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# Asian Expatriate Development: A Comparative Study of Japanese, Korean and Singaporean Expatriates

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**Asian Expatriate Development:  
A Comparative Analysis of Japanese, Korean and Singaporean Expatriates**

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# ASIAN EXPATRIATE DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JAPANESE, KOREAN AND SINGAPOREAN EXPATRIATES

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## **Introduction**

Owing to rapid internationalization of business activity, human resource development (HRD) has become increasingly important in recent years. This is especially true when domestic human resource management takes on international dimensions as it deals more with multicultural workforce. International HRD, much of it embodied in cross-cultural training, has been proposed by many scholars as a means of facilitating more effective interaction among managers, employees and customers from different national-cultural backgrounds. Despite the need for cross-cultural skills and the shortage of managers who possess these skills, most human resource decision-makers do nothing in terms of cross-cultural training for their employees. Studies have found that negotiations between business people of different cultures often fail because of problems related to cross-cultural differences, and the costs of failed cross-cultural encounters are very high. Cross-cultural training has long been advocated as a means of effective international business management. But, its use is not widespread in today's business organizations. Various reasons have been cited for this, the most prevalent being that such training is not thought to be necessary and thus top management sees no need for it. However, the fundamental reason behind the lack of training seems to lie in wrong assumption that good management is good world-wide (Black & Mendenhall, 1989; 1985; Black, 1988; Schwind, 1985; Runzheimer, 1984; Tung, 1981; 1984; Graham, 1985; Landis & Brislin, 1983; Brislin, 1981; Bouchner, 1982; Harris & Moran, 1979; Zeira, 1976).

Human capital, once considered to be the most stationary factor in production, now increasingly flows across national borders as easily as cars, computer chips and corporate bonds. Just as managers speak of world markets for products, technology and capital, they must now think in terms of a world market for human resource. During the next decade, the world's workforce will become even more mobile, and employers will increasingly reach across borders to find the skills they need. In a global organization, the human resource challenge becomes recruitment, selection, training and development planning on a global scale from global sources. When a firm's international activity reaches a significant level, where it is involved with multiple subsidiaries in other countries, with transfer of technology to other countries, and with the movement of a large number of expatriates from country to country, the training and development function takes a new and more complex nature. Global and cross-cultural training and career development planning becomes necessary for managers in today's organizations, regardless of their domestic or international assignments (Osman-Gani, 1996; Marquardt & Engel, 1993; Odenwald, 1993; Reynolds & Nadler, 1993; Johnston, 1991; Rhinesmith, 1991).

While much have been written on expatriate training and development, very little was documented on expatriates from Asian countries. With Asian economies ready to take centre stage in the twenty-first century, it is only logical that we should have a better understanding of Asian expatriate management. This study attempts to fill the research gap in this area of international management literature, which by far focused mainly on the Western economies.

East Asia was one of the fastest growing regions in the world until the recent regional financial crisis that has affected it since the last quarter of 1997. According to the UN World Economic Survey, East Asia grew by an annual average rate of 4.5% during the last decade, while ASEAN's (Association of South East Asian Nations) average was at 6.8%. The comparable rate for the US was 1.4% and 1.7% for Europe. ASEAN member countries were ranked among the world's largest hosts of foreign direct investment inflows. At the same time they are becoming significant foreign investors themselves,

mostly in other less-developed Asian countries. The OECD has projected the Asia-Pacific to grow by 5-6% to the year 2010. On the other end, the comparable rates for North America and Europe were set at 2-5% and 3-4% respectively. Again, the interdependence among the countries of the region manifests itself in the forms of intra-regional investment and trade flows. For instance, intra-regional trade in East Asia was 37% of the region's total trade in 1989 (Regional Outlook, 1995; The Straits Times, 1993).

Despite the recent Asian currency crisis, Japan and South Korea are still known to be the two economies with extensive overseas operations in the region. South Korea is increasingly getting involved in international business, being the most export-oriented country in Asia (after Japan), and with the presence of some emerging Asian MNEs. In 1996, Japan directly invested some US\$33,608million in East Asia, as against \$22,005 million in the United States (Jetro, 1998). Although efforts are being made to localise management, Japanese firms operating overseas still rely very heavily on their own managerial resources. Singapore is an economy where the government has embarked on a regionalisation drive since 1993. Singapore has extended its external wing which in 1997 contributes 14% to the Singapore economy, compared to 13 % in 1996. The number of companies set up abroad increased steadily from 5,159 in 1995 to 5,850 in 1996 and the stock of direct equity investment abroad by companies increased from \$36.9 billion in 1995 to \$44.9 billion in 1996.

