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Recommendations for successful intercultural preparation of middle-level managers (MLM) for foreign assignments

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Statutory declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work, that I have not used other than the sources indicated, and that all direct and indirect sources are acknowledged as references.

This printed thesis is identical with the electronic version submitted.

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Signature

Abbreviations

DiM: diversity management

PM: personnel management

MLM: middle-level managers

MNC: multinational corporations

ICP: intercultural preparation

ToM: Theory of Mind

Table of contents

VII

Table of figures

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to take a closer look at preparation measures companies use for the deployment abroad of middle-level managers (MLM) and to provide recommendations that comprise suggestions for improvement. To remain successful on the markets, companies often make use of worldwide subsidiaries. In this respect, appropriate personnel is needed to put the corresponding measures into practice. The findings from literature towards basic preparatory measure in companies and important aspects of preparation programs are covered in Chapter Two and Three. Chapter Two emphasizes aspects companies have to consider before the departure of managers. Fundamental organizational conditions which are needed to make use of social diversity are illustrated. Chapter Three focuses on imparting social competence and cultural skills which prepare MLMs for the social intercourse with locals. Moreover, measures and training methods are presented which facilitate the practical implementation of the learnt contents on site. The empirical part of this thesis is based on qualitative data gained from interviews with experts from the areas of intercultural management and personnel provision. The gained in-depth perspectives are used together with the findings from literature to give within Chapter Five recommendations for the creation of appropriate intercultural training for MLMs.

1 Foreign assignments: an introduction to the importance of appropriately preparing personnel

In every culture, people have a variety of different patterns in regard to the way they behave, feel or think and differ from humans of other cultures. These differences appear in different communication styles, wording or gestures. Confrontations with unfamiliar behavioral patterns often cause unpredictable reactions by conversational partners, as messages are misinterpreted or not understood. Since companies are increasingly operating all over the world to make use of cost differentials in workforce or resources, the requirements for managers sent abroad to serve as contact persons in branches on-site have increased as well.

Expatriate managers, called expatriates, are managers who are deployed abroad to act as a crucial link between the strategic top management and the operative level and carry a special significance in terms of taking responsibility for various fields of business. Within this thesis, the terms expatriates, managers, managers of the middle hierarchies or expatriate managers are used to increase the readability. All measures presented refer to a duration of stays abroad of at least one year.

MLMs play a key role within any company as they receive requests of executives and have to guarantee a successful implementation. Hence, they must take up different roles, from recipients of orders to leaders of departments. The management of employees is in this context of particular importance as MLMs are information intermediaries and control the information flow. In the case of foreign assignments, they maintain close contact with staff and have to be prepared to deal with other cultures.

Between 16 and 40 per cent of all managers engaged in foreign assignments, as Torbiörn (1985) states, cannot adjust to the conditions abroad and, inevitably, stop their engagement due to bad job performances. To make things worse, those 16 to 40 per cent do so in an early stage (within a few weeks), and 5 out of 10 are not

able to put the goals set into practice. These facts alone are good reasons to reconsider the whole process of sending managers abroad, as the empirical data mentioned above show a low probability of success. However, this incapability of managers can result in high expenses. A study carried out by Mendenhall and Oddou (1985a) proves an average loss of $65,000 to $300,000 as a consequence of insufficiently prepared managers sent abroad. Now, the question is whether or to what extent companies can remedy this development by initiating suitable measures that enhance the success of foreign assignments. Greater importance put on the area of intercultural preparation (ICP) is essential as large sums of money are invested to send managers abroad.

When entering new markets in different countries, managers report that doubts and uncertainty are constant companions. Such statements are not unusual since people sent abroad are confronted with a variety of stimuli and need to learn how to handle new situations. It is simply impossible to overcome these difficulties without a certain degree of intercultural sensitivity. In this regard, it is of great importance to provide managers with the necessary information and skills to fulfil the given tasks in the best way possible.

There is no doubt that the results of foreign assignments highly depend on how managers incorporate the norms of the host country. Sims and Schraeder (2004) point out five key factors which are noteworthy: (a) the training managers receive, (b) the demographic characteristics of the managers, (c) the dispositional and personality characteristics of managers, (d) the level of organizational support provided to the managers and (e) the level of technical competence of managers.

Another motive for the need of ICP are the currently changing environmental conditions. Long, Wan Ismail, and Amin (2013) state that companies face different challenges, from macro political effects to organizational and micro political changes. Furthermore, alterations in values and individualization lead to social transformation and, therefore, new demographic developments and migration lead to new international labor markets (Chang, Yuan, & Chuang, 2013). This calls for appropriate ex-

ecutives who can handle these specific circumstances and initiate change measures to meet the company's goals. In conclusion, professional competences per se are a precondition for foreign assignments but many other aspects need to be considered as well before sending managers abroad. ICP has to combine all required knowledge together with a defined planning horizon for the implementation on-site.

Globalization as part of economic change results in increased competitive pressure and, thus, branches need adequately trained employees all over the world. The handling of associated cultural differences is gaining relevance and is a key factor for successful management (Berner, 2010). Possible candidates for foreign assignments should bring along open-mindedness to a certain extent. In order to prepare MLMs for their stay abroad, a list of recommendations is presented at the end of this thesis that focuses on language, culture and training. The reason for focusing on MLMs is that this specific group represents an important link between executives and lower hierarchy managers. MLMs perform numerous tasks that contribute to corporate success as they translate the strategies of the top management level into corporate actions. Mostly, they serve as division heads, take responsibility for key customers and are constantly in touch with employees. This confirms the importance of MLMs in the context of international assignments compared to any other group of executives.

Furthermore, education and training measures are provided together with ways and means that make it possible to give support during the whole process of preparation (Pedersen, 1983). For foreign assignments, recommendations in the direction of qualifying expatriates to speak the same language (to communicate on an equal level) as locals are required to remove main linguistic and cultural problems (Yook & Albert, 1999).

It is important to note that education does not equal training and that this is not a sufficient method to achieve a change in attitude and values (Fischer, 2011). Furthermore, basic requirements are abilities (qualification), knowledge of human nature (communication), willingness (motivation) and will to succeed (leadership).

Equipped with these prerequisites, expatriates will find their way abroad (Tilchin & Essawi, 2013). Additionally, the importance of personal conversations (e.g. mentoring) with employees will be clarified and personal characteristics that define successful MLMs are displayed (Deardorff, 2009).

1.1 Further research questions: what else has to be considered when creating ICP for MLMs prior their deployment

As the aim is to point out what should be considered and what has to be avoided explicitly at the stage of training before sending MLMs abroad, various perspectives need to be taken into consideration. This is about comparing various training approaches with the overall objective of transmitting intercultural competence that enables managers to remain capable despite possible problem areas. In order to guarantee the best possible conditions for a successful implementation of managers in the target country, the findings based on the interviews conducted in the empirical part of this thesis are used to create adequate ICP. The goal is to find out to what extent standardized and flexible training measures contribute to achieving positive training results. Subsequently, the perspective of the trainees, i.e., managers to whom the training is addressed, should be considered as it is very important to incorporate fears and worries or ideas and desires they may associate with tasks abroad.

For all managers engaged in these preparation processes, it is essential to find ways to guarantee their total commitment prior to, during and after foreign assignments. Additionally, the significance of a balanced relationship with one another and respect towards employees and business partners in the context of deployments abroad is pointed out as these factors are mostly neglected. The expert interviews conducted aim to exchange application-oriented opinions of competent people. In this way, requirements that are expected of managers should be clarified and compared with findings from existing literature to verify the formulated hypothesis.

Aside from professional competence that is needed to successfully achieve typical professional tasks, social competence is essential to work effectively and successfully in teams. Assertiveness, critical faculties, empathy, conflict ability as well as flexibility are important skills, to name a few (Brislin, Richard W. W. & Yoshida, 1994). The knowledge of one's own culture and the respective foreign culture is necessary to find similarities in order to understand each others' behaviors. As Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2007a) state, language skills are also seen as crucial regarding intercultural competences and, hence, intercultural openness and cultural diversity come to the fore.

