

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter we present all the primary and secondary data gathered regarding each proposition. The information is presented as it is shown in the table 3.1 from the previous chapter and it is summarized in order to emphasize key elements for discussion and analysis, which will be presented in the next chapter.

4.1 Proposition One

A social cross-cultural training approach meets the need to institutionalize the concept of diversity within the workforce of the organization

Diversity stands out as one of the main drivers for competitive advantage and also an important factor which increases the relevance of International Human Resource Management today. The interview with CEO and Chairman of Johnson and Johnson Corporation indicates the trend of diversity within this organization and all the family of companies linked to it. Chairman, Frank Bolden says: “We’re doing diversity because we think we can gain market share from it. We think it will give us a greater appreciation and understanding of our customers and the ability to serve their needs better. If we can do that we’ll be the best health care company in the world.” CEO, William C. Weldon also adds by saying: Diversity is something that should be institutionalized in the way we do business. Is something that the individual has to feel passionate about, they have to believe in. The challenge is to embrace diversity within the organization and to use that as a competitive advantage as we go forward in the marketplace” (JNJ, 2007).

In the interview with the planning analyst of the Human Resource Department of Johnson and Johnson, Mexico, she mentioned that currently they don't have a cultural training program established for expatriates. This is because they are not sending employees abroad for international assignments. However, she mentioned that there are two executive positions occupied by expatriates in Mexico. They are both Director Managers, one from Colombia and the other from Brazil. When asked if they had difficulty in adjusting to the Mexican culture, she said that not at all. They both had done excellent jobs. In fact, one was even promoted and the expatriate from Brazil had an excellent level of Spanish, except for the accent.

When asked regarding the effect of Benchmark Diversity initiative covering recruitment, retention, training and development and compensation (JNJ), she said that the organization is currently going through an integration phase, since JNJ recently acquired Pfizer Pharmaceutical. However, the objective remains to maintain consistency in the Human Resource practices. For example: In selection procedures, she said that the company is open to hire personnel regardless of the nationality, race or gender and that there is support for diversity in the organization. However, a "multicultural work team" does not exist currently. For the most part, the workforce is Mexican.

Out of the four expatriates, only two answered the question of the type of training they received. One of them said that he only received in-country training for 3 months. The approach was a traditional school method for Japanese culture study combined with field trips and sightseeing activities in the country. The language training was with Japanese teachers who gave lectures 7 hours a day, every day, plus half a Saturday every other week for 3 months. Additionally, he was required to 2-3 hours for homework. Outside of school, he intentionally engaged in other activities like watching T.V, listening to the radio

and sharing experiences with other international students and people from the neighborhood. The other expatriate answered that he only received a seminar course about Japan prior to the arrival to the host country that lasted 4 days. On the other hand, the secondary data on forty-four expatriates in China revealed that twenty-one of them received language classes; however, all argued that finding the time to participate in language classes was difficult. One expatriate suggested that language skills were not as important as the ability of an individual to adapt and take a “big picture” (Hutchings, 2005).

All of the expatriates answered that they had related with other expatriates or people from their own nationality after the first three months. Three of the expatriates responded that they had met with them on a daily basis. Only the Philippine answered that he met with other expatriates once a week. The majority of the expatriates did not answer the question properly because they only mentioned that they had been in touch with several local people, but they did not specify the number. Only the American mentioned that he was in touch with 10 or more local people.

4.2 Proposition Two

A social cross-cultural training approach enables expatriates to develop emotional and cultural intelligence

In the interview, the trainer expert shared his experience working in Volkswagen as a personnel trainer in German language and culture. He said that for many years he had used the traditional approach to language learning. In other words, a teacher and a textbook. After coming back from a trip to Germany, where they had trained a team of 20 young Mexican men, they decided to change to a social approach.

He explained that trainees were learning the language much faster through this method and they were less afraid to speak. That is why today he is convinced that the best method is the “80-20”, meaning 80% of practice and 20% of theory. He described, according to his experience, how the social approach had helped the trainees to develop skills to relate to people in a different social context. He said: “What is really important is when people engage in social activities, like parties and gatherings, especially young people. And that’s all it takes. That’s all you need. Interestingly that is how they (20 trainees) learned the culture.”

