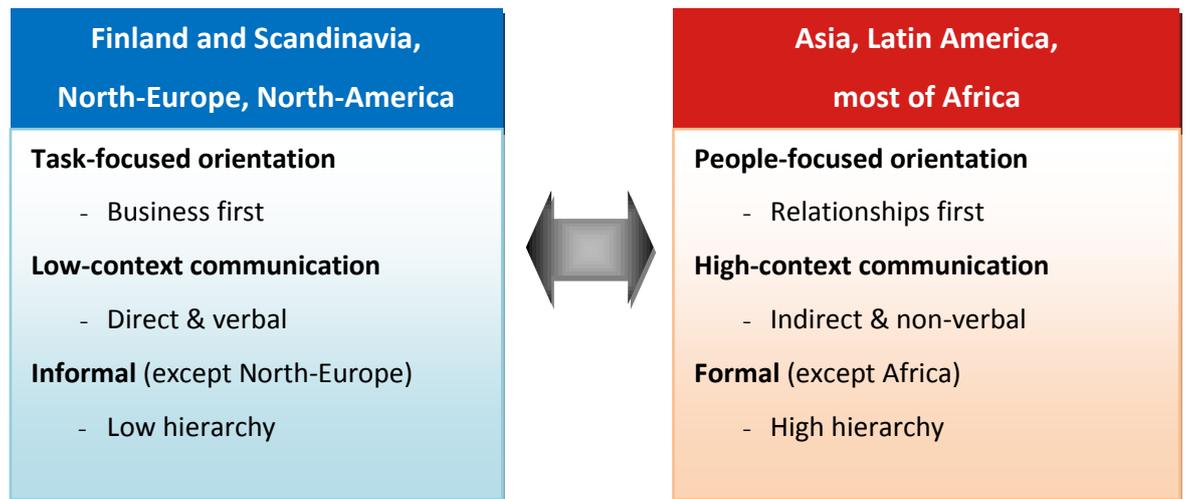


Figure 2. Differences of world's business cultures (Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 44; Gesteland 2005, 19–47; Sinkkonen 31–33).

2.1.3 Expatriate failure and success

Sending an expatriate for a foreign assignment involves high investment as well as high opportunities for success and business development. A successful expatriate assignment can improve market share, increase sales and improve shareholder relationships.

However many risks of which many are due to cultural distance and differences are also involved and the assignment can result in failure. Unfortunately expatriate failure is not uncommon in companies and it involves high financial loss (Lee 2007, 403–405). The reasons behind expatriate failure are various, yet quite often they are related to cultural misunderstanding, conflicts and non-adjustment. Either the expatriate or the family might not adjust which can cause a pre-mature return (Lee 2007, 411). Therefore the role of the spouse and family on expatriate assignment shouldn't be undermined. Some recognized indicators of expatriate failure and success are demonstrated in figure 3.

Expatriate failure is costing businesses a lot directly and indirectly. The direct costs are related to financial costs associated with relocation, training, living costs, taxes and compensation. The indirect cost can be more significant in long term since they are related to:

- loss of sales/market share/business opportunities,
- damaged business relationships
- harm to corporate image
- decrease in productivity

Additionally the expatriate might suffer from psychological effects such as decreased self-confidence and career concerns. (Lee 2007, 405; Greengard 1999, 106.)

Considering the high costs of expatriate failure it should be recognized how important it is to develop expatriates' cross-cultural competencies already before sending them to the assignment. By carefully managing the expatriate process failure rates might be decreased (Lee 2007, 403). Providing training only when problems start to occur is not efficient.

The reasons behind why all of the companies are not offering cross-cultural training for expatriates prior to departure can be various. The management might be considering only matching the expatriate's technical competence with assignment requirements. Furthermore there can a perception that a person successful in the home office will also succeed in different cultural environments, which however cannot be guaranteed.

There might also be a constraint of time when there are not enough time for cultural training in between expatriate selection and departure. Some companies might simply cut on pre-departure training in order to save costs. (Littrell et al. 2006, 359.) The lack of competent training professionals and expertise might also be one of the reasons for not to offer expatriate training (Shen & Edwards 2006, 61). Furthermore many companies that do offer cross-cultural training don't ensure its' quality and don't take the family into consideration (Lee 2007, 405; Ferraro 2010, 177). Insufficient planning and execution of CCT fails to meet the training needs and is a waste of the financial investment.

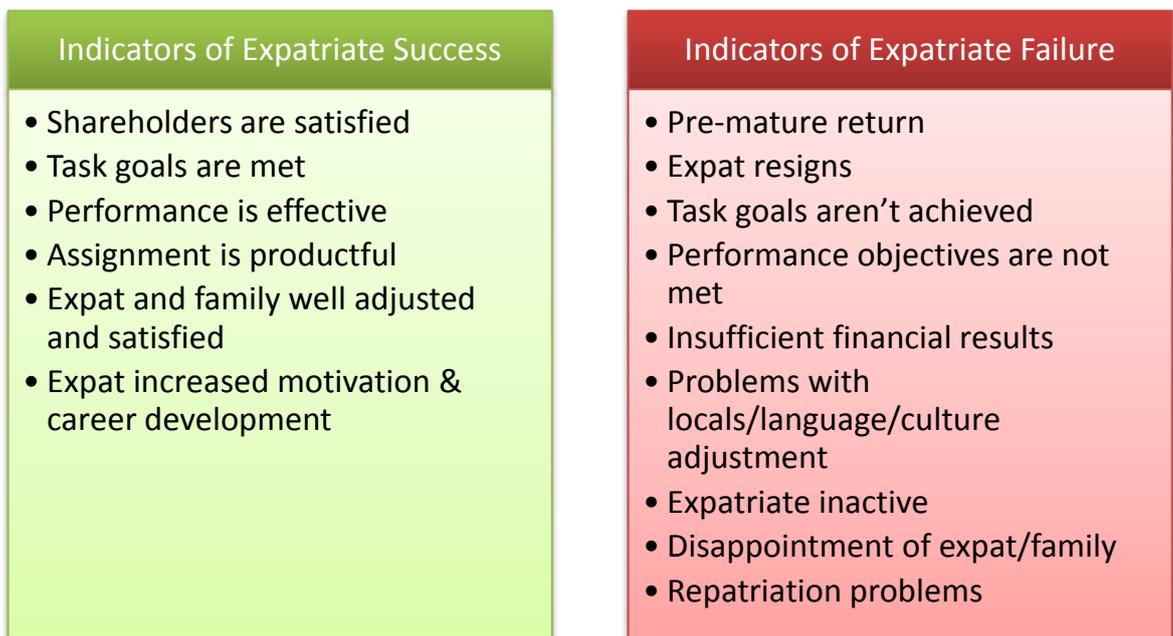


Figure 3. Indicators of expatriate success and failure. (Modified from Lee 2007, 403–405, 411; Sinkkonen 166, 182, 185.)

2.2 Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) has an important role in affecting the individual performance outcome and cultural adaptation and thus expatriate effectiveness. High CQ improves communication effectiveness, competencies, team work capabilities and task performance. The four dimensions of cultural intelligence are cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioral capabilities (figure 4). These dimensions are related to each

other and additionally to other personality characteristics such as social or emotional intelligence. (Ang & Dyne 2008, 11.)

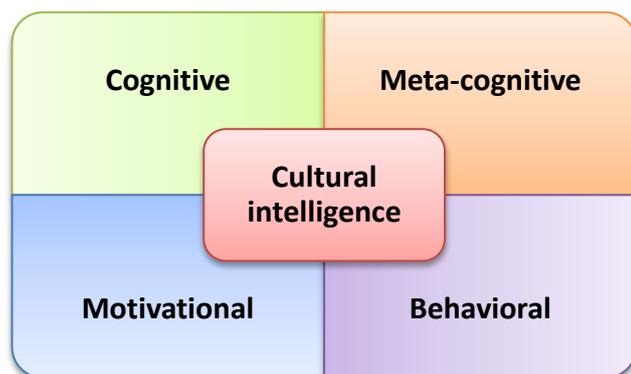


Figure 4. The four dimensions of cultural intelligence (Ang & Dyne 2008, 5)

Metacognitive CQ is an essential part of the cultural intelligence. A person with high metacognitive CQ is consciously aware of the cultural differences during interactions. The person is constantly questioning previously acquired cultural assumptions and gaining new strategies to adapt. Cognitive CQ is referred as the gained knowledge of a certain culture. The knowledge of cultural norms and practicalities is gained by education and personal experience. Cognitive CQ is important since the knowledge of a culture helps understanding the behavior in social interactions. (Ang & Dyne 2008, 5–6.) Thus metacognitive and cognitive cultural intelligences are strongly linked together.