Qualification is the basis for learning new things and not synonymous with education, as many cross-cultural training programs suggest (Kinloch & Metge, 2014). Training and education primarily impart knowledge, new workflows and skills like appropriate conversation techniques. In order to develop new values and attitudes which managers require for foreign assignments, trainings and seminars are not enough. Hence, the area of learning and qualification should be broadened in order to transmit the needed knowledge. What, and especially how things should be taught is of great importance. The provision of some facts of the target country is insufficient as personal interactions are increasingly important to guarantee a practical implementation on-site. The consideration of cognitive learning (knowledge), emotional learning (willingness) and behavioral learning are three different processes of learning defined by Pestalozzi (2014) and are gaining in importance. Therefore, ICP should contain these three learning processes to guarantee an optimal transfer of knowledge.

1.2 Literature review: insights from literature towards intercultural training

Due to the increasing number of company fusions all over the world, many academic researchers dedicate their work to this topic. The existing literature deals with a wide range of aspects related to cultural sensitivity trainings and, therefore, provides

guidance for both further research and practice (Pedersen, 1983; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2008). Nonetheless, the multitude of existing theories along with several contradictions makes it necessary to take a closer view to selected approaches in the context of ICP. Thus, priority should be given to displaying central aspects of theory which are related to training, language and culture.

Findings of both literature and practice provide the basis for creating a critical assessment of existing intercultural preparation methods. Regarding the complexity of this topic, another intention of research is laid on major aspects of didactic approaches. Conclusively, the developed recommendations include the "do´s" and "don'ts" in imparting intercultural knowledge and highlight a potential line of action which facilitates a more effective use of resources. Regarding the area of corporate culture, the main topic of interest is cultural fit. Potentials for conflicts are shown while different methods that actively influence the company culture are also examined. Complementary to the theoretical underpinning for the preparation of managers for assignments abroad, the empirical part of this thesis intends to provide an in-depth perspective on the main requirements of preparatory trainings to reach intercultural integration. In private life, people sometimes misinterpret behaviors due to differing cultural attitudes. Such misunderstandings initially appear less relevant and, hence, little attention is paid to the influence of misbehavior in various situations. On a personal level, people often feel misunderstood and react with personal retreat from everyday life or resignation. Whereas in the business context, insufficient communication skills can cause great damage, starting with incorrectly performed tasks through the failure of crucial negotiations.

The aim of creating ICP that prepares managers for foreign assignments is to heighten the cultural sensitivity and to convey required skills that then prevent from making mistakes in the context of cultural interactions. Since the first impression is crucial for the further course of conversations, MLMs need to pay attention to characteristics which help to evaluate the conversational partner. The Iceberg Model of Culture, illustrated on the nex page, is an example to express the discrepancy between what people realize in the first place and what remains undetected during the first meeting.
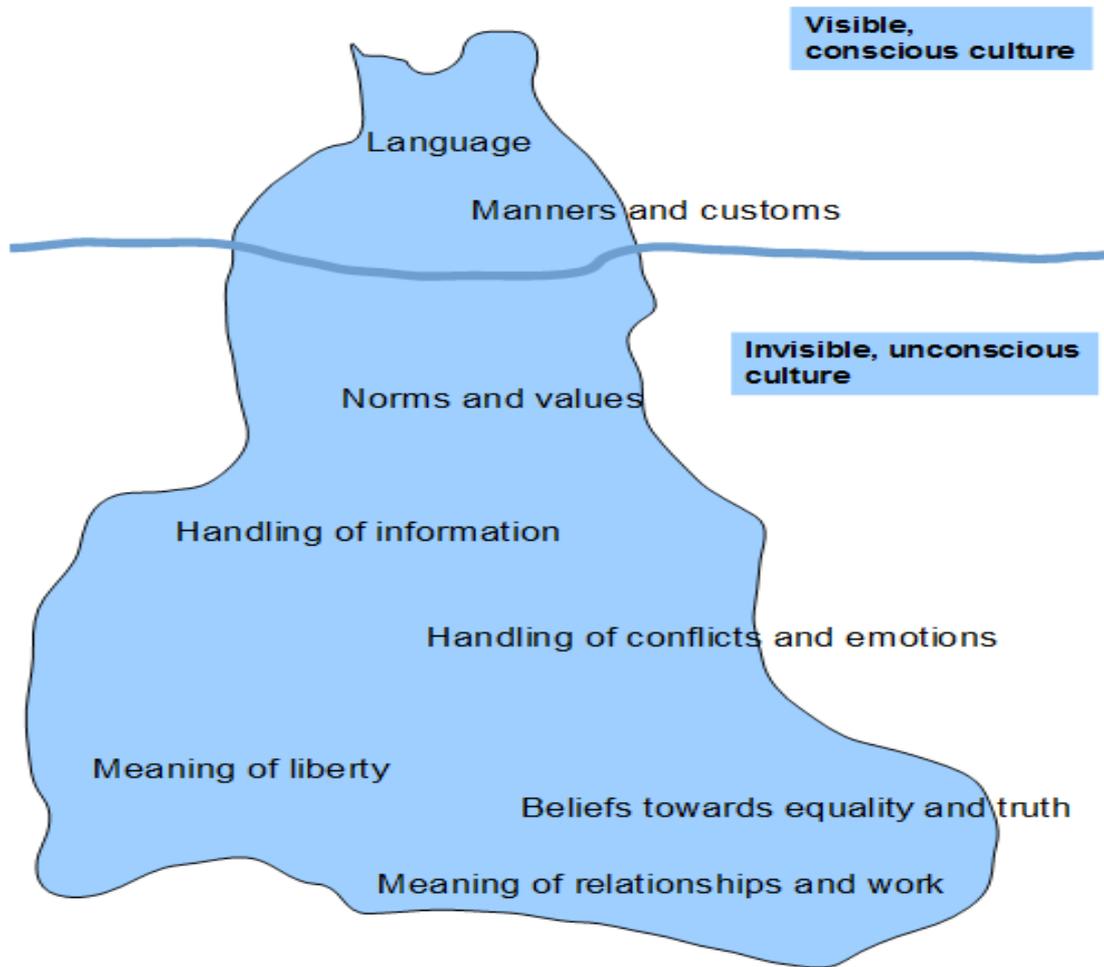
Figure 1: Illustration of the Iceberg Model of Culture
(adapted from Erll und Gymnich, 2013)

Only about one tenth, the peak of the iceberg, is perceived consciously by the dialog partners. This is about clearly recognizable aspects like language, clothing or practices. Most of the iceberg, the remaining 90 per cent, is beyond the water surface and contains beliefs and values. These aspects, which are not visible, must first be explored by managers to avoid misunderstandings or disagreements during conver-

sations, since norms and values, for instance, are decisive for the behavior of people. Hence, MLMs should take some time to get to know colleagues.

The aim of designing ICP for expatriate managers is to call attention to those aspects that can hardly be noticed at first but which have a decisive influence on the further course of interaction. According to Atteberry, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013), aspects like appearance, gesture and facial expression determine to a large proportion the way humans perceive one another, whereas what is said influences the first perception to a very slight extent. Based on those findings, it remains inevitable to give further attention to ICP that contains approaches which enable managers to draw appropriate conclusions from attitudes, clothing or even dialects shown by staff from foreign cultures.

As the objective of cross-cultural trainings is to cope with cultural differences related to the working environment, trainees are often overwhelmed by the provision of information which takes place within a very short period. Planning sufficient time is of high importance and one of the greatest challenges in creating ICP. In addition, it must be kept in mind that first impressions are snapshots and highly depend on external circumstances. Many preparation programs fail to provide knowledge that helps to master the first-ever meeting. In this context, one's behavior and mood highly depend on the current situation and, hence, this has to be prioritized. Another aim of an adequate preparation of managers for foreign assignments is to highlight the importance of taking a look at the emotional state of dialog partners (Carney, Colvin, & Hall, 2007).

