

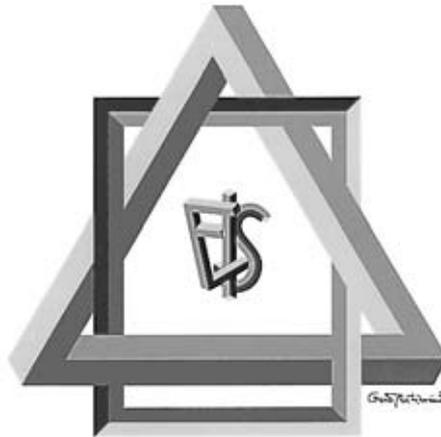
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MANAGING COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN A CROSS-CULTURAL ORGANISATION

What are the Barriers and Enablers?

by

Misook Park-Westman



Department of Computer and Information Science

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Linköping 2006

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DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER

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by

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ABSTRACT

During the past decade, research on competence development and cross-cultural organisation has been acknowledged both in academic circles and by industrial organisations. Cross-cultural organisations that have emerged through globalisation are a manifestation of the growing economic interdependence among countries. In cross-cultural organisations, competence development has become an essential strategic tool for taking advantage of the synergy effects of globalisation. The objective of this thesis is to examine how competence development programs are conducted and to identify barriers and enablers for the success of such programs, especially in a cross-cultural organisation.

To identify the processes involved in managing competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation, a case study method was chosen. A total of 43 interviews and 33 surveys were held with participants, facilitators and managers in competence development programs at four units of IKEA Trading Southeast Asia located in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, respectively. In addition to the observations made on these four competence development programs, a study of the literature in related research areas was conducted. The interviews were held and the survey data collected in 2003 and 2004.

In the findings, the barriers identified were cultural differences, assumptions, language, and mistrust; the enablers were cultural diversity, motivation, management commitment, and communication. The conclusions are that competence development is a strategic tool for cross-cultural organisations and that it is extremely important to identify barriers to, and enablers of, successful competence development, and to eliminate the barriers and support the enablers right from the early stages of competence development programs.

This work has been supported by the Foundation for Knowledge and Competence Development, the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (through IMIE), the Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technical Development and IKEA.

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PREFACE

The field of Economic Information Systems (EIS) includes the communication and transmission of information to, from and between people, as well as the development and evaluation of appropriate information systems for those purposes. The field also covers information structures; in other words, the interaction among modern information technology, organisational solutions and people.

Doctoral candidates in this field are associated with various research programmes. Some candidates conduct their research at IMIE (International Graduate School of Management and Industrial Engineering). Doctoral candidates at EIS may also participate in "Management and IT" (MIT), a co-operative research programme involving seven universities. Other doctoral candidates are enrolled in the Industry Research School in Applied IT and Software Engineering, which is partially funded by the Swedish Foundation for Knowledge and Competence Development. There is also a three-year licentiate Research Programme for Auditors and Consultants (RAC). RAC is being carried out in partnership with leading audit firms in Sweden. EIS also co-operates closely with Gotland University College and Skövde University College. EIS graduate study programmes are open to some of their doctoral students.

EIS research is currently conducted under a number of principal headings:

- e-Business
- Combating Economic Crime
- Financial Accounting and Auditing
- Organisation and Communication with New Information Technology
- Strategy and Management Control
- Simulation, Decision Support, and Control of Manufacturing Flows
- Applications of Principal-Agent Theory
- IT and productivity

Misook Park-Westman, M.B.A wrote *Managing Competence Development Programs in a Cross-Cultural Organisation – What are the Barriers and Enablers?* as her Licentiate thesis in the field of Economic Information Systems, Department of Computer and Information Science, Institute of Technology, Linköping University. She was enrolled in the research school IMIE.

Linköping, June 2006

Birger Rapp
Professor
Economic Information Systems

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the journey of this study, a lot of things happened in my private life. The biggest things of all are the birth of my second child and the death of my father. I postponed my time plan for the thesis because I have two small children who needed my every moment attention. On the other hand, my father encouraged me to continue my study in his own way during his life and even after his death. I thank my family who made my journey more meaningful as it was not easy and simple. Especially, I give thanks to my father for being my father forever. I realize that he is alive in me even after his death.

I cannot forget my professor, Birger Rapp. Without him, I wouldn't have started or even finish my study. He was my extra father. He gave me all the support that I needed during my study. I should thank Pamela and Anna for editing my English and structure. I even thank Nils-Göran, Leif, Fredrik, Alf and other researchers for your thorough readings and corrections. I thank Curt Temin and Göran Ydstrand at IKEA for their supporting my research. I would like to thank all IKEA TASEA co-workers who stood out with interviews, surveys and proof readings.

I have my mother alive and she lives in another part of earth, Korea. I feel sorry that I cannot visit her more often. Mom, you know that I love you. I thank my mother and my family in Korea who believe in me. To Ingrid and Rune, I send my special thank for their support always. Johanna, Victoria, Linnea and Calle! I'm really sorry for not being patient many times because I was stressed, but I know you understand that I try to be a good mom for you guys. Göran, dear my husband! Thank you for all your constructive criticism

about my research and for your love. Thank you for your patient reading my thesis so many times!

Linköping, September 2006

Misook Park-Westman

Economic Information Systems

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the need of competence development in a cross-cultural organisation both from individual and organisational points of view. The goal of this study is to understand the managing process of competence development programs and the case-study is held at IKEA Trading Southeast Asia.

1.1 NEEDS FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

The global economy demands increased flexibility in production and service delivery, improved use of advanced technologies, and increased responsiveness to the requirements of customers. This has made expertise more prized than ever before (Carnevale, 1991). Higher demands on people when it comes to competence are appearing in current industrial life. Thus, competence development is not only an individual interest, but also an organisational one. The reality of contemporary organisations is that most employees are being required to develop higher levels of competence rapidly and continuously and without it having any undue interference in the ongoing work of their organisation (Jacobs, 2003). Unlike other resources, human competence is not concrete. It is neither visible nor touchable. Nevertheless, managing competence is more central to an organisation than managing its tangible resources (ibid). Thus, there are needs for competence development in two different aspects: the individual and organisational perspectives.

Individuals need competence development as a part of their self realisation and fulfilment (Maslow, 1998). Organisations, small as well as large, have needs for competence development of their human resources (Ylinenpää, 1997). The advance of global competition, coupled with the explosion of information, presents serious challenges at all levels of industry today (Davis & Davis, 1998). The consequent need for training – or retraining – to adapt to new job demands has never been greater. Competences are regarded as a competitive strategy (Drucker, 1999; Fulmer, 2000) and they are absolute musts to have in an uncertain future business environment (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). By providing training programs, so-called, competence development programs for the newcomers, small and large companies try to be attractive objects in a business market. The emergence of learning organisations became inevitable for the competitive survival of current corporations (Senge, 1990). In a global context, organisations themselves are changing, reengineering their approaches to the work they do and the structures they create for doing it. As individuals in an interconnected world, populations interact more frequently, and human differences take on new importance resulting in a crucial need for better understanding of diversity.

1.2 MANAGING COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

When people join an organisation, they must “learn the ropes” and become familiar with the way things are done. Socialisation is the process of influencing the expectations, behaviour, and attitudes of a new employee in a manner considered desirable by the organisation (Maanen & Schein, 1979). Thus, running competence development programs can be understood as a changing process. It is clearly stated that competence development programs have a key role to prepare for the uncertain future (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). It is even more important in a cross-cultural organisation (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001). However, running a competence development program in a desirable way is not an easy task to fulfil. It is only 30 percentage of competence development efforts

succeeded (Garvin, 2000). Unfortunately, training is often superficial and ineffective (Davis & Davis, 1998). There are barriers and difficulties in running competence development programs. Moreover, running competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation addresses additional problems such as geographical distance, language and cultural differences (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001).

There are often geographical distances between co-workers who are working in the same team or area in a cross-cultural organisation. They can have meetings and video-conferences, but daily contacts are made through memos or by telephone. There are barriers in geographically dispersed organisations, but there are enablers as well, for instance communication technology that make them work. Though there are technologies for communication for managers, managers prefer to face-to-face contact (Lindström, 1999). Also co-workers have a need to have a direct contact in order to have a feeling of belongingness to a team and an organisation. Since team members are spread over national borders, they miss the continuum of contacts. Daily memos and telephone conversations have their limits in creating closeness and trust. People have preferences still for face-to-face contacts, corridor chats and coffee-breaks. Competence development in an informal route occurs through sharing knowledge and experience. In a cross-cultural organisation, geographical distance becomes a barrier for informal competence development.

Many different languages are involved in a cross-cultural organisation. To accommodate all the different languages, every co-worker is expected to be a multi-language speaker. That is to say, employees are expected to be able to speak at least more than one language. For instance, a Swede working in China for more than ten years is expected to understand Chinese even though the office language is English. In that case, there are three languages involved in the organisation. In general, a cross-cultural

organisation has English as the official language. English has many different forms¹ such as American, British, or Malay. Employees have difficulties in language not only because of their lack of language knowledge, but also because of the different ways it is used (Schermerhorn, 1996). It was found that language can also be the barrier for transferring knowledge from one project to the next ones within the same organisation (Björkegren, 1999). Most of the cross-cultural organisations support their employees' training in language, but still in the educational environment, the message of a training program is not fully communicated to all participants to the same degree. Thus, language can be a barrier during the execution of competence development programmes.

Cultural difference becomes a barrier when co-workers have a prejudice and negative assumptions about certain values, attitudes and behaviours (Schermerhorn, 1996). Values are broad beliefs, preferences, viewpoints, and inclinations forming a person's approach to the surrounding world (Rokeach, 1973). In contrast to values, attitudes are more specific "likes" and "dislikes" that result in predispositions to behave in certain ways toward other people, objects, and events. Many cross-cultural organisations try to manage conflicts caused by cultural differences through workshops or training sessions. Cross-cultural training sessions aim to understand differences by discussions and role plays. Some cross-cultural organisations use cultural differences for their own advantage instead of disadvantage. For instance, there are best practices that work well in one place, which can be applied to another place. Cultural differences have been studied in many comparative researches (Olve et al., 1988; Hofstede, 2001).

¹In Microsoft Word, Language selection lists 18 different kinds of English language.

1.3 QUESTION

There are many questions around competence developing processes. How can a company assure the result of competence development programs conductions? Why are the results of competence development programs different from case to case? For companies, it is important to understand the characteristics of competence development programs, the conditions of operating competence development programs, and what are achievable results and effects of competence development programs. The main question in this thesis is therefore;

- + What are the barriers and enablers to succeed in managing² a competence development program in a cross-cultural organisation?

As described earlier there have been barriers in running competence development programs in cross-cultural organisations. 30 percent of competence development programs reach their goals. There are programmes that have succeeded and programmes that have failed in a cross-cultural organisation. What are the barriers if the courses were failures? What are enablers if the programs were successful? In order to be able to answer this question we need to go deeper in the discussions about learning situations and critical factors that influence the results of competence development programs execution. This will be discussed more in the Chapter Three, Frames of References.

1.4 PURPOSE

For companies it is important that competence development programs deliver satisfactory results. The purpose of this thesis is to understand

² In this study, the term, “managing” has the synonymous meaning of running, executing, performing and conducting, which is one part of implementation in competence development processes.

how competence development programmes are conducted and to identify barriers and enablers for the successful competence development programs execution, especially in a cross-cultural organisation. The word, 'successful' is used in the sense that the programs reach their goals. Participants feedback, managers feedback and evaluation surveys are the input to understand the result. It will be interesting to see how the different actors involved understand the courses to be successful. By considering the cross-cultural context, the effects of standardisation in competence development programs will be explored. Thus, this research will describe the running process of competence development programs and identify enablers and barriers.

1.5 THE THESIS OUTLINE

Chapter One, Introduction, the background of the research, problem formulation, goals and expected contributions are described.

Chapter Two, Method, the approaches and the roles of the researcher in this research are discussed.

Chapter Three, Frames of References about competence, competence development, culture, learning in cross-cultural organisation, definitions are made and the use of definitions in the study are given.

Chapter Four, Practice, the empirical case-study is described. Running processes of different competence development programs in parallel are compared and findings of highlighted factors are illustrated.

Chapter Five, Analysis, important observations and interview materials are analysed to obtain a holistic view of managing competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation.

Chapter Six, Closing, research results are summarised and Further Studies, with different objects and different approaches are proposed.

The following Figure 1 illustrates the organisation of the thesis.

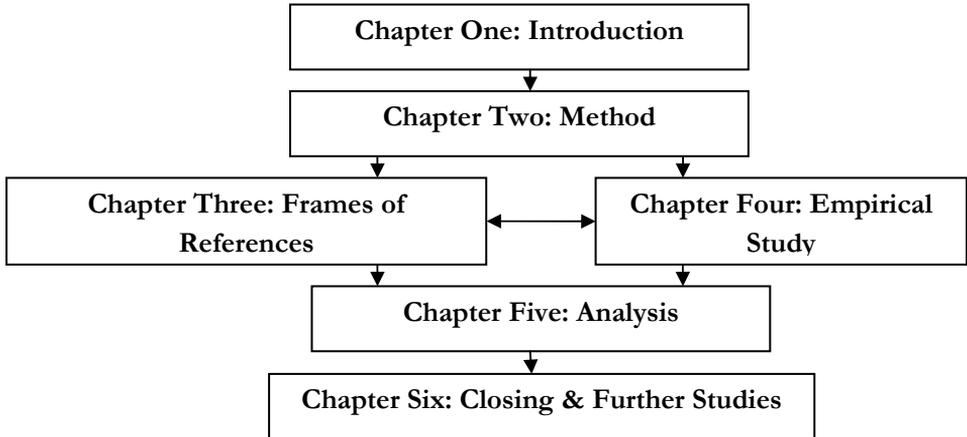


Figure 1: Organisation of the thesis

1.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the need of competence development in a global business market was discussed both from individual and organisational points of views. It was unavoidable to run competence development as cross-cultural organisations not only because companies want to attract employees in a business market, but also because they want to raise local competences so that local employees perform as well as transferred employees.

The goals were described as to understand competence development processes in a cross-cultural organisation and identify critical factors that influence the effects of each program. Those factors will be categorised as enablers or barriers.

The contributions of this study are illustrated by findings from an empirical study in Southeast Asia where little research has been done within the area of cross-cultural training literature. IKEA is an exemplary corporation where a lot of success stories are coming out, but it is interesting to see how their competence development programs are run in different local countries. Another contribution of this study is to see if some of the results found in references can be found in the case studied here, and if there are other new results.

2 CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

In this chapter, the method of the research that has been chosen for this study will be described. Qualitative methods were used as a main research tool. In addition to the qualitative method, Quantitative methods were also used due to the limitation of material availability and information quality. The research aims at understanding how a cross-cultural organisation runs a competence development programs and what critical factors influence the effects of competence development programs. In order to understand the managing processes of competence development programs, a case study was chosen. This is because case study is a suitable method as research strategy when the focus is more on the process than the result (Merriam, 1988). Much of the qualitative case-based methods, such as interviews are suggested in order to investigate process focused questions in the literature (Yin, 1984; Merriam, 1988). Case study strategy is a qualitative research method which includes interviews, observations and documentation collections. In addition to the qualitative method, a survey which is a quantitative method was also made in order to check the quality of information gathered from interviews and observations, and also as a complementary way of collecting data. The purpose of this was to increase the quality and richness of information.

2.1 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

It was important for me to meet people in different roles who were involved in the competence development process. They are actors such as participants, managers, co-workers and the person responsible for HR in a

competence development process. I chose interviews and observations in order to gain deeper understandings and insights into what are happening in competence development processes. Interviews and observations belong to the qualitative method.

2.1.1 INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

One could ask why the interview method to study competence development and management should be used. Historical methods can be used, too. Another possibility is to use a simple survey. Using the survey has the advantage that you could collect information from a lot of cases within a short time. Using the survey has the disadvantage that the information collected is not enough to draw a concrete conclusion with detailed explanations. The survey results can give a slight idea on a general level. It is difficult to get a deep understanding. The historical method is suitable when there are enough secondary sources.

A lot of research within competence management has been done through interviews as well as surveys. In this study, the combined method of interviews, observations, internal documents as well as a survey was chosen. This combined method aimed to increase the validity of information quality. The historical method was not used in this study as the case studied here is an on-going process currently and there is not enough secondary material written to research about. The case studied here is one case, not multiple cases because of its methods, like interviews and observations, require a lot of time. The aim of the study is not to generalise things and create a theory, but to indicate any applicability from one case to another similar cases.

2.1.2 SELECTION OF THE CASE

IKEA was selected for this study, first of all, because I have had an access to information as an employee, after working for more than ten years as facilitator within IKEA and experiencing different forms of training during this time. Permission and support from the management group

and HR group in IKEA has been granted for this study, which is a big advantage for performing this kind of research.

Secondly, IKEA is an interesting study object as it has a cross-cultural organisation with a matrix organisational form. It is complex, but IKEA is known to be one of the successful companies at managing complexity in a simple way (Salzer, 1994).

Thirdly, it is interesting to see how IKEA prioritises competence development on corporate levels and how IKEA manages competence development processes. There is curiosity to discover if there is any gap between competence management prioritised by the corporate strategic level and competence development in the operational level. IKEA HR Idea and IKEA's modern testament³, called Ten Jobs in Ten Years clearly show that IKEA is focusing on competence development. It has not yet been investigated. How these IKEA HR Idea and IKEA's Ten Jobs in Ten Years testament are understood and implemented in competence development process?

Finally, IKEA has both in-house and external competence development programs designed and implemented world-wide and locally. There are success and failure stories in running development programs. What are the factors that steer results? It is interesting to see how those running processes are performed in order to get an idea of the critical factors.

To summarise, my work experience within IKEA over the last ten years has made me realise that IKEA is leading in competence management by prioritising and using competence development as strategy for the future uncertain business conditions⁴. From interviews that performed as a pre-

³ Testament is like IKEA's vision and directives for the coming ten years since 2000.

⁴ IKEA is the most attractive company for new graduates in Sweden according to research done recently (2004). For the second year in a row, IKEA tops the list of economics students' ideal employer. The "Company Barometer" is an annual Swedish

study⁵, it was obvious, most of IKEA employees in IKEA Trading South East Asia have intentions to work for IKEA as IKEA prioritises and invests on personal development. From the survey with newly graduated young Swedes, IKEA was an attractive company as it strives for development, challenges each individual and they might have chances to work in an international environment in the future. Thus, all these factors above motivate me to study IKEA.

2.1.3 IKEA TRADING SOUTHEAST ASIA

I was located in Southeast Asia, specifically in Bangkok. IKEA Trading Southeast Asia (TASEA) covers four countries namely Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. Thus, IKEA TASEA is the area where the research has been made. IKEA TASEA's main business is purchasing. The purchasing organisation is based on materials areas. There are six material areas such as Natural Fibre, Metal & Plastic, Wood, Textile, Ceramics and Business Development. One material area covers more than one country.

In a purchasing team, there are purchasers, technicians and someone with operational responsibility. There are more than three people in a

opinion poll that ranks companies according to their popularity among different student groups, mainly within economics, technology and IT. The company behind the survey is Universum Communications. The results are based on the opinions of around 6,400 students at 33 different universities and university colleges in Sweden. On April 22nd 2004, Universum gave awards to the companies that ranked highest. According to Fortune (2005), IKEA is one of the best companies to work in. These facts strengthen ideas that IKEA is a good company and cares about IKEA's workers and that IKEA's workers appreciate it.

⁵ Between 2001 and 2002 I interviewed 30 IKEA TASEA employees who were working for logistics and operations. Most of responses from interviewees were that they wanted to continue working for IKEA because IKEA focuses on the developments of human resources.

purchasing team. There could be two technicians and three people with operational responsibility. There is more than one purchasing team in a material area. One purchasing team usually covers one country. Purchasing teams are the study target of this research.

In this research, four competence development programs are studied in order to see the differences in effects depending on the different characters of the programs. The competence development programs have been selected considering different characteristics of programs and programs with high priority importance in an organisation. As the research touches the area of cultural differences, the IKEA culture program has been selected among the competence development programs studied even though there are other programs that are oriented towards attitude change. Thus, the four competence development programs that are studied here are:

- + Purchasing Team Competence
- + Situational Leadership
- + Quotation Management
- + IKEA Culture

2.1.4 DATA COLLECTION

Interviews with the competence development program participants were made. Participants from Thailand and Vietnam were interviewed mainly as they were the first participants in the time plan of running competence development programs. For participants from Indonesian and Malaysian nationals, surveys were mainly made as the interview material was not available. Thus, surveys were made with shorter questions for Malay and Indonesian co-workers and e-mails and telephone conversations were held when the answers to the survey were not clear. Access to the

materials was limited for Indonesia and Malaysia during the empirical study.

By combining interviews and a survey, research could be performed more efficiently. Interviews were made with trainers, people responsible for HR and managers of competence development programs. Information from trainers became a good source to compare the information the researcher collected from participants. Facilitators usually could give some comments about the differences among countries and people in each program, which is not always the case. People responsible for HR and managers had often a broader view enabling them to see an individual's growth and development in full personally as well as professionally. People responsible for HR and managers were input from outside competence development programs. They reflected what others who didn't attend the programs perceive about running competence development programs.

Observations about competence development programs were made in Thailand and Vietnam. The researcher couldn't participate in all training programs events as they occurred at the same time in some cases. When the researcher planned to observe programs in Malaysia and Indonesia, she had to cancel due to the illness during that time. In that case, the researcher in this study asked both facilitators and participants about some remarkable things happened during the course. Also, during the interviews, the researcher would ask additional questions how the course was more in detail.

As interviews and observations were underway, a better idea was informed of how competence development programs run in different places for different people with different national background. Based on this deeper understanding, more refined questions were made for the next survey. The questions in the survey were easier for the respondents to understand. The researcher and the respondents had a common understanding within the framework of the competence development program. The communication became easier and more efficient.

Course materials were studied before observations and interviews. Thus, the researcher in this study could concentrate on observing how people interact during the programs and ask questions about whether participants understand course contents and intentions. In addition to course materials, feedback and evaluation sheets were reviewed after the programs. Documents like course materials helped the researcher prepared for interviews and observations. Documents like feedback and evaluation sheets gave an opportunity for the researcher to validate information collected from interviews and observations.

The researcher in this study had a role as trainer as well as researcher during the research period. But in the chosen competence development programs, the researcher in this study had only the role of researcher. Many writers emphasise that it is important to have access to the study object. For instance, Gummesson (1985) states that there are three different kinds of access possibilities: as traditional researcher, consultant and employee. He mentions that it demands a lot of time to acquire basic knowledge about the company and it is a big advantage if the researcher is an 'insider'. However, there is a disadvantage in doing a research as an 'insider.' The respondents might not tell the truth or an 'insider' is brainwashed by the way of thinking from internal training that she has received over her employment period. In order to avoid these disadvantages, the researcher in this study kept dialogue with different parties within the company.

The researcher in this study collected information from training program participants in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia for each training program⁶. They were people in business support, technicians, purchasers, team leaders and material area managers in Material Area

⁶ It was not all the participants and it was not from all training programs. The main interviewees were from Thailand and Vietnam. For Indonesia and Malaysia, a survey was a main method.

Textile, Natural Fibre, Metal & Plastic and Business Development. Data collections were made through interviews, survey and observations summarised in the below Table 1.

	Thailand		Vietnam		Indonesia		Malaysia	
Purchasing Team Competence	Interview	11	Interview	22	Interview	1	Interview	0
	Survey	1	Survey	3	Survey	13	Survey	6
	Observation	3	Observation	2	Observation	0	Observation	0
Situational Leadership	Interview	1	Interview	3	Interview	0	Interview	0
	Survey	1	Survey	0	Survey	2	Survey	6
	Observation	1	Observation	1	Observation	0	Observation	0
IKEA Culture	Interview	6	Interview	19	Interview	0	Interview	0
	Survey	0	Survey	0	Survey	13	Survey	6
	Observation	0	Observation	0	Observation	0	Observation	0
Quotation Management	Interview	3	Interview	0	Interview	1	Interview	1
	Survey	0	Survey	0	Survey	0	Survey	0
	Observation	1	Observation	0	Observation	0	Observation	0
Total Numbers of Employees	38		122		10		27	

Table 1: Data collection

There were seventy one people who answered questions in the survey and/or took time for the interviews (See Appendix for details). Eleven Thai, twenty two Vietnamese, one Malaysian and one Indonesian were interviewed. Some of them answered the survey as well. The majority of Malaysian and Indonesian responders were studied through surveys due to the difficulties of travel. Interviewees responded to questions that were prepared in advance. The responses from interviewees were quite similar, regardless of their nationality. The answers were very similar in general. The important and highlighted meanings were noted during and after the interviews and observations.

In addition, course materials, feedback and evaluation were referred to. The contents of course materials were reviewed in order to understand how much participants had learned and then used after the programs. Feedback was usually emailed to the course administrator and the researcher in this study received the copy together with course evaluation. From feedback and course evaluation, the researcher in this study could get some idea of the results of each program. The materials were even compared with the information that is collected from this study.

2.2 THE ROLE OF RESEARCHER

In order to understand the process of competence development programs, observations and interviews were made in this study as mentioned earlier. The role of the researcher was as observer, interviewer, data collector and analyser. The data was collected through observations, interviews, surveys and documents.

2.2.1 OBSERVER

The researcher in this study participated as an observer in eight training programs. Outside the training locations, she tried to grasp the atmosphere in the office from co-workers' faces, coffee break and corridor chats. There are four types of observer; participant, participant – observer, observer – participant or observer (Junker, 1960). The researcher as a participant hides her role as an observer. She can be considered as a spy or betrayer in the group later. Participant – observer, on the other hand, reveals the observer's role. It compromises the quality of information and raises the question of whether it has had an impact in the result of the research. Observer – participant means the researcher collects information as an observer and the information quality and level is steered by the group she observes. The researcher as an observer means that she is invisible in the situation such as at an airport or in a library. In this study, the researcher observed the study object as an observer –

participant, focusing more on observation rather than on participation in the programs.

Observation is one of the methods of collecting information that can be time consuming, but it gives a real insight into how the competence development works. To be able to observe a situation requires both trust and permission. As an observer, the researcher needs to be passive not to show off. She needs to be straightforward and honest to the questions of what she is doing rather than too detailed or tactical. In the beginning of each program, a short presentation of the researcher and her research project needs to be made, so there is no room for speculation and suspicions of hidden agenda.

In this study, the researcher's role as an observer – participant means that the group knows what is going on and they are aware of being observed. There can be reactive effects of direct and structured observation (Kazdin, 1982). If the group has a negative attitude and is worried about being observed, they can behave in an acceptable and wishful way. If the group is conscious of being observed, they can react based on the way they expect is desired way. Also, the group can change their behaviour reflecting the observer's behaviour. The researcher in this study could sense there was a positive impact on the running process of programs as the participants paid more attention to the programs. The researcher in this study was conscious of the fact that the observed group could be influenced by her presence in the training course. The researcher in this study tried to assess what is natural or unnatural, and what seems to be real or fake. The balance between the insider and outsider was important (Patton, 1980) in this study. The challenge is to combine participation and observation. Understanding the course as an insider and describing it as an outsider is a good combination and the one that was pursued in this study.

A digital camera was used to take pictures of locations and people instead of sketching. Laptop was used to write journals on the spot to illustrate

the situation and atmosphere in a livelier way. Notes were made during the course when there were hot discussions going on about special issues. After each visit of observation, the researcher in this study wrote down impressions about the course and interesting events that were relevant to the research questions. This demands discipline and hard work on the part of the researcher in registering information. The observer can write with a pen, typewriter or laptop, or even tape recorder can be used. The important rule is that the researcher should spend time taking notes as much as in observing (Lofland, 1971). Participating observation is one of the most important methods when it comes to case research. The observation gives a first hand description of the situation and then it is combined with interviews the second hand, which enables a holistic view of the case to be obtained. Digital cameras, notes, journals, tape-recorders were aids the researcher to remember through research journey.

2.2.2 INTERVIEWER

The first role of the researcher in this study is observer. The second role of the researcher in this study is interviewer. The researcher in this study had forty three interviews with IKEA TASEA co-workers. Interviews can be made when things can not be observed, such as feelings, thinking and opinions, or when things happened a long time ago. This is one of the most time consuming and expensive ways to collect data. Still, an interview is a preferred method to collect information since it gives better or more information (Dexter, 1970) to observation or survey. For instance, during an interview the researcher has an opportunity to ask questions that she doesn't understand during the observation or from the reply on the survey. Thus, the interview complements other collecting methods such as observation and documentation. During the observation, there are things needed to be explained. In documents, it is hard to read between the lines. From this point of view, interviews can give a chance to obtain explanations and sense things not caught from observations and documents. The interview is one of the best information collecting methods when it comes to getting an idea of what someone knows or

what someone thinks (Patton, 1980). From my experience the interview is a good way as the researcher has a chance to meet people personally, to read their body language and to get impressions as a whole person.

