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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES**

- *AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON ITALIAN EXPATRIATES*

**Master's Thesis**  
**in International Business**

**VAASA, 2015**



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**ABBREVIATIONS**

CCA	Cross-cultural Adjustment
CCT	Cross-cultural Training
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
IHRM	International Human Resource Management
MNC	Multinational Corporation



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International Business

**Year of Entering the University**

2013

**Year of Completing the Thesis**

2015

Pages: 129

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**ABSTRACT**

In today's globalized world, where business is international and expatriation is a widespread practice, cross-cultural training is still a current topic. Due to the controversy characterizing the extant literature, further insights of the topic are needed. Despite many scholars have studied CCT in fact, effectiveness literature presents a lack of a unitary and consistent perspective. Contradictory results instil in MNCs and practitioners a sceptical attitude, thus likely impeding the development and implementation of effective training programmes due both to the doubts surrounding the effectiveness of CCT and the unawareness of what makes a training programme effective. The purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the impact CCT programmes have on expatriates' experience, specifically in terms of cross-cultural adjustment. Hence, Italian expatriates' perspective was considered in order both to understand expatriates' CCT experience and to provide new insights about the effects of CCT on CCA.

The theoretical part of the study is based on CCT features and the existing CCT effectiveness literature, including the main theories guiding CCT research and development, and the relationship between CCT and CCA. The research design applied implies the qualitative research method. For this exploratory study, the empirical data were collected through non-standardized semi-structured interviews, and five Italian expatriates were interviewed.

The empirical data were analysed and discussed related to the main theories examined in the literature review. The findings emerged reflected the expatriates' perception of CCT and the evaluation of its effectiveness. The study showed that CCT was effective in enhancing adjustment through the development of realistic expectations, the improvement of work abilities and the enhancement of interaction with locals. It also appeared that the effect of CCT on CCA could be improved through the higher involvement of host nationals, the provision of in-country support and the combination of didactical and experimental training method. Further research is needed to understand the moderating effects factors as prior international experience and perceived training need may have on CCT outcome.

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**KEY WORDS:** Cross-cultural training, Cross-cultural adjustment, Expatriates



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of research

The internationalization of business has become one of the essential features of today's economy, the exponential increase of globalization and the large number of MNCs operating globally through subsidiaries has led to the growing importance of international HR strategies as determinants of sustainable competitive advantage and success in a globalized economy (Puck, Kittler & Wright, 2008; Foster, 2000; Harvey & Moller 2009). In this scenario, the role of international assignments has increased critically; expatriation in fact, is one of the most common strategies adopted by MNCs in terms of human resource management (Bennet, Aston & Colquhoun, 2000; Bhagat & Prien, 1996; Caligiuri et al., 2001; Foster 2000).

The need of using expatriate managers relocated overseas has grown consistently in the recent years and the number of expatriates is expected to double in the next five-years (Fernandez, Mutabazi & Pierre, 2006). The reasons for sending an expatriate overseas are several and are usually related to the needs of transferring knowledge and technologies, overseeing operational start-ups, managing joint ventures, transmitting organizational culture, controlling and coordinating international activities and managerial development (Bennet et al. 2000). Thence, expatriation is a widespread practice, which is likely to grow even further in the future (Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008; Fernandez et al. 2006).

Nevertheless, it is a highly costly practice which expense is estimated in a range between \$200.000 and \$500.000 each expatriate due to both direct and indirect costs, the first involving training, relocations, compensation and repatriation expenditures, the second concerning poor or negative effects on strategy implementation and issues with governmental institutions (Wederspahn, 1992). Further costs may arise from the failure of expatriation, meant as an early return or a poor quality of the performance; for MNCs located in the US it has been estimated a \$6 billion annual loss due to failed overseas assignments (Harvey & Novicevic 2000, 2001). The main causes of expatriation failure

have been identified from previous research as the inability to adapt to the new environment due to cultural and physical differences and the difficulties in the adjustment to the host countries for the expatriate's family (Calgiuri, Philips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Bürgi, 2001). Moreover, the lack of personality skills for cross-cultural communication and the shortage of managerial capabilities necessary to transfer effectively managerial practices are among the reasons of poor performance and early return of expatriates, which have been estimated around 40% (Rahim, 1983; Baumgarten, 1995; Bhagat & Prien, 1996; Tung, 1981).

The expatriation process can be divided in pre-assignment stage, actual assignment and post-assignment stage (Harzing & Punnington 2011: 203). The elements included in the different phases are respectively selection and preparation; adjustment to the expatriate role, management of the performance, compensation and rewards; repatriation. Each of the above-mentioned phases is strictly linked with the expatriate success or failure and since expatriation is highly costly, the company has to consider carefully and manage properly all the stages. Inadequate selection criteria, ineffective compensation programs, ineffective leadership and in particular problems in expatriate and family adjustment are examples of factors that are likely to enhance the failure rate of expatriates (Dowling, Welch & Schuler, 1999).

Expatriate managers, dealing with international assignments which require to work efficiently across different cultural contexts, have to be aware of the cultural aspects characterizing the environment they are moving to and the adjustment to the new culture is one of the most important elements of a successful expatriation (Forster, 2000). As organizations are globalizing new challenges are rising, borders are re-defined and the development of globally prepared managers is a critical factor for a long-lasting success. In order to develop capable managers provided with a global mindset and with those skills that allow them effective control and coordination across national borders, and to prevent a potential failure of the international assignment, it is argued that a careful and accurate preparation of the expatriate is of massive importance (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Landis & Brislin, 1983; Kealey & Protheroe, 1996).



Training in fact, influences the expatriate's adjustment, hence potentially the expatriate success or failure too. Several researches have argued that cross-cultural adjustment largely affects an expatriate's success. Problems related to the difficulty of speaking the foreign language, the understanding of institutional issues, the interaction with locals and the culture shock are likely to impede cross-cultural adjustment (Harzing & Ruysseveldt, 2004). Cross-cultural Training (CCT), which objective is to predispose international assignees to a rapid adjustment, appears as an appropriate option to prepare these individuals for overseas assignments. Through the improvement of cultural awareness and the development of communication and interpersonal skills, CCT should enable expatriates to interact with the locals and to work efficiently across national and cultural borders (Puck et al., 2008; Tung, 1982; Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley & Riedel, 2006).

## **1.2 Research Gap**

Due to the increasing globalization of economy in the past few decades, cross-cultural research and in particular cross-cultural training have become a hot topic. Several studies have taken into account issues related to expatriation, the failure of international assignments and the challenges faced by expatriates. Cross-cultural training programs have been widely discussed by scholars; nevertheless, questions connected to the effectiveness of training programs, especially according to expatriates' perspective, have not been completely defined and analysed.

MNCs often present a sceptical attitude towards CCT, considering only the technical capabilities as the main determinants for expatriation success (Littrell, et al. 2006). Furthermore, the high cost of training programmes and time constraints act as deterrents for their implementation. All training programmes in fact, imply substantial investments for the company, thus the MNC is willing to get a return that makes the investment in the expatriate and in its preparation worth it. Instead, there is a lack of clear empirical evidence proving the effectiveness of such training.

Conflicting opinions continue to exist regarding the impact of CCT on expatriate performance and adjustment. Some studies (e.g. Tung 1981; Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou 1987; Black & Mendenhall 1989; Deshpande & Viswesvaran, 1992; Mendenhall, Stahl, Ehnert, Oddoy, Osland, Kuhlmann, 2004) have argued the positive influence of CCT on expatriate adjustment, considering how it helps expatriates to overcome all the potential challenges they are going to face in their international assignment, increasing the chances of a successful expatriation. These researches have discussed theoretically about the development of training programs and about how these can considerably enhance the expatriates' adjustment capabilities. On the other hand, other researchers observed weak or no relevant influence of CCT on adjustment (e.g. Black & Gregersen 1991; Gregersen & Black 1992; Kaeley & Protheroe, 1996; Morris & Robie, 2001).

Therefore, additional studies concerning CCT, both empirical and qualitative, may be important for the elaboration of effective and efficient training programs and their assessment, in order to provide MNCs with evidence based on expatriates' experiences. The high cost of expatriate failure, the reluctant attitude of MNCs towards CCT, the workplace diversity and the increasing adoption by MNCs of expatriation procedures as well as the lack of empirical evidence regarding the implementation and effectiveness of training programs suggest that further studies concerning the cross-cultural training topic are needed (Littrell et al., 2006).

Although the issues of training concerning adjustment have been considered by several studies as essential for the expatriation process, and CCT have been claimed as effective in facilitating cross-cultural adjustment, research in the theme is insufficient (Suutari & Burch 2001; Vance & Paik 2002). Hence, it emerges that there is a gap in the literature consisting in sparse qualitative researches. In order to understand the process as a whole and consequently the needs of expatriates in terms of development, deliver and implementation of training programs, additional CCT research is needed to provide a wider picture concerning the effectiveness of such programs and the issues expatriates have to deal with in order to adjust to the new environment.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

This thesis wants to investigate the unique challenges faced by expatriates and the reasons behind the need for expatriation training and training effectiveness. More precisely, the aim is to investigate the expatriates' perspective and opinion about the cross-cultural training programmes, the consistency between their needs and the preparation received, as well as the shortages identified according to personal experiences. In particular, through the analysis of Italians expatriates' experience overseas, the aim is to identify the challenges faced by expatriates and whether and how CCT affected the outcome of their international assignments. By considering Italian expatriates in specific host countries it should be possible to compare the cross-cultural training provided by the Italian MNCs and highlight the kind of training program expatriates received in terms of content, method and timing. Moreover, it should be possible to figure out whether and which training program has been perceived as most effective according to the problems faced in their experience in the host-country.

Specifically, through the empirical identification of the training programs provided and the collection of expatriates' experiences and perspectives, the purpose is to verify how Italian expatriates assess the training received related to their adjustment process, referring to the effectiveness as the enhancement and improvement of adjustment capabilities. Furthermore, the intent is to pinpoint those that are considered the weaknesses arisen in the training programs and identify the potential improvements suggested by the international assignees.

This thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of cross-cultural training programmes based on expatriates' experience?
2. How does cross-cultural training affect the expatriates' experience in terms of cross-cultural adjustment?

The research questions are studied from the expatriate's point of view. The perspective of home or host organization falls outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the results would provide further information both to home and host organizations in terms of training, cross-cultural adjustment and therefore in terms of factors that are likely to enhance successful assignment of expatriates.

#### **1.4 Key concepts**

**Expatriates:** individuals that have international assignments from their employer and are relocated from one country to another for at least one year (Liu & Lee, 2008). In other words, the term expatriate refers to an employee sent by his or her company to manage operations in a different country.

**Expatriate failure:** many expatriates are unsuccessful in the international assignment, where the measure of success or failure is determined by factors as the early return of the expatriate to the home country, late productivity, MNC's image harm, lost opportunities, interruption of the relationship between the expatriate and the host nationals (Bennet et al. 2000)

**Cross-cultural adjustment:** the level of psychological adjustment experienced by the individual within a new society (Black 1988, 1990; Black & Mendenhall 1991; Feldman & Tompson 1993; Selmer 2002) and is argued to be "the vital construct underlying the rewards and consists of expatriate experiences to individuals, their families and their firms" (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk 2005: 257). Other than a matter of familiarity and comfort in a new environment, expatriates ability to adjust is a factor that significantly affects the success of the international assignment (Suutari & Burch 2001; Vance & Paik 2002). Black (1988) provides an additional classification of adjustment referring to work adjustment when it comes to factors that are related to working, including responsibilities and performances; relational adjustment, when it concerns with elements affecting the interaction with members of the host country; and general

adjustment when it is related with non-work environment and life conditions in the foreign country.

**Cross-cultural training:** the aim of CCT is to prepare individuals for overseas assignments improving their cultural awareness in order to strengthen their ability to interact with those belonging to different cultural backgrounds and increase their chances to be successful on an international assignment. (Baumgarten, 1995; Morris & Robie, 2001; Black & Mendenhall 1990; Forster 2000). Researchers have provided several definitions of CCT programmes, among the others CCT programmes are described as:

- “those educative processes that are designed to promote intercultural learning, by which we mean the acquisition of behavioural, cognitive and affective competencies associated with effective interaction across cultures” (Landis & Brislin, 1983)
- “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” (Levy 1995)
- “any planned intervention designed to increase the knowledge and skills and expatriates to live and work effectively and achieve general life satisfaction in an unfamiliar host country” (Harzing & Ruysseveldt 2004: 284)
- “the educative processes used to improve intercultural learning via the development of the cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies needed for successful interactions in diverse cultures” (Littrel et al. 2006: 356).

### **1.5 Structure of the study**

Overall the thesis comprises of five sections. The first section presents the background of the research, identifying the literature gap and stating the research question and objectives. The second section encompasses a review of the relevant literature in terms of expatriation, cross-cultural adjustment and cross-cultural training, with particular focus on cross-cultural training effectiveness. The third section focuses on the research methodologies employed in the study including the research design, the research approach, the data collection process and analysis. Section four describes the research findings

collected through the interviews, related to the extant literature. Finally, section five discusses the relevant findings, drawing the main conclusions and suggesting practical implications. In this section, the limitations of the study are defined and areas of future research recommended.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Internationalizing firms have to deal with the HR implications deriving from operating beyond domestic borders since people are an important component for the successful development and implementation of international strategies (Dowling et al. 1999: 59). Nowadays, competition among MNCs is increasingly based on human talent and in MNCs globalized business context, expatriates play an important role in carrying out international activities. Therefore, sending expatriates overseas is a widespread practice among MNCs and the capabilities required for those sent on international assignments are several, as well as the challenges faced during the expatriation process.

An expatriate assignment is a costly investment; the annual expense range is estimated between \$300.000 and \$1 million (Vance & Paik 2011: 250). Furthermore, the risk of expatriation failure, which was found to be from 10 to 20 percent among U.S. expatriates (Vance & Paik 2011: 250) and which main cause is identified as the inability to adjust, may rise further costs for the MNC, as well as negative effects on an expatriate's career and motivation. In order to increase the chances of a successful expatriation, organizations usually provide training programs, in particular CCT, which aim is to enhance the expatriate adjustment through an adequate preparation. Training is one of the phases of the expatriation process and must be organized, developed and delivered properly; although it has been widely studied by researchers and its importance often emphasizes, empirical studies concerning its effectiveness remain scarce.

In order to answer to the research questions previously stated, this chapter aims at analysing the core literature concerning CCT, its features and its effectiveness. For the contextualization of such practice, giving an overview of the expatriation process is essential, as well as the identification of the reasons why MNCs adopt the costly practice of international assignment and the clarification of the determinants of success or failure. Furthermore, cross-cultural adjustment, which is one of the main factors affecting

expatriation success, will be taken into consideration according to the different studies conducted by researchers. Finally, cross-cultural training, its features and delivery modes, as well as studies supporting or rejecting its effectiveness will be considered in order to provide a theoretical framework, which enables the reader to understand the empirical results obtained through the interviews.

## **2.2 Expatriation**

The traditional definition of expatriation involves the process of moving a corporate employee from the parent company or headquarters to a foreign subsidiary on an international assignment and for a certain period of time, which usually lasts at least one year (Briscoe et al. 2011: 234). The increase in globalization of economy has placed the effective management of international human resources as a major determinant of success or failure in international business (Foster 2000; Dowling et al. 1999) and most of the time and effort of IHRM usually concerns the management and supervision of expatriates (Briscoe et al. 2011: 230). MNCs in order to operate internationally, to enter new markets and to develop and sustain their competitive advantage are establishing subsidiaries in different countries. For an effective coordination and control of these operational unit and, therefore, for international expansion to be successful, the use of qualified expatriates has increased significantly (Lee & Li 2008).

Previous studies have identified many reasons behind the MNCs choice to use expatriates for their international operations. These motives can be summarized in Edström and Galbraith's classification (1977), which theoretically explains the reasons of international transfers. They identified three main reasons: the first is to fill positions, here expatriation is conceived as a mean to transfer technical and managerial knowledge; secondly, a major motive concerns management development, an overseas assignment in fact implies an international experience and a career enhancement, which may lead to future important tasks in subsidiaries. Finally, a third motive is organisational development, which can be intended as a matter of control and coordination; the goal in fact is to improve the connection between subsidiaries and headquarters through the socialisation of both



expatriate and local managers, the sharing of a corporate culture and the creation of an information network (Harzing & Ruysseveldt 2004: 259).

There seems to be a common widespread perspective concerning the reasons why international transfers occur, the ultimate goals identified by further researches in fact are similar to Edström and Galbraith's classification (1977). Pausenberger (1987), for instance, provides subtle differences arguing that all the three reasons of international assignment are linked with the achievement of organizational development. Peterson (2003) on the other hand, provides as three basic reasons of expatriation the need to fill an overseas vacancy, the enhancement of an individual manager's competencies and the improvement and the faster transfer of knowledge throughout the MNC, including technical and functional expertise. Other motives usually provided for the transfer of personnel overseas concern the transfer of know-how, the training of local managers, the increase of loyalty with headquarters goals, an easier and enhanced communication and the development of managers' global mindset (Harzing & Ruysseveldt 2004: 260-261; Briscoe et al. 2011: 230).

Based on the identification of control and coordination enhancement as one of the main reasons of expatriation, Harzing & Ruysseveldt (2004) define three specific roles expatriates are going to play during their overseas experience: the bear, the bumble-bee and the spider. The bear reinforces the centralization of decision-making in the MNC and provides direct means of observation over subsidiary operations, the level of dominance associated with this type of direct control is high. The bumble-bee flies from "plant to plant and create cross-pollination between various branches" (Harzing & Ruysseveldt 2004: 265), control is practiced in a more indirect way and is based on socialisation. Lastly, the spider controls subsidiaries through the development of informal communication networks throughout the MNC. Both the bumble-bee and the spider are important role in those subsidiaries that have developed a high decentralization and independence.

Due to the increasing importance of human capital management as a determinant of success or failure of an organization in an international context, human resource

management literature argued that more attention must be given to expatriates' selection, preparation, management and repatriation (Dowling 1999). Vance and Paik (2011: 250) suggest companies to consider the importance of pre-departure, foreign experience and repatriation phases in order to maximize the company's return on the expatriation process investment.

### **2.2.1 Expatriation phases**

Harvey and Moeller (2009) identified different aspects of expatriation, which can be summarised according to Harzing and Pinnington (2011: 203) in pre-assignment stage, actual assignment and post-assignment stage, where the post-assignment stage is broadly indicated with the term repatriation. A detailed planning and an efficient management of all these stages is essential in the management of expatriates and for the success of the international assignment.

As first, the pre-assignment procedure involves two different steps: selection and preparation. First, MNCs have to identify potential candidates provided with managerial competences essential in the global context and in particular cross-cultural skills such as communication, learning, adaptation etc. as well as personal characteristics, e.g. empathy and sense of humour (Arthur & Bennett 1995; Black & Stephens 1989). Secondly, the ideal candidate must be selected according to the assignment and candidate's traits; success factors were abundantly analysed in the literature (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). Concerning the selection process the assessment of candidates' technical expertise is not enough; other criteria must be taken into consideration, among the others: cultural sensitivity and adaptability, family factors, communication skills, curiosity and learning (Briscoe et al. 2011: 229). Researchers, in fact, have identified certain personality characteristics, which enable international assignees to socialise, to be receptive to the norms and culture of the host country and to handle better the challenges arising from an international assignment, including higher levels of stress due to the ambiguity and low familiarity with the environment. These elements, critical for expatriation success, are called "the Big Five" and consist in those factors that repeatedly occur in many studies. The Big Five personality factors are extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness,

emotional stability and openness of intellect (Buss 1991; Digman 1990; Glodberg 1992, 1993; McCrae & Costa, 1987; McCrae & John, 1992). Other than these personal traits, which make candidates more desirable for international assignments, other factors that are likely to encourage a higher level of cross-cultural adjustment are the language knowledge, which increases the cultural empathy of the expatriate in the host country, and prior international experiences (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2006).