With enterprises from these three economies taking an active interest in regional expansion of business, expatriation is becoming a significant international human resource management issue, since expatriates hold the key to effective strategic control of overseas subsidiaries. The high costs of expatriation also underscore this importance. But, there has been very little empirical research conducted on expatriates from these three economies so far. Previous studies conducted are either too general or pertinent mainly to European or American expatriates. With the visible development of the external wings of the Korea and Singapore economies, the number of Korean and Singaporean expatriates is expected to become relatively significant by the turn of the century. Japan is also world renowned for their MNEs and their Japanese communities in the various economies of the world. As such, developing expatriates' skills through proper training & development strategies, is crucial for effective expatriate performance. Findings from this study may help managers to make more informed decisions in the area of Asian expatriate training and development, that will contribute positively to their performance. More importantly, these findings will provide some guidelines for conceptual thinking on Asian expatriate management for regionalization of business operations in the Asia-Pacific.

This paper reports a study conducted on the expatriates from these three economies with the view to obtain descriptive accounts on the types of training programs considered important for preparing expatriates, the areas of emphasis in the training programs, the duration of such programs, the training delivery methods, and the agency that should deliver training so as to ensure greater effectiveness. In addition to the descriptive findings, the authors also explored the differences in what the expatriates from these economies perceive on these aspects of training. The authors chose to use expatriates as the source of data as they provide a relatively unbiased source of data being individuals who have been deployed on overseas assignments and who being "in the field," so to speak, could provide insights into the training needs of Asian expatriates. Differences are expected in the training and development in the light of differences in the sending organizations and the domestic environments of the sending organizations. Differences exist between the three economies despite the underlying Confucian values that have been found to present in these economies. The differences lie in the socio-cultural, legal, national and economic environments in each of the economies, which are different levels of economic development. As such, the authors hypothesise that there would be differences in the five aspects of the study – the types of training programs, the contents, the duration, the training delivery methods and the delivery agents.

## **Methodology**

The research methodology for the study consisted of interviews and a survey of Japanese, Korean expatriate professionals in Singapore, and Singaporean expatriate professionals. A questionnaire was developed to collect data on several issues relating to training & development and other areas of

expatriate management. In designing the questionnaire, some items were selected from previous surveys used in similar studies conducted in other countries, which were integrated with additional items developed from the findings of the interviews and the literature review.

A panel of experts comprising of university business faculty, and senior business executives, was consulted to verify the content, sequence, structuring and relevance of the questionnaire items. In addition, it was administered to a sample of forty expatriates each from Japan, Korea and Singapore as the pilot test. In this process, views and suggestions were gathered on further improvement to the questionnaire so that it is comprehensive enough to cover the relevant issues and is easy enough to complete by the expatriates. The questionnaire was administered personally to achieve a good response rate.

For the purposes of the study, the authors obtained stratified random samples of Japanese (180), Korean (170), and Singaporean expatriates (180). The Japanese and Korean expatriates represented various multinational enterprises (MNEs) operating in different business sectors in Singapore. A sampling frame for each group of expatriates was formed: to form the Korean sampling frame a comprehensive listing of Korean companies operating in Singapore was obtained from the Korea Trade Centre Singapore; a sampling frame of Japanese MNEs in Singapore was obtained using the *Directory of Japanese Companies in Singapore*, *Singapore 1000 Companies*, and the *Singapore Manufacturers Association Directory*; the Singapore sampling frame was drawn from the *Singapore 1000 Companies*. Stratified random sampling was used to draw the three samples from the sampling frames. The study focused on the companies from the three major business sectors representing the three classification strata of the study. Each strata comprised of ten companies from each of the three major business sectors: Manufacturing, Transportation/Logistics, and Financial Services. These three sectors cover most of the Korean companies based in Singapore. The classifications of the three major industrial sectors were taken from the Singapore Standard Industrial Classification (1990). A total of 103 completed questionnaires were obtained from the Korean sample (response rate of 60.59%); 150 questionnaires were obtained from the Japanese sample (response rate of 83.33%); 96 questionnaires were received from the Singapore sample (response rate of 53.33%).

## Results

### *Respondents' Profiles*

The representation of the expatriates from the three major business sectors is shown in Table 1 below:

**TABLE 1**

**Distribution of Respondents by Industry and Economy**

<b>Economy Industry</b>	<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>Transportation/ Logistics</b>	<b>Financial Services</b>	<b>Others</b>
Japan	33.3%	33.4%	33.3%	-
Korea	41.75%	25.25%	33.0%	-
Singapore	58.3%	18.8%	19.8%	3.1%

The age distribution, genders and marital status of the respondents are shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

**Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Age	≤ 24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	>50	Total
Japan	-	10.6%	28%	28.67%	11.33%	3.33%	4.67%	100%
Korea	-	5.9%	20.6%	37.3%	30.4%	4.9%	1.0%	100%
Singapore	12.5	25.0%	31.3%	14.5%	12.5%	3.1%	1.0%	100%
<b>Marital Status</b>								
	<b>Married</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>Total</b>					
Japan	87.0	13.0	100%					
Korea	92.2	7.8	100%					
Singapore	52.1	42.7	100%					
<b>Gender</b>								
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>					
Japan	95.0	5.0	100%					
Korea	93.2	6.8	100%					
Singapore	74.0	26.0	100%					

From Table 2, it can be observed that most of the respondents were of ages between 30 to 44 years old, while there were no respondents under the age of 25 for Japan and Korea. Male respondents formed an overwhelming majority in the Japanese and Korean respondents. The Singapore respondents manifest the same imbalance although there is a higher representation of female expatriates compared with the other two. This gender imbalance is consistent with world-wide trend of overseas assignees, and is not peculiar to Japanese, Korean and Singapore MNEs only. Of the three groups of respondents, it appears that Japanese and Korean MNEs prefer to send married expatriates whereas Singapore companies are open to both.