Before the interview, an interview guide was prepared to help during the interview process, in addition, the interviewees could prepare answers or at least they could know questions in advance. All interviewees were not fluent in English and it was good for them to prepare before the interview and they felt comfortable rather than nervous. There are different types of interviews: structured and open. The structured interview has prepared questions in a special order (Merriam, 1988). In this study the interview guide consisted of three parts (See Appendix). Questions about the course contents and methods were the first part, then questions about what happened after the course, and finally questions about personal background with cultural connections were asked. The structured interviews with an interview guide assume that interviewees have a common language and that questions are understood and have the same implications for all (ibid). Structured interviews do not aim at forcing interviewees to answer within the category frame of interviewers with a lot of leading questions (ibid). However, they have the advantage of retrieving more information within the limited timeframe. On the other hand, unstructured open interviews are used when the researcher doesn't know enough to pose relevant questions, so open interviews are explorative in their character and require flexibility on the part of the interviewer. In this study, there were some open questions from time to time when it seemed that something needed to be explained. Also, the researcher was flexible enough to ask if interviewees wondered about anything during the interview process. Nevertheless, this study mainly used structured, ready-made questions in most of the cases. This helped avoiding misunderstanding of the questions. There were however exceptions when additional explanatory questions were made and the researcher found an interesting clue.

Additional interpreting questions⁷ were asked when there was something significant was implied during the interviews. Some of questions used in this research were interpreting ones. The questions with why and how concerned the situations before training course, during the course and after the course. The questions focused on situations during the courses. Leading questions and why questions should be avoided in order not to influence the research results. In this study, the researcher was conscious of the risk that some leading questions might influence research results, so she tried not to use too many interpreting questions unnecessarily. For instance, the researcher used interpreting questions in areas which were directly job-related in order to ascertain how much the interviewee understood about her work and business.

In this research, a tape recorder, digital camera, notes and journal were used to complement each method. However, notes and journals were used more as the tape recorder was found to be more time consuming during the process. To register and judge interview information is another big task for the researcher. The most common way to register is to record with a tape-recorder, or even a video camera. The second one is to make notes during the interview. The third one is to write down as soon as possible when the interview is done.

The researcher in this study has more than ten years working experience at the company. She understands the way of communicating among co-workers so it was extremely important to keep a distance from her knowledge and ideas before, during and after the interview. There are three variables identified that can influence the material collected in the interview situation: the interviewer's personality and skills, the interviewee's attitude and inclination, and how both sides define the situation (Dexter, 1970). Even if it is impossible to eliminate human

⁷ There are four types of questions according to Patton (1980): hypothetical, aggressive, idealistic or interpreting.

factors in the interview situation, the researcher here tried to minimise the worst cases by being neutral and non-judging interviewee's replies that contrasted to her own norms and values built up during the working experience in the company.

In this study, the researcher chose purchasing teams as a study object. A purchasing team consists of purchasers, technicians and business support. The selections of interviewees were based on the purpose of the interview. The aim here was to have a good mix of job functions, sex, age, experience, organisation and country. The aim was not to generalise a common idea, but find any differences among different backgrounds. If the researcher aims at generalising, randomly selected groups are interviewed (Chen, 1981). If the researcher wants to discover, understand and obtain insights, the selection is non-random (Patton, 1980). This study selected the group with the planned idea of not generating any biased idea from one side.

In this study generally forty five minutes was spent about per interviewee in Thailand and Vietnam, and a tape-recorder and a digital camera were used during the interviews. Interviews were held in the IKEA Thailand and Vietnam offices. Small conference rooms were reserved for the interviews which were held without interruptions from outside. It was a quiet environment for interviews. The researcher explained the interview questions to each interviewee and asked if there were any unclear question in order to make sure they understand questions. Then an interview question paper sheet was given to the interviewees in advance so that they could prepare.

2.2.3 SURVEY

The researcher made a survey for thirty three IKEA TASEA co-workers. In order to check information quality from interviews and observations, an additional survey was made for participants in the countries that the researcher could not travel to (See Appendix for survey questions).

Additional telephone conversations and emails were made to ensure that both questions and replies were clearly understood. Questions were more simplified and shorter compared to the interviews with only necessary core contents to reflect if they understood some difficult words and meanings in the previous interviews. The questions were open, so the answers were freely written by the respondents. The questions and the replies were sent by email. The answers were sorted by different countries. The answers that were different from the majority of replies were highlighted and marked. The answers that were similar to or different from the results from other literature were marked accordingly. In order to get good information quality from the survey, it was necessary to have the input from the previous interviews and observations.

2.2.4 DOCUMENT COLLECTOR

Internal documents were reviewed in this study. It was good to review internal documents and information about IKEA in order to understand the current situation in the company when it comes to information about learning and development and organisational changes. Course materials and agendas were studied to ensure a problem-free communication with course participants and course trainers. These materials helped provide a language base to understanding each other during the data collecting process. Documents such as feedback and course evaluation from participants were collected.

In this study, the researcher have studied documents like evaluation sheets, course materials, opinion survey results and organisation information that were related to the research questions. Evaluation sheets and opinion survey results show the results of competence development programs both directly and indirectly, and both over a short-term and long-term period. An evaluation of each course is usually made right after the course by participants. Participants answer evaluation questions at the end of each course, or sometimes they send their feedback by memo some weeks later. The evaluation concerns course contents, methods,

facilitators, participants and even other facilitates. The evaluations are collected, interpreted, summarised and sent to facilitators and managers. IKEA has run opinion surveys worldwide and can see how each country is satisfied with their competence development programs compared with the average IKEA in total. Various authors have argued that the use of documents is advantageous to research. Documents are ready made, and are rich and complete with other purposes, whereas interviews and observations have the limit of accessibility (Webb, 1981). Dexter (1970) argues that there are benefits from using documents as they give more information at a lower costs compared with the other two methods. It is the only way to study the problem when it is hard to get access to interviews such as in historical studies (Riley, 1963). Another advantage with documents is stability. The researcher does not influence research object in document whereas observation might influence the research object by the researcher's presence. Document can give descriptive information, verify hypotheses, develop new categories and create historical understanding.

However, there are disadvantages in using documents proposed by other authors. A researcher using these documents does not really understand the document because it is not the result of the work being carried out (ibid). To judge the correctness of the document is another dilemma the researcher faces. Thus, document can not be used as the only information source (Burgess, 1982). In this study, the researcher looked into interview materials and had to judge which was most accurate to my interpretation and insight. Thus, in this study, documents were not the only source of information, but a complement to other interviews, observations and survey methods. The value of documents is determined by its relevance to the research question. The results of the evaluations thus were re-evaluated and information was selected which was most relevant to the research question.

2.2.5 LITERATURE SURVEY

The researcher in this study searched words like ‘competence’, ‘competence development’, ‘culture’, ‘cultural diversity’, ‘cross-cultural organisation and ‘globalisation’ on the Internet. The results were as Table 2.

Search Words	Number of Related References
Culture	33,622,492
Competence	2,370,031
Cultural diversity	1,826,777
Competence development	889,607
Globalisation	787,135
Cross-cultural organisation	196,567
Competence development in a cross-cultural organisation	17,938

Table 2: Internet results

The results showed that there has been a huge research around this research area and there are still great interests to discover even more both in academic and industrial fields. The researcher in this study went through different institutions and authors who researched related areas previously. In addition to that, the researcher in this study went through recommended books from organisational behaviour science. There were authors and institutions that appeared several times on different websites and recommended by institutions’ professors and the researcher in this study read through references in order to see if there was any previous research that was similar to this research. It was found there was similar research in different regions such as Far East Asia, China, Australia, Europe and North America (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001; Hofstede, 2001; Olve et al., 1988).

From literature survey, the researcher in this study could find critical matters to think when a cross-cultural organisation ran a competence

development program. These critical matters were reflected when the researcher in this study performed her empirical case study. Even during the empirical study the researcher in this study continued to look through literature especially contemporary journals in order to observe if there was any research presented or published during my research period.

2.3 RESEARCH PROCESS

The research started with searching for an interesting and problematic area to investigate in summer, 2003. There were inputs from some professors and researchers about potentially interesting research questions that had not previously been researched. In addition to that, practitioners in industrial life suggested that there were problematic areas to be investigated. In winter, 2003 a research project plan was finalised and approved by both Linköping University and IKEA Asia Pacific Ltd. First of all, a research project plan was initiated by a proposal at the request of industrial organisation and a senior researcher's suggestion. When the research project was approved by the academic institute⁸ and industrial organisation⁹, the research project plan was initiated to be completed within the timeframe of two years.

Then, an appropriate research method had to be chosen considering the characteristics of the research questions and purpose. This study chose to combine qualitative and quantitative methods, i.e. interviews, observations, documents and surveys. The qualitative method was chosen

⁸ For instance, professors in Linköping University such as Rapp and Hägglund (2003) in Institute of Information and Computer Science accepted and approved that research work proceeded.

⁹ Ydstrand (2003), IKEA Trading Asia MD, Temin (2003), The IKEA Trading Global HR manager and Öhlund (2003), the IKEA Trading Southeast Asia HR manager showed great interest and gave support by approving and supervising throughout whole research process.

mainly because the research question focuses more on process rather than result, that is to say, the running process of competence development programs. The survey method complemented interviews and the observation methods in this study.

After the formulation of problem area in the research project, the next step was to read literature about competence, culture and organisational learning and see if there were any previously studied materials. A literature study was made in advance of the empirical study. It aimed to avoid existing research results. But also, returning to the literature occurred from time to time whenever there was any similarity or differences between the literature and the empirical study. Sometimes, the research can be continued even though there has been similar research done within the area. In that case, the empirical case study can either strengthen the existing results or provoke discussions due to contradictory results. In general, there is a distinction between source material and literature. Sources are the “pure” form of data that always require an interpretation by the researcher, in addition to the interpretation which has already been made. For instance, the purest form of sources, so-called “remains”¹⁰ (Thuren, 1990). Literature, on the other hand, is used to contextualise the subject under study. The source material in this study consists of both first and secondary sources. Knowledge and information were collected through literature study. Research questions were more concretised and at the same time a theoretical frame work was built up based on continued literature study. The final research questions were made through consultation with supervising professors.

In parallel to the theoretical study, the empirical study was initiated with a research plan. The research plan included travel plans, interview question preparation and research method selection. Meetings with managers, co-

¹⁰ Historians discover historical remains when they search for new things about the past. Remains can be a skeleton of dinosaur for instance.

workers, HR and trainers were held and input from them became a basis for contact information in order to arrange further observations, interviews and document collections.

Information was collected through observations, interviews, survey and documents and the analysing process started at the same time as the data collection. An additional literature study was made in order to grasp the whole picture of the research area and processes.

Based on the materials collected from interviews, observations, surveys and internal documents, the researcher analysed information in this study. Analysing was continued together with reflecting and summarising research work. The analysing process occurred in parallel to the information collection. Collection and analysis of the information was a recursive and dynamic process (Merriam, 1988). Notes from interviews and observations were made using key words and sentences that are central issues in the running process of competence development programs. There has been a continuous checking between literature and findings during the research process. For instance, keywords and key sentences were marked after the literature study and then used to sort out information acquired from the interviews and observations. Those keywords and sentences were used in the analysing process that will be discussed in more detail in the analysis chapter later. When the analysis work was completed, the results and conclusions from the study were summarised.

Key words and sentences were sorted into different categories of central concepts in terms of factors and indicators. Factors and indicators that are meaningful in the running process of competence development programs were marked. There were words and phrases held in common between what was written in the literature and in the journals. Overlapping words were marked in bold marked. This will be described more in the analysis chapter later. Some conclusions and suggestions about future study were

made. The research process of this study in summary is illustrated in Figure 2.

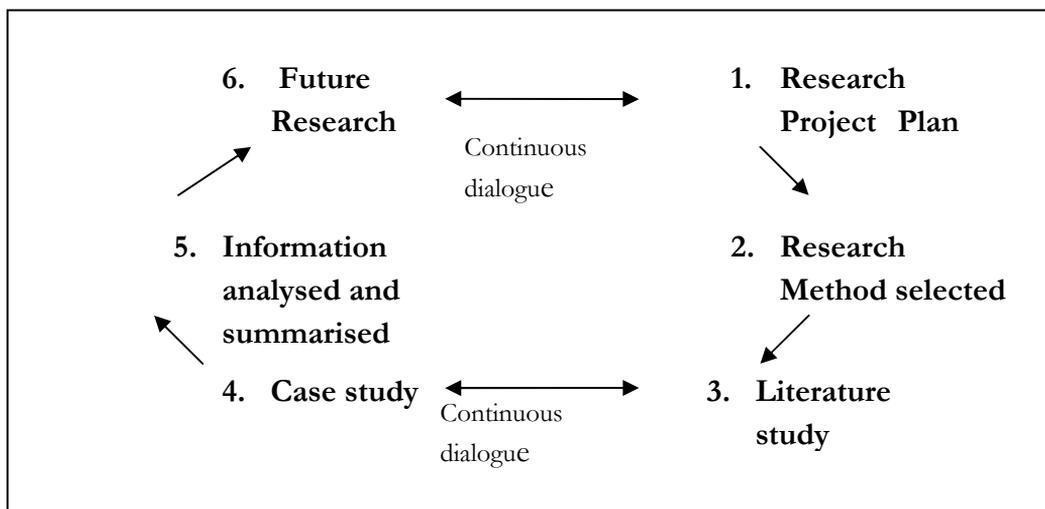


Figure 2: Research process

From the results of this study, the things that couldn't be properly dealt with were listed and they became the next challenge for coming research work. These research matters would be an input for the new research plan. Thus, this research process is a kind of cycle with a process of adding value from one stage to the next in the work.

2.4 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND GENERALITY

In one sense this study is written by a teacher (I personally prefer the word, “facilitator”). The author, as well as being a facilitator can be biased and make assumptions about the object of research. This gives rise to problems with regard to the questions of validity, reliability and generality in the analysing process. There can be risks and failures in data collection and analysis processes (Merriam, 1988). The researcher is a human being with feelings, values, needs and opinions. And those human factors can influence the research results (Elbaz, 1981). The facilitator can even

influence the answers during the interview process. The interviewer can forget and lie (Thuren, 1990). In order to minimise the risk, in this study the researcher listened to people from different areas who were involved in the competence development process. They were HR people, trainers, the participants' colleagues and their managers.

The literature study about 'competence development in cross-cultural organisations' could be used to validate some findings in this empirical study. Research has been done within the same area with different focus and different areas. In some cases, the previous studies gave hints about the key words and meanings to read in the answers to the questions.

Information gathering and analysis is a continuous process during the course of study. Then, how do we know that it is the time to stop collecting information? In this research, numbers of interviews and observations were predefined according to budget from the very beginning. When there was a sense of a lack of information, additional interviews and observations were made. Guba and Lincoln (1981) give four pointers for how to judge that it is time to stop collecting information. The first one is when the information source is ending. The second is that categories start to be complete and there is a very little new in comparison to the energy input. The third one is when certain regular responses are repeated. Finally it is when information is overflowing and the content of information is irrelevant to the research area. When there was a sense that responses from interviewees were not trustworthy, the researcher in this study asked why they were not honest in their answers. Consciousness of the fact that the respondents could be telling the truth was critically important to me in this study¹¹. Interviews were not held for all the four countries. The main interview group was from the countries

¹¹ After some months of interviews, interviewees recognized that I was the wife of the TA manager. After that, I was more conscious of the possibility of collecting unreliable data.

Thailand and Vietnam. There were difficulties to get information from Malaysia and Indonesia, but also there were redundancies that were shown through interviews, so the survey method was used to cover those two countries.

In addition to interviews, observations and document collections, a survey was made with the similar shorter questions aimed at the people not interviewed previously. A survey¹² is also made in order to get a sense of understanding without personal interaction. The reality that qualitative case study describes is subjective rather than objective. It is based on the observation of what's going on in reality. The main method in this study is observations and interviews. Qualitative and quantitative methods were combined to extract the best from each method.

Journals were kept to record in every observation and interview to describe the atmosphere and impressions of situations and people and they were recorded according to date and place. At the same time, the researcher listened to the tapes after the interview and sorted things out and finally wrote down key words or sentences as aids to memory. Journals and the tape recorder helped improve reliability as there were chances reflecting on what was said in interviews and observations. All materials that are collected from observations, interviews and documents need to be organised and structured in a so called, "case study database" (Yin, 1984). It is important to sort data in a systematic way, so analysing occurs without intervention of subject interpretation or judgement not based on facts. To work with case journals implies a kind of sorting process of information. The goal is to search for specific information during the analysing process. Thus, the information needs to be organised in a way which is meaningful and of practical use for the researcher.

¹² The survey is made in this study in order to complement interviews and observations for the regions that are not covered in interviews and observations. When something was unclear, I asked the respondents directly either via e-mail or telephone.

Information therefore is registered and categorised with the help of the above mentioned schemes.

The case study done in this research is of one organisation, IKEA Trading Area Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, there is still a possibility for generalisation. One type of generality is that the one case can be applied to other cases in greater populations (Noren, 1990). For instance, the Trading Area Southeast Asia case can be one of other trading areas in IKEA. It could even apply to another company in a similar situation such as a cross-cultural organisation with cross-functions. One case study can be motivated by three reasons – the case is critical, unique or previously inaccessible (Yin, 1984). In my study of IKEA TASEA, the case was chosen as it was previously inaccessible¹³ and the case was critical as competence development was a key issue in the case studied as the researcher in this study mentioned earlier in the selection of research method, the selection of case.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter the method that was adopted in this study was described and argued. The main research strategy was based on the qualitative method as the research goal was to understand the process rather than the result. In addition to the qualitative methods such as interviews, observations and documents, the survey was used to investigate IKEA co-workers in Malaysia and Indonesia and validate findings from Thai and Vietnamese participants. One of the main reasons for the survey was because the material was not available for two countries Malaysia and Indonesia. It is also because there was the redundancy found through the interviews with other countries Thailand and Vietnam. The role of the

¹³ I have not found any previously written materials about the Southeast Asia region in the literature of cross-cultural training.

researcher in this study was as observer, interviewer, document collector and surveyor during the data collecting process.

This study made an effort to increase the quality of reliability and validity by collecting information from different people in different locations. Also, it used varieties of qualitative and quantitative methods during the data collecting process. In order to keep a distance from the information collected, other tools like tape recorders, notes and journals were reviewed repeatedly during the analysis process. In addition, this study aims at reasonable generality, which means that the result of this study can be applied to other cases in similar situations.

3 CHAPTER THREE: FRAMES OF REFERENCES

In this chapter, the basic concepts of key terms found from other research that are related to this thesis will be described. It aims to create a common understanding between the writer and the readers about the themes that will be presented here. From the frame of references, important theoretical findings will be illustrated in order to create a comprehensive view of critical factors that influence the effects of competence development programs. The frame of references will be used later in the analysis chapter in order to compare with the findings in the empirical study of this research. Before we go into critical factors that are found by other authors, the definitions and perspectives of key terms need to be clarified.

3.1 DEFINITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

As previously mentioned, there is a need for competence both for an individual and for an organisation (Maslow, 1998; Senge, 1990). Individuals are educated through both formal and informal educational systems over their lifetimes. As individuals enter a company, they continue to develop their competences. They often go through different training programs starting with an introduction package, through job-related training and even leadership training based on individual needs as well as organisational ones.

3.1.1 DEFINITIONS OF COMPETENCE

What then is competence? What do we mean by competence? The word, ‘competence’ originates from a Greek *competo*, meaning something that creates some kind of results. There are numerous different views and definitions of competence illustrated in the literature. In general dictionaries the meaning is often described as skills, capability, authority and qualification. Scientific literature generally emphasises knowledge as being an important component of competence, but also suggests components such as aptitude, attitude, commitment and motivation. Definitions are normally also related to specific tasks or a specific context. Nordhaug (1993) relates competence to professional requirements regarding productivity, and defines competence as “the composite of human knowledge, skills and aptitude that may serve productive purposes in organisations”.

This professional competence appears at different levels of analysis. A common division is to separate between individual and organisational competence (Mintzberg, 1975). Individual competence is often regarded as a prerequisite for organisational competence. Organisational competence is something based and dependent on individual competence. Individual competence is in turn developed out of learning.

Sveiby (1995) defines knowledge as “the capacity to act,” and divides individual competence in five different parts:

- + Knowing, i.e. to know. Knowledge acquired via information, often through formal education.
- + Being able, i.e. to do. Physical and intellectual skills to achieve results.
- + Experience that humans obtain by their own mistakes and successes in life.

- + Values, i.e. what humans believe in, understanding of what they feel right for themselves.
- + Social network, i.e. capability and interests to build relations.

Senge (1990) uses the term knowledge as competence, defining knowledge as the capacity for effective action, clearly distinguishing it from data and information. Knowledge is most commonly catalogued as belonging to the tacit or explicit variety among theorists. There are also different types of knowledge such as static vs. dynamic, declarative (knowledge of facts) vs. procedural (knowledge of how to do things), and abstract (in that it may apply to many situations) vs. specific (in that it applies only to one situation) knowledge according to Gamble and Blackwell (2001).

On the other hand, Ellström (1992) expresses competence as “an individual’s potential managing capability in relation to a certain task, context or work. This individual managing capability depends on task’s characteristics considering knowledge, intellectual and manual skills as well as social skills, attitude, personal entity within individuals.” He categorises competences in five types.

- + Psychological factor – different types of perceptual and manual skills such as playing piano.
- + Cognitive factor - cognitive and intellectual skills such as solving problems or making decisions.
- + Affective factor – willing and emotional assumptions such as engagement or values
- + Personality factor – action assumption related to personal characteristics such as self-confidence or self-understanding.
- + Social factor – social skills such as cooperation, leadership or communication ability.

The psychological factor is related to a certain skill such as carpenters or pianists have, whereas the cognitive factor concerns capability acquired from knowledge and experience. Affective, personality and social factors are more related to the emotional intelligence that manages motivation or self image. Due to the nature of competencies, it is proposed that they consist of four generic elements - technology, human beings, organisational systems, and organisational culture. The organisational culture is based on the analysis of the above five factors (ibid).

There are four areas of interest in the training process (Gamble & Blackwell, 2001).

- + Unconscious incompetence – when a person offends others but is not aware of having done so;
- + Conscious incompetence – when the person knows they have made a mistake but does not know what it is;
- + Conscious competence – when a person learns what to do and how to interpret what the other person is doing but they have to stay on guard all the time to be sure to think and behave correctly;
- + Unconscious competence – when a person has internalised the thoughts and behaviours that would be appropriate in another culture.

To move from unconscious incompetence to conscious competence is the main aim of training. Unconscious competence and conscious incompetence are on the progress of improvement. From cross-cultural management view, training is also used to reduce prejudice (ibid).

A whole field of learning called ethno-methodology has grown up around the practice of learning in work. Knowledge acquired through work comes without abstraction and no restructuring is required if the information is presented through a lecture, book or film. Knowledge

about work is best acquired through work (ibid). Thus, in most of organisations, the combination of on-job-training and off-the-job training are used.

Freden and Nilsson (2003) refer to competence on two different levels, one in individual and the other in organisation. On the individual level, competence consists of knowledge, skills and ability to adapt knowledge and skills. On the organisational level, it is related to the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives, maintain itself internally, and adapt to its external environment (Argyris, 1977). Organisational ability is more than the sum of individuals' ability, due to the synergy effect. The synergy effect occurs when the knowledge in organisations is shared among the members. Knowledge sharing is a human behaviour, but it is not always guaranteed that people are willing to do that (Ives et al., 2002). People tend to protect their knowledge for themselves as knowledge is an asset for them in this knowledge society. Knowledge and skills are their competencies and their market value.

IKEA defines competence as comprising of three parts: knowledge, capability and motivation. From the study by Freden and Nilsson (2003)¹⁴, it was found that IKEA TASEA co-workers didn't understand that motivation is linked to competence. For them, competence means more or less knowledge and job-related skills. IKEA's definition of competence is related to other organisation theorists' ideas about competence. Table 3 illustrates different names for types of competence in the literature and in IKEA.

In this thesis, competence is defined in three ways as the knowledge, motivation and the capability to achieve results. The expected results are increased knowledge, changed behaviours and/or attitudes. The concept

¹⁴ Freden and Nilsson have studied IKEA TASEA for their master thesis at the Department of Economics, Linköping University.

of competence is closely linked to in definitions between different authors. Knowledge is on the same level with cognitive factor (Ellström, 1992), motivation affective factor (ibid), and capability capacity to act (Sveiby, 1995) for instance. According to Ellström (1992), cognitive factor, knowing is related to ‘hard’ competence, affective, social and psychological factor ‘soft’ competence. These soft and hard competences will be discussed later in the empirical study. The dimension of competence is focused on the individual level.

IKEA	Gamble & Blackwell	Ellström	Sveiby
Knowledge	Hard	Cognitive	Knowing
Capability			Being able
			Experience
Motivation	Soft	Personality	Value
		Social	Social network

Table 3: Definitions of competence in the literature and in IKEA

In this study, the term competence will be used meaning individuals’ knowledge, motivation and capability according to IKEA’s definition in order to have consistent understanding about competence from theory to practice.

3.1.2 DEFINITIONS OF COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

The competence developing process can be understood as a socialising process. ‘Socialisations’ (Maanen & Schein, 1979) of new comers begin with orientation – a set of activities designed to familiarise new employees with their jobs, with their colleagues, and key aspects of the organisation

as a whole (Schermerhorn, 1996). This includes clarifying the organisational mission and culture, explaining operating objectives and job expectations, communicating policies and procedures, and identifying key personnel. This socialising process is a part of learning process. Thus, competence development means learning in this thesis in this sense.

Learning occurs through different ways and methods. Here, learning means the institutional learning which is planned and organised by a function department in an organisation. There are trainings with different methods. Here we will look at training as a set of activities that provides the opportunity to acquire and improve job-related skills (ibid). This applies both to the initial training of an employee and to upgrading or improving someone's skills to meet changing job requirements. The more progressive organisations are implementing major training programs to ensure that their workers have the basic skills needed to learn and perform in new jobs. One training method, on-the-job training is done in the work setting while someone is doing a task, and can be done using job rotation, coaching, apprenticeship, mentoring and modelling (ibid). Off-the-job training is accomplished outside the work setting. It may be done within the organisation at a separate training room or facility, or at an off-site location such as management development workshop. The study object of competence development programs in this research was for off-the-job training occurring outside the office, initial and job-related upgrading training.

Competence development is to increase knowledge, capability and motivation. Senge (1990) characterises learning organisation as places where “people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.” He also acknowledges that the idea of a learning organisation is a vision. In this sense, learning and competence development are belonging together.

3.1.3 COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND THREE PERSPECTIVES

There are different types of learning according to Faria (2001). Types of learning can be categorised into cognitive learning, affective learning and/or behavioural learning (ibid). Cognitive learning might be viewed as developing an understanding of basic facts and concepts so that sound decisions can be made. Affective learning might be described as developing a positive feeling and attitude toward business and organisation. Behavioural learning might be described as formulating correct actions and decisions or exhibiting desired changes in behaviour. There are different perspectives in learning according to Rapp & Björkegren (1998). The three perspectives in learning are found to be similar to the types of learning. The three perspectives are divided depending on the results the learning is aiming at; behavioural perspective, cognitive perspective or situational perspectives (ibid).

Behavioural perspective is based on three fundamentals. From the behavioural perspective, learning occurs through changed behaviour. What is interesting is to collect knowledge and experience from the environment and see how this result in changed behaviour. From the behavioural perspective, cultural diversity includes language, space, time orientation, religion, and use of contracts that show differences among different cultures (Schermerhorn, 1996).

The behavioural perspective can be illustrated as in Figure 3.

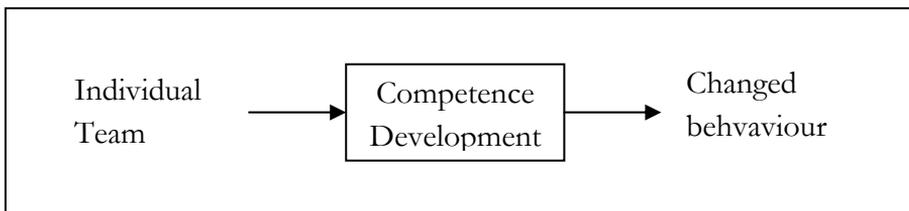


Figure 3: Behavioural perspective

Competences of individual, team and organisation exist on three levels and the aim of competence development programs from the behavioural perspective is changed behaviour. For instance, as an individual, a person knows better and thus can handle things in a more efficient way.