The recruitment of the candidate according to his skills, capability and personality is fundamental as well as the suitable preparation and orientation of the expatriate through training programmes. Success in international assignments in fact, may be facilitated through training programmes which in the form of pre-departure training should provide a realistic set of expectations about the host country, reducing uncertainties and increasing the expatriate's awareness of the new environment (Vance & Paik, 2011: 250-251). Specifically cross-cultural training is aimed at increasing the knowledge and skills of expatriates in order to facilitate their cross-cultural adjustment and to help them to operate efficiently in the host country (Caligiuri & Tarique 2006: 311). Organizations are progressively recognizing the important function of CCT and are adopting it as a way to prepare expatriates to the challenges they are going to face in new cultural environments, increasing their cross-cultural knowledge of the host country. (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2006: 310).

The second practice is the actual assignment phase and it incorporates compensation and performance appraisal, in other words the main activities that HR managers need to undertake during the expatriation period (including repatriation process). For a successful management of compensation, MNCs must be aware of the employment and taxation laws, norms, customs, and employment practices of the foreign country. The objectives of international compensation systems are different and they involve not only personnel attraction in international tasks, but also cost effectiveness, fairness with the local employees and other expatriates, facilitation of the re-entry process and firm's strategy support (Bonache, 2006). Regarding the organization perspective, international compensation policies should be consistent with the overall strategy, structure and needs of the MNC; furthermore, they should be both attractive for the employee in order to

facilitate the international transfer and to retain valuable employees and cost-effective for the firm (Dowling et al. 1999: 182). Other aspects to consider refer to cost-of-living allowances, hardship premium and tax equalization system, standard benefits as health insurance and vacation allowances, and special benefits such as housing, education, travel to home country etc. (Griffin & Putsay 2007: 577-579).

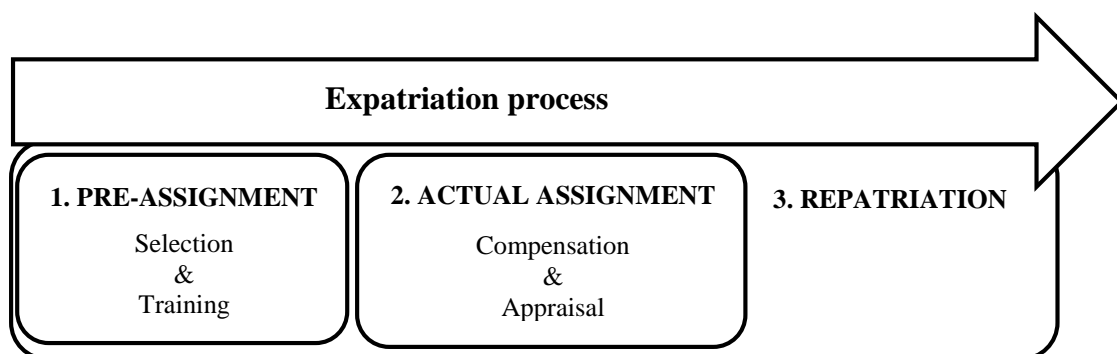
The second aspect of the actual assignment phase regards the performance appraisal. Expatriate performance appraisal should be a systematic assessment of both the expatriate manager and the organization in the foreign environment (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). Traditionally it involves a set of goals, which must be specific and measurable; Dowling et al. (1999: 136) distinguish three kind of objectives: hard, soft and contextual goals. Hard goals, which are quantifiable and can be measured through indicators such as ROI, market share and so on; soft goals, concerning interpersonal skills, leadership style and relationship-based factors; and contextual goals, which involve elements specific for the situation and setting in which the performance occurs. A fundamental rule of performance appraisal is to maintain consistency in the managers' evaluation (Ilgen, Barnes-Farrell & McKellin, 1993). In order to maintain an appropriate level of fairness, a substantial modification of the domestic performance appraisal system is necessary (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). The aim of introducing an appraisal process is not merely related to the evaluation of manager's performances; the appraisal process is used also to learn how to develop managerial skills and reduce the failure rate in abroad experiences. The process should be used also as an instrument to help managers understanding better the opportunities in the international context and how to improve their performances (Harvey & Moeller, 2009).

The third practice of HRM process for expatriates is repatriation. In the literature is commonly agreed that repatriation of expatriates managers is a process that begins before the expatriation period, continues during the period abroad, and ends with the return of the expatriates (and usually the expatriates' families) to their home country (Baruch & Altman, 2002; Baruch et al., 2002; Bonache, 2005; Paik, Segaud & Malinowski, 2002; Harvey & Moeller, 2009). Dowling et al. (1999: 205) divide repatriation in four connected phases: preparation, physical relocation, transition, readjustment. The first phase includes

the employee and family preparation for the transfer home; MNCs usually do not consider it as important as pre-departure training (Stroh, 1995), and it is usually included in it. Physical relocation refers to the effective move from the host to the home country, while transition concerns the temporary accommodation of the expatriate and his family, including housing and schooling arrangements and administrative tasks. Finally, readjustment is the phase usually considered more difficult and poorly handled by organizations. Many problems are likely to occur in this phase if not adequately programmed and managed, including both family issues concerning the psychological pressure of finding another place where to live, new schools for children, establishing a new career for the spouse and individual issues since the manager has to be integrated again in the company's work life.

Companies often fail to reward managers for their international experience, their improved skills and intercultural competences, and to reintegrate them once back in the home country. For the success of the expatriation process as a whole it is necessary that the organization is able to take advantage from the knowledge and the capabilities acquired by international workers in their overseas experience, transforming knowledge and building competencies into competitive advantage (Thomas et al., 2005:342).

The HRM process for managing expatriates can be summarised as in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** HRM process for managing expatriates

### **2.2.2 Expatriation success and failure**

Due to the importance of expatriates for MNCs, which today largely compete on the effectiveness and capabilities of their human capital, and aware of the vast cost expatriation implies, from a strategic perspective maximizing the success of expatriation processes is of great significance for the organization and a main task of HR department. The issue concerning expatriation failure is somehow controversial in the literature. Practitioners refer to this matter mainly as the early return of the expatriate in the home country; however, more recently, several authors disclaimed this perspective presenting a broader range of themes included in the term expatriation failure. As Joshua-Gojer pinpoints the literature lacks of a critical, organized and complete summary of these various definitions (2012: 52).

Briscoe et al. (2011: 243) provide a wide definition of expatriation failure, which, besides the early return home, include other factors as poor quality of the performance, the lack of adjustment both in the form of no adaptation to the local conditions and no acceptance by local nationals and high turnover after repatriation. Moreover, they include the underutilization of the expatriate both during and after the assignment, personal dissatisfaction, harm to customer relationships and contacts, and missed opportunities. Harzing (1995, 2002) suggests that considering failure just as early return is misleading since many MNCs may base their efforts on avoiding expatriates' premature return, ignoring elements that may be more crucial for the company's success, in addition premature return might actually indicate the early accomplishment of the assignment. Furthermore, this misjudgement could lead companies not to properly identify the failure or ineffectiveness of their selection and training programs. Therefore, in line with the definition previously stated, Harzing include under-performance and repatriate failure as fundamental elements of expatriate failure. On the other hand, Varner & Palmer (2002) refer specifically to expatriates success as the achievement of cross-cultural adjustment and the fulfilment of the organizational goals. Consistently, according to Caligiuri (2000) success or failure should be measured in terms of contribution of the expatriate assignment to the mission of the firm in the long term.

The literature investigates also the reasons for expatriation failure, some factors have been claimed to influence the failure rates, others are intended as proper causes of failure. Those reasons likely to cause expatriation failure have been discussed by several authors and refer to HR practices, expatriates features, and adjustment issues. The reasons of expatriation failure are largely associated with the main problems the HR department faces in planning and managing the different phases of expatriation. Among the causes of failure of the international assignment in fact, Tung (1981) identifies mistakes in candidate selection, dissatisfaction with compensation and benefits, inadequate cultural and language preparation and insufficient support from the HQ on the overseas assignment.

Moreover, the expatriate may not possess the required personality skills or emotional maturity needed to operate overseas and to cope with larger responsibilities; a lack of technical competences as well as absence of motivation may lead to the expatriate underperformance (Briscoe et al. 2011). Poor cross-cultural interaction and inability to communicate are in fact an obstacle to an effective transfer of managerial practices and goals accomplishment (Littrel et al. 2006). Lastly, adjustment issues are a crucial aspect concerning the success of the expatriation process. Several authors have pinpointed the inability of the expatriate and his family to adapt to the overall characteristics of the host country as a probable cause of failure. Harzing (2002) suggests that more attention to the different layers concerning adjustment is needed, including both job and relational issues.

MNCs are willing to undertake every possible step for the promotion of expatriation success; CCT is indeed conceived as a mean for the enhancement of expatriation success. According to the scope of this thesis, the aspect of expatriation success and failure that results the most important for the development of CCT programmes and the assessment of their effectiveness is adjustment. Due to the close link occurring between adjustment issues and training programmes, the next section will deal with cross-cultural adjustment providing a better understanding of its features, defining its layers and analysing those factors that influence adjustment process.

### 2.3 Cross-cultural adjustment

Cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) appears as a precondition to the expatriation success; a vast amount of the literature concerning international assignments in fact, has adjustment as its focus and argues a positive relationship between CCA and performance. During the 1970s and the early 1980s, researchers developed the conventional wisdom according to which expatriates performance depends on their ability to adjust (Hays 1972, 1974; Howard 1974; Miller & Cheng 1978; Tung 1981). The crucial role of adjustment for overseas assignment effectiveness continued to be the main topic of expatriation studies from the late 1980s to the 1990s. Yet, by considering the expatriate inability to adjust the more likely cause of international assignment failure, nowadays the expatriation and CCT literature still consider cross-cultural adjustment as one of the core issues of the expatriation process (Thomas & Lazarova 2006). Due to the large attention given to the topic in the years, there is not a unique definition of adjustment; according to scholars, as reported in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Definitions of adjustment

Church (1982)	A normal process of adaptation to cultural stress involving such symptoms as anxiety, helplessness, irritability, and longing for more predictable and gratifying environment
Searle & Ward (1990)	Psychological well-being and sociocultural competence
Black and Gregersen, (1991)	The degree of a person's psychological well-being with various aspects of a new setting
Black et al. (1991)	Individual's ability to get along with and effectively interact with host nationals, new culture, and new environment
Berry (1992)	Increased fit and reduced conflict between the environmental demands and the individual attitudinal and behavioural inclinations
Aycan, (1997)	The degree of fit between the expatriate manager and the environment in both work and non-work domains
Shaffer et al. (1999)	The vital construct underlying the rewards and costs of expatriate experiences to individuals, their families and their firms.
Selmer et al. (2000)	The expatriate's ability to negotiate interactive aspects of the host culture measured by the degree of difficulty experienced in managing day-to-day situations in the host culture
Hippler (2000)	The general satisfaction with one's life in the new environment
Puck, Kittler & Wright (2008)	The degree of psychological adjustment experienced by the individual within a new society or the degree of psychological comfort and familiarity perceived within a new environment



These definitions include several aspects, yet they focus on a similar perspective. Hence, it is possible to consider cross-cultural adjustment as a situation of individual psychological comfort in a new work and socio-cultural setting, involving familiarity with the host culture and effective communication with locals. Consistently, in this thesis, adjustment is conceived as the psychological adjustment of the international assignee to the new culture, including the effective interaction with the host nationals and the achievement of a sense of well-being related to the new setting, both in terms of work and non-work domains.

There is a long discussion in the academic literature arguing whether adjustment is a unitary or multi-faceted phenomenon. Those supporting the first perspective focus on the individual's adjustment to the general environment conceiving adjustment as a unitary process (Lysgaard 1955; Oberg 1960; Ruben & Kealey 1979; Torbiorn 1982; Tung 1987). However, most of the adjustment literature of recent years is based on Black, Mendenhall & Oddou's framework (1991), which distinguishes three dimensions of adjustment: work, interaction and general adjustment.

*Work adjustment* is intended as the level of comfort associated with the job environment and it encompasses responsibilities, performance tasks, expectations and supervision. These factors, as well as daily-routines and decision-making processes, may be very different from the home to the host country organization causing problems in communication or in completing the work. It is considered the easiest of adjustment facets and it is essential in order to succeed in the international assignment (Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall & Stroh 2005).

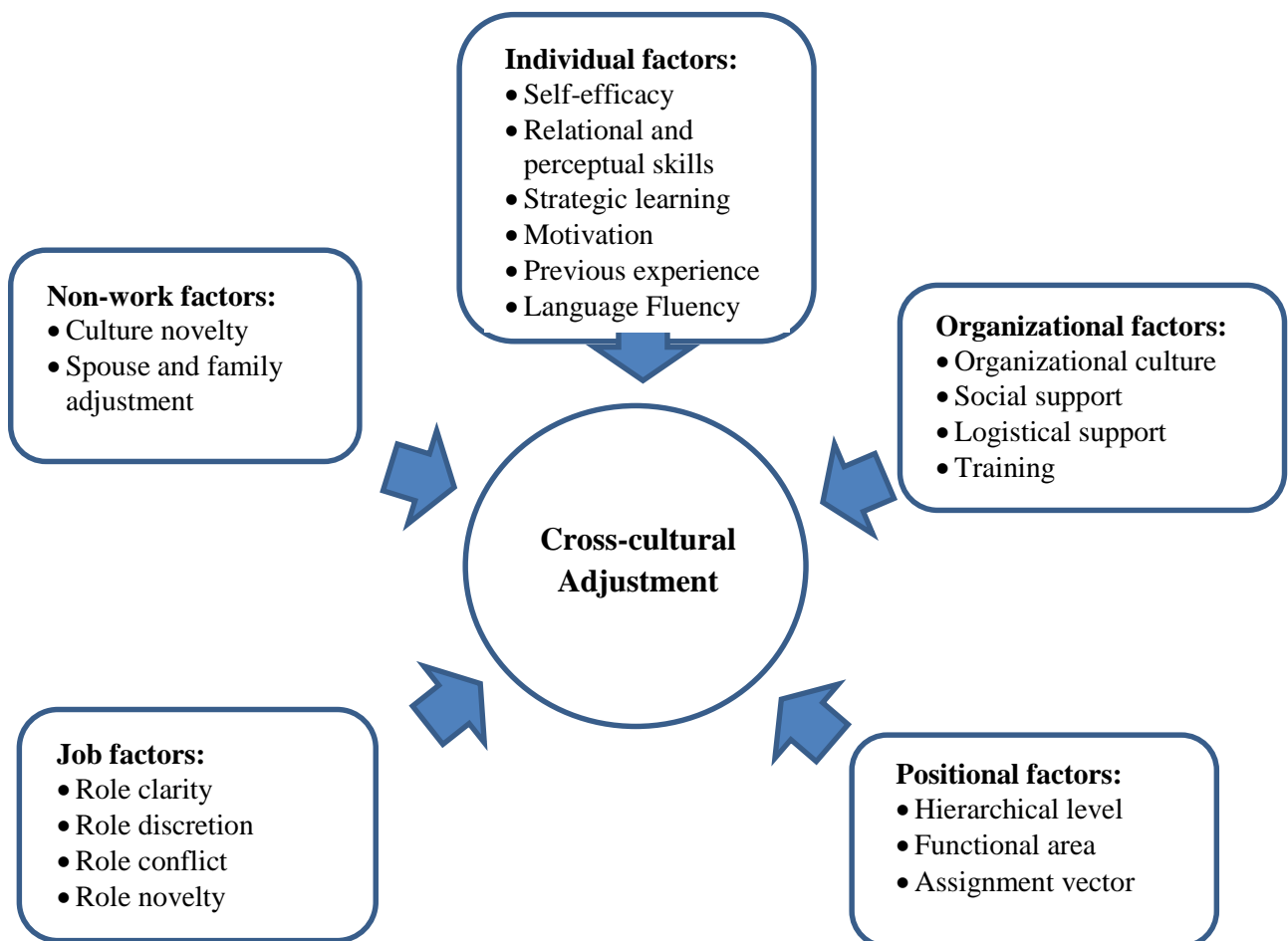
*Interaction adjustment* concerns the relational aspect of adjustment; it refers in fact to the ability to interact and communicate with host-country national both inside and outside the work environment. Cultural differences, language fluency and variances in assumption and values affect one's ability to interact effectively with individuals in the foreign country (Black & Gregersen 1999).

*General adjustment* is the degree of psychological comfort related to life conditions in the foreign country and it involves various non-work factors including culture setting, climate, health-care, daily customs, transportation, entertainment, facilities, food, housing and so forth (Black et al. 2005).

Ward & Kennedy (1992) re-elaborate this multidimensional framework and present two types of international adjustment grouping Black's dimensions in the socio-cultural adjustment and adding the category of psychological adjustment. The first type refers to those aspects considered important for expatriation success and involve primarily new knowledge, skills and behaviours. The latter concerns the development and preservation of a new approach that leads to an overall subjective well-being, which involves happiness feelings and the ability to handle problems and enjoy daily activities (Vance & Pail 2011: 255).

Whether classifying it a unitary or multidimensional phenomenon, cross-cultural adjustment has a great significance in the literature concerning expatriation process. The literature of the past decades and researchers' personal experience in fact, led to the construction and spread of a main stream, which insistently argues on the influence cross-cultural adjustment has on the outcome of the assignment, as well as on the overall expatriate performance. Nevertheless, the positive relationship between adjustment and performance has been the centre of many debates in adjustment literature. Thomas & Lazarova (2006), for instance, reject this assumption assuming a critical position towards this main stream. According to their review in fact, the positive relationship between adjustment and performance is the result of an uncritical assumption likely to develop generalizations in the field. On the other hand, Poonpol (2010) argues that, among the elements expected to have positive relationship with expatriate performance, CCA must be considered. Based on previous research (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al. 1991; Caligiuri et al. 2001) he claims that a higher cultural distance leads to lower adjustment and performance; moreover, he believes that an effective use of the new knowledge and experience is essential to facilitate the comprehension of the international setting where the expatriate is working.

Although there are conflicting perspectives concerning adjustment-performance relationship, the role of adjustment appears crucial for the overall expatriate process and its outcomes; hence, it is important to consider those factors that influence cross-cultural adjustment process. Black et al. (1991) identified four main categories of affecting elements: job, individual, non-work and organizational. This model has been later revised and other categories or sub-categories added (Shaffer et al. 1999). Figure 2 summarises the main factors identified in different studies.



**Figure 2:** Factors influencing cross-cultural adjustment (adapted from Harzing & Ruysseveldt, 2004)

*Individual factors:*

Individual factors refer to personal traits and features that are likely to have an effect on expatriate's adjustment. Bandura (1977) refers to self-efficiency as the personal ability to adjust to a new environment; together with relational and perceptual skills it helps expatriates both in work and interaction adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005).

Relational and perceptual skills improve expatriate's ability to interact and understand appropriate behaviours (Black et al. 1991). Language fluency and previous international experience as well can enhance adjustment, the first facilitating communication, the latter reducing cultural shock (Black et al. 1991). Moreover, Poonpol (2010) argues that the level of strategic learning, meaning personal learning orientation/predisposition, and motivation, in terms of compensation package, career advancement and new experience possibilities, are likely to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment.

*Non-work factors:*

Non-work factors refer to those elements that affect expatriates' adjustment, which are not directly related to work and are commonly identified as family and spouse adjustment and culture novelty (Black et al. 1991, Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley 1999). Family and spouse adjustment has been identified by Tung (1987) as one of the main causes of expatriation failure; concerning adjustment well adjusted spouse and family have a positive influence on the expatriate facilitating his/her gradual adjustment (McCaughey & Bruning, 2004). Therefore, MNCs must pay attention to expatriate's family considering them as part of the expatriation process (Andreason, 2003; McCaughey & Bruning, 2004; Porter & Tansky, 1999). Cultural novelty depends on the degree of cultural distance between home and host country, a greater cultural novelty will create higher uncertainty and will negatively impact on the adjustment process; it affects all the three categories of adjustment and reactions in terms of culture shock depends on the level of culture novelty (Andreason 2003, Black et al. 1991).

