Role of training transference and personality characteristics on intercultural training success outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is to investigate the role of training transference on intercultural training success outcomes in the context of Indian Companies and Influence of personality characteristics such as willingness to experience, individual tolerance, emotional intelligence, cross cultural flexibility, which have been examined on the extent to which training transference takes place and subsequently relates to cross cultural success which is signified as work satisfaction, work performance and as cross cultural adaptability. In addition to these, factors such as previous international experience, climate for training support and biographical characteristics were also examined.

Data has been collected from responses given by Indian expatriates who are working for multinationals in countries such as Japan, China and Korea, America, Europe, and Germany.

Statistical tests such as Correlation and Regression, Chi square test of contingency and Cross tabulation and Mediation Analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

Findings indicate that except for previous experience, the remaining characteristics are positively correlated to training transference. Gender has no significant relation as opposed to Age on Training Transference. Training transference partially mediates the relationship between cross culture learning and work satisfaction, also, work performance, and cross cultural adaptability. Interesting Implications of findings and suggestions for future research are outlined.

Key words: intercultural training, training transference, personality characteristics, climate for training
Multinational Organizations worldwide are investing a lot in facilitating intercultural communication training to build up skills of their employees interacting with their overseas counterparts. From an organizational perspective, the transfer of skills and knowledge acquired during training, back to the job context represents perhaps the most central aspect of training effectiveness, as it indicates the overall utility of training. However, the impact of training is only 10% effective thus creating huge financial losses. (Feinberg, 2013)

The beginning of Intercultural Communication was for applied purposes rather than for theoretical considerations: Training was the main issue. Intercultural Communication has in the recent decades developed and matured also as an academic field with its own theory building. According to (Gudykunst and Kim, 1995), the key concept in understanding intercultural communication is the concept of stranger. Russell Arent (2009), in his “Bridging the Cross-cultural Gap”, explains the following, even if they were born and raised in the same neighborhood (in the city or in a rural area), their conversation could be just as “intercultural” as two people who came from opposite corners of the globe because they are from two subcultures,” (Arent, R. 2009). Other authorities, such as Judith and Nakayama, in contrast, expand the notion of intercultural communication to encompass inter-ethnic, inter-religious and even inter-regional communication, as well as communication among individuals of different sexual orientations.

Caligiuri and Tarique (2012) examined the dynamic cross-cultural competencies and global leadership effectiveness in US. The study findings highlighted that the combined effect of the personal characters such as extraversion, openness to experience, and lower neuroticism, and cross cultural experience such as organization-initiated, cross-cultural work experiences and non-work cross-cultural experiences, as a predictors of dynamic cross-cultural competencies which includes tolerance of ambiguity, cultural flexibility, and reduced ethnocentrism.

Personality traits play a significant role in expatriate adaptation based on the evolutionary theory of personality, an adaptive mechanism of sensing a negative outcome and withdrawing from a situation (MacDonald, 1998, in Caliguiri, 2000). According to Caliguiri et al. (2000), in a validity study of the influence of personality traits and the expatriate’s decision to persist to the completion of their international assignment with positive, supervisor rated performance, agreeableness and extroversion had predictive effects of the desired outcomes. The findings of
this study indicated neither a relationship between emotional stability nor openness/intelligence to staying on assignment.

Another study was conducted in Nigeria titled “Relationship between Organizational Climate and Training Transfer in Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria” by Mohammed Abdullahi, Ismi Arif Ismail, Oladipo Kolapo Sakiru, Shehu Adamu Abdullahi (2013) and has found to have an impact.

In her Dissertation titled “Cross-cultural competence training effectiveness: the Impact of Training transfer and Predictors of transfer” by Dr Emily Feinberg (2013) predictors of training transfer including organizational climate have been examined and individual characteristics have also been discussed to examine the extent to which they are likely to impact the extent to which training transfer occurs.

MEDIATING VARIABLES: TRAINING TRANSFERENCE AND CROSS CULTURAL LEARNING

“The concept of training transference refers to the issue of carryover from training to the work situation or context. (Tesluk P. et al, 1995)”

“In informal or social environment with the host nationals, the individual is aware of personal values, able to use proper body language in consideration of physical proximity and touch. When interaction is required, able to modify tone and volume of voice, verbal modification, is comfortable being friendly with peers, the group and members in the community, able to use appropriate culture specific behavior when interacting with members of opposite sex, able to informally absorb new knowledge from surroundings, sensitive to different values, sensitive to concerns unique to a host country, can engage in hobbies alone, can identify common health concerns and promote physical health through proper behaviors. (Black J. S. and Mendenhall M, 1990)” The above accomplishment is reflected in the cross cultural learning.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES: INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. INDIVIDUAL TOLERANCE