Table 3 depicts the primary functional areas represented by the respondents and the breakdown of the respondents by the number of years of service in the sending company.

**Table 3**  
**Primary Functional Areas of the Respondents**

FUNCTIONAL AREA	Japan		Korea		Singapore		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General Management	35	23.8	32	31.4	33	34.4	100	29.0
Production/Engineering	9	6.1	14	13.7	18	18.8	41	11.9
Human Resources	-	-	7	6.9	2	2.1	9	2.6
Information Technology	-	-	2	2.0	7	7.3	9	2.6
Finance/Accounting	30	20.4	21	20.6	7	7.3	58	16.8
Public Relations	2	1.4	2	2.0	1	1.0	5	1.4
Marketing/Sales	64	43.5	20	19.6	15	15.6	99	28.7
Research & Development	2	1.4	2	2.0	7	7.3	11	3.2
Distribution	1	0.7	1	1.0	1	1.0	3	0.9
Customer Service	-	-	-	-	2	2.1	2	0.6
Project Management	4	2.7	1	1.0	3	3.1	8	2.3
	147	100	102	100	96	100	345	100

From Table 3 it can be seen the primary functional area for many expatriates are in the areas of General Management (32 respondents), Finance/ Accounting (21 respondents) and Marketing/ Sales (20 respondents). This is consistent with the findings that general management, accounting, financial and taxation issues, issues and marketing issues were ranked highly by the Korean expatriates when asked what should be incorporated in an expatriate training program (Osman-Gani, 1997; 1995). The same

could be said of the Singaporean expatriates as they fall into a similar pattern. The Japanese respondents did not follow the same order of primary functions but the triumvirate is still present.

**Training & Development Issues**

Research has shown that expatriate training is often neglected or handled poorly in most international organisations. Baliga and Baker (1985) found that only 25% of the largest U.S. MNCs provide extensive pre-departure orientation programs. Tung (1981) also observed that only 32% of the U.S. companies surveyed provided some international training. Expatriate training seemed to be more prevalent amongst the European and Japanese MNEs, with 69% of the European and 57% of the Japanese multinationals rendered some form of training to their expatriates. Studies have also found that between 16% and 40% of American managers sent on overseas assignments return prematurely because of poor performance or because of the inability to adjust to the foreign environment. The costs for expatriate failure also include non-quantifiable losses like damaged corporate reputation and lost business opportunities. Clearly, some form of training is necessary to minimise expatriate failure (Baker & Ivanceich, 1971; Tung, 1981; Black, 1988; Harvey, 1989).

Training and development of expatriates should begin where the selection process ends. The basic aspects of expatriate development are noted below:

- Development of expatriates before, during, and after overseas assignment
- Orientation and training of expatriate families before, during, and after foreign assignments
- Development of the headquarters staff responsible for the planning, organization, and control of overseas operations

International training and development programs need to recognise the importance of bringing about attitudinal and behavioural changes in the expatriates and their families. Rahim (1983) proposed a model to guide the development of expatriates. The major developmental issues that need to be considered are summarised in this model, which emphasised the need for constant feedback to allow for evaluation of the expatriate’s performance. It is also through these feed backs that corrective actions can be taken to resolve any difficulties the expatriate may be facing, thereby helping to improve the expatriate’s job performance in the host environment. Mendenhall and Oddou (1986) proposed three critical areas in which the organizations should prepare their expatriates. These are: cultural training, language instruction training and orientation training on familiarity with everyday matters. Similarly, Rahim’s model also emphasised these areas. Preparation can take place before departure, post-arrival or during re-entry. The aim of the preparation is to ensure the expatriate is familiar with the host-country conditions, culture and his family’s needs in a new environment.

In this study, the respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of pre-departure, post-arrival and repatriation training for expatriates. The mean scores of the three groups of respondents are shown together with the ANOVA results.

**TABLE 4**  
**Importance of Pre-departure, Post-arrival and Repatriation training**

	Japan		South Korea		Singapore		F-value	P-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Pre-departure training	3.26	0.91	3.22	0.64	3.48	0.82	2.990	0.052
Post-arrival training	3.34	1.03	3.72	0.78	3.70	0.85	6.672**	0.001
Repatriation training	2.69	0.96	3.16	0.84	3.07	0.84	9.894**	0.000

(1= Not Important, ..... 5 = Most Important \*\* = significant at 0.01 level)