As already mentioned, in each culture people acquire various patterns of thinking and behavior which distinguish them from others (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). When different cultures meet, misinterpretations of the appearances of others may lead to confrontations. To avoid problems in such situations, ICP that aims to prepare managers for foreign assignments requires a carefully considered planning in agreement with the management and all participants. According to Bolten (2002), there is a great number of suppliers for intercultural trainings who provide a wide range of di-

verse approaches that intend to help managers to familiarize themselves with unknown cultures. However, when considering the quality of such trainings, it becomes obvious that the provided teaching contents refer to a great extent to the state of knowledge of previous experiences. Furthermore, already established methods are revisited, but modifications and adjustments are hardly made. To fulfill the demands of the respective application areas, needed knowledge and skills in compliance with the cultural conditions have to be imparted by educational programs. For this purpose, the demands on sufficiently qualified trainers is to give managers an understanding of what it means to behave according to new circumstances and to submit suggestions that help to interact with locals. There is no generally accepted concept of how the training must be designed since each ICP created for managers going abroad consists of various requirements that have to be adjusted to each person individually.

Clarifying crucial aspects in advance is essential to ensure a smooth introduction phase for managers on site. In this respect, common issues that arise very likely have to be highlighted. It is advisable to highlight areas where failures most likely happen and to focus on that. It does not make sense to get lost in detail, whereby even more important points are neglected. As an additional focus in preparing training programs should be on guaranteeing a smooth entry into the day-to-day business for mangers on site, it is indispensable to provide training measures with a practical orientation. Numerous ICP focus too little on imparting skills which are applicable abroad. The objective must be to design intercultural personnel development measures that orient towards both theoretical requirements and skills needed for practical applications. Aside from this, sufficient organizational capabilities must exist to provide appropriate personnel.

1.3 Introductory case study: several indications that there is no holistic approach for the preparation of expatriate managers

According to literature, there is little information regarding personal and professional problems managers may face. The few available sources vary greatly and make it

difficult to derive measures for designing ICP. A study conducted by Franke and Kühlmann (1985) analyzed foreign assignments of managers of the middle and higher level. Via interviews, data concerning certain problems was gathered to get a good impression of the factual circumstances managers face abroad. The foreign assignments took place in the US and Japan with three various durations of stay: (a) up to two years, (b) between two and six years and (c) over 6 years. The results confirmed a significant association between the country of residence and issues related to tasks of the foreign assignment. The level of hierarchy as well as the duration of the stay had comparatively little influence to that effect. A generalization of the problems of executives sent abroad is hardly possible as managers in the US are less affected by issues of communication and language or customs and traditions compared with managers in Japan. The US are known for legal and bureaucratic barriers and, hence, country-specific aspects must not be underestimated (Franke & Kühlmann, 1985). The outcomes mentioned above are valid for the US and Japan only and should not be regarded as universally applicable, even if other countries possess similar characteristics. The first conclusion to be drawn from the study is that preparation measures for foreign assignments have to consider both region specific circumstances and job requirements. Most of the problems regarding language and communication, quality of life or business practices remained stable or slightly rose or decreased over the years. This suggests that the support managers receive during the assignments is not sufficient, as initial problems usually disappear over time. On the other hand, it can be assumed that the preparation measures were insufficient or poorly targeted. Problems concerning the "relationship with the head office" increased significantly over the years, as managers complained about missing support and less freedom of choice. This highlights that in the course of creating ICP for foreign assignments, it is of high importance to regard what can be done to prevent problems towards the exchange between deployed managers and the headquarters' management.

Intercultural competence is often associated with demand-orientated personnel development measures, although there are various opinions to what specific extent language skills, management competences or behavioral patterns are relevant (Kin-

loch & Metge, 2014). Several relevant sources confirm intercultural competence as an appropriate method to prevent potential issues that may arise within the scope of foreign assignments. For this reason, it is essential to pay particular attention to synergy effects instead of focusing on avoiding possible problem areas only. Most ICP are primarily designed as "survival trainings" with instructions that help expatriates to avoid trouble, but the goal should be to nurture the strengths and abilities of participants and to encourage them to resolve difficult situations. Consequently, fundamental coping strategies for common problems are needed which facilitate a better integration into the culture of the target country.

1.4 Design of data acquisition and conclusion

The concluding segment of this thesis is formed by the analysis of two processes. The empirical findings are compared with the recommendations and expected outcomes portrayed in the academic literature. In further consequence, the results of the empirical part and theoretical inputs are applied to articulate recommendations to create an optimized training process. The intended outcome covers all relevant steps right from the planning stage up to the deployment of MLMs.

The empirical part of this work focuses on qualitative research methods to gain the required information on business practices. Eight in-depth interviews with decision-makers in the area of corporate culture, organization and human resource were conducted to get views, suggestions and ideas of experts. All interview partners have been chosen based on their position and are part of companies that operate internationally through worldwide subsidiaries. The interviews were carried out with decision-makers from different business areas, such as rapidly expanding companies engaged in transport and logistics; a company from the timber production sector; a multinational corporation (MNC) whose main business is textile and non-woven cellulose fibers as well as experts in processing and finishing metal parts.

It was the aim to receive practical experiences of the interview partners and to talk about aspects which are not covered in the interview guideline (Weiss, 1995). Based on the findings of the interviews, promising measures have been noted and integrated in Chapter Five.

2 Preliminary work in the company: what to keep in mind for the preparation of MLMs before going abroad

In times of demographic change, the meaning of recruiting increases significantly as corporate success and competitiveness highly depend on the skills of employees. In this regard, personnel management (PM) as a division of management focuses primarily on all activities associated with employees. Colloquially, designations like staff, manpower, jobholders, subordinates, fellows or fellow workers are, depending on the context, tantamount to the term employees and are used to increase the readability of this thesis. As the main task of PM is to provide and apply manpower according to demand, a number of important tasks remain to be tackled despite organizational tasks (Hendry, 2012). As growing internationalization causes changed conditions within many company departments, the impacts on PM with specific regard to cultural aspects are worthy of note (Werther & Davis, 1996). Values, work attitude, law and collective labor agreements come to the fore and influence recruitment as well as personnel development.

International PM is exposed to a variety of impacts associated with country-specific adaptions. Usually, leadership positions are discussed by the central management board to make decisions from a global business perspective. National characteristics are quite often neglected since companies operating at an international level attempt to standardize processes. Hence, single company branches abroad are not considered as independent but rather perceived as part of a worldwide operating business network (Lascu, 1994). However, the aim of international PM, in contrast to the methods currently applied by many international companies, should be to reach a high degree of autonomy and adaption to local standards. As stated by Laurent (1986), central positions at the company's headquarters have to make decisions and have to assign the responsibility to its branches. The aim is to recognize characteristics of respective countries, to operate more effectively and to use concepts and strategies abroad which have proven their worth in domestic markets. Cultural contradictions between the home and host country, however, are mostly excluded. The

standards towards personnel planning in respective foreign branches and headquarters are rarely the same. Consequently, PM on a national level is only suitable for companies which do not emphasize international activities.

In case of companies operating worldwide, transnational PM, which focuses on developing abilities to handle changing environmental circumstances, is an important division. Market proximity in all branches is vital, therefore, the staff development department (as part of the PM) has to include certain region-specific characteristics (Baruch, 1995). Managers with international experience and diversified education can be assigned to branches flexibly without lengthy preparations. For MNC consisting of companies that operate more or less independently in different regions or countries, communication is a main issue due to great distances and various corporate cultures (Nohria & Ghoshal, 1997). MNC seek to successfully adapt to particular market conditions and to form task forces. Such task forces enable employees with different cultural backgrounds to corporate and to meet the global competition (Baliga & Jaeger, 1984).