*Job factors:*

Job factors are connected to specific tasks and duties an individual has to carry out and have the highest impact on work adjustment (Andreason 2003). Black et al. (1991) include in this category of factors role conflict, role novelty, role clarity and role discretion. Role conflict arises since expatriates get conflicting messages about how they should behave and what is expected from them in the new environment. Other than understanding which his role is and how to carry out the related tasks, the expatriate has to face role novelty, which is “the degree to which the current role is different from past roles” (Black. et al. 1991). Both factors increase the level of uncertainty and deter adjustment. Pre-departure and in-country training are expected to make adjusting to work easier, helping expatriates to cope with social, legal, economic, technical and physical demands differences (Andreason 2003, Shaffer et al. 1999; Black et al. 1991). Role clarity and role discretion on the other hand, positively influence work adjustment, the first providing a clear set of expectations and behaviours, the latter giving a greater flexibility leading to a better suit of the individual to the job; both decrease overall uncertainty (Nicholson 1984, Black et al. 1991).

*Positional factors:*

Linked to the work dimensions, Sheffer et al. (1999) added positional factors as moderating elements in cross-cultural adjustment; these are hierarchical level, functional area and assignment vectors. Due to the different type of work and to the different levels of responsibilities and authority an individual had in previous assignments, the previous experience has a positive or negative effect on adjustment. The functional area is significant on adjustment only in terms of language fluency since for example technical expatriates need higher language competences in order to achieve work adjustment. Finally, the assignment vectors classified in parent country national, third country national and inpatriates (Briscoe 1995) affect adjustment in terms of relationships and interaction (Shaffer et al. 1999).

*Organizational factors:*

Among the elements influencing adjustment, organizational factors such as organization cultural novelty, social support, logistical support and training exercise their influence from inside the organization. Organizational culture novelty refers to the degree of difference occurring between the home and host country organization. The higher this difference the harder work adjustment will be (Black et al. 1991); organizational culture in fact is made of shared values, beliefs, behaviours and practices that are often implicit and guide individuals' attitudes within the organization, holding organizations together (Sirmon & Lane 2004). Social support refers to helping relationships with co-workers and superiors; this kind of support can decrease uncertainty and provide useful hints on how expatriates should behave according to the new culture and organization (Andreason 2003, Shaffer et al. 1999). Logistical support is a concept that can be assimilated to individual motivation, indeed it includes compensation and benefit packages that MNCs provide to expatriates in order to attract and retain staff, incentive them to go on overseas assignment and facilitate their adjustment through housing, school search and standard of living (Dowling 1999).

Another organizational factor that should be provided to facilitate adjustment is cross-cultural training. Caligiuri et al. (2001), suggest that MNCs need to train expatriates in order to develop and strengthen their international competences, including the ability to adjust to different cultures and environment. CCT is argued to enhance expatriates adjustment, specifically promoting international learning and providing insights on appropriate norms and behaviours and more realistic expectations. According to several researches CCT is likely to reduce cultural distance, increase adjustment and lower expatriate failure (Black et al. 1991; Black & Mendenhall 1989-1990; Caligiuri et al. 2001; Pothukuchi, Damanpour, Choi, Chen & Park 2002).

The literature review here proposed has so far faced those that are the topics needed to proceed to the next section concerning CCT, the core subject of this thesis. Cross-cultural adjustment in fact is one of the main criteria adopted in this thesis to define the effectiveness of training programs. The purpose of the following section is to define CCT and its theoretical frameworks, discuss its technical features and mostly review the literature concerning effectiveness training.

## 2.4 Cross-Cultural Training

Due to the widespread adoption of expatriates to compete and operate in an international and globalized business environment, the management of international assignees is a crucial matter for HR department. Given the cost of expatriation, MNCs are progressively realizing that it is necessary to carry out every effort necessary to promote assignee success. Cross-cultural training is one of the critical means implemented by MNCs in order to succeed in expatriation processes (Bennet, Aston & Colquohn, 2000). The past few decades have seen an increasing branch of researchers examining CCT and a vast amount of definitions has emerged. The most recurring defines CCT as “the educative processes used to improve intercultural learning via the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies needed for successful interactions in diverse cultures” (Landis and Brislin 1983, Morris & Robie 2001). This definition represents a valid and consistent starting point for the description of CCT and the features arising from diverse studies.

Surveys conducted in the past years indicated MNCs as reluctant to provide pre-departure training, mostly due to a sceptical attitude towards the effectiveness of cross-cultural training, to the belief that technical competences will ensure success and to the costs associated with training. Tung (1982) reported that only 32% of U.S. multinationals tended to use training programs for expatriates, European and Japanese companies on the other hand showed higher rates, 69% and 57%, respectively. However, surveys conducted in recent years show that there has been a positive trend of growth with respect to MNCs offering CCT. Studies indicate that the percentage of U.S. companies providing CCT for their international assignees has shifted to over 60% (Arthur Andersen & Bennet Associates 1997). Similar numbers have resulted from researches among European companies (Cendant International Assignment Services, *International Assignments: Policies and Practices*, 1999). A survey by Andersen Consulting revealed that among the best 32 of 500 Fortune organizations 69% offered cross-cultural training to their expatriates. In addition, Sinangil and Ones (2001) illustrated that approximately 63% of 250 companies examined offered cross-cultural training to international assignees. Researchers therefore, suggest that companies increasingly use training as a staffing

practice in international human resource management in order to successfully transfer their personnel across borders.

Once an employee has been selected for an international assignment, providing him/her with some form of training is the following step in order to enhance the expatriate's effectiveness and success overseas, since functional and technical abilities alone are not enough to determine success (Dowling et al. 1999). In order to operate effectively in a complex and ever-changing environment, international business managers may be facilitated through the training and development of cross-cultural competences. Providing an expatriate with contents and skills that will improve his/her interaction with host-country nationals and incrementing the assignee knowledge regarding culture and expected norms and behaviours may help him/her to cope with cultural diversity, to develop a gradual perception of familiarity and comfort and to proficiently adapt to the new context. However, Kaeley and Protheroe (1996) identify a different stream in the literature concerning intercultural training. Despite the widespread literature's consensus regarding the effectiveness of CCT, the authors suggest that empirical investigation appears inadequate, furthermore they highlight how part of the training community often assume that a careful and effective selection of high-performing managers is enough to ensure a satisfying performance. A variant of this perspective is that the motivations and the previous experiences of the assignee may affect the result of training more than expected, resulting more determinant for the overseas success, than the training programme itself.

In order to ensure that training is effectively considered as a useful tool from MNCs and to maximize the desired outcomes both in terms of impact on the employee adjustment and organizational performance, designing effective CCT programmes should be guided by a systematic approach (Vance & Paik, 2002). There are several models and versions of this systematic process, but they generally follow a similar path based on different phases relevant to the training development, related to the needs and goals stated and involving issues concerning content, methodologies, duration and timing (Littrell et al., 2006). Hence, to tailor programmes able to satisfy specific company and assignees' requirements, an exhaustive analysis and evaluation of the expatriate's needs should be



conducted. Based on this needs assessment, general or specific content structure is chosen, the instructional method defined and adequate timing and duration provided; the aim in fact is to develop a well-structured, consistent and integrative programme, which can be truly effective (Bennet et al. 2000). A comprehensive example is the model elaborated by Tarique & Caligiuri (2003), who propose a systematic process of designing effective CCT programmes based on five distinct phases: identification of the type of global assignment, determination of the specific cross-cultural training needs, establishment of goals and measures, development and delivery of CCT programme, evaluation of CCT effectiveness.

Researchers have proposed a variety of theoretical frameworks dedicated to the analysis of the role of intercultural training, its development and the building of its layers. A close look to the development of training programmes, with the analysis of its components, as well as a review of the main related studies may help to clarify the key findings and the central theories underlying the CCT literature, which still lacks of a unitary perspective (Littrel et al. 2006). For the purpose of this thesis, the critical review of the main studies concerning CCT effectiveness conducted in the past decades represents the core part of the literature, and will be widely discussed further. However, first it is important to focus on the design of the training programme, in order to understand what the theories elaborated by researchers suggest in terms of CCT features and development.

#### **2.4.1 The development of effective cross-cultural training programmes**

There are different types of global assignments, which can be distinguished in technical, functional, developmental and strategic. According to the type of assignment CCT configuration will be different based on the aims required from the assignment in order to be successful. Assignees sent abroad to fulfil technical assignments are expected to face work tasks similar to those carried out in the home country, and interactions with host nationals are not essential for the outcome of the assignment. On the other hand, functional assignments involve a significant amount of interactions with host nationals, therefore cross-cultural skills are needed to be successful. Developmental assignments have as a main goal individual development; whereas strategic assignments imply tasks

related to the competitiveness of the organization, hence cross-cultural abilities and adjustment levels of these assignees are crucial (Caligiuri & Lazarova 2001; Caligiuri & Tarique 2003).

The definition of the type of assignment is important for the analysis of the training needs, which is articulated on three levels: organizational, individual and indeed, assignment level. At the organizational level, it is important to analyse the context for cross-cultural training including culture, politics, structure and strategy of the MNC in order to develop a training programme able to support the global strategy both at the headquarters and at the subsidiary level. The individual analysis considers specifically the assignee needs based on his/her previous international experience, on his/her cross-cultural competences and communication style, on his/her perception of CCT and on his/her family needs. Finally, the assignment analysis determines the cross-cultural knowledge and skills required to carry out important tasks and complete successfully the global assignment (Vance & Paik 2011; Caligiuri & Tarique 2006).

Once cross-cultural training needs have been analysed and identified, Caligiuri & Tarique (2006) suggest that long-term and short-term goals of cross-cultural training should be stated. Long-term goals generally refer to every international assignment and can be summarized with the improvement of cross-cultural adjustment and the development of cross-cultural skills. Whereas, short-term goals are specific and different for each assignment and aim at the understanding of the specific cultural values for the development of adaptive behaviours and the effective management of the expatriate's attitude towards the new culture and setting.

Broadly speaking the objective of CCT is to support assignment success helping expatriates to understand and manage conflict situations arising from cross-cultural differences, prepare them for daily reality, develop capable and valid workers who can enhance MNCs competitiveness and effectiveness on an international scale (Joshua-Gojer 2012; Caligiuri & Tarique 2006). Overseas success in fact, encompasses people's ability to cope with unexpected situations in a new culture, which Early (1987) states as a major objective of CCT. However, training programmes cannot predict and therefore prepare

expatriates for every event that may occur in the host country. Moreover, as Littrel et al. 2006 point out, CCT should provide expatriates with knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for personal adjustment, work adjustment and interaction with host nationals. Thus, essential goals of CCT programmes are both to teach the expatriate how to learn and to enable him/her to make isomorphic attributions, referred as the assignees ability to interpret and judge behaviours as host nationals would do (Brislin & Bhawuk, 1999). More specifically, Cushner and Brislin (1997) include as main training goals the development of positive relationships with host nationals and the assistance of expatriates in carrying out effectively work-related tasks, despite difficulties and stressors arisen during the international assignment.

#### **2.4.2 Cross-cultural training content and method**

After the determination of training needs and the statement of the specific goals, considerations concerning content and method are the further step for CCT design. The instructional method and the content, both determined to achieve the training goals and meet the organizational, individual and assignment needs, are strictly connected and often interdependent.

As Bennet et al. (2000) point out, CCT programmes need to be well designed and consistent with the company's strategies and the organizational culture. Training is better when customized and content and delivery methods coherent with the needs and the goals of the individual and of the organization. In order to maximize the company's return on investment in costly overseas assignments, expatriates are used to contribute to the organization global competitiveness mainly through the development of both individual and organizational competencies. To achieve such cross-national competencies CCT programmes should be tailored to support assignees in their performance, providing assistance in personal and professional transition; in their adjustment, helping expatriates to manage cultural distance; and in the organizational development, supporting the management of professional responsibilities. Furthermore, training should focus on another fundamental success factor, which is the ability to build trusting and respectful relationships, indispensable element of partnerships and alliances (Bennet et al. 2000).

In order to develop those skills necessary to cope with an unfamiliar setting, instructional content should include notions highlighting the influence culture has on human behaviour, the knowledge necessary for survival and possibly success in a foreign environment and the emotional challenges that an assignee is likely to face (Brewster and Pickard, 1994). According to research (Brislin & Yoshida 1994; Kohls & Brussow, 1995, Briscoe et al. 2011) and practitioners' experience, it is possible to identify a set of basic topics that a training programme should cover at minimum. Intercultural business skills, general and country-specific cultural awareness, practical approaches to culture-shock management, lifestyle adjustment, international transition and stress management are some examples.

Harrison (1994) on the other hand, focus on the most appropriate content structure based on both a general and a specific cultural orientation. General cultural orientation is necessary to identify the elements that possibly affect one's receptiveness to the training programme (e.g. resistance to change, ability to manage stress, understanding of purpose and values). Specific cultural orientation aims at the expatriates understanding of a specific culture, including appropriate cultural behaviours, customs, norms, diversity etc.

Gertsen (1990) made a similar distinction concerning training orientation, distinguishing general orientation, focused on the notion of culture, and specific orientation, which considers one particular culture. Furthermore, she identifies a conventional and an experimental form of training. The first is associated with schools and universities where knowledge and information are conveyed through a unidirectional communication. The latter consists instead of a participative kind of training where the trainee is involved in the simulation of real life situations. Thus, by combining these dimensions, four categories of training method emerge: general experimental training, general conventional training, specific experimental training, specific conventional training.

A variant of this view is the categorization proposed by Gudykunst, Guzley & Hammer (1996), who suggest CCT methodologies based on a didactic or experiential learning approach, and on a culture-general or culture-specific content of training. The discussion of content issues results similar to the one above-mentioned; however, the study proposes a further insight concerning the learning approach. The didactic approach is based on a

cognitive understanding of a culture and is practically delivered through lectures, seminars, reading material, orientation briefings and case studies. The experiential approach instead lays its foundations on the assumption that individuals learn best from their experiences; therefore, it is usually conveyed through role playing, look-see trips, in-country cultural coaching and immersion programmes.

Due to the variety of ways an expatriate can be trained, a set of theory-based frameworks have been progressively developed for the selection of the appropriate CCT method. Some situational and contextual factors have been identified, as well as their practical implications in the choice of training method. Brislin (1979) identifies three techniques that can be adopted in cross-cultural training: cognitive, affective and behavioural. The cognitive approach consists in the use of non-participative sessions or conferences for the provision of information on a foreign culture environment. The affective method involves individual reactions for the participants to learn how to deal with critical cultural episodes. The behavioural approach aims at the improvement of the trainee's communication style and the development of positive interactions with the host nationals.

A number of researchers have re-elaborated Brislin's model adding situational variables that might be considered as useful guidelines for determining and appropriate programme. Tung (1982) focuses on training rigor, meaning the extent of effort required by both trainees and trainers to prepare the trainees for expatriate positions. According to her studies, the level of training rigor depends on the degree of interaction expected between the individual and the members of the host culture and on the degree of dissimilarity between the home and host culture. Mendenhall, Dunbar and Oddou (1987) incrementing Tung's model, suggest that training methods, levels of training rigor and duration of the training should be correspondent to the degree of interaction expected in the international assignment and to the level of culture novelty, recalling the importance of cultural distance. Black et al. (1992) position is linear with the previous ones; their model of cross-cultural training in fact builds around the above-mentioned contextual and situational factors, adding the function and role of the managers as further element to consider.

On the other hand, Ronen (1989) and Black et al. (1992) pay attention to the individual variables, specifically personal learning objectives and the degree of active participation, which may shift the priorities of the training programme and the correspondent suitable approach. Consistently, Black and Mendenhall (1989) focus on expectations, motivations and incentives to apply learned behaviour in the host country and highlight how these individual factors affect the different aspects of learning process: attention, retention, reproduction (Bandura, 1977). The main aspects of learning theories will be further analysed related to the effectiveness of training programmes.

### **2.4.3 Timing of cross-cultural training**

Another issue concerning training method regards the timing of delivery. In the expatriation literature, a current debate exists on this topic: proponents of pre-departure CCT on one side, advocates of post-arrival or in-country CCT on the other. Pre-departure training is provided prior departure and is the most widely utilized form used by MNCs. It is argued that this type of training has the important function of preparing the employee and his/her family in terms of realistic expatiations, providing practical information and a basic knowledge of the host culture and of the living conditions. Bennet et al. (2001) suggest that less anxiety about the unknown will lead to a greater confidence about the expatriate ability to succeed. Furthermore, the anticipatory adjustment supposedly achieved through pre-departure training should enhance the actual adjustment once in the foreign country (Caligiuri et al. 2001).

Meanwhile, some researchers prefer post-arrival or in-country training based on the idea that the actual experiencing of the host country culture, beliefs and value enhances the learning capacity of the assignee (Black et al. 1999; Gudykunst et al., 1999; Selmer et al. 1998). Mendenhall & Stahl (2000), for instance, assert that pre-departure training cannot foresee and provide answers to all specific situations that may occur and even more an expatriate will tend to consult with other expatriates and in many cases this turns into “the blind leading the blind”. Therefore, according to their studies expatriates need in-country training to respond to their specific and unique needs and concerns.

Littrel et al. (2006) conclude that it is unclear whether pre-departure or post-arrival training is the best; hence, they focus on a new model of CCT that combines both methods in a sequential model of CCT. Through the theoretical framework of cross-cultural absorptive capacity (CCAC) Tarique (2001) explains theoretically why training contents and delivery need to be sequenced at different timings. The author proposes a sequenced series of pre-departure and post-arrival training assuming that the greater is the individual's prior accumulated cultural knowledge, the higher is the individual's learning of the new culture.

#### **2.4.4 Delivery of cross-cultural training**

Despite the traditional distinction of training programmes according to the didactic and experiential methods, reviewing CCT literature it is possible to classify training programmes in several delivery approaches (Littrel et al. 2006). Those most commonly discussed are area studies, attribution training, cultural awareness, intercultural effectiveness skills training and personal coaching.

Area studies are a component of all training programmes and involve the provision of information concerning the history, the culture, the economy and the social structure of the host country in order to provide the expatriate with a clear picture of the context in which he/she is going to live and operate. Together with practical information about the living conditions and the working realities, this kind of training helps the development of realistic expectations and a better understanding of the political and social environment. The clarification of strategic goals and of the organizational culture of the receiving organization, as well as an adequate knowledge of cultural and social traditions, should help the expatriate understanding many behaviours and dealing with unforeseen situations (Kaeley & Protheroe, 1996). The main techniques used to convey the content of area studies include lectures, seminars, reading material and audio-visuals (Briscoe. 1995).

Attribution training consists in a cognitive approach, where the objective is to enable expatriates to make isomorphic attributions, interpreting situations and explaining host national behaviour, as they were members of the host culture (Brislin & Bhawuk, 1999). Often, expatriates misinterpret host natives intentions and meanings and these incorrect

attributions may result in conflicts or misunderstandings. Hence, the ability to make attributions and analyse events from the perspective of a host national is considered helpful both for a successful adjustment and for work-related issues (Morris & Robie, 2001).

Cultural awareness is based on the assumption that a deeper knowledge and understanding of the unique components of the trainee's own culture will make him/her appreciate the differences occurring with the host culture, supposedly leading him/her to an appropriate responding to cultural stimuli (Littrel et al., 2006). This type of training aims at a higher personal involvement of the trainee, in terms of perception and feeling towards values, traditions and customs of his/her own culture and of the host one. Through the cultural knowledge, reinforced by the empathy for that culture, the expected result of cultural awareness is an enhancement of interactive skills, hence a less harm of host nationals' sensibility and the development of fruitful collaboration (Kaeley & Protheroe, 1996). Cultural assimilator is one popular training tool used for conveying cultural awareness; it provides trainees with scenarios of possible cross-cultural situations where the expatriate must decide the best alternative among different choices. The most appropriate answer for the specific situation will be provided and the reasons behind the trainee's choice will be examined. The aim is to understand the framework used by the expatriate for the evaluation of the most appropriate behaviour and to provide him/her with some decision-making experience (Morris & Robie, 2001).