Table 4 shows that companies from all three countries place importance on pre-departure training. There is no significant difference between the mean scores as the ANOVA test shows. The ANOVA results show there is a significant difference in the importance placed by the respondents on post-arrival



and repatriation training. The post hoc analysis using Tukey HSD showed that there is a significant difference (at the 0.01 level) in the mean scores for post-arrival training and repatriation training between Japan and Korea, and between Singapore and Japan. Both Korea and Singapore are newer to establishing overseas operations when compared to Japan and this may explain the differences in the means and the higher mean scores for Korea and Singapore for these two types of training. It is interesting to note that Korea and Singapore expatriates all rated the three types of training above the median and that the Japanese expatriates place a lower importance than the other two groups. This finding could be explained by the presence of distinct Japanese communities in the host countries. It is apparent that in countries where the Japanese MNEs are present, a network develops amongst the Japanese expatriates and an infrastructure develops to provide the social and cultural needs of this community. This phenomenon varies from country to country. In Singapore, there is a Japanese school with three branches on the island; there are clubs that have been established. As such, there may be less need for repatriation training. Further, the Japanese corporations have a longer history of expatriation and, until recently, a policy of lifelong employment. These features of Japanese MNEs may provide an explanation for the finding.

### *Types of Training*

Tung (1982) identified six major types of cross-cultural training used by American, European and Japanese companies. They are: (1) environmental briefings used to provide information about such things as geography, climate, housing and schools; (2) cultural orientation designed to familiarise the individual with cultural institutions and value systems of the host country; (3) cultural assimilators using programmed learning approaches designed to expose members of one culture to some basic concepts, attitudes, role perceptions and customs of another culture; (4) language training; (5) sensitivity training designed to develop attitudinal flexibility; and (6) field experience, which sends the participant to the country of assignment to undergo some of the emotional stress of living and working with people from a different culture. Tung also observed that both American and West-European companies recognized the need for more rigorous training for the CEOs and functional heads than for trouble-shooters and operatives. In contrast, the Japanese firms appeared to provide slightly more rigorous training for the operatives. Tung's findings were also confirmed by other studies. Brewster (1988) observed that the emphasis placed by European and Scandinavian MNEs on pre-departure training, particularly language training, continues to be stronger than that of American multinationals. Feldman (1989) surveyed American firms regarding relocation programs regarding relocation programs and found that only 13% of the respondents indicated that they would offer expatriates an orientation program. More recently, McEnery and DeHarnais (1990) estimated through a review of American practices that between 50 and 60 per cent of American companies operating abroad do not provide any preparatory training for expatriates. Those that do provide, focus only on brief environmental summaries and some cultural and language preparation, and only half of these programs would last longer than a week. Again, Barham and Devine (1990) found that European, Scandinavian, and Australian firms place less priority on providing pre-departure training for the spouse and family.

Depending on the location of overseas assignment, the expatriate and family may have to confront and adapt to a culture which is markedly different. Contrasts can also manifest in the forms of language barriers and encompasses aspects of social life, political climate, and religious orientation. The expatriate must not feel a sense of isolation from the host-country. Some form of adaptability training is essential to ensure that the negative feelings are minimised. Derr and Oddou (1993) advocated cross-cultural seminars as a training method for internationalisation of managers. Baliga and Baker (1985) suggested that the expatriate receive cross-cultural training focused in the assigned region's culture, history, politics, economy, religion, social and business practices. They advocated a training program concentrated on a particular location as opposed to one in which expatriates are taught the broad differences in cultures and encouraged to be receptive to them.

However, cultural training is not provided by many organisations. Dunbar and Katcher (1990) observed that only 30% to 45% of the MNEs offer relevant cross-cultural orientation to their expatriates. As

Earley (1987) mentioned, a major objective of inter-cultural training is to help people cope with unexpected events in a new culture. Cultural training enables individuals to adjust more rapidly to the new culture and be more effective in their new roles. This cultural preparation is necessary for overseas assignment because financial ability alone does not determine success (Dowling, Schuler & Welch, 1994; McEnery & DesHarnais, 1990).

Language training is needed for successful and productive expatriate performance abroad and should form the part of any long-term management development program for aspiring global executives. While there is a general recognition of English as a universal business language, an exclusive reliance on it may diminish effort to develop the linguistic capability of the expatriates and hinder the processing of foreign transactions or decisions. It is important to note that multilingual employees of MNEs from non-English speaking countries are able to monitor the activities of their English-speaking competitors from various media. Moreover, certain cultures place high premiums on people who understand and appreciate their native language. The Japanese and Koreans are fine examples of such cultures. A study by Baker (1984) of seventy-four executives of MNEs found that only twenty-three of them felt that knowledge of foreign languages was necessary for conducting business abroad.. Those firms offering language training believed that it improved the effectiveness of employees and enabled them to relate more easily to a foreign culture, which in turn lifted the image of the MNE in the host-country. However, Baker found a significantly different attitudes among those who were assigned to non-English-speaking countries. Of those respondents, more than 36% felt that knowledge of the local language was important, and 32% of the companies offered some language training. Most did not offer in-house training but instead sent employees to language schools. Mendenhall and Oddou (1986) stressed that willingness to communicate does not refer to the level of fluency in a foreign language but rather the expatriate's confidence and willingness to use the host-country's language. Proficiency in a foreign language can improve the expatriate's effectiveness and negotiability strength, and can improve the expatriate's access to important information regarding the host-country's economy, government and market.