Then, the trainer was asked how he related the social language learning to the concept of emotional and cultural intelligence. He immediately said “That is precisely what we are talking about. Pure intelligence is important, but it is not the most important thing.” He mentioned that the point is not to solve a problem in school, but to be able to solve it in a working environment and even then, problems are not completely technical. Many times it is necessary to influence others about the solution. Regarding the cultural context, he said “If you are not able to immerse in a new culture, pure intelligence is no longer worth it. What it is needed is a different type of skill to know how to relate to people, to use diplomacy, to convince, etc.” He also talked about the importance of developing a competence. This means when people actually do or perform something. He said: “For this you need more than knowledge. The knowledge itself doesn’t mean that you can do it, but if you have the competence, then you can.”

Yamazaki and Kayes proposed an experiential approach to cross-cultural learning by making a review of competencies which make up successful expatriate adaptation. The abilities that they found particularly useful for cross-cultural training were the abilities to employ intuitive understanding and sensitivity toward other people’s emotions and values, the ability to influence people and change

situations and the abilities understand the meaning of thoughts and situations by carefully watching and listening. The abilities of the use of logic ideas and concepts that require thinking and analyzing were not considered as relevant for cross-cultural learning. The findings of this research match Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence as the "skill that allows a person to appreciate what makes individuals similar to and different from one another" (1995) and it also matches Early and Ang's definition of cultural intelligence as "skill that enables outsiders to interpret unfamiliar gestures and actions as though they were insiders" (2003).

4.3 Proposition Three

The implementation of a social cross-cultural training creates a competitive advantage over the traditional approach

The trainer expert mentioned that the team he trained received a very intensive language course in Germany. Most of them did very well and were learning very fast. However, there was one person who showed a notorious lower level of language proficiency than his classmates. The trainer said that even when he tried hard to improve his scores, the results were the same. After a few weeks, they were questioning if he would be able to complete the program successfully. Meanwhile, the young man decided to join a soccer team and spent most of his free time playing soccer. The trainer said that he was also a good-looking person, so he spent a lot of time with German girls. Not long after that, he was already speaking German. And finally, when the training was over, "I am not sure to what extent his language level was better than his classmates," said the trainer, "but at least he spoke the language and even had more German friends to practice with." Finally, he noticed that those students who worried

too much about learning the language, ended frustrated because the more perfectionist they wanted to be, the less they learned the language.

In the interview, the trainer said that many times the teaching context is very distant from the actual daily practice. That is why he favored the social learning approach. “The point is that learning is so much easier and better using the right side of the brain, but when you learn a language in a school, you only use the left-side of the brain and you don’t adapt,” he said. Further, he mentioned that he had met a 67 years old lady, who had studied German her whole life, but she was not able to speak it. He said it was because she didn’t take risks. “In order to learn a language, one should be able to take risks and be socially open.” He said that children use the right-side of the brain to learn the language. So, first they learn it and then they refine it. In addition, he mentioned that the social approach is a mechanism which helps to decrease the level of anxiety. So if someone is anxious, he will be nervous and paralyzed and will no longer find the right words to be able to communicate.

The model cross-cultural training model established by Tom and Elizabeth is said to have helped many expatriates working in developing countries to learn local languages. They also based their method in the social learning theory stating that “language and cultural learning is a social activity rather than an academic one.” The affective engagement is evident in their strategy, which is called the “bonding strategy.” They explain that entering a new culture is parallel to a bonding relationship. They base their success in cross-cultural adaptation on the following principles:

- You can learn language by interacting with ordinary people in everyday encounters
- Language is more of a social activity than an academic activity and so should be learned in social situations

- Learners should bond emotionally with members of the speech community and culture
- Learners should elicit texts about things they want to say, learn them, and then go out and use their texts with a regular route of native speakers of the language (Brewster, 1976).

