

Cross-Cultural Training for the U.S. Military: Implications for Mission Readiness



Prepared by:
George Reinhart, PhD
Claudia Brugman, PhD
Emily Feinberg, MS
Sharon Glazer, PhD
Michelle Falk, MA
Shaina Castle, BA

Goals of the Study

- To examine the utility and effectiveness of cross-cultural training (CCT) and cross-cultural education (CCE) for the U.S. Military, and to assess the potential effect of CCT/CCE on mission readiness.
- Effectiveness translates into mission readiness, a cognitive predisposition to apply the outcomes of CCT/CCE whenever the operational environment demands it.
- However, we found no recent published research that examined the effectiveness of CCT/CCE in military contexts.

Methodological Approach

- Consequently we examined effectiveness of CCT/CCE in nonmilitary contexts.
- We summarized the recent literature on CCT/CCE in industrial, academic, and non-profit settings.
- We compared the characteristics of current CCT/CCE delivered in military contexts to the results found in current published nonmilitary research.

Literature Review

- We identified 135 articles that considered:
 - The relationship between types of training and aspects of cultural competence.
 - Models of the process of acquiring or enhancing cultural competence.
 - Traits characterizing the (cross-)culturally competent individual.
- A subset of these articles were analyzed by (1) meta-analysis and (2) qualitative literature reviews.

Meta-Analysis

- The initial article search identified 96 empirical articles, 26 of which were deemed appropriate for meta-analysis.
- The 26 articles presented data on 5,678 subjects.
- Four clusters of outcomes were identified:
 - Job performance
 - Increased cultural knowledge
 - Attitude change
 - Adjustment, including work adjustment, interpersonal adjustment and general adjustment
- These outcomes were similar to those found in previous meta-analysis studies on CCT.

Meta-Analysis (Cont.)

- The effect sizes for the outcomes were:
 - Performance ES = .22 (Z = 6.37)
 - Adjustment ES = -.02 (Z = 1.00)
 - Knowledge ES = .89 (Z = 16.49)
 - Attitude ES = .19 (Z = 3.30)
- In summary, the meta-analysis demonstrated that in industrial, academic, and non-profit contexts, CCT has a positive and significant impact on job performance, cultural knowledge, and attitude change, but not on adjustment.

Moderator Effects

- We examined the impact of two moderators – duration of training and type of training.
- Training duration was classified as short – one-day or shorter – or long – more than one day.
- Training type was classified as didactic, experiential or mixed.

Moderator Effects (Cont.)

- Although it appears to be counterintuitive, short duration training had an ES of .14, small but significant, while long duration training had a non-significant ES.
- Didactic training had a non-significant ES; experiential training had a large ES of 1.02 ($p < .000$); and mixed training had a moderate ES of .42 ($p < .000$).

Qualitative Review

- Training vs. no training
 - Independent of method, several studies have demonstrated that CCT had a significant impact on job performance, adjustment, and cross-cultural skills adjustment.
- Pre-departure and post-arrival training
 - Pre-departure training is more prevalent.
 - Post-arrival training that supplements pre-departure training is more effective than either type alone

Qualitative Review (Cont.)

- Culture-specific vs. culture-general training
(culture-general training or education teaches about the organizing principles that may differ between cultures, rather than teaching about specific groups)
 - Training or education with a culture-specific content is not transferable to a different cultural context.
 - Culture-specific training may have effects on more of the components of cross-cultural competence than culture-general training.
 - Perspective-taking ability, addressed by culture-general training, can improve interaction, both within the organization and in transnational situations.

Qualitative Review(Cont.)

- Effects of CCT on self-maintenance, interpersonal, and social skills.
 - There is a strong positive relationship between CCT and all three levels of interaction skills development.
 - CCT intervention positively affects interaction skills whether or not the interactions are cross-cultural in nature.

Qualitative Review (Cont.)

- Didactic training vs. experiential training
 - Experiential training has a significant impact on job performance, sensitivity, and empathy.
 - Mixed training models increase knowledge, skills, attitudes, and sensitivity.
 - Culture-general CCT is appropriate when the training model is experiential.
 - A mixed training model may be more effective than either didactic or experiential training individually

Qualitative Review (Cont.)

- Duration of training.
 - Duration of training is highly variable.
 - Studies indicate that there is no relationship between duration of training and adjustment.
 - Increased duration of training may work best when cultural distance between home culture and target culture is large.

Moderator Effects

- There is a robust relationship among manager support, peer support, and an overall positive climate of learning and transfer of knowledge in the work environment.
- Congruence of training method and trainee's culture may impact CCT outcomes, e.g., self-focused methods for those from individualist cultures vs. collectivist methods for those from collectivistic cultures.
- Personality traits such as extraversion and tolerance of ambiguity may have a positive impact on the effectiveness of CCT.

Conclusions

- Cross-cultural training is effective.
- However, CCT is not equally effective for all outcomes.
 - It impacts job performance, knowledge, and attitudes, but not adjustment.
- Some types of CCT appear to be more effective than others—in particular, mixed didactic and experiential have the most positive effects.
- A number of moderating effects impact CCT.
 - Cultural distance.
 - Organizational commitment to enhance 3C in workers.
 - Interrelationship between skills training and deployment needs.

Implications for Mission Readiness

- Currently each service branch provides a mixed model approach for both culture-general and culture-specific training.
- The pathway between CCT and mission readiness occurs in three steps:
 - *Mission readiness* must be defined in operational terms that can be incorporated into evaluation practices.
 - The content of CCT must mirror the operational terms that comprise mission readiness.
 - The content of CCT must be comprehended and retained by military learners and applied in an appropriate range of settings and situations.

Implications for Mission Readiness (Cont.)

- The content and delivery of CCT/CCE in military settings is often not standardized, consequently allowing for variability in conceptualization and effectiveness of training, as well as incongruities in outcomes.
- While the assessment of CCT is made at the individual level, the assessment of operational effectiveness is made at the unit level.
- Nevertheless, assessment of warfighter acquisition of CCT content would enhance improvement of training content and delivery methods and would assist in determining whether programs are meeting force needs.

Implications for Leadership

- Leadership in the military context requires:
 - Declarative knowledge of the target culture.
 - Meta-cognitive skills for hypothesizing cultural characteristics based on incomplete information.
 - Substantial transfer of cultural knowledge both within the organization and in the operational environment.
- Leaders must have at their cognitive disposal multiple cultural milieux relative to which they can act, and consequently, a robust ability to evaluate host actors relative to assessable cultures.

Implications for Leadership (Cont.)

- The literature consistently demonstrates that CCT is most effective when it has leadership support and leadership participation.
- The learning process for cross-cultural competence rarely occurs from the bottom up.
- Rather a “waterfall” rollout of CCT is recommended, where training is received first among leadership and then proceeds down the hierarchy.
- In order for forces to develop cultural competence, their leaders must exhibit quintessential cultural competence.

Summary

- Cross-cultural training and education programs present service members with basic knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes to enhance their proficiency in analyzing cross-cultural interactions and decision-making involved in those interactions. Applying these competencies increases service members' readiness in a wide range of operational environments.

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