This dimension refers to the individual’s comfort level of being with people whose values are different from their own. Tolerant Individuals are comfortable with people with different characteristics their disposition is characterized by a tendency to perceive strange situations positively. Herman et al, 2010
2. CROSS CULTURAL MOTIVATION

‘This dimension reflects the individual’s desire to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations which are culturally different.” Ang et al, 2007

3. CROSS CULTURAL FLEXIBILITY

The participant finds it is easy to learn and enjoy new activities from the other culture. “It is easy for the participant to find new things they like in the other country. The confidence that being away from current environment will not make him or her homesick because there will be new activities to enjoy.” Shaffer M.A. et al, 2006

4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The participant can empathize and understand others emotions in intercultural setting understand the needs of others in intercultural settings; “Reassure others in intercultural settings, concerned about others in intercultural settings; Is eager to make people feel comfortable in intercultural settings and give time to others to adjust.” Cloninger et al, 1994

5. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE ABROAD

“This dimension addresses the exposure that the individual would have gathered through overseas travel, experienced the stress and strain of unfamiliar situations and therefore appreciate the objective of training prior to overseas assignments.” Feinberg, 2013

6. WILLINGNESS TO EXPERIENCE

“This dimension refers to the individual’s range of interests, inclination to be imaginative, and fascination with new ideas. Extremely open individuals are creative, curious and artistically sensitive and broadminded unlike people or individuals who find comfort in the familiar and are more inclined to be conventional. They are less dogmatic, more open to all kinds of situations.” Goldberg L.R. 1992

7. WORK ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE FOR TRAINING SUPPORT

“This dimension is an environmental factor in which the training is taking place and refers to the ethos in the organization. It addresses aspects like whether there is encouragement by the seniors to use the skills learnt during training, whether the trainer has encouraged the trainee to use what is learned in training, at work, whether seniors have worked with the participant on problems he or she may be may be having in trying to use learning from training, consults with participants regarding ways to apply training on the job, colleagues show interest in the skills, give feedback to improve job performance. There is a culture to encourage usage of new techniques, open to change.” Holton III E.F. et al, 2000
DEPENDENT VARIABLES: CROSS CULTURAL SUCCESS

1. WORK SATISFACTION

“Participant likes new assignment, is satisfied with his or her own organization when he or she compares it to other organizations he or she has worked with.” Caligiuri P.M. et al, 2001

2. WORK PERFORMANCE

“Able to perform technically on this assignment. Able to represent effectively to the host national community. able to effectively maintain good working relationships with host nationals.”

Caligiuri P.M. et al, 2001

3. CROSS CULTURAL ADAPTABILITY

“Able to adjust to the living conditions, to the housing conditions. adapt and adjust to the shopping conditions, to the local food, able to cope with cost of living ,to adapt to the available recreation facilities to adjust to the health care facilities available. adapt to the safety and security.”

Black J. S. and Mendenhall M, 1990

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases if there is a positive relation between willingness to experience and training transference.
2. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases if there is a positive relation between Individual tolerance and Training transference.
3. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases if there is a positive relation between Cross cultural motivation and training transference.
4. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases if there is a positive relation between previous experience abroad and training transference.
5. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases if there is a positive relation between climate for training support and training transference.
6. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases if there is a positive relation between cross cultural flexibility and training transference.
7. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases if there is a positive relation between emotional intelligence and training transference.

METHOD – N==312

Top ranking MNCS were identified from ranking survey done jointly by ISB and FDC. In order to identify the lists of multinational companies headquartered in India, or internationalized
Indian companies, the study used trans nationality index (TNI), in addition, the list of companies that have been listed in Boston Consulting group (2012) was also checked. Top 100 MNCs were identified with the help of both lists. Out of around 100 companies contacted, only around 60 firms responded for the study from which 5 to 8 respondents were selected as samples. The target population of this study was Indian expatriates who are working in countries such as Japan, China and Korea, America, Europe, and Germany.

DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical tests used were Correlation and Regression, Chi square test of contingency and Cross tabulation, Mediation Analysis (Baron and Kenny, 1986)

1. The relationship between willingness to experience and training transference is statistically significant and connotes that the relationship is positive which means high willingness to experience would exhibit high levels of training transference increasing effectiveness of cross cultural communication. Also the regression model unveils that training transference is depended on the willingness to experience and leads to increase the level of training transference by an average of 0.810 times. The coefficient of determination (R2=0.777) connotes that around 78 percent of the variation in training transference is predicted from willingness to experience.

2. Cross culture communication training effectiveness increases with individual tolerance as there is a positive correlation between individual tolerance and training transference. The impact of individual tolerance on training transference using linear regression analysis is significant and specifies that individual tolerance strongly predicts the training transference and every additional score in individual tolerance leads to enhance the level of training transference by an average of 0.655 times which is supported by 66 percent of the variation in training transference as predicted by individual tolerance (R2=0.658).