To return to international PM, cultural aspects are essential criteria of corporate success and should be part of PM strategies (Laurent, 1986). According to Chew (2004), three major aspects are of high importance in providing personnel for foreign assignments: (a) staff selection, (b) support during the assignment and (c) reintegration after returning. Staff selection in this context consists of the preselection of managers with international experience. During a stay abroad, the PM department serves as a first contact point for any issues and forwards requests. A much greater effort, whereas, is to find adequate tasks for returning managers after the completion of the assignment.

2.1 The requirements for staff in terms of abilities and traits to complete foreign assignments successfully

As numerous companies extend their fields of activity all over the world, the importance of managers from middle management positions comes to the fore. Accord-

ingly, PM departments are expected to supply adequate staff that is both professionally qualified and culturally aware. Insufficiently prepared assignments go hand-in-hand with a non-achievement of initial objectives and a possible realignment of the corporate strategy (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985a). Applied research in the area of merging companies supplies evidence that insufficient personnel selections often cause crises. There are numerous requirements for managers to cope with tasks abroad. Based on the research of Tung (1987) carried out in several American MNC, four major points were identified which are basic prerequisites of expatriates: (a) professional ability, (b) personality traits, (c) environmental factors and (d) family situation.

During the selection of personnel, one very important aspect is the comparison between the applicant's attitude and the company values. This is of high importance as MLMs deployed abroad have to communicate those values to the resident manpower. Such qualified and appropriate managers are not easy to find and, thus, according to Stiles et al. (2006), a "talent pool" is a possible procedure that helps to build a reserve of suitable managers even though there is no immediate need. The development of such talents without time constraints can be designed in a stress-free manner and helps to avoid wrong personnel decisions because of sudden need. Within companies, employees have extensive contact between each other and may be involved in the staffing of future projects, since almost 90 per cent of all expatriate managers are recruited internally (Kangas, 2012). The preparation of employees, thus, will be simplified with respect to costs and time as extensive personnel selection processes no longer become necessary (Edström & Galbraith, 1977).

The selection criteria for staffing may be defined in coordination with the respective assignment as each deployment has specific demands. Possible obstacles in terms of mobility need to be clarified in advance, because being sent abroad for a long period (12 months or longer) is a decisive decision in both private respects and professional (Edström & Galbraith, 1977; Kangas, 2012). Under consideration of cross-cultural skills, the occupational aptitude to work in intercultural settings and private circumstances, a first preselection among the potential candidates may be per-

formed. Since posted managers will usually lead sub-areas like marketing, purchase or staffing on site, their professional experience is vital. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that candidates even with extensive foreign experience do not guarantee satisfactory results. Rather, it is necessary to select those managers who are able to adapt their existing skills and knowledge to the conditions abroad.

2.2 Measures to guarantee personnel sent abroad have ideal support during the assignment

A decisive reason for supporting MLMs sent abroad during their assignments is to reduce stress to a certain extent and to help them to focus on the tasks set. Especially at the beginning of an assignment, the acclimatization period contains many bureaucratic burdens and, hence, assistance and advice provided by the sending enterprise contribute to avoiding an over-stressing of managers. The first phase of assignments is particularly important as the initial euphoria declines very quickly once managers start to doubt whether or not they feel able to solve the tasks set. Oberg's (2006) findings confirm that managers experience several burdens during the adjustment to new cultural circumstances. After the early enthusiasm wears off, managers may become increasingly conscious of differences between the home and the host country in the course of a stay. Ranjan, Boyle, McDonnell, Mitchell, and Nicholas (2012) further point out that even if relationships with locals can be established, differences appear little by little. This may hinder the process of adaptation as both deployed managers and locals feel overwhelmed by the whole situation.

If managers are not able to deal with new cultural settings, symptoms like sleeping disorders or a loss of performance may appear. In some cases, concerned managers develop a deliberate refusal towards the foreign culture and avoid making friendships with locals or avoid learning the national language (Thornton & Thornton, 1995). It is up to the sending company to help expatriates to overcome the difficult period of adaption which is often characterized by listlessness or self-doubts. Aside from the problems managers face to successfully integrate into new surroundings,

16

their partners or spouses may be affected by psychological burdens caused by the move as well (Hippler, 2000). These findings are supported by Purgał-Popiela (2011) as she points out that almost half of the partners who followed abroad reported psychological stress associated with the relocation. She further asserts that one third of the partners suffered from health complaints and 37 per cent noticed problems in their partnerships.

A central task for sending companies, as already explained, is to support managers and their spouses and families during foreign assignments. Moreover, it is important to serve as a contact point in case of arising problems and to provide immediate support. The support provided by the posting enterprise plays a major role concerning the success of foreign assignments. Shaffer and Harrison (1998) verified within the framework of a study that the satisfaction of managers working abroad depends highly on the support offered by the sending company. In particular, they highlighted the importance of a constant availability for questions and queries. To facilitate the reintegration of expatriate managers once the deployment abroad is over, it is crucial to keep up with the family, acquaintances and colleagues at home. This includes taking care of personal and business contacts even during the period of absence. The majority of partners who followed abroad, as stated by Puttlitz (2003), highly valued the support of the sending company but would appreciate the possibility to exchange experience with people in similar situations. Social contacts play a decisive role in the mental well-being of people. A central question within the area of social psychology is whether humans are more resistant to situations of stress because of good social surroundings or not. Especially ties with teammates or acquaintances are of significance for one's physical and mental health. Such contacts with fellows in the country of residence help to adapt to the conditions abroad and, thus, reduce the level of stress (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985b).

Another important issue when creating ICP for foreign assignments is an appropriate transmission of course contents. Thus, the deployment of qualified trainers is vital. In the case of foreign assignments, trainers have to fulfil functions, according to Balogun and Jenkins (2003), as follows: (a) instructor, (b) coach and (c) mentor. In-

17

structing, coaching and mentoring are three forms of relationships occurring within companies. Instructing is about giving support for problems arising temporarily. Coaching supports the solving of problems in the longer term whilst improving the performance with the aid of mentoring focuses on the development of the individual (Dollinger, 2014).

2.3 Managers of the middle-level hierarchy: underestimated top performers who set the course for corporate success abroad

To be on good terms with colleagues, employees or superiors, MLMs face the challenge of being a mediator between the low and high level of management. As most foreign assignments happen on a project basis, a broad expertise is required to successfully fulfil the defined requirements. In recent years, the internationalization of companies has forced executives to deal with various management styles and to acquire needed skills that enable personnel to deal with intercultural matters (Shi, Markoczy, & Dess, 2009). In this respect, professional competences of MLMs are not the only requirements as management and leadership capabilities come to the fore. Even before MLMs are sent abroad, most of them act as a link between the top and the operative management. Being leader and follower at the same time is difficult as both parties have to be satisfied. This underlines the need for appropriate preparation programs which sufficiently prepares MLMs in their role as mediators before going abroad.

Once established in the host country, the sending company already expects corresponding results from their expatriates (Shi et al., 2009). Since deployments are associated with high expenses, the standards set for MLMs are very high. Thus, pressure to perform and necessary personal resilience are omnipresent during foreign assignments. It is the task of managers sent abroad to implement the policies of the top management on site. Resulting, expatriates are responsible for the assignment's success to a great extent. Their area of competence includes, among others, the finding of concrete solutions, the definition of sub-goals and the representation of

the company's philosophy (Meyer, 2006). Leadership skills are essential as MLMs have to lead subordinates in the foreign branches according to the goals set. Hence, the significance of the middle management in general has to be reconsidered as this position is not just an intermediate step before entering the senior management level but rather a career goal in itself.