Next, we present the data gathered from the expatriate surveys to show how the cross-cultural and language training method helped them to cope with different culture shock experiences. The Mexican expatriate said that he had received a traditional approach to cross-cultural and language training. However, he did mention that he engaged in other social activities with international students and people from the neighborhood. His level of local language when he arrived to the country was intermediate. The initial contacts he had were people from the school. He was shocked of how different his culture was from the host culture. All of his culture shock experiences related to every-day issues like vehicular transit on the streets and high cost of living. He did not mention any difficulties with local social encounters. In fact he mentioned that he had no problems to be adapted, because the people at the office were really kind to him. After the first three months in Japan, he said “I had no problems having a normal life even with local people.” Further, he indicated that the cross-cultural training he had received had helped him cope with conflict at work. He did not have any cultural mentor, but he said that teachers in school were always willing to help.

The Philippine expatriate mentioned that he had received no cross-cultural and language training prior to his arrival. Therefore, he had no knowledge of the local language when he first arrived. Once in Japan, he received only language training 2 hours every week. The initial contacts when he first arrived were other expatriates. Regarding the cultural shock experiences, he mentioned that “the culture was terrible and difficult”. He also mentioned the difficulty in adjusting to the right side of the vehicles. In his experience when he took a taxi, he knew that the driver was laughing at him deep inside. In

addition, after the first month he said “people think that I’m an idiot, just like any other foreigner in this country.” According to him the language training had helped him to cope with conflict because he was able to understand them. He did not have any cultural mentor. In addition, he affirmed that “understanding their language is the key to understanding the culture of people.”

The woman expatriate from Mexico also said that she did not receive any cross-cultural training prior to her arrival. As a result, she had no knowledge of the local language whatsoever. Her first impressions: “I thought that people were too cold from the way of greeting and the way of having fun.” In Japan, she did receive cross-cultural training using the traditional approach once every two months for an hour. The teacher answered her questions and gave her new vocabulary. She described one culture shock experience which her teacher. When struggling with the Japanese language, she asked the teacher to explain a word. She asked a second time and then the teacher told her that she never understands and that he was not going to lose time in explaining her. She felt very mad and hurt because the teacher had no reason for that kind of reaction. She told him: “Hidoi”, which in Japanese means “pretty mean” and then left. Finally the teacher apologized to her after talking for one hour. It took her a month to erase those hard feelings. She indicated that the cross-cultural training she received did not help her to cope with conflict and she did not have a cultural mentor.

The American expatriate said that she received a 4- day cross-cultural training about Japan prior to her arrival. During her stay she also received cultural and language training, but it was very basic. She mentioned that she had fun learning with other teachers and students. Her initial contacts were with a host-family, who helped her to learn the language. She described her first impressions on the culture as “not good” and “very cramped and people seemed very strange.” Her culture shock experience dealt with the fact that she had been forced to go to middle-school instead of high-school Japanese language

school. She felt very upset because she was treated like a child. After two weeks arguing, she was finally placed in the high-school level, but she still was not happy in that school. Another opinion she had was that she felt that the local people perceived her “as a foreigner” and she felt like “an experiment.” Training did not help her to cope with conflict and she also didn’t have a cultural mentor.

Empirical research showed that expatriates experience paradoxes when engaging in cross-cultural interactions and that “there will be a positive relationship between the awareness of paradox and the degree of cultural involvement.” It was also argued that this factor forces expatriates to give up some of their cultural values in order to be accepted or successful in another country, but also, some of their core values become even stronger as a result of intercultural exposure. A sample of 35 repatriated U.S. businesspeople who were abroad for at least 18 months was used. The number one ranked paradox of self identity had one of the lowest percentages of awareness, meaning that only 48.6% of the expatriates had experienced it. The second most important paradox was the one dealing with the sense of belonging or “feeling at ease anywhere but belonging nowhere.” This paradox had the lowest percentage of awareness, 45.7% (Osland, 2006).

The empirical research conducted by Selmer, where 165 expatriates working for Western business corporations in China were surveyed, showed that twenty-one of the interviewees claimed that their organization provided them with language classes. All argued that finding the time to participate in language classes was difficult (2006).

