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Evaluating management training and development in a cross-cultural context

A stakeholder approach

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to address the challenge in evaluating China's overseas management training and development (MTD) in cross-cultural settings. It examines the evaluation practice of China's overseas MTD interventions and explores a comprehensive approach to the MTD evaluation.

Design/methodology/approach – This study collected both quantitative and qualitative data from 526 major stakeholders involved in China's overseas MTD. A mix method approach is used to explore the perspectives of different stakeholders.

Findings – The respondents from different stakeholder groups perceived purposes of evaluation and problems conducting evaluation differently. The perceived evaluation criteria and approaches by individual group were also focused differently. The current evaluation system was based on segmented information collection and little joint effort was found in the MTD evaluation. The judgement on the value of China's overseas MTD is culturally sensitive due to the diversity of stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds. A new framework is proposed to address the evaluation challenge.

Research limitations/implications – This study is limited to evaluating China's MTD between China and the UK. The evaluation framework is based on complex involvement of multiple stakeholders in an international setting. It may not be applicable to situations where only two parties are involved in training.

Practical implications – The proposed stakeholder-based evaluation framework may be used for other skill-based training and development programs involving multiple stakeholders in the international arena.

Originality/value – This paper contributes to the HRM evaluation literature by focusing on a unique evaluation setting and proposes a framework to evaluate a complex international MTD initiative by the Chinese Government.

Keywords China, United Kingdom, Stakeholder analysis, Cross cultural studies, Training evaluation, Management development

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

The transformation of China's economy in the past decade has led to increased managerial responsibility and organisational autonomy that requires new skills for the increasing uncertainty and global competition (Wang *et al.*, 2009; Warner, 1993, 2004). The role of managers has shifted from being bureaucratic administrators to strategic decision makers. Recent initiatives in management development (MD) has become a key facilitator to embrace the changes (Cooke, 2010; Sun and Wang, 2009; Wang and Wang, 2006; Cooke, 2005). There is a growing consensus and recognition by the Chinese policy makers that the competition in the post-WTO era relies on talent competitions (Hu, 2010). Developing managerial skills with international vision has therefore become a strategic goal for the government at all levels (Warner, 2004). The recent *National Medium/Long-term Talent Development Outline 2010-2020* (国家中长期人才发展规划纲要 2010-2020; Chinese Government 2010-2020) by the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council has further raised the bar for human resource development (HRD) and talent competition (Xinhuanet, 2010). It has outlined the talent development strategies to facilitate China's economic growth and to promote organisational competitiveness. One of the key strategies is to develop decision-making managers' and professionals' comprehensive skills and knowledge to cope with global competitions (Sun and Wang, 2009).

As a key player to accomplish the national strategy, the China Association for International Exchange of Personnel (CAIEP) is responsible for organising and implementing China's overseas management training and development (MTD). CAIEP is a non-profit organisation under the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs. CAIEP works mainly with Chinese Government and state-owned enterprises by cooperating with overseas institutions and delivering tailored MTD programmes for Chinese managers. In the last 30 years, CAIEP coordinated 40,000 managers per annum in average to receive training abroad particularly in countries such as, the USA, the UK, Germany, Australia and Japan. By the end of 2010, CAIEP has established partnership with over 300 overseas institutions, including training and educational institutions. In the UK, it has certified more than ten universities and training centres for the delivery of MTD programmes (SAFEA, 2011).

Whilst there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that China's overseas MTD interventions have generally been beneficial to managers and organisations, little systematic evaluation is available at both strategic and programme levels (Wright *et al.*, 1996, 2002; Branine, 2005; Wang *et al.*, 2009). Since Kirkpatrick (1994) first introduced a four-level evaluation model in 1959, academics and practitioners have been developing new methods to assess the effectiveness of training. However, training evaluation is often perceived being problematic, particularly when the training seeks to achieve outcomes that are not readily measurable, as is the case in MTD (Wang and Wilcox, 2006). It is even more challenging to evaluate the effectiveness of MTD programmes across national boundaries (Adler, 1997; Torrington *et al.*, 2002).

This paper is to address the challenge in evaluating China's overseas MTD in cross-cultural settings. We focus on the overseas MTD programmes initiated by the CAIEP. Given the limited studies on the evaluation of MTD across countries, this study contributes to the literature by investigating China's overseas MTD activities and exploring the approaches of evaluation in the cross-cultural context. To this end, we examine the following two research questions:

RQ1. What is the perceived cross-cultural impact of China's overseas MTD programmes?

RQ2. What criteria and approaches may be adopted for evaluating the overseas MTD?

In addressing these research questions, we attempt to develop an appropriate approach to China's MTD interventions.

Literature review

The impact of MTD has been recognised by many scholars (Wang *et al.*, 2009; Minzberg, 2004; Cooke, 2005; Child and Rodrigues, 2005; Mumford and Gold, 2004; Branine, 1996). Yet, evaluating MTD activities remains problematic. Some relies on counting the numbers of training days per annum (Mabey, 2002), others find it difficult in measuring the extent of impact and separating it from other system components (Ekaterini and Constantinos-Vasilios, 2009; Winterton and Winterton, 1997). Therefore, it is necessary to review the literature and identify gaps and challenges in cross-culture MTD evaluation.