2.4 Diversity Management (DiM): highlighting the need for mutual appreciation in terms of cultural variety

DiM as part of the PM department uses the variety of staff to assure corporate success in the long run. Employees represent the company's most important resource and have to be valued, accepted and promoted. According to Coote Martin (2014), each person has to be treated equally regardless of origin, sexual orientation, health, annoyance or age. Derived from economic and social trends, alterations in the working environment, for instance, require DiM to take advantage of changing values. Things considered as relevant by employees, like the growing significance of sustainability, the tendency to act more autonomously with increased responsibility, as well as intangible values (like spending time with the family) are becoming more important. Standard labor contracts with fixed working hours, though, are still preferred by entrepreneurs but similarly diminish the company's attractiveness as an employer (Austrian Economic Chambers, 2015). Nevertheless, one aspect stands out, the growing expectations towards companies to act responsibly, ethically and sustainably. Trust shown from the corporate side is highly valued by staff and increases their sense of responsibility towards their employer, a win-win situation for both (Kangas, 2012). Since MLMs often complain about limited possibilities to realize their intentions abroad, a certain level of trust provided by the managerial level helps them to realize given objectives according to the given tasks (Shi et al., 2009).

Based on demographic change and the inflow of foreign workers in Central Europe, more heterogeneity in labor markets are the result (Paul 2010). Aside from this, cross-border business relations and corporate mergers require DiM to strive for

qualified employees and to keep and expand market shares. As a result, different cultures within organizations facilitate the merging between companies from different areas. Innovation and creativity, both essential to staying competitive, require several various approaches to solve arising problems in the best way possible (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003). Therefore, teams consisting of members with various skills and qualifications are needed. To sum up, diversity is an important aspect for corporate growth and achieving success abroad. Appropriately prepared MLMs take up a major position in this respect since they have intercultural skills and appropriate knowledge which help to get in contact with potential markets all over the world. In addition, they are co-responsible for realizing targets abroad and guaranteeing the continuity of companies.

The origin of DiM may be the result of the human rights movement of the middle 60s of the 20th century when the US law required non-discriminatory behavior towards persons of different origins. A few years before, fights of the civil rights movement of Afro-Americans against racism and discrimination and for equal opportunities began. Another origin of DiM lies in the optimal use of human resources due to structural changes in the American labor markets in the 1980s (Coote Martin, 2014). US companies strove to stay competitive and recognized the potential of people with different cultural origins or physical abilities. The anti-discrimination regulations guarantee equal treatment irrespective of race, religion, gender, age or ethical and cultural origin in terms of employment. In conclusion, DiM brings together appreciation and expedience of individuals within organizations.

2.4.1 Dimensions of diversity: working out differences and similarities that influence the success of foreign assignments

Differences and commonalities of people within companies can be divided into several dimensions. The requirements for preparation programs for deployments abroad are high since it is the aim to find managers who are suitable for assigned branches.

To get an overview of various aspects that should be taken into consideration for decision making, The Four Layers of Diversity by Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003), illustrated below, may be used.
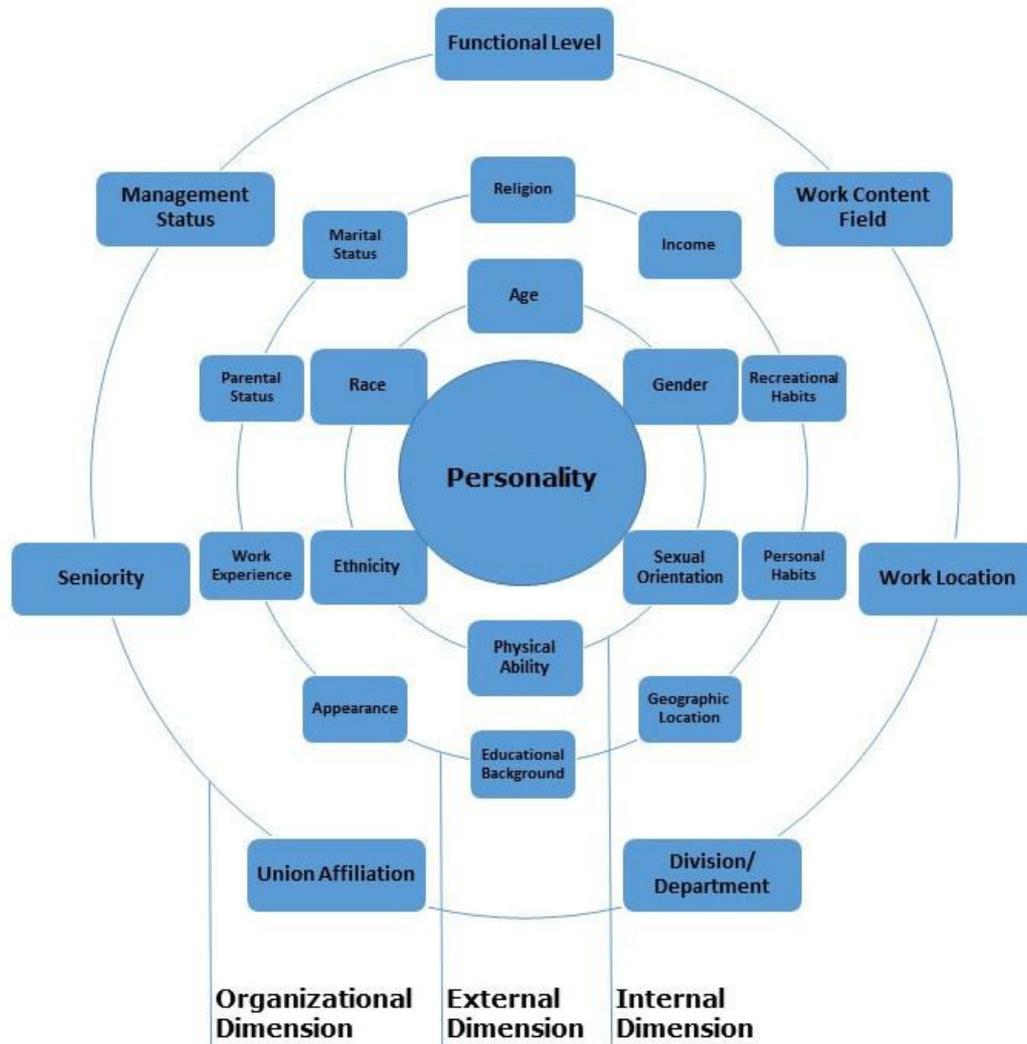
Figure 2: The Four Layers of Diversity: a simplified illustration of factors that enable managers to understand characteristics of people
(adapted from Gardenswartz und Rowe, 2003)

The model states that all differences and commonalities of people within companies can be divided into several dimensions. Furthermore, this model groups each dimension into several layers. Central to this concept, personality is surrounded by the other three dimensions which are almost unchangeable. Personality and the internal dimension are core dimensions and should not be exclusively associated as relevant when companies form project groups. This is because habits, education or appearance are also important and each of these dimensions is in turn related to each other.

Concerning Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003), The Four Layers of Diversity contain personality as the innermost dimension which includes all aspects that define a person as unique. The internal dimension is also called core dimension because it is almost unchangeable by the individual. Terms that belong to the internal dimension are age, gender, mental and physical abilities, nationality, skin color and social origin. Residence, education, leisure behavior, income, habits, parents or appearance are ranked among the external dimension. Religion and ideology have to be considered from two perspectives as they are not always freely selectable and, thus, can be added to the internal dimension as well. The outermost dimension, termed organizational dimension, is associated with aspects like workplace, content of job, role in the company, seniority or the status of employment. In conclusion, all dimensions are connected with each other and no priorities can be assigned to the individual factors.

