

The importance of cultural training for expatriate adjustment

Helena Cristina Roque

Escola Superior de Ciências Empresariais, Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal, CIES-IUL

Madalena Ramos

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), CIES-IUL

One of the consequences of globalization has been the internationalization of organizations, which often, due to the lack of local human resources, use third country nationals. In this context, where expatriation has become central to the competitiveness of organizations, poor performance of expatriates compromises the success and competitive capacity of these organizations. As several authors (Dowling, Festing, Engle, 2017, Waxin and Panaccio, 2005) demonstrate, cultural training in promoting the adjustment of these expatriates to a new culture enhances their performance and consequently their organizations.

Based on the cultural training programs developed by Brislin (1979) and Tung (1981) we propose a cultural training program that includes four components: linguistic, cognitive, effective and behavioral. The language component will be developed only when the official language of the country of destination is different from the language of the country of origin. This component should provide an elementary knowledge of the language of the country of destination. The cognitive component involves knowledge of the cultural profile of the destination country and the impact of this profile in social and organizational terms. This information will be based on the following dimensions of the national culture: distance to power; avoidance of uncertainty, assertiveness, gender equality, human orientation, performance orientation, future orientation, endogrupal collectivism and institutional collectivism (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, Gupta, 2004). The affective component involves the simulation of situations that involve eventual cultural incidents. Based on the information acquired in the cognitive component the participants must express the appropriate solution in the simulations. Finally, the behavioral component involves the ability to adapt the communication style most appropriate to the country of destination as well as the development of positive interpersonal relationships with the local community.

Individuals from different cultures have different preferences regarding human resource management practices, sources of guidance in decision-making about work events, type of guidance with supervisors, and the communication process (Abdulai, Ibrahim e Mohamed, 2017; Lagrosen, 2003; Roque, 2017; Roque, Silva, Ramos e Caetano, 2017;

Silva, Roque e Caetano, 2015). Thus, in order to deal with all these differences, knowledge of national idiosyncrasies is very important, and cultural training is essential, as these can be a key element in the internationalization process, as well as a success factor in expatriation.

Key words

Expatriation, cultural training, national culture, adjustment.

References

Abdulai, M., Ibrahim, H., Mohammed, M.A. (2017). Communicating across cultures in multicultural Ibis West Africa. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 58, 42-53.

Brislin, R.W. (1979). Orientation programs for cross-cultural preparation. In A. Marsella, G. Tharp and T. Ciborowski (Eds.), *Perspectives on Cross-cultural Psychology*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Dowling, J.P., Festing, M., Engle, A. (2017). *International Human Resource Management*. London: UK: Cengage Learning.

House, R., P. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. Dorfman e V. Gupta (2004). *Culture, Leadership and Organizations: The Globe Study of 62 Societies*. London: Sage.

Lagrosen, S. (2003). Exploring the impact of culture on quality management. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management* 20(4/5), 473-487.

Roque, H.C. (2017). Relação entre a distância ao poder, o coletivismo e as fontes de tomada de decisão nas organizações em Portugal e Angola (Unpublished pd's thesis). ISCTE- Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

Roque, H.C., Silva, M.R., Ramos, M., Caetano, A. (2017). Valores societais em Portugal: Replicação do Projeto Globe 17 anos depois e implicações para a gestão. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media*, 9 (5), 24-42.

Silva, M.R., Roque, H.C., Caetano, A. (2015). Culture in Angola: Insights for Human Resources Management. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 22 (2), 166-186.

Tung, R.L. (1981). Selection and training of personnel for overseas assignments. *Columbia Journal of Word Business*, 16(1), 68-78.

Waxin, M.F., Panaccio, A. (2005). Cross-cultural training to facilitate expatriate adjustment: It works! *Personnel Review*, 34(1), 51-68.