Motivational CQ is the level of interest that drives a person to engage in cross-cultural interaction. The motivational dimension drives energy and attention into learning and behaving in culturally different settings. Behavioral CQ is demonstrated when a person is able to act appropriately in different cultural settings. The behavior is referred to verbal and non-verbal actions. The behavioral intelligence in cultural interactions is very important since it clearly exhibits a person's understanding of cultural differences. (Ang & Dyne 2008, 6–7.) There is also an obvious connection between motivational and behavioral intelligence. Cultural intelligence develops individual's cultural competencies. The competencies are for example cultural knowledge, language skills, communication knowledge and attitude (Sinkkonen 2008, 25).

2.3 Cultural intelligence and cultural adjustment

Ang and Dyne (2008, 73) argue that cultural intelligence is a justified determinant in expatriate adjustment and performance since an expatriate with a high CQ is able to manage cultural differences and perform better. The performance is affected by the different dimensions of CQ in a sense that they determine a person's conscious cultural knowledge and motivation to act accordingly (Ang & Dyne 2008, 74).

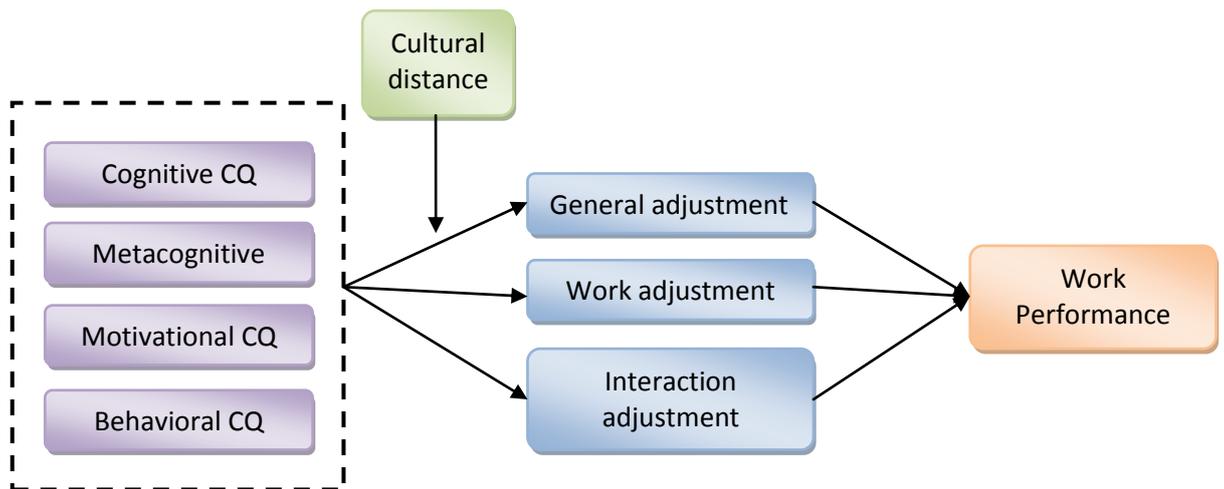


Figure 5. The effects of cultural intelligence (CQ) on expatriate adjustment and performance (Ang & Dyne 2008, 73)

The dimensions of expatriate's cultural adjustment can be divided into general (living arrangements, food etc.), work (goals, responsibilities etc.) and interaction adjustment (social life, communication etc.). As demonstrated in figure 5 the cultural adjustment is a link through which CQ affects job performance. If an expatriate has a high CQ and in addition is able to well adjust to a new culture, succeeding in job assignment will be more likely. All of the three adjustment levels are equally important. (Ang & Dyne 2008, 74, 76–77.)

Cultural distance determines how essential CQ is in expatriate's cultural adjustment. According to Ang and Dyne (2008, 78) the greater the cultural distance between two countries the greater the influence of CQ to cultural adjustment. For example Finland and China have high cultural distance and therefore expatriates sent from Finland to China need to have high CQ in order to adapt well.

Sinkkonen (2008, 41) explains that cultural intelligence can be partly learned and partly it is a natural characteristic of a person. Cultural adjustment is required from an expatriate, yet giving up on one's own identity is not the intention. The expatriate entering a foreign culture should not copy the behavior of locals and give up their own personality, yet understanding and respecting the culture and its customs is desired behavior. (Sinkkonen 2008, 18, 103.)

2.4 Pre-departure cross-cultural training

Cross-cultural training known as CCT is typically linked with training expatriates. However it is recently associated also in multicultural training, where employees (not just expatriates) are trained in order to increase cultural awareness and skills in working with different nationalities. (Littrell et al. 2006, 356.)

Expatriate CCT can be focused on training the expatriates:

- Before leaving to the host country (pre-departure),
- After arriving to the destination (post arrival) and
- When returning back (repatriation) (Sinkkonen 2008, 194.)

This study is especially focusing on the effectiveness of pre-departure cross-cultural training of expatriates and therefore the related theories are discussed.

2.4.1 Objectives and planning of pre-departure CCT

The purpose of offering an expatriate cross-cultural training before the departure to the host country is to improve the cultural adjustment of expatriate and the family and to teach them how to act appropriately in the new culture. Improving the business performance of the expatriate is also one of the main objectives of cross-cultural training. (Waxin & Panaccio 2005, 54; Littrell et al. 2006, 368; Ferraro 2010, 183.) The training increases individual's cultural intelligence which affects especially the general and interaction adjustment to the new culture. Expatriates who are culturally adjusted can more easily establish good relationships and respect local colleagues and business partners (Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 4). The training should also teach the expatriate and spouse characteristics of their own culture, which affect their own behavior. Cross-cultural

training should help build up the confidence level and interaction skills when entering a new culture (Waxin & Panaccio 2005, 54; Ferraro 2010, 183).

The training is influenced by expatriate's characteristics, the nature and complexity of task assignment and cultural distance between the expatriate's culture and the host culture (Lee & Croker 2006, 1187). Therefore there is not a single design training program that could meet the needs of all companies and expatriates. Yet each expatriate's circumstances and background should be taken into consideration when planning the CCT program. Factor to consider are also the length, context and the methods used in the training. The longer, deeper and more skill improving the cultural training before expatriate's departure is the more likely is the successful completion of the assignment. (Ferraro 2010, 184.)

When starting to plan the pre-departure cross-cultural training conducting needs assessment is the first step. The purpose is to find out the expatriate's training need by assessing their characteristics such as their interpersonal and cognitive strengths and weaknesses. Also the past cultural experience of the expatriate and the training need's of spouse and family are discussed before planning the training. (Bennet et al. 2000 in Littrell et al. 2006, 368–369.) The determinants of expatriate training needs are described in figure 6.

In addition to the influence of expatriate's characteristics, the nature of the assignment also affects the training need. Therefore the complexity and objectives of the task assignment abroad should be acknowledged before choosing the training context. Another factor considered when planning the expatriate cross-cultural training is the cultural distance between the home and the host country and how the expatriate sees the cultural differences. If the cultural distance is high and the expatriate sees the differences as being significant, the more essential is the role of training in expatriate adjustment. (Lee & Crocker 2006, 1187; Tung 1981 in Waxin & Panaccio 2005, 53.) For example, if an expatriate with no previous experience of Chinese culture is sent to China and the job assignment involves a lot of communicating with nationals, there is a high need for cognitive, interaction and language training. Sinkkonen (2008, 61) makes

the notion that when considering the cultural differences in the planning of CCT there are several local variations inside large nations such as India and China. Cities and certain areas have regional cultures and differences (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, 54).