Intercultural effective skills training is usually conveyed through experiential methods involving learning by doing such as role playing, behavioural method, simulations, action learning. The aim is to enhance expatriates adaptation, cross-cultural communication and partnership skills in order to teach international assignees how to adapt their personality and their professional styles to fit with the host environment (Kaeley & Protheroe, 1996). Preliminary visits are often included since a preview of the host location business and social context can enhance initial adjustment. In addition, interactions with the expatriate community are found to have a positive influence on expatriate adjustment (Brewster & Pickard, 1994). Similarly, Befus (1988) argues that on-the-job training, where an



experienced expatriate assists the incoming expatriate concerning business practices and life in general, is one of the best way through which international assignee may learn.

Finally, practical assistance may be provided through personal coaching, an emergent practice that involves external advisors or consultant for assisting expatriates in career decisions, in stressful and uncertain situations and daily challenges expatriates face while living and working overseas. It consists in a real-time coaching that embraces that part of the literature convinced that in-country training is the most effective. Mendenhall & Stahl (2000) emphasize the advantages of this type of training as its task-oriented and concrete approach, the tailored and individualized nature of personal counselling, as well as the confidential aspect of this instrument.

In order to define the main features concerning the effectiveness of cross-cultural training programmes, this section have faced progressively the different aspects of training. Reviewing the frameworks elaborated in the main studies it has been possible to identify the mostly adopted methods and the suggested content of CCT in relation to the training needs and objectives, considering issues such timing and delivery techniques. The following step will consist in the analysis of the various theories elaborated to explain why CCT should improve the success rates of expatriate assignment and that are likely to clarify the theoretical basis of effective training programmes. Finally, the last part of the chapter will refer to the effectiveness of such training programmes reviewing effectiveness literature, critically discussing the findings and defining the criteria that will be adopted in this thesis to assess the effectiveness of CCT programmes.

## **2.5 Cross-Cultural Training Effectiveness**

Although several theoretical frameworks have been proposed to enhance the development of CCT programs and to explain why and how training is supposed to effectively facilitate the adjustment and performance of expatriates on overseas assignment, research results in terms of CCT effectiveness still appear fragmentary and often conflicting. In order to define the criteria mostly adopted for the assessment of training effectiveness and the

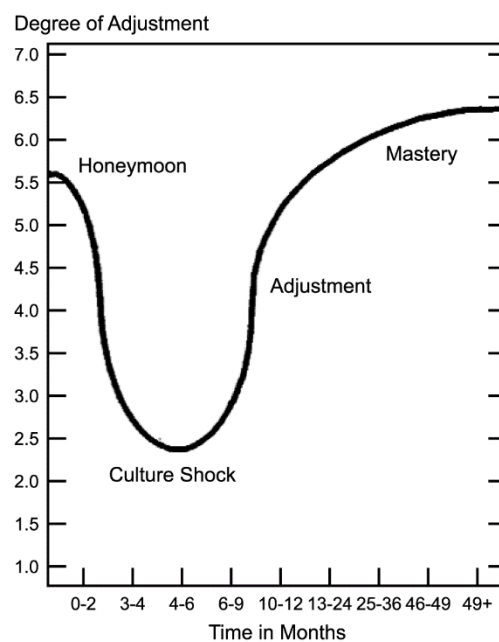
factors that may moderate training outcomes, in the next section the main theories guiding CCT research will be investigated and the literature of effectiveness training reviewed.

### 2.5.1 Theories guiding cross-cultural training research and development

In the debate concerning CCT effectiveness researchers have been developing many theoretical frameworks in order to investigate why and how CCT should improve the success rate of expatriate assignments (Littrel et al. 2006). Many of these theories have been used in different studies for the development of CCT programs as layers and guidelines. In the next section, the following theoretical frameworks that have been proposed by researchers will be discussed: U-curve theory, culture shock and the theory of met expectations; sequential model of adjustment and learning theories, where understanding how people learn appears a crucial aspect for the effectiveness of a training programme.

#### *U-curve theory*

The concept of cross-cultural adjustment is important for CCT purposes and is often integrated with the U-curve theory, which representation is shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** The U-curve (Liu & Lee, 2008)

In the U-curve framework developed by Lysgaard (1955) the adjustment process is explained by different steps that include the honeymoon, followed by the culture shock, the adjustment and the mastery phase. At the beginning of the operation abroad, there is an initial time of excitement, the so-called honeymoon, but after an average of 3 months, the feelings of stress, depression, and sometimes physically illness arise. At the end, the expatriate reaches a level of mastery in which he/she is able to understand and manage in the long-run the assignment abroad but only after a period of adjustment (Liu & Lee, 2008).

Vance & Paik (2011) propose a similar framework where international adjustment is characterized by a five-stage cycle, from which expatriate performance depends. In stage 1, the “honeymoon” or “tourist” stage, living in a new environment is perceived as a positive adventure where enthusiasm and energy drive the expatriate through a higher performance. This phase lasts soon and makes way to the culture shock, which characterizes stage 2. Dissatisfaction, homesickness, hostility towards the new setting, isolation and loneliness are the most common feelings experienced at this time; here the expatriate faces the different dimensions of international adjustment. Subsequently the expatriate whether surrenders to the culture shock and probably returns home early or overcomes this phase and steps in stage 3, the adjustment dimension. CCT should be able to aid the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates helping the overcome of culture shock. Through the gradual adjustment the decrease of the overall performance stops and, with the effective adjustment, as well as the enhancement of new skills that characterize stage 4, it starts to increase again. Stage 5, international mastery, is the last one, here personal development and professional competences are higher and the individual’s performance stabilizes. This theory is relevant in terms of CCT research since it highlights how expatriates experience different challenges at different times of the international assignment and suggests how CCT should be effective in the enhancement of adjustment.

#### *Sequential model of adjustment*

Consistently with the identification of different adjustment phases, Selmer and colleagues (1998) have proposed a model of CCT programme based on the concept that training is a

process. Thus, considering it as a cycle and not as a one-time event, its structure should be consistent in terms of content and timing with the adjustment phases. This framework proposes four phases of adjustment: the ethnocentric phase, the culture-shocked phase, the conformist phase, the adjusted phase. Each stage differs in terms of levels of personal psychological receptivity to the culture; hence, it leads to a different impact of training. The model of sequential CCT includes both pre-departure and post-arrival training elements and the features and techniques are designed according to the progress of the adjustment process. Pre-departure training should be provided to prepare the assignee for the many changes he/she is going to experience, information about living conditions and adjustment process should be included. Post-arrival training should help reducing the expatriate's cultural ethnocentrism and dealing with the culture shock through the development of cultural awareness. Once the first phases are over, the individual has been taught how to learn about his or her environment and the focus of CCT should shift to learning by doing through an experiential training. Here expatriates should interact with host nationals and deal with daily situations; the appropriateness of their attitude should be immediately assessed and the learned behaviour applied to real-life situations.

### *Culture shock theory*

Yet related to cross-cultural adjustment and U-curve theory is the culture shock theory. Littrel et al. (2006), based on Befus (1998) and Church (1982) studies, define culture shock as “a normal process of transition, adaptation, and adjustment in which an individual who enters a foreign environment for an extended time period experiences cultural stress involving some degree of anxiety, confusion, disruption, helplessness, and irritability”. By including considerations concerning problems and challenges associated with culture shock, the design of CCT can be improved and likely reduce the expatriate levels of psychological discomfort. Hence, CCT should provide the expatriate with the skills necessary to cope with the problems associated with culture shock in terms of emotional, behavioural and intellectual effects.

A related perspective involves met expectations theory, where the purpose is to reduce the discrepancies existing between the expectations held by the expatriate and the reality

he/she is going to deal with. Caligiuri et al. (2001) argue that these inconsistencies may impede cross-cultural adjustment and increase dissatisfaction; on the other hand, if the initial expectations are consistent with the reality of the global assignment then the individual is more likely to be committed and adjusted. Therefore, CCT should be effective in creating realistic expectations and facilitating the overseas performance and adjustment of the expatriates.

### *Learning theory*

As above-mentioned, a basic concept for analysing whether and how CCT programmes are effective concerns learning theories; in fact, in order to design and develop effective training programmes it is important to figure out how people best learn. Learning is defined as “the acquisition of skills and abilities that results in a relatively permanent change in behaviour contended that the way in which training takes place can be extremely important” (Lee & Li, 2008). It is possible to identify three levels of learning that are relevant pertaining CCT: cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains (Vance & Paik, 2002). The cognitive domain of learning deals with intellectual and rational thinking processes and concerns the increase of knowledge, awareness and understanding. Within this domain there are various levels of learning: according to the depth and complexity of these levels an individual is able to comprehend a message or a concept; analyse a problem situation examining the most important aspects; synthesize and re-elaborate these aspects in order to find a solution; evaluate the best option for the achievement of the objective. The affective domain involves a deeper commitment and a more active participant interaction; it affects feelings, emotions, values, beliefs, attitudes and expectations. The psychomotor domain requires both intellect and motor coordination for the acquisition of information at a very deep and unconscious level.

Bandura (1977), in the late '70s proposed the social learning theory, where learning is seen as a process influenced by observation and experience and governed by four components: attention, retention, behaviour production and motivation. In order to learn from observation people need to note the main features of the behaviour in question; this attention component is affected both by personal factors, as sensory capacities or

experiences, and by the nature of the interaction or the model itself. The information gained from observation must be processed and remembered; retention is possible through the imaginary or verbal representation of mnemonic patterns in symbolic form. These retained symbols will be subsequently used in the behaviour production as criterion for comparison with their actions; actions will be progressively adjusted in order to reach an acceptable match with the model symbolically stored. Motivation influences the whole learning process: people are more encouraged to translate learning into behaviour, adopting the model observed, if it is seen as more likely to produce a positive outcome (Gibson, 2004). Black & Mendenhall (1990) apply Bandura's (1977) social learning theory to the scope of CCT. Through CCT, individuals are able to experience situations in a structured environment where by observing appropriate and inappropriate host country behaviours, they can base their own behaviours and attitudes on these models and reproduce them developing the skills necessary to interact properly overseas.

In addition, the way in which training takes place is claimed to be extremely important for CCT; specifically Lee & Li (2008) assert that the fit between teaching and learning style is decisive for the effectiveness of expatriate training. Learning style concerns how the learner perceives and processes information; Harvey & Novicevic (2001) for instance, argue that learners can be classified according to their learning style. Divergent learning style involves individuals who attempt to learn through observation and adaptation to environmental context; convergent style on the other hand implies the perception and analysis of both the problem and the context of the problem. Learners with an assimilation learning style are able to integrate several information to solve complex problems and situation, while an accommodative learning style makes the learner able to adapt himself to new settings, being versatile and goal-oriented. A different view is offered by Crooker (2002), who categorizes learners according to the concrete or abstract manner of perceiving concepts and to the experimental or cognitive way of processing information and learning. He combines these features on a perception continuum, thinking-feeling, with a processing continuum, reflective-active.

The result of Lee & Li (2008) study confirms that expatriates with a learning style that matches the teaching method tend to achieve higher expatriate effectiveness.

Furthermore, the authors analyse the influence of cultural differences and sustain that the perceived cultural distance has a moderator effect on training effectiveness. A frequent choice of theoretical framework for cross-cultural research in fact includes Hofstede's model (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede identified four distinct dimensions of culture on which countries differ: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity. The power distance dimension focus on how societies deal with inequalities in wealth and power between people; the uncertainty avoidance dimension states how different societies socialise their members into accepting ambiguous situations and tolerating uncertainty; the individualism-collectivism dimension analyses the relationship between the individual and the community; the masculinity-femininity dimension focus on the relationship between gender and work roles. The greater the cultural distance between the home and host country, the greater the moderator effect may be on CCT effectiveness. Thus, company need to consider cultural differences when providing training in order to enhance its effectiveness and reduce the problems related to cultural toughness (Black et al. 1992, Lee & Li 2008; Littrel et al. 2013).

### **2.5.2 Cross-cultural training effectiveness literature**

A large part of the literature supports the positive effects of CCT arguing that it is successful enhancing the expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and developing intercultural skills essential in overseas assignments. Specifically, Romero (2002) identifies a positive relationship between CCT and work-related effectiveness of expatriates, which would also indicate better expatriate adjustment. Furthermore, Waxin & Panaccio (2005), through a quantitative study involving more than 200 managers, found that CCT facilitates all three facets of adjustment, with a relatively lower influence on work adjustment. However, due to the research method adopted it is unclear how CCT effectively enhances adjustment, and why the work dimension is less affected. The benefits of CCT discussed in the literature go beyond adjustment; general cross-cultural adjustment in fact, has turn to be positively related to involvement and performance and negatively related to early return rates, influencing the success of the global assignment (Caligiuri et al. 2001; Deshpande & Viswersvaran 1992, Brewester, 1995).

Moreover, CCT is argued to enhance self-development, interpersonal relationships with host nationals and appropriate perceptions of the foreign culture through the development of cognitive skills. Deshpande & Viswersvaran (1992), in the attempt to put an end to the contradictory opinions of corporations and academicians, evaluate CCT effect using a meta-analytical framework where they interpret the development of these categories of skills as a link between CCT and cross-cultural efficiency. Also Morris & Robie (2001) conduct a meta-analysis with the aim of resolving the conflicting findings emerged from the previous studies on the same topic. They focus on the effects of cross-cultural training on expatriate performance and adjustment, and support CCT role in assisting adjustment, yet highlighting that the impact is weaker than expected. The strength of meta-analytic technique relies on the generalizability of findings since it involves cases from multiple studies. Anyhow, it is important to consider that this approach includes both the strengths and the limitations of all the researches involved and does not provide an explanation of the reasons behind the results.

Similar results are claimed by Black & Mendenhall (1990). Through a review of the cross-cultural literature in fact, they determine that CCT in general is effective. Despite the fact that findings are once again connected with the previous research, highlighting the need of further and new studies, the study presents an interesting perspective. It stresses the effectiveness of CCT in improving expatriate's communication and interaction abilities, in teaching behaviours adequate for the context, and consequently increasing the assignee feeling of well-being and self-confidence. Higher confidence and involvement should improve the expatriate satisfaction and adjustment, which may result in increased motivation and performance (Hodgets & Luthans 2000; Shim & Paprock 2002). Hence, in general, CCT can be considered a useful tool for facilitating expatriate success and increasing MNCs return on investment (Morris & Robie 2001; Bennet et al. 2000).

On the other hand, Brislin & Yoshida (1994) claim a non-significant relationship between CCT and expatriation outcomes, defining CCT as one of the several contributions designed to assist people sent overseas. Although the widespread literature's consensus on the effectiveness of CCT in fact, some research downsize the impact of CCT on the international assignment results. Cerdin (1996) for instance, neglects the influence of



intercultural training on the three facets of adjustment while Selmer (2005) identifies only a weak positive association with work adjustment for expatriates in joint ventures. Moreover, part of the literature seem to generally agree on the effectiveness of training in terms of learning results, knowledge and trainee satisfaction, but the effect on modification of behaviours and attitudes that would lead to adjustment and higher performance is in question (Kaeley & Protheroe 1996; Mendenhall et al. 2004).

On the contrary, Puck et al. (2008) reject any kind of effectiveness of CCT; through a quantitative study, they test the relationship between CCT and the level of adjustment, relating adjustment with CCT length and comprehensiveness in terms of content and methods, finding trivial or no relevant evidence. The research has the property of being complete in terms of research method, since in addition to the statistical approach interviews were conducted to better understand the results of the survey.

Finally, Kaeley & Protheroe (1996) aware of the ambiguity of previous research results, wonder if CCT can significantly provide expatriates with intercultural sensitiveness, communication skills, cross-cultural competencies and other qualities necessary to succeed in the international assignment. They critically review the existing literature and focusing on the methodological weaknesses of previous studies, they point out that it is impossible to create a direct link between training and performance; even if performance is improved it would still be unclear the role of training in determining this enhancement. Furthermore, emphasizing the deficiency of existing experimental research, they refuse to merely accept the adoption of intercultural training as solution for successful expatriation. In addition, they define the elements necessary for a more effective study and recommend proper research studies on the effectiveness of cross-cultural training.

Regarding the training scope, not even language training is subject to a unitary and consistent perspective. According to Littrel et al. (2006), language training is a desirable component of a training programme due to its role in facilitating intercultural adjustment. Anderson (2005), for instance, place language abilities as one of the elements, together with CCT and job-related training, that is likely to improve cross-cultural interactions, hence confidence and involvement in the international assignment.

English has become the language of world business; however, the exclusive reliance on English has implications both on a strategic and adjustment perspective. The process of important information and firm-specific interpretations are carried out by translation services with the risk of a leak of information and of misreading specific data. Moreover, language skills are important also in terms of cultural adjustment, a careless attitude towards the foreign language in fact, may denote a degree of ethnocentrism. Hence, as Gudykusnt et al. (1996) point out even if the international assignee is not fluent in the host language being able to exchange common courtesies shows an interest in the culture and in the host nationals that may result in the access to social support structures and the expatriate community.

Puck et al. (2008) found language training to be crucial for intercultural adjustment to take place, conceiving it as the central factor on which MNCs should focus on training rather than as a part of CCT. The central role of language is supported by the idea that communication is a fundamental aspect of management, thus, from a business perspective language abilities must be carefully considered. Forster (2000), on the other hand, through his study argues that language training is not a significant factor for the majority of his research respondents, with a 5% of them defining it as useful and only 2% finding it as essential. The interviewees though were British expatriates, hence it can be assumed that by being English mother tongue, the language barrier may be weaker than between two interlocutors both non English-native speakers.

The literature have been focusing also on the type of cross-cultural training in order to investigate the effect of the different types of cross-cultural training on cross-cultural adjustment. Early (1987) and Hammer & Martin (1992) tested both conventional training and field experiences and came to similar conclusions finding that both types of CCT have a positive effect on adjustment to the host country's culture. These results are consistent with other studies that have indicated the significant and enhancing effect of different types of CCT on expatriates' adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al. 1991). A study on western expatriates in Nigeria conducted by Opkara & Kabongo (2011) confirmed this positive relation for general conventional CCT, while general experimental CCT was found to have a weaker effect. However, experimental trainings

were pointed as the most effective ones, in particular those focusing specifically on the different aspects of the host country's culture. Other research, by verifying the different level of adjustment according to the type of CCT received, agrees with the identification of experimental and interpersonal training as the most effective one when it comes to modify the expatriate attitude towards a foreign culture (Prugger & Rogers 1994; Waxin & Panaccio 2005).

What emerges from the critical review of the existing effectiveness literature, which main findings are summarized in Table 2, is that due to the redundancy of the research conducted and the lack of new insights, no unitary perspective concerning CCT effectiveness and implementation has been reached. Based on the high importance of intercultural skills in today's international business world, researchers and academicians are responsible for solving the controversy that characterize the field of cross-cultural research and training. Hence, in order to provide MNCs and practitioners with consistent and effective recommendations for expatriates' preparation, further research is needed.