Summative and formative are two important aspects of training evaluation. A summative evaluation assesses the outcomes of a training programme (Brown and Gerhardt, 2002). It is conducted at a particular time after training has been delivered. In contrast, formative evaluation is designed to validate a programme by identifying the weakness in instructions. It takes place throughout the progress of a training programme (Brown and Gerhardt, 2002). While a tendency of overlooking formative evaluation is observed, scholars have been advocating for engaging in more systematic formative evaluation for its obvious scientific benefits (Brown and Gerhardt, 2002).

Of the formative approaches, Geis's (1987) method involves in various stakeholders in training design and development; it also helps build the commitment of managers, trainers and trainees towards programme implementation to reduce apprehension regarding evaluation. This integrative model has combined the strengths of different perspectives on formative evaluation and aims to improve the effectiveness of training delivery in organisations (Dick and Carey, 1996; Weston *et al.*, 1995). The argument of combining summative and formative approaches is established by the possibility of both assessing the outcomes of training intervention and on-going improvement of the effectiveness of a training programme (Brown and Gerhardt, 2002).

In the summative realm, an influential work is Kirkpatrick's classical four-level evaluation model that classifies evaluation into reaction, learning, behaviour, and results. It has been widely used, expanded, over-generalised and criticised (Alliger and Janak, 1989; Dawson, 1995; Holton, 1996; Abernathy, 1999; Salas and Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Tamkin *et al.*, 2002). For example, Hamblin (1974) refines the "results" into intermediate impact on organisational performance and ultimate results measured in financial terms. Among the critiques, Holton (1996) notes that Kirkpatrick's model is more of a taxonomy to test causal assumptions but fails to defining the causal constructs. The four-level evaluation is further identified as a communication tool rather than being claimed as evaluation techniques or steps (Wang *et al.*, 2002).

Later research on evaluation has shifted to a wider context of training and development interventions. Wang and Wilcox (2006) posit that the evaluation on HRD intervention should focus on long-term effect, measuring behaviour change of

individuals and the impact on organisational performance. Many also note that evaluation cannot be isolated from the system that the training activity serves (Easterby-Smith, 1994; Bramley, 1996; McClelland, 1994; Galanou and Priporas, 2009). For example, Wang *et al.* (2002) propose a theoretical systems approach to quantitatively measuring the ROI of HRD interventions. Bramley (1996, p. 30) observes that evaluation is a process of collecting information to meet a particular purpose. It is not “economic and feasible to evaluate something from all perspectives”. Therefore, it has been agreed that evaluation should be tailored to, and interacting with, the system the training serves (Hamblin, 1974; Phillips, 1996; McClelland, 1994; Lewis, 1996; Nanda, 2009).

Learning effectiveness is another focal area in the evaluation literature. Kraiger *et al.* (1993) provide a multidimensional perspective on measuring learning outcomes which refines learning constructs into cognitive, skill-based and affective learning outcomes. It is argued that while designing the evaluation system it is necessary to look at the aspects of individual, organisational and training-related factors such as learning and knowledge transfer (Kraiger *et al.*, 1993). Tamkin *et al.* (2002) suggest that evaluation should be integrated with the process of learning and development. A study by Krishnaveni and Sripirabaa (2008) suggests that perception-based and consensus-oriented assessment be a valuable tool for evaluating and improving training activity. McClelland (1994) objective-oriented evaluation places emphasis on the learners.

Notably, Holton *et al.* (2003, 2007) have developed the Learning Transfer Systems (LTSs) inventory demonstrating that the LTSs differ across organisational settings and training types. LTSs under different organisational settings are underpinned by different organisational cultures (Kirwan and Birchall, 2006). Training managers abroad re-shape their mindsets in addition to developing new knowledge and managerial skills (Minzberg, 2004; Luoma, 2005). Furthermore, studies have shown the causal links between managerial concepts and culture, the cultural dominance of delivering MTD and the constraints of knowledge transfer in cross-cultural settings (Adler, 1997; Berrell *et al.*, 2001; Batonda and Perry, 2003; Bedward *et al.*, 2003; Branine, 2005; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Selvarajah, 2006).

Similar to Geis' method in the formative aspect, the summative literature has also documented the development of stakeholder approaches (Vartiainen, 2003; Nickols, 2005). The key principle is to invite different stakeholder groups to participate in the whole process of evaluation. Nickols (2005) believes that evaluation is concerned with judgements based on individual values that vary by stakeholders involved. Therefore, it is necessary to identify stakeholders of evaluation and analyse their different objectives towards evaluation (Esterby-Smith, 1994; Wang and Wilcox, 2006). Second, the different objectives of the stakeholders need to be communicated and negotiated during the process in order to reach a balanced view of priorities about evaluation (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Likewise, Copeland (1987) stresses the importance of reaching an agreement on the objectives of training in advance between the senders and the receivers in the process of international training. Third, Vartiainen (2003) elaborates that cultural and social factors account for the differentiations of the stakeholders' behaviours. In short, for evaluation involving stakeholders, the object under examination is to be connected with interrelations among context, evaluation processes, and criteria.