Practical assistance training makes an important contribution toward the adaptation of the expatriate and the family to their new environment. The MNE needs to assist the expatriate and family to adapt to the environment by helping them to establish a new support network. Such a network involving friends and colleagues, would ordinarily include a pattern of life style which includes banking, shopping, laundry, transportation, food and so on. The sooner the network is established, the better the expatriate and family can adapt to the new environment. Adaptation and assimilation, however, go in both directions, depending on various social and personality factors of people involved, and training can expedite the process. Some MNEs like Colgate-Palmolive (Lublin, 1992) believe that there is no substitute for on-the-job training in this regard. Ronen (1989) proposed a set of methods and techniques for intercultural training and identified the purposes for each of those methods. There is no unanimity among scholars in recommending a set of training methods and techniques or types of training that would be effective in all nations and cultures. This study aimed at identifying the effective types of training programs for Japanese, Korean and Singaporean expatriates working in the Asia-Pacific. In the study, the respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of various types of training programs that that should be provided before going on overseas assignments. Six different training programs were suggested in the questionnaire, and the respondents rated the following types of training in terms of their importance. Table 5 presents the findings with means and the ANOVA results for the types of training.

**TABLE 5**  
**Important Types of Training Programs to be provided for Effective Expatriate Performance**

	Japan		South Korea		Singapore		F-value	P-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		

Cross-cultural training	2.83	0.88	3.13	0.74	3.43	0.87	14.914**	0.000
Host country language training	3.45	0.93	3.61	0.98	3.50	0.96	0.855	0.426
Family adjustment orientation	2.84	0.93	3.05	0.73	3.28	0.95	7.401**	0.001
Area Study	2.97	0.79	3.43	0.76	3.07	0.80	10.607**	0.000
Practical training on living conditions	2.55	0.84	3.00	0.74	3.02	0.87	13.454**	0.000
Overseas acquaintance trips	2.61	0.95	2.64	0.82	2.97	0.80	5.536**	0.004

(1= Not Important, ..... 5 = Most Important \*\* = significant at 0.01 level)

Host language training is rated as very important training programme for pre-departure training of all expatriates. The ANOVA results show that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the three groups. The importance of language training is in line with the findings from western expatriates' views. This is consistent with other findings of this study where language of host country is not considered a key pre-requisite in the selection of candidates for expatriate assignments (Osman-Gani & Toh, 1997). Since the expatriates are normally not chosen solely based on their language abilities of the host countries, it is natural that they would need training in that area before taking up their expatriate assignments. Area study encompassing the geographical, political, socio-economic information etc., was also rated as very important by all the expatriates considering the need for the updated information on the changing scenario of the region. However, in the case of Singapore, the mean score for cross-cultural training was higher than that for area study. The differences in the means for area study between Japanese and Korean expatriates, and those between Korean and Singaporean expatriates were found to be significant at the 0.01 level (according to the Tukey HSD post hoc analysis). It indicates that the Korean expatriates placed a greater importance on area studies than the Japanese and Singaporean expatriates.

The respondents rated cross-cultural training, as being the other important type of expatriate training. The ANOVA results show significant difference in the means at 0.01 level of significance and the Tukey HSD analysis shows that there are significant differences in the means between the groups at the 0.01 level of significance between Japan and Singapore, and at the 0.05 level between Japan and Korea, and between Korea and Singapore. Singaporean expatriates rate cross-cultural training more highly than their Japanese and Korean counterparts, and the Koreans rate it more highly than the Japanese. It is also interesting to note that overseas acquaintance trips and practical training on living conditions were not considered important by all the three groups of respondents. This is probably because such trips are usually costly and time-consuming, and the marginal benefit derived from these trips over the other training programs does not justify the additional time and resource commitments. The post hoc Tukey HSD analysis shows that in respect of practical living, there is a significant difference in the means at the 0.01 level between Japan and Korea, and Japan and Singapore.

### ***Training Contents***

In designing training and development programs for expatriates, companies need to recognise the importance of multiple home-country and host-country role relationships. Rahim's (1983) model for developing key expatriate executives showed major relations between the expatriate manager and other parties interested in international business. The content, mode of delivery and training rigor are important factors in determining the success of training and development programs for overseas assignments. It is very important to identify the relevant areas of training content before designing an expatriate training program so that the required knowledge and skills are provided for effective expatriate performance. Osman-Gani and Toh (1995) conducted a study on more than 200 senior managers of Singapore-based companies involved in international business. The study covered several issues of training and developing managers for success in overseas assignments in the Asia-Pacific region. They identified several areas of training needs with specific content requirements. Seven broad areas were identified, knowledge in which were found to be critical for successful performance in overseas assignments. This study sought the expatriates' views on these different training content areas. They were asked to rate the relative importance of various training content areas that should be included

in an international training program designed for expatriate managers and professionals. The findings are presented in Table 6.