Many organisational theorists define learning from the behavioural perspective (See Table 4).

Authors	Definitions of Learning
Fiol & Lyles (1985)	The process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding
Kim (1993)	Increasing an organisation's capacity to take effective action
Huber (1991)	The range of potential behaviours is increased through its processing of information
Levitt & March (1991)	Encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behaviour

Table 4: Definitions of learning by behavioural authors

From the cognitive perspective, learning is to change thinking (Senge, 1990; Argyris & Schön, 1978; Weick, 1979; Ellström, 1992). In this perspective, individual learning is in the centre and learning occurs through interactions among individuals. How an individual responds to input depends on each person's experience and perceptions. This means that we can not assume that individual reacts in certain situations in the same way.

The cognitive perspective is summarised as in Figure 4.

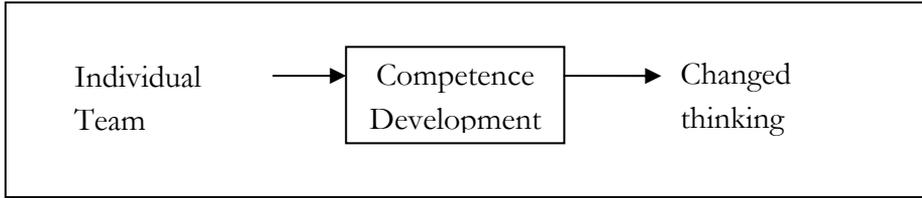


Figure 4: Cognitive perspective

Competences of individuals, teams and organisations are developed from running competence development programs and they result in changed thinking. Thus, the aims of competence development programs from the cognitive perspective are to change thinking. For instance, values and attitudes of an individual are influenced by training programs; and a person’s acceptance level of new ideas becomes higher.

The definitions of learning are slightly different from author to author. One common definition is that the aim of learning is to change thinking. Table 5 shows different definitions of learning by different authors.

Authors	Definitions of Learning
Argyris (1977)	A process of detecting and correcting error
Daft & Weick (1984)	The process by which knowledge about action-outcome relationships between the organisation and the environment is developed
Stata (1989)	Occurs through shared insights, knowledge, and mental models... builds on past knowledge and experience – that is, on memory.
Senge (1990)	Team learning – through dialogue and discussion in balance

Table 5: Definitions of learning by cognitive authors

From the situational perspective, learning depends on the context in which an individual is situated (Giddens, 1986; Chaklin & Lave, 1993). Knowledge is related to cultural and social implications. There is no universal knowledge or generic knowledge, but knowledge that is related to a certain situation or specific context. Learning occurs through more informal experience. The situational perspective is illustrated in Figure 5.

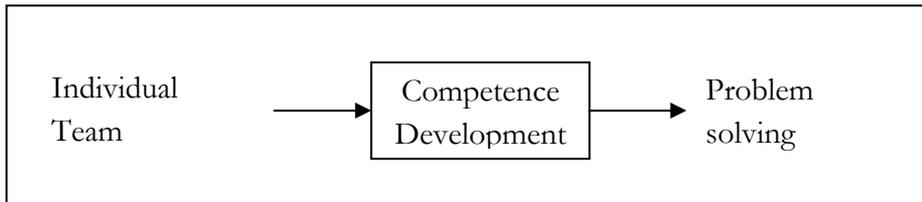


Figure 5: Situational perspective

The most important focus in the situational perspective is to solve problems. There is no one way to approach problems. Everything is relative rather than absolute depending on the situation.

Perspectives in learning and learning types will help in framing different competence development programs that were studied later during the research work. Different perspectives would be found in different goals of each competence development program.

All four competence programs studied in common share the cognitive perspective in that the aim of development programs is to change thinking by obtaining new knowledge and skills. Situational leadership is more oriented to the situational perspective as it aims at solving problems in different situations with regard to different leadership styles. Purchasing Team Competence and Quotation Management programs are closer to the behavioural perspective in that the objective of the programs is to change behaviours through learning such as sharing knowledge or using the new system.

3.1.4 DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Kotler (1997) argues that “culture is the most fundamental determinant of a person’s wants and behaviour.” He explains national culture as a set of values, perceptions, preferences and behaviours that a child receives from family or other key institutions while growing up. Kotler (1999) also defines organisational culture as “a system of values and beliefs shared by people in an organisation.” The organisational culture informally guides the behaviour of people at all company levels.

Hall (1995) deals with different kinds of culture by using two components. The first component is called the ingredients component. The three main ingredients are ABC, artefacts, behaviours and core values. It is often made of layers, like an onion and the model shows core values as the deepest and artefacts as the most superficial layer. The second component is the segment component. This answers the question of who we are talking about when we talk about a certain culture. Is it a national culture, company culture, industrial culture or regional culture? Segments are also groups between which interaction takes place. Interaction between an individual and a company is one example.

Schein (2004) defines organisational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumption and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.” His definition brings together many of the ideas and concepts expressed, but puts particular emphasis on shared, taken-for-granted, basic assumptions held by the member of the group or organisation.

There are different aspects of culture such as language. Three thousand languages and dialects are spoken today and it is increasingly common to use English in commerce (Schermerhorn, 1996). The use of space also varies among cultures. Arabs and many Latin Americans prefer to communicate at much closer distances than the standard American practice for instance. Time orientation is different in many cultures (Hall,

1997). Monochromic cultures are cultures in which people tend to do one thing at a time, such as schedule a meeting and give the visitors undivided attention for the allotted time. In polychromic cultures, by contrast, time is used to accomplish many different things at once. Another major influence on many people's lives is religion, and its impact may extend to business practices regarding dress, food and interpersonal behaviour (Schermerhorn, 1996). Cultures vary in their use of contracts and agreement. In the USA, a contract is viewed as a final statement of agreement whereas in China it may be viewed as more of a starting point.

Goffee and Jones (1996) describe culture as 'a habitual way of behaving and acting, often motivated from deeply engrained presumptions about the right way to act.' What this really means is that a corporate culture is a set of behaviours and qualities that are valued not because they are enforced from outside, but because that is the way that influential members of the enterprise prefer them to happen. Culture is powerful because it is intimate. If employees are uncomfortable with corporate culture, then it is unlikely that they will be happy in their work. Corporate culture develops over time from preferences and styles. Goffee and Jones (1996) classified cultures as high or low on two axes, sociability and solidarity. Sociability concerns people and solidarity concerns production.

In this thesis, the definition of Kotler's national culture and organisational culture is used. It is in order to see national differences in a cross-cultural organisation in different countries and also organisational culture created by corporations.

3.1.5 DIVERSITY

There are two kinds of diversity: one is cognitive diversity and the other behavioural diversity (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Hackman and Associates, 1990; Pelled, 1996). The term cognitive diversity refers to diversity in the substantive content of how the various organisation members perceive the challenges and opportunities, the

options to be evaluated and optimal course of action. Cognitive diversity can originate from a variety of underlying factors such as differences in nationality, subsidiary history and character and functional background. Cognitive diversity can be a source of strength.

The members of an organisation must be able to integrate the diverse perspectives and actually come to an integrative resolution. The use of “cognitive diversity” (a result of cultural diversity) and “cognitive integration” (a result of shared corporate culture and a shared competitive agenda) is an important way to think about global teams and a way to derive the benefits of the global talent pool (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001). Behavioural diversity refers to diversity in language as well as culture-driven norms of behaviour – body language, the importance of “face,” norms regarding punctuality, norms regarding team representation, and so forth. Behavioural diversity is regarded as a necessary evil – something that you can not avoid, but whose effects must be minimised through language training and cultural sensitisation.

3.1.6 CULTURE AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

From the cross-cultural literature, national culture affects a wide range of organisational functioning, such as how people make decisions, accept new technology, and take on management approaches (Osman-Gani, 2000). Research has shown that national culture can be as strong a determinant of individual behaviour as organisational culture (Hofstede, 2001).

National culture influences many aspects of organisational functioning and presumably affects the effectiveness of training as well. For instance, consideration needs to be taken when trainers and trainees differ in their national cultural backgrounds, according to many researches on diversity training (Copple, 2003).

According to Hofstede’s theory (2001), different cultures can have different degrees of power distance. The individuals in a culture with high

power distance are more likely to accept a centralised power structure and they need a greater degree of supervision. Hofstede divides cultures into collective and individualistic cultures. Collective cultures are often very integrated and the individuals are likely to be part of groups that they are reluctant to be separated from. Hofstede includes another dimension in cultures such as masculinity or femininity. Masculine cultures expect men to be ambitious and competitive and they stand for the material values in society. In feminine cultures, social relations and life quality are encouraged to a greater extent.

Different cultures tend to avoid uncertainty in different degrees. According to Pornpitakpan (2000), for instance, Thais have a moderately high level of uncertainty avoidance and are concerned with security in life and believe in experts and experts' knowledge.

A culture that has a long-term orientation has values that are oriented towards the future whereas a short-term oriented culture values the past, and value the past means this respect for tradition and social obligations.

Culture, after all, exist on two levels, the national and corporate (Kotler, 1999). Here, the researcher in this study use two terms of culture, national culture and organisational culture. National culture is related to an individual's origin and includes sex, age, location, religion, so to say, personal background. It is often regarded as an obstacle to competence development which aims towards personal behaviour changes. Organisational culture in other words, corporate culture, is an atmosphere that the company strives for in the working environment in order to achieve its business goal in an efficient way.

Individuals with different national backgrounds have different values and at the same time, they may have to adapt to the environment in a company. After their adaptation over time the gaps between individuals and corporations probably become narrower. Later in chapter four, the researcher in this study will discuss the results from the empirical study

into national characteristics and compare them with those of the above mentioned authors.

3.2 CRITICAL FACTORS IN MANAGING COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

There are three phases in competence development processes. As Walton (1986) described about the Deming's PDCA cycle (Plan – Do – Check – Act), there are three phases in competence development programs: designing, implementing and evaluating. Designing covers planning, and revising. Revising after evaluation leads to possibilities for improvement is part of the general design and it covers Plan and Act. Implementing includes executing the process of the designed programs, but also using the results from the programs. In this research, the process of conducting development programs is the main focus. The words, 'running', 'conducting', and 'executing' are used in the same meaning in this thesis. Running a program is a part of implementing phase, but it results from the design and the results of the evaluation. Evaluation belongs to the process of checking to see what went wrong and what went well. This study concerns this running process of competence development within the implementing phase

This study was made between September 2003 and December 2004. During that period the execution phase of competence development programs was the major event. If the research aims at planning and follow-ups, the study period needs to be extended, but the research is limited by time and budget. The implementing process is in focus as the respondents from the interview recall how useful the programs were and observation is made mainly during the implementing process. Thus, the planning and evaluating the processes of competence development programs are not included in this study.

There is a progression involved in competence development programs from designing, implementing and follow-up, in another words, planning,

performing and evaluating. They are like a circle, as designing steers the choice of program and how it will be fulfilled. Implementing a program is an input for follow-up and follow-up will be an input for designing of future competence development programs.

There are two kinds of results from development programs (Davis & Davis, 1998): Results (R1) refer to the immediate effect from the program, such as: increased knowledge; satisfied or inspired trainee; and the evaluation of the course, and results (R2) refer to the practical effect in the organisation such as: working efficiency in time and routines; use of knowledge; and transfer of knowledge. R1 is a short term oriented, while R2 has a long term perspective. There are even more sophisticated ways to measure the results in terms of financial benefits of human resource development (Swanson, 1994). Swanson (1994) developed a HRD benefit forecasting model that gets down to the difficult job of calculating the dollar value of various types of performance. In this study, the result of programs is reviewed through the interviews with participants, facilitators and managers and the course evaluation materials.

In the following subchapters we will discuss several key factors which influence the results of competence development programs. They are diversity, trust, communication, motivation, learning culture and leadership and management's engagement according to other authors within the same research area as shown in Table 6.

Key factors according to literature which influence competence development programs	Discussed in section
Diversity	3.2.1
Learning culture and language	3.2.2
Leadership and engagement	3.2.3
Motivation	3.2.4
Trust	3.2.5
Communication	3.2.6

Table 6: Critical factors

These key factors found in the literature study will be described in the following parts.

3.2.1 DIVERSITY

One of the most critical factors that organisations are facing at the moment is the ability to take their technology and map it against the performance required of the collective organisational competence, from the individuals, teams and communities of practice (Gamble & Blackwell, 2001). For instance, if the strategy of the business is to enter a new market, then organisations should be able to map that business strategy to the known competence within the organisation. In other words, organisational knowledge is an asset within the workforce who must have sufficient capability to meet the business objectives. There have been two

extreme views toward alliance strategies for multinational companies: local adaptation and central standardisation. The local adaptation version is based on cultural relativism and central standardisation ethical imperialism that is to say, absolutism. Ethical imperialism and absolutism involves thinking that there is an ultimate culture that can dominate the rest and that the other cultures is nothing to consider.

Local adaptation emphasises cultural diversity. Companies and managers should respect host countries, their core values and their ethical behaviour. They even consider that managers and companies that don't follow the rules of host countries should leave the countries and go back to their home countries. Local adaptation is represented as a form of national responsiveness (Doz, 1986).

Central standardisation focuses on consensus of ideas, opinions and even interpretations. There is one best culture that can conquer any other cultures and the company should implement the best practice into every organisation all over the world. Japanese and European companies originally put a high value on relationships and loyalty whereas US companies value freedom and democracy. Japanese, European and American cultures should be absorbed in local countries from the view of absolutism. Those activities belong to the integration efforts of the multinational firms (ibid).

In earlier previous research, Hofstede (1999) claims that multinational organisations need to adapt their management style to the environment because of cultural differences. His empirical studies show inconsistent results in categorising different nationality characteristics. He also explains that differences in values are smaller than in practices¹⁵. Rodrigues (1998)

¹⁵ Values are invisible except in their effects on people's behaviour and practices are visible to the observer and include behaviour as well as artefacts. This makes practices more superficial and therefore easier to change than values (Hofstede 1999).

argues that expatriate managers need to understand the nature of the culture of the country where they are going to be managing, and how to adapt their management style accordingly. On the other hand, Ghoshn (2002) thinks that the national culture can not be 'formed into gold' unless corporate culture is right.

There have been inconsistent results from research concerning local adaptation and central standardisation. A lot of empirical research has been made among cross-cultural management studies. With this in mind, another piece of empirical research is attempted in this study and will be described in chapter four.

In a context of collective learning and organised action, the sharing of meanings is not necessary (Weick, 1979). Eisenberg (1984) argued that ambiguity in group processes facilitates collective action in that it allows for consensus despite multiple interpretations. Donnellon et al. (1986) similarly argued that organised action can occur despite differences of interpretation among organisational members. Organisational learning, like individual learning involves the development of diverse interpretations (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Learning in organisations entails not only the acquisition of diverse information, but the ability to share common understanding so as to exploit it. The apparent paradox is that collective learning, by definition, encompasses both divergence and convergence of the meanings of people assigned, to their surroundings.

On the other hand, there is a theory saying that using diversity culture can bring about effective education (Cox, 1993). He means that the organisational outcomes increase if there is diversity from a mix of nationalities in an organisation. The assumption is that there is a diversity atmosphere within the organisation. From the diversity in an organisation, diversity climate is created. Diversity climate influences individual outcomes such as job performance and consequently individual outcomes influence organisational outcomes such as creativity, problem-solving and even profits.

It is a challenge to work with cultural diversity but it is not easy to create a multicultural work culture. The term diversity has many interpretations.

Diversity is the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting (ibid).

In this definition the phrase social and cultural identity refers to the personal affiliations with groups that research has shown to have significant influence on people's major life experiences. These affiliations include gender, race, national origin, religion, age cohort, and work specialisation, among others.

There is a greater chance today that when individuals interact in organisations, they represent a mismatch of national cultures. Questions rise about the specific relationship between national cultural and training effectiveness (Osman-Gani, 2000).

There is a suggested idea of cultural diversity.

The more a human sees itself as inhabiting a single planet, the greater the need for each culture on that globe to own a unique heritage. It is desirable to taste each other's cuisine, fun to dress in blue denim, to enjoy some of the entertainment. But if that entire process begins to erode the sphere of deeper cultural values, people will return to stressing their differences, a sort of cultural backlash. Each nation's history, language, and tradition are unique. So in a curiously paradoxical way, the more alike we become, the more we will stress our uniqueness (Cox, 1993).

Cross-cultural researchers often use national boundaries as proxies for identifying cultures, since the political entity yields another layer of experience to shape behaviour (Jacobs, 2003). For instance, some

observers say that the ethnic Chinese who live in Singapore differ from the ethnic Chinese who live in Malaysia or in China, just because of their differing national experiences in the last forty years.

There is a greater recognition of cultural differences, the way in which this affects learning styles and of the differences between individual learners. In a prescriptive approach to learning, an externally set curriculum is taught and examined by those who decide what needs to be known, imposing it on those who may wish to know (Gamble & Blackwell, 2001). This is certainly efficient, but it runs a number of dangers. If the teacher has misunderstood the problem environment, an inappropriate set of skills may be shared. The prescriptive approach is a teacher-oriented learning regardless of learner's context.

People in different cultures have different values. People in Western countries are task-focused at work whereas those in Oriental countries relationship-oriented (ibid). In relationship-based culture, trust plays a much larger role in doing business or in learning.

To sum up, there are a lot of discussions about learning strategies in a cross-cultural organisation. Cultural diversity exists in a cross-cultural organisation and it is a key issue how to handle diversity in a good way. There are continuous discussions between local adjustments and central standardisation. Diversity is one of important factors in managing competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation.

3.2.2 LEARNING CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

There are barriers to operating efficiently in cross-cultural organisations. Those barriers are based on cultural differences as well as on individual differences. When a company expands its boundaries cross border, it aims to reduce costs by utilising cheaper labour and sources of material in other low cost countries. However, those cross-border, cross-cultural organisations face other problems. Problems with language, different values and behaviours arise. Cross-cultural organisations have to manage

cultural differences and diversity¹⁶. In a cross-cultural organisation, competence development is emphasised to overcome problems created by those barriers. Some cross-cultural organisations try to overcome dilemmas from cultural differences by implementing competence development programs (Olsen, 2004). Competence development programs increase the competences of human resources and thus co-workers in low cost countries can deliver the same or even better results without major conflicts. Learning culture therefore becomes a fundamental base for a successful competence development in a cross-cultural organisation.

Culture is the shared set of beliefs, values, and patterns of behaviours common to a group of people (Schermerhorn, 1996). Anyone who has visited another country knows that cultural differences exist, but you don't even need to leave the country to find them in a global village. The important business and managerial implications of socio-cultural differences must be understood. Then, cultural differences can become a competence. Language, use of space, time orientation and religion are the things that the company should deal with in order to make cultural differences into competencies (Hall, 1973).

The same language, such as English, can vary in usage from one country to the next. Although it isn't always possible to know a local language, it is increasingly common in business dealings to find some common second language in which to communicate – often English. Good foreign language training is increasingly critical for the truly global management. The use of space varies among cultures. Arabs and many Latin Americans, for example, prefer to communicate at much closer distances than the standard American or even Asian. Misunderstandings are possible if one

¹⁶ Cultural diversity and differences are used synonymously in Gamble and Blackwell (2001), which is rather different to the practical use found in IKEA TASEA empirical study analysis, chapter five.

businessperson moves back as another moves forward to close the interpersonal distance between them (Bunker, 1990).

3.2.3 LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

There are key actors involved in the competence development process that is to say, learning: facilitators¹⁷, participants. Management style and management engagement is known as one of the most important factors that makes programs successful (Cox, 2001). Individuals perceive expectations from managers that employees should develop certain competencies. Then they pursue and develop these desired competencies. It is a kind of motivational factor. The manager's role is expanded even to become a facilitator in some cases. A manager as a facilitator is an excellent source of ideas to use as a team develops and changes. Leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers in a learning organisation (Senge, 1990). In the context of organisational change, leadership is behaviour that establishes a direction or goal for change, a vision, provides a sense of urgency and importance for the vision, facilitates the motivation of others, and cultivates the necessary conditions for achievement of the vision. Leadership is the most essential element for change (Cox, 2001).

There are different views toward the role placed by managers and leaders (Garvin, 2000). The former spends time doing, delegating and deciding (Mintzberg, 1975). Their concerns are lying in the present and they measure success by skilled execution and effective implementation. Consistency and stability are the primary goals. Leaders, on the other hand, focus on the future. They spend their days setting targets, developing strategies, communicating vision, and aligning individuals and

¹⁷ Here facilitators means trainer. There is more than one trainer in development programs. Facilitators accommodate the environment for learning whereas trainers simply transfer knowledge and skills.

departments. Change is the primary objective and the challenge is to get all parts of the organisation moving in the desired direction rapidly.

Managers and leaders are action-oriented, and their goal is to get things done. Any activity that does not produce immediate, tangible results is therefore viewed with a certain degree of suspicion (Garvin, 2000). There is a hesitation towards investment in education or competence development. Even though there is a plan for competence development, competence development is a rather lower priority. For instance, when participants are hindered from attending the course due to some business matters, they would choose to deal with the business rather than attend the course. In most of all cases, the first priority is business. Thus, the most difficult challenge is developing a culture that values learning (Sullivan & Harper, 1996). So, the role of managers and leaders is essential for competence development. There are difficulties of running competence development programs and managers and leaders provide support by recognising and accepting differences, providing timely feedback, stimulating new ideas and tolerating errors and mistakes (Garvin, 2000).

Drucker (1988) mentions a good “old-fashioned” leadership. His observations on leadership offer a useful complement to the transformational leadership. A good leader keeps goals clear and visible by defining and establishing a sense of mission. Another essential aspect is accepting leadership as a responsibility rather than a rank. Then, there is the earning and maintaining trust of others. Effective leadership is not based on being clever; it is based primarily on being consistent.

3.2.4 MOTIVATION

Another factor in running a competence development program is motivation. There are actors in competence development programs such as facilitators and participants, in other words, trainers and trainees. The role of trainees became more important as participation from the trainee

is perceived to be a critical factor for the success of competence development programs (Gamble & Blackwell, 2001). However, it is not always the case that trainees are motivated to participate actively in training. There are different motivations within individuals. This has to do with a shift from the classical teaching concept to the idea of learning. There is a theory that motivation is low if expectancy is low and if expectancy is high, motivation is high (Vroom, 1994). It is not always that the expectancy is the same among individuals (Freden & Nilsson, 2003). There are variations from person to person. With higher motivation, there can be better result from competence development programs implementation.

There are different degrees of motivation among participants. The motivation is related to his personality and background. When it comes to the personality of participants, the term personality is typically defined to include the enduring and relatively stable profile of traits that make each person unique in the eyes of others. The issue of cognitive style is dealing with the way people gather, process, and interpret information for decision-making purposes. It is important to realise that people of different cognitive styles may have difficulty working well together in problem-solving situations and in various types of group activities. By being more aware of differences, it is expected that accommodations and adjustments can be made to better deal with this aspect of individual differences. One popular instrument used to measure alternative cognitive styles and to help develop this sensitivity is the Myer – Briggs Type Indicator, or MBTI¹⁸.

The term motivation is used in management theory to describe forces within the individual that account for the level, direction, and persistence of effort expended at work. Simply put, a highly motivated person works hard at a job; an unmotivated person does not. Motivation in a learning

¹⁸ The MBTI is published by Consulting Psychologists, Inc., Palo Alto, California, 94306.

context has an important meaning as a great deal of effort has been made by pedagogies and practitioners in all areas of learning and training to engage learners in their own knowledge development and to encourage them to participate in their learning process actively. Thus, there has been a marked shift from teaching to learning at all levels of the education spectrum (Gamble & Blackwell, 2001). One of the most critical issues in terms of organisational competence is the ability to deliver to the workforce education which is much more learner¹⁹-sensitive, which means that the programs take more into consideration personality, motivation, background, and the capacity of participants.

One of the most important trends at the moment is the transfer of the responsibility for learning. Wenger & Snyder (2000) defined learning as interplay of individuals' experience and competence. Management of the learning environment becomes a question of defining how boundaries are to be set and managed. Motivation becomes a key factor in a successful competence development by transferring responsibility from manager and teacher to individual and learner for the competence development.

3.2.5 TRUST

Trust is one of the key factors that have been identified through the literature study. Trust implies “the willingness of a party to the vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party (McAllister, 1995)” by definition.

¹⁹ The use of learner is the same as trainee, participants in this paper. The words that are chosen are related to different authors' use of the words who named differently in the different literatures.

From the research, when a cross culture organisation fails in its developing processes, it is usually the case that organisation didn't manage cultivating trust properly (Govindrajan & Gupta, 2001). More specifically, research has discovered that people tend to trust each other more when they are more similar to each other, have more frequent communication with each other, and operate in a mutually embraced institutional and cultural context that imposes tough sanctions for behaving in an untrustworthy manner (Kramer & Tyler, 1996).

3.2.6 COMMUNICATION

Communication is the process of sending and receiving symbols with messages attached to them. Communication process is a foundation not only for all interpersonal relationships but also a successful competence development in a cross-cultural organisation. Through communication people exchange and share information with one another; and through communication people influence one another's attitudes, behaviours and understandings (Schermerhorn et al., 1994).

Good communication is indispensable to the effective competence development. One of the effective managerial leadership is found in communication in Minzberg's study (1973). Managers spend their major time (over 60 percent) in oral communications. They spend only one quarter of their time doing "desk work." The manager serves as the centre point in a complex information-processing system whose responsibilities include promoting learning and competence development within the organisation.

3.2.7 SUMMARY

To summarise what has been said by other authors, variables and factors that influence the results of running competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation are illustrated in Table 7. Some of the factors have things in common, for instance, language and communication have an overlapping space as language is one part of

communication. However there is a need to separate language from the other factors as language has its own specific, large areas to cover. This is particularly true when it comes to training specifically for language.

Key factors according to literature which influence competence development programs	Discussed in section	Mainly discussed by
Diversity	3.2.1	Goffee & Jones, 1996 Hofstede, 2001 Cox 1993
Learning culture and language	3.2.2	Schermerhorn, 1996 Olsen, 2004
Leadership and engagement	3.2.3	Senge, 1990 Garvin, 2000
Motivation	3.2.4	Vroom, 1994 Gamble & Blackwell, 2001 Wenger & Snyder, 2000
Trust	3.2.5	Govidarajan& Gupta, 2001 Kramer & Tyler, 1996 McAllister, 1995
Communication	3.2.6	Schermerhorn, et al., 1994 Minzberg, 1973

Table 7: Critical factors that influence the effects of competence development according to other authors

This chapter aims to establish the common understanding about competence, competence development and culture. The term competence in this study is used in the sense of knowledge, capability and motivation. The definition of competence is in line with the idea of the IKEA Human

Resource Idea. Competence development is a socialising process, which in turn is a part of learning. There are three different perspectives on competence development and they might play important roles for the decision-making questions of local adaptation or standardisation in training contents, methods and facilitators.

Cognitive and behavioural perspectives toward competence development reflect different needs, depending on the goals of the changes. The competence development process is illustrated based on references that are written by other authors. The competence development process will be explored, elaborated and illustrated more in the next chapter, chapter four “IKEA, The Practical World.” In our empirical study we will try to understand which factors are the most important enablers and barriers when you implement a competence development program. Then in chapter five, Analysis and Reflections we will based on our empirical research see if we need to modify our model according to our new knowledge.

The expected results of competence development programs are different: changed behaviours, changed thinking and/or changed attitudes. After all, the competence development process leads to increased competences in one of three competence levels. Now remains the question of what are barriers and enablers to achieving goals during the running process of competence development programs in practice.

In the coming chapters, we will see if the variables from empirical study results are the same or different and if there are other factors found in the empirical study.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: IKEA, THE PRACTICAL WORLD

This chapter describes the competence developing process and development program's execution in a multinational company²⁰ over one and a half year period²¹. It starts with an introduction to the company background, and its organisation. Then it moves on to empirical studies about how a cross-cultural organisation manages competence development programs.

4.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

IKEA is a global cross-cultural organisation possessing a worldwide network within product development, supply chain and retail²². IKEA emphasises the importance of competence development and it has a

²⁰ It is a so-called, MNC abbreviated to. MNC, a cross-culture organisation, cross-border Company, global company and across-country Company are synonymous in this paper, meaning it is more than one country and more than one culture within the organisation and company.