The review of the literature relevant to MTD reveals the following gaps in evaluation research. First, limited holistic approaches to the evaluation of MTD are available for evaluation practice. From a holistic perspective, scholars have noted that there is a danger in separating the study of training evaluation from that of training effectiveness (Kraiger *et al.*, 1993; Salas and Cannon-Bowers, 2001). Second, it is well known about the complexity of evaluation when diverse stakeholders are involved in cross-culture training (Hamblin, 1974; Easterby-Smith, 1994; Mitchell *et al.*, 1997; Freeman, 1994, 2004; Mellahi and Wood, 2003). Literature in this area has largely focused on training programs on cross-culture skills for interactions (Ardichvili and Kuchinke, 2002; Bhawuk and Brislin, 2000; Black and Mendenhall, 1990). Little is known regarding the complexity of evaluating cross-culture MTD training where managerial skills are a key focus additional to cultural competence and where multiple cross-culture stakeholders are involved.

Third, studies have revealed inadequacy in cross-cultural learning of international students and expatriate managers, as well as in the transfer of knowledge from Western to non-Western settings (Newell, 1999; Berrell *et al.*, 2001; Batonda and Perry, 2003; Iles and Yolles, 2004; Branine, 2005; Selvarajah, 2006). Holton *et al.* (2003) have further showed that LTSs are intertwined not only with organisational culture, but also national culture. However, there has been scant research on measuring MTD interventions in cross-cultural settings (Wang *et al.*, 2009; Wang and Wilcox, 2006; Wright *et al.*, 1996, 2002).

Method

Research design

The design of this study is to obtain a holistic understanding, interpret the perceptions of major stakeholders involved in the MTD process, and explore appropriate approach for cross-cultural MTD training. Therefore, we adopted a sequential and concurrent mixed methods approach to combining quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Creswell *et al.*, 2003). We conducted the study in two phases. In phase one, a sequential exploratory strategy was used with qualitative data collected through document reviews and focus group interviews (Creswell *et al.*, 2003). Based on the qualitative findings, we further used a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews in phase two. The survey was to identify different perspectives and attitudes of the participants from different stakeholder groups, while the semi-structured interviews complemented the survey with rich data from different stakeholders (Gilmore and Carson, 1996). The mixed methods offered the advantages of supplementary, cross-validation, and confirmation of the findings of the study (Creswell *et al.*, 2003).

Sample and procedure

We took a blend of probability and stratified purposive sampling process (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Kemper *et al.*, 2003), and targeted a defined population in the China's overseas MTD. A total of 526 participants from the following five groups were included in the study:

- (1) Trainees (139) who were taking training in the UK in 2004.
- (2) Ex-trainees (198) who took training in Western countries (including UK) during 2000-2003 and had returned to their jobs in China at the time of the study.

- (3) Training managers and officials (66) of Chinese Government agencies and organisations who were in charge of and/or have organised overseas MTD (hereinafter referred to as China's training department).
- (4) Instructors and training managers in the UK training institutions/organisations (68) who delivered MTD programmes for the Chinese managers (hereinafter referred to as UK training institutions).
- (5) Ex-trainees' supervisors (55) who worked as direct managers of ex-trainees.

Most of the participating trainees and ex-trainees were from Chinese Government and non-profit organisations (60 percent). The remaining was either from enterprises (33 percent) or educational and research institutes (7 percent). About 80 percent of them were in the ages of 26 to 40 with 46 percent being middle-level managers, 25 percent senior managers, and 29 percent professionals. Ex-trainees' supervisors had a similar distribution in terms of organisational origins. Half of them were senior managers, 30 percent middle managers, and 20 percent chief executives or directors.

The majority of respondents from UK training institutions were from educational institutions (66.7 percent). Some were from training providers and agents (33.3 percent). Over half of the respondents from UK training institutions were instructors and about 40 percent training managers or project managers. The participants from China's training departments/organisations came mostly from government agencies (53.3 percent) and non-profit organisations (46.7 percent). The respondents from China's training departments and organisations consisted of 40 percent administrators, 32 percent middle-level managers, 17.8 percent project managers, 11.2 percent senior managers, and 8 percent training managers.

In phase one, we identified 14 focus groups with 91 participants composed of 17 percent of total number of respondents (Table I). The purpose was to collect thematic information about training evaluation, training effectiveness and cultural impact and to develop survey questionnaire. We also reviewed the internal documents about China's overseas MTD from the central and provincial governments' HR organisations for background information on the evolving policies of MTD programmes.

In phase two, we used questionnaire survey and face-to-face or telephone interviews to collect data. The questions included evaluation practices, the perceived criteria and methods of evaluation, purposes of evaluation, barriers to evaluation and the cross-cultural impact on the overseas MTD intervention. The interviewees were

Participant	Methods							
	Focus groups		Questionnaire survey		Semi-structured interviews		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Trainees	20	14	95	68	24	18	139	100
Ex-trainees	48	24	120	61	30	15	198	100
China's training department	10	16	45	68	11	16	66	100
UK training institution	8	12	48	71	12	17	68	100
Ex-trainees' supervisor	5	10	40	72	10	18	55	100
Total	91	17	348	66	87	16	526	100

Table I.
Summary of data
collection

selected with a stratified process considering participants' seniority, age, organisational sector and geographic location. The invitations were sent out by email or telephone. The analysis of interview data focused on in-depth understanding of the meaning and context of the responses rather than simply identifying the themes emerged (Maxwell and Loomis, 2003; Silverman, 2001). Thus, narrative description was used in presenting the findings (Silverman, 2001). As reported in Table I, a selection of 87 participants from the five groups mentioned above participated in the interviews. The interview questions included "To your knowledge how do you (your organisation) evaluate China's overseas MTD", and "what are your suggestions on evaluating the overseas MTD effectively?"

