

Importance Of Pre-Departure Training For Expatriate's Career Advancement

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Abstract

Purpose – Researchers have been focussing on different types of training, career development of repatriates but it was unclear on how the pre-departure training has its impact on career advancement. The purpose of this paper is to develop a comprehensive framework in building a relationship between pre-departure training and career advancement.

Design/Methodology/Approach – The review of past research is used to develop Conceptual framework.

Findings – This conceptual paper provides insight on relationship between pre-departure training and career advancement. It is found that the skills acquired during the pre-departure training can help an expatriate in his career progress.

Originality/Value – The proposed framework is developed based on the past research in order to cover the gap between pre-departure training and career advancement. Based on the proposed framework this paper invites researchers to further research on relationship between pre-departure training and career advancement with employee competencies as mediating variable.

Keywords - Expatriate, Skills, Pre-departure training, Career advancement, Cross cultural.

INTRODUCTION:

As global markets continue to open and merge, there has been a constant growth in organizations assigning employees to foreign assignments (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2012). With increase in globalization, expatriate adjustment, development, and retention are now more important determinants of international business success (Dowling et al., 1994; Tung, 1998). Managing international assignments is a challenging and complex task for the organizations, than domestic selection or relocation (Shaffer et al., 2001). The growth of long-term international experiences has been demanding companies to develop training programs in order to prepare their international assignees, namely related to language awareness and cultural knowledge (Lee and Croker, 2006; Suutari and Burch, 2001; Wurtz, 2014; Morris and Robie, 2001; Scullion and Brewster, 2001; Selmer, 2006; Suutari and Brewster, 1998). Expatriates' training is

essential for the success of business globalization (Lee and Croker, 2006; Suutari and Burch, 2001; Wurtz, 2014).

This paper specifically helps in understanding the impact of pre-departure training in improving the skills of an expatriate which in turn helps in career advancement. The previous research, concentrated more on the types of the pre-departure training given and how the expatriates can improve their knowledge (Avril and Magnini, 2007). Whereas, in the context of the career advancement, the previous research concentrated on how the expatriate can grow the career ladder once he returns from host country (Adler, 1981).

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Pre-Departure Training

According to Levy (1995) pre-departure training can be defined as “a cohesive series of events or activities designed to develop cultural

self-awareness, culturally appropriate behavioural responses or skills, and a positive orientation toward other cultures". The pre-departure training is given in order to prepare the expatriates on the host country's norms and behaviour. For more than twenty years, pre-departure training has been promoted as means of facilitating effective cross cultural interactions and cross cultural adjustments (Ashamalla and Crocitto, 1997; Brewster, 1995; Katz and Seifer, 1996; Kealey and Protheroe, 1996). It helps the expatriate in understanding the host country culture and also helps in developing his/her learning orientation (Porter and Tansky, 1999). Various skills necessary for cross cultural learning are interpersonal skills, informational skills, analytical skills, action skills and developmental learning which have been further classified. Apart from learning about the culture it is essential that the expatriate is able to apply the pre-departure training knowledge when they face new cultures (Yoshitaka and Christopher, 2004). Effective expatriate training should focus on improving the self-efficacy of an individual (AAhad and Thomas, 2009). Cross culture training is more effective for those who have no or less prior experience, whose cultural difference is more than the host country and the employees who receive the cross cultural training are more adaptable to adjust any type of work environment (Marie and Alexandra, 2005). Short training sessions may not make much impact on the participants basic values (Jan, 2005). Many studies have found that expatriates with cross-cultural training adapt better in the host country (Earley, 1987; Eschbachet al., 2001; Landis and Brislin, 1983; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1981).

Career Advancement

Hall (2002) defined career advancement as, "promotions to jobs at a higher levels in the management hierarchy or to jobs that have a larger scope of responsibilities". Similarly, Wang and Barney (2006) defined career advancement as, "promotions, and human-capital development during employment, which is essential for both individuals and organisations". Managerial career advancement is usually perceived as promotions in managerial ranks and attainment of high managerial levels and pay (Tharenou,

1997). Maria, Shaffer and Mark (2009) proposed that there are three levels in career advancement i.e. hierarchy-demotion, lateral move and promotion- as perceived by repatriated employee. Schein (1978), has classified the career movement within an organization into three dimensions those are:

- Vertical movement: movement "up" or "down" in the organization; classically, a promotion or a demotion;
- Radial movement: the degree of centrality to the organization, which mediates the organizational power of the employee; and
- Circumferential movement: the horizontal move across functional areas (e.g., transfer from sales to product development).

For an expatriate to advance in career, it is essential for him to undergo a training process which leads in enhancing the skills. Career advancement is a motivation factor for an employee and hence it is essential that the organisation takes necessary steps for the career progress of an employee.