**TABLE 6**  
**Important Areas to be Incorporated in an Expatriate Training Program**

	Japan		South Korea		Singapore		F -value	P -value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
General management factors	3.61	0.82	3.43	0.75	3.40	0.75	2.601	0.076
Human resource and labor factors	3.56	0.85	3.13	0.68	3.60	0.69	12.691**	0.000
Socio-cultural factors	3.27	0.78	2.86	0.70	3.53	0.72	20.540**	0.000
Accounting, financial and taxation factors	3.29	0.87	3.60	0.87	3.27	0.77	5.118**	0.006
Legal and environment factors	3.36	0.76	3.24	0.88	3.49	0.78	2.483	0.085
Production and technology factors	3.20	1.11	2.90	0.71	3.23	0.80	4.020*	0.019
Marketing factors	3.23	0.76	3.30	0.78	3.43	0.84	1.806	0.166

(1= Not important,... 5 = Very Important      \* Significant at .05 level      \*\* Significant at .01 level)

It can be observed that the expatriates from each country consider different areas as the most important when the areas are ranked based on their mean scores. Considering the area with the highest mean score for each group of expatriates, it can be observed that general management factors has the highest mean score for Japan. Human resource and labor factors was the area with the highest mean score for Singapore. Issues concerning accounting, financial and taxation policies of the host country are considered most relevant and important by Korean expatriates. The differences in the areas considered important may be explained by the respondents' backgrounds. Using the Korean sample as an illustration, the finding that accounting and financial issues, and taxation policies is the area with the highest mean score may stem from the respondents' backgrounds; most of whom (79% of the sample) were from the functional areas of General Management, Finance/Accounting and Marketing/Sales. Hence, it is not surprising to find issues relating to these three functional areas being rated highly important by the respondents. Again, from a general perspective it can be explained that these are the areas where specific skills are highly demanded of an expatriate for effective performance in overseas assignments. It is interesting to note that the Korean expatriates did not consider the socio-cultural factors and production/technology factors as important training content areas relevant to their performance. This may be due to their familiarity with the socio-cultural environment of the region, and with the job related factors that they would be dealing with. This can be contrasted with Osman-Gani & Toh 's (1995) findings where the top three preferred areas of training were general management, human resource & labour, and legal & environmental issues.

When the contents are considered across the three countries, ANOVA results indicate that there is a significant difference in the means at the 0.05 level for human resource and labor factors, socio-cultural factors, and accounting, financial and taxation factors; there is a significant difference at the 0.01 level for production and technology factors. On further post hoc analysis (Tukey HSD), it was discovered that Japan rates human resource and labor factors higher than Korea (significant at the 0.01 level), and that Singapore rates it higher than Korea (significant at the 0.01 level). Socio-cultural factors is similar – Japan rates this more highly than Korea (significant at the 0.01 level), Singapore rates it higher than Korea (significant at the 0.01 level) and Japan's mean is higher than Singapore (at the 0.05 level). In the area of accounting, there is a significance difference at the 0.05 level between Japan and Korea, and between Korea and Singapore. Korean expatriates in this instance place a higher score on this aspect than the other two countries. Finally, there is a significant difference in the means at the 0.05 level for production and technology factors between Japan and Korea and between Korea and Singapore, with Korea again attributing less importance to this as compared to the other two countries. In summary, Korea differs from Japan and Singapore in these aspects. In all the content areas where ANOVA results

showed a difference in the means, Korean expatriates had attributed a lower importance except for accounting, financial and taxation factors. These differences are discussed below.

### ***Training Duration***

Determining the right amount of pre-departure training for expatriates is not an easy task. If too little time is spent on pre-departure training, the expatriates may not be well prepared, which could lead to poor job performance and even premature termination of the expatriate assignment. On the other hand, if too much time has been spent for pre-departure training, the trainees may suffer from information overload and boredom, and the company may be spending too much resources. Among the various types of training programs for international managers, some last only few hours, others last for months. Some are fairly superficial, others are extensive in coverage (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1988; Hodgetts & Luthans, 1994). The preferred duration of training for overseas assignment in the Asia-Pacific would vary widely with mean hours of 17 to 51 hours for a program depending on the type and contents of the program. The majority of the companies (54.35%) had pre-departure expatriate training programs of an average duration of one to four weeks per program in a year (Osman-Gani & Toh, 1995). This study sought to identify the appropriate duration of pre-departure training program for expatriates working in Asia. Table 7 presents the findings of the expatriates' views in order of their importance.

**TABLE 7**  
**Appropriate Duration for Pre-departure Programs**

	Japan		South Korea		Singapore		F-value	P-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
1 day (8 hours)	1.56	0.88	2.01	0.94	1.66	0.94	7.124**	0.001
3 days (24 hours)	2.10	0.98	2.55	0.79	2.48	1.17	7.295**	0.001
1 week (40 hours)	3.03	1.10	3.01	0.92	3.19	1.09	0.930	0.396
2 weeks (80 hours)	3.01	1.23	3.36	1.02	3.02	1.25	2.881	0.058
More than 2 weeks	2.99	1.46	3.84	1.20	2.42	1.28	26.548**	0.000

(\* \*\* Significant at the 0.01 level)

Table 7 showed that Japanese and Singaporean expatriates consider that the appropriate duration for pre-departure training should be offered for a week; Korean expatriates rated the duration exceeding two weeks as more appropriate. ANOVA results showed that there are significant differences in the means for the following durations - one day, three days and more than two weeks.