Questionnaire survey was designed in a structured format to mainly collect primarily quantitative data with some open-ended questions, which allowed the respondents to give complementary information. The questions were related to the training evaluation practices such as criteria and methods of evaluation, purposes of evaluation, and barriers to evaluation. Pre-determined instruments were generated from other studies on evaluation, internal organisation documents and focus group interviews. For example, the participants were asked to rank the importance of the purposes of evaluation as well as to choose the criteria and methods of evaluation used in practice and their recommendation. We received a total of 348 valid responses for the survey. The data collected were coded and entered into SPSS and analysed by using mostly descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, one-way ANOVA, and *t*-test.

Given the scope of the study, we conducted the data collection in both English and Chinese languages. The interview protocols and the survey were developed in English and then translated into Chinese. Both language versions were verified by bilingual scholars specializing in HRM research. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and English with respective language groups without translation. Interview transcripts for the Chinese samples were translated into English for the purpose of reporting and presentation.

Results

Qualitative findings

Perceptions on evaluation practice. Participants reported that it was difficult to collect all-round information and get a holistic picture of training outcomes from the perspective of individual stakeholders. For example, the interview participants from China's training department and ex-trainees' supervisors showed that the supervisors and training managers can hardly access the information of trainees when they take training abroad. One training manager commented:

[...] It is almost impossible to carry out on-going follow-up with trainees due to the distance and costs (No. 12-CTM).

Likewise, interviews with UK training institutions revealed that the training providers had little feedback from ex-trainees, and China's training department. An instructor commented that he had "no clue" about how trainees applied their learning in the workplace (No. 3-UL). A training manager from a UK training institution mentioned that they had tried to conduct a post-training survey to several cohorts of Chinese training groups, but it had turned out to be very difficult, even impossible (No. 7-UTM). On the other hand, several Chinese managers questioned the fairness and transparency

of the standard for assessing their learning outcomes. Some from the training institutions also suggested inconsistency on the purposes of evaluation between training providers and training organisers as well as inconsistency in the requirement of the training institution and the expectation of Chinese participants.

Most interviewees, particularly those from China's training departments and ex-trainees, regarded evaluation of China's overseas MTD not being a systematic process, which involved in individuals, organisations, and administrative regions such as provinces and cities. "A scientific evaluation system needs to be established", suggested one official from China's training department (No. 65-CL).

Culture and evaluation standards. Interviewees noted that the evaluation process of China's overseas MTD was complicated. It involved in the interactions of organisations in both home country and host country. Such interactions were dependent on, and influenced by various factors.

Interviewees suggested that stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds might hold different criteria on the same type of training:

Cultural differences result in different standards for measuring the outcomes of training. Language, a media of exchange of information, is also a barrier for evaluation (No. 11-UL).

This was echoed by some trainees and ex-trainees that the differences in culture led to different approaches to evaluation:

I believe that the standard of assessing the value and worth of training cannot be the same between the Western institutions and us. It is not appropriate to simply use the Chinese way to evaluate the effectiveness or purely use Western perspectives (No. 37-T).

Moreover, some of the training managers from China's training organisations pointed out that language and culture difference between the home country and host country could negatively impact on the information exchange with overseas training providers:

"It is up most important to set up a baseline for evaluation including objectives, criteria, terminology, and methods in the language agreed by the two parties (training organiser and training provider)" said one Chinese official (No.7CTM).

Evaluation criteria and approaches. The interviews have identified new criteria and methods of evaluation as follows.

The interviews found out that studying abroad Chinese managers not only acquired new knowledge but also changed their mindset. One ex-trainees mentioned (No. 31 ET) that overseas learning experience stimulated the formation of new concepts by reflecting on theory learning and work placement in host country organisations such as Western market economy and the service-oriented public administrative notions.

An interviewed provincial governor suggested (No. 57CTO):

The measurement of overseas MTD is beyond the impact on my organisation. There are several examples that managers applied their learning from abroad and made great contribution not on to their organisations but also to a particular industry. Some of them have been promoted to the leadership position in top companies in our province.

Focus group meetings was suggested to collect post-training information by the interviewees particularly by the ex-trainees and their line managers. Some ex-trainees' line manager pointed out that it was necessary to link overseas MTD evaluation to management cultivation and promotion at organisational level; whereas some training

managers of government department stressed the importance of including evaluation into talent development system and providing reference for the policy makers in talents development policy and strategy.

Furthermore, the findings from interviews demonstrated the intangible aspect and the long-term effect of MTD as a technical issue for adopting the evaluation approach as articulated by manager (No.25-ET):

[...] the results of training are usually potential and cannot be (directly) measured.

Trainee (No. 44-T) echoed:

It is difficult to measure changes in mindset and ways of thinking, such as the notion of the market economy, cultural awareness and value change.

Quite a few Chinese training managers thought the post-training report was the most cost-effective way for training evaluation. In contrast, some ex-trainees expressed the necessity of conducting on-time evaluation:

The feedback from post evaluation might benefit other trainees after us. But it is often too late or even meaningless to assess the training abroad after we have completed the courses (No. 22-ET).