**Table 2:** Key findings from the CCT effectiveness literature

<b>P O S I T I V E  F I N D I N G S</b>	<b>Waxin &amp; Panaccio (2005)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CCT facilitates all the three facets of adjustment</li> <li>▪ CCT has a lower influence on work adjustment</li> <li>▪ Experimental and interpersonal training is the most effective in modifying expatriates' behaviour</li> </ul>
	<b>Deshpande &amp; Viswersvaran (1992)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CCT is effective and develops cognitive skills</li> <li>▪ CCT enhances: self-development; interpersonal relationships with locals; appropriate perceptions of the foreign culture</li> </ul>
	<b>Black &amp; Mendenhall (1990)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CCT is effective and improves expatriates' communication and interaction abilities</li> <li>▪ CCT teaches behaviours adequate for the context</li> <li>▪ CCT increases the assignees' feeling of well-being and self-confidence</li> <li>▪ Both conventional and experimental training enhance expatriates' adjustment</li> </ul>
	<b>Morris &amp; Robie (2001)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CCT assists adjustment</li> <li>▪ CCT's impact is weaker than expected</li> <li>▪ CCT is useful in facilitating expatriates' success</li> </ul>
	<b>Romero (2002)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Positive relationship between CCT and work-related effectiveness</li> </ul>
	<b>Littrel et al. (2006)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Language training facilitates intercultural adjustment.</li> </ul>

<b>N O N  P O S I T I V E  F I N D I N G S</b>	<b>Puck et al. (2008)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CCT is not effective in facilitating adjustment</li> <li>▪ CCT's length and comprehensiveness do not effect adjustment</li> </ul>
	<b>Kaeley &amp; Protheroe (1996)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is impossible to create a direct link between training and performance</li> <li>▪ Intercultural training is not a solution for successful expatriation</li> <li>▪ CCT's effect in the modification of behaviours and attitudes is in question</li> </ul>
	<b>Brislin &amp; Yoshida (1994)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-significant relationship between CCT and expatriation outcomes</li> <li>▪ CCT is one of the several contributions designed to assist expatriates</li> </ul>
	<b>Cerdin (1996)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intercultural training has no influence on the three facets of adjustment</li> </ul>
	<b>Forster (2000)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Language training is not a significant factor for expatriates</li> </ul>

The research conducted on CCT effectiveness often involves different variables in the assessment of effectiveness. The studies in fact, reveal the presence of many factors that may affect the training outcome and evaluation in terms of effectiveness. Littrel et al. (2006) suggest that the studies' results should be viewed aware of the possible effects that these moderating elements may have on the relationship between CCT and expatriate performance and adjustment. The learning-teaching dimension, together with motivation and cultural distance are often indicated as the main moderating factors of CCT effectiveness.

As previously stated, learning is a critical issue when considering CCT and its effectiveness. Lee & Li (2008) test the effect of learning style according to its fit with teaching method and agree with many academics and practitioners who have reported that the fit between teaching and learning is likely to enhance the effectiveness of expatriation training (Vance & Paik 2002; Kolb, Osland & Ribom 1995; Mc Murray 1998). Lee & Croker (2006) related the learning-teaching fit with the perceived need for training. The authors found that the fit between the instructors' teaching method and the expatriates'

learning style is positively related with both the perceived need for training and the training effectiveness. Motivation, meant as perceived need for training in fact, has been found as an important variable for the CCT outcome: the higher is the perceived need for training and greater the desire to learn, the higher is the training effectiveness (Lee & Croker 2008; Lee & Li 2008). Yet, the perceived need for training is argued to be affected by the expatriate's personal competence, the complexity of the task and cultural distance.

A large amount of studies have claimed that a substantial difference between host and home culture would lead to a higher level of difficulties in expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment. Whether it is referred to it in terms of "cultural distance" (Church, 1982), "hardness of culture" (Tung, 1987), or "cultural toughness" (Littrel et al. 2006) the perceived cultural differences is negatively linked to cross-cultural adjustment and is asserted to significantly affect the effectiveness of training programmes (Lee & Li 2008; Poonpol 2001; Littrel et al. 2006). The effect of cultural distance on the CCT effectiveness and adjustment is hard to assess, Hofstede's model is often adopted as framework for the evaluation of the cultural distance, but as Waxin & Panaccio (2005) point out it does not consider the perceived cultural distance, meaning the expatriate subjective feeling towards the host country. Littrel et al. (2006) suggest that a higher cultural toughness calls for a raised training rigor both in terms of training method and time spent on training, so that CCT can assist the expatriate in overcoming the challenges related to interacting and working in a culturally tough environment.

Finally, some organizational and individual attributes inferable from the factors influencing adjustment could have a moderating effect on adjustment and CCT effectiveness. The corporate culture influences the kind of CCT that the organization provides, and the perceived dissimilarity between home and host organizations may moderate the effect of CCT on adjustment (Joshua-Grojer 2012). Furthermore, a person's individual attributes in terms of adjustability, individual attitude and personality traits are important for the result of the expatriation process, hence selection is an essential element to associate with CCT (Littrel et al. 2006). Expatriates with no prior international experience register a higher effect of CCT on the three dimensions of adjustment, likely due to their higher perceived need of training (Waxin & Panaccio 2005). Finally,

contextual antecedents as the size of and connection with the expatriate community in the host location, the length of time spent overseas and the family support are linked to the expatriate's adjustment and the effectiveness of CCT (Brewster & Pickard 1994; Joshua-Gojer 2012).

### **2.5.3 Cross-cultural training and Cross-cultural adjustment**

An accurate analysis of CCT effectiveness literature indicates how, when dealing with CCT assessment, the focus is on adjustment and performance. However, a performance analysis would be complex since it would embrace the examination of factors specifically related to the organization business that would possibly result in indicators as ROI or similar ones. In addition, a comprehensive performance analysis would require necessarily a careful consideration of the overall strategy and its implications, which is hardly possible without being an integral part of the company and of its organizational culture. As Kealey & Protheroe (1996) point out it is impossible to create a direct link between training and performance, even if improved performance was documented it would still be unclear that the training was the determining factor. Moreover, this kind of analysis lies outside the scope of this thesis; here the aim is to highlight the individual perspective, specifically the expatriate's one, in order to obtain an empirical acknowledgement of his/her experience connected to the received training, so as to assess the utility training had throughout the expatriation process.

Consequently, assuming adjustment as a precondition to expatriate success, by adopting it as a criterion to evaluate CCT effectiveness, it might be possible to spot out training effects and assess its effectiveness. The adoption of cross-cultural adjustment as basis for training assessment, including its three dimensions, enables the study of personal point of view encompassing a variety of aspects that would perhaps lead to the identification of shortages and of possible progressions achievable through further researches in terms of training design and development.

Adjustment is proposed as an issue that goes all along with CCT analysis and its aspects: the main objectives of CCT as increasing interpersonal skills, developing the ability to

communicate and to overcome cultural distance, refer to adjustment as final achievement. Hence, it seems relevant for the purpose of this thesis to highlight the main connections existing between training programmes and adjustment that are inferable from the literature. In this chapter, CCA has been discussed in terms of its features, defining its layers and the factors that are likely to influence it positively or negatively. Accordingly, training has been conceived as an organizational factor able to affect adjustment, and in the literature analysed the idea that CCT's aim is to facilitate adjustment has been widely emphasised.

Since there is a lack of qualitative studies concerning CCT related to adjustment and the main studies analysed and conducted are quantitative, it is not clearly stated how CCT is supposed to enhance adjustment. Previous research shows that these two elements are interrelated; for instance, the elements that are said to affect CCT effectiveness are also factors able to influence CCA (e.g. cultural novelty, motivation, corporate culture, personal features), implying how the achievement of the first follows the other. Furthermore, the theories guiding cross-cultural training and research development as culture shock and u-curve theory entail an accurate consideration of adjustment issues. However, how training facilitates adjustment is less evident and not explicit; therefore, among the research that sustains a positive effect of CCT on CCA it might be useful to pinpoint those ways through which CCT effectively facilitates adjustment, in order to draw a clear link that allows us to investigate training effectiveness specifically in terms of adjustment.

People generally have an ethnocentric attitude, where their culture is conceived as the best and only way to do things; others are evaluated according to the standards of one's own culture and the individuals identify themselves with their own ethnic group. This limits the ability to accept cultural differences and the meanings and intentions of host national behaviour is often misunderstood (Lee J. 1966; Littrell et al. 2006). In order to adjust it is significant for the expatriate to get to know the nature of culture; since "once learned culture becomes a way of life, the sure, familiar, largely automatic way of getting what you want from your environment and as such it also becomes a value" (Oberg K. 2006:144). Therefore, CCT's function is to increase the expatriate's specific cross-

cultural knowledge of the host country in order to lead the individual to effectively adjust and operate across different cultural contexts, without any specific cultural context in mind (Caligiuri & Tarique 2006).

To enable adjustment and overcome the culture shock, interaction with people of the host country is of great relevance. In order to get people to talk and develop a common background, it is helpful to be aware of people's interests, and of the appropriate norms and behaviours in the host country (Poonpol 2010; Oberg K. 2006). Being able to communicate and interact with host nationals allows the expatriate to avoid feelings of isolation and alienation and to develop an ongoing sense of well-being critical for the initial psychological adjustment (Vance & Paik 2011). Through the self-confidence developed with successful communication and the new cultural meanings assimilated from the positive relationships with locals, in fact, it is easier to integrate and adjust.

The effective guidance and support provided through training programmes helps international assignees to operate effectively in the new setting improving their cross-national competencies; the practical information provided in terms of basic cultural traditions enhances assignees' adjustment to the local work realities (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). The development of cognitive models through which interpret behaviours and the ability to make isomorphic attribution for the analysis of the social situations that occur, are critical in the adjustment phases, and allow expatriate to fully understand how values and convictions affect work habits and organizational culture (Caligiuri & Tarique 2006; Morris & Robie 2001). Hence, CCT provides expatriates with a framework for understanding host national behaviours and develops a set of psychological and task-related competencies necessary for them to adapt their personal and professional styles to fit with the unique circumstances they face in the local culture and cope with unexpected situations (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Furthermore, the improvement of social relationships between expatriates and the members of the foreign culture, together with the perception of organizational support are helpful to build a sense of inclusion and tackle isolation, for a concrete cross-cultural adjustment (Vance & Paik 2011).



CCT helps to reduce the inconsistencies between expectations and reality through the clarification of the project objectives and the practical preparation of the expatriate for his/her overseas assignment. Planning effectively the international assignment and providing the assignee with country specific and job related information, in fact, is vital for building up accurate expectations and lower the levels of uncertainty and psychological distress. It is important for the international assignee to have realistic expectations in order to achieve cross-cultural adjustment through the preservation of a strong sense of control over the new circumstances, the management of the stress of transition, and the reduction of the behavioural and emotional effects of cultural shock (Forster 2000, Kealey & Protheroe 1996).

Finally, CCT enhances cross-cultural adjustment easing out the effect of culture distance. Developing the individual cross-cultural competencies and knowledge and providing him/her with some awareness concerning the main aspects on which cultures differ leads to a better understanding of the impact that the cultural differences may have on everyday habits and customs, reducing culture shock. Hence, the reduction of anxiety, the ability to accept differences and the assimilation of appropriate behaviours bridge such cultural distances, encouraging an anticipatory adjustment (Caligiuri & Tarique 2006; Poonpol 2010).

Summarizing what emerges from the literature, CCT enhances expatriates adjustment mainly through the recovery from culture shock, the development of positive and trusting relationships with host nationals, the understanding of local work realities, the creation of accurate expectations and the reduction of the effects of cultural distance. In order to provide a clear picture of what discussed so far about the relationship between CCT and CCA the researcher gathered the main concepts in Table 3 following the pattern developed in this paragraph. The aim is to show through which functions and elements cross-cultural training is supposed to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment.

**Table 3:** How CCT enhances CCA

<b>CCA's ENHANCEMENT:</b>	<b>CCT's FUNCTIONS:</b>
<b>Interactions with locals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- communication to avoid isolation</li> <li>- communication to develop a sense of well-being</li> <li>- communication to improve self-confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of a common background</li> <li>• teaching appropriate norms and behaviours</li> <li>• teaching how to approach people</li> </ul>
<b>Adjustment to local work realities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- isomorphic attributions</li> <li>- understanding of values, work habits and organizational culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing information on cultural traditions</li> <li>• development of cognitive models</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce inconsistencies reality-expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accurate expectations</li> <li>- lower uncertainty</li> <li>- lower psychological distress</li> <li>- realistic expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarification of objectives</li> <li>• practical preparation</li> <li>• providing country specific and job related information</li> </ul>
<b>Ease out cultural distance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- better understanding of the impact of culture</li> <li>- reduction of anxiety</li> <li>- acceptance of differences</li> <li>- assimilation of appropriate behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of cross-cultural competences</li> <li>• increasing knowledge and acceptance of differences</li> </ul>

The clear statement of the connection existing between CCT and CCA is important in order to define the criteria adopted for the training assessment, understand the data collected and analyse the findings, drawing consistent and relevant conclusions. For this purpose, the next chapter will explain in details the research methodology adopted, in order to guide the reader from the theoretical notions of the literature review to the findings emerged through the empirical research and its practical implications.

### **3. METHOD**

Research design is defined as “the general approach you will take to answering your research questions, as well as the specific techniques you will use to gather, analyse and interpret data” (Maylor & Blackmon 2005). Similarly Saunders et al. (2009: 136) describe it as “the general plan of how you will go about answering your research question” arguing that it should be consistent with the purpose of the study as a whole, providing a valid justification for the research choices made by the researcher.

The aim of this thesis is to assess the effectiveness of cross-cultural training programmes according to Italian expatriates’ perspective; hence, for the purpose of this study, the field of CCT and its assessment is investigated. Although the critical review of the main literature offers a useful overview of the key features of CCT and its effectiveness, in order to answer to the stated research questions, a consistent research methodology for the collection and analysis of data must be formulated. In this chapter, research philosophy and approach will be discussed, the structure and techniques for gathering and analysing data defined, as well as the criteria leading the study; finally, considerations concerning its reliability and validity will be formulated.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

According to Saunders et al. (2009: 107-108) the research philosophy concerns the development and nature of knowledge. It implies assumptions related to the research approach and method, and affects the author’s perspective, influencing the research project and the overall outcome. The philosophical approach underpinning this study is interpretivism; due to the nature of this study, characterized by a research conducted among people, the adoption of an empathetic viewpoint is important for the understanding of expatriates’ perspective on cross-cultural training and adjustment matters, which is affected by their personal experience and the host country environment. As Saunders et al. (2009: 116) point out the interpretivist philosophy is consistent with the human

resource field and management research, where circumstances highly affect people's behaviour and business situations are complex and unique. Moreover, because this study implies a qualitative research approach, the interpretation of other people's actions, the contextualization of insights and impressions in the specific environment the experience was developed and the conceptualization of data are important for drawing adequate conclusions.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

Concerning data collection and analysis techniques and procedures, it is possible to distinguish a quantitative and a qualitative approach. The simplest way to discern the two is to consider whether numeric or non-numeric data are included (Saunders et al. 2009: 151). Quantitative method in fact, mainly includes questionnaire or similar data collection techniques to gather information that will be processed and analysed through statistical procedures or other means of quantification, generating numerical results (Saunders 2009: 151). Statistical testing methods are used in order to verify the causal relationship between variables and to empirically test hypothesis for the validation of theories (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 2004:466; Stake 2010: 11). On the other hand, a qualitative approach implies the generation and use of non-numerical data, the aim is to obtain depth information and knowledge about a subject, a phenomenon or a situation and to highlight qualities, features and processes that cannot be measured in terms of quantity, frequency or amount. Quantitative research methods include the use of questionnaires, cross-sectional analysis and graphs, while qualitative studies deal with the use of interview, the categorisation of data and multi case studies (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 10).

When defining the research design it is important to choose the methodology that best suits the research project, consistently with the research question and objectives (Saunders et al. 2009: 137). Concerning this thesis, when determining how to best gather the information from expatriates regarding the CCT received and its effectiveness related to adjustment, the qualitative research method suits better. Qualitative data in fact, are more subjective and suit well on studies about human perception and understanding

(Stake 2010: 11). A qualitative method takes into account people and the context in which they operate, with a higher attention on diversity and an open-ended approach on the results that might emerge. Moreover, qualitative research is better at investigating the meaning behind the issue considered, focusing on feelings, attitudes, values, perceptions or motivations, as well as actions and interactions of people (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005). Specifically, due to the lack of qualitative studies concerning CCT effectiveness, data collected through interviews that aim at a deeper examination of the phenomenon are needed to completely understand the picture provided by the quantitative research so far conducted (Littrel et al. 2006).

In academic research, there are two main research approaches: deductive and inductive. Research through deduction implies the development of hypothesis based on a theoretical framework that is subsequently tested using the data collected. On the other hand, through induction, the data collected are explored and theories developed from these data, that will be subsequently related to the literature. This thesis presents an abductive approach, implying both inductive and deductive elements; however, the inductive method is predominant. Saunders et al. (2009: 124) observe that every master's thesis will use a theoretical basis in the research design. The deductive approach is implemented in the theoretical framework, which represents the layers for the study and provides an overview on the existing theories concerning CCT effectiveness.

Nevertheless, since qualitative research is scarce and the perspective of expatriates on CCT effect on adjustment is under-researched, the inductive approach is used to interpret the expatriates' responses and build new theory starting from their experiences. Induction is suitable with this research since it emphasises the understanding of the meanings humans attach to events, a close understanding of the research context and a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses (Saunders et al. 2009: 126). This fits with the qualitative research method since as Pratt (2009) points out much of learning appears throughout the research process. Moreover, the flexibility granted through an inductive and qualitative approach is consistent with the nature of this study, which is exploratory.

According to the research purpose, a study can be classified as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Explanatory studies are aimed at establishing the casual relationship between variables on the basis of theories; alternatively, if the purpose is to describe accurately persons' profile, events or situations the study is descriptive; data are collected after a clear picture of the phenomena is defined. Through an exploratory study, the focus is initially broad and it is narrowed down progressively with the research. The aim is to find out "what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light" (Robson 2002: 59). This study is based on semi-structured interviews and tries to explore the existing theories developed in the theoretical framework, and to suggest possibilities for upcoming research. Hence, the exploratory approach fits with the purpose of the research that is clarifying the role of CCT and its effectiveness according to Italian expatriates' adjustment.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 Data collection method**

In this study, primary data were collected through one to one semi-structured interviews in order to answer to the research questions. Interviews can be distinguished in structured and non-structured interviews according to the level of formality and depending on the predetermination of questions and topics. In the first case, the interview is addressed to a large number of people and the interviewer gives a specific direction to the discussion through formalized and standardized questions, organized in a uniform structure. Alternatively, in non-structured interviews the conversation is flexible, informal and unstructured, led by the interviewee's perception, which is important for the clarification and explanation of the responses (Holloway 1997; Saunders et al. 2009: 320-321).

Non-structured interviews can be unstructured/in-depth or semi-structured interviews. In unstructured/in-depth interviews there is not a stated list of questions, but the interviewee has the chance to talk freely, interpreting the questions made and providing an in depth personal sight on a general area (Saunders et al. 2009: 320-321; Holloway 1997). Semi-structured interviews instead, allow the researcher to have enough flexibility to adapt to

the respondent flow of conversation and simultaneously have control over the main themes that are going to be discussed. For the interpretation of data in fact, it is important that the interviewee is free to communicate his/her perception and to explain his/her answers according to his/her personal feelings and thoughts. For this reason, the questions are not stated in a specific and standard order; however, there is a list of themes and questions to be covered, considering the individual's unique needs and perspective (Saunders et al 2009: 320-321).

Semi-structured interviews suits best with the exploratory purpose of the study and the qualitative approach adopted in this research. Furthermore, this type of interviews seems appropriate since the research's aim is to gain the expatriate's perspective concerning CCT effectiveness, in relation to his/her adjustment process. Easterby, Thorpe & Lowe (2002) in fact, argue that this kind of interviews fit when the topic is confidential and there is the need of an in-depth understanding of the interviewee's opinion and logic. Hence, a form of interviewing that "allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants' responses" (Smith & Osborn, 2008) seems consistent with the scope of this thesis. It enables indeed, the researcher to interpret and analyse the interesting and important themes and aspects that arise from an informal conversation, which includes the respondents' opinions, thoughts and feelings. This interview method is appropriate also considering that the sample of respondents can be relatively small and that further information can be asked in order to clarify and refine the information provided (Stake 2010: 95).