²¹ 2003 – 2004

²² There are 1600 suppliers in 55 countries, 42 purchasing units in 33 countries, 1600 suppliers in 55 countries, 27 distribution centres in 16 countries, and 172 stores in 22 countries (IKEA Intranet).

strong belief that the company grows when the individual grows²³. Competence development was highlighted when the president of IKEA made the statement, “Ten Jobs in Ten Years.” In the document “Ten Jobs in Ten Years²⁴”, it is much highlighted that competence development is a critical factor for future success and survival. Ten tasks prioritised within ten years are described with different job numbers from one to ten. Job number Six²⁵ states clearly that IKEA is to attract, develop and inspire IKEA people. Ten Jobs in Ten Years has been spread over all IKEA units world-wide and it is implemented currently in one way or another within each organisation.

The IKEA HR Idea²⁶ states that HR management is

to give down-to-earth, straightforward people the possibility to grow, both as individuals and in their professional roles, so that – together we are strongly committed to creating a better everyday life for ourselves and our customers.

This HR Idea initialised many competence development programs globally within IKEA. Those IKEA competence development programs have been developed internally and also externally²⁷, and run in different

²³ Anders Dalvig (2000), MD in IKEA pointed out this in his statement.

²⁴ Ten Jobs in Ten Years is a widely read, understood and implemented concept within IKEA worldwide.

²⁵ Job Number Six is one of Ten Jobs in Ten Years written by MD of IKEA corporations in 2000.

²⁶ IKEA HR Idea is a booklet distributed to new and old IKEA co-workers for information about the way IKEA HR is heading.

²⁷ It is about 80/20 when it comes to in-house and externally developed competence programs within IKEA according to the Global IKEA HR manager.

places within IKEA. For instance, there is a trading competence development unit, called IKEA Purchasing Development Centre (IPDC) and it has centrally developed programs and they have a trainers' pool where they share trainers located in different places²⁸.

A competence development process starts from when an individual is recruited. IKEA as a global company²⁹, a cross-cultural organisation recruits human resources based on their potential growth in the future. They don't employ ready-made people who are totally trained and completely equipped. Instead, they employ people with high potential and let them grow and develop their different potentials along their career paths. They don't provide co-workers and managers with market's highest salary, but they invest time and money in human resource development. IKEA makes a success in competence development in some places, but also makes mistakes not to be able to develop competencies needed for future business conditions or even loses competencies they have when competent people leave the company (Björk, 1998). From the point of view of IKEA's recruiting strategy, competence development programs are crucially important for the corporate competitive advantage. IKEA's standardised competence development programs are run in different local offices; for instance, there are forty IKEA trading offices (Björk, 1998) and development programs run in each local office or even several offices combined depending on the distance from each office and numbers of participants. These are usually grouped by region³⁰; in some countries, the

²⁸ IKEA is cost-conscious of travels, so trainers are traveling to give education to different local offices instead of trainees traveling.

²⁹ Global company here is in a sense that this is the age of global economy, one based on worldwide interdependence of resource supplies, product markets, and business condition (Schermerhorn 1996)

³⁰ In Asia Pacific, there are regions like Southeast Asia (TASEA), South Asia (TASA) and East Asia (TAEA).

competences are increased after training courses, and in some countries they are not³¹. IKEA's recruitment process reflects the importance of competence development and cultural aspect.³² IKEA, as a global company, cannot ignore cultural differences, but must respect cultural diversity. It is very important for IKEA to understand the critical factors that make competence development successful. These factors steer the success of personnel recruitment and development. IKEA wants to have successful recruitment and secure the quality that is delivered from the course. The HR manager in IKEA TASEA mentioned in the interview quoted below,

“If we have two candidates with the same competence level and one is close to IKEA culture and the other not, then we would choose the person with IKEA culture in mind already. Nowadays managers are even more looking into personal cultures if they fit into IKEA culture, so IKEA doesn't have to spend so much time and efforts to change people's personality or cultural mind”

The experience of organisations losing competencies as they have downsized or restructured has made IKEA more aware of the costs of “reinventing the wheel.” At the same time, very competent people leave the company for other challenges in other companies. Also, succession

³¹ The results are shown in evaluation and knowledge tests performed after the course. Not all programs have the same evaluation method. If there isn't any formatted evaluation sheet, there is at least feedback the trainees can send to course administrator after the course. Even facilitator's oral comments after the course often indicate the different results and effects from programs. This is not the part of my study results but it was an input to get started my empirical study.

³² I attended an internal IKEA course, called the IKEA recruiting process and I found the individual cultural value was a very important criterion for the final selection when all other criteria were even.

planning for transferred employees increases the importance of knowledge transfer from expatriates to local employees. IKEA TASEA has downsized by reducing numbers of both local and expatriate³³ employees. This raises the value of knowledge management for existing and new co-workers.

Based on future needs for competence both within the organisation and on an individual level, competence development occurs over time. After recruitment, there is a development talk³⁴ once a year at least, when managers and co-workers discuss the previous work performance and future career development. The development talk becomes a base for guideline when co-workers apply for training programs. The interest in increasing competence from individuals is high in organisation. From the interviews with trainees in IKEA TASEA, it was found that one of the most important factors for choosing the job was personal development and opportunity. They want to continue to be an attractive resource in the market through their continuous competence development. A big question is how IKEA should manage to keep those individuals with high competence within the organisation.

There have been many competence development programs aimed at knowledge increase such as material courses in IKEA TASEA. During 2003 and 2004, it was a special phenomenon that a lot of competence development programs were aimed at behaviour and attitude changes, such as team building, IKEA culture and leadership courses. MBTI was one of the basic tests that most IKEA TASEA co-workers took and IKEA TASEA co-workers understood their differences in personality and

³³ For instance, IKEA Trading Malaysia Office reduced its size from 45 people to 10 during the last half year.

³⁴ There is a training program called development talk for managers and HR staff. It is a tool for development talk. It is recommended, but not obligatory. To document development talk is on the other hand obligatory.

preferences. The most acknowledged successful competence development program was Purchasing Team Competence. Both IKEA TASEA co-workers and managers saw big positive changes in their behaviours and attitude after the programs. Communication improved and team members became closer to each other. There are open-minded approaches where they share information and knowledge within the team.

For most of IKEA TASEA co-workers, competence lies within the team. Team competence was more highly prioritised than individual competence. To the question of specific responsibilities, most interviewees answered that the whole purchasing team is responsible. For most of the IKEA TASEA managers, competence means each individual and competences can be increased over time from training work experience and education. Team competence was very important to the most of IKEA TASEA co-workers who responded during the interviews and to the survey. The team members felt as one and each team member contributed with her own competence and cooperated with other team members. This doesn't mean that there is a conflict in the concept of competence between co-workers and managers. For managers, the driving force for competence development should come from each individual. For co-workers, team work is more important than to show off each individual's excellence at work.

With regards to the question of the choice of job criteria, the interviewees thought that competence development opportunity was very important. IKEA TASEA co-workers put a high value on their individual competence development. There was also a tendency that competence development was understood as career development like a promotion or bonus. When they had more opportunities to attend many competence development programs, they felt that they were important individuals in the organisation. On the other hand, there were a few who complained that they didn't have enough time to work in business as they were attending after different courses all the time.

IKEA strongly believes in that IKEA co-workers can grow in their job and responsibility, according to IKEA HR Idea documents. IKEA global HR focuses on IKEA culture and basic leadership courses³⁵. For the other job-related competences, each organisation should create its own competence development programs and make it as a ‘best practice.’ There was a slight indication from the interviews that IKEA TASEA co-workers spend too much time attending so many different training programs. IKEA global HR believes that each individual should drive the competence development process, so called Self Managed Learning³⁶. Most of IKEA TASEA co-workers who responded in the interviews mentioned that it was their managers who led and decided during the competence development process. There was a gap between what IKEA HR pursues today and what IKEA TASEA co-workers think about what is competence, which competences are prioritised, and the purpose of competence development.

Team competence is highly emphasised by Govindarajan and Gupta (2001) in a context of global companies. Innovation occurs when there is a system that encourages teamwork, and learning, not avoiding blame and assigning responsibility (Hesselbein et al., 2002). The empirical study of IKEA TASEA also shows that its co-workers were conscious of the importance of teamwork rather than ‘one man show.’ At the same time, this study found that each individual’s initiative and driving force in the competence development processes were critical factors in running competence development programs.

³⁵ It was revealed in IKEA internal documents such as IKEA Purchasing Policy, but also from the interviews with IKEA global HR manager and Trading HR manager.

³⁶ IKEA Intranet, Human Resource Site

4.2 IKEA TASEA ORGANISATION

There are approximately 200 IKEA TASEA co-workers spread throughout Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. There are six material area managers (MAM) and each material has more than two purchasing teams. Each team has purchasers, technicians and people responsible for operations. Table 8 shows the numbers of IKEA TASEA co-workers in different functions and locations.

Numbers of	Thailand	Vietnam	Malaysia	Indonesia
Purchasers	3	12	2	5
Operational responsible	4	12	2	5
Technicians	5	19	6	6
Administrators	12	6	0 ³⁷	8
Transferred employees ³⁸	14	14	0	3
Total employees	38	122 ³⁹	10	27

Table 8: IKEA TASEA organisation

³⁷ Some operational responsible persons take care of administration and IKEA Distribution Centre in Malaysia partly shares its office maintenance with the purchasing office.

³⁸ People are usually called ‘expatriates’ who are transferred from another country. Most of the expatriates are Swedish who have worked in the head office in Sweden and then transferred to another IKEA office in order to transfer their competences from the central IKEA to the local IKEA offices on a contract basis of three years.

³⁹ Guards, drivers and office cleaners are included.

There are more people involved in business in Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia whereas in Thailand half of the people are involved in administration. Previously, purchasing teams were divided into different countries but two and a half years ago purchasing teams were grouped by different material areas. The changed organisation meant that people from different countries should work together in the same team with the same goal, which is ‘best buy’⁴⁰.

The new cross-country organisation based on material areas⁴¹ demanded the understanding of cultural diversity as co-workers work together. On the other hand, those co-workers are from a similar cultural background in the region of “Southeast Asia.” One purchasing team has its team members spread over more than one country. This requires additional efforts for communication and information sharing. There was a comment from one participant in the Situational Leadership training program in Vietnam.

“Previously we used to be in the same team and we felt that we were working in the same office. Nowadays, I don’t have any idea of what the others in the office are doing since we are not in the same purchasing team any longer. We became strangers sharing the office only”. (A frustrated person who was responsible for operations)

When IKEA TASEA was organised based on geographical boundaries previously, sharing knowledge with other countries was understood as

⁴⁰ The concept of ‘best buy’ symbolizes one IKEA that aims at customer’s satisfaction rather than pursues its local own interests or individuals.

⁴¹ IKEA TASEA internally calls the new organization based on material resources as Material Area Team. There are new roles from the new organization such as Material Area Manager (MAM) and Team Leader of purchasing team consisting of Purchaser, Technician and Operation & Logistic responsible (O&L).

losing competencies and competitiveness. Countries in IKEA TASEA competed with each other for lower price and they wouldn't share information about their prices with other countries as this would be a risk of losing business. In the current IKEA TASEA organisation, cooperation is encouraged in order to get a better price for IKEA customers in the end. It is more customer-focused and process-oriented. In order to succeed in a geographically dispersed organisation based on materials, sharing and transferring knowledge has become a key value-adding process. There has been competition among countries previously and now they have to work together in order to beat the rest of the trading countries. Even though they all belong within Southeast Asia, there are big differences among different countries. Understanding different culture becomes a key factor to be successful in this new organisation. There is a need to change behaviour from competitive to collaborative⁴².

Another participant in Purchasing Team Competence program in Vietnam commented pointing out some positive sides of the new organisation.

“Nowadays when I analyse prices and try to negotiate with suppliers and counter partner in IKEA of Sweden, I have a broader picture of situations. I’m not any longer looking at prices only in Vietnam suppliers, but also in other countries in the region. I even try to persuade my suppliers into a competitive price compared with other countries in another region. I feel like we have better total control over what we are doing.” (A smiling young male Vietnamese purchaser)

⁴² There is a new word used in this situation, so to say, “co-petition.”

As mentioned earlier, there are six material areas that are covered within IKEA TASEA: they are Wood, Textile, Metal & Plastic, Ceramics, Natural Fibres and Business Development⁴³. There are material area managers and they have more than one purchasing team within the area. Often, one purchasing team in one material area covers one country. For instance, Thailand and Vietnam have Ceramics material, and the Ceramics material area in that case has two purchasing teams, one in Thailand and the other in Vietnam. More than one purchasing team are working together within the same material area and from that perspective, the importance of teamwork is highlighted cross-borders.

Being both a matrix organisation and at the same time a cross-cultural organisation, IKEA TASEA has function supports such as HR, Operations & Logistics, Quality & Environment, and Finance & Administration. There are managers in each function and function managers have local co-workers who coordinate work across-material areas. This cross-cultural and matrix organisation in IKEA TASEA is two years old and still the organisation form is regarded as a 'new' organisation among workers. There are great needs for better communication and cooperation among managers and workers. Thus, new leadership has become essential in this new organisation.

4.3 IKEA TASEA COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

There were two levels when it comes to competence: individual and organisational ones (Argyris, C. & Schön, D. A., 1978; Mintzberg, 1975; Gamble & Blackwell, 2001; Freden & Nilsson, 2003). Organisational competence is more than the sum of individual competences due to the synergy effect. Team competence is very important especially in a cross-

⁴³ Business Development is including other material areas and they concern mainly the newly developing products with different materials. Thus, there are overlapping common suppliers shared with other material areas.

cultural organisation. In IKEA TASEA, the team building was highly emphasised issue and they ran Purchasing Team Competence programs. Competence means knowledge, motivation and capability (Senge, 1990; Ellström, 1992; Sveiby, 1995). IKEA TASEA had competence development programs that aimed at increasing not only knowledge but also positive attitudes and increased motivation.

Purchasing Team Competence programs were aiming for better team work, Situational Leadership program was targeting new leadership and IKEA Culture was aiming at a creating corporate culture that works for the successful business. Purchasing Team Competence, Situational Leadership and IKEA Culture were selected for empirical study as they were prioritised programs within IKEA TASEA.⁴⁴ There was also the recommendation from Learning & Development⁴⁵ Manager and four courses, including Quotation Management⁴⁶ were selected for the empirical study as Quotation Management program has different characteristics compared with other competence development programs.

From the new organisational form, it was found that competence development was critical issue in order to excel in business in IKEA TASEA. Through the Business Plan 2003 and 2004, the importance of competence development was identified and communicated with co-

⁴⁴ IKEA Trading South East Asia and South Asia Learning & Development (L&D) Manager. Verbal Interview in 2003.

⁴⁵ Learning & Development (L&D) is a new unit established since autumn 2003, taking care of both IKEA TASEA and South Asia, i.e. Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. In China, there is a new branch unit from IKEA Purchasing Development Centre (IPDC).

⁴⁶ Quotation Management is selected as it has different character in the contents of program, namely concerning computer operating education for the comparisons.

workers (internally say, ‘co-professionals⁴⁷⁾) in IKEA TASEA. There have been a tremendous number of competence development programs run within the IKEA TASEA. There were especially prioritised courses such as Purchasing Team Competence, IKEA Culture, Basic Leadership, Management Skills and Personal Development.⁴⁸

4.3.1 DESCRIPTIONS OF SELECTED PROGRAMS

Purchasing Team Competence (PTC) has three sessions. The first session, PTC1 is composed of three days intensive course with a lot of exercises and group work. It comprises both personal and team development. Participants learn about listening, negotiating, and communicating skills. It invites one external consultant and one IKEA HR manager to attend as facilitators. Target groups are all purchasing team members such as team leaders, purchasers, technicians and business support. PTC2 is a two-day course with practical knowledge in business. Participants learn how to evaluate suppliers and the key variables to look at when they perform supplier evaluations. In PTC2, suppliers are invited to participate for group discussion. PTC3 is a one-day course to go through the implementation and follow-up of action plans that participants made in each session. It is more or less an evaluation session. All PTC sessions are owned and developed by IKEA.

The Situation Leadership (SL) course is a standard training program that IKEA bought from Ken Blanchard Group and Companies who developed the theoretical model of leadership. Different leadership needs to be applied to different situations as it is said. For instance, leaders need to delegate more to people who have more and higher competence so that

⁴⁷ IKEA TASEA emphasises professionalism. This means that co-workers should be professional when they meet suppliers and even other IKEA co-workers. Professionalism involves a lot of organising, planning and preparing before actions.

⁴⁸ IKEA TASEA HR manager, verbal interview in 2004.

they may grow in their responsibility. And leaders who have people that need to develop their competences have to give guidelines and instructions.

The training program consists of two days, the first day with learning theory and the second day with applying theory through exercises and games. An IKEA internal facilitator runs the course and the target group in the first place is leaders and managers. The training method of SL is very varied. The trainer uses videotapes for situation analysis, a flipchart for brainstorming and writing down key words. There is a mix of traditional teaching/learning and a casual exercises and group work. Training materials are provided at the start of sessions. There is a recommended book such as *The One-Minute Manager* written by Blanchard and Johnson in 1992.

The IKEA Culture (IC) course is about the IKEA concept, values and symbols. It is one of key courses within IKEA that characterises core IKEA competence, such as IKEA culture. It is strongly stated by Kamprad (2001) that “maintaining a strong IKEA culture is one of the most crucial factors behind the continued success of the IKEA concept.”

There are participants from different organisations and different functions from IKEA worldwide. They are rather new in the company between six to twelve months. Their expectation of the course is to learn about IKEA history, philosophy and Swedish culture. They are eager to know how they should interact with other co-workers who are Swedish. The course location was originally in Älmhult, Sweden, but since last year, the IKEA culture course in TASEA is mainly held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where there is an IKEA store. People have a chance to visit the IKEA store and it is cost saving to travel to Malaysia rather than to Sweden. The IKEA culture course is held for three days and most of participants are from the IKEA retail organisation. People who attend from Trading see how an IKEA store looks and how IKEA co-workers at store working toward the customer. In that way, participants learn what IKEA culture represents,

that is to say, Simplicity, Humbleness, Cost-consciousness, Honesty, Open-mindedness, Straightforwardness, Responsibility and Hardworking. The researcher in this study didn't attend any IC course in Southeast Asia. Information about the IKEA culture course is based on interview materials and surveys. Most of the participants attended the course in order to understand the company, as they were new. Some of participants attended the course after some years at IKEA because they wanted to refresh their idea of what IKEA stands for. It is also a kind of status that they are important people who are able to travel abroad in order to take some courses.

Quotation Management (QM) training is different in character compared to the other programs mentioned earlier as it is a course about using a computer application. The application system is about handling quotations between IKEA and IKEA suppliers. QM itself is an application system name, developed by external Software Company, and the educational package for QM has been developed by an internal IKEA co-worker. QM is a web-based, self-learning system with a support of a trainer and is composed of introduction to the new system and hands-on exercises. The first 'training the trainer' session has been completed in the whole of IKEA Trading and IKEA of Sweden (IoS). The target group is purchasers in Trading and purchasing strategists in IoS. An IKEA internal co-worker is a facilitator. There have been sixty five different quotation management processes before the system QM was to be designed. Purchasing strategists (Istra) at IoS and purchasers at Trading worked in different ways depending on different cases until QM was developed.

The use of QM implied a change in behaviour in handling quotation. The new system, QM, will be used by every Istra and purchaser, so the target group is naturally Istras and purchasers. The first QM training session in

IKEA TASEA was held in Bangkok for all super users⁴⁹ both in IKEA TASEA and IKEA TASA⁵⁰. There were nine trainers to be trained in the new quotation managing system. QM is a totally new web-based system. There were two facilitators from Sweden, one who was responsible for training and the other for technical support. Participants were supposed to be trainers, so-called, ‘super user’ for the end-users. They were from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Pakistan and also from different material areas. Most of the participants sit listening to the facilitator passively as the facilitator uses the lecturing method in the classroom. One of the keyword of the new QM is ‘transparency’ as the system allows the visibility of the decision-making process from bidding among different trading and suppliers. The word of ‘transparency’ was not familiar to some of participants by its definition and possibilities. The course was for three days. The first two days concerned the new QM system and the last day was tips for organising and planning training for the end-users. Thus, only two days were about the QM training for the end-users.

Table 9 shows information about the four competence development programs in summary.

⁴⁹ IKEA Trading uses the word, ‘super user’ for the trainer, as the super user will be responsible for training end-users as well as problem-shooting and continuous development of the new system.

⁵⁰ IKEA TASA is Trading Area South Asia that covers countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Courses	PTC	SL	IC	QM
Contents	Teamwork & communication	Leadership	Value & Culture	Quotation handling
Expected Changes	Cognitive Behavioural Situational	Cognitive Behavioural Situational	Cognitive Behavioural	Cognitive
Target Group	Purchasing team members	IKEA Co-workers	Leaders and managers	Purchasers
Trainer	External ⁵¹ & Internal ⁵²	Internal	Internal	Internal
Program Development	Internal	External	Internal	External
Training Method	Traditional Classroom	Exercises & Group work	Group work & field trip	Web-based hands-on
Duration	7 days	3 days	2 days	2 days
Start/End Period	Autumn 2003/ Autumn 2004	Autumn 2003/ Autumn 2004	Autumn 2003/ Spring 2004	2001/2004
Strategy	Best Practice	Best Practice	IKEA Standard	IKEA Standard

Table 9: Competence development programs studied

⁵¹ Here External means outside IKEA such as consultant.

⁵² Here Internal means IKEA employed.

The four training programs are described in terms of content, people, environment and time. The numbers of participants in most IKEA training programs are around fifteen. Different types and levels of competence development programs, and expected results characterise the contents of the courses. Trainers, trainees and facilitators are human factors in the programs. The location, media/tools, and methods of training programs set conditions for the training environment. Time is another category that is identified with the duration of the course and start period. The effect of the course in reality is shown depending on external forces. The effect is immediate if the new way of working is obligatory. When it is optional, the effect is not immediate and it is totally up to participants. Finally, the strategy of the learning programs is divided into two, either best practice or IKEA Standard. The 'best practice' means that any locally developed programs are acknowledged as a good example and they in turn are transferred to other organisations. The 'IKEA Standard' means that IKEA centrally developed programs are run in the rest of IKEA units.

According to Faria (2001), there were three learning types and the four competence development programs selected for this study have different goals. Purchasing Team Competence, Situational Leadership and IKEA Culture are more affective and involve behavioural learning because they aim at changing behaviour and attitude. In comparison to them, Quotation Management is more about cognitive learning skills because it simply aims at understanding basic facts, knowledge and skills.

According to (Rapp & Björkegren, 1998), there are three perspectives in learning; these are behavioural, cognitive and situational. Purchasing Team Competence is oriented to the behavioural and cognitive perspective because it aims at changing behaviours and thinking. Situational leadership and IKEA Culture are more cognitive and situational perspective oriented because they aim at changing thinking, and focus on solving problems according to different situations. Quotation Management is oriented a little bit towards all three

perspectives because it aims at changing behaviours and to being able to think differently in different situations.

4.3.2 DESCRIPTIONS OF OTHER PROGRAMS ATTENDED

Other than the above four programs, the researcher in this study participated in IKEA Recruiting Process and MBTI (Myers Briggs Type Indicator) courses. The attendance of the IKEA Recruiting Process helped the researcher understand how IKEA takes consideration of IKEA culture in the IKEA recruiting processes where competence development starts. MBTI is a self-analysis method where you can categorise the personal profiles to which an individual belongs. The researcher in this study used the MBTI personal profile when she interviewed individuals in order to understand his or her personality.

IKEA TASEA chose MBTI in order to understand individuals in terms of their personality and preferences. The intention behind this is to have a good mix of different profiles in order to achieve diversity in the group. It is an on-going course for the new and existing IKEA workers. IKEA even sends internal trainers to be trained as certified MBTI trainers, which means IKEA believes MBTI is its best practice.

IKEA TASEA runs the IKEA recruiting process course for the person who is responsible for HR and managers who are involved in the recruiting process. It teaches interview techniques as a part of the training program. It is in the form of workshop, small group discussions and simulated exercises. The intention is to deliver the message that IKEA has a special demand on new workers that they have to have a mindset close to that of the IKEA culture. IKEA intends to spend less time transforming new comers into IKEAn⁵³.

⁵³ Internally, IKEA calls people who are transformed according to IKEA values and culture as IKEAn.

Table 10 summarises those two programs.

Courses	Myers Briggs Type Indicator	IKEA Recruiting Process
Contents	Self-assessment	IKEA's recruiting process and interview techniques
Purpose for reference (in order to understand)	Individual personality preferences in group	IKEA culture in use
Target Group	IKEA co-workers	Human Resource, Managers
Duration	1 Day	2 Days

Table 10: Competence development program referred

I observed competence development programs on eight occasions. These were Purchasing Team Competence (PTC) in Thailand and Vietnam⁵⁴, Quotation Management (QM) in Thailand⁵⁵ and Situational Leadership (SL) in Thailand and Vietnam. Each time, it was different purchasing team members, but the contents and methods of the programs were identical. For IKEA Culture (IC), interviews and surveys were the main methods used in the study. Forty three interviews were made for participants and facilitators including interviews with managers and people who were responsible for HR. An additional survey with 33 participants and

⁵⁴ There were PTC courses held two times in each location and I attended all.

⁵⁵ There were two QM courses for trainers in Bangkok and I attended one of them.

managers was made. Highlighted issues, key words and sentences through observations, interviews and surveys are noted in my research journals.

4.4 MANAGING COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

In running competence development programs there are different factors that should be taken into consideration. In the frame of reference, three categories were identified; strategy, actors and context. In the following phases, the empirical study of IKEA Trading TASEA will be described according to those three categories. Then, the successful courses according to IKEA TASEA workers will be described. Finally dominant MBTI personal profiles among IKEA TASEA workers will be illustrated.

4.4.1 DOES LOCAL ADJUSTMENT MATTER FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES?

There have been inconsistent results from research concerning local adaptation and central standardisation (Hofstede, 1999; Rodrigues, 1998; Ghosn, 2002). In this empirical study, the reactions from the participants and the facilitators to the question of the necessity of local adjustment were different. A majority of the participants in all the four programs preferred to have local adjustments; at least facilitators should have basic knowledge of the cultural background where the program participants came from. A majority of the facilitators thought that it would be good to know the local culture from where the participants came from, but that it wouldn't be necessary for them to consider local differences. The facilitators didn't intend to change any contents, methods or processes in the training programs. The four competence development programs that were studied in this research all had in common the fact that they were not locally adjusted. This means that the programs did not consider the national background of the participants in their program designing processes. They were all standardised programs using the same materials, adapting the same teaching methods and taking the same procedures. The only difference was the participants of each program.

Half of the respondents in all programs replied that there was no need to understand local cultures and half of them said that there was a need to consider and adapt the materials to the local situation. The former believed that differences exist no matter where people come from and in the educational situation; people tend to be more tolerant about differences. The latter had some negative experiences when facilitators didn't have any knowledge about local culture and they offended participants openly in an unacceptable manner. Co-workers who have more international contacts seem to have more understanding of cultural differences and they don't see any great need to consider local cultural differences in educational situation.

The facilitators of the Purchasing Team Competence program didn't think that any local adjustment of the programs was necessary because the program was intended to build up 'one purchasing team' in IKEA TASEA. During the interview, one of Purchasing Team Competence facilitators clearly said,

"I and my co-facilitator ran this Purchasing Team Competence program for whole material areas teams in different places. I've received very positive feedbacks from participants and the evaluation sheets after the program show very high scores in the facilitation. There are differences among different countries of course, but I don't see any reason to change course materials or methods depending on countries where the program is run. I've been working in Southeast Asia so many years, I understand people how they think and react. Perhaps, it is an advantage if the facilitator understands a little bit of the cultural background of participants. However, it is not a must, but good to know once again." (A very confident middle-aged male Swedish facilitator in Purchasing Team Competence program)

In autumn 2003, the Purchasing Team Competence programs started to run. The facilitators of Purchasing Team Competence programs didn't differentiate training materials, methods and processes, which means that it was the same conditions for all. All purchasing teams, so-called material area teams participated in Purchasing Team Competence One. When purchasing teams started the second course, PTC2, the researcher in this study observed the courses and interviewed the participants. Purchasing Team Competence was recommended as 'best practice' to the other purchasing organisations in IKEA, which means that it will be introduced to other purchasing teams in Europe and North America. From the feedback and course evaluation, the appreciation from participants was very high. From observations, the researcher in this study found that participants were very enthusiastic. In interviews, both facilitators and participants said that it was a great experience, they had learned a lot and they had used some of the skills acquired on the course in practice after the course.