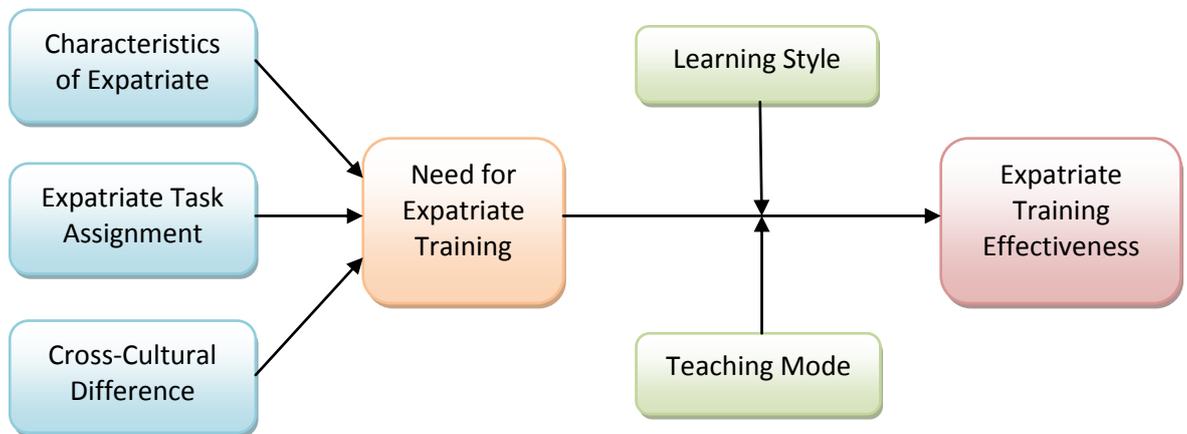


Figure 6. The research model of expatriate training (Lee & Crocker 2006, 1191)

As demonstrated by the figure 6 there should also be a fit between the expatriate's learning style and preferences and the applied teaching methods (Lee & Crocker 2006, 1188, 1202). Accordingly, the next step in planning the expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training is to customize the training program according to the assessed needs of the expatriate.

The overall situational factors influence the actual content of the training and the individual needs determine the training program's methods and techniques (Bennet et al.2000 in Littrell et al. 2006, 369). Situational factors can be for example the complexity of the assignment and the cultural differences. Individual need's can include for example an expatriate's preferred learning style. The learning style varies among individuals and it can be for example concrete or abstract way of learning. Concrete learners prefer learning by doing and abstract learners by observing. (Lee & Crocker 2006, 1191.) The fit between learning style and teaching method affects the effectiveness of expatriate training (figure 6).

After the customized expatriate pre-departure training program is conducted the quality of the training must be ensured. The personnel in charge of planning and imple-

menting the expatriate training program should be experts in the cross-cultural training and on the specific host country. (Bennet et al. 2000 in Littrell et al. 2006, 369) The expertise services offered by other outside organizations can improve the quality of the expatriate training program (Sinkkonen 2008, 10). The quality should be monitored by evaluating expatriate success and collecting feedback from the expatriates concerning the training experience and its affect on cultural adjustment (Bennet et al. 2000 in Littrell et al. 2006, 369). In order to improve the training experience, a personal, honest and trustworthy relationship between the trainer and the expatriate and his/her family is ideal. The training should be started as an early stage as possible and the role is to offer information but also social and emotional support to the expatriate and the family. (Sinkkonen 2008, 10, 126.)

2.4.2 Pre-departure CCT methods

The training methods of cross-cultural expatriate pre-departure training can be divided into different classes according to their approach and focus.

Attribution training focuses to teaching the expatriate to explain the behavior of a certain culture in a similar way that the country's nationals explain it. It is called making isomorphic attributions. (Bhawuk et al.2001 in Littrell et al. 2006, 369)

Cultural awareness training's focus is to make the expatriates understand their own culture better in order to identify cultural differences. Recognizing the characteristics of one's own culture and job culture helps to understand difficulties caused by them in international environment. A training group (I-group) helps the expatriate to identify their own feelings and behavior patterns caused by their culture. (Befus 1988 in Littrell et al. 2006, 370.) The group can consist of several participants who all express their own feelings and experiences to the conversation. Increasing cultural awareness teaches that the own culture should not be perceived as being the only right way (Sinkkonen 2008, 21, 98). As part of the training, self-assessment exercises can be conducted in order to identify own perceptions and views (Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 10).

The language training is very important in order to develop in-depth interaction skills with locals especially, if English is not the most spoken language in the host country. Not being able to have conversations in the local language can prevent full understanding inside and outside the working context. Furthermore mastering the local language helps the expatriate adjust to the overall culture and decrease the feeling of being isolated (Dolainski 1997, 33–34). The language training should be started at an early stage, as soon as the expatriate is selected for the assignment. Language training has many different levels from learning the basic phrases to very extensive interactive training. (Shen & Edwards 2006, 62, 67.)

Didactic training consists of formal and informal briefings on the host culture. Formal briefings and lectures give information and facts on living and working in the host culture. The subjects are broad, including topics such as geographic matters, history, politics, religion, customs, norms, free-time possibilities and work etiquette. The informal briefings consist of having discussions with country experts, former expatriates or host country nationals. (Bennett et al. 1986 in Littrell et al. 2006, 371; Sinkkonen 2008, 23–25.) The information should include a culture's informal guidelines which explain behavior (Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 6). It should be noted that sharing the previous expatriate's experience and knowledge is valuable and therefore companies should realize to use it more often (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, 176).

In addition to briefing the expatriate about general geographical, cultural and business culture related matters, relevant ethical and safety issues must be discussed. Human rights, bribery and justice are all examples of ethical issues that need to be addressed during the training (Shen & Edwards 2006, 61). Safety briefings and risk assessments might be very important when sending expatriates to certain areas where for example crime, assaults, kidnapping or terrorist attacks are not uncommon (Greengard 1999, 108).

Cultural assimilators enhance the expatriate's capability to face and solve situations challenged by cultural differences. The expatriate reads scenarios which are called critical incidents and chooses the course of action which is then analyzed by an expert.

(Bhawuk et al. 1998 in Littrell et al. 2006, 371; Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 10) The briefings enhance cognitive and meta-cognitive cultural intelligence.

The didactic training should also explain the concept and symptoms of culture shock which expatriate will encounter when adapting to a new culture. Explaining the culture shock will help the expatriate to handle the related stress and understand that is an inevitable part of adjustment. (Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 4–5.)

Experimental training is focused on learning in practice and methods include pre-visits to the location, workshops, role plays and simulations (Grove et al. 1985 in Littrell et al. 2006, 372; Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 10). A pre-visit gives valuable practical experience on the living area and its' housing, schools, transport and free-time possibilities (Sinkkonen 2008, 127). The mentioned cross-cultural training methods are described in table 2.

As described earlier, which training method to use is determined by the nature of the assignment, the characteristics of the expatriate and the level of cultural distance between the home and the host culture (Tung 1981 in Waxin & Panaccio 2005, 53). In addition the learning preferences of the expatriate and the spouse should be taken into account. When considering the different training methods often pre-departure training is mostly didactic, post-arrival is experimental and repatriation training is both (Littrell et al. 2006, 382).

The increasing trend in cross-cultural training is using software and internet in the learning process. For example various multimedia packages offer self-learning experiences by using video clips and other interactive teaching methods. (Dessler 2009, 419.) Nowadays using the self-learning material could be implemented to various technical instruments such as smart phones, laptops and tablets. The training material could therefore be more easily accessed anywhere and at anytime by the expatriate and the spouse or family. This increases the distance learning possibilities and can create cost savings for the sending company. The computer-based learning material can be entertaining and educating at the same time when using interactive videos, narratives and quizzes (Greengard 1999, 106–108).