Quantitative findings

Perceived purpose of evaluation. To identify different stakeholders' perceptions on the purpose of evaluation, we asked the respondents to prioritise a list of 11 optional evaluation purposes based on previous literature.

Post hoc ANOVA analysis (Table II) showed different foci on the purpose among stakeholder groups. Compared to other groups, China's training departments prioritised the purposes in the following sequence: "to assist in marketing for future programmes", "to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the HRD process in which training facilitates", and "to determine the service quality of training providers". On the other hand, significant negative mean differences were identified between the UK training institution and the other three groups in "to determine whether a programme achieved its objectives", "to determine the appropriateness of a programme", and "to find out where improvement is required". This may be interpreted as that training institutions prioritises the reasons for evaluation being related to the programme delivery aspects whereas China's training departments focuses more on training process-related aspects.

The uni-variant ANOVA analysis of respondents' perceived problems in conducting MTD evaluation (Table III) found that different stakeholder groups emphasised on different aspects of evaluation. For example, China's training departments considered the problems being "lack of cooperation of ex-trainees' organisation", "lack of cooperation of ex-trainees", "lack of staff", and "lack of expertise and skills" than the other groups. In addition, significant mean scores were identified between the training institution group and China's training departments in the items "lack of criteria and methods", "lack of expertise and skills", "lack of cooperation with training institutions" and "lack of cooperation with training trainees and ex-trainees". This raised the issue of how China's training organisers and UK training institutions could cooperate in evaluation by sharing resources and information.

Evaluation criteria. We asked the respondent to indicate what evaluation criteria were being used versus those they recommend to use for MTD evaluation out

Dependent variable (rating)	(I) group	(J) group	Mean difference (I ~ J)
To determine a programme achieved its objectives	Training institution	Trainees	0.64*
		Ex-trainees	0.42*
		Training department	0.13
To determine the appropriateness of a programme	Training institution	Trainees	0.71*
		Ex-trainees	0.43*
		Training department	0.32
To find out where improvement is required	Training institution	Trainees	0.68*
		Ex-trainees	0.40
		Training department	0.26
To assist marketing for future programmes	Training department	Trainees	0.73*
		Ex-trainees	0.48*
		Training institution	0.53*
To identify the strengths and weaknesses in the HRD process in which training facilitates	Training department	Trainees	0.47*
		Ex-trainees	0.25
		Training institution	0.13
To determine the service quality of training providers	Training department	Trainees	0.65*
		Ex-trainees	0.38
		Training institution	0.23

Note: The mean difference is significant at the *0.5 level

Table II.
Comparisons of the
perceptions of
stakeholders about
purpose of evaluation

of 12 pre-determined criteria, An ANOVA mean comparison showed that the respondents' perceived criteria used and recommended included "reaction of trainees", "changes in knowledge and skills possessed by trainees", "changes in attitudes possessed by trainees", and "how well the programmes were designed", followed by the other two criteria "Extent of the applicability of programmes" and "meeting objectives of trainees' organisation" (Table IV).

One-way ANOVA (Appendix 1) test showed the different perceptions among the stakeholder groups. For example, the trainees and ex-trainees reported the criteria of "changes of trainees' performance" was more frequently used than the training institutions' and training departments/organisations' groups. On the other hand, the groups from the training institution and training department indicated that the criteria of "extent of the continued demand for programme" used more frequently than trainees and ex-trainees' groups. A paired *t*-test showed the following evaluation criteria were most recommended by all respondents. They were "changes of trainees' performance on the job", "changes in trainees' organisation related to training", "financial return of the programme", followed by "meeting objectives of trainees' organisation", "meeting trainees' objectives", and "extent of the applicability of programmes" (Table V).

Evaluation methods. Similar to the evaluation criteria, a question asked the respondents to report what evaluation methods were used as opposed to what they recommended to use for MTD evaluation. An ANOVA mean comparison showed that

Dependent variable (rating)	(I) group	(J) group	Mean difference (I-J)
Lack of staff	Training department	Trainees	0.41
		Ex-trainees	0.68*
		Training institution	0.64*
	Training institution	Trainees	0.23
		Ex-trainees	0.04
		Training department	0.64*
Lack of cooperation of ex-trainees' organisation	Training department	Trainees	0.77*
		Ex-trainees	0.92*
		Training institution	1.12*
	Training institution	Trainees	0.35
		Ex-trainees	0.20
		Training department	1.12*
Lack of cooperation of training institutions	Training department	Trainees	0.18
		Ex-trainees	0.22
		Training institution	0.81*
	Training institution	Trainees	0.63*
		Ex-trainees	0.59*
		Training department	0.81*
Lack of cooperation of trainees and ex-trainees	Training department	Trainees	0.65*
		Ex-trainees	0.73*
		Training institution	1.32*
	Training institution	Trainees	0.67*
		Ex-trainees	0.59*
		Training department	1.32*
Lack of evaluation criteria, and methods	Training department	Trainees	0.46
		Ex-trainees	0.41
		Training institution	1.74*
	Training institution	Trainees	1.28*
		Ex-trainees	1.33*
		Training department	1.74*
Lack of expertise, and skills	Training department	Trainees	0.52
		Ex-trainees	0.55*
		Training institution	1.52*
	Training institution	Trainees	1.00*
		Ex-trainees	0.97*
		Training department	1.52*