However, the participants in Purchasing Team Competence programs think that some local adjustments might be helpful in smoothing up any outstanding conflicts during the training course. For instance, the aggressive behaviour of one facilitator intimidated one participant in Vietnam and she almost cried at that time. As the participant discussed her recollection of the course, she said that the content of the program and the way of addressing the message were something new and she learned to be affirmative afterwards. Still for her, it was not acceptable to be aggressive as 'aggressiveness' is equalled to 'disrespectfulness.'

In January 2004, the Situational Leadership program started to run, first of all in Thailand. The participants were a mix of local Thai co-workers and expatriates⁵⁶. Since most of the participants were some kind of leaders and managers, they were more open-minded in their attitude. When there was

⁵⁶ They were two Swedes, a Danish person and a Canadian.

a discussion about delegation and responsibility, one female senior purchaser commented as below.

“We Thai think that respect is very important. We should show respect to older people and to our managers. Managers are like our parents who take care of us as children. The behaviour that we challenge to the older and managers is not acceptable in Thai society.” (An unmarried female senior purchaser)

There were nods from other Thai purchasers that showed agreement with her. From the above comments, conflicts between the contents of the course and the local values and norms of behaviour were observed. The participants didn't reach any conclusion as to how they were supposed to act in reality. However, there were general discussions around how IKEA co-workers should behave in different situations, for instance, when they meet suppliers and when they approach their managers.

In December 2003, the first Quotation Management training for trainers was held in Bangkok. Trainers who attended were purchasers who were supposed to give training to the rest of the purchasers in other material areas and trading offices. It was not a subject even considered as a possible topic of discussion when it comes to the local adaptation of the course. Participants simply learned how to use the system and how to plan and train the rest users. During the interview with a facilitator in QM, the facilitator said,

“QM is a system education and the goal is to learn the system and the processes behind the system. In this kind of training program, I don't think it is necessary to adjust any local cultural differences. Most of all, IKEA co-workers are more or less same as they worked for IKEA after a while, and they understand how things are going and how they are supposed to act.” (A middle-aged male British facilitator in QM)

Previously the IKEA Culture program was run for the most of the IKEA TASEA co-workers and nowadays it is only new employers who attend. From the interviews and the survey, participants mentioned that it would be necessary for the facilitator to understand local cultures where participants came from. But it wouldn't be necessary to change materials or methods for the course as the goal of the course was to learn IKEA culture.

It has been found that competence development programs run in IKEA TASEA were not adjusted to local situations. They were run according to standard content, methods and procedures in all places and for all IKEA TASEA co-workers. From the facilitators' point of view, local adaptations were not needed but good to have, especially for the understanding of participants. From the participants' point of view, local adaptations were needed for a great acceptance of the messages from the training programs.

The amount of local adaptations depended on the type of competences aimed to increase. When the competence development programs aimed at pure knowledge or technical skills increase, local adaptation was less important whereas in programs aimed at attitude and behaviour changes there were more of less necessities. For instance, leadership courses needed to adapt more to local conditions in how the contents of the course were presented than quotation management system training course. In the case of team building and culture courses, understanding the local co-workers' background was a must. Nevertheless none of the programs that were studied make any local adjustments. This study couldn't prove which is better, but local participants' needs had to be understood and that was not taken care of during the running process of the programs.

4.4.2 DOES DIVERSITY IN GROUP MATTER FOR LEARNING POSSIBILITIES?

The importance of cognitive diversity and behavioural diversity in a cross-cultural organisation were recognised in the study by Govindarajan & Gupta (2001). Cognitive diversity in the group has a positive impact on some courses like IKEA Culture, Situational Leadership and Purchasing Team competence. When there were varieties of different job functions and countries, there was a richness of discussions and indirect learning among participants. However as the course aimed at pure knowledge transfer, such as system education, Quotation Management, the question of diversity in the group was not important.

In Situational Leadership, the participants were mainly team leaders, material area managers and purchasers. Some technical managers attended, too. There was a good mix of nationalities in Thailand as some were expatriates who have a Scandinavian background and some were team leaders from local countries. In Vietnam it was only Vietnamese who attended the program. There were often discussions of Westerner contra Asians.⁵⁷. There was a group thinking of how Thai contrasts to ‘you, westerner’ represented by expatriates or IKEAn.

In IKEA Culture, there were mainly discussions around IKEA culture and what were good with IKEA way. There weren’t any discussions about a specific country as participants of IKEA Culture usually come from many different countries, organisations to functions. One of the IKEA Culture participants who attended a half year ago said in the corridor once after the training program.

“IKEA Culture training program was very good to understand the history and philosophy of the company. Especially, there were participants from different countries

⁵⁷ One facilitator was a British consultant and the other Swedish IKEA co-worker.

and organisations; I could learn a lot even from other participants as we had different experiences in working places.” (A middle-aged newly employed Vietnamese male IKEA TASEA co-worker)

In Purchasing Team Competence programs, most of the participants appreciated the fact that the same purchasing team members attended the course at the same time because they could build up team spirit through the program. Purchasing Team Competence One, Two and Three were held in Thailand on three occasions. More than one material area team attended. There was a mix in the group, people from different functions in the same purchasing team. All the purchasing team members of the same material area were there and each team member had to solve problems as a part of a group. The problems that might happen in the work place were simulated. Thailand was one of the first places where Purchasing Team Competence programs were held. Most of co-workers were senior, and had worked for IKEA for a ‘relatively⁵⁸’ long time. There was an established knowledge and routine in place. IKEA co-workers in Thailand had pre-determined attitudes toward how things should work. They felt comfortable with routines and regulated administrations. Most of the participants were rather quiet and smiling. Some of them felt humiliated by a facilitator who took an aggressive approach.

“When I attended PTC One, I learned a lot through the course, but I was really shocked by the facilitator’s behaviour and approach. He was very aggressive and impulsive. I didn’t know how I should react. I felt humiliated and shamed. I still have hurt feelings from the

⁵⁸ In IKEA Sweden, there are co-workers who worked for IKEA for thirty or forty years. In IKEA Asia, there are few IKEA co-workers who work for IKEA for their whole lifetime. A person who has worked for IKEA more than five years up to ten is considered to be a senior.

course.” (A saddened participant in PTC1 during the interview)

When the same question was put to the facilitator, he replied,

“It was all a part of the training program. I intended to provoke the participants, so they can react. Most of the participants have shown an active response. I’ve received very positive feedback from the most of participants. I can imagine that there was a few who couldn’t really absorb the message.” (A calm facilitator in Purchasing Team Competence programs during the interview)

The participants of Purchasing Team Competence One, Two and Three were mainly IKEA TASEA co-workers who were members of the same purchasing team. There was a mix of seniority at work, of gender and of family status. Almost half of them were men, with more than five years working experience and were married. People with different functions within the same team attended the course, so there was a mix of job functions. Two Thai participants in the group actively mentioned something like “we Thai are like that and like this...” representing the group. There was a group thinking of Thai contrast to ‘you, westerner’ represented by the two facilitators.

However, in Quotation Management, there were no discussions of any diversity or any such issue. Participants listened to what tutors said and followed instructions in the exercises of new program.

In summary, for IKEA Culture training program, different mixes of group among the participants seemed to be important for a broader and deeper understanding of cultural values and behaviours. For Quotation Management, it was not meaningful to mix the group of participants as the training program aimed to teach a new system. For Situational Leadership in Vietnam, there was no mix of group considering different national backgrounds as the participants came from the same office. For Situational Leadership in Thailand, there was a good mix of nationalities

among participants, so there were livelier and more exciting discussions during the course. For Purchasing Team Competence, most of participants were from the same country, but job functions were different within purchasing teams such as purchasers, technicians and the people responsible for operations.

4.4.3 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MANAGER FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT?

From the previous study, we saw that the management's engagement was crucial in competence development (Senge, 1990; Cox, 2001; Garvin, 2000; Mintzberg, 1975). From the empirical study here, we learn that the role of managers in the competence development process is highly important especially in a cross-cultural organisation. There are expectations from IKEA TASEA co-workers that managers should steer their competence development. However there are expectations from IKEA TASEA management group that their co-workers should take more responsibility for their own competence development.

In order for competence development programs to be successful, there are things that encouraged IKEA TASEA co-workers to participate in the programs actively. The presence of managers played a key role. There were several managers who attended the programs partly to see how their co-workers were learning during the programs of Purchasing Team Competence and Situational Leadership and what they used from their learning. It was observed that there was more energy in the rooms of learning. When there was more involvement of managers who were in charge of implementation, the program made more sense to the participants and they were motivated to use the new system in Quotation Management.

For IKEA TASEA co-workers, managers were the people who made decisions. There were distinct definitions of what a manager was and a leader was according to the survey. The role of managers was more

controlling in business operations whereas those of leaders were rather coaching. IKEA TASEA managers wanted to delegate more to IKEA TASEA co-workers in the daily operations. They wished to spend more time in the competence development of their co-workers. For instance, they can have more dialogue with their co-workers about their competence development need instead of the daily trouble-shooting in business operations. IKEA TASEA co-workers were more dependent on their managers than their managers wanted them to be preferring situations when the managers gave directions and guidelines for their work. The new role of team leaders was one of the frustrating things that confused IKEA TASEA co-workers. There were discussions on that issue during the courses, so the time management of training programs was difficult. The participants wanted to spend more time on discussions but there were agendas to follow in the training programs, thus participants felt the lack of time for discussions and facilitators felt that they ran out of the time needed to keep up with the schedule.

There were discussions about the role of managers during the programs in IKEA TASEA. Also, during the interviews, interviewees expressed some frustrations about their team leaders.

When the researcher in this study observed Situational Leadership in Vietnam, there was a hot moment when one young male senior co-worker said directly. “For me it is the manager who decides everything. The other co-workers should do what the manager says.” It was when the facilitator explained about four different types of leadership needed in different situations. The facilitator mentioned that leaders need to delegate things to co-workers depending on the maturity of co-workers in their job, and the co-workers should be able to decide and take their own responsibilities. The perception and idea about what is the role of leaders in Vietnam was quite different from the message of the program.

Several times during the interviews with Purchasing Team Competence participants, frustration was expressed about team leaders in the purchasing teams.

“After the new organisation, my purchaser in the purchasing team was promoted to be a team leader. She is not ready to be a team leader. She is just a purchaser. I still have a development talk and salary review with my purchasing manager. I don’t understand what role of team leader has.” (A confused participant whose job is to be responsible for operations of Purchasing Team Competence participant in Thailand during the interview)

Team leaders have not started their new roles in the team yet and team members don’t understand really what they can expect from their leaders. In training, the ambiguity of new team leaders’ role was one of the issues for discussion. During the lunch break, a short conversation was held with a material area manager. She mentioned,

“I’m conscious of the fact that the team leader is in a new role and it is a big challenge for the team to work with it. Team leaders are going to attend leadership course, so they can learn and practice in their new roles gradually. I’m confident that it will work in the long run.” (A young Swedish female MAM⁵⁹ in Purchasing Team Competence during the lunch break)

From the management point of view, there was an acknowledgement of problems, but there was a belief that it would not be any problem in the long run. By means of continuous competence development through

⁵⁹ Material Area Manager. There are six material area managers such as metal & plastic, ceramics, wood, natural fibres and textile in IKEA TASEA.

leadership trainings, managers believed that team leaders could grow up to a leader in the team after all. During the interview a purchaser in Situational Leadership said about his new role of team leader in the purchasing team.

“I’m a businessman. I meet the supplier and negotiate with the supplier. I don’t know how to take care of people and now I’m responsible for my purchasing team members as a team leader. I still spend most of my time working as purchaser, but I plan to spend more time in my leader’s role.” (A young male team leader of Purchasing Team Competence participants in Vietnam)

The team leader admitted that he was not used to working as a leader and he didn’t understand what it meant to be a team leader. He wanted to spend more time caring for people, being more involved in the competence development of his co-workers. Some material area managers attended Purchasing Team Competence courses partly when there were action plan presentations and evaluations of action plans in the end. Most of material area managers actively tried to follow up after the training programs. In the survey, the answers to questions about the roles of managers were as follows in most of cases.

‘Informally I would ask my co-workers about the programs over the coffee break time, when they came back from the course. Formally, at development talks, I request to answer my co-workers more in details in terms of skills gained, applied and related back to results and improvements.’ (A young single Swedish female IKEA TASEA material area manager)

The material area manager added that she intended to be present when action plans and evaluations were at the end of programs. She thought that her actions would represent the involvement of managers and interests in competence development for her co-workers.

To the question of how participants finally made the decision about attending the course, the replies were as follows;

“My managers (Material area manager and the team leader) sent me a memo asking me if I was interested in the course and they highly recommended the course. I learned a lot what others in the team are working with and we could understand each other better. After the program we are more active at updating information within the group. Our communications improved a lot.” (A young married male Vietnamese technician from Purchasing Team Competence)

In addition to that, he mentioned that it was more or less a must to attend the Purchasing Team Competence programs. In most of cases, the programs to attend were decided in the beginning of the year in development talks. Sometimes unplanned courses could pop up and then business had the first priority.

For Quotation Management, a deputy material area manager was in charge of training the trainers and the implementation of the new system. He invited facilitators from Sweden and the first Quotation Management was held in Bangkok in December 2003, and the second session in Bangkok in October, 2004. In the interview, the deputy material area manager who was in charge of Quotation Management in IKEA TASEA expressed himself as follows;

“We didn’t succeed in using the new Quotation Management in our region. That was partly because the counter partners who were supposed to initiate quotations didn’t start to use right away. They still continued to the old way of sending memos back and forth. It was almost one year delayed in its use of the new system. That’s why we had to have the second training sessions because we forgot how to use the system after almost one year.” (A

*disappointed Swedish male Quotation Management
responsible in IKEA TASEA)*

In the first Quotation Management training, there were participants from Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. Most of the participants would be trainers for local training. The implementation plan was made as a part of the program. However, the implementation plan was postponed due to the fact that Istra⁶⁰ didn't start using the new Quotation Management until autumn 2004. Since the training occurred a long time earlier, additional training was held for trainers again in autumn 2004 and after, trainers ran training in each country. At this moment, the use of quotation management was not active. The system training like quotation management could not be successful without the use of the system from the users. It took time to change user behaviour and training programs underestimated the time needed to change users' behaviour. The use of the system was not obligatory, either. Users tried to continue their old ways of doing things, especially, when the system was new and it had some errors. Users were not encouraged to use the system. If there was a strong engagement from line management, the lead-time for the learning and using process could have been shortened. The situation turned out to be that there was no use of the system when there was a lack of management enthusiasm.

There were two facilitators for Quotation Management; one was to give the training and the other to give technical support for hands-on exercises. During the interview with the former trainer, he expressed his difficulties;

“I travelled around the world for QM training for the last one year, but I was not really into the new system in the very beginning. There were so many errors during the

⁶⁰ Istra is an abbreviation of “inköpsstrategi”, Purchasing Strategist in IKEA of Sweden.

training sessions; the reliability of the new system was so low due to those defects. Managers were not really engaged in implementing the new system in business operations. After a while bugs and errors were fixed and now the system is more stable. Now I understand concepts much better about quotation handlings in practice. I think that it is a critical and successful factor to use the new system when managers in each organisation involved drive questions of implementation and make things happen.” (A single middle-aged senior British male facilitator)

The facilitator pointed out that the involvement and engagement of managers played an important role in running a competence development program. When there was no engagement from the managers' side, the running process was delayed. After the second session of QM, both facilitators and participants expressed satisfaction with the training and the new system. They mentioned additionally that all purchasing teams could have fair business relations to quotations initiators in Sweden. The users said that the new system had an advantage like the price became more transparent and they could see the price picture better. When there was encouragement from the managers, participants could see the value of the new system and make efforts to learn and use it.

There have been opinion surveys in all IKEA units world-wide. The evaluation results of transferred employees as managers were not desirable. IKEA TASEA local co-workers didn't appreciate the efforts made by transferred employees. The question of the differences between managers and leaders from the survey in this study show different conceptions and expectations of managers.

Leaders can communicate a greater picture and vision, live by it and lead through it. They bring a bigger picture of inspiration and enthusiasm to people's mind/ motivation. They are determined and they can take and deal with

high/ low. They are persons with people skills. Politically, this is often a person being selected by his/ her followers; there are parallels to this in corporate life. Managers are from a title, status or position. They are able to take on a role to manage and control people through the system. They often describe strategies and goals. However, the greater vision is not really driven by this individual. Managers are an executer who works on a more operational level. They are not necessary chosen by his/ her followers.’ (Survey replies from a material area manager)

There were ideas and ambitions among material area managers that they wanted to be leaders rather than managers. This was expressed in the survey;

Manager is the position. Leader is the one who apart from other managerial tasks work well with their leadership, and leads the team naturally to the best result. For me here in our part of the world, daily coaching is the key to the right leadership. It is sometimes difficult when having remote teams.’ (A material area manager in Thailand)

The facilitator in Situational Leadership mentioned during the course that different leadership is required in different circumstances. In an immature organisation for a newly employed person, directing leadership is needed. In a mature organisation for an experienced senior person, delegation is the leadership style required.

IKEA leadership style in IKEA Culture represents both democratic and delegating behaviours after managers develop IKEA co-workers’ competences. IKEA HR directions state that it is the responsibility of IKEA co-workers to take care of competence development. Self-Managed Learning (SML) is a new concept that HR has been promoting within IKEA in recent years. In a word SML means that IKEA co-workers take

initiatives for planning, acting and evaluating of their competence development processes.

From the survey, it was found that it was each individual who takes an initiative to decide which courses he or she should take a part in. Then, managers support and finally determine its possibility considering the budget. In Vietnam and Thailand, co-workers had more expectancy that their managers should decide over their competence development. Thai and Vietnamese expect more that managers should know better and decide what steps their co-workers should take next while Malaysian and Indonesian workers showed more independence. Most people were very cost-conscious in general but Indonesian and Malay co-workers especially seemed to be more conscious of down-sizing, tight budgets and its effects.

From the interviews and observations, it was found that IKEA TASEA co-workers' expectations of their managers were close to the traditional management styles. For IKEA TASEA co-workers, it was still managers who decided to send co-workers on training programs and who were sitting in a driver's seat in the competence development journey. Managers are role models for co-workers to follow. There was a gap in expectations between IKEA's leadership style and that understood by IKEATASEA local co-workers.

In most of the cases the motivation to attend courses was self realisation. One of the main reasons that IKEA co-workers chose and remained working for IKEA was the opportunity to develop and the freedom to take their own responsibilities. Competence development was understood as a part of promotion as well. When IKEA invested them in a form of competence development programs, it was a showing that IKEA believed in them, in their growth and contribution to the company.

To the question about the closeness between IKEA and their own country, most of interviewees mentioned that they were closer to IKEA than their own countries in their way of thinking. They felt more an

IKEA than their own nationality. As the dialogue went further and deeper, the answer was more likely that they were close to IKEA culture in the office or when they meet suppliers as a professional person. However, when they were at home, they are close to Vietnamese or Thai, their own national culture as a private person.

For some participants, going on a course is to get another diploma or certificate. They think that they have too many courses to participate and they don't have enough time to work with day-to-day operations and business. The organisation is still 'new' to them and it is confusing them. They are in a state of confusion.

Even though there is a lot of information and document all around, the internal communication where people can understand what it really means to them in reality and in practice was lacking. The chaotic situation they feel in their organisation influences them even when they are in the place of education. They spread a negative feeling in the atmosphere. They mention unrelated topics, such as "I don't understand the new organisation", "there are so many managers", or "who is my manager?"

From the survey, it was found that most managers wanted to spend their time more on the competence development of their co-workers in the long term but they had a heavy work-load in their daily operations at this moment.

'Due to workload at a start too little, plan that was set we are sticking to, but I am more coaching in daily operation than development the team. I feel engaged with their plans; they open up and tell me what they want and where the discussions have been before. BUT I feel that I want to be more creative and active in their more long-term development.' (A material area manager and deputy trading area manager)

IKEA has a vision with regard to that it will develop strong leaders who embrace the IKEA vision and culture, who have professional competence and skills in developing others, responsibility for and a genuine interest in home furnishing. Leadership seminars have been held, with the

purpose of creating a common understanding of the IKEA co-workers' side of 10 jobs in 10 years,⁶¹ to establish a meeting place for IKEA managers to support One IKEA⁶², and to create a forum for sharing value & ideas for developing a fully conscious IKEA leadership. One common question was asked to all interviewees in this study. That was what IKEA culture meant to them. Most of them repeated core contents from IKEA Culture programs, saying 'simplicity, humbleness, cost-consciousness, responsibility and respects.'

From the observations and interviews, the engagement of managers has positive effects on the use and applications of training programs from participants in all countries and courses. Managers' recommending good development programs encourage co-workers to draw more attention to competence development. The active follow up by managers after the training programs enforces the use and applications of learning from the programs. There were no major differences among nationalities and programs and management's engagement was critical for learning and using what they learned for all.

4.4.4 WHEN SWEDISH CULTURE MEETS SOUTHEAST ASIAN CULTURE...

In January 2003, the first Situational Leadership course was held in Bangkok. There were ten participants who were team leaders and managers. Male or expatriates⁶³ were majority with 60% and female or local Thai co-workers were about 40%. The ages were from 30 to 40.

⁶¹ Dahlvig, Anders (2000), MD in IKEA Group showed visions for IKEA co-workers in his statement of 10 jobs in 10 years.

⁶² One IKEA is one of the main ideas stated in 10 jobs in 10 years.

⁶³ In other words, Transferred Employee (TE), that is to say, people who are transferred to another country with special competences that don't exist in local countries. Usually, they are Swedes.

Experience as a manager ranged from one year to ten years, so it was a very good mix of participants. Team leaders, function managers and material area managers attended the course. There were two Thai purchasers who were responsible as team leaders. They commented on topics and issues rather in a position of follower or listener. They mentioned cultural differences when it comes to ‘asking questions’. Asking questions was regarded as challenging the opposite person and listening was the natural way that Thai people grew up with (this similar culture was shown among Vietnamese co-workers as well in Purchasing Team Competence One). On the other hand, as senior or manager, it was losing face if you asked questions. The reason behind this was that as a senior or manager, a person was supposed to know everything about the work and topic.

During the Situational Leadership program, there was a dialogue of ‘we Thai’ contra ‘you Swedish.’

“When we travel to IKEA suppliers together with Swedish expatriates, we are situated in between IKEA and Thai suppliers. IKEA is very straightforward when it comes to negotiation. We Thai can perceive that straightforwardness as impoliteness and disrespect.” (A quiet talking senior female Thai purchaser in Situational Leadership)

On the other hand, during the lunch break in the Situational Leadership course in Bangkok, a material area manager expressed frustration she had once felt visiting IKEA suppliers.

“When I meet IKEA suppliers together with local IKEA co-workers, I can be really upset about my local IKEA co-workers. They tried to defend IKEA suppliers as if they worked for IKEA suppliers not for IKEA. We often talk about ‘IKEA hat’ or ‘IKEA ambassador,’ and they were wearing IKEA supplier’s hat in that case” (A young female Swedish material area manager in Thailand)

In the Situational Leadership course in Vietnam, there were participants from other functions, for example, technicians, financial managers, and purchasers other than only purchasing team leaders or material area managers. There were discussions about differences among different positions, for instance, administration versus purchasing. Administration felt that purchasing team was more central to the organisation. They sometimes even felt like an 'outsider' in the organisation.

The atmosphere of the Situational Leadership training program in Thailand was very open and relaxed. During the break, the facilitator turned on music and ventilated the room by opening the windows from time to time. There were lots of laughs on the second day when they did lots of exercises. There was no hesitation to ask questions when they had questions. Expatriates were rather dominant in leading dialogues. They offered themselves for discussions sharing their own experiences and reflecting. It gave a room for opening mind from participants.

Purchasing Team Competence One, Two and Three were held in Vietnam after Thailand. Group works were done by actual purchasing team members just like the same way how it was in Thailand. Activities in the course situation were quite refreshing their relationships. They were rather relaxed and free to talk about what they think in most of times. IKEA Vietnamese co-workers were quite new employees compared with the rest of IKEA Southeast Asia. A lot of them worked for IKEA less than one year. IKEA co-workers who worked for IKEA more than one year were considered as 'senior.' Most of the participants were very inspired, eager to learn and curious. There were open discussions and there were disagreements. One of Purchasing Team Competence participants replied to the question of IKEA culture as follows;

"For me IKEA culture is very close to that of Vietnamese. We are humble and we respect others. The story of hardworking Swedes in Småland talks namely about Vietnamese history. We Vietnamese are very poor and for

us to work and earn money is a matter of survival. I don't have any problem in being humble and respectful. It is so natural for Vietnamese to be like that.” (A young female Vietnamese purchaser)

It was very natural for Vietnamese participants to understand the importance of 'listening'. Listening culture in Vietnam was often regarded as obedience. Asking questions is regarded as challenging the opposite person and even hurting. Respecting and having a good relationship was a very essential thing that you should keep as Buddhist.

To the question about the difference between local and IKEA culture, most of the responses were negative. They don't think there is any big gap between IKEA and local culture. If there is any difference, there is more openness in IKEA rather than local. Openness was understood as straightforwardness and honesty. In Asian culture, straightforward and open talks can be considered as rude and hurt feelings of others. They mean they are more careful thinking about what and how others receive the messages. The solution they came up with was to speak out but in a humble way.

In IKEA TASEA empirical study, it reveals that national cultures in the Southeast Asia and corporate culture in IKEA had a lot of points in common. IKEA TASEA co-workers see themselves as people who have simple, humble, honest, hardworking, cost-conscious, and respectful approaches to the surroundings and problems. The IKEA culture written in several internal documents was generally accepted by IKEA TASEA co-workers. They became very enthusiastic about the culture they were living and working in during the interviews. In that sense, Ghosn (2002) argument is closer to the case of IKEA TASEA than Hofstede (1999) and Rodrigues (1998). IKEA's culture was right for IKEA TASEA's national cultures. The two cultures of IKEA and IKEA TASEA seek similarities and the value that the company can capitalise upon.

The only obvious difference of two cultures in IKEA and IKEA TASEA was when it comes to the ‘openness.’ ‘Openness’ as straightforwardness was highly appreciated by IKEA, but it was considered to be impolite by the interviewees at IKEA TASEA. Most of the Southeast Asian co-workers preferred peaceful and calm atmosphere in their working environments. In other words, they don’t want to have conflict and if possible, they wanted to avoid it. They disliked having direct straightforward conversations and they preferred having a conversation in a ‘nice’ way, which can be tricky to understand what they really mean from time to time. This could be observed during the programs. For instance, when the participants faced an aggressive facilitator in the program, they got embarrassed and had a hard time adjusting their behaviours to the demands from the facilitators. In general, IKEA TASEA co-workers thought that company culture was one of the most important factors in choosing a job, after development opportunity and salary.

However, some IKEA TASEA co-workers expressed indirectly that there was a company atmosphere they didn’t like according to some interviews made. One of the situations that some of the respondents in the survey didn’t like was that there was a political situation when decisions were made in an unfair way. There was non-transparency in information share and communication according to the interview. There were positions that mattered even though the distance between managers and co-workers was closer than local companies such as IKEA suppliers⁶⁴. Though, in the office they could have very informal way of conversation with jokes and laughs like family and friends during the coffee-break for instance. In addition to that, the idea of ‘respect’ was slightly misunderstood by IKEA

⁶⁴ IKEA made a supplier survey and the result shows that suppliers see IKEA TASEA as a company that there is a close relationship between managers and subordinates. During the interviews with IKEA TASEA co-workers, there were many interviewees mentioned that they see their managers as a person who supports rather than controls.

TASEA co-workers who thought it meant that you should listen to others those who are older in age, senior at work or higher in their position. Sometimes exaggerated respect became an obstacle for business negotiations with IKEA suppliers according to the result of the interview.

After the Purchasing Team Competence One course in Vietnam, there was a big discussion about aggressiveness and assertiveness. Aggressiveness was perceived as negative thing to the Vietnamese point of view. As a Vietnamese, she is expected to listen and respect others rather than challenge others. After the course, most of the participants realised the benefits of open communication and necessity of straightforward talks.

Transforming behaviours and attitudes toward assertiveness was a kind of challenge to Vietnamese co-workers. They try to be aggressive, otherwise, assertive (this is not that strong in a sense to them) in their team meeting. In some cases, aggressiveness was understood to be negatively critical and people had a tendency to just complain. Anyhow, the understandings of team members increased as team members were in the learning situation together and tried to solve the problems together. They could see how they react in a group. In the end, for the purpose of effective communication and efficient way of working, open honest discussion brought better and faster results.