2.4.2   What it takes to benefit from a diverse workforce

Besides focusing on diversity in groups, leaders have to create an environment which supports the skills and the cultural imprint of each team member. The figure on the next page illustrates the relationship between diversity and inclusion. It highlights the improved functionality of organizations if inclusion and diversity are highly valued.
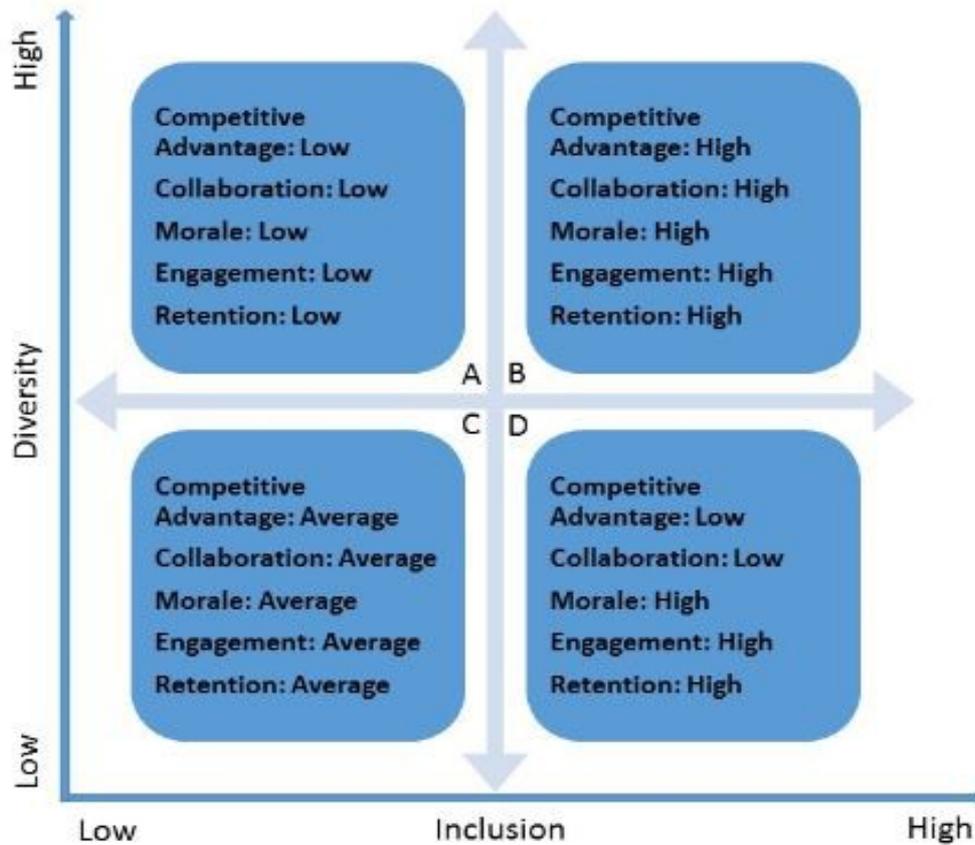
Figure 3: Relation between diversity and inclusion
(adapted from Schmitz, 2006)

Each quadrant shows five relevant factors within companies, namely competitive advantage, collaboration, morale, engagement and retention which are affected by inclusion and diversity. To point out the influence inclusion and diversity have on these factors, the four following combinations (A) low inclusion – high diversity, (B) high inclusion – high diversity, (C) low inclusion – low diversity, and (D) high inclusion - low diversity have been created. Moreover, the three graduations low, average and high attach importance to these five crucial factors (Janakiraman, 2011). A high level of diversity without creating an inclusive environment obtains low scores amongst all

relevant factors. Inclusiveness per definition, "is the quality of the organizational environment that maximizes and leverages the diverse talents, backgrounds and perspectives of all employees" (Janakiraman, 2011). Consequently, employees with various cultural backgrounds enrich the corporate culture but relevant achievements first become obvious when the corporate structure provides measures to support diverse talents.

2.4.3 The world is growing together : the need for companies to adapt their workforce to changing environmental conditions

As a result of the increasing number of producers that offer products and services irrespective of borders, the term globalization is omnipresent (Breidenbach & Nyíri, 2009). Boundaries between nations blur when talking about international trade. International companies face the challenge of installing collaborative structures instead of centrally controlled processes. The integration of expatriate managers into subsidiaries becomes necessary and this requires a higher level of responsibility for them (Bhatt, 2001; Sims & Schraeder, 2004).

In this context, the importance of diversity management to successfully work in teams stands out. The creation of project groups for tasks abroad represents a major challenge for expatriate managers. Avoiding bringing together employees with different cultural settings is not constructive as diversity contributes to finding various solution approaches caused by the team member's various views or heterogeneous origins. According to Thomas and Ely (1996), synergy effects like the reduction of conflicts or a promising collaboration at an international level are the results of successful DiM. If companies manage to adjust their branch's corporate culture to the given environment, innovation and creativity may increase and conflicts can be reduced. It is almost impossible to entirely adjust the branch's corporate culture to the given circumstances, since the headquarters' standards of the need to be considered as well. The difficulty consists in the fact that employees from both the

headquarter and branch have different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the term globalization is moving into the spotlight as it defines a process which intensifies worldwide relations on numerous levels caused by the close links between the areas of economy, environment, politics, and culture, as stated by Castles, Miller, and Ammendola (2005). Peoples are characterized by a common language, culture or religion, according to Faist (2000). However, globalization must be considered from both sides (Williams & Hall, 2000). On the one hand, exploiting the pay gap and bypassing environmental requirements are at the expense of developing countries. On the other hand, cultural globalization helps to spread ideas of human rights and democracy. Migration, contrary to tourism where the change of location is temporary, names a steady spatial change of the center of one's life (Murphy, 1977).

However, there are typical reasons for leaving everything behind. Lack of future perspectives caused by institutional structures that do not meet economic desires and wishes or war force people to leave their homes. Once arrived in the country of destination, migrants are confronted with a new language or a different lifestyle. Consequently, new values and norms affect their personality as well. Although cultures combine strong elements of continuity with long traditions, it has to be assumed that one or two generations are sufficient to cause drastic changes. Referring to Bhugra (2004), migration can be defined as a life-changing experience, mostly accompanied by a crisis towards one's identity or personality. However, this can be replaced by a more contemporary perspective, namely enrichment and strengthening of the individual through various cultures and languages along with an expansion of the personal identity. To return to ICP for managers, at the beginning of foreign assignments when getting in contact with unknown cultures, expatriate managers are comparable to migrants. Nevertheless, the development of one's personality and an enhancement of one's professional experience may be incentives to go abroad.

3   Important elements for the creation of ICP for MLMs

One major aim of designing ICP for expatriates is to improve their social competences and cultural skills. It is not about changing one's behavior fundamentally, but rather an approach to making managers aware of cultural disparities and enhancing them in dealing with interpersonal difficulties that arise when deployed abroad (Herfst, van Oudenhoven, & Timmerman, 2008). Since MLMs fulfil operational tasks in most cases, they work closely together with employees of the department they lead. Being familiar with one's own strengths and weaknesses enables one to perceive others better. It is particularly important to be aware of one's own appearance as this helps to adapt to the circumstances abroad. Statements and the behavior of colleagues facilitate the perception of the present mood, attitudes or traits of colleagues.

As illustrated by Figure 2: The Four Layers of Diversity: a simplified illustration of factors that enable managers to understand characteristics of people (see Section 2.4.1, page 21) this tool helps to illustrate differences between employees which facilitate successfully leading departments abroad. As a result, The Four Layers of Diversity assist in developing an understanding of how people are perceived by others (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). Facial expressions and gestures provide information about stable personality traits, present mental states and feelings of other persons. A realistic self-perception helps a person to become aware of one's positive and negative characteristics as well as behavioral patterns. Keeping this in mind, it simplifies interpreting the current emotional states of other employees better and helps one to draw conclusions from that. With reference to a study by Rosemann and Kerres (1986), a number of conditions that influence the selection and processing of information have been detected. One's own expectations towards a person together with one's own attitude and prejudices influence the perception of other people.

Furthermore, one's emotions and motives and the way events are perceived are crucial for the processing of information. The way people react towards statements of others, however, are mostly based on individual traits and experiences.

3.1 Highlighting the necessity of preparatory measures for the deployment of personnel

Teaching intercultural awareness is a wide area consisting of numerous aspects. Based on the personal experience of a person, the process of learning should involve enough variety to guarantee an optimal learning environment. Learning objectives are an extension of social, professional or individual competences. The handling of disagreements in cross-cultural settings, for instance, requires managers who are able to apply appropriate wording or negotiation techniques in conversations (Vogelsmeier, Scott-Cawiezell, Miller, & Griffith, 2010). Aside from this, basic knowledge regarding national laws and regulations is inevitable to prevent expatriate managers from any inconveniences that can be linked to legal matters. However, this is not about adapting blindly to the foreign culture, it is more about becoming conscious of differences and similarities of the cultural background of others to finally have a good rapport with employees.