Table 2. Cross-cultural training methods (Brislin & Yoshida 1994, 10; Littrell et al. 2006, 370; Sinkkonen 2008, 18, 22–23; Tung 1981 in Waxin & Panaccio 2005, 53)

Training approach	Focus	Activity	Sources
Attribution	Learning to explain host culture the same way nationals do		
Cultural awareness	Learning about own culture and thus about cultural differences	T-group, information briefings, self-assessment	Lecture material
Language	Learning local language in order to improve adjustment	Lectures, distance-learning	Lecture material, language course text books, internet
Didactic	Learning factual information	Information briefings: formal and informal, culture assimilators	Lecture material, non-fictional and fictional books, films, internet, other persons (returned expats, nationals, experts), discussion forums
Experimental	Learning by doing	Pre-visits, workshops, role plays, simulations	Experiences

3 Empirical Research

There amount of previous empirical research conducted on the subject of expatriate training in Finland is limited and therefore more research is needed. The empirical part of this study consists of a qualitative research where primary data was collected and analyzed. The purpose of the research was to collect experiences and opinions of the expatriate pre-departure cross-cultural training offered in Finland. The objective was to find out different points of view such as that of an expatriate's, the spouse's and the trainer's. The required data was subjective in its nature and therefore qualitative research was considered as an appropriate approach. Qualitative interviewing was chosen as the research method, to ensure the collection of relevant and in-depth data (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 198).

3.1 Data collection method

The scope of the data collection was to gain information from international Finnish companies which are located in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The companies should have had international operations and expatriate assignments with pre-departure training. The expatriate interviewees had to fill the requirements of the term expatriate thus they have spent at least one year in abroad job assignment and returned. The expatriates must have received some type of cross-cultural pre-departure training. Additionally expatriate's spouse who has been involved in the cross-cultural pre-departure training could have been interviewed. Trainees that plan and conduct the pre-departure training could also be interviewed. The requirements of interviewees are demonstrated in figure 7.

The technique for collecting data was by semi structured face-to face interview. Face-to-face interviewing as a qualitative research method offers the opportunity for in-depth understanding and flexibility. (Rubin & Rubin 2012, 29.) The interviews were with a company's expatriate, their spouse and the outside trainer from a company responsible for the pre-departure training. The interviewees were found through personal connections and were carefully selected in order to gain appropriate data results. Ensuring quality and richness of data were the main reasons for choosing the data collection method.

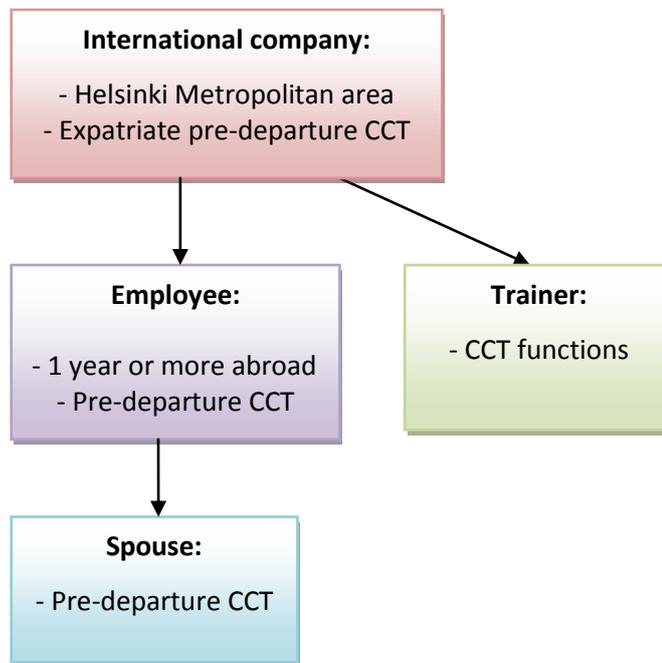


Figure 7. The characteristics of interviewees (Pessala 2012)

The research has characteristics of a convenience sampling since the interviews were set up through personal connections (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 139). In the beginning of October of 2012 the researcher sent cover letters to HR departments through person's working in that company. The cover letter can be seen in attachment 1 and 2. Using personal connections when contacting HR departments, turned out to give responses in most cases. However in couple of the contacted companies they didn't have cross-cultural training for their expatriates. The HR personnel of other two companies' helped to find appropriate interviewees from their employees, yet most of the interviewees turned out not to match the criteria during the initial selection process. They had not received pre-departure cross-cultural training. However one of the companies found an interviewee who was a professional trainer with expatriate experience. Additionally the researcher knew a family with expatriate experience who agreed to be interviewed. In the first interview there were two interviewees and it was held on the 16th of October in Vantaa and lasted for 50 minutes. The second was an individual interview held little more than a week later on the 25th of October in Helsinki. The second interview lasted for 80 minutes.

3.2 Interview design

The frameworks for the semi-structured interviews were based on the research problem and the investigative questions. The interviews were held in Finnish. The initial interview frameworks can be seen in attachments 3 to 6. Two frameworks were formed since the first framework had to be adjusted to the second interview, due to the different viewpoints off an expatriate to a trainer. The use of semi-structured question design ensured that the interview followed certain themes and collected relevant data yet was flexible at the same time. The interview design was constructed from main questions and possible follow-up questions. The main questions ensured that all of the investigative questions are handled and follow-up questions asked for clarification and in depth knowledge. The follow-up questions can be considered to some extent in advance yet often they are formulated during the interview. (Rubin & Rubin 2012, 6–7, 31.)

The questions formatting and the initial follow-up questions were likely to change according to the interview situation and responses. The first question framework was tested before conducting the first interview and alterations concerning the details of the questions were made. The framework was followed to a certain extent during the interview in order to ensure reliability and validity. For each interview a time period of around one hour was reserved and the interfering elements from the environment removed in order to ensure in-depth elaboration.

The questions were sent to the interviewees few days before the scheduled interviews. The researcher had not conducted many professional interviews and therefore chose to interview the known expatriate family first. Interviewing people that are familiar first teaches how to stay neutral and objective (Rubin & Rubin 2012, 83). At the first interview the expatriate and the spouse were interviewed at the same time since they remember different parts and could add to each other's elaborations. Simultaneous interviewing also ensures the consistency and accuracy of responses (Rubin & Rubin 2012, 60).

4 Data analysis

The data analysis was a process of transcribing, translating, coding, categorizing, summarizing, combining and concluding the gathered data. The interviewer also took notes during the interview and came up with more follow-up questions: asked for details, explanations, tested few theories and asked for examples. After the transcriptions were made, the answers were coded according to their relevance and concepts and further combined according to their relevance.

4.1 Analysing methods, validity and reliability

The interviews were recorded and transcribed from word-to-word. They were also translated directly from Finnish to English from the voice recordings. Every sentence of the recording was listened at for two to three times in order to translate and transcribe it carefully and ensure originality and truthfulness of answers. A written transcript removes biases since it ensures that result analysis is based on actual data and not solely on the interviewer's memory (Rubin & Rubin 2012, 190). When the recorder data was transcribed each answer was checked and irrelevant material removed, such as off topic conversations. The data was coded by words relevant to each theme or concept.

When considering the validity of the interview answers it should be noted that the expatriate and his wife had left to China around three years ago thus the memories of the cultural training are not recent. However the answers gain from the trainer can be considered to be highly valid due to her experience of ten years. The answers were coded using the same themes as presented by the investigative questions and the interview questions. Answers that included information regarding for example repatriation or other off-topic matters were not included in the analysis. The coded data was then further summarized and compared according to its relevance and point of view.

4.2 Interview Responds

The research was conducted by interviewing an expatriate; he's spouse and a cross-cultural trainer from an outside company. It turned out at the first interview that all of the interviewees were linked together since the trainer had in fact conducted the cross-cultural training for the expatriate and his wife. This was an interesting notion and focused the research even more into finding different points of view on the same situation. The trainer could offer a more in depth answers on teaching methods and the expatriate and his wife on the training experience. The responses are divided into themes according to their relevance. The first chapter will present background information of the interviewees followed by describing the cross-cultural training methods and experiences and CCT's usefulness in adaptation, support and work performance. The interviewees are named as: expatriate, spouse and the trainer and are handled as anonymous. In each theme firstly the trainers responses are presented after which the expatriates and the spouses experiences.