Table III. Comparisons of the perceptions of stakeholders about problems of evaluation

Note: The mean difference is significant at the *0.5 level

Evaluation criteria	Mean test (use in practice)	Mean test (recommended)
Reaction of trainees	3.60	4.40
Changes in knowledge and skills possessed by trainees	3.16	4.23
Changes in attitudes possessed by trainees	2.91	4.10
Changes of trainees' performance on the job	2.41	3.83
Changes in trainees' organisation related to training	2.16	3.76
Meeting trainees' objectives	2.31	3.97
Meeting objectives of trainees' organisation	2.51	4.00
How well the programmes were designed	2.85	4.16
Financial return of the programme	2.27	3.89
Extent of the applicability of programmes	2.52	4.07
Extent of the continued demands for the programme	2.32	3.53
Comments to the trainees from their colleagues	2.24	3.49

Table IV.
Mean tests of evaluation
criteria perceived by all
respondents

Pairs No. Item	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (two-tailed)	Mean
1 Changes of trainees in performance on the job	-18.58	201	0.00	Pair a 2.42 Pair b 3.87†
2 Changes in trainees' organisation relevant to training	-18.98	185	0.00	Pair a 2.17 Pair b 3.38†
3 Meeting objectives of trainees' organisation	-17.16	190	0.00	Pair a 2.31 Pair b 3.99†
4 Financial return of the programme	-18.62	210	0.00	Pair a 2.52 Pair b 4.14†

Table V.
Paired *t*-tests for training
evaluation criteria

the methods used and recommended were: "post-training report by group", "self-report by trainees", followed by "pre- and post-training tests", "pre- and post-training questionnaire" and "evaluation form filled by instructor". The least used methods were "comparison with group of people who did not take training" and "use of business records" (Table VI).

Different perceptions about using of some methods were identified by *post hoc* ANOVA test (Appendix 2) among different stakeholders. For example, China's training departments mostly perceived using "post-training report by group" most, but "pre- and post-tests" least. In contrast, the training institution group perceived using the following methods most: "pre-evaluation on instruction", and "informal collection of feedback", but using less "post-training report by group". Moreover, it appeared that different stakeholders had a different focus on recommendation of the evaluation methods. Trainees strongly suggested "pre-evaluation on instruction", the training departments/organisations' group suggested using "follow-up survey" more, and training institution and ex-trainees' groups recommended using "pre- and post-tests" and "intermediate evaluation".

A paired *t*-test showed most significant negative mean score differences between Pairs A and B for the evaluation methods: "pre-evaluation on instruction", "use of performance appraisal", followed by "use of business records" and "comparison with

Table VI.
Mean tests for using of
evaluation methods
perceived and
recommended by the
aggregate

Evaluation methods	Mean test (use in practice)	Mean test (recommended)
Pre- and post-training questionnaire	2.56	3.94
Pre- and post-training tests	2.68	3.78
Informal collection of feedback by trainees	2.36	3.40
Evaluation by instructors	2.54	3.84
Pre-evaluation on instruction	1.97	3.88
Post-training report by group	4.37	4.17
Self-report by trainees	3.78	3.97
Intermediate evaluation	2.02	3.30
Follow-up survey	2.32	3.75
Use of performance appraisal	2.00	3.59
Use of business records	1.70	3.19
Comparison with group of people who did not take training	1.52	2.90

group of people who did not take training”. The big gaps between their using in practice and suggested could be interpreted as that these methods were not frequently used but highly recommended by the respondents (Table VII).

Discussion

The findings from both interviews and the survey provided important insights for China’s cross-culture MTD evaluation. First, the current evaluation system appears to suffer methodological weakness. China’s overseas MTD is an initiative by Chinese Government agencies, and is jointly financed through government funding and organisational budget. The sponsors of the training programmes are more concerned about the value and worth of a particular training intervention whereas the Western training providers implement evaluation by assessing the learning outcomes of Chinese managers. On the other hand, Chinese managers (trainees and ex-trainees) and their organisations are perceived hardly participating in MTD evaluation. The findings show little sign of joint effort on assessing the training effectiveness. The discrepancy, therefore, challenges the appropriateness of the current evaluation approach as well as the validity and reliability of the evaluation results. In addition, the achievements derived from training as perceived by various stakeholders are mostly intangible and hardly measurable. The findings challenged existing evaluation approaches to meeting

Table VII.
Paired sample tests for
training evaluation
methods

Pairs No.	Item	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (two-tailed)	Mean
1	Pre-evaluation on instruction	-18.60	195	0.000	Pair a 1.97
					Pair b 3.91†
2	Use of performance appraisal	-17.17	189	0.000	Pair a 2.01
					Pair b 3.61†
3	Use of business records	-16.62	179	0.000	Pair a 1.71
					Pair b 3.18†
4	Comparison with group of people who did not take training	-16.61	187	0.000	Pair a 1.53
					Pair b 2.98†

the requirements of major stakeholders in terms of their objectives in training and the feasibility of implementing evaluation.