A study of McLeod, Lobel, and Cox (1996) shows that a diverse group consisting of numerous different ethnicities achieved significantly better results in brainstorming tasks than a homogeneous group of Anglo-Americans did. The results produced by the inhomogeneous group were of greater creativity and more feasible. Based on the results of the study, ICP should make managers aware of the fact that working together with people from different cultural backgrounds may contribute to achieve more accurate results, even if the associated organizational effort increases. Intercultural competence requires the ability to appreciate other people's lifestyle and tradition, and the willingness to consider their views (Forster, 2000).

The aim of ICP for the deployment of managers is to qualify them to deal with un-known and novel behavior properly as well as to show impartiality towards employ-ees of various origins. MNCs sometimes dispatch insufficiently prepared personnel to foreign subsidiaries and, hence, run the risk of losing touch with other global con-cerns. According to Neill (2008), research on the topic of training measures for ex-patriate managers confirms the importance of adequate preparation in order to achieve the desired results of foreign assignments. Another issue of internalization is the monetary factor. Whereas traditional borders disappear, the cooperation between individual branches gains in importance and requires experts. This may justify higher expenditures for the intercultural preparation of managers.

As the lifecycle of products shortens increasingly by reasons of innovations which are forwarded by the international exchange of technologies, the requirements for staff are subject to change as well (Hannigan, 1990). Enhanced handling skills of new technologies like computers, social media, smartphones, and communication skills are required for both training instructors and participating managers. These as-pects are not part of the intercultural preparation per se, but are rather preconditions which should be given before starting the training. The process of learning should be regularly adapted to environmental alterations since some training measures are already outdated while they are applied (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1983). This causes modifications of educational views and presents new challenges for ICP. Addition-ally, the learning contents as well as the way they are conveyed need to be adjusted and improved over time. Therefore, there is a constant need to adjust management skills to the changing market circumstances.

3.2 Fundamentals of intercultural competence and ways to apply acquired knowledge

Aside from special characteristics foreign branches bring along, the language of the country, cultural differences, hierarchies and power relations have to be taken into consideration. Thinking beyond the borders of one's own culture and dealing with

uncertainty and ambiguity are essential to comprehend and anticipate behavioral patterns of others (Zeleny, 2005). Thus, the organizational structures of both branch and parent company need to be coordinated (Zhang & Kulich, 2012).

As illustrated by Figure 4, intercultural training measures start with the cognitive area and peak in behavioral training.
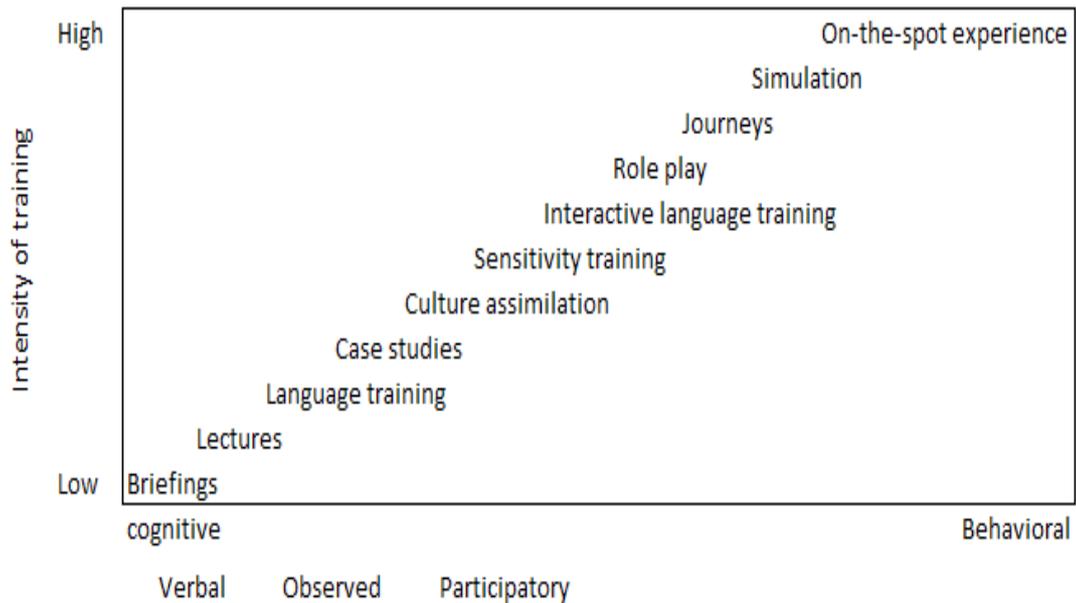
Figure 4: Methods of intercultural training
(adapted from Eisenchlas and Trevaskes 2007b)

Besides, the way training measures are imparted is presented on the horizontal axis, from verbalization through observation up to participation. The intensity of training along the vertical axis starts at a low level with briefings and lectures and ends with comprehensive methods like simulations or on-the-spot-experiences. Therefore, the given ways and means have to be used to convey intercultural com-petences together with sufficient information of foreign cultures. Eisenchlas and Tre-

vaskes (2007b) highlight that the provision of learning contents is the beginning for giving trainees an understanding of what it means to work in intercultural settings. To guarantee that learnt contents have been understood by future expatriates, they should have the opportunity to put the contents learned into practice. This happens, for example, by exercising practical applications through role plays or simulations.

3.2.1 Rapport: achieving consistency with staff irrespective of their origins

By definition, rapport is described as a situation in which people meet each other eye-to-eye and understand each other's needs (Acosta & Ward, 2011; Dippold, 2014). In an ideal case, a joint basis of communication arises. Since managers sent abroad have to deal with workmates they have not met before, it is helpful to find time for a joint talk to get to know each other. The way people get in contact with each other may happen in several ways. Principally, avoiding an enforcing or intrusive behavior is recommendable since staff confronted with new superiors feels more comfortable when they get enough time to evaluate the new situation (Degroot, 1974). In addition, finding similarities and showing interest in the conversational partner is a sign of respect and mutual appreciation.

In the course of ICP, it is important to equip expatriate managers with a certain degree of empathy to help them to integrate well into the personnel structures abroad. As stated by Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, and Werner (1998), it is much easier to establish relationships when all people involved respect and acknowledge each other. Generally, building rapport requires the ability to come to an agreement with others. What at first glance seems simple may become quite difficult as meetings with strangers often result in nervousness, feelings of stress or discomfort. Not uncommonly, running out of words is the result and starting a conversation becomes difficult (SkillsYouNeed, 2016).

To avoid this, some prepared phrases, which are retrievable at any time, are a good approach to preventing initial difficulties. After overcoming these initial problems, the conversational partner may start to act naturally and speaks without inhibition.

To prevent an unsuccessful cooperation abroad, ICP are supposed to contain several aspects which help MLMs to show appropriate behavior towards subordinates. Having a sympathetic ear for the concerns and issues of local employees is always useful. Along with this, they should be able to take the behavior of colleagues into consideration to adjust their own behavior to the respective situation. When conversations take place, leaders are expected to observe the given circumstances to create a pleasant atmosphere for colleagues without noise or other disturbances, according to Acosta and Ward (2011). Showing interest towards others implies to being interested in their origins, preferences or hobbies. The aim of ICP for MLMs going abroad is not to convey analysis methods which enable managers to categorize each person right down to the last detail. Rather, it is about getting acquainted with employees and knowing little aspects about them to show honest interest.

By naming employees by their first name, managers may symbolize recognition towards the person they speak to in several cultures. This results in an enjoyable discussion atmosphere and makes it easier to express certain tasks or suggestions for improvements. To develop rapport, it is of high importance to accept others' feelings and emotions, to participate in their emotional life, to show compassion or to share others' joys (Bronstein, Nelson, Livnat, & Ben-Ari, 2012). If the conversational partner shows interest and openness to chat, it is important to be unprejudiced. Being respectful includes accepting different opinions without being biased, no matter how the person vis-à-vis is behaving. The goal of administering to someone's needs, as explained by Bird (2010), is to allow them to illustrate their current state of mind without giving instructions for the immediate resolution of issues. Hence, showing patience and understanding is vital and, furthermore, ICP has to convey managers recommendations for finding the right mix between listening and giving advices. Once a relationship based on trust and frankness has been established, the course is set for a successful and productive cooperation on both personal and professional level.

3.2.2 The meaning of small talk: a first step to building trust

To establish trust, both conversational partners have to feel comfortable with the current situation. A central requirement for ICP which help to prepare managers for foreign assignments is to give an understanding of how to create a pleasant discussion atmosphere. The use of small talk, for instance, is a promising way to break the ice (Mullany, 2006). Assessing whether employees are ready or not for some small talk is not a simple task. In a first approach, being aware of some indicators that are characteristic for frequent types of people is important. Two major groups are common, namely people who are rationally thinking and people who are enthusiastic and spirited. Rationally thinking people usually have an aversion towards an excessive use of superlatives or showing personal feelings and emotions. As Stanovich, West, and Toplak (2013) point out, data and facts are aspects that attract their attention most. If managers perceive such behavioral patterns, the authors assert that it makes little sense to make efforts to get an insight into their emotional world. In fact, rationally thinking persons are rather interested in reaching common accord. After their top priority concerns are satisfied they are willing to chat.

In contrast, enthusiastic and spirited people have no difficulties revealing personal information. They like getting involved in a discussion as they have much to tell. A good opportunity for managers to get from business matters to personal ones is to target those aspects which seem to concern them most (Leising, Scharloth, Lohse, & Wood, 2014). If managers have the impression that the conversational partner is really interested in one's life and is willing to talk about certain personal aspects, then, for sure, it is advisable to start a conversation immediately with some small talk. In contrast to rationally thinking employees, starting to talk about business matters may not be performed until after a personal chat. During a discussion, there are some fundamental principles which are applicable for all types of people. Once a topic has been introduced, both parties should have the possibility to express their opinions (Barron & Black, 2015). After that, mentioned aspects may be commented and additional information can be provided. It is particularly important to show trust and to give the feeling that the opinion of the counterpart matters.

3.2.3 What it takes to be a good listener

During chats, many opinions or suggestions are expressed, but this does not neces-
sarily mean that all things said get even noticed. Both conversational partners
should be friendly, honest and attentive during conversations. Showing sincere in-
terest and a positive body language are basic requirements for successful negoti-
ations. The focus is set on listening without judging (Back, 2007). The concerns and
issues of others are fundamental and interruptions are out of place. To demonstrate
active listening, it is appropriate to ask questions, to comment on statements and to
enquire about the opinion of the person vis-à-vis. Non-verbal gestures like maintain-
ing eye contact, incidental nodding or taking notes are common approaches which
MLMs may use for showing honest interest towards employees. Whilst doing so, the
speaker is encouraged to keep on talking and receives the respect deserved
(Moreno-Cabrera, 2011).

To show honest interest during a conversation, any avocations are inappropriate
since the aim of listening is to focus on the topic discussed (Back, 2007). A laugh or
gesture may force the speaker to interrupt and, thus, external impacts should be ig-
nored as far as possible since the information given by the speaker requires full at-
tention. Impartiality is a key word in the context of getting closer to unknown cul-
tures. Showing compassion and understanding makes it possible to put oneself in
the position of others. Ideas presented by others should not be commented immedi-
ately by the use of gestures or annotations. Initial reluctance or a short break to re-
flect on what has been said signal real interest (Moreno-Cabrera, 2011). Sub-
sequently, a greater mutual understanding between managers and employees
caused by a better exchange of information makes it easier for both to find a com-
mon ground for discussions. It is vital to appreciate the one's opposite by showing
him/her that the information presented is appreciated (Wolvin & Coakley, 1985).

In the context of ICP, the importance of listening should be highlighted as most
people do not perceive the subtle differences between listening and hearing. While
hearing is about being aware of what has been said acoustically, listening contains

the conscious perception of statements as a whole. This includes verbal and non-verbal expressions such as language and body language. Many things apart from content-related aspects can be deduced from the way information is provided. Opinions offered by both conversation partners may lead to contradictions, but showing comprehension for presented ideas, even if they do not meet one's point of view, help to build up empathy. While counterarguments are formulated, managers shall seek to collect as many arguments as possible from an objective perspective (SkillsYouNeed, 2016). The goal is to impart basics in how argumentations and assertions can be conveyed to reach employees (Wolvin & Coakley, 1985).

Occasionally, it takes a few moments to put thoughts into words and, hence, managers should be aware that interruptions during conversations do not necessarily imply something bad. Quite the contrary, breaks are mostly a sign of interest and respect. Patience, in turn, expresses comprehension towards dialog partners and contributes to establishing a pleasant atmosphere (Smid, 2012). Since the corporate management provides targets which have to be realized by the middle management, to return to the business context, remaining neutral within conversations usually turns out to be quite difficult for managers since they have to reconcile the well-being of employees with the targets of the company.

Even before a dialog starts, both participants usually classify each other based on the first impressions. This is called bias and describes a state of restricted judgement due to personal motives, according to Rosnow and Rosenthal (1997). Available information often is evaluated unilaterally and decisions are made based on prejudices. Consequently, managers may forget to overserve body language or way of speaking when perceiving people. Slow speech is not necessarily a sign of nervousness, whereas clear articulation does not imply that the speaker is confident. Consequently, the goal is to include just those aspects that are associated with what the conversational partner says (SkillsYouNeed, 2016). The way arguments are presented is meaningful as it helps to find out what is important and needs to be emphasized and what can be disregarded.

To ensure whether things said have been understood or not by the listener, managers need the ability to correctly interpret the gestures, tone or content of the conversation partner (Goldin-Meadow, Wein, & Chang, 1992). Indeed, it is at least equally important to be a good listener since this is a prerequisite to build up rapport. Diverse demands on MLMs make it difficult to pay attention to employees, on the one hand, and to reach the targets set, on the other, as Hölterhoff, Edel, Münch, and Jetzke (2011) note. To reach this, both resident employees and expatriate managers have to pull in the same direction. Individual insecurities caused by cross-cultural collaborations must be respected to create a pleasant working atmosphere (Acosta & Ward, 2011).

The respect towards others is crucial to benefit from mutual exchange, as pointed out by Koivisto and Rice (2015). Based on that, all participants of a discussion should treat each other equally, irrespective of one's social, political or cultural background. The aim is to communicate that culture, origin, gender or preferences are immaterial (Vacharkulksemsuk & Fredrickson, 2012). In addition, it is the task of MLMs to foster appropriate values and attitudes to strengthen the team spirit. Understandably, being aware of each one's personal background is impossible, but managers should try to show interest and understanding for each employee.

Beside the principle of mutual respect, an additional step towards reaching rapport is the establishment of equality in terms of giving each dialog partner the right to express their opinion. Such conversations help to learn from each other and facilitate understanding problems. Since much heterogeneity within teams implicates the potential for misunderstandings, it is indispensable to reflect on thoughts and behavior presented within intercultural dialogs to avoid future disputes. To that effect, the dialog between individuals and groups of different ethical, cultural and religious backgrounds is crucial to reaching solidarity and cohesion within companies. In addition, this may strengthen the participation on tasks as well (Jonker & Nijhof, 2006).

When working in teams, compromises are frequently used approaches to solve problems. It is quite common that people involved in a discussion accept a com-

promise to waive their claims for the good of all (Jian & Xiaolin 2011). Managers have to be aware that avoiding conflicts is