Relationship between Training and Career Advancement

Apart from interpersonal skills, informational skills, analytical skills, action skills and developmental learning, it is crucial for an expatriate to be trained before going for an international assignment in order to get familiarized to the new culture, new language and new norms. If an expatriate is unfamiliar with the customs, cultures and work habits of the local people then he may find it difficult in adjusting in the host country, and hence pre-departure training is essential for the effectiveness and success of their overseas assignment (Mendenhall et al., 1987; Black, 1992; Weech, 2001). Pre-departure training is a training given to the expatriates which consists of host country culture, language and living conditions. The skills necessary for an expatriate for cross cultural learning are interpersonal skills, informational skills, analytical skills, action skills and developmental learning (Yamazaki and Christopher, 2004). Cross cultural training helps in developing cross cultural skills which eventually helps in cross cultural adjustments through which job performance can be

enhanced (Stewart and Mark, 1990). Cross cultural adjustment plays a vital role in accomplishing the targets. The general dimension of cross cultural adjustment is the individual's psychological comfort, familiarity, and ease of adjustment regarding features of general environment (like weather, food and living condition). The work dimension of cross cultural adjustment refers to the degree of psychological comfort an expatriate feel with respect to various job tasks (Takeuchi and Tesluk, 2002). A pre-departure training is said to be effective if it improves the self-efficacy of an individual which assists him in building the relationship between cross-cultural adjustments and their performance (Gani and Rockstuhl, 2009). Self-efficacy plays a pivot role in cross-cultural adjustment in terms of their ability to perform successfully in the new culture (Gist et al., 1991). Cross cultural training can be associated with the feelings of well-being and self-confidence; development of appropriate behaviours in the context of the foreign culture; and improvement of the relationships with host country's inhabitants (Marie and Alexandra, 2005). The Organisations can help the employee in career development by assigning the apt number of projects to each expatriate based on their skills and capabilities.

According to Yoshitaka and Christopher (2004), "The other skills necessary for an expatriate for cross cultural learning include language skills (Hautaloma and Kaman, 1975), communication (Steningand Hammer, 1992), willingness to communicate (Black, 1990), communication competence (Cui and Van, 1991), communication behaviour (Cui and Van, 1991), understanding of hostcountry language (Dunbar, 1992), English-language skills (Ishida, 1992), and language fluency (Shafferet al., 1999)". Though communication is vital, Ishida (1992) discovered that analytical skills are important for the effective performance of expatriates in foreign assignments. Yoshitaka and Christopher (2015) pointed out that, "Apart from this ,action skills are also necessary , the action and initiative skill set includes not being passive (Thomson and English, 1964),

changing bad situations (Hautaloma and Kaman, 1975), taking risks (Ratiu, 1983), being action-orientated (Kealey, 1989), taking initiations, and exhibiting an extraversion orientation (Parker and McEvoy, 1993)". Ishida (1992) also reported that decision skills are also essential for effective performance. Unlike the previous seven skill clusters, developmental competencies bring out the integration of multiple learning skills. Developmental learning constitute higher-order adaptive competencies because they demonstrate an ability to respond to multiple situations, to exert flexibility in learning style, and to move out of one's preferred mode of learning (Yamazaki and Christopher, 2004). Furuya et al. (2009) examined that the repatriates, found a positive relationship between expatriate self-adjustment and their global management competency learning. By acquiring cultural skills, employees will be more sensitive to cultural differences, will be able to work across international boundaries, and have a broader worldview for making business decisions (Stahlet al., 2002). The skills henceforth depends on the pre-departure training given, the work culture and the host country's culture. Workplace learning is one of the training given to the expatriates to get accustomed about the workplace cultures of the host country.

The pre-departure training practices are one way to improve the organization's chances of having well-adjusted expatriates on global assignments. In turn, the improved cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates will lead to a better performance in the global arena - for both individuals and the organizations (Caligiuriet al., 2001). When the expatriation process becomes successful the expatriate gains the confidence in handling any sort of international projects. One of the reason, is that the expatriate is ready with the required skill set which he has acquired during training. From the above discussion, we interpret that there is a relationship between pre-departure training and career advancement. The diagrammatic representation of relationship between the same is shown in the below figure 1:

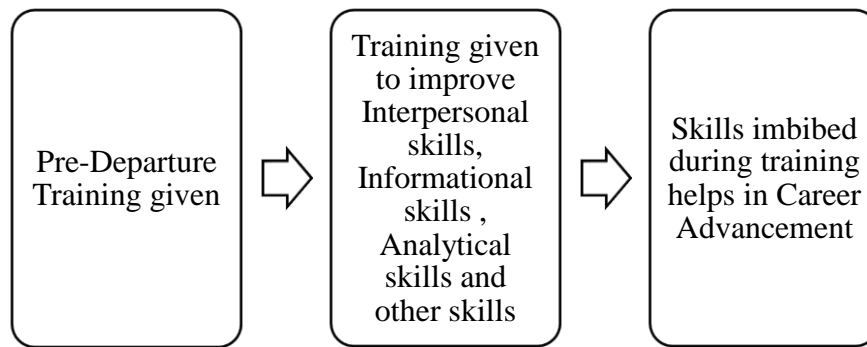


Fig 1

CONCLUSION:

This paper discusses about the relationship between the pre-departure training and career advancement of the expatriate. Firstly, the variables: pre-departure training and career advancement have been defined and also its importance has been discussed. Secondly, various skills which an expatriate acquire during the pre-departure training has been explained and finally the relationship between pre-departure training and career advancement has been illustrated. To conclude, further research can be taken on barriers of training and its consequences on expatriate and also there is scope for further research on taking competencies as mediating variable for pre-departure training and career advancement.

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