To the similar question about IKEA culture, a MAM replied as follows;

“The idea of humbleness and respect in IKEA culture can be misunderstood sometimes by local IKEA co-workers. Often they think that listening is the behaviour of being humble and respectful. When their boldness and stubbornness is needed, their humbleness can be an obstacle in a negotiating process. Sometimes local IKEA co-workers show rather exaggerated respect to IKEA suppliers.” (A reflecting female Swedish MAM)

From the survey it was shown that in Malaysia and Indonesia, IKEA co-workers didn't think that their colleagues had a simple approach⁶⁵ to the problems. They think that colleagues have rather complicated approaches in a complex situation. Thai and Vietnamese colleagues were rather satisfied with the office atmosphere that was close to IKEA culture. In general, cost-consciousness and hardworking had higher points. When it comes to humbleness and respect to others, responses varied from lower and higher points. Openness and straightforwardness had an average rating.

One of the participants in Vietnam could not understand that IKEA co-workers can decide in some situations instead of managers. For him, it is only the manager who can decide. The researcher in this study could sense a tension among participants. The discussion led to the fact that there are different leadership styles desired in different situation depending on the maturity of the organisation.

“I’ve worked for other companies in many years before I joined IKEA and I worked for IKEA for one year so far. Now I understand how IKEA leadership is like. Still, I can not accept an idea that even co-workers can make decisions. For me, it is only managers who can decide over co-workers.” (A confused Vietnamese financial manager)

After all, the culture of IKEA and IKEA TASEA local is very close to each other in terms of humbleness, respect, hardworking and simplicity. There were some exceptions in the meaning of ‘respect’. There were more respects for managers, positions and seniors in IKEA TASEA. Openness was rather difficult for IKEA TASEA workers because ‘openness’ can be misunderstood as aggressiveness and offending.

⁶⁵ Simplicity is one of the basic values in IKEA culture. IKEA believes in small means for a great goal. Simplicity is also related to the humbleness.

4.4.5 LANGUAGE AND ASSUMPTIONS

Most of the Vietnamese participants had difficulties in language during the course. They are used to use American English, but the course trainer had a heavy British accent and the videotape was also in British English. Team leaders and purchasers didn't have very many problems with language, but business supporters and technicians had difficulties in understanding most of the time.

Also, some words had a negative meaning to Vietnamese co-worker and this created a lot of misunderstanding. For instance, the word 'aggressive' had a very negative meaning. As a Vietnamese, she is supposed to be kind to others and she should respect others, which means, she is expected to behave not challenging others especially the older and more listening. When the course trainer explained the meaning of aggressive attitude after long discussions, they could understand the meaning better. Participants even thought that aggressive attitude and behaviour sometimes bring very powerful effect on the results. 'Aggressive' could be understood more as 'honest' and 'straightforward' later on.

The word 'overwhelming' was not easy to understand for the most of the Thai participants. One of the Swedish participants starts a dialogue and says, "To Swedes, it has a rather positive meaning". On the other hand, another Thai participant said, "To a Thai, it is negative as it means that we are out of control." In Situational Leadership course in Thailand, overwhelming was perceived to be negative for Thai as it means some situation where you are out of control and over your limit.

Some interviewees responded that it would be nice to have videotapes with an Asian English accent considering that the listeners are Asians. There was even a suggestion that the course should provide a dictionary explaining key words to be understood during the course. Also, they would like to have materials provided before the course, so they could prepare in advance.

Vietnamese participants had realised that they had been making a lot of assumptions in many situations. Especially, when they communicate with other team members or even with suppliers in reality, they assume that they understand the same thing in the same way. 'I understand' the situation as it is, and 'I assume' that 'she understands' as I do without any communication in between for a long time. Then, suddenly they realised that they didn't understand the situation in the same way and they had different tasks to do. Finally, during the course, they realised that they wasted a lot of time without any results.

When they realised that the lack of communication was due to many assumptions, they were really motivated to be more open-minded and to share information, knowledge and experience. Once they removed all kinds of assumptions, they realised that the communication was improved and they felt happier about the situation. The situation is the same perhaps, but as they have the same picture of the situation and they have better understanding of each other, they are happier and they feel confident about themselves. The acknowledgement that assumption is a barrier to efficient communication was a valuable thing the participants learned from the course.

4.5 TO SUCCEED OR FAIL?

There are three factors that those participants, managers, and facilitators regarded as necessary for successful competence development programs. These are sharing information, impact on daily operations and interesting program contents and training methods.

4.5.1 SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Learning in organisations entails not only the acquisition of diverse information, but also the ability to share common understanding so as to exploit it (Govindarajan & Gupta 2001).

It was found in the empirical study that one of factors that steers if the execution of competence development programs succeeded or failed by considering if there was knowledge transfer. Knowledge transfer occurs from those who participated to those who didn't attend the course through sharing information. Knowledge transforms occur when knowledge taken by participants is shown in actions. From the survey, most of MAM considered that PTC was one of successful programs for the following reasons.

'Particularly the PTC course made an immediate and clear difference, the modules of communication and conducting team meetings was as an example immediately implemented and put into use. This was also the course where we have the most clear positive feedback as to content and execution.' (A MAM in Vietnam)

Meeting of purchasing team became more efficient and the communication was improved. The knowledge undertaken by participants was revealed in actions according to him. He adds that participants shared information and knowledge after the program both informal and formal ways in order to increase competence level of whole group.

'Typically individuals have to report back to the group on the regular Monday meetings that we hold either verbally or in presentation form in order to higher the general competence of the group.' (A MAM in Vietnam)

In Purchasing Team Competence in Vietnam, there were two material area teams participating at the same time. There were tensions in one morning when they talked about cooperation and communication. There was a sense of insecurity when they didn't feel for sharing information and knowledge. Knowledge for them was their ownership that couldn't be shared with others in other teams. If they shared some know-how's, they would lose their value in market. Some expressed their frustrations that

they couldn't get enough information from other members in other material area team.

“Previously, the organisation was divided by geographical boundary, so to say, by countries and the information was shared among co-workers in the same office. Now after new organisation, we don't get any information if we are not in the same team. I don't feel that we are working in the same office any longer. After the new organisation, competition among countries was replaced by the one among material area teams instead.” (A saddened frustrated female Vietnamese operational responsible)

To this comment, another participant in Purchasing Team Competence responded.

“I don't have any problem in sharing information with your team. I understand that we share one of IKEA suppliers together and I know it will be interesting for you to know some information that we have about the supplier. Please just come and ask me.” (A confidently assuring Vietnamese male purchaser in Purchasing Team Competence)

An observing material area manager in Purchasing Team Competence commented after she listened to the discussions in the end.

“It is frustrating that IKEA co-workers in Vietnam don't have any system where you can share information with each other. Sometimes, you might think that it would be a sensitive information concerned prices, but in the end, we are working for IKEA customers and we should make best price for them as a common goal.” (An assuring Swedish female material area manager in Purchasing Team Competence)

After attending competence development programs, generally most of the people shared their knowledge and experience from education when they had team meetings. In some cases, they reported to their managers what they learned from the course in a formal way. In case others would attend the same course later, they wouldn't share information they got from the course. In case the course didn't concern other people in their work, the information was not shared. In general, it was very encouraged to share knowledge and experience from the course among team members by managers. Just right after the course, managers would ask about the course and later in their development talks they discussed more about what they learned and what they need to learn more in the future rather in a formal way.

4.5.2 EFFECTS ON DAILY WORK

After the course, trainees from IKEA Culture course went back to the work, and to their colleagues. Some of them shared knowledge that they got from the course through a short presentation in their monthly meeting with other team members or casual coffee break chats. Some of them shared even with their family. Some of them applied learning from the course in their private life and some of them in their relationship with their managers and IKEA suppliers.

In another case, participants were inspired after the course but they returned to their past routines after a while. They didn't remember what was said, but what they did during the course. For instance, visiting places and trying Swedish herring was unforgettable. Most of the participants were familiar to IKEA culture through materials in advance to the course. Experiencing IKEA and Sweden was more meaningful than learning the contents of the course.

To the question of what are the important factors of a successful course, the interviewees responded that the programs become successful when they can use what they learned from the course. That was to say, it was

when the course had a practical effect in reality. From Purchasing Team Competence courses, the team meeting became more giving and worth to spend time, as team members were willing to share information and experience. They shared what they learned and they used what they learned in practical works. The meeting became more efficient as team members were conscious about the objectives and they agreed upon action plans. They became more open-minded and 'dare-to-say'. Team members tried to be more aggressive and assertive in their approach to IKEA suppliers.

There are higher demands on individual competence in IKEA TASEA after the new organisation compared to the previous organisation. Purchaser is not enough by being a good purchaser. She needs to be a good team leader. Being a good team leader is as important as being a good purchaser or even more in some cases. Operational responsible person has to take the whole responsibility over whole supply chain. These higher demands on co-workers motivate them to work on competence development. Technician's responsibility is concerning not only product quality but also social environment in suppliers. The responsibility became broad and deep, thus it requires higher competence in purchasing teams.

4.5.3 INTERESTING CONTENTS AND METHODS

Another factor that influences that the program becomes successful was joyfulness and variety. There has been shown a strong demand that training programs should be more fun to participate in than it was in Situational Leadership Vietnam. In Vietnam, it was very obvious that the training course should be entertaining in Situational Leadership course. Trainees in the program were searching for the fun continuously during the course activities. Sometimes, searching fun was too much and it was understood that the participants were not serious about the course. Through the interviews with trainees after the course, it was found in the replies that the funniest part of the course remained in the memory. What

they meant that the memory of learning was longer and there was the use of learning when the program was enjoyable. Group work, activity of games and discussions were most of interviewees' favourite ways of doing in training sessions.

The participants demanded the competence development programs to be more interesting in the way of facilitating and materials. It was important that the program uses the variety of teaching methods. The first Purchasing Team Competence Two course was held in Thailand. The participants were mostly Thai co-workers. Most of Thai co-workers were excited about Purchasing Team Competence Two as they had a great learning experience from Purchasing Team Competence One. There were lots of PowerPoint presentations and the participants sat and listened. After all, the Purchasing Team Competence Two course turned out to be rather boring compared with Purchasing Team Competence One and a disappointment. The same, but a little better result was shown in Vietnam as the facilitator adjusted contents after the feedback from Purchasing Team Competence Two in Thailand. The main course method was PowerPoint presentation for the first day and it was rather long sitting without many activities.

Even outside the course, the cheerful atmosphere in the office was found to be important in order to enjoy working. There are stressful moments in working life and especially, interviewees in Vietnam think balance between life and work is important, and to have fun with other colleagues is an important part of working life.

Having fun during the course was very important to both Thai and Vietnamese co-workers, especially in Vietnam. When they had fun in the course, they said that they remembered things for a long time they learned. Things they did in forms of activities, exercises and group discussion, they remembered better than in a form of PowerPoint presentation for instance when it comes to Purchasing Team Competence and Situational Leadership. For IKEA Culture the participants were

interested in the contents of the course and they could visit the sites of different IKEA organisations, so they found it very interesting to participate in the course and they could remember by recalling those visits. Quotation Management was rather boring when it was mainly PowerPoint presentations, then when it was hands-on training, the participants found it interesting to interact with the application system.

4.6 MBTI (MEYER BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR)⁶⁶

There were dominant MBTI types in IKEA TASEA co-workers who responded on interviews and surveys. The major dominant MBTI type for Thailand was ISFJ. The one for Vietnam was INSJ. The one for Malaysia was INTJ. The one for Indonesia was ESTJ. For the more details, see the Appendix.

4.6.1 IKEA THAILAND – INTROVERT SENSING FEELING JUDGING

According to MBTI, Thai people are dependable and considerate, committed to the people and groups with which they are associated, and faithful in carrying out responsibilities. They have a realistic and practical respect for facts. They use their sensing primarily internally, where they have a wealth of stored information. They remember clearly the details of things that have personal meaning for them, such as tones of voice and facial expressions.

They are uncomfortable with confrontation and will go a long way to accommodate others, though their respect for traditions and people's feelings can lead them to challenge actions they perceive as hurtful or insensitive. Under great stress, ISFJs can get caught up in "catastrophizing" – imagining a host of negative possibilities. They may

⁶⁶ The theory behind MBTI is developed by Briggs Myers, Isabel based on Jung's philosophy. The descriptions of MBTI types were quoted from her handbook, Introduction to TYPE, 6th Ed.

then express these without their usual consideration for the impact on people around them.

4.6.2 IKEA VIETNAM – INTROVERT INTUITION FEELING JUDGING⁶⁷

According to MBTI, Vietnamese people have a gift for intuitively understanding complex meanings and human relationships. They use their intuition primarily internally, where they develop complex pictures and understandings. They apply personal value and emphasize to understand others and make decisions. They are loyal to people and institutions that exemplify their value but have little interest in those that do not. They want meaning and purpose in their work, their relationships, even their material possessions.

Vietnamese people readily show compassion and caring for others, but they share their internal intuitions only with those they trust. Under great stress, they may become obsessed with data they normally would consider irrelevant or overindulge in sensing activities such as watching TV reruns, overeating, or buying things that have little meaning for them.

4.6.3 IKEA INDONESIA – EXTROVERT SENSING THINKING JUDGING⁶⁸

According to MBTI, Indonesian people like to organise projects, operations, procedures, and people and then act to get things done. They value competence, efficiency, and results and display them in their work and play. ESTJs enjoy interacting and working with others, as long as the others are responsible about meeting deadlines and completing assigned

⁶⁷ Actually, it was 50/50 for Introvert and Extrovert of respondents, but several respondents insisted that they were actually Introvert, but the result of MBTI test was Extrovert. INFJ was chosen instead of ENFJ because of that reason.

⁶⁸ Indonesia was the only country among Southeast Asia with Extrovert as the dominant preference.

tasks. They work best in situations where clear, known problems can be solved with proven techniques.

They take an objective approach to problem solving and are tough when the situation requires toughness. They may decide too quickly before taking in enough information. Under great stress, they may feel alone and unappreciated and be unable to communicate their feeling of distress and despair.

4.6.4 IKEA MALAYSIA – INTROVERT INTUITION THINKING JUDGING

According to MBTI, Malay people have a clear vision of future possibilities coupled with the drive and organisation to implement their ideas. They love complex challenges and readily synthesise complicated theoretical and abstract matters. They see things from a global perspective and quickly relate new information to overall patterns.

They present calm, decisive, and assured face to the world, though they may find it difficult to engage in social conversation. They usually don't directly express their most valued and valuable part. Under great stress, they can overindulge in sensing activities – watching TV reruns, playing cards, overeating – or become overly focused on specific details in their environment that they normally do not notice or usually see as unimportant.

4.7 SUMMARY

In the chapter, the findings in the empirical study were illustrated. There were four competence development programs studied, Purchasing Team Competence, Situational Leadership, IKEA Culture and Quotation Management. Purchasing Team Competence, Situational Leadership and IKEA Culture aimed at behavioural and attitude changes reflect the behavioural and affective perspectives in learning. Quotation Management aimed at knowledge and skill transfer reflecting the cognitive perspective in learning.

In courses like Purchasing Team Competence, Situational Leadership and IKEA Culture, diversity in the group had a positive impact on the program result. Diversity enriched the contents of learning among participants. In Quotation Management course, diversity question was less important.

In courses of Purchasing Team Competence and Situational Leadership, it was important that the course facilitators have pre knowledge about the participants' national background and culture. The norms and value of participants influenced the level of acceptance about the message from the participants. In Quotation Management course, participants didn't have any expectation that the course facilitators should have pre knowledge and they need to have local adjustments.

The role of managers and leaders were important in the effects of the programs. There were a gap in expectations between the managers and co-workers. Managers expect IKEA TASEA co-workers take an active responsibility of their competence development whereas their co-workers still have expectations that managers should take care of their co-workers competence development process. When there was an engagement of managers, the course atmosphere was livelier and cheerful. When there were no interests about the course from managers, the participation of co-workers were low and the enthusiasm level was also low.

IKEA TASEA co-workers and managers consider that the programs were successful when there was knowledge share among co-workers, when co-workers use their learning in practice and when the program was giving enjoyments and memorable. The variety of teaching methods was preferable among participants. When participants enjoyed the program, they were willing to share with colleagues and they used their learning from the programs. From three perspectives of knowledge share, use of learning and joyfulness, Purchasing Team Competence programs were perceived as a successful one among co-workers and managers.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTIONS

In chapter three we identified several variables that could have an effect on running competence development programs according to the literature. Some of the variables are found to facilitate to run programs and some to obstruct to run programs. We call these parts of the variables enablers and barriers. In this chapter we describe the barriers and the enablers that we have found when we studied the running of competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation (IKEA). The descriptions originate from the analysis and reflections based on the feedback from participants, the notes from observations, interviews, internal documents and the survey as well as theoretical studies. These reflections lead to ideas for future studies which are further discussed in the next chapter. In our analysis of the empirical study we also found barriers and enablers that we could find not directly related to the literature. However some of them can be classified as belonging to a variable already identified. We will also argue that some of the effects that we have observed have direct effects and some indirect effects on running a competence development program.

5.1 BARRIERS & ENABLERS

Factors that influence the results of competence development programs discussed by other authors were identified in chapter three. There were descriptions of things that often occurred during the running processes of competence development programs. The variables identified by other authors are leadership and management engagement, trust, diversity,

organisational learning culture, motivation and communication which is summarised in Table 11 (cf. Table 6).

Key factors according to literature which influence competence development programs	Discussed in section
Diversity	3.2.1
Learning culture and language	3.2.2
Leadership and engagement	3.2.3
Motivation	3.2.4
Trust	3.2.5
Communication	3.2.6

Table 11: Critical factors according to the literature

The research model was based on those factors highlighted by other authors that influence the competence development processes. Those factors were then investigated to find out if they matter when it comes to the IKEA TASEA case. But also other factors were found in the empirical study of IKEA TASEA. From the descriptions in the literature and the empirical study, some of the factors are grouped as ‘barriers’ and ‘enablers’ in the running of competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation. Based on the information collected from the empirical study and the literature we identify three barriers and three enablers in the running of competence development programs. They are discussed below.

5.2 DIVERSITY

In section 3.2.1 we discussed diversity and in our empirical study we found that this can both be a facilitator and an obstacle. When we mean that diversity is a barrier we call it cultural differences (5.2.1) and when it is an enabler we call it cultural diversity (5.2.2). In 5.2.3 we suggest some actions to take in order to improve the running of competence programs.

5.2.1 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Cultural differences between western and eastern cultures have been studied previously in terms of individualistic and collectivistic norms for decision making (Hofstede, 2001). In running competence development programs, the empirical investigation showed that the cultural differences between facilitators and participants were more obvious than among participants. It was often participants who were local employees and facilitators who were westerners. In case there were participants who were expatriates⁶⁹, there were tensions between expatriates and local IKEA co-workers. There were contrasts between ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ cultures. You ‘western’ and we ‘eastern’ thinking and discussions occurred during the training programs.

These became somewhat constructive discussions, but there was also some hesitance about accepting new behaviours and value. It is imperative that there exists more than one culture in a multinational company such as IKEA. It is important to eliminate behavioural cultural differences in order to minimise resistance and irritation occurring among participants in training sessions. On the other hand, it is important to be aware of

⁶⁹ Expatriates are transferred employees. The majority of expatriates are Swedes and the rest are Danish, British and Canadian in IKEA TASEA. There are also local co-workers who became transferred employees to other countries within the same region. For instance, a Thai is working in Vietnam or an Indonesian in Vietnam within the contracted period six months to three years.

cognitive cultural differences in order to enrich the contents of training. To mix people from different gender, ages, and backgrounds is a good way to get to know differences in a natural way.

The study showed that there were differences among individuals as well as among groups. When there is more than one country involved in an organisation, there is even more complexity and differences. Cultural differences work as a negative force when differences are ignored. By cultural differences the behavioural perspective is meant. Irritation and resistance against facilitators and other participants occurred when they behaved in a way which was not acceptable in other people's culture. When there are types of behaviour that were not acceptable, those behaviours should be made known to facilitators and participants from other countries before the course starts. When the cultural differences are revealed in an inappropriate way, then they tend to be a barrier for running the programs.

To the question of how IKEA corporate culture was different from participants' own national cultures, most of interviewees replied that there wasn't any big gap between IKEA's culture and national cultures. IKEA's simplicity, honesty, humbleness, respect, cost-consciousness and responsibility were very close to those of Southeast Asian. The only difference was that IKEA culture was more straightforward than the Southeast Asian culture. For the Southeast Asians, direct communication was very difficult as straightforwardness could be considered as rudeness. In running a competence development program, straightforwardness became an obstacle for participants to accept the messages from the programs. If the facilitator understood the cultural background, he could have had a different approach and achieved the same goal. Participants understood what they learned after the programs through their reflections. During the program, participants were sometimes embarrassed and felt even offended.

This empirical study shows that cultural difference does matter in running competence development programs. Cultural differences become a barrier that lowers the degree of acceptance from the participants unless they are initially informed and known to facilitators and participants from other countries at the beginning of the course.

5.2.2 CULTURAL DIVERSITY⁷⁰

In the study, there was a diverse group of participants in the competence development programs in IKEA TASEA coming from different functions with different gender, age and national backgrounds. Cultural diversity enabled tremendously rich dialogues around different ways of thinking about some issues and values. There were contrasting ideas between Westerners and Asians, managers and co-workers, and different material area teams. When there was a mix of groups from different cultures, there was more excitement and discussion in the classroom, and thus the programs became more dynamic. From this study, it was seen that culturally diversified memberships such as those found in a cross-cultural organisation, had positive effects on running competence development programs.

For most of the managers in IKEA, it is almost obligatory to attend cross-cultural training. For local co-workers, it is not always obligatory, but optional. In order to build bridges between the corporate and local business cultures, it is very important to give all local employees opportunities to attend cross-cultural training. It is important for the local employees to be given the same cultural training as the managers receive. Then, cross-cultural training can be an enabler to make the implementation of competence development programs more successful.

⁷⁰ 'Cultural diversity' has a positive meaning whereas 'cultural differences' has a negative one in the context of this empirical study despite that fact that cultural diversity and differences are used synonymously in literature.

5.2.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR IKEA

How to improve the competence development programs, the analysis from the interviews show that IKEA should use cultural diversity when programs collect participants from different countries. Due to the travel costs, IKEA restricts that local co-workers travel for the training programs currently, so there is a tendency that facilitators train local trainers and local trainers run competence development programs for local co-workers afterwards⁷¹. When a facilitator runs a competence development program for local trainers, it is good or even necessary to understand cultural backgrounds of participants especially for changing the way of working and attitudes. When local trainers run a competence development program, it is good to mix different functions, gender, ages and working experience for the enrichment of learning contents if the circumstances allow.

5.3 LEARNING CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

In our empirical study we found that assumptions were a critical factor in accordance also with the literature (5.3.1). We also found that the use of word was important (5.3.2). These observations give some implications for IKEA when they run competence programs (5.3.3).

5.3.1 ASSUMPTIONS

In this research, it was found that assumptions were one of the critical factors for the execution of competence development programs. It was observed that meanings about some words and behaviours were assumed among participants during the competence development program. Those assumptions became an obstacle for understanding and accepting some ideas and ways of thinking presented during the program. Especially when

⁷¹ It is so-called, 'train-the-trainer' concept within IKEA Learning and Development Centre.

the training program was intended to change attitude and behaviour such as Purchasing Team Competence and Situational Leadership, assumptions among participants played a great role in the effect of the programs. There were different norms and values that the Southeast Asian culture cherished. Stereotyping is an example of Vietnamese assumed characters that represent certain behaviours.

Respect was one of the most cherished values found among the interviewees. It assumed that one was expected to respect others depending upon age, gender, position and seniority. Showing exaggerated respects became a barrier to actively participating in the program. Facilitators were regarded as people that participants should respect. If a participant suggested any idea that contradicted what facilitators stated, they thought themselves to be an impolite person. When a participant was forced to act assertively and aggressively, she or he felt offended and even embarrassed.

Negative assumptions and prejudice about the course contents and certain terminology used during the courses lowered the acceptance level to the bottom unless these were dealt with at the beginning of the program. Assumptions became a strong barrier for understanding and accepting from the participants. When participants were offended due to aggressive approaches from the facilitator, they were not inclined to listen to the rest of contents of the program. For the participant, it was a moment that she couldn't erase from her memory. Words were meant and used differently in different cultures. The use of words (5.3.2) describes more about the language in practice.

5.3.2 USE OF WORDS

There are many different English within the English language. In addition to linguistic differences such as American English or Singaporean English, there are differences in the use of language. Language has become a barrier in the process of running competence development programs at

IKEA TASEA. There were conflicts in the meaning of local and Swedish English languages with regard to words, ‘assertiveness’ and ‘overwhelming.’ Assertiveness was understood by the participants to be very negative, not respecting others, and immaturity. After the course, the participants understood that it was a part of professionalism to show strong representation of their opinions. ‘Overwhelming’ was understood by the participants as a stressful moment when they can not control situations. Some participants didn’t understand the meaning at all. After a while, facilitators had to explain what it meant. The explanation was that the surroundings demand more than what they can provide. The training programs were usually performed in an official language, often English. The local language was totally ignored.

When the facilitator of Purchasing Team Competence, the second module, invited suppliers to participate during the sessions, suppliers had difficulties in participating in discussions because they couldn’t understand English. IKEA co-workers tried to translate what was said by the facilitator, but it was a very unnatural situation. In a small group discussion, they started to speak the local language, and then there was active discussion and laughs. There was total disagreement. If questions arose from misunderstanding and disagreement, it was fortunate, as the facilitator or other participants could explain. Otherwise in most cases, the facts are unknown forever. The ‘silence’ was understood differently. When there was no question or comment, it could be understood that everyone got the idea or agreed. Sometimes, silence can be understood as the sign of lack of understanding. There were some unnatural silent moments during the training program. In such cases, facilitators tried to provoke questions or comments but they failed occasionally.

5.3.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR IKEA

This study shows that facilitators should be careful in selecting words during the course and they should notice words that they need to explain in advance. Otherwise, time passes by without understanding from the

participants. It is not always that participants voluntarily mention that they do not understand. Clear explanations about the meanings used in the course need to be made already in the introductory phase of the training program.

In the introduction phase of competence development programs facilitators need to spend some time for understanding participants. Just short presentations of individuals for some moments will help a lot in the end of the programs when participants reflect and take an initiative for changes in their behaviours and attitudes. It will give more chances for the effects on the real life situations. Thus, the time spent for the understanding of cultures and languages where participants are located in the introductory phase is worth and paying in the end.

5.4 LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Leadership and management engagement were often stated as key factors in most of organisational science literature as well as in these literatures (3.2.3) and my empirical (4.4.3) studies. Motivation of managers and leaders influence participants' motivation and thus it shows the degree of management engagement in competence development questions.

5.4.1 MOTIVATION

Motivation is important for learning in any kind of organisation. In a cross-cultural organisation, motivation has an even more important meaning. There are different actors involved in running competence development programs. They are facilitators, participants, managers and colleagues. It was clear from the interviews that there was expectancy about the programs that increased the motivation among individuals. Some participants tried to find out what the programs were about before they attended the course. Those who had actively searched usually have a higher expectation about the program and their expectation increase the motivation of participation. For the facilitators, motivation was high when they understood the content of the programs deeply and the contents did

not contradict to the value that they cherished. A facilitator said that she didn't understand what she was talking about when she delivered a training program. The facilitator was even cynical about the use of learning after the training programs. On the other hand, when the facilitator designed the contents of programs and when she accepted the whole concepts of the training, she was very energetic to deliver her message through the course. There was more power and energy in the classroom of learning compared to when facilitators didn't design or accept the ideas of competence development programs.

For participants in the application process there was a big difference in their motivation. For some, it was the manager who had decided to apply for a training program whereas for others it was each individual who decided to attend the programs. In global IKEA, self-managed learning, so-called, SML is encouraged,⁷² which means that each individual steers his or her own competence development process from the beginning to the end. Individuals who actively searched and applied for the course had more enthusiasm. Their motivations arose from individual needs for self-realisation and self-satisfaction. To the question of who decided competence development, the majority of interviewees replied that it was managers. Only a few answered that it was both managers and themselves who initiated the competence development process. This contrasts to the corporate idea of SML, which means that each individual has his or her own responsibility for competence development. A big gap was found between what IKEA TASEA co-workers think how competence development should be managed and how IKEA management groups desired competence development to occur.