The first interview included both an expatriate and the expatriate's spouse. They and their children had been on an expatriate assignment in China Peking for altogether three years. Anonymity of the sending company was requested and therefore only general facts of the company can be briefly presented. The company is large sized industrial company which operates internationally in over 100 countries. They have had operations in China for several years which have enabled them to develop their expatriate management process. There has been an ongoing Finnish R&D manager position held in Beijing for several years. The maximum time for an expatriate assignment period is five years.

When the opportunity to go to Beijing was presented, the expatriate and the spouse decided to go in order to pursuit change. Until that moment the expatriate had worked for the company about 18 years. The current position was a project manager which changed to R&D manager in China but both of the positions were in the field of product development. The expatriate had around 50 employees in Beijing who were all capable to communicate work issues with decent English language. Additionally there

were six other Finns working there simultaneously. The expatriate's wife didn't have a job while living in Beijing.

The second interview was with a trainer, who has a Finnish consulting company which main focus is to offer cultural training for business workers who are leaving to a foreign country. The company also offers repatriation training and other types of cultural trainings of for example multicultural teams. The trainer has lived and worked in Portugal, Spain, Japan and USA before establishing the company. The motivation to start the cultural training company came from own experiences and mistakes when living abroad in various locations. She wanted to help other abroad goers in a sense that they would not make the same mistakes and would get as much as possible out of the experience.

The trainer has gained work experience as a trainer and a consultant in another company as well. Nowadays her company does cooperation with the old employer and also with a language training company. She established the company about ten years ago. The trainer doesn't have actual employees yet the operation of the company is based on networks. Currently she has almost 40 experts in her network and it is constantly expanding when new connections are established. The main service is to offer training for abroad goers from any company level from CEO to operative level. According to the trainer most trainees have been middle or upper middle managers or experts. There are fewer trainees from the lowest operational and the highest management level of companies.

4.2.1 Applied Cross-cultural training: timing, methods and context

CCT Timing, Trainer

The trainer's opinion about the timing of the training is about two months before the departure. She said: "I always get to know too late. I understand that companies don't want any costs before the leaving is certain. But usually we are in a hurry. If there are some challenges in the family or in the leaving they don't cancel at that point. I have tried to remind companies that if e.g. the agreement negotiation is difficult that the actual negotiation is not the problem but that there is something else in the back-

ground. --- when I spend a day with a person I can notice if e.g. the decision is mutual, who really wants to go and why are they actually going. What is the real motivation? It is not always because of work but it can be anything.” She also said that the training should be before the pre-visit.

Expatriate and spouse

According to the expatriate and spouse it was known that there will be cultural training when the Beijing assignment was first offered in February 2009. The expatriate and the spouse could decide themselves when to participate the training. They explained that the training occurred in May 2009, before their pre-visit to the destination. The length of the training was two days and the pre-visit was a one week trip. The expatriate left to Peking in June, followed by the family in August. The expatriate’s spouse was fully participating in the pre-departure cross-cultural training.

CCT Methods and Context, Trainer

The cross-cultural trainer highlighted that each training case is its own and is about individual human beings’ feelings, expectations and experiences about the foreign assignment. She said that she as an expert creates the framework but the participants create the context according to their personality. The trainer emphasized that during the training sessions it is very important to get the expatriate and the spouse to engage in the conversation. According to her the main goal of the training is to wake them up to realizing and finding the truth and give tools for learning.

The trainer explained the context of their training and showed the framework from her computer. She explained that the training consists of two parts: The general culture section and the country specific section. According to the trainer in the first section it doesn’t matter where the expatriate and the spouse are going since it’s about general cultural issues. Examples from any country are used such as India or China thus the main point is what do cultural differences mean.

The trainer explained that the general section also includes the expatriate process, culture shock and adaptation, cultural interaction and family and spouse section and a

mover's memory list. She uses different theories such as Hofstede as a teaching tool. Furthermore she mentioned that there is a section of what does it mean to be Finnish. The trainer said: "I believe in what I think Adler said that the greatest challenge is not that we don't know the other culture but that we don't know our own culture. --- First it's good to look in the mirror and think what the others think about us or about me. Sometimes someone says that stereotypes should not be used but my personal opinion is that they are a good starting point but we shouldn't stay to them. After that there must be an opportunity to go and find your own truth." At the end of the first general section the trainer mentioned to have the trainees to complete a SWOT analysis about their selves. She also has a mover's memory list of all the practical things to arrange before departure.

The trainer told that the second training session is the country specific section which includes information on what the country is about, culture, background, history, religion, business culture, way of communicating, language and safety issues. She said to use actual cases of what does working in that country mean and what misunderstandings might occur.

The trainer said that she never sends a first timer to train alone but together with a more experienced trainer in order to ensure quality and follow the company's view point. She also talked about the spouse's significance: "The spouse's role is highlighted very strongly in the meetings since it is the biggest risk in that the assignment doesn't go like planned. Our role is to find out what are the spouse's pre-expectations. And how honest is she to herself and has she enough capabilities, knowledge and talent to be honest: has she for example differentiated a holiday trip from moving to somewhere. Unfortunately this is not very uncommon. There is just some need to go abroad which is so powerful."

Studying the local language is very important according to the trainer. She said that the expatriate doesn't have to be able to work in that language but at least to understand the basics in order to gain the locals respect. She prefers that the language studies would start as early as possible before departure and to continue at the location.

The trainer recommends the expatriates and spouses to read fictional and non-fictional books before the departure. She said that the fictional books open certain thinking models and philosophy of the culture.

Expatriate and spouse

According to the expatriate the training included listening and conversation with only them and the trainer present thus it was very interactive. He recalled that the context included general Chinese cultural knowledge as well as business culture features and differences. Also more specific examples were given such as how to hand a business card and what are the background meanings in gift giving. The expatriate explained: “For example when giving gifts everything is not appropriate, like knives cannot be given.” The expatriate remembered that Chinese *quanxi*, history, emperor families and superstition were discussed. The spouse remembered that in the training the communication style of Chinese was mentioned to differ. She said: “And I remember from the training that if a Chinese says yes it doesn’t mean yes but it means that they have heard it. So you have to check many times”

The expatriate remembered that the training also handled prejudices that Finns have about Chinese and that Chinese have about Finns. He agreed that the training also taught about own culture. The spouse added that the training also talked about the family adjustment and went through the steps of adjustment. The expatriate mentioned that in the training it was told that returning back home would be more difficult yet he didn’t feel this way. The expatriate and his spouse also told to have received written material during the training. The sending company’s HR department gave books and magazines for reading. The expatriate and the spouse recalled that at the pre-visit many practical things were arranged such as visiting the schools, choosing the apartments and visiting food stores. There would have also been an opportunity to visit hospitals.

According to the expatriate and the spouse language training was offered by the company at the location. The spouse’s opinion was that it was better to start the language training after arrival and not already before departure. She said that there was so many

other things to organize that there would not have been resources for learning a language before departure. Expatriate: “Chinese language is so difficult that I got the instructions not to even start because the language skill would not have been fluent enough to help in work tasks.”

4.2.2 Usefulness of CCT

Trainer

The trainer described that the training doesn't make anyone ready but wakes up and shakes. She mentioned that it's not possible to know exactly the outcomes of the training but that it helps the expatriate and spouse to understand by hearing from others' experiences and related studies. She also said that the training helps the trainees to start acknowledging and asking questions that they have not realized to ask before. She also mentioned that the trainees start to see things in different perspective and think what the real normal life abroad will be like. The trainer told to conduct a pre-questionnaire where almost all answer that they don't need cultural training. Yet she told that after the training it is said in the feedback that there was a high need for training. She said: “There are a lot of people who have been on assignment many times but nobody has ever stopped them to discuss. Very typical feedback in my feedback form is that I got answers to questions that I could never know to ask.” She told that no-one of the trainees has never said that the training wasn't useful. According to her also for the expatriates who are going again to an assignment cultural training is useful, since there might be a long time since the last departure and a different life situation. The trainer said that often the expatriates reflect too much on previous assignment experiences.