3. The correlation between cross cultural motivation and training transference reveals that the relationship is positive. Thus it is concluded that high scores of cross cultural motivation lead to increase the training transference level. To support this further regression model unveil that cross cultural motivation predicts the training transference and every additional score increase in cross cultural motivation leads to enhance the training transference by an average of 0.666 times. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R2=0.453) specifies cross cultural motivation predicts 45 percent of the variation in training transference supporting the relation.

4. The relationship between previous abroad experience and training transference is very low, almost zero and researcher concludes that there is no relation between these two variables.

5. The correlation between climate for training support and training transference is found to be positive indicating increase in the climate for training support will lead to increase training
transference level. Also from regression model it is observed that climate for training support influences training transference and every unit increase in climate for training support leads to enhance the training transference level by an average of 0.590 times i.e., 49 percent of the variation in training transference is predicted from climate for training support (R2=0.493).

6. The correlation between cross cultural flexibility on training transference is positive which indicates increase in cross cultural flexibility will increase training transference. Regression model also supports this finding and every unit increase in cross cultural flexibility leads to enhance the training transference level by an average of 0.613 times i.e. 53 percent of the variation in training transference is predicted from cross cultural flexibility (R2=0.525).

7. Correlation between emotional intelligence and training transference is positive which is supported by regression model. It is observed that emotional intelligence influences training transference and every unit increase in emotional intelligence leads to enhance the training transference level by an average of 0.765 times i.e. 83 percent of the variation in training transference is predicted from emotional intelligence (R2=0.829).

**Findings and Conclusions for Mediation Analysis**

It is concluded that Training transference partially mediates the relationship between cross culture learning and work satisfaction, work performance and cross cultural adaptability.

**Relation**

**Gender and training transference**

Chi Square test of Contingency. Since the P value (0.0625) is greater than level of significance (0.05), hence it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between gender and training transference.

**Age Group and training transference**

To study if there is any relationship between age group and training transference. Statistical Test: - Chi Square test of Contingency Since the P value (0.004) is less than level of significance (0.05), hence it is concluded that there is significant relationship between age group and training transference. Age group 31-40 and 41-50 shows highest training transference.

**Educational Level and Training transference**

Chi Square test of Contingency Since the P value (0.0205) is less than level of significance (0.05), hence it is concluded that there is significant relationship between education level and training transference. Bachelor level shows higher training transference followed by post graduate level.
Discussion

The study is encouraging in dismissing notion of Gender having any effect on training transference or Learning acquired from training, hence promoting the idea of importance of diverse representation in teams without any biases towards women. Since the age group of 31 - 50 has shown higher training transference it is an indication for HR to reduce the usual ageist attitude. Usually there are negatives associated with older age groups while selecting participants for training purposes but it may be worthwhile to note this finding when in the process of maximizing potential benefits accrued through training for the organization.

It was surprising that this study found no relation between previous experience abroad and training transference which was also matches with finding in earlier research of Dr Emily Feinberg on Peace Volunteers from America. This could be because of overconfidence of the participants about their knowledge and awareness about foreign locations thus resulting in underestimating the need for training or perhaps the knowledge of the trainer. There is an element of surprise here because the gut feeling was that the participant with previous experience would value the cross cultural training more having experienced the distress of unfamiliar territory earlier and therefore keen to avoid errors arising out of ignorance and uncertainty. There is evidence yet again that common sense notions can often lead you astray in attempt to understand human behavior and behavioral research offers means for testing the common sense notions.

The importance of an encouraging ethos and culture in the organization is yet again endorsed by this research.

Support was found for Educational level and Training Transference. Bachelor level shows higher training transference followed by post graduate level as compared to High Institute Level. This may be because individuals having had no post graduate level education would be more inclined towards receiving inputs to further their knowledge due to not having had the opportunity to pursue post graduate level studies.
Recommendations

- High Potential candidates can be identified prior to commencement of training to enhance initiatives of training and development.
- The organizational ethos should be cultivated to support participants in training or undergoing training.

Future Scope for Research

- Future research could collect data related to variables at a regular interval of time, throughout the tenure of assignment, so as to avoid temporary influences and to be more thoroughly examined. It is also understood that the timeframe of the data collection may have influenced respondent’s perceptions of organizational climate for training support.
- Future research should continue to look at the influence of factors which are likely to influence the individual difference towards training transference relationships.
- Comparative Analysis may be done to see extent of training transference in different industries.
- Study could use Income and Rewards as mediating variables. Study could focus on role of Motivation to the extent it could likely affect training transference and thereby effectiveness of training

References


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