The sampling technique adopted for data collection is the snowball sampling: a non-probability sampling that enables the researcher to identify the members of a specific target group when it is hard to spot potential respondents having the specific features required for the study. As Saunders et al. (2009: 240) argue, this sampling technique involves different steps; firstly, the researcher must make the initial contact with a member of the desired population, and this will identify new cases who will identify further cases and so on. The process stops once the sample's dimension would not be manageable if bigger or when no more members are given. This was the case for this study, as the identification of Italian expatriates who had been provided with CCT was

difficult and was made possible only through an initial contact that introduced the researcher to other members. In the next section, the sampling of the target group will be discussed further, together with the effective way the interviews were conducted.

### **3.3.2 Data collection process**

The researcher in accordance with the research design of the study has chosen semi-structured interviews as primary data collection method. The list of questions has been developed consistently with the topics faced in the literature review, in order to ensure the inclusion of the main elements necessary for the understanding and assessment of CCT programmes. Moreover, the set of questions follows the logic structured through objectives and research question, focusing on the pros and the cons of training programmes, and on the influence of such programmes on adjustment issues, in order to reach an overall training assessment according to the expatriate experience. The first part of questions aimed at investigating the participant personal and professional background both to figure out if there were elements able to condition the respondent answers, as age or marital status, and to consider the factors able to moderate CCT effects, as previous experiences or perceived cultural distance. The second part of the questionnaire focuses on the training received and its features, while the last part deals with adjustment and training assessment. The guidelines of the interview with the questionnaire framework are presented in Appendix 1, while Appendix 2 provides an example of the CCT programme MNCs provided to the expatriates. A pilot interview was conducted and questions were slightly adjusted to ensure the logic and the clarity of the interviews and of the topic covered.

The target group of this study is Italian expatriates who have been sent overseas by a MNC and who have been provided with an in-country or pre-departure CCT programme. The international assignment had to be finished so that the respondent could assess in retrospect the effectiveness of the training programme according to his/her adjustment process and his/her overall experience. The reason behind the choice of Italians as respondents consists in the importance of interpretation and understanding of findings; for the researcher and the participants sharing the same nationality is of advantage for



catching the expatriates' perspective and empathize with their feelings and thoughts, because of both the common cultural background and language. As above mentioned the technique used to find the participants was the snowball technique, due to timing constraints and the specificity of the target group requirements the identification of suitable members was difficult.

The first contact was made through the internet through an expatriate community; the other members were subsequently introduced through word of mouth. Overall, 5 people were interviewed, 2 were face-to-face interviews and 3 were conducted via Skype. Some background information of the respondents are provided in Table 4. Each expatriate is provided with a number that will be specified in brackets when it is useful to interrelate or contextualize the information analysed.

**Table 4:** The interviewees' features

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Age</b>	42	28	31	58	45
<b>Host Country</b>	USA	USA	USA	China & South Africa	Venezuela
<b>Job Role</b>	Engineer	HR executive	Manager	Manager	Engineer
<b>Length of Assignment</b>	1 Year	1 Year	2 Years	1 Year & 4 Years	1 Year

The respondents were contacted via email and provided with information about the study, and with general guidelines concerning the interview and its duration. Confidentiality and anonymity were granted and the interviewee was aware that he/she could choose not to answer to any question. The researcher provided the respondents with a questionnaire sample during the interview in order to have more efficient interviews and to allow participants to express themselves naturally, yet having an idea about what themes were going to be displayed.

Each interview lasted around 45 minutes and was recorded and transcribed; the researcher took personal notes with the aim of capturing the individual's perspective and impressions. Interviews were conducted in Italian, since it is the native language of both the interviewer and the respondents; this allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and express themselves naturally and in an informal way. However, Italian language was occasionally combined with English expressions that helped the researcher in the interpretation and understanding of the information, since it was a natural display of the participants' thoughts on issues expatriates were used to face in English.

Due to the difficulties arose from the identification of the target group, the research emphasis has been modified as the research proceeded; a certain flexibility was necessary to maximize the learning throughout the research process. This is consistent with the nature of this study, which is exploratory, and with the inductive and qualitative approach. Moreover, the heterogeneity of the interviewees provided broad perspectives on the issue in question, even though the sample's dimension was not wide. Yet, for the research's scope and purpose, the quality of the interviewees' answers and its interpretation is of greater matter rather than the number of the actual interviewees.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

A qualitative research involves the generation and use of non-numerical data, where meanings are expressed thorough words, information collected are non-standardised and conceptualisation is necessary for processing data. The aim is to obtain a deep knowledge about a subject, a phenomenon or a situation and to highlight qualities; hence, in order to analyse data in a meaningful way, it is important to take into account the nature of the study and its implications (Saunders et al. 2009: 482). Qualitative method is more subjective and explains problems and conditions from the point of previous experience and research. The data collected can be found in many forms and due to its features, there is no standardised way to analyse or interpret data in a qualitative study. There is no unique procedure that is broadly accepted, instead it depends on the research topic and on the researcher personal style (Smith et al. 2008; Neuman, 2006)

Data collection and analysis reflect either a deductive or an inductive perspective. As above stated this thesis implies both approaches. A conceptual framework was formulated before data collection for the researcher to develop a clear direction, while data analysis implied exploring the information collected. It was based on interpretation and focused on the close understanding of the research context and of the subjective perspective of each interviewee.

Miles and Huberman (1994) formulated an analytical procedure named as the “data display and analysis”. This process of analysis implies three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Firstly, information are summarized and simplified according to the aspects on which the researcher wants to focus; subsequently data are disposed and gathered for an appropriate representation able to support analytical thinking. The process ends with the conclusion drawing and verification, which should have been facilitated by the data reduction and display steps.

In this thesis, Miles and Huberman’s model has been adopted for the data analysis due to its suitability with the qualitative and abductive approach of the study. Qualitative analysis starts through the transcription of data; thus, interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed and translated in English. The researcher then read thoroughly the interviews, adding the notes written during the conversation with the participants; moreover, ideas concerning specific aspects of the research were included through self-memos. Once the researcher had sufficiently familiarized with the content of the interviews, the main themes of the discussions were collected and summarized, in order to focus on the priority elements for answering to the research questions. For example, the elements concerning adjustment arisen during the interviews were gathered as well as the information concerning the expatriates’ perspective about CCT programmes in terms of both features and effects. Hence, a reporting pattern was formulated and through the use of a chart the answers were divided according to the research questions they were going to fulfil. At the same time, the elements not directly linked with the research questions were gathered and linked to the main themes in order to draw the big picture and contextualize the answers as best as possible. Once the content of each interview was

analysed and data were connected, organized and processed; the findings were discussed in light of the theories faced and summarized in the literature review. Finally, conclusions were drawn through the interpretation of the various aspects emerged from the interviews and taking into consideration the extant literature.

### **3.5 Reliability & Validity**

In a qualitative exploratory study conducted through semi-structured interview great emphasis is given to the importance of data quality, thus it is necessary to make some considerations concerning the reliability and the validity of the research. Reliability is conceived as the consistency of findings related to data collection techniques and analysis procedures. By adopting the same procedures in analogous contexts, other researchers should be able to reach the same findings, hence it is usually considered as the possibility to repeat or reproduce the results of the research (Yin, 2003). Validity on the other hand concerns the accuracy of the conducted research, for the achievement of unambiguous findings (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005). Saunders et al. (2009: 157) assert that it “is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be”. However, both concepts should be considered in light of and consistently with the research approach of the study.

Non-standardized interviews are used for exploring complex and dynamic circumstances; therefore, the research procedures are not necessarily meant to be repeatable. The uniqueness of this type of study may be intended as a weakness, which can be overcome through the accurate definition of the research design explaining every step of the process and connecting the facts according to a specific logic. This should enable others to reanalyse the data the researcher has collected in light of the accurate explanation of the research design, granting an adequate level of reliability (Saunders et al. 2009: 328). Concerning validity in non-structured qualitative interviews, it is intended as the researcher’s ability to obtain access to the interviewees’ knowledge and experience and to understand the meanings the participants want to communicate. Hence, validity is achieved through accurate interviews where questions are clear, meanings are

investigated and issues are faced from different perspectives (Saunders et al. 2009: 327). Different form of bias, first of all interviewer and interviewee bias may threat the reliability and validity of the study; yet they can be avoided through the careful preparation of the interviews. Preparation in fact, is a key element for the quality of data collection and represents, together with the credibility that the interviewer is able to instil in the respondents, a determinant for the research's reliability and validity (Saunders et al. 2009: 328).

In this thesis, the researcher tried to avoid the threat to reliability concerning replication issues in qualitative studies, through the accurate definition of the research design, the clarification of the criteria adopted, the statement of the methods utilized and the explanation of the reasons underlying methodological choices. A comprehensive literature review including the main theories concerning the topic was formulated before conducting the interviews in order to enhance the interviewer's credibility through the familiarization with the topic and the development of an adequate knowledge of the subject. This promoted also the validity of the study, since it enabled the researcher to develop a clear sense of direction when formulating the questionnaire and to make logical connections between theory and findings. Moreover, for the collection of reliable and valid data, a pilot interview for testing the impact and understanding of questions was made and interviews were recorded and transcribed for a thorough analysis, in order to catch all details provided by the respondent.

In order to avoid the interviewer and interviewee bias, and thus promote reliability and validity, several precautions were adopted. In the first place, the respondents were supplied with a sufficient amount of information before the meeting for a comprehensive understanding of the interview's aim and study purpose. This allowed the interviewees to prepare themselves to the discussion and to provide additional organizational documentation concerning the CCT programmes received, as those showed in Appendix 2. Questions were phrased in order to catch real-life experiences of the participants and presented as neutral as possible. A copy of the questionnaire was handed to the interviewees to ensure their full understanding of the questions and to provide them with the chance to read the question and potentially avoid response and interviewer bias.

Moreover, the respondents could ask clarifications about the themes faced so that the content and context of the interviews were made clear. Misinterpretation of responses due to cultural and language differences were minimized by using the interviewees' native language. Additionally, as an attempt to reduce response bias, the interviews started with the researcher granting once again the interviewees' anonymity and confidentiality in order to increase their sense of confidence and trust, and reducing their uncertainties in sharing information. The respondents decided location and timing of the interviews so that it was convenient for them and they could feel comfortable in sharing their experience; this precaution was intended to increase the access to the information and experience of the participants, thus promoting the validity of the study.

A final issue concerns the generalizability of findings from qualitative research, concerning whether the findings can be adapted to other similar research (Yin 2003). As Marshall and Rossman (1999) point out, the range of applicability of the findings emerging from a research is broader when the research project is connected to the existing theory. The researcher tried to establish clear connections between theory and findings, although the aim of the study is to achieve a deeper understanding of the elements influencing CCT effectiveness, particularly referring to adjustment rather than formulating generalizable statements.

## 4. FINDINGS

In this chapter, the data collected through the interviews will be presented extensively, and the findings displayed and analysed according to the research questions stated in the first chapter of the thesis. This thorough analysis will lead the researcher in the discussion of the empirical data and will allow the comparison between the theory and the findings; thus, in the next chapter, conclusions will be drawn and practical implications highlighted.

Firstly, expatriates' experience of CCT will be analysed related to the technical aspects of the CCT programmes provided by the MNCs and to the perceived strengths or weaknesses of the programmes - Research question 1: What are the strengths and weaknesses in Cross-cultural training programmes based on expatriates' experience. Secondly, the overall evaluation of CCT programmes is searched out through the expatriates' training assessment. The purpose is to understand how CCT influenced cross-cultural adjustment – Research question 2: How does cross-cultural training affect the expatriates' experience in terms of cross-cultural adjustment.

The phenomenon studied in this research implies a wide range of variables able to influence the outcome, both in terms of adjustment and training effectiveness. Hence, a third section of analysis will focus on the elements necessary to outline the specific context and conditions in which the respondents developed their experience, together with an attempt to understand the main difficulties occurred in the adjustment process. Personal perceptions and experiences in fact, need to be considered throughout the data analysis since they characterize individually and independently each expatriate and his/her adjustment. The purpose through the interviews in fact, is to gain a deep understanding of the expatriates' training perception related to CCT, their personal experiences and their adjustment process. Subsequently, conclusions will be drawn by combining the various findings for a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of empirical data, which will be finally related to the main concepts and assumptions emerged in the theory.

## 4.1 Expatriates Experiences of CCT

This first area of investigation for data display and analysis concerns CCT programmes in terms of features and technicalities. The aim is to try to understand expatriates' experiences of CCT, based on their perceptions related to the type of training they have been provided with. The researcher's intent in fact, is to understand what it actually worked out for the trainees according to their experience and their learning method, in order to find out those that can be considered the strengths and the weaknesses of training programmes, gaining a first partial assessment of CCT programmes.

### 4.1.1 Perceived training need

For a comprehensive analysis and a better understanding of the findings, this first section of analysis includes the expatriate's training motivation, meaning the perceived need for training, since it is an element potentially able to influence the training outcome. The answers to the question "Did you perceive the need of a training programme before leaving for the international assignment?" were various, for example:

*"Yes, training is always useful to increase your knowledge and to understand how approach other people. I also had other previous experiences in terms of training so I knew the importance that it can have."*

*"No because I didn't know the situation of the environment over there so I did not realize it"*

*"Not really since I already knew the host country, so I'd say I didn't feel the need for training."*

As evident, the answers are quite heterogeneous, and depend on personal perspectives, experiences and competences. Additionally, according to the answers it is not clear if the respondents' job role may have influenced the perceived CCT need, depending on the type of assignment. Supposedly, the different perceptions in terms of training need may



depend also on the MNC organizational culture, its priorities and its goals in terms of expatriation that may affect the assignee in his/her training experience. When discussing about the training programme with one of the interviewee, his perspective reflected the MNC tendency of being sceptical towards CCT programmes:

*“Everything is useful when you are abroad, but I don’t think that the company would spend money on stuff like culture. You make experiences on your own, especially in periods like this where companies don’t want to spend money.”*

Again, besides the MNC answered to his need through a training programme, another expatriate pointed out how living the experience is different and CCT cannot always prepare you for the situations you are going to face:

*“The training programmes were good and the MNC answered to a need that I had, yet living the experience is different. One thing is the training for an international experience; another one is actually living it”*

This weakens the effect that the perceived need for training may have on the effectiveness of the programme, posing more attention to practical issues as in-country mentoring or coaching, since a constant support may facilitate the expatriate in facing challenges and fill a gap given by the objective impossibility of training programmes to prepare the assignees to every possible situation.

#### **4.1.2 CCT focus**

The expatriates’ experience of CCT and the identification of strengths and weaknesses is related to type of training received, which will emerge in the data display and analysis together with the respondents perceptions. Concerning the structure of the CCT programmes, none of them was an individual course, yet it included small groups of people (6 on average). This was consistent with the training method of most of the programmes, which included workgroups and play-roles. This was perceived and

identified as a first strength and was highlighted by the respondents who found useful the interaction with the other trainees.

*“There was interaction with other students, and some of these people were from other countries, so we started to figure out how to match with other cultures. An individual course would have been less useful and more expensive.”*

When questioning about the training focus disparate findings emerged, particularly referring to the programme provided to the assignee expatriated in China and South Africa (4). Both of the trainings he was provided with, in fact, were mostly related to the work environment concerned with the specificities of the country. Nevertheless, the content included also the discussion of good manners and appropriate behaviours, as well as interactions and communication with local people, especially customers, and was found somehow useful according to what mentioned by the respondent:

*“It improved my professional skills, it provided me additional information, and gave me the chance to learn how to connect in the different stages of the business deal and how to approach and interact with the locals, in particular the clients.”*

Some analogies emerged with the content of the training provided to the expatriate who was sent in Venezuela (5). The CCT programme in fact concerned once again work issues, here related to the management of local people; thus, because the interaction with the locals was a core element of the job, the focus was on behaviour, interaction and communication aspects.

*“Since I was supposed to deal with local people and provide them assistance in technical aspects it focused on the right way to behave and interact with them.”*

Hence, the training was perceived as able to strengthen the professional abilities of the assignees, providing them with further instruments and information for a better fulfilment of the job tasks. Moreover, the training focus on communication issues was claimed as of

great importance both for work issues and for the relationships with others. This was posed in fact, as one of the strengths of the training programme.

For those expatriating in the U.S.A. (1, 2, 3) the CCT programmes provided were wider and more complete in terms of issues faced, focusing both on international teamwork and on the problems you might face while having an international experience. The comprehensive content of the training programme in fact, was highlighted as one of the most appreciated elements and emphasized as an important strength.

*“They highlighted precisely the problems you have expatriating, living in a country with a different culture, the impact of the language and of the culture, homesickness, and all the other issues.”*

*“It dealt also with working in teams made of people with different cultures, different habits, with problems in understanding each other. There were also examples that emphasized the communication problems you might have working in an international team.”*

*“It concerned work related issues, but it also gave us information about what to expect in terms of cultural differences and habits”*

In summary, what emerges from the expatriates' perspectives is that training was experienced as a mean through which learn how to deal with problems and a way to be psychologically prepared for the culture shock and the cultural differences and habits. Unexpectedly the training programmes comprehensive of the main aspects considered crucial for adjustment and able to increase the expatriates' preparation concerning the non-work domain, were provided to those sent to a country relatively easy to adapt to and less distant in terms of habits, customs and overall culture, rather than to the expatriates affected by a higher cultural distance. Hence, the strengths identified so far by the respondents depended on the CCT focus, which shaped their perception of the training programmes and how they experienced it.

### 4.1.3 CCT Method

The training method adopted by the different MNCs included both didactic and experimental training. They consisted of theory and simulations, lectures about coaching and communication, workgroups, role-plays and practical demonstrations.

*“The training was theoretical in the morning dealing with what we should know and how to behave for each of the country in question, the afternoon was devoted to practical exercise such as role-plays.”*

What was interesting were also the examples the participants were able to provide as role-plays and simulations. Although the CCT programmes had been provided at least a year before the interview took place, the interviewees remembered the practical exercises quite in detail. This highlights how the practical aspects of the training programmes were perceived as a crucial part of their preparation.

*“I remember in particular the second part of the teamwork training; there was a kind of puzzle to build and a team manager who gave us indications. All the other members of the group had to follow his instructions even though he gave us only half of the information to make us understand and to try to simulate real situations, it was a mess!”*

*“We were 6 trainees, 4 of us would stay in the room and 2 outside who were indicated as people from an HR department of a different country. The four people in the room had to suppose the common mistakes that the 2 role-playing would have done, then they had to observe them taking notes and draw conclusions based on what learned in the morning.”*

Hence, the practical aspect of the CCT programmes was widely appreciated by all the trainees and this was reflected in the answers concerning the strengths of the training programme. Practical examples, exercises and simulations are indeed mentioned as the most useful part of the CCT programmes. This suggest a fit between the learning and the teaching method, which is likely to enhance the effectiveness of the training.

*“I would say that simulations were the most important part, when you do things you remember them more easily, and this was the case.”*

*“The theory and didactical approach is useful, but practical demonstrations concerning how hard it is to communicate with people of different culture, speaking a different language and in different time zones it’s what made the course very very useful.”*

*“The practical aspect where I was the team builder gave me the chance to have an idea on how my tasks would have been once I was overseas.”*

Consistently with these statements one of the weaknesses highlighted was made by the expatriate in China and South Africa (4) who was the only one who received only theoretical and didactical training in the form of lectures and seminars.

*“It was too theoretical; I didn’t have enough practical skills involved. When I left I did not know anything, we were left on our own, some of the training was provided by people who were not locals, so they were just as unable as we were to give us suggestions about how life worked there, habits and education.”*

Here, other than the expatriate’s perception about the method, it emerges the lack of MNC support and involvement. Moreover, the shortages emphasized concerned also the fact that the trainer was not a local. This aspect concerned all the training programmes and emerged several times as a perceived weakness, providing a useful suggestion for the MNCs developing CCT programmes.