### ***Training Delivery***

Selection of appropriate training delivery methods depends on many factors, the most significant one being the training rigor, which is again dependent on job and culture novelty issues. Research shows that training rigor is critical to the success of cross-cultural/expatriate training programs. The ability of a firm to determine the appropriate degree of training rigor needed for its global managers is the secret to cross-cultural training design. Black and Mendenhall (1989) presented a model showing the relationship of high and low rigor training with methods of delivery and time spent on training. According to them, low rigor training includes approaches such as lectures, films, area briefings, and books. Whereas high rigor training approaches are interactive language training, assessment centers, and sophisticated cross-cultural simulations. The duration of low rigor training was four to twenty hours, and for high training rigor, it was 60 to 180 hours (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Black & Mendenhall, 1989; 1990). This study also sought to identify the suitability of various types of training delivery methods for expatriates for effective performance in their overseas assignments.

Six most common training delivery methods used for expatriate training were identified through literature search, and the respondents were asked to rate the relative appropriateness of the methods to ensure effective overseas performance. The findings are presented in Table 8.

**TABLE 8**  
**Appropriate Training Delivery Methods for Effective Expatriate Performance**

	Japan		South Korea		Singapore		F-value	P-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Lecture / classroom training	3.11	0.84	3.01	0.75	2.87	0.87	2.345	0.097
Workshop / seminar	2.93	0.81	2.86	0.65	3.07	0.88	2.345	0.156
Case-study / video system	3.21	0.94	3.12	0.85	3.23	0.89	0.431	0.650
Role play / Interaction	3.02	0.87	2.82	0.85	2.84	1.04	1.837	0.161
Self-instructional training modules	2.97	0.92	3.10	0.75	2.49	1.10	11.532**	0.000
On-site (on-the-job training)	3.93	1.09	4.11	0.87	3.88	0.92	1.534	0.217

(1 = Not Appropriate, ..... 5 = Most Appropriate \*\* Significant at the 0.01 level)

On-site or on-the-job training were ranked as the most appropriate and effective training delivery method by all the respondents. This could be because such form of training is by far the most direct form of instructional method. It provides trainees with an opportunity to learn through hands-on experiences under real-life business settings. Case-study or video approach in training delivery was considered to be the next most appropriate judging from the mean scores. Training through lectures and in classrooms was next but in the case of Korea and Singapore expatriates, this delivery method was rated just above the median in the case of Korea and below the median by Singapore expatriates. The respondents also considered the role play/interaction and the workshop/seminar methods were less appropriate for Asian expatriate training programs. Self-instructional training modules was only rated above the median by Korean expatriates. ANOVA results reveal that the only significant difference in the means for delivery methods is in this aspect of self-instructional training modules. The above findings are also consistent to a great extent with previous studies on international training and development.

In order to identify the effective providers of expatriate training programs, the respondents of this study were asked to rate the relative effectiveness of the various training providers. Table 9 presents the findings as follows.

**TABLE 9**  
**Effective Providers of Expatriate Training Programs**

	Japan		South Korea		Singapore		F-value	P-Value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
In-house / company personnel headquarter	3.47	1.05	3.31	0.85	3.28	0.85	1.355	0.259
Host country subsidiary / partner personnel	3.53	0.90	3.68	0.86	3.60	0.93	0.826	0.439
Outside professional consultants	3.03	0.89	3.00	0.70	2.82	0.91	1.952	0.144
University / academic professionals	2.29	1.07	2.53	0.81	2.19	0.87	3.307*	0.038

(1 = Not Effective, ..... 5 = Most Effective \* = significant at the 0.05 level)

Personnel of host country subsidiary/partner were regarded by the expatriates as the most effective providers of the necessary training for effective expatriate performance. This could very well be because

they are familiar with the conditions and environment of the host-country, and hence are in the best position to impart the necessary knowledge and skills of host-country management to the expatriates. It is interesting to note that all the expatriates considered the university/academic professionals to be the least effective among the four groups of expatriate training providers. The ANOVA results show that there is a significant difference in the means at the 0.05 level for the university/academic professors as providers. Post hoc test using Tukey HSD show that the significance difference in the means is between Korea and Singapore at the 0.05 level. The Korean expatriates rate the university academics most favourably as effective providers of training among the three groups.