In my empirical study there was a question if the contents of the programs had any relevance to the jobs IKEA TASEA employees are performing. Most of the respondents confirmed that the programs were

⁷² HR manager in IKEA Trading Global (2004), Verbal interview

relevant to what they were doing at their working places. Also individuals selected to attend a course thinking that the company considered them to be important people. Individuals were encouraged to develop their competences with their own initiatives. In the end, it increases motivation among individuals, which in turn gives results in their work performance. Managers were involved in competence development of their co-workers. Their involvement played a critical role in the process of learning before, during and after the training as well as contributing to enthusiasm in the place where learning occurred. Some managers participated in some parts of the education sessions such as the introduction or final presentation or feedback sessions. In such cases, there was more energy in the room. Even after the training, the awareness of the learning content among managers influenced the use of what had been learned among participants. There were both formal and informal follow-ups of their action plans after the training programs. Colleagues who didn't attend the course were curious about the training programs. They were not chosen people and they felt like 'outsiders'. If colleagues were curious in a constructive way, participants were willing to share learning from the course. If colleagues were jealous and tried to find any defects in participants, participants were reluctant to share what they had learned from the programs. In an implementation plan for a competence development program, there should be something that takes care of people who don't attend the course. In that sense, the contents of the course should be made transferable from one person to another in a simple and easy way. In this context, colleagues can be motivators as well as de-motivators.

This empirical study shows that motivations become an enabler as individuals participate in the course more actively and are eager to share knowledge from the course with their colleagues when motivated. A participant's motivation is shown already from the application process.

5.4.2 MANAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT

Management involvement is important in a cross-cultural organisation as well as in any other context. The study showed that management interest and engagement empowered the awareness of the importance of teamwork. There were some material area managers⁷³ who attended training programs together with local IKEA TASEA co-workers. In these cases, participants showed stronger enthusiasm for learning and using what they learned. Material area managers had chances to explain about the visions and goals of the organisation during the program. In such cases, teamwork aimed at shared goals and team members worked with the same priorities in a better way during the training programs. Sharing information and knowledge was encouraged by management during the programs. Managers could empower other participants so they could have a broader and more holistic view toward situations and directions.

It was obvious from this empirical study that there were livelier and more enthusiastic discussions when there managers attended in competence development programs. Even after programs when managers actively chased after the results, participants were more conscious of using what they had learned. When managers actively informed and communicated what is the available competence development programs with their co-workers, IKEA TASEA co-workers were more engaged in actively participating in the programs. In some cases, managers were responsible for implementing a new way of working, and then the processing lead-time was shorter than in the case when managers were not involved at all in the implementing process. Thus, management engagement had a positive effect on running competence development programs.

⁷³ Here the word, 'manager' and 'leader' are used in the same meaning. In IKEA TASEA, the team leader is called 'leader' and material area manager 'manager.' The difference lies in the title rather than in the meaning.

According to my survey, managers had an ambition to spend more time on their co-worker's competence development. Currently they spend a lot more time on daily business operations than they want to. They preferred coaching to giving instructions and guidelines on everything in detail. Managers wanted more to be 'leaders' rather than 'managers.' The view of 'manager' was more controlling and more involved in business operations while the view of 'leader' was more as a coach someone who was supportive and who allowed co-workers to decide when they were able to. 'Leader' was the person who was accepted and lifted up to lead people while 'manager' was a position that meant someone who was eligible to make commands and decisions for co-workers. This signifies that managers in IKEA TASEA are genuinely interested in co-workers' competence development and the co-workers' competence has an essential importance for them in the role of 'leader.'

5.4.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR IKEA

Individuals as participants in the training programs had different levels of motivation before they attended the course. Highly motivated participants showed a great interests and active participation during the development programs. Managers who were engaged in the competence development programs did not only encouraged individuals not only to attend the program but also to use learning after the programs. For IKEA it is crucial to find individuals who are highly motivated and make sure that management supports the competence development programs.

5.5 TRUST

In literature trust was regarded as an important key to build global business teams. When there was trust in the organisation, the open communication was possible and organisation became efficient. In empirical study at IKEA TASEA, mistrust about 'new' organisation based on material areas was found as a hindrance for open communication and acceptance of new ways of thinking.

5.5.1 TRUST & MISTRUST

Trust in an educational environment is very important in terms of the acceptance level of learners. In a cross-cultural organisation especially, mistrust can be a critical variable. When trust is not built among teams in a global organisation, it often ends with failure according to Govindarajan and Gupta (2001). There was mistrust about the new roles of team leaders in IKEA TASEA. IKEA TASEA co-workers wondered how purchasers could work as leaders because they were only 'businessmen/businesswomen.' There was mistrust about the new organisational structure where they had teams based on material areas instead of countries even though they could see great advantages from a new organisational form after a while. For instance, they could make a 'best buy' for IKEA customers instead of fighting each other for more orders. Due to the mistrust, participants in the courses had a great need to talk about the new organisation and new roles of team leaders.

During the training programs, there was a moment for an open discussion and the participants were willing to talk about team leaders' role and material area team organisations. Through discussions and dialogue, the participants got a better understanding about what would happen in the near future and why certain changes were inevitable. However, in running competence development programs, time management was difficult because those open discussions took a long time. Those 'out of content' discussions became obstacles managing time in running competence development programs. Some participants even complained that they didn't have enough time for other group activities. In a way the programs helped better communication and information distribution about the new organisation and team leader's role, but this sort of communication took time from other activities in the programs.

From observations, some IKEA TASEA co-worker dared to mention their problems and they were not afraid to ask questions. In such situation, this study reveals that there is a certain degree of trust that they feel for towards the management in their organisations. The typical ideas

of Asian people being shy were not found to be the case in this study. Of course, there is a factor that a learning situation is a little bit different from real-life situations though.

5.5.2 COMMUNICATIONS

The importance of communications emphasised by authors (3.2.6) were reflected in the practice (4.5.1). Information share occur through communication and a good communication is indispensable in the running competence development programs. The efficiency of leadership comes partly from management's communication skills.

5.5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR IKEA

It is essential to build a trust in a cross-cultural organisation before any competence development programs are initiated. Even competence development programs can be used in order to create trust in the organisation. Trust enables a good and efficient communication and a good communications is inevitable in the competence development programs. For IKEA, it is important to acknowledge that information and knowledge share occur during and after the programs when there was enough communication about the programs before the programs start-up. Also, open communication helps to build a trust in the organisation. Thus, trust and communication go hands in hands together.

5.6 OTHER VARIABLES

Other than the enablers and barriers listed above, there were indirect factors⁷⁴ that mattered during the running process of competence development programs at IKEA TASEA in the study. They were not

⁷⁴ The influence or effects were not directly obvious in the study. However, there were subtle tensions that could be sensed. Those variables were listed under 'other' variables.

included in the category of enablers or barriers as their influences were rather indirect and unclear.

5.6.1 MATERIAL BASED ORGANISATION AND DISTANCE

In a cross-cultural organisation, there are two kinds of distance: one is physical and the other is mental. Geographical distance did matter in IKEA TASEA even though there are communication technologies. There was reluctance about using communication technology such as video conferencing. People had to travel to keep in contact and to be updated as they prefer direct contacts rather than via IT. There was also a mental distance among team members. People in the same team didn't have the same contact if they were not located in the same office. There were distances both physically and mentally. Distance became a barrier in running competence development programs. The course requires an ice-breaking session in the early stage. Thus, facilitators and participants had to spend more time getting to know each other. However, continuous efforts gradually reduced difficulties in communication caused by geographical distance, for instance, by introducing the use of increasing communication technology such as video-conferencing, phones and memos. During the course, the facilitator showed information that had been published on the Intranet using a laptop or informed participants where they could find information on the Intranet.

The matrix organisation combined with function and line management required better communications and information sharing in this cross-cultural organisation compared to an organisation with a single line management organisation. Communication and information sharing was critical and difficult to manage in the new organisational structure. In addition, new management and leadership styles from team leaders were still confusing for IKEA TASEA co-workers. For instance, they felt that they had more managers to report to and they were suspicious about the competence of team leaders in their role as leader.

In the training program, worry was expressed about the organisational structure. The new organisation put a high demand on sharing knowledge and information in order to be competitive with the rest of the world. However, it was not easy sharing knowledge and information was not evenly distributed. There was competition among different material areas. When there was little understanding and acceptance of organisation structure, participants spread negative energy in the learning place. Discussions about organisation are not related directly to the contents of training programs but some chats about it occurred during the course. In that case, the energy in place of learning lessened.

An organisational structure is the system or network of communication and authority that links people and groups together as they perform important tasks. It is the way in which the various parts of an organisation are arranged to both divide up the work to be done and coordinate performance results. A “good” structure does both of these things well and is an important asset to an organisation (Chandler 1962). Organisational structure in a context of running competence development programs can cause problems with communication and decision-making. When an individual desires to attend a course, he or she has to get approval from her manager. When the organisational structure is matrix form, the participant should contact two managers, both a functional manager and a line manager. Sometimes, there is a conflict when the line manager doesn’t approve the course while the functional manager does. The decision-making causes delays and in some cases, participation becomes impossible.

To the question of what IKEA TASEA co-workers liked about IKEA, major interviewees mentioned that they were positive about IKEA culture and the company atmosphere. Co-workers were friendly and the distance between managers and co-workers was shorter than other foreign and local companies according to interviewees. The general atmosphere that IKEA TASEA co-workers felt was like one big family. On the other hand, some of them mentioned negatively that it was rather political in the

office and sometimes decisions were made through unfair procedures. It was rather difficult to see any direct relations between this and organisational structure and atmosphere. However, an indirect relationship between the organisation where the participants have a feeling of belonging and the influences on running a competence development program was sensed.

5.6.2 IT USE

In the communication of competence development programs, MEMO⁷⁵ was used for information distribution. Intranet was also used for course schedules and course content. Communication technology such as MEMO, Calendar, Intranet, video-conferencing and the telephone were often used as the means of communication in IKEA TASEA. There were preferences for face-to-face contacts among managers and co-workers such as chats in the corridors and coffee-break, and development talks. It is time-consuming but it is more personal. This research did not study how communication and technology influence the results of competence development programs, but it was clear from the interviews that communication was important for both participants and facilitators. There was a difficulty in communication due to physical distance in the new organisation, but it could be overcome through communication technology.

The literature shows that competence development programs can be implemented in a cost efficient way if the right technology is used for the training method. The traditional classroom technique can be replaced by group workshops and discussions over video conferencing, for instance. This has not been studied in this research. In cross-border organisations, communication technology becomes an enabler for reducing difficulties caused by geographical distances within the organisation. Thus, when

⁷⁵ Internal email system within IKEA.

communication technology is used properly, it becomes an enabler for overcoming distances. There is confusion and suspicion when there are unclear goals and directions. When there are clearly documented and communicated guidelines and instructions, trust comes. More open and frequent communication and contacts help to improve trust in teams. Trust becomes a strong enabler for implementing competence development programs (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001). The question is how to build trust into an organisation. The way to build trust into an organisation is to give directions and guidelines for the co-worker and create a good communications channel. Also, frequent contact between managers and co-workers help improve trust.

5.6.3 MYER BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR (MBTI) TYPES

From the observations, the introversion characteristics of participants had a less positive impact on learning processes. Introversion is shown in the behaviour of merely being present in the programs rather than contributing to dialogues and discussions of different issues during the course of programs. According to MBTI results in IKEA TASEA, introversion was an obvious characteristic. In Thailand, Introvert Sensing Feeling Judging (ISFJ) was the major MBTI type, in Vietnam Introvert Sensing Thinking Judging (ISTJ), in Malaysia Introvert intuition Thinking Judging (INTJ) and in Indonesia, Extrovert Sensing Thinking Judging (ESTJ). It was difficult to generalise which type was better for running a competence development program. Not all participants gave information about their MBTI types and even among those who gave information some did not agree with the result of the MBTI test. Often, they would say that they were actually Introvert rather than Extrovert. Some of them would mention that they didn't really understand all the questions in MBTI test. The reliability of the results was not high. Nevertheless, Introvert, Thinking and Judging were the major characteristics that IKEA TASEA co-workers had. From the interviews, observations and surveys, it showed that there were tendencies that IKEA TASEA co-workers wanted to listen rather than talk. They tried to analyse what was the right and

wrong way and if possible they wanted to hear either from managers or facilitators which courses of actions they should take.

5.6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR IKEA

Geographical distance became a barrier for IKEA TASEA as purchasing team members felt insecure of new organisation based on material areas instead of national boundaries. In the first phase, team members who were located in Thailand were not fond of the situation when their managers were sitting in Vietnam for instance. In the later phase, with the efforts of more frequent travels and meetings of team members and their managers, their mental distance were reduced. Even communication technologies such as memo, video- and telephone-conferences helped in this cross-cultural geographically dispersed organisation.

The relation between IT use and the efficiency of cross-cultural organisation was not deeply studied in this research. Still there were tendencies that the obstacles of communication due to geographical distance in a cross-cultural organisation were overcome through the use of IT in IKEA TASEA.

Introvert and judging preferences were dominant in IKEA TASEA according to MBTI tests in IKEA TASEA. It was difficult to see clear relation between MBTI result and participants of competence development programs in IKEA TASEA. However, this study did show introversion characteristics of participants during competence development programs that they prefer listening to talking. For facilitators it was difficult to understand the meaning of 'silence' during the programs. During the interviews, participants showed seriously the importance of respect to others. Nevertheless, there were exceptions of stereotyping of people and it was not fair to generalise people in whole Southeast Asia region. Also, MBTI test was not done as a part of this research, but this study used the result of MBTI test to see any relation in between.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In short, barriers and enablers in running competence development programs were clearly shown, and so were indirectly related factors that influence the running processes. Table 12 illustrates the relations between competence development and factors that influence the running processes. Barriers and enablers in running the competence development programs are illustrated as well.

Competence among employees changes by competence development programs. In this study, changed competence was recognised by satisfied participants, more knowledge, and inspired, motivated participants in a positive term. Changed competence was called as 'decreased' as participants were disappointed with the programs. This study didn't measure how much competence increased by a scale, but the comments such as 'very much' or 'a little' or 'unchanged' were used to understand the degrees of competence development.

There are things other than competence development programs that could influence the competence development in an organisation, for instance, job rotation and apprenticeship. This study considered competence development through competence development programs that are designed and run within IKEA TASEA. There were factors that directly influence and they were labelled barriers and enablers. There were enablers such as individuals' motivation, managements' engagement, and cultural diversity. There were barriers and obstacles in running competence development programs such as individuals' negative assumptions, mistrust and cultural differences. Other than enablers and barriers, there were other variables that indirectly influence the result of running competence development programs. The other variables were geographical distance, organisation, IT use, and personality types. The other factors were not studied in this research, but they were indirectly mentioned during the interviews and observations from participants and respondents.

Among barriers and enablers, assumptions, cultural diversity and cultural differences are closely related to the cross-cultural context whereas motivation, mistrust and the engagement of managers are relevant to any other educational environments.

Key factors and other variables that influence competence development programs	Barriers	Enablers
Diversity (5.2)	Cultural differences (5.2.1)	Cultural diversity (5.2.2)
Learning culture and language (5.3)	Assumptions (5.3.1) Use of words (5.3.2)	
Leadership and management (5.4)		Motivation (5.4.1) Manager's engagement (5.4.2)
Trust (5.5)	Mistrust (5.2.1)	Trust (5.2.1) Communication (5.2.2)
Other variables (5.6)	Geographical distance (5.6.1) Organisational structure (5.6.1) MBTI (5.6.3)	IT use (5.6.2)

Table 12: Key Factors and Other Variables as Barriers and Enablers

Both in the literature references and the empirical study, variables were seen that influence the effect of running competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation. They were labelled barriers and enablers. Motivation, management engagement and cultural diversity were identified as enablers while assumptions, mistrust and cultural differences were described as barriers. Among those variables, assumptions, cultural differences and cultural diversity had a unique meaning in a context of cross-cultural. That is to say, assumptions and cultural differences and cultural diversity have more relevance to the context of a cross-cultural organisation. On the other hand, management engagement, motivation

and mistrust have a more important meaning in such cases than in other educational programs in any kind of organisation.

To the question of whether standardisation and local adaptation, there was not a clear answer as to whether the standardisation or local adaptation is the best choice in all learning situations. On the other hand, the importance of local adjustment was highlighted based on the characteristics of developing programs. When the programs aim at changing attitude or behaviours, local adaptation is more suitable. When the programs aim at pure knowledge transfer and skills acquisition, the local adaptation is less important. For instance, in the empirical study of IKEA TASEA, Purchasing Team Competence, Situational Leadership and IKEA Culture were considered to be more suited to local adaptation whereas local adaptations were not considered to be important for the course in the Quotation Management.

6 CLOSING

In this chapter, there are three parts. The first part is the contributions of this study, the second part the reflections of this study and the third part suggestions for future study. Contributions are discussed from both the industrial and academic aspects. Reflections highlight important findings in the study and some thoughts around local adaptations. Future study is an interesting area of study that was found during this study and it is based on the possibility for the potential empirical studies in the future.

6.1 CONTRIBUTIONS

This study has implications from both the industrial and academic perspectives. The industrial implication is mainly that a cross-cultural company in a similar situation to IKEA TASEA can adapt the findings in their competence development process. The possibilities for interest of these results might be high as there are growing numbers of multinational companies in a global economy. The academic implications are that there are many factors that influence the running process of competence development programs. Not all the factors are critical in the competence development process and some has a direct influence and some has an indirect influence. This study points especially to the connection between an individual's motivation and the successful running of competence development programs.

6.1.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INDUSTRY - GENERALISATION

Different theories have been used from different authors within the area competence development and cultural diversity training, and developed those related theories further on through the empirical research. There are many cross-cultural organisations that are in a similar situation to IKEA TASEA. A company that has organisations spread in different places of the world running purchasing businesses for instance. There are mixed groups in organisations with people who have different national backgrounds. Those organisations spend a lot of time and energy in spreading knowledge and information through some kinds of training programs or communication channels. What are the things that these findings can tell practitioners in those industries?

First of all, this study brings to attention the importance of understanding cultural differences in an educational situation. It is often the case that for cross-cultural organisations it is a dilemma how to run centrally designed ideas or programs in a local organisation (Hansen et al., 2001). Cultural differences can become a barrier when they are ignored, but cultural diversity leads to a richer context of learning.

This study also illuminates how assumptions and languages can influence the understanding and acceptance of participants. It emphasises the importance of having common basic understandings of the subjects' and participants' backgrounds before the programs are started in the first phase. It is especially more important when the programs intended to change behaviours and attitude after the programs ended compared with when the programs are intended to inform or increase factual knowledge.

Thirdly, it is not always that there are needs for local adjustment in running training programs. When the program is about a pure knowledge acquisition like technical knowledge, the importance of local adaptation becomes less important than in a training program that is about behaviour or attitude changes. Even though the Purchase Team Competence programs aimed at behaviour changes in the teamwork, it was not a

necessity to have a local adjustment in the course contents or methods. On the other hand it was found that there was a need for local participants to be understood by facilitators.

Fourthly, managing a competence development program in a cross-cultural organisation becomes successful when there are driving forces for the individuals. Individuals as participants, facilitators and managers need to sit in the driving seat. It means that individuals feel that they are driving the whole process of competence developments. The effect becomes greater and the energy level in the program improves. When the participants relied on managers to drive the competence development process, they didn't participate in activities in the program actively. When the managers showed interest by attending some parts of the programs, there was a boost in the energy of a learning place.

Finally, the maturity of an organisation is of an importance in the successful running of a competence development program. When the organisation is new and there are a lot of new comers, the competence development programs should allocate extra time to the introductory explanations of business idea, organisation history and a corporate philosophy. When there is a change in the organisation, members are not used to the new idea of new functions and organisational settings. Thus, time management is a key issue in running competence development programs smoothly.

6.1.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ACADEMY

There has been continuous research about both competence development and cross-cultural training. In this study, there was an interesting focus on how to use cultural diversity in cross-cultural trainings. Different authors pointed out the important things to consider when competence development programs are run in a cross-cultural organisation. The key element to consider is first of all cultural diversity as it is the most often mentioned in many literatures. From this study, it was also found that

cultural diversity enriches the content of competence development programs and participants learn from each other when the group consists of a mix of people from different cultural backgrounds. The additional finding from this study was that cultural difference has a negative effect when participants feel that differences are something that is not acceptable according to their cultural value. This study also differentiates between the definitions of cultural difference and cultural diversity that are in use. Cultural difference is used in a negative way when it turns into an obstacle to absorb the messages from the competence development programs. Cultural diversity is used in a positive way when it enriches the messages from the programs. A good mix of group members from different nationalities, different job functions, ages and genders is recommended.

Researchers such as Senge, Drucker, and Garvin have shown the importance of management's engagement in a competence development process. The empirical investigation in this study clearly indicated that the participation from the managers and the leadership style of the management were critical to the successful running of a competence development program. This study shows that the engagement of managers played an important role in increasing enthusiastic participation of participants and the smooth running of competence development programs. The managers partly took the role of facilitator. This study added another point that the individuals' driving force in a competence development process was a critical factor. This study adopted MBTI profiles of each individual and showed interaction between their personalities and their participation in the programs. When an individual has a self-driven motivation in a competence development process, she or he actively participates in training and thus gets a better result and use from her learning.

Local adaptation is seen as a necessity for running competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation by many researchers such as Hofstede, Rodrigues and Ghosn. In this study, it was not found necessary to adjust to local circumstances in the contents and methods of competence development programs. Nevertheless, it was observed that participants had a need that was not satisfied. There was still a need to be understood with regard to national background. For instance, local participants had a need to be understood by facilitators, but facilitators didn't see any reason for any adaptation. It was only an extra good-to-know thing. Thus this study reveals that the local adaptation of competence development programs that are made does not guarantee success.

This study introduces a broader field of research about critical factors that influence the running process of competence development programs with more holistic approach compared to earlier studies. Research reveals some elements of these factors and their relevance to the results of competence development programs. This study covers a rather comprehensive area of those factors that matter both directly and indirectly in the executing process of competence development programs. These factors contribute in two ways; enablers or barriers. Indirect factors were identified as other variables in running competence development programs.

To sum up, this study contributes in two ways. One is an academic contribution and the other is a practical one. The former is that the study confirms some ideas about the effect of diversity on competence development programs from other authors, distinguishes between the use of the terms cultural diversity and cultural differences, shows the fact that the localisations of competence development programs are needed depending on the characters of competence development programs, and strengthens ideas of management commitment and its influence in the running process of competence development programs. The latter contribution is that the study draws attention to the importance of learning cultural differences for running a competence development

program. It suggests that there might be a lack of local adaptation when there is a need from the participants, and illuminates the importance of individuals' driving forces for motivation and the importance of stability in organisations.

6.2 REFLECTIONS

The result highlights the need to consider the cultural background of the participants in running competence development programs. The result begins to clarify the roles of actors involved in competence developing process: facilitator, participant, manager, co-worker and HR. If one wants to explain why particular argument frames emerge in a group, one must understand the tensions arising from different content labels of reality.

This study contributes to an understanding of the links between the success of a competence development program and understanding of local cultures over time. The dynamics along different dimensions of understanding suggest what we are capturing at such a moment is the convergence of the language used to construct group-wide meaning (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001). Cultural differences make a difference in the result of a competence development program, depending on the deliverables of the course. The results suggest that 'soft'⁷⁶ competence development programs imply more complexity and it is necessary to understand the national culture the individuals bring to the course of participation and interactions among participants. In other words, if the course aims at behaviour and attitude change, then cultural differences have more importance on the effect. If the course simply delivers facts and knowledge, then it is less important to consider cultural background. In the case of computer system training, it is not very important to

⁷⁶ 'soft' here means that the contents of competence development programs aim at behavioural and attitudinal changes

understand national culture in order to deliver messages from the contents of the system.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand national culture if there is an intention to let people use the system and take advantage of it. In such a case, a detailed and structured plan of implementation needs to be designed and considered. In some competence programs it makes a difference and it is important to consider the cultural differences in competence development program processes. Especially when the intention is to change the behaviour and attitudes of participants, understanding the cultural background of participants is essential to increase the potential to make competence development programs successful.

When corporate culture is close to national culture, national culture doesn't make big difference in the result of running competence development programs. When corporate culture is far from national culture, it is necessary for the facilitator to understand the national cultures of participants. When there are participants with a mix of different cultures, it is worth spending some time discussing different responses and interpretations about cases in different cultures.

For a cross-cultural organisation, it is a critical matter to create a corporate culture that can be understood simply and accepted easily. It can be a recruiting strategy to employ people who have mindset close to corporate culture from the beginning. By doing this, a company can save time, money and efforts in transforming a person's behaviour and attitude.

The most difficult challenge is developing a culture that values learning (Sullivan & Harper, 1996). As a cross-cultural organisation, a company needs to be open to learn differences from different cultures in different countries. There are findings that illustrate the difficulties of effective implementation and by implication, the power and potential of improved organisational learning.

Communication plays a critical role in the implementing process of competence development programs. Learning is the process of modifying one's cognitive maps or understandings (Friedlander, 1983), thereby changing the range of one's potential behaviours (Huber, 1991).

I quote from Olsen (2004),

“You must allow yourself to be a stranger in these different cultures and accept that you can't do everything correctly all the time. We have a word for this: humbleness.”

The word, 'humbleness' is found among the values in IKEA culture.

Organisational learning is developing diverse interpretations. In other words, organisational learning equals unity combined with diversity (Cohen & Levithal, 1990). Organisations with a mix of different cultures aim at learning as a community. Meaning can be simultaneously diverse and shared from individual to individual.

6.3 FUTURE STUDY

There have been many studies about IKEA and different findings about different cases have been made. Edvardsson & Enquist (1998) argue that service culture and service strategy have to do with business development in a long-term perspective. Salzer (1994) wrote in her PhD. thesis that the IKEA Way is the sum of all the values that IKEA co-workers believe in and it is one of the successful factors in IKEA's business. Björk (1998) states that IKEA has a democratic leadership style with little distance between manager and co-worker. Each individual has a great responsibility for his or her own function. This demands a great deal of an individual's special knowledge and skills. Leadership and relationship between manager and co-worker becomes more like Swedish-Scandinavian model, but it takes long time (Björk, 1998). Freden and Nilsson (2003) found that an individual's and a manager's expectations of competence development in terms of content and direction are different.

Previous research has been more focused on the retail businesses and the founder of IKEA (Torekull, 1998) and described mainly the success stories of IKEA. Its business idea and philosophy, leadership and the founder's entrepreneurship were highlighted.

This study describes the competence developing process and the part of development program's implementation within IKEA TASEA. IKEA trading is the target; purchasing team especially is the target group for research. The finding is that there is higher potential for the success of competence development programs when barriers and enablers are identified from the beginning phase of development programs.

There are other questions remaining to be answered. This research had focused on the part of the implementing processes of competence development programs. What about planning and evaluation? The question of how competence developments programs are designed to fulfil the intended goals needs to be described and the reflection of

planning and designing done in evaluation. There are gap analyses performed before development programs are designed. The gap is analysed between the existing competence and the needed competence for the future of the organisation. Do all programs have those gap analyses and is the gap analysis used as a basis for program design? The company wants to assure the results of programs but how? How can the company assure the desired quality of competence development programs so that improvements and efficiency are guaranteed after the programs are completed? How can the company measure the results? What are the important factors to have a successful training and education? Why are the results and effects of the same training so different depending on where the people are from and how different are these in reality?

The following questions are interesting for the future study. How is training planned, implemented, and evaluated? How is it decided who attends training? What are the expectations and motivations among participants? Does motivation matter in the result of course effects? Does motivation appear differently from different countries and cultures? How is the effect of training different in people from different countries in terms of people's competence level, cultural background, manager's engagement, etc? How can the company ensure that the result of the course is sustained?

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8 APPENDIX

8.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

Start:

End:

Name:	Sex:
Age:	Years at IKEA:
Function:	Family:
Education:	Civil status:
Original Nationality:	Nationality:
Religion:	MBTI:

PERSONAL Questions

approx. 15 minutes

1. What is the most important thing in your life?

Family	Work	Free-time/Leisure/Hobby

2. What are your main tasks?

3. Do you feel confident about your job?

4. Do you enjoy at your work today?

5. What do you think is the most important thing to be able to enjoy at your work?

6. What are the things that influence your work performance?

Salary/bonus/ benefits	Education/training / kick-off	Manager's encouragement	Inner motivation/ passion at work

7. What do you have as your career plan?

Same company, Same function	Same company, different function	Different company, different function

8. Which one is the most important thing when you choose a job? Prioritise them!

Salary/benefits	Development opportunity	Management/ leadership	Task

- 9. Do you have any religion? What is it?

- 10. Do you think that your religion in any case influence your work, working ethics and behaviours? In which occasions for example?

