Chapter 9 Review questions and answers

1. To what extent do you think the emphasis on cross-cultural training for expatriates is justified?

This answer requires the reader’s opinion, supported by reasons for the views. For example, if expatriate failure is the often the result of failure to adjust by the expatriate or spouse, then there is good reason to have both cross-cultural training before and during the assignment to try to prevent this problem arising, as well as a visit to the country prior to accepting the assignment. This might help the expatriate to have a realistic view of the assignment expectations and context of the assignment. There should also be a person (preferably someone with experience of the host country but who is from the home country) available to provide advice and moral support for when there are difficulties.

More attention needs to be paid to the selection of the expatriate, in terms of personality, adaptability etc.

2. What other forms of training and development would you advocate for expatriate employees?

These ideas should reflect your own opinions. What would you like to know and how would you like to receive training before being sent overseas. Is online training effective? What form should it take?

3. How should potential Global Managers be trained? Is experiential training effective? Would you recommend regional or global training, and why?

Training needs to be appropriate for the person, place and appointment that person is taking up. It depends on how much previous international exposure the person has had and the learning style of the person.

Potential global managers need a mix of theoretical and experiential training, preferably specializing in one region to build expertise and language abilities. They need some challenging experiences in order to learn and preferably should have a mentor or sponsor with whom they can discuss their experiences and the learning drawn from them.
4. What can be done to ensure that more women have opportunities for expatriate training and overseas assignment opportunities?

Opportunities need to be offered to women as well as men and it should not be assumed that they are not interested in overseas opportunities. However, first they need equal access to domestic management positions, must develop effective networking and mentoring systems among themselves, and have to take the initiative to show their interest in opportunities. Barriers of prejudice among male managers need to be broken down through education and diversity programmes.

5. Why might some expatriates be unwilling to share knowledge with their subsidiary employees?

Some expatriates feel that sharing knowledge and training subsidiary employees means that they are gradually reducing their own opportunities for the positions. They also may think that the local employees are not ready to take over these positions of responsibility and disagree with the localisation programme for various reasons.

6. What can multinational organizations do to encourage knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer?

There are multiple ways in which MNEs can encourage knowledge sharing and transfer. First, the people involved must be willing and able to share their knowledge and the others must be willing to learn. However, knowledge flow processes across MNEs are complex, ongoing and require multiple levels of analysis. Factors affecting knowledge transfer include culture, structure and the level of trust between the actors. Specific ideas include encouraging knowledge sharing through communities of practice and promoting networks of interpersonal relationships. Taking a proactive approach is important.

7. To what extent should multinational organizations control knowledge management and centralize information?

MNEs may try to centralize information, however, this is probably only possible for explicit information, and research has indicated that this is not effective. This depends on the structure of the organization and how far staff can be obliged to cooperate. Tacit information tends to be shared over time, through building relationships and during informal, unplanned situations, as it is built through experience and is not easily put in explicit terms. It is impossible to centralize this information as it is ‘in people’s heads’.
8. How can the difficulties of knowledge sharing be avoided in International Strategic Alliances?

Difficulties can be avoided by developing trust in the relationships between parties. Both sides must see the mutual benefits of knowledge sharing and cooperation. Having knowledge cannot be seen as having power but as a resource to be utilized for the benefit of both parties. The partner with knowledge must be willing to share this and also to provide opportunities for learning and development of the other partner.

9. How can learning communities be developed today, especially with the use of the internet? Consider how this idea might be used in your organization.

The reader should consider this idea in the light of his/her organization’s needs. Learning Communities (LCs) can be developed by groups of people with similar jobs and interests, who maintain contact through face to face meetings and electronically, through teleconferences and other media, which allow the sharing of information and experiences, the discussion of best practice approaches and explicit information sharing in documents and newsletters. Many IT driven facilities can be used, including blogs to express and share views, mailing groups, file sharing etc. These Learning Communities allow opportunities for discussing problems, knowledge creation, sharing and organizational learning, but may require encouragement at the outset, ground rules and expectation-setting. The level of formality of the LC can be determined by the group and its needs.

10. In your own experience of training and development, what factors made the learning experience effective? Have any of the issues raised in this chapter been similar to your own experience?

This reader needs to reflect on his/her own learning experiences to answer this question. The answer will depend greatly on the reader’s own learning style and learning experiences. The role of the trainer and style of training used will also be relevant. You might also consider the effectiveness of ‘online learning’ in your own case.