She encourages the companies to arrange a pre-visit since it is cheaper than sending the expatriate there who might return early. The trainer also hoped that companies would conduct more testing and personal evaluation of the expatriates and their spouses before choosing them for a foreign assignment. She mentioned that companies should get rid of the point of view that a good worker here will be good also abroad. Furthermore she said that companies should realize the needs for cultural training in all culturally different situations such as when a foreigner comes to work here or when

there is a multicultural team. The trainer also mentioned that starting companies might not have the experience to see the need for cultural training but then again old companies who have been operating internationally for a long time might think that this is how the things have always been done (yet they might still be doing something wrong). She hopes that the companies would not see the cultural training just as costs but to realize that they bring extra value.

Expatriate and spouse

When considering the usefulness of the cultural training both the expatriate and the spouse told that the fact that they were alone with the trainer enabled interactive conversation and opportunity to ask many questions. Especially the spouse found it important to be able to ask directly. She was positively surprised that she got to participate in the training and visit the location for a week to see the place and the schools. The expatriate said that the use of cases as examples was useful. He and his spouse also mentioned that the teaching about customs, local thinking and Asian culture were useful since they gave a good base. The expatriate said that some of the training topics were familiar but still helped to understand and know what is expected from him.

The spouse also mentioned that the knowing the culture shock steps that were gone through in the training were remembered later and she knew what was going on when adjusting in practice. She could also recognize the stage of culture shock in other families. The spouse told to have been very active herself in looking for information before departure and had found the Beijing's Finnish Society's web pages very useful. However the expatriate said that the information stays better in the mind when somebody tells it to you rather than just reading it from the internet. He said about the training: “--- it was well and professionally done. And also entertaining and interesting. Not only information, but the training was a nice experience. It created a positive spirit towards the country. That was important.”

The spouse said that a welcome package offered by the sending company after arrival contained useful matters such as taxi cards which helped moving around when local language was not yet learned. The spouse said: “The whole process was well thought

from the company. I was surprised by that. We were taken care of from beginning to the end. Healthcare was good, and insurance. Practical things were arranged. It is a demanding country and it would have been more difficult to be there. It was well organized, from moving and everything. And it was not only the cultural adjustment but also the practical things.” The spouse said that this type of training can be useful in some things even if going as close as Sweden. The expatriate added that it can also be useful when someone is coming to work here.

The expatriate and the spouse didn't recall much to be non-useful in the training. However they said that some of the books received from the company contained out-dated information. The expatriate said: “--- there were many books, some of which clearly already out-dated. Since China is developing very quickly. In the books was something like it is difficult to buy food. This was very different, since in ten years it has changed completely.” In addition they would have hoped for more information on children's adaptation and about the fact that the non-working spouse can get easily bored during the assignment.

4.2.3 CCT's affect on cultural adjustment

Trainer

The trainer's opinion on cross-cultural training's affect on cultural adjustment was that it can help in understanding, reading your own behavior and in being forgiving to yourself. She said that the expatriates should just keep trying, going forward and consciously not avoiding the locals in order to adjust more quickly. According to her the expatriates and their spouses should also realize if they don't want to adjust to the culture yet prefer living in a bubble. She said: “--- the more different the environment you are going into there can be this bubble life which isn't local life or Finnish life but it's something in between.” The trainer also said that many think that they have well adjusted yet they are actually living isolated from the environment and don't have any local friends since it is easier to interact with people of same nationality. She added that then again not very many are ready to live like for example the traditional Chinese families but certain level of respect is still required.

When considering the children the trainer said that the adjustment might be harder if the child is closer to teenage. She also said that children don't participate the training since they get easily tired of listening and that it is the parents' responsibility to explain the matters. The trainer also emphasized that it should be acknowledged that the longer the family is abroad the more it affects the children in a way that they might not adjust back or for example speak fluent Finnish anymore. She said that in order to help the children's adjustment learning the school's language and finding a way to continue their hobbies abroad can help. She also suggested that older children such as teenagers could benefit of participating the pre-visit and seeing the school.

The trainer explains that in the cultural training it is taught that in the long run the experience is a positive experience yet momentary downturns might occur thus mental preparedness is required and the realization that they can do something about it their self. The trainer mentioned that when an expatriate is going to assignment the second time they can use what they remember and realize how the adjustment process went before. She said that the expatriates can experience similar adjustment but this time influence it their self and make it easier to adjust rather than get stuck. She said: "Everyone is that they will respect and adjust. But at the end it is actually very difficult. There are situations, countries and areas and cultures where certain customs and behaviors are very much against you. You don't have to sell your soul and shouldn't be something else that you are. --- You don't have to agree but you don't have to try to change. Sometimes I wonder why companies send for example women to work in Arabic countries."

Expatriate and spouse

Both the expatriate and the spouse told that they didn't experience a strong culture shock but that it followed the adjustment steps. However they said the children had difficulties in the beginning. The spouse said: "I remember that they said that children adapt most easily. Yet our two youngest children had the most difficult because they had to learn a new language at the same time, I mean English. This came as a little surprise. It wasn't like was said in the training." Expatriate: "--- we were going to a culture

where people work much harder and school days are much longer. More demanding and at the same time the language changes.”

The expatriate and the spouse mentioned that the cultural training gave good background knowledge and knowing already something gave certainty. The expatriate said that the training provided information when not much was known at that stage. Studying the language was appreciated both by the expatriate and the spouse. The spouse mentioned that knowing the language helped to understand the culture and how people think. She said that language skill also made it easier to arrange things.

According to the expatriate and his spouse it was considered supportive to have a strong Finnish community at the location. The spouse gained social contacts to other foreigners at the language training on location. However at the same time the expatriate and his spouse said that they didn't get to know regular Chinese people yet they knew more the other expatriate families and parents through schools. They didn't visit normal traditional Chinese families. The expatriate told that the spouse had some signs of boredom which was one of the reasons for returning yet the spouse told that she just didn't want to completely lose her work in Finland.

4.2.4 CCT's affect on work performance

Trainer

When the trainer considered the effect of cultural training to work performance she mentioned that in order to gain an answer a trained and not trained person's work performance should be compared. Yet she said that the training doesn't remove frustration but believes and hopes that the trainees will remember the discussed things at the workplace. The trainer said that important is the pre-attitude, attitude during the assignment and how the expatriate is understood. She added that it is not required to agree with everything but that there is respect and for example China is not tried to be changed to Finland.

She agreed that the adjustment of both the expatriate's and the spouse's affects the work performance and even if the expatriate is well adjusted to work he might not be

adjusted to the normal life. She mentioned that expatriates that go alone might not have the energy to build a social network outside the workplace. The trainer explained that the spouse is the biggest risk that the assignment doesn't go like planned and the more career oriented the spouse is the more difficult situation it might be to accompany the expatriate.

Expatriate and spouse

The expatriate told that it is difficult to say how much the cultural training before arrival helped in job performance but he said that probably it did help in some way on adjusting to the Chinese working style.

The expatriate also said: "The working life teaches quite quickly, but in the beginning you feel more certain that you are trained, even though the training might be short. It helps to act in a way which doesn't create large conflicts."

It was also mentioned by the expatriate that the support from the superior who had been there for 14 years was considered useful by the expatriate since he could tell how things should be done. The expatriate explained: "--- he gave examples on how to do things. For example if you want something to be done, a clear format has to be created. It has to be defined clearly enough. If you just explain it, the result might be something else."

The responses of the cross-cultural trainer and the experiences of the expatriate and his spouse from China are summarized and compared in table 3.