- 11. What do you see is the most important thing in your culture/country?

- 12. Do you think that your cultural background influence your work, performance and behaviours? In which occasions for example?

- 13. How much do you think that it influences?

Not at all	A little	A lot	Extremely

- 14. What do you like most about IKEA?

- 15. What do you like least about IKEA?

16. What is most important, price development, service, quality or environment for you?

17. Who is responsible if the service level is too low?

18. If IKEA should give benefits, what should be the basis?

19. What are the 5 biggest important problems in your work today?

Course to participate:

Prior courses participated:

COURSE Questions 1

approx. **20 minutes**

1. How did you know about the course?

2. Who decided to participate in the course?

Manager	Myself	Both

3. When did you decide to participate in the course?

Planned in development talk	Happened by chance

4. How did you prioritise the course prior to your work? Were you interested in the course personally? Was it difficult to participate in the course due to the lack of time? Did your manager force you to participate in the course?

5. Is the course related to your job today?

6. Was there any pre-requisition before the course? Were you prepared to participate in the course?

7. Did you feel confidence about participating in the course? How much were you confident?

Not at all	A little	A lot	Extremely

8. How much the course will influence your work performance?

Not at all	A little	A lot	Extremely

9. What were the things you learned during the course?

10. What were the most interesting parts in the course?

11. How much were you engaged in the activities of the course?

Not at all	A little	A lot	Extremely

12. Was there any obstacle for you to engage in course activities? What were they?

13. What was good in the course?

14. What was less good in the course?

15. What could be improved?

16. How could they be improved?

17. Would you recommend the course to your colleagues?

COURSE Questions 2

approx. 15 minutes

1. What were changes after the course?

More knowledge	More positive attitude	Acknowledgement by colleagues	Acknowledgement by manager

2. What was important for you when you reflect what you learned during the course?

3. What was good in the course when you reflect the contents of the course and how it performed?

4. What was less good in the course when you reflect the contents and the method of the course? Anything else particular you want to point out?

5. Do you think that there was any relation between cultural background and course effect?

6. Did your cultural values conflict to any contents of the course? What was it?

7. How do you think the course can be improved if any?

8. Would you recommend to your colleagues?

Culture Questions

approx. 15 minutes

1. What is IKEA culture?

2. What is in common between IKEA culture and your national culture?

3. What is the difference between IKEA culture and your national culture?

4. Did your national culture matter in the course you participated? Did it help or hinder?

5. What is your culture? Are you IKEA culture person or your national culture person?

6. What is important for you in your life?

7. What is important for you in the course?

8. What do you think is the most successful course for you?

9. How do you think the course can be successful?

10. How do you think you can contribute to the course?

11. Does your national culture matter to be understood for the successful course?

8.2 SURVEY QUESTIONS

Name:
Memo id:
Job function:
Job tasks:
Years at IKEA:
Gender:
Age:
Civil status:

Children:
Religion:
MBTI profile (if any):
Courses attended in IKEA
Year/Month:
Facilitator:
Location:

To co-workers

1. Are you familiar with IKEA vision? What is it?
2. What is IKEA culture for you?
3. What are differences in IKEA culture if you compare with other companies that you know?
4. How would you describe your current situation? (1-10 scale; 10 is best and 1 is worst)
 - People have simple approaches to solutions about complex problems.
 - People are cost-conscious
 - People are humble
 - People respect each other
 - People are hardworking and taking responsibility

- People are open minded and straightforward
5. Do you think that it is important that the course facilitator understands your national culture before the course started?
 6. What is your national culture? What are important values and behaviors that you respect from yourself and others? Any special work ethics?
 7. Is there any big gap between IKEA culture and your own culture?
 8. What was your expectation for the course you attended?
 9. What was your motivation to attend the course?
 - learning is for fun
 - learning is for promotion
 - learning is for self-realisation
 - learning is for manager's push
 10. When you attended courses, what was good? Please specify in terms of facilitator, participant, location, contents, method, time, communication and materials!
 11. When you attended courses, what was not good? Please specify in terms of facilitator, participant, location, contents, method, time, communication and materials!
 12. What did you learn from the course you attended?
 13. Did you use what you learned from the course? If not used at work, why?

14. Who is responsible for your learning and development? What are your role and your manager's role in personnel development?
15. Did your manager recommend the course you attended? Would you recommend the course you attended to other colleagues? Why?
16. Did you share the knowledge you got from the course with your co-workers and manager? If so, how was the response from them? If not, why didn't you share?
17. Do you think that IKEA should continue the course you attended? Why?
18. What are your improvement suggestions in the course you attended, if any?

To managers

1. Who is deciding which course in your organisation and when?
2. How much are you engaged in your co-workers personal and professional development? (In percentage, if possible)
3. What do you see yourself as a manager or/and leader?
4. What is the difference between manager and leader in your definition?
5. Which courses do you consider most important?
 - PTC
 - Situational leadership
 - IKEA culture

- Quotation management

6. What is your expectation when your co-workers attend the above courses?
7. How do you do your follow-up?
8. Do you see any difference for the last year up to now? What are big changes that you can remember in terms of competence development? Any behavioural, attitudinal, knowledge changes?

8.3 REFERENCES

8.3.1 THAILAND (12)

Names	Type I(Interview) S(Survey)	Material Area	Job Function
Angkana Chuduang	I	Wood	Business Support
Aree Kongpatphanich	I	Wood	Business Support
Benjaporn Verasa	I	Metal & Plastics	Technician
Chinorot Wannaprasert	I	Ceramics	Business Support
Numpol Chaiyasena	I	Metal & Plastics	Technician
Panamporn Suchookorn	I & S	Metal & Plastics	Assistant to MAM
Sariya Likitpolchaloorn	I	Wood	Team Leader
Sumate Prasitsome	S	Metal & Plastics	Team Leader
Thodsapan Kunsilp	I	Wood	Technician
Santi Jintavanich	I	F&A	Manager
Sumontha Hirangwong	I	Metal & Plastics	Business Support
Warakorn Sinthuwongsangont	I	Wood	Technician

Table 13: Reference people in Thailand

8.3.2 VIETNAM (28)

Names	Type I(Interview) S(Survey)	Material Area	Job Function
Bui Ngoc My	I	Natural Fibers	Team Leader
Cao Thi Hong Lan	I	Ceramics	Business Support
Do Thi Mai Huong	I	Natural Fibers	Business Support
Hang Thanh Hai	I & S	Textiles	Business Developer
Hoang Hai Bac	S	Business Development	Business Developer
Le Thanh Nam	I	Wood	Technician
Lu Thanh Liem	I	Metal & Plastics	Business Support
Lam Hoang Quoc Khoi	I	Ceramics	Technician
Nghiem Thi Anh Dao	I	Textiles	Business Support
Nguyen Hoang Minh	I	Metal & Plastics	Team Leader
Nguyen Kim Phung	S	Textiles	Business Support
Nguyen Quoc Vinh	I	Ceramics	Business Developer
Nguyen Thanh Tam	I	Wood	Business Support
Nguyen Thi Viet Hoa	I	Business Development	Technician
Nguyen Thi Ngoc Diep	I	Business Development	Business Support
Nguyen Thi Thu	I	Metal &	Business Developer

Thuy		Plastics	
Nguyen Van Ha	I	Natural Fibers	Technician
Phan Dinh Thu	I	Wood	Team Leader
Pham Duc Dai	I	Natural Fibers	Technician
Ta Hien Huong	I & S	Textiles	Technician
Tang Thai Son	S	Metal	Technician
Thinh Dinh Nguyen	I	Metal & Plastics	Technician
Tran Quang Hai	I	Natural Fibers	Business Developer
Tran Thi Thu Hong	S	Natural Fibers	Team Leader
Tran Van Hung	S	Textiles	Technician
Trin Thi Thanh Thuy	I	Business Development	Business Developer
Truong Chu Tam	I	Textiles	Technician
Viet Doan Tuan	S	Ceramics	Material area manager

Table 14: Reference people in Vietnam

8.3.3 MALAYSIA (6)

Names	Type I(Interview) S(Survey)	Material Area	Job Function

Donna Mo	S	Metal & Plastics	Technician
Jamilah Awaluddin	S	Metal & Plastics	Business Support
Kam Weng Yong	S & I	Metal & Plastics	Team Leader
Petrina Goh	S	Business Development	Business Developer
Saw Siew Mui	S	Wood	Business Developer
Tony Goh	S	Metal & Plastic	Technician

Table 15: Reference people in Malaysia

8.3.4 INDONESIA (14)

Names	Type I(Interview) S(Survey)	Material Area	Job Function
Cheri Chairina	S	Textiles	Business Developer
Daniel Tobing	S	Wood	Technician
Dwi Widjayanti	S	Natural Fibers	Business Support
Helmida Dahmin	S	Textiles	Team Leader
Ita Unidjaja	S	Wood	Business Developer
Kerniawati Sjarif	S	Natural Fibers	Business Developer
Lucy Gowidjaja	I	Natural Fibers	Business Developer
Mariani Zainuddin	S	Textiles	Business Support
Martin Partogi Hutagalung	S	Natural Fibers	Technician
Muchamad Reviana	S	Natural Fibers	Technician

Rita Wirandinata	S	Wood	Team Leader
Siska Andira Iskandar	S	HR	HR responsible
Sunita	S	Textiles	Technician
Yuhaeti	S	Textiles	Business Developer

Table 16: Reference people in Indonesia

8.3.5 OTHERS (11)

Names	Type I(Interview) S(Survey)	Job Function
Colin Mason	I	Facilitator
Curt Temin	I	IKEA Trading HR manager
Katarina Senicar	I & S	Deputy TASEA manager Material area manager
Lars Gejrot	I	IKEA Global HR manager
Lena Öhlund	I	TASEA HR manager
Louise Köning	S	Material area manager
Michael La Cour	S	Material area manager
Per-Olof Gustafson	I	L&D manager & facilitator
Pernilla Rosenquist	S	Material area manager
Per Stigenius	I	Trainer
Mike Hoar	I	Facilitator

Table 17: Reference people in other countries

8.4 MBTI (MYERS BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR)

8.4.1 WHAT IS MBTI?

There are four dichotomies that are used in MBTI types.

- + Extraversion or Introversion (E/I)
- + Sensing or Intuition (S/N)
- + Thinking or feeling (T/F)
- + Judging or Perceiving (J/P)

Characteristics associated with people who prefer extraversion and introversion are described as a below table:

Extraversion (E)	Introversion (I)
Attuned to external environment	Drawn to their inner world
Prefer to communicate by talking	Prefer to communicate in writing
Work out ideas by talking them through	Work out ideas by reflecting on them
Learn best through doing or discussing	Learn best by reflection, mental “practice”
Have broad interests	Focus in depth on their interests
Sociable and expressive	Private and contained
Readily take initiative in work and relationships	Take initiative when the situation or issue is very important to them

Characteristics associated with people who prefer sensing and intuition are described as below:

Sensing (S)	Intuition (N)
Oriented to present realities	Oriented to future possibilities
Factual and concrete	Imaginative and verbally creative
Focus on what is real and actual	Focus on the patterns and meanings in data
Observe and remember specifics	Remember specifics when they relate to a pattern
Build carefully and thoroughly toward conclusions	Move quickly to conclusions, follow hunches
Understand ideas and theories through practical applications	Want to clarify ideas and theories before putting them into practice
Trust experience	Trust inspiration

Characteristics associated with people who prefer thinking and feeling are described as follow:

Thinking (T)	Feeling (F)
Analytical	Empathetic
Use cause-and-effect reasoning	Guided by personal values
Solve problems with logic	Assess impacts of decisions on people
Strive for an objective standard of truth	Strive for harmony and positive interactions
Reasonable	Compassionate
Can be “tough-minded”	May appear “tender-hearted”
Fair – want everyone treated equally	Fair – want everyone treated as an individual

Characteristics associated with people who prefer judging and perceiving are:

Judging (J)	Perceiving (P)
Scheduled	Spontaneous
Organise their lives	Flexible
Systematic	Casual
Methodical	Open-ended
Make short- and long-term plans	Adapt, change course
Like to have things decided	Like things loose and open to change
Try to avoid last-minute stresses	Feel energised by last-minute pressures

After more than 50 years of research and development, the current MBTI is the most widely used instrument for understanding normal personality differences (Myers 1998). Because it explains basic patterns in human functioning, the MBTI is used for a wide variety of purposes including the following:

- + Self-understanding and development
- + Career development and exploration
- + Organisation development
- + Team building
- + Management and leadership training
- + Problem solving
- + Relationship counselling
- + Education and curriculum development
- + Academic counselling

- + Diversity and multicultural training

8.4.2 MBTI TYPES IN IKEA TASEA

The common characteristics shared by people working for IKEA Trading Southeast Asia were introvert and judging. Introverted people tend to be receptive, contained, intimate, reflective and quiet. They like quiet for concentration, enjoy focusing on a project or task, develop their ideas internally, learn new tasks by reading and reflecting, and enjoy working alone with no interruptions.

Judging people tend to be systematic, planning, early starting, scheduled and methodical. They want to plan their work and follow the plan, like to get things settled and finished, feel supported by structure and schedules, reach a goal by deciding quickly, and focus on punctual completion of a project.

8.4.2.1 *IKEA Thailand – Introvert Sensing Feeling Judging*

People with ISFJ preferences are dependable and considerate, committed to the people and groups with which they are associated, and faithful in carrying out responsibilities. They work with steady energy to complete jobs fully and on time. They will go to great trouble to do something they see to be necessary but dislike being required to do anything that doesn't make sense to them. ISFJ types focus on what people need and want, and they establish orderly procedures to be sure those needs and wants are fulfilled. They take roles and responsibilities seriously and want others to do the same. Family relationships and responsibilities are extremely important to ISFJs, who fulfil their roles conscientiously and expect other family members to do the same.

ISFJ types have a realistic and practical respect for facts. They use their sensing primarily internally, where they have a wealth of stored information. They remember clearly the details of things that have personal meaning for them, such as tones of voice and facial expressions.

Thus, ISFJs are likely to be practical and realistic, concrete and specific. Their opinions are firm because their decisions are based on careful application of their clear values and their wealth of stored data. ISFJs respect established procedures and authority, believing that these have persisted because they function well. Therefore they will support change only when new data show it will be of practical benefit to people.

ISFJs are unassuming and quiet in their interactions, often putting the needs of others – especially family members- before their own. They are uncomfortable with confrontation and will go a long way to accommodate others, though their respect for traditions and people’s feelings can lead them to challenge actions they perceive as hurtful or insensitive. People see their values, their desire for structure and their kindness. What others may not see is the wealth of rich, accurate internal sensing impressions and memories. Others usually see ISFJ as quiet, serious, and conscientious, considerate, good caretakers, and honouring commitments, preserving traditions.

Sometimes life circumstances have not supported ISFJs in the development and expression of their feeling and sensing preferences. If they have not developed their feeling, ISFJs may not have reliable ways of dealing with the world and instead focus solely on their sensing memories and impressions. If they have not developed their sensing, they may rush into value judgements or taking care of others without considering the realities. If ISFJs do not find a place where they can use their gifts and be appreciated for their contributions, they usually feel frustrated and may become rigid in supporting hierarchy, authority, and procedures, feel unappreciated, resentful – complain a lot, and be overly focused on the immediate impacts of decisions. It is natural for ISFJs to give less attention to their non-preferred intuitive and thinking elements of their personality. If they neglect these too much, however, they may not see the wider ramifications of current decisions or procedures, find it difficult to assert their needs and be uncomfortable applying impersonal criteria to decisions, even when this is needed. Under great stress, ISFJs can get

caught up in “catastrophizing” – imagining a host of negative possibilities. They may then express these without their usual consideration for the impact on people around them.

8.4.2.2 *IKEA Vietnam – Introvert iNtuition Feeling Judging*⁷⁷

People with INFJ preferences have a gift for intuitively understanding complex meanings and human relationships. They have faith in their insights and find that they often empathically understand the feelings and motivations of people before the others themselves are aware of them. They combine this empathic understanding with the drive and organisation to implement global plans for enhancing people’s lives. INFJs have a visionary grasp of human relationships and possibilities, which, when articulated, can elevate and inspire others.

INFJs seek meaning and connection in their lives and have little use for details unless they fit with their inner vision. They use their intuition primarily internally, where they develop complex pictures and understandings. INFJs are likely to be insightful, creative, visionary, conceptual, symbolic, metaphorical, idealistic, complex and deep. INFJs apply personal values and emphasize to understand others and make decisions. They are loyal to people and institutions that exemplify their values but have little interest in those that do not. INFJs prefer to lead persuasively by sharing their vision. They are likely to be sensitive, compassionate, empathic, and deeply committed to their values. INFJs want meaning and purpose in their work, their relationships, even their material possessions. They are interested in growth and development for themselves and significant others and are willing to consider

⁷⁷ Actually, it was 50/50 for Introvert and Extrovert of respondents, but several respondents insisted that they were actually Introvert, although the result of MBTI test was Extrovert. INFJ was chosen instead of ENFJ because of that reason.

unconventional paths to achieve these. They value the depth and complexity of their insights and creative gifts as well as those of others. They want to see these insights realised in the world.

INFJs readily show compassion and caring for others, but they share their internal intuitions only with those they trust. Because they keep this most valued, important part private, others may find them difficult to know. When they try to communicate their internal sense of “knowing,” they often express it metaphorically and with complexity. They especially value authenticity and commitment in relationships. Though INFJs are usually reserved, they don’t hesitate to assert themselves when their values are violated. Then they can be persistent and insistent. Others usually experience INFJs as private, even mysterious, intense and individualistic.

Sometimes life circumstances have not supported INFJs in the development and expression of their feeling and intuitive preferences. If they have not developed their feeling, INFJs may not have reliable ways of making decisions and accomplishing their goals. Then, their valuable insights and creativity stay locked inside. If they have not developed their intuition, they may not take in enough information or take in only what fits with their internal pictures. Then they will make ill-founded decisions based on distorted or limited information. If INFJs do not find a place where they can use their gifts and be appreciated for their contributions, they usually feel frustrated and may not give others the information they used to arrive at a decision, and thus seem arbitrary, base their judgements on little data, on a sense of “knowing” that has little basis in reality, withdraw their energy and insight, and become resentful and critical. It is natural for INFJs to give less attention to their non-preferred sensing and thinking aspects. If they neglect these too much, however, they may be unable to verbalise their inner insights in a way that others can understand, fail to check their insights against reason and practicality, and end up following a vision that has little possibility of being realised, become single minded in pursuit of a vision. Under great stress, INFJs may become obsessed with data they normally would consider irrelevant

or overindulge in sensing activities such as watching TV reruns, overeating, or buying things that have little meaning for them.

8.4.2.3 *IKEA Indonesia – Extrovert Sensing Thinking Judging*⁷⁸

People with ESTJ preferences like to organise projects, operations, procedures, and people and then act to get things done. They live by a set of clear standards and beliefs, make a systematic effort to follow these, and expect the same of others. They value competence, efficiency, and results and display them in their work and play. ESTJs enjoy interacting and working with others, as long as the others are responsible about meeting deadlines and completing assigned tasks. They work best in situations where clear, known problems can be solved with proven techniques.

ESTJs take an objective approach to problem solving and are tough when the situation requires toughness. They use their thinking primarily externally to organise their lives and work, and they have little patience with confusion, inefficiency, or halfway measures. ESTJs are likely to be logical, analytical, objectively critical, decisive, clear and assertive. ESTJs focus on the present – what is real and actual. They apply and adapt relevant past experience to deal with problems, and they prefer jobs where results are immediate, visible, and tangible. ESTJs are likely to be practical, realistic, and matter-of-fact, systematic and pragmatic. ESTJs are usually excellent administrators because they understand systems and logistics. They can project the steps needed to accomplish a task, foresee potential problems, assign responsibilities, and marshal resources. They cover all the bases, leave no loose ends, and get things done on time. When they see that things are not working, they will plan and act to correct the situation. Otherwise, they prefer proven procedures and systems. Their orientation is to tasks, action, and the bottom line.

⁷⁸ Indonesia was the only country among Southeast Asia with Extrovert as the dominant type.

Because they naturally devise systems, procedures, and schedules, others rely on ESTJs to take charge and get things done. Others may also find them overpowering at times because ESTJs are so certain about how things should be. Because they are clear and straightforward in their communication, people seldom have to wonder where they stand. ESTJs can be quite gregarious and generally enjoy interacting with people, especially around tasks, games, traditions, and family activities. They take relationship roles seriously and fulfil them responsibly. Others usually see ESTJs as conscientious, dependable, decisive, outspoken, and self-confident.

Sometimes life circumstances have not supported ESTJs in the development and expression of their sensing and thinking preferences. If they have not developed their sensing, ESTJs may decide too quickly before taking in enough information. Then their decisions will reflect their previously formed judgements or biases. If they have not developed their thinking, they may not have reliable way of evaluating information and thus end up making inconsistent or overly harsh decisions. If ESTJs do not find a place where they can use their gifts and be appreciated for their contributions, they usually feel frustrated and may become rigid, dogmatic, be intrusive, “know-it-all” experts, overpowering others, refusing to listen, and get picky about details and be impatient with those who do not follow procedures exactly. It is natural for ESTJs to give less attention to their non-preferred feeling and intuitive parts. If they neglect these too much, however, they may apply logic even when emotions and impacts on people need primary consideration, fail to respond to others’ needs for intimate connection and processing of feelings, and not always see the wider ramifications of a seemingly simple, direct action. Under great stress, ESTJs may feel alone and unappreciated and be unable to communicate their feeling of distress and despair.

8.4.2.4 *IKEA Malaysia – Introvert iNtuition Thinking Judging*

People with INTJ preferences have a clear vision of future possibilities coupled with the drive and organisation to implement their ideas. They love complex challenges and readily synthesise complicated theoretical and abstract matters. Once they have created their general structure, they devise strategies to achieve their goals. Their global thinking leads them to develop visionary goals and a broad-brush plan for achieving these within large organisational structures. INTJs value knowledge and expect competence of themselves and others. They especially abhor confusion, mess, and inefficiency.

INTJs see things from a global perspective and quickly relate new information to overall patterns. They trust their insightful connections regardless of established authority or popular opinions. Dull routine smothers their creativity. INTJs use their intuition primarily internally, where they develop complex structures and pictures of the future. They are likely to be insightful, creative synthesisers, conceptual, long-range thinkers. INTJs use their thinking to make logical decisions. They assess everything with a critical eye, quickly identify problems to solve, and are tough and decisive when the situation calls for toughness, INTJs tend to be clear, concise, rational, detached, and objectively critical. INTJs are excellent long-range planners and often rise to positions of leadership in groups or organisations. They are independent, trust their own perceptions and judgements more than those of others, and apply their high standards of knowledge and competence most rigorously to themselves.

INTJs present a calm, decisive, and assured face to the world, though they may find it difficult to engage in social conversation. They usually don't directly express their most valued and valuable part: their creative insights. Instead, they translate them into logical decisions, opinions, and plans, which they often express clearly. Because of this, others sometimes experience INTJs as intractable, much to the surprise of the INTJ, who is

very willing to change an opinion when new evidence emerges. Others usually see INTJs as private, reserved, hard to know, even aloof, conceptual, original, and independent.

Sometimes life circumstances have not supported INTJs in the development and expression of their thinking and intuitive preferences. If they have not developed their thinking, INTJs may not have reliable ways to translate their valuable insights into achievable realities. If they have not developed their intuition, they may not take in enough information or take in only that information that fits their insights. Then they may make ill-founded decisions based on limited or idiosyncratic information. If INTJs do not find a place where they can use their gifts and be appreciated for their contribution, they usually feel frustrated and may become aloof and abrupt, not giving enough information about their internal processing, be critical of those who do not see their vision quickly and become single-minded and unyielding in pursuing it. It is natural for INTJs to give less attention to their non-preferred sensing and feeling parts. If they neglect these too much, however, they may overlook details or facts that do not fit into their intuitive patterns, engage in “intellectual games,” quibbling over abstract issues and terms that have little meaning or relevance to others, not give enough weight to the impacts of their decisions on individuals, and fail to give as much praise or intimate connection as others desire. Under great stress, INTJs can overindulge in sensing activities – watching TV reruns, playing cards, overeating – or become overly focused on specific details in their environment that they normally do not notice or usually see as unimportant.

8.5 COUNTRY FACTS

8.5.1 THAILAND

Thai culture prefers consensus to conflict, harmony to argument (Andrews 2002). In consequence, Thais have a keen sense of social hierarchy: the king is at the apex of a pyramid whose steps are defined by myriad nuances of language and gesture. Although Chinese blood runs in the veins of probably a third of the population, the Thais regard themselves as an ethnically homogeneous society. Some 95% are Buddhist, some 4% Muslim.

8.5.2 VIETNAM

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam could become Asia's most dynamic economy: its growth starts from a low base; it has a large, disciplined, literate and cheap workforce; and it is in the centre of a prospering region, which has capital to invest.

Most of respondents to the interview showed patriotism in that they want to help poor people and there were quite aware of the fact their country is one of the poorest countries in the world.

8.5.3 MALAYSIA

Modern Malaysia is divided into two parts, West and East, separated by 400 miles of the South China Sea. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with a difference: the sultans of nine states of the peninsular elect one of their numbers as king for a five-year period. The Malay half of the population has a special position constitutionally but resents the economic dominance of the Chinese third of the population, which in turn resents the Malays' political supremacy. Managing the balance since independence has been a task of a governing coalition.

As a founder member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and with its experience of the emergency, Malaysia is fiercely anti-communist. It has argued for making the ASEAN area a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality.

8.5.4 INDONESIA

Indonesia has diversity in its cultural influences in history (Andrews 2002). Indonesia’s cultural origins lie first in the Malay kingdom of Srivijaya, which from the 7th to the 12th centuries spanned the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and the western part of Java. Hinduism and Buddhism influenced the Srivijaya kingdom and the Majaphahit kingdom, which took power in Java at the end of the 13th century. Islam arrived from India in the 13th century. Over the next two centuries the faith spread throughout the archipelago, except for Bali, which remained Hindu.

The summary of four different country facts is summarised in table 18.

Countries	Thailand	Vietnam	Malaysia	Indonesia
Population	62.8 mil	78.1 mil	22.2 mil	202 mil (1998)
History	Land of the Free, non colonial rule	Defeating the Foreigner	Independence August 1948	Independence Aug 1945
Language	Thai, English in commerce	Vietnamese, English in commerce	Malay Chinese	Malay in city 250 dialects in rural English in commerce
Religion	Buddhist, Muslim	Buddhist, Christian	Muslim, Buddhist, Christian,	Muslim, Christian, Hindus,

			Hindu	Buddhist
GDP/ person	\$2,010	\$400	\$3,850	\$730
Material Area	Ceramics, Textiles, Wood, Metal & Plastic	Ceramics, Natural fibres, Wood, Textile	Metal & Plastic	Natural Fibres

Table 18: Country Facts in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia (Andrews 2002)

8.5.5 OTHER COUNTRIES

There were participants from India, Pakistan, Sweden, and Denmark in the programs, but the observations about them are not described in this paper. However, their character traits helped to compare differences from South East Asian participants indirectly.



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Managing Competence Development Programs in a Cross-Cultural Organisation – What are the Barriers and Enablers?

Författare

Author

Misook Park-Westman

Sammanfattning

Abstract

During the past decade, research on competence development and cross-cultural organisation has been acknowledged both in academic circles and by industrial organisations. Cross-cultural organisations that have emerged through globalisation are a manifestation of the growing economic interdependence among countries. In cross-cultural organisations, competence development has become an essential strategic tool for taking advantage of the synergy effects of globalisation. The objective of this thesis is to examine how competence development programs are conducted and to identify barriers and enablers for the success of such programs, especially in a cross-cultural organisation.

To identify the processes involved in managing competence development programs in a cross-cultural organisation, a case study method was chosen. A total of 43 interviews and 33 surveys were held with participants, facilitators and managers in competence development programs at four units of IKEA Trading Southeast Asia located in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, respectively. In addition to the observations made on these four competence development programs, a study of the literature in related research areas was conducted. The interviews were held and the survey data collected in 2003 and 2004.

In the findings, the barriers identified were cultural differences, assumptions, language, and mistrust; the enablers were cultural diversity, motivation, management commitment, and communication. The conclusions are that competence development is a strategic tool for cross-cultural organisations and that it is extremely important to identify barriers to, and enablers of, successful competence development, and to eliminate the barriers and support the enablers right from the early stages of competence development programs.

Nyckelord

Competence, Competence Development, Competence Development Programs, Culture, Cultural Diversity, Southeast Asia Case Study, Cross-Cultural Organisation