Second, the existing evaluation process seemed to be segmented. The differences in the major stakeholder involvement in evaluation lead to the different objectives for training evaluation. As the initiator and organisers, the training departments and organisations in China are more focused on the adjustment of the training function and continuity of overseas MTD activities, whereas the UK training institutions emphasise on whether the management training have achieved the desired learning objectives and the quality in the programme delivery. Furthermore, different purposes of individual stakeholders' on evaluation resulted in the use of different evaluation criteria and methods. This raises an issue of streamlining a fragmented evaluation process into an integrated system for standardised evaluation criteria with specific objectives.

For the purpose of maintaining quality learning and transfer of knowledge, a dynamic information flow is required among all major stakeholders. In reality, unilateral data collection has proven to be a key problem in the process of training and evaluation. For example, the Chinese training organisers rely mostly on post-training reports whilst the UK training institution can only obtain information in the learning phase. Evaluation is thus based on segmented information and reveals single-facet results at a particular time and location without a whole picture. Furthermore, a fundamental purpose of China's overseas MTD is to facilitate managers learning from the West and transfer it to the Chinese context. Apparently, the learning and transfer of knowledge is underpinned by two distinct national cultures, thus the subsequent evaluation is culturally sensitive. This in turn influences perceived value of MTD and evaluation by stakeholders from different cultures. For example, Chinese managers perceived learning outcomes differently from their UK training providers. The culture differences challenge HRD practitioners to explore new approaches to evaluation and integrate different stakeholders needs rooted in different cultural background.

The complexity of China's overseas MTD and evaluation practice revealed put forward a special requirement for its evaluation system. Existing approaches are often focused on a single aspect of training (Kraiger *et al.*, 1993). Some assess the learning outcomes (Kraiger *et al.*, 1993; Tamkin *et al.*, 2002), whilst others look at the transfer of learning (Holton *et al.*, 2003), still others examines a system of assessing whether training has achieved their objectives (Kirkpatrick, 1994; McClelland, 1994; Phillips, 2003; Lien *et al.*, 2007). Another important issue is that existing evaluation models are mainly designed for organisational setting (Wang *et al.*, 2002; Nanda, 2009; Tamkin *et al.*, 2002; Dick and Carey, 1996). Yet, China's overseas MTD is taking place in a broader context. Thus, these approaches are limited in integrating diverse stakeholders, multi-layered objectives and impacts, and cultural influence.

A framework for evaluating MTD in a cross-cultural context

To address the challenges revealed in this study, we propose an evaluation framework for MTD in cross-cultural context. We consider evaluating MTD interventions in a cross-cultural context a multi-stage effort with multiple stakeholders interested in the different aspect of training activities and outcomes. Figure 1 shows a three-stage evaluation framework. Each stage may be connected with the rest yet remains independent in evaluation practice.

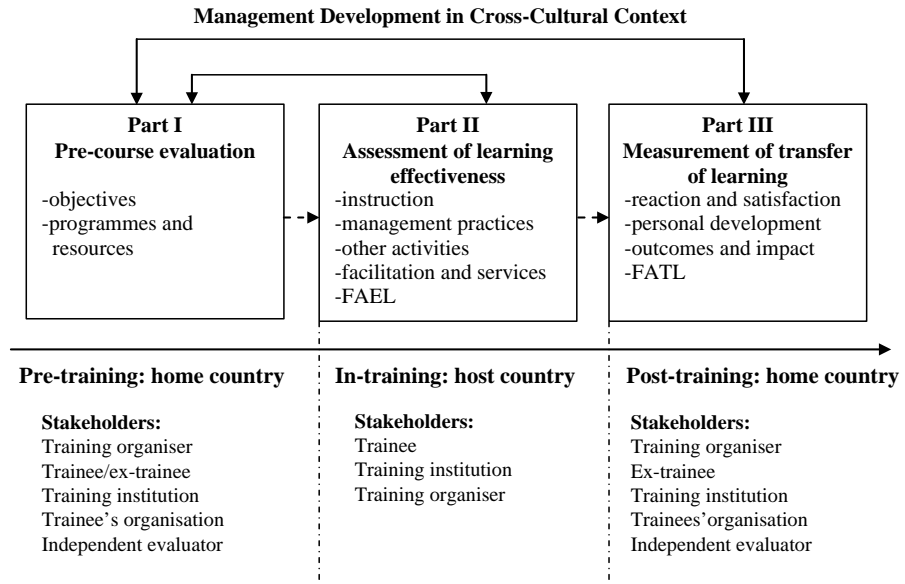


Figure 1.
A framework of training evaluation for MTD in cross-cultural context

Stage I, assessing pre-training status, contains two elements:

- (1) objectives; and
- (2) programmes and resources.

Objectives refer to establishing and defining specific learning goals to be achieved through a particular training programme based on training needs assessment at organisational or regional level. For example, such goals may include provincial talent development strategy, business plan of an organisation or personal career development. Programmes and resources relate to the validation of the courses to be delivered and the assessment of the resources in the host country to assure quality instruction and other management activities. They may include subject matter, contents, pedagogical issues, as well as the culture context of host country.

The purpose of Stage I is to evaluate whether the programmes designed may support the achievement of the objectives. It may also ensure that trainees get most out of the upcoming training. This stage focuses on formative approach and based in the home country with the cooperation of training providers from the host country.