Table 3. Research results of interviews concerning cross-cultural training (Pessala 2012)

Theme	Trainer's expertise	Expatriate's & spouse's experience from Beijing, China
CCT Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 months before departure - before pre-visit - Local language learning as early as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 month before (expatriate's departure) and before pre-visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ could decide themselves - Local language after arrival
CCT Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 days of interactive sessions for the expatriate and the spouse - Culture general section - Country specific section - Pre-visit offered by the company - Local language studies - Practical matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interactive learning and discussion - Basic knowledge of China - Specific cases - Cultural adjustment - Language studies offered by company - Pre-visit and arrangement of practical matters by company
Usefulness of CCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals have high level of need for cultural training - Brings extra value for companies <p>Get expatriate and the spouse to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask questions - Acknowledge cultural issues - Gain different perspectives - Build realistic pre-expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal level thus able to ask directly - Concrete examples - Spouse's presence in training and pre-visit - Increased understanding - Pre-visit & practical matters - Handling of the whole process by the company
CCT's affect on adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand & read own behavior - Realize the level of adjustment and the ways to improve it - Mental preparedness - Acknowledging the children's adjustment factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recalled the culture shock symptoms - Knowledge gave certainty - Surprising that young children had difficulties in the beginning - Language skill increased understanding of locals
CCT's affect on work performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remember the discussed matters at work place - Right attitude and respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adjustment to Chinese working life - Give certainty - Teach to act in a way which doesn't create large conflicts

5 Discussion

The data collected from the interviews demonstrates the expert trainer's opinions and suggestions and the expatriate's and spouse's personal training experiences. Followed by the general presenting of the responses, the findings are further analyzed in the following chapter. At the end potential suggestions for companies answering the main research problem of how to make the cross-cultural training effective are presented.

5.1 Findings

The responses concerning the pre-departure cross-cultural training gave different perspectives of the trainer who has been a cultural trainer for about ten years and the trainees that attended the 2-day program about three years ago before the assignment in Peking.

5.1.1 Timing and length of CCT

When considering the timing of the cross-cultural training it became evident that the timing would be best before the pre-visit. The trainer's recommendation was two months before the actual departure which seems appropriate in order for the expatriate and the spouse to be able to remember and reflect their learning at location. However the cross-cultural training length of two days can be considered short when compared to the earlier presented theory. According to Ferraro (2010, 184) a long and deep CCT is considered to be more skill improving.

5.1.2 Content and methods of CCT

The content of the training was divided into culture general and country specific sections. The training is personalized to each case and the method is to engage the expatriate and the spouse into having conversation, realizing and asking questions. The general culture section's purpose is to increase the general understanding of cultural differences and adjustment. The country specific section presents the destination country's culture and work culture. The spouse was included in the training since the spouse's adjustment is one of the risk factors of expatriate failure. The spouse experienced it

very positively to be taken into the cultural training and the pre-visit. The expatriate and spouse remembered many subjects from the training and even concrete examples that were discussed. It was considered valuable to have an intimate session with just them and the trainer thus asking directly was possible.

When considering related theory the cross-cultural training consists mostly of didactic training methods and culture awareness training. Cultural assimilators were not used which could be considered. The pre-visit was experimental training which also included arranging practical matters and visiting a Finnish family living in Peking. The expatriate was taught in the workplace by Finn who had been there long thus previous experiences were used. The quality of the cultural training is ensured by using experts and conducting a pre- and a feedback questionnaire. The pre-questionnaire determines the training needs of the trainees yet according to Lee and Crocker (2006, 1188, 1202) discovering the learning styles might also be beneficial in order to customize the teaching techniques.

Studying the local language was considered important both from the trainer's and the trainees' opinion. Since it improves the interaction adjustment and even basic language skills help to gain the locals respect. However there was difference in the preferred timing. The trainer recommended starting the language studies as early as possible yet the spouse felt that it was more convenient to start the studies at location. On the other hand for the expatriate it might be too demanding to learn a new language and at the same time trying to adjust to the working and general life thus earlier start in language studies should be considered. Both the trainer and the spouse agreed that language training at location helps to create social contacts. The language training can increase all of the adjustment levels of interaction, general adjustment and work adjustment.

5.1.3 Value and purpose of CCT

The trainer and the expatriate and his spouse all agreed that cross-cultural training is useful. Furthermore the trainer mentioned that according to her feedback the training needs turn out to be high yet they are not acknowledged before the training. Thus the main purpose is to get the trainees to have realistic expectations, be prepared and to

understand cultural differences. According to the expatriate and the spouse's responds these goals can be said to have been reached and they gave positive feedback on the method and content. However they would have appreciated more instructions on children's adaptation and for the books to be up-to date. The training's purpose and outcome is partly consistent with theoretical findings in a sense that the training did increase knowledge of own culture, teach how to act appropriately and help in adjustment and confidence. However given the fact that language training was started at location the pre-departure training didn't fully develop the trainees' interaction skills. On the other hand the cultural intelligence as described by Ang and Dyne (2008, 5–7) was increased especially on the trainees' cognitive side.

The expatriate and the spouse felt not to have a strong culture shock and the spouse told to have been able to recall the theory presented at training. Thus the cultural training gave confidence and knowledge. In addition the trainees appreciated the pre-visit and the support in arranging practical matters. The responds of the expatriate and the spouse as compared to trainer's experience suggest that they were not fully adjusted to Beijing, especially on the interaction part since they didn't have local friends yet were sort of isolated from the environment and interacting only with other expatriate families. However given the demanding culturally different location and strong Finnish community present this was not surprising. Ang and Dyne (2008, 78) argued that the higher the cultural distance between the expatriates home and host countries the more significant is the influence of cultural intelligence to adjustment. Thus as Finland and China have high cultural distance, high level of cultural intelligence is required which can be partly obtained with cross-cultural training.

The interviewees' elaboration on CCT's affect on work performance was clearly more limited compared to the other themes. Yet it became evident that CCT can have an effect on understanding and behaving accordingly at work place. The trainer supported the claim that the general, interaction and work adjustment all affect the work performance. The research also revealed that several companies have not yet realized the role of cross-cultural training in all culturally different situations in business.

5.1.4 Suggestions for effective expatriate pre-departure CCT

When comparing the research results and presented theories overall they seem to support each other. Based on the findings the importance of cross-cultural training of expatriate and spouse is profound. Supporting the spouse and family of an expatriate is essential in order to prevent expatriate failure. The research indicated that there are various aspects to consider when planning and conducting an effective expatriate pre-departure CCT (table 4). The companies should also realize the value of implementing CCT in all culturally different interactions in international business.

Table 4. Suggestions to ensure the effectiveness of expatriate pre-departure CCT (Pessala 2012)

Ensuring the effectiveness of expatriate pre-departure CCT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start cultural and local language training at an early stage• Continue the trainings at location• Don't undermine the importance of even basic local language skills• Arrange a pre-visit to the destination• Support the expatriate family in arranging practical matters• Let the expatriate's spouse to take part in CCT and pre-visit• Plan the CCT carefully and customize individually according to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- training needs and individual learning styles- cultural distance and complexity of assignment• Ensure the quality of CCT by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- having professional trainers who are experts in their field- using accurate and up-to-date information- collecting feedback and measuring performance• Consider the potential of CCT in preventing expatriate failure• Implement pre-departure CCT even if:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the company has long operated at the location- the expatriate has prior experience and/or doesn't recognize the need

5.2 Further research

During this research it became obvious that more research and attention towards the subject of cross-cultural training is required. The lack of empirical research and comprehensive theories doesn't implicate enough proof for companies to invest in CCT. However considering the amount of challenges created by cultural differences in international business, the investment is justified. In order to research the effect of CCT on work performance it would be beneficial to conduct an empirical research of expatriates who have recently been culturally trained and comparing them to those who have not trained before the assignment. Both of the expatriates' performances should be then monitored and assessed during the time period abroad. In addition the role of CCT in other parts of the expatriate assignment requires more studies. The cultural training is needed also after arrival and when returning from the expatriate assignment thus it is to do with handling of the whole expatriate process by companies. Expatriates should be supported during the assignment and helped to adjust back to the home country.