*“It would have been better to have locals to train us, it has been a good training but I think that a local would have provided an added value.”*

Overall, team-works, role-plays and simulations were widely emphasized; thus, in order to be effective and complete in its teaching function, CCT is perceived as an experience that must include experiential learning and practical demonstrations. Furthermore, the

possibility of interacting with locals starting from the preparation phase would be perceived as an advantage.

#### **4.1.4 CCT Timing**

The respondents did not essentially question the duration and timing of the training programmes. The information provided informed the researcher that the CCT programmes were sometimes provided in-country, sometimes prior departure and they lasted from 2 days to a couple of weeks. Only the training programme for China has been provided on a regular basis for the whole 4 years of the international assignment. The only issue that explicitly emerged was the timing of the training for one of the participants expatriated to the U.S.A. (1) who claimed as an important weakness the late provision of the CCT programme.

*“The real weakness is that the training programs were provided later, once I already had part of the experience. I would say that while the timing was wrong.”*

Hence, the timing of the CCT programme, meaning whether it is provided prior departure or in-country, does not seem crucial at least for the expatriates interviewed, as long as it is not provided too late. However, analysing the information given by the respondents and focusing on how they experienced the CCT programmes, a matter that often came up was related to the lack of in-country support. To be precise this issue emerged on one hand as the inability of the training programmes to prepare the expatriate to every possible situation, and on the other as the MNC tendency to overlook the international assignee needs once he/she gets to the host country. This poses the low commitment of the MNCs to the expatriates cause and the resulting lack of in-country support as a further weakness emerged from the assignees' experience.

The elements here emerged, highlighted some differences in terms of CCT programmes features; the accurate display of the findings permitted the identification of the strengths and the weaknesses of the CCT programmes, encompassing the expatriates' perception and experience of CCT, as pursued through Research Question 1. As a whole, the factors

posed as most useful for the expatriates training have been the specific focus on cross-cultural communication and interactions, the improvement of professional skills and the experimental traits of the method intended as simulations and role-plays. From the expatriates' perspectives, in fact, these factors result in a higher preparation for work related tasks, the development of problem solving abilities and the psychological readiness to cultural differences. On the other hand, the recurrent weaknesses emphasized regarded the fact that the trainers were hardly ever local people, although host nationals were indicated as those able to give the added value needed to face the challenges encountered once a person expatriates overseas. Furthermore, the lack of in-country support arose in different points in the interviews, emerging as a weakness commonly perceived. Considering this shortage analytically, based on the international assignees experience of CCT, it is possible to suppose that a mentor in the host country could help them deal with unforeseen situations and ease out the feeling of isolation and loneliness.

## **4.2 The effects of CCT on CCA**

Once the researcher was able to build the wider picture concerning the CCT programmes received, defining how expatriates experienced the training and identifying the strengths and weaknesses, the matter narrows down to Research Question 2 and adjustment issues. As previously discussed in fact, in order to draw consistent and comprehensive conclusions about the effectiveness of CCT programmes, adjustment is chosen as the main parameter to consider for the interpretation and understanding of data, and for the training assessment. Thus, this next section deals specifically with cross-cultural adjustment issues and the effectiveness of the training programmes related to its effects on adjustment. In the display and analysis of the findings both the CCT's functions able to enhance CCA, and CCT assessment based on its impact of CCA, will be considered according to the international assignees experience, perspectives and evaluation criteria. Finally, language training will be discussed in relation to its effect on expatriates' adjustment.

### **4.2.1 CCT assessment**

In the interviews, adjustment issues and the influence CCT programmes may have had on it were investigated. The researcher asked the respondents how CCT prepared them to face job issues, how it enhanced their interaction and how it facilitated their everyday life, in order to find out what have been the effects of training programmes on cross-cultural adjustment. More specifically, the investigation of these matters helped to search out the functions that CCT carried out in order to enhance adjustment.

*“Since it was focused on the management of people and it faced communication matters it helped me understanding the best way to approach people and interact with them”*

*“It gave me an idea about what Americans are used to and what they want and expect you to do concerning the work context and the clients.”*

*“It increased team group and team building skills, this helped me both in work issues and in the interaction with colleagues.”*

The answers gave rise to interesting perspectives related to CCTs functions, giving us an idea of the effects CCT may have on adjustment. Analysing the findings what emerges is that training main function was related to the interaction with locals and the adjustment to work realities. Through the provision of information on work habits, the improvement of work skills, and the development of the correct approach to people CCT supported the expatriates in their overseas experience. Moreover, the understanding of norms and behaviours, the higher cultural knowledge and the practical preparation seemed useful to lower the uncertainties and create realistic expectations.

*“It gave me useful information about what to expect and provided me with some knowledge specifically related to the relationships and communication issues with others”*

*“Through an improved cultural knowledge I figured out how things worked and I understood typical behaviours, so I didn’t have many problems interacting with the locals, but I guess my previous experiences helped me too.”*



*“I learned how to behave with the locals and to understand and interpret their behaviors, I also was a bit more prepared on what to expect in terms of living conditions and habits even though it was surprising and sometimes shocking anyway.”*

Additionally, the interesting perspective of one of the respondents outlined a problem linked to the expatriation process rather than to the CCT itself. Among those claimed as the main difficulties in the adjustment process, one of the assignee mentioned that the colleagues in the host country were not predisposed to interact with him or help him integrating. Beyond the cultural differences that may influence people’s attitude, the main reason was suggested by the expatriate himself, who argued that the temporary nature of his assignment unmotivated the locals to interact with him. He also explicitly suggested a solution, arguing that the need for training programmes for the locals is as high as for those expatriating. Hence, the CCT execution of this further function could represent a further advantage for the expatriates and their adjustment processes.

*“I was expecting them to be more tolerant and patient, I tried to do my best related to my level of English, I was patient and I stood the situation and dealt with their habits. That said I was the passive part in the context, they needed the training as much as I did, I wasn’t the team manager and I was the only foreign people there.”*

Overall, the training was argued to be useful in preparing the expatriates to job issues through the improvement of practical skills, the provision of consistent expectations, and the creation of work relationships. Concerning the interactions with the locals, and the role of the training programmes in improving the chances of communication, training was found able to enhance the interactions with the locals in different ways. It provided specific information improving the expatriates’ cultural knowledge, it taught them the correct way to approach people, and helped them understanding typical behaviours; these are likely to create a psychological sense of well-being and increase expatriates’ self-confidence.

For the evaluation of training programmes' effectiveness the findings emerged from the expatriates experiences related to the CCT's functions provided a crucial insight for the assessment of training programmes. However, the matter of CCT effects on CCA will be discussed further in order to obtain clear information about CCT's assessment based on its impact of CCA, to help the researcher to understand the expatriates' overall perspective and the evaluation criteria adopted by the international assignees.

Direct questions were posed to the interviewees concerning both training assessment and training efficiency related to adjustment. The expatriates were asked to evaluate the efficiency of the training provided, with a scale from 1 to 5 (5 the maximum). On average, the CCT efficiency was assessed 4, which indicates the respondents gave a high relevance to the training programmes received in terms of effectiveness. When investigating the reason of training efficiency the expatriates sent to the U.S.A (1, 2, 3) mainly focused on expectations, as well as the improvement of work abilities.

*“It improved my cross-cultural skills. It was useful also for the overall cultural knowledge, behaviours and habits since it gave us some basis about what to expect.”*

*“It was well structured, it covered the aspects that I needed to know for the job and it gave me an idea on what to expect.”*

The criticism towards the timing of the CCT programme already mentioned by one of the respondents (1) emerged also in the training assessment. Still, the training was evaluated very positively.

*“Good training programmes, very well done. They helped me to figure out how to face problems, but they were provided when the shock already happened, the MNC should have just provided them earlier.”*

It is important to notice that their assessment is based mainly on the ability of the training to prepare them to what to expect and on the improvement of working skills, suggesting

that realistic expectations and the work dimension have a crucial impact on the expatriates' perspective.

Despite the critical remarks raised concerning some aspects of the training programmes, when asked about training efficiency, also the other respondents (4, 5) positively evaluated CCT effectiveness. Again, the work dimension was a fundamental matter in the training assessment; in fact, they focused on the enhancements concerning work issues and the ability to build relationships with locals, especially colleagues. Hence, what emerges from this investigation is that regardless of the weaknesses of the programmes the expatriates evaluated the CCT programmes as useful and effective.

*“As I considered it very efficient and well structured, I was more self-confident and prepared on the workplace.”*

*“I had the chance to build relationships with colleagues because I was able to understand better their habits without misunderstanding their behaviour.”*

Moreover, due to the nature of the interviews that are semi-structured, the interviewee were free to express their ideas and thoughts spontaneously and the assignee expatriated in the U.S.A (1), provided an answer of great interest. He claimed several problems in adjustment likely due both to language difficulties and personal traits, posing the psychological support the CCT gave him as the main way through which training enhanced his adjustment.

*“I experienced loneliness, what means not being able to communicate. Those training programs mainly focused on communication and on the importance of communicating and how you feel when you can't communicate. It can drives you crazy! I must say that the training and the information provided in it made me feel understood and helped me to fell less lonely”*

Finally, when questioned about how the training was useful for the adjustment and why, being prepared in terms of expectations was mentioned again from those expatriated in

the U.S.A. (1, 2, 3) as an important advantage provided by the training programme. In the same way, the work dimension was involved in most of the answers. Finally, all the respondents indicated communication and interaction as core elements of the training programmes for facilitating adjustment.

*“It certainly prepared me for the work I was supposed to do overseas and it helped me to figure out what to expect in the host organization and from colleagues. I would say it helped me to adjust faster especially in the work environment.”*

*“It was useful since it gave me an idea of what to expect, I felt prepared for work related situations and in the interactions with the locals I was aware how to behave or interpret different attitudes.”*

*“It taught me to be more tolerant and patient, because you have to be patient when you deal with people speaking a different language and have a different culture. And tolerant because sometimes people’s behaviour seems wrong because you are not used to it, you are not used to behave like that or to react that way, but once somebody explains you why they behave like that and have these kind of habits then you understand and think “ah ok, that’s fine then. For sure I have been advantaged by these kind of training programs.”*

What is interesting to notice is that the discussion concerning training assessment faced in this section highlights the expatriates’ evaluation criteria. CCT programmes in fact, are evaluated positively relating to the development of positive and trusting relationships with host nationals, the understanding of local work realities, and the creation of accurate expectations. The psychological support provided by the training programmes, together with the practical skills and knowledge acquired through it, supposedly led the expatriate to a lower isolation, an easier acceptance of differences and an overall higher sense of well-being, both in terms of work and non-work domains. In other words, CCT was able to enhance expatriates’ adjustment.

#### **4.2.2 Language training**

Language fluency can enhance adjustment through an effective communication with the locals, improving cross-cultural interactions, hence confidence and involvement in the international assignment. Thus, in order to figure out the impact that language may have had on the expatriates' adjustment and the resulting assessment of CCT training, the interviewer included a specific question on the theme when investigating on the features of the training provided.

When questioning the participants about their language skills and the importance of language training, two major things came up. The first one was that most of the respondents had a good level of English before departure. The second one, considering exclusively those expatriated in not English speaking countries (4, 5), was that the local language was considered completely irrelevant.

*“It was not important at all. We used English and in this environment you use always the same 500 words so you don't need to be very skilled even in English. Other languages were totally unimportant.”*

While language training seemed a non-significant factor for the majority of the research respondents, it has been a crucial matter for the only expatriate who was not very skilled in English (1). Despite a long-lasting language training, the preparation provided in terms of communication and language skills was claimed as insufficient.

*“Language can be useful in terms of grammar and vocabulary because you might learn a few more words, but still it is very distant from everyday life”*

*“Since I started from a basic level of English, the language training wasn't adequate for me to face everyday life and to become an integral part of the work environment starting from day 1. It took me 3 months before I was able to interact with locals.”*

The inadequate language preparation cost the expatriate a long period of poor communication and difficulties in interactions. This certainly appears as an episode to

consider when developing CCT programmes, and alternatively when it comes to selection issues.

### **4.3 CCT moderators**

When conducting the interviews some factors not directly related to the research questions came up, both due to the type of interviews since semi-structured interviews imply a certain freedom of the respondents and because some questions and issues were necessarily investigated to contextualize the expatriates perspectives and answers. This allowed the researcher to identify some factors likely able to influence the expatriates' adjustment process, thus moderating the relationship between CCT and expatriate adjustment, and possibly affecting training evaluation. The moderators that may be taken in consideration are several; however, the accurate investigation of all of them falls outside the scope of this thesis.

The perceived training need and issues concerning language training have already been discussed in relation to the research questions. Hence, the researcher found important to analyse the respondents' previous experiences overseas and their perceived cultural distance, since these elements are useful also for the contextualization of the expatriates' experiences. A prior international experience in fact, is a factor able to influence cross-cultural adjustment, but gives also information of a person's basis for comparison when assessing training in terms of adjustment. For the same reason, the perceived cultural difference, which may influence the expatriates' perceptions and adjustment process, was investigated and the related findings displayed and analysed in the section below. These factors, as well as individual features and attitude, actually came up when discussing about the challenges faced by the international assignees during their adjustment process. Analysing the findings in fact, prior international experience, perceived cultural distance and individual features seem to shape somehow expatriates' experience, suggesting an effective influence on cross-cultural adjustment, and consequently a moderating effect on the relationship between CCT and CCA.

### 4.3.1 Previous international experience:

When investigating about previous international experiences it emerged that the majority of the respondents had at least one relevant experience abroad, whether for study or work related reasons.

*“I’ve lived discovering other countries and languages, both for personal and academic reasons. I wanted to find out how was studying and living in other countries.”*

*“I’ve been working for a large international bank, I have been hired and I started working in Genova, then I moved to Milano where I’ve been offered the chance to move to four other different countries: Egypt, India, South Africa and China.”*

*“I had several international experiences before this international assignment. I attended a year of high school in the U.S. and I did my master in the Netherlands. I also spent few years working in the U.K. so I was kind of used to live abroad.”*

Among the respondents, two of them (1, 5) claimed a lack of international experiences; thus, this participants diversity may help the researcher to assess the moderating effects of this factor. Soon enough in fact, a connection between the past foreign experience and the expatriates’ choice to move overseas came up, as the predisposition to travel and the curiosity of discovering new countries and cultures were mentioned as reasons that encouraged the respondents to go overseas.

*“I always aimed at an international career due to my previous experiences, so I took the chance to go overseas as an expatriate. I wanted to discover the culture and organization of the company in another country, to meet people, to improve my work position and evolve.”*

*“The MNC I am working for offered me the chance to work in the U.S. and I accepted for several reason: higher salary, career development, and the chance to live abroad once again.”*

Among the motives indicated career growth was recurrent, implying the expatriates' common thought that an international assignment could represent an added value in their career path.

*“I chose to go overseas, for curiosity, interest, career development, better economic conditions, and live new experiences.”*

*“The MNCs encouraged employees to have this experience in order to open their minds and improve their language skills”*

*“To increase my working skills and I thought an international experience would have been an interesting challenge”*

Furthermore, the improvement of working and language skills, compensation package, new experience possibilities and personal development were mentioned as further reasons for expatriation. Both prior experiences overseas and the reasons behind the expatriate departure may influence his/her attitude and perspective concerning the international assignment, likely having an effect on the adjustment process.

#### **4.3.2 Cultural distance:**

The other factor questioned in this section concerns the differences in terms of culture, general living conditions, job environment, interactions and so on, in order to figure out the perceived cultural distance between home and host country. The answers here were quite spontaneous and heterogeneous due both to the different countries the participants were sent to and to personal feelings and impressions.

Independently from the host country, the expatriates found several differences affecting their international experience and their adjustment process. For those expatriated to the U.S.A (1, 2, 3), probably because of the analogies in western cultures that made living conditions, daily customs and habits similar, the aspects on which the respondents



focused mainly were the differences in terms of work environment and the relationships among colleagues, rather than norms, behaviours and everyday matters.

*“They have a different way of working compared to us, while we are attached to the concept of clocking in and out and to the 8 hours of work, they have free entrance to work, what matters is that you do what you are supposed to, you can also work at home.”*

*“They are more independent and autonomous, for sure they are more goal oriented, they do not care when you do it, how you do it, why you do it, what matters is that you do it.”*

*“It was hard to integrate even in terms of job environment, both because of technical issues, they knew I was going to be there just for a year and because of their habits and personal features, they are detached and colder, they are different, for example they have lunch on their desk while they are working. In other words, there are cultural differences. However I was lucky since the American culture is not that different from ours, I know people who’ve been sent to China, I guess it was even harder for them.”*

On the other hand, for the respondents (4, 5) who went to countries commonly considered culturally tough and different from Italy, e.g. China, the dissimilarities concerned factors often related to socio-economic matters, national culture, habits, daily customs, food and levels of economic development.

*“South-Africa. was very different, there were racial problems that in Italy do not exist, a large percentage of undereducated population, high level of crime, unfriendly relationships with border countries.”*

*“China’s culture is totally different from European’s one, however they are educated people, but in a different way. Basically they are suspicious of foreigners, they do not trust them very much. Food is completely different, but it was good, Chinese food in China is way better than Chinese food in Italy”*

*“Venezuela is completely different in terms of welfare, standard of life and culture. One of the aspects that emerges clearer concerns inequalities among the population.”*

Due to the importance given to some elements rather than others when discussing about cultural distance, it is possible to assume that the expatriates’ adjustment processes may result different according to the host country and to the impact cultural differences had on the individuals. Hence, CCT it is likely to have various effects on cross-cultural adjustment depending on such elements. Moreover, the different perceptions concerning cultural toughness denote differences in personal traits, mindset and individual attributes.

### **4.3.3 Adjustment difficulties**

In order to understand how previous international experience and cultural distance may have acted as moderators on the effects of CCT, it is useful to analyse them related to the adjustment difficulties faced by the assignees. Through the investigation of the main challenges encountered in their adaptation process in fact, the respondents provide an interesting perspective on how cultural distance and prior international experience might have shaped their perspective and/or influenced cross-cultural adjustment.

The first question that was addressed to the expatriates in terms of adjustment concerned each own challenges to adapt to the host country. The respondents were asked to evaluate their adjustment difficulty on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 as a maximum, and to explain why they rated it so. By posing this question, it has been possible for the researcher to gain both an understanding of the challenges faced by each expatriate in the adjustment process and further specificities about the expatriates’ individual features. The answers in fact, are rich of details on the respondents’ perspectives and impressions, which also allude to the expatriates personal traits and character.

Those expatriated to the U.S.A. who had previous international experiences (2, 3) claimed a low difficulty in adjustment, and pointed out the habit of being in contact with foreigners and of living abroad as the main reason of the few difficulties in adapting. It would be easy to think that the relatively little cultural distance between U.S.A. and Italy could be

another reason. However, what emerges from the interviewees' answers is that individual personality and previous experiences are the factors that affect the most the adjustment process. Unlike these respondents in fact, the expatriate with no international experience (1) gave a completely different answer, arguing that a big effort has been necessary to adjust.

*“It was very hard, I also suffered of homesickness, I missed home. The first 3 months were like living in a bubble, completely isolated. The company treated me well, it gave everything in terms of facilities and comfort. Yet, I didn't have any friends, my colleagues were old or not interested. I was alone in and out side the place of work, but I resisted. From 1 to 5 I would say that the difficulty to adjust was quite high 3,5/4, I had to work hard to integrate.”*

Similarly, the respondent expatriated to Venezuela (5) who had no prior experience overseas found it hard to adjust; this was caused also by a higher cultural distance that according to the respondent had its impact.

*“I would assess the difficulty to adjust 4, because of the cultural and country differences. It was hard to fit in such a different setting.”*

Hence, it is possible to suppose a dissimilarity in adjustment patterns between the respondents who had various international experiences and those interviewees who had no previous experience abroad.