Stage II, evaluating learning effectiveness, emphasises on learning effectiveness in the host country. It includes areas in learning activities (classroom instruction, managerial activities related to training subject such as work placement, on-site visits), supporting functions to facilitate effective learning, such as learning support, language courses, and logistic support to trainees (e.g. lodging accommodations). The purpose is to assess whether the learning has achieved the objectives defined in Stage I and to identify factors affecting effectiveness of learning (FAEL) in the host country. This on-going assessment covers in-process and end-of-course assessment and FAEL analysis is likely to obtain timely feedback on learning. It is carried out in the host

country with active involvement of trainees and training institutions. Meanwhile, the evaluation results are to be conveyed to stakeholders in the home country for administration of current and future such HRD intervention.

Stage III, measuring transfer of learning, will be implemented in the home country after trainees return. It consists of four evaluation elements:

- (1) reaction and satisfaction;
- (2) personal development;
- (3) outcomes and impact; and
- (4) factors affecting transfer of learning (FATL).

Reaction and satisfaction gauges the perceptions of the major stakeholders on the training activities. Personal development is to measure trainees' changes in attitude, behaviour, knowledge and performance. It also includes follow-up evaluation on individual career development. Outcomes and impact examine benefits of MTD in talent, economic and social development and open-minded, as well as the impact on organisations. Last, identifying FATL is to analyse the elements that have influence on positive transfer of learning across cultures and provide insight for improving future MTD programmes.

The advantage of the proposed framework

Compared to previous evaluation models, this framework has the following advantages. First, it focuses on accountability and responsibility of all stakeholders in different culture contexts involved in the process (Nickols, 2005). This will promote proactive and cooperative actions among stakeholders in the process of training and evaluation and establish a communication platform between any countries. Second, it helps generate evaluation data from multiple sources with different perspectives and accommodates both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods (Nickols, 2005; Vartiainen, 2003). It thus enables diverse data sources and increases the reliability of information to enhance the validity of evaluation results. Third, it combines formative assessment with summative evaluation and shifts the focus on results to including training design before implementation. This allows all stakeholders involved in the MTD process work together prior to the training intervention. Fourth, it integrates training evaluation with MTD intervention process and maintains a unity of separate processes operating in one compatible system, so that evaluation does not deviate from its objectives in the whole process. For example, the inclusion of pre-course evaluation helps clarify unclear or potential misunderstanding of objectives, inadequate programmes and delivery, which are found as major problems in this study. Additionally, it aligns training results evaluation with personal development and outcomes at organisational level. The emphasis on the process of MTD integrates evaluation to the management development system which in turn provides references for making MD policies and strategies as well as for developing future MTD programmes. Last, but not the least, this framework takes consideration of the cross-cultural setting of China's overseas MTD as well as the cross-cultural impact on managers' learning and development. It creates a system of evaluation in which the learning and transfer process takes place and is underpinned by both host and home cultures. It allows evaluation to address not only outcomes in an organisational setting, but also issues related to contexts in both home and host countries.

Limitations and future research

This study is not without limitations. First, the study was limited to two countries between China and the UK for China's MTD cross-culture initiatives. Further studies need to examine similar MTD programs between China other countries, such as the USA and Australia. Such research may provide additional insight to validating the evaluation framework proposed. Second, the evaluation framework was based on China's Government-initiated overseas MTD programs. It may not be applicable to situations where only two parties involved in training, e.g. trainees and training providers. Yet, with increased globalization, governments of other developing countries have initiated similar cross-culture training programs (e.g. Brazil, Russia, and India) in various industries. Future research on comparing different evaluation criteria and approaches across different cultural contexts may provide further insight to improve the proposed framework.

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Appendix 1

Dependent variable	(I) group	(J) group	Mean difference (I-J)
Changes of trainees in performance on the job	Trainees	Ex-trainees	0.40
		Training department	0.62 *
	Ex-trainees	Training institution	1.25 *
		Trainees	0.40
	Training department	Training department	0.22
		Training institution	0.85 *
	Trainees	Trainees	0.62 *
		Ex-trainees	0.22 *
	Training institution	Training institution	0.63
		Trainees	1.25 *
Extent of the continued demands for the programme	Trainees	Ex-trainees	0.85 *
		Training department	0.63
	Ex-trainees	Ex-trainees	0.16
		Training department	0.39
	Training institution	Training institution	1.24 *
		Trainees	0.16
	Training department	Training department	0.55
		Training institution	1.40 *
	Trainees	Trainees	0.39
		Ex-trainees	0.55
Training institution	Training institution	Ex-trainees	0.853 *
		Trainees	1.24 *
	Ex-trainees	Ex-trainees	1.40 *
		Training department	0.85 *

Evaluating MTD
in a cross-
cultural context

Table AI.
Mean comparisons of
criteria for training
evaluation used in
practice perceived by
stakeholders

Table AII.
Mean comparisons of
methods of training
evaluation used in
practice perceived by
stakeholders

Dependent variable	(I) group	(J) group	Mean difference (I - J)
Pre- and post-test	Training department	Trainees	0.81*
		Ex-trainees	0.72*
Informal collection of comments	Training institution	Trainees	0.91*
		Ex-trainees	1.65*
	Training department	Trainees	1.60*
		Ex-trainees	1.32*
Pre-evaluation on instruction	Training institution	Trainees	0.81*
		Ex-trainees	0.76*
		Training department	0.89*
Post-training report by group	Training department	Trainees	0.76*
		Ex-trainees	0.47*
		Training institution	1.16*

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