### Differences Between Japanese, Korean and Singaporean Expatriates

The findings have been discussed in the earlier sections. However, there is a need to address the major differences between the three groups of expatriates. When one considers types of training, significant differences have been found in the importance attributed to post-arrival training and repatriation training; and the importance attributed to cross-cultural training, family adjustment orientation, area study, practical training on living conditions and overseas acquaintance trips. Where contents of training are concerned, significant differences are found in human resource and labor factors, socio-cultural factors, and production and technology factors. Significant differences were also found in the duration of the programme, training delivery methods and delivery providers. However, it is the differences in the importance attributed to the types of training and training contents that deserve further discussion as one could argue that the duration, delivery methods and delivery providers could be explained by individual preferences. The differences in the means and the significance as shown by the post hoc analysis using Tukey HSD is shown in Table 10 below:

**TABLE 10**

#### Differences in Importance Attributed to Training and Training Contents

	Mean Difference		
	Japan-Korea	Korea-Singapore	Japan-Singapore
Post-arrival training (at host-country)	-0.37**	0.018	-0.35**
Repatriation training (at home/host country)	-0.47**	0.008	-0.38**
<b>Training Programs for Effective Expatriate Performance</b>			
Cross-cultural training	-0.30*	-0.30*	-0.60**
Family adjustment orientation	-0.21	-0.23	-0.44**
Area Study	-0.45**	0.35**	-0.099
Practical training on living conditions	-0.45**	-0.021	-0.47**
Overseas acquaintance trips	-0.028**	-0.33*	-0.36**
<b>Views on Training Contents</b>			
Human resource and labor factors	0.43**	-0.48**	-0.046
Socio-cultural factors	0.41**	-0.67**	-0.26*
Accounting, financial and taxation factors	-0.31*	0.33*	0.015
Production and technology factors	0.30*	-0.33*	-0.032

(\* Significant at 0.05 level.

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level)

The reason for the differences in results across Japanese, Korean and Singapore companies may be explained by the individual factors, organizational factors, host country factors and cultural factors in the home country. Under individual factors, the working experience of the expatriate and prior experience in overseas assignments would affect the training and content required. Organizational

factors include the history and experience of the sending organizations in overseas operations and expatriation, the types of businesses the expatriates are deployed in, the organizational culture with respect to expatriation and employment. When considering the types of businesses an expatriate is assigned it is necessary to training requirements would change in relation to the level of technology, for instance, involved. Another organization factor is the selection of personnel. If there is a policy to select married personnel for overseas assignments, the training provided would have to factor in the needs of the family whereas the Singapore companies who send single people would place less emphasis on this aspect.

Host country factors would include the socio-cultural, legal, economic and the presence or absence of expatriates in the country. These factors determine the contexts and environments within which the expatriates are required to operate. Two different economies in Asia could provide different settings for business operations by virtue of the level of economic development. Singapore, for example, emphasises high technology manufacturing whereas an economy like Vietnam seeking employment for its workers would tend to favour labor intensive activities. Herein lies a limitation of this study. Although the respondents were request to complete the questionnaire in the light of the training for expatriates, it must be noted that two of the samples were assigned to Singapore, whereas the Singaporean sample would have been assigned outside of Singapore. Interviews were conducted to complete the questionnaires with the view of eliminating this possible bias. Finally, cultural factors in the home country would have an impact on the training needs. Cultural factors would include the experience of the country in sending out expatriates, government policies and attitudes of the public to working overseas. Other cultural factors would include the psyche of the citizens. If citizens perceive of themselves as members of a diaspora, working overseas might not be uncommon. In Singapore's case, for example, the government has encouraged businesses to venture overseas since 1993 as such the culture of working overseas has gradually been inculcated in the workforce and in the student population. Of the three countries, Japan has the longest history of overseas operations followed by Korea with Singapore as the new kid on the block. The recent drive to develop an external wing to the economy may explain the higher mean scores in some of the aspects examined in the study.

## **Conclusions**

Whilst this has been a preliminary study on expatriates in Asia, focusing on expatriates from three economies, the findings indicate that the expatriates generally agree with the prescriptions in the literature on the type of training and contents of training to be implemented. There are a number of implications for international business theory and research. The findings indicate that the prescriptions in the western management literature on the training and development of expatriates whilst applicable need to be modified in the light of individual factors, organizational factors, host country factors and cultural factors in the home country. Further research is necessary to develop a framework of international human resource development that is pertinent to Asia and for research to address the question whether the training and development strategies in Asia differ from those in the western countries.

In the past, studies on expatriation often focused on nationals outside Asia. However, as Asian economies gradually become major players in world trade, the relevance of those studies in the context of current business trends needs to be re-assessed. Fundamental differences in historical, cultural and political backgrounds exist between the East and the West. Research findings in the past pertaining to expatriates from countries such as the United States and other European countries may not necessarily apply to the rapidly growing number of expatriates from Asian countries. Although this study serves to narrow the research gap on Asian expatriates, it is far from being comprehensive and exhaustive. The findings do provide scope for better training programs and training strategies to be developed for expatriates in Asia. Future research in this area are needed to explore other aspects that have not been studied. More studies on Asian expatriates are definitely needed since increasing interest is observed for investments in this rapidly growing region of the world. Hopefully, the findings from this study will trigger greater research interest on Asian expatriate management.





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