Even if a company is not sending employees abroad they might have multicultural teams with various cultural backgrounds. The impact of cross-cultural training in reaching good team cooperation and performance should be further studied. One very interesting and challenging topic that the researcher came across with was an article by Wah (1998, 25) handling sending women expatriates to unequal job cultures such as to some Arabic cultures. There are some work cultures that exclude women from working life and this can be a huge obstacle to overcome for a women sent to work there thus the importance of support by the sending and receiving companies is highly important.

5.3 Thesis process

The topic was motivating since the researcher had a high interest towards cultural differences and their affect on everyday interactions. The research process was challenging yet very motivating experience when the challenges were overcome. The biggest challenge was to conduct the whole research from start to finish in ten weeks. Another

challenge turned out to be finding appropriate candidates in such limited time frame. The researcher learned about time management, planning, interviewing and analyzing. The research increased confidence and encouraged to plan further master studies abroad on the field of international human resource management. The researcher gained a lot of knowledge on the topic and hopes to recall the thesis later when on a path to international career.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. The cover letter

Hei!

Nimeni on Heli Pessala ja opiskelen viimeistä vuotta Haaga-Heliassa International Business linjalla suuntautuen henkilöstöhallintoon. Teen parhaillani lopputyötä joka käsittelee expatriaattien lähtövalmennusta. Expatriaattien lähtövalmennus on tärkeä askel, jotta työkomennukselle lähtevä henkilö sopeutuisi vieraaseen kulttuuriin ja suoriutuisi hyvin. Myös komennukselle mukaan lähtevä puoliso tai perhe kaipaa tukea, varsinkin jos kohteen kulttuuri on hyvin erilainen.

Tutkimusta varten haastattelen expatriaatteja ja heidän puolisojaan, jotka ovat olleet pitkällä työkomennuksella ulkomailla ja saaneet siihen lähtövalmennusta lähettävältä yritykseltä. Haastattelisin mielelläni myös lähtövalmennuksesta vastaavia kouluttajia. Haastattelu kysymykset lähetän etukäteen, jotta niitä voidaan rauhassa pohtia. Haastattelun teen mieluiten kasvotusten, tarvittaessa kysymyksiin voi myös vastata sähköpostilla. Lopputyön aikataulu on melko tiukka, joten haastattelut täytyy suorittaa lokakuun aikana.

Olen todella kiitollinen jos teiltä liikenee aikaa tutkimukseen osallistumiseen. Yritys ja henkilöt voivat halutessaan vastata anonyymisti ja tutkimusraportti kokonaisuudessaan lähetetään siihen osallistuneille. Otathan yhteyttä mahdollisimman pian jos haluat osallistua tutkimukseen.

Kiitos.

Ystävällisin terveisin

Heli Pessala

Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulu

International Business -linja

Attachment 2. The cover letter, English translation

Hey!

My name is Heli Pessala and I'm studying my last year in Haaga-Helia in the field of international business and specializing in human resource management. At the moment I'm doing my thesis about expatriates' pre-departure training. The pre-departure training is an important factor to help the person going an assignment to adjust to the different culture and perform well. Also the expatriate's spouse and family need support especially if the new culture is significantly different.

For the thesis research I'm interviewing expatriates and their spouses who have been on a long foreign assignment and received pre-departure training from the sending companies. I would also like to interview the trainers responsible for the cultural training. The interview questions will be sent before hand in order to get to know and think about them. I prefer doing the interview face-to-face, but if necessary the questions can also be answered by email. The thesis schedule is quite tight so the interviews have to be done by the end of October.

I'm very thankful if you have the time to take part in the research. Companies and persons can respond as anonymous and the ready thesis will be sent to those who took part in it. Please contact me as soon as possible if you like to take part of the research.

Thank You,

Best regards

Heli Pessala

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

International Business

Attachment 3. First Interview's Questions

1. Mikä on asemasi yrityksessä?
2. Kerro ulkomaankomennuksesi pääpiirteet: Kohdemaan, komennuksen kesto, tehtävän tarkoitus ulkomailla?
3. Kuvaa saamaasi kulttuurivalmennusta ennen ulkomaankomennukselle lähtöä
 - a. Valmennuksen sisältö?
 - b. Valmennustavat?
 - c. Valmennuksen kesto?
 - d. Perheen osallistuminen?
4. Koitko saamasi valmennuksen hyödylliseksi?
 - a. Mikä oli erityisen hyödyllistä?
 - b. Oliko jokin asia hyödyttömpi?
5. Karttuivatko tietosi ja taitosi valmennuksen myötä? (esim. kielitaito, kulttuuri tietämys, käytöstavat)
6. Auttoiko valmennus sopeutumaan uuteen kulttuuriin?
 - a. Mikä uudessa kulttuurissa oli erityisen yllättävää?
 - b. Antoiko valmennus valmiuksia toimia uusissa tilanteissa?
7. Oliko valmennuksesta hyötyä työtehtävien suorittamisessa?
 - a. Paransiko valmennus työtehtävien onnistumista?
8. Ekspatriaatti kokemuksesi jälkeen lähtisitkö uudestaan ulkomaankomennukselle?
 - a. Minkälaisista lähtövalmennuksista toivoisit jatkossa?

Attachment 4. First interview's questions, English translation

1. What is your position in the company?

2. What is your expatriate experience in terms of location, length and purpose of the job assignment?

3. What type of cultural training have you received before departure?
 - a. Content of the training?
 - b. Methods used?
 - c. Length?
 - d. Family involvement?

4. What the training useful?
 - a. What was particular useful?
 - b. What was not very useful?

5. Did the training improve your skills and knowledge? (e.g. language skills, cultural knowledge, behavior)

6. Did the training help in adjusting to the new culture?
 - a. What was most surprising in the new culture?
 - b. Did the training improve preparedness to act in new situations?

7. Did the training help in conducting the work assignment?
 - a. Did the training improve the success of job assignment?

8. After the expatriate experiment, would you be willing to go to another assignment?
 - a. What hopes do you have concerning the future training?

Attachment 5. Second interview's questions

1. Kerro työkokemuksestasi ja yrityksestäsi
2. Kerro ulkomaankokemuksesi pääpiirteet
 - a. Missä olet työskennellyt ja kuinka kauan?
 - b. Oletko itse saanut kulttuurivalmennusta?
3. Tarjoavatko yritykset mielestäsi riittävästi kulttuurivalmennusta ekspatriaateille ja heidän perheilleen ennen ulkomaille lähtöä?
4. Minkälaista kulttuurivalmennusta ekspatriaatille tulisi tarjota ennen ulkomaankomennukselle lähtöä?
 - a. Opetustavat?
 - b. Valmennuksen sisältö?
 - c. Valmennuksen ajankohta ja kesto?
 - d. Perheen osallistuminen?
 - e. Ovatko jotkin valmennusmallit osoittautuneet erityisen tehokkaiksi?
5. Mitä hyötyä ennen lähtöä tapahtuvasta kulttuurivalmennuksesta on ekspatriaatille ja perheelle?
 - a. Karttuvatko jotkin tietyt tiedot ja taidot? (esim. kulttuuri tietämys, käytöstavat, kielitaito..)
 - b. Auttaako valmennus sopeutumaan uuteen kulttuuriin?
6. Onko kulttuurivalmennuksesta mielestäsi hyötyä ekspatriaatin työtehtävien suorittamisessa?
7. Mihin suuntaan kulttuurivalmennus on tulevaisuudessa kehittymässä?

Attachment 6. Second interview's questions, English translation

1. Tell about your work experience and your company?
2. What is your experience of working abroad?
 - a. Where have you worked and for how long?
 - b. Have you received cultural training yourself?
3. Do companies offer enough pre-departure cultural training to the expatriates and their spouses?
4. What type of cultural training is offered to the expatriate before departure?
 - a. Teaching methods?
 - b. The context?
 - c. The timing and length?
 - d. The family/spouse involvement?
 - e. Have some teaching methods proved to be very effective?
5. How is the expatriate and spouse training useful?
 - a. Does it increase certain skills and capabilities?
 - b. Does the training help in adjusting to a new culture?
6. Is the training beneficial for the expatriate in his work tasks?
7. What is the future of cultural training?