Another empirical research studied a way to measure cross-cultural adaptation multi-dimensionally. This study used the distinction between cognitions and emotions to explore adaptation outcomes in a cross-sectional sample of expatriates. The major findings were:

- Relationship and day-to-day interaction factors for both, cognitions and emotions are highly correlated with language skills.
- The more sufficient people feel their language skills are, the worse they feel in day-to-day interactions. (The author admits it is hard to explain this result)
- Expatriates experience greater ease in the formation of relationships with representatives of the local culture, if contacts are friendly. Yet, friendly contacts seem unrelated to day-to-day interactions.
- The understanding of local values, but not the attitude towards them, is related to local contacts (Haslberger, 2005).

4.4 Proposition Four

A social cross-cultural training approach has the potential to equip the expatriate for successful performance at least to the extent of the person’s success in his own home country

In the interview with the trainer expert, he mentioned that in order to speak another language, in this case German, one has to stop being a Mexican and become a German. Only then, will people learn the language. This is when you begin to understand the German culture. At this point, “your view on things has changed”, he said. That is why people express themselves in a different way. “When you engage in cross-cultural interactions you begin to notice not only the good but also the bad”, the trainer commented. Therefore, what people used to see as normal in your own country, it no longer is. What happens is that “they begin to appreciate new cultures, in a way that you be yourself in both”, he said. The trainee added: “Many of the young trainees we worked with are now high executives of VW in Puebla. Others work in other companies, but they still have high positions.” He explained that their

level increased because they were able to perform not only in their own country, but also internationally. “This helps people to have a stronger personality, where you feel comfortable and with enough security to perform internationally”, said the trainee. He described that when this happens people no longer feel intimidated by foreigners, because they are able to see, say Germans, just how you see Mexicans. His final statement was: “So, I think learning new languages not only enables you to learn about new cultures, it also means leadership.”

The Brewster’s social method of cross-cultural training was found very useful for many expatriates in adapting to new environments. Many of these expatriates shared their adventures and experiences using this method for learning the language and the culture of the host country (1986). The Brewsters have traveled around the world and have experienced adapting to new cultural environments. They created this method because they are convinced that it is the most effective way to “bond” in another culture. They said that “anybody can be successful in learning another language because evidently they have been successful in learning their own mother tongue” (1976).

Empirical research showed that the four key strengths of good intercultural communicators (Jandt, 2001), namely:

- Personality strength (eg strong sense of self; socially relaxed)
- Communication skills (non-verbal and verbal)
- Psychological adjustment (ability to adjust to new situations)
- Cultural awareness (understanding of how persons from different cultures behave)

The expatriates were asked their level of language proficiency, including local language. The Mexican expatriate said apart from his mother tongue, Spanish; he had a fluent level of English and an intermediate level of Japanese. The American expatriate, apart from her mother tongue, English; she had an intermediate level of German and a beginner level of Japanese. The Philippine expatriate, apart from Filipino, had a fluent level of Cebuano and English and a beginner level of Japanese. The Mexican woman expatriate, apart from Spanish, had an intermediate level of English, a beginner level of Korean, French and Japanese.

Also, the expatriates were asked to evaluate their performance in the host country. The Mexican woman expatriate said that sometimes she could understand the Japanese people and other times she couldn't understand herself, so she isolated from them; but for the most part, she thinks that she did a pretty good job trying to get along and leave the differences behind. "I also think I did a good job learning the language", she said. She did not answer the question on how the organization had evaluated her performance abroad. The Philippine expatriate said: "I really learned a lot about the culture, the work ethics and the overall aspect of relating with other people." He only mentioned that his evaluation was based on the feedback of his immediate superiors abroad. The American expatriate only expressed negative comments about his relationship with the other Japanese students. Finally, the Mexican expatriate said that he considered that his performance in Japan was successful and that in his personal life, he feels that he has overcome the cultural shock and barriers. The company has requested him to keep working in Japan so far because they have evaluated his performance as good.