*“I would evaluate adjustment difficulty in South Africa 2, it was easy to integrate with white population but it is different to integrate with the black population. Still the apartheid left some consequences.”*

*“Adjustment difficulty in China was 3 because the culture, the behaviour, the habits are more different in China than in South Africa, but if you want to know in Egypt I would say 5, Egypt was hard, you do not adapt to Muslim culture, it is not easy to interact with*

*them. But I am open minded and friendly and when you are abroad you have to accept everything.*

The tendency for who already had international experiences was to compare the different experiences and assess each one relatively to the others. However, we can only suppose that this downsized the effects of cultural distance and adjustment problems.

Furthermore, through the findings here analysed the researcher was allowed to get a sense of the respondents' individual attributes in terms of adjustability, individual attitude and personality traits. This was relevant since from the answers provided according to the researcher's interpretation and impressions developed during the interviews, the respondents' individual attributes consisted in the most influencing element in defining the expatriates' adjustment assessment and process, even though it is unclear which elements it effectively affected and how.

Finally, when questioning the expatriates about their adjustment issues, an element not specifically investigated in the interviews emerged in the discussion, and involved all the respondents regardless the individual dissimilarities and the differences in experiences. It concerned the expatriate community and in general, the meetings for international people, which were mentioned as factors helping the respondents to overcome homesickness and isolation, thus facilitating adjustment.

*“There was InterNations and many others expatriate communities. It was very helpful, you scratch my back and I scratch yours as they say.”*

*“I started to be homesick when the third month started, and I overcame it with the meetup groups (meetings for international people). I told myself I had to get a move on and insert myself in the society otherwise I wasn't going to resist for a year alone. Every week I used to go there and I started to interact with people, they kind of introduced me in the society, I started to make friends.”*

This provided an interesting information about another way through which adjustment can be facilitated, in addition to the enabling effects that CCT has on cross-cultural adjustment.

In conclusion, although both the factors considered had a certain relevance for the respondents' answers, the element that up-came more often and that was partially linked to several responses concerned whether or not the expatriate had previous international experiences. This suggests that the impact of this specific moderator may be wider than expected since it potentially conditions not only the training outcome and the adjustment, but also the personal reasons for expatriation as well as the individual attributes developed, possibly shaping expatriates' international experience and his/her perceptions of CCT programmes.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

In today's globalized world, where business is international and expatriation is a widespread practice, cross-cultural training is still a current topic. Due to the controversy characterizing the extant literature, further insights of the topic are needed. Despite many scholars have studied CCT in fact, effectiveness literature presents a lack of a unitary and consistent perspective. Contradictory results instil in MNCs and practitioners a sceptical attitude, thus likely impeding the development and implementation of effective training programmes due both to the doubts surrounding the effectiveness of CCT and the unawareness of what makes a training programme effective.

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the impact CCT programmes have on expatriation, specifically in terms of adjustment. Hence, Italian expatriates' perspective was considered in order both to provide new insights about the effects of CCT, and to connect training programmes to adjustment issues.

### **5.1 Discussion and Conclusions**

The findings emerged reflected expatriates' perception of CCT, the evaluation of its effectiveness, but also elements related to the participants expatriation experience. In this section, conclusions are drawn interrelating the areas of investigation, interpreting the implications of expatriates' perspective and comparing the theories discussed in the literature review to the main findings.

The findings led to the identification of a set of basic topics covered by CCT programmes. In general, training programmes covered mainly issues related to the work dimension and the development of effective communication skills. This suggests that, despite the cultural distance, MNCs gave importance mainly to work issues and relationships with the locals rather than to other broader and more general aspects. Caligiuri & Tarique (2006) on the other hand, claim CCT should provide the expatriates with some awareness concerning

the main aspects on which cultures differ leading to a better understanding of the impact that the cultural differences may have on everyday habits and customs, reducing culture shock. Although the focus was on job and communication matters, the training programmes included also aspects related to the main challenges that an assignee is likely to face in his/her experience overseas. Furthermore, training provided the expatriate with a sufficient knowledge in terms of norms and appropriate behaviours. Through the improvement of professional skills and the enhancement of cross-cultural communication abilities, the training programmes were experienced as a psychological support and as an aid in facing cultural differences both in and outside the work environment. Hence, CCT programmes focusing on work and interaction dimensions seem adequate to satisfy the expatriates' broad needs and able to cover the relevant matters for enhancing adjustment.

Nevertheless, as Mendenhall & Stahl (2000) assert and as restated by the expatriates' experience, CCT programmes cannot foresee and provide answers to all specific situations that may occur. This together with the perceived lack of MNC support and involvement imply the provision of in-country assistance as a valid solution for the expatriate to fulfil his/her needs and to overcome his/her unexpected challenges; thus, increasing CCT effectiveness. Expatriate communities partially compensated for the lack of in-country assistance and indeed, were indicated as substantial support for overcoming homesickness and isolation. The idea that an ongoing in-country support would be of help in international assignments enhancing adjustment is further sustained by Tarique's model (2001) of sequential pre-departure and post-arrival training, where training contents and delivery need to be sequenced at different timings, according to the expatriate adjustment process.

Both theoretical and experimental training were implied. In accordance with several studies (Early 1987; Hammer & Martin, 1992; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al. 1991), either were considered necessary and useful according to expatriates' experience. However, practical methods were experienced as the most effective. Experiencing situations, observing and realizing appropriate and inappropriate behaviours, and understanding how to face problems in a structured environment was perceived as the most effective way for the assimilation of information and the preparation of expatriates.

This leads to the idea that experimental and interpersonal training is the most effective one when it comes to modify the expatriate attitude towards a foreign culture, as suggested by Prugger & Rogers (1994) and Waxin & Panaccio (2005).

Furthermore, the analysis of expatriates' experience and perspectives leads to the conclusion that a higher involvement of local people, as trainers and trainees, is likely to increase CCT effects on adjustment since it may reduce the rise of interactional problems and would help to ease out the sense of isolation and loneliness. On one hand having local people as trainers would be beneficial in terms of quality and specificity of communication issues and general information, as well as advantageous for the expatriate who gets used to interact with a host national. On the other hand preparing the locals improving their cross-cultural skills could increase the quality and the frequency of approaches between locals and foreigners at least in the work environment.

Considering specifically the effects of CCT on expatriates' experience in relation to their adjustment process, the main results concerned the impact training had on the work domain, the creation of realistic expectations and the interactions with local. Puck et al. (2008) argue that CCT has no effects in enhancing adjustment; on the contrary, the improvement of practical and cross-cultural skills, the provision of consistent expectations, the creation of relationships with host nationals and the adequate preparation for job related situations can be considered as the main ways through which CCT is effective in enhancing adjustment. Interaction and the ability to build relationships is one of the aspects most emphasized in CCT effectiveness literature. Black & Mendenhall (1990) for instance, emphasize the effectiveness of CCT in improving expatriate's communication and interaction abilities, in teaching behaviours adequate for the context, and consequently increasing the assignee feeling of well-being and self-confidence. The consequent higher confidence and involvement derived should improve the expatriate adjustment. This is consistent with the research findings, since understanding how to approach locals, being aware of the typical behaviours, and the ability to communicate and build relationships increased the expatriates' self-confidence, enhanced their adjustment and helped overcoming isolation.



Concerning language training, Puck et al. (2008) found it to be crucial for intercultural adjustment to take place, conceiving it as the central factor on which MNCs should focus on training rather than as a part of CCT, arguing that communication is a fundamental aspect of management. Based on expatriates' experiences interactions and the ability to build effective relationships is once again stressed for its essential role for both adjustment and work matters; however, knowing the local languages was not perceived as a significant factor, in accordance with Foster's study (2000). In one case, isolation and poor communication were the direct result of an inadequate English training. The implication is that careful selection or more efficient training concerning the widespread business language are crucial for expatriations success, since such a shortage is likely to cause considerable problems in adjustment, downsizing the positive impact of CCT.

Finally, the elements that may moderate the training outcome and evaluation need to be considered. Previous international experiences, perceived training need, cultural distance and individual attributes might have had an impact on the expatriates' evaluation of adjustment difficulties. Thus, they possibly affected the relationship between CCT and expatriate adjustment. The investigation of the main adjustment difficulties faced by the expatriates suggests that prior international experience, cultural distance and especially individual attributes may have had an effect on the adjustment process. On the other hand, it is not clear if and how the perceived training need for affected the CCT experience and expatriates' perspective. Kaeley and Protheroe (1996) identified a part of the training community sustaining the perspective that the motivations and the previous experiences of the assignee may affect the result of training more than expected, resulting more determinant for the overseas success, than the training programme itself. The nature of the study does not allow the researcher to draw conclusions based on the influence of moderators; quantitative research is needed to identify the causal relationship between these variables. However, the results arising from this study highlighted the positive effects of CCT on CCA, denying the idea that moderators, as prior experience and motivations, are more important and effective than the training programme itself.

As a whole, the research involved the expatriates' perception and the assessment of CCT and of its effect on cross-cultural adjustment were personal and relative. Hence, the

findings can be hardly generalized, combined quantitative research and additional qualitative investigation would be needed for this purpose. Yet, generalization is beyond the scope of this study. The intent instead, is to provide a starting point for new recommendations for expatriate preparation, highlighting the fields where CCT had succeeded or failed in preparing international assignees and the reasons behind the positive or negative outcome. As Kaeley and Protheroe (1996: 162) point out, cross-cultural research has the challenge “to establish more definitively whether intercultural training works, as well as to identify what kinds of training work best in the varied and rapidly changing circumstances in which international collaboration takes place today”.

In conclusion, the study showed that CCT was effective in the development of realistic expectations, the improvement of work abilities and the enhancement of interaction with locals. Despite the moderating effects that prior international experiences, individual features and other factors may have had on adjustment issues and expatriation process, the perspective that emerged encompassed a unitary and consistent evaluation of the CCT programmes’ effectiveness in facilitating CCA. Specifically, interaction and communication are the core elements to consider for enhancing self-development and expatriates’ adjustment. The ability to build interpersonal relationships with host nationals in fact, have an impact on the expatriate sense of well-being, but also on the assignee preparation and self-confidence in the work environment.

It must be said that, although the perspectives and impressions collected implied an overall positive assessment of CCT programmes and confirmed the effectiveness of such programmes, the remarkable difficulties arisen in the search of candidates who fit in the target group suggest how still CCT is not a widespread and common practice, entailing MNCs and practitioners enduring sceptical attitude. Therefore, CCT’s path towards conclusive and evident answers is still long and arduous, and CCT field still presents many chances for theoretical and empirical advances.

## **5.2 Managerial implications**

This study has established how CCT is effective according to expatriates' perspective through the improvement of professional and cross-cultural skills, the assignees' preparation in terms of realistic expectations and the improved ability to interact with host nationals. In addition, the investigation of such concepts included the discussion of CCT strengths and weaknesses that led to the identification of some managerial implications.

First, according to the findings theoretical and didactical training method must be combined with experimental exercises that enable the international assignees to practice their skills and learn experiencing situations. From a practitioner outlook, this is a useful hint for understanding what type of training works best and consequently for the development of effective training programmes. Secondly, as above mentioned the involvement of locals in CCT programmes could represent a useful expedient likely to improve the training outcome. Through the effective participation to training programmes, host nationals would improve their cross-cultural skills having an active role in facilitating expatriates' adjustment. Moreover, corporations should consider the contribution that locals could give as trainers for an improved cultural awareness and the understanding of communication patterns. Even though the study could not clarify how moderators affected adjustment and CCT outcome, MNCs should consider carefully factors such prior international experiences, individual experiences and language fluency for the selection of the best candidates for expatriation.

In addition to the practical guidelines directly linked with the field of CCT, further implications relevant for the expatriation process management emerged. The empirical section involved also the investigation of the reasons for departure and expatriates' showed expectations in terms of career development. This reminds MNCs that there must be consistency between the assignees reasons of expatriation and career expectations and the corporation intentions on how to validate the international assignees experience. Discordance in perspectives in fact, may lead to problems in repatriation and likely failure of the expatriation process.

Finally, MNCs must have clear in mind what the expatriates' needs are, in order to avoid discrepancies between assignees needs and training programmes features. Hence,

providing expatriates with in-country assistance would have several benefits. International assignees would be provided with ongoing psychological and practical support and their needs would be constantly taken in consideration. Moreover, a higher commitment of MNCs in the provision of CCT programmes as well as in-country support would have the twofold effect of showing the corporation interest and involvement in the assignee experience and of increasing the expatriate sense of well-being.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

Due to time and resource constraints, the limited scope of the research, the specificity of themes faced and methodology deficiencies each study has its own limitations and the researcher must be aware of it.

A first limitation is that the findings emerge from personal and relative perspectives; it is very difficult to identify the effect individual differences may have on the research construct. Personality traits, age, job role and previous experiences might have affected the respondents' answers reducing the accuracy of the study. Furthermore, the nature of the study implied a certain degree of subjectivity, the results in fact, implied the expatriate's assessment that cannot be taken as a question of fact, yet it must be interpreted in light of the context and of the study approach. Quantitative measures would be a helpful contribution for improved the understanding of the findings and the knowledge on the topic.

A further limitation is the sample dimension, because of time constraints as well as the specificity of the candidates searched, the snowball sampling technique did not lead to the achievement of the expected results. The fact that the study was dependent on perceptual data, the limits due to the qualitative approach and the small sample size of the persons interviewed do not allow broader generalizations about the findings of this research. Once more, it would be beneficial to investigate these concepts applying both more quantitative methods and a larger and heterogeneous sample of expatriates.

Moreover, further research adopting a similar approach but with a larger number of expatriates would enhance the generalizability of the study and provide further knowledge on the controversial and current topic of CCT programmes and effectiveness. Consistently with the identification of the research limitations and the clear need of new studies and based on the insights provided by the findings, in the next section some suggestions for further research are provided.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

This study provides a further insight in the controversial topic of CCT effectiveness for a better comprehension of the effects of training and the identification of the way through which it enhances adjustment and the expatriation outcome.

Cross-cultural training programmes have been widely discussed by scholars; nevertheless, effectiveness still results are contradictory and MNCs often present a sceptical attitude. Due to the extent of the topic and the deficiencies of the extant literature, there are still many themes to be explored. Diverse context and unique international patterns may require different approaches and methodologies, and involve several variables affecting the expatriates' experiences. Hence, one first recommendation is to investigate further CCT and adjustment relationship.

Another suggestion regards the role of moderators, a wider investigation of which variables influence CCT outcome would be useful for tailoring and implementing effective training programmes. Finally, in conjunction with training issues, further research is needed pertaining selection. On one hand, the choice of the appropriate employees to send overseas would be useful since not every skill can be trained; on the other hand, it would be important to understand the function of selection in relation to CCT.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDELINES AND QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **Introduction:**

- Thanking for participation.
- Shortly introducing myself in order to establish trust and confidence.
- Providing instructions:
  - The purpose of this interview is to assess the effectiveness of CCT programmes according to expatriates' experience.
  - The interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes.
  - The participant has the right not to answer any question.
  - The participant's right to confidentiality and anonymity is restated.
  - The authorisation to record is requested.
  - Agreement to start the interview.

#### **Investigation of the participant personal background:**

- Age
- Family status
- Country of origin

1. Could you tell me about your international experience in general (including work, studying experiences, etc.) before the international assignment?

#### **Investigation of the participant professional background:**

- MNC the expatriate is working for
- Host Country
- Time spent in the Host Country
- Occupation before expatriation
- Occupation during the international assignment

2. What are the reasons why you went to work overseas?
3. How different (in terms of culture, general living conditions, job environment, interactions etc.) was the host country from your home country?
4. How hard was it to adjust and why? (from 1 to 5; 5 the hardest)

**Training:**

5. How was the training that you received? How was it structured?
6. What was the focus of the training you received? What was the main content (e.g. general cultural awareness, cultural behaviours and norms, intercultural skills etc.)?
7. Was the training provided by your MNC theoretical and didactic (e.g. lectures, seminars, reading material) or did it include simulations and play roles?
8. How long did the training programme last? Was the programme provided before the departure or did it imply also an in-country assistance?
9. Was language training part of the training? If yes, did you find it useful for work and in everyday life? If not, would have better language skills facilitated your adjustment?

**Training assessment:**

10. Did you perceive the need of a training programme before leaving for the international assignment? Why? What were you expecting from this training programme?
11. How did the training prepare you for the job issues you had to face?

12. How did the training enhance your chances to interact with the locals?

13. How did the information received during the training facilitate your everyday life?

**Conclusions and suggestions:**

14. What are the strengths of the training programme you received? If you have to choose one what would it be and why?

15. What are the weaknesses of the training programmes? If you had to suggest any improvement for the training programme, what would it be and why?

16. From a scale from 1 to 5 (5 the maximum) how do you evaluate the efficiency of the training provided by your MNC? Why?

17. How was the training useful for your adjustment and why?



## Appendix 2

# Working on Remote Teams

### Proposed Program Agenda for Company A - Day 1

Time	Module	Description
9:00-9:30am	<b>Introductions &amp; Objectives</b>	Confirmation of issues/concerns identified in needs assessment and introduce agenda for the day. Icebreaking activity.
9:30-10:30	<b>The Remote Team – Today’s Reality and Tomorrow’s Vision</b>	Reflection on points of pain participants currently encounter working on remote teams. General discussion on different concepts of “team” from cross-cultural perspectives. Participants will begin to visualize what an ideal remote team would look like.
10:30-10:45	<b>Break</b>	
10:45-12:00	<b>Building Trust and Credibility in a Remote Environment</b>	Participants will begin to examine the challenges of building and sustaining relationships with remote teams. They will view the first of several video clips from “A World of Difference” a film that illustrates the challenges and successes of working on a cross-cultural remote team. Discussion on best practices to building trust and credibility.
12:30-1:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:30-3:15	<b>Communicating with Remote Teams</b>	This section will explore some of the specifics for communicating with remote teams, including conducting meetings and conference calls, providing feedback and dealing with conflict. Participants will practice writing and analyzing a simulated email and will discuss some of the challenges in communicating in a virtual environment. They will also view another scene from “A World of Difference” examining the breakdown of communication and brainstorm strategies to enhance communication.
3:15-3:30	<b>Break</b>	
3:30-4:30	<b>Facilitating Time and “Space” in Remote Teams</b>	This unit will begin to look at the challenges of creating a virtual “space” for the team to create cohesiveness. Participants will also partake in an exercise to assess how best to coordinate operational processes across time zones. Discussion on strategies when working across different geographical time zones.
4:30-5:00	<b>Q&amp;A/Wrap-up of day</b>	

## Working in Remote Teams

### Proposed Program Agenda for Company A - Day 2

Time	Module	Description
8:00-8:15	<b>Overview of Day 1</b>	Questions or comments from previous day's session
8:15-9:30	<b>Cultural Self-Awareness</b>	Participants will examine the results of their cultural profiles from the Akteos cultural tool and analyze how the different cultural dimensions can help or hinder their work in a remote environment. They will then embark on an exercise where they must style switch to explore strategies to bridge the gaps with their own cultural preference and that of their culturally-diverse colleagues.
9:30-9:45	<b>Break</b>	
9:45-12:00	<b>Managing Remote Teams</b>	This module will explore approaches to managing people in a remote environment. The focus will be on areas such as project planning and implementation, decision-making, information exchange, risk and initiative, problem-solving, etc. Participants will analyze another clip from "A World of Difference" that demonstrates the misunderstandings that frequently occur in global working environments. Participants will also discuss ways to better align the team's cohesiveness to engage and motivate remote team members.
12:00-1:00	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:00-2:30	<b>Remote Team Simulation</b>	Participants will take part in a learning activity that simulates a remote team project. Debriefing and discussion on the challenges and lessons learned.
2:45-3:45	<b>Optimizing the Remote Team</b>	Participants will view the final video clip from "A World of Difference" and continue to discuss strategies for creating a successful remote team. A final interactive exercise will encourage them to combine different images to creatively problem-solve and cooperate as a team. Discussion on how different perspectives can shape one's reality and the importance of looking at the "big picture" when working in a remote environment. Participants will begin to create their individual action plans to enhance their communication and work processes within their remote teams.
3:45-4:00	<b>Q&amp;A/Wrap-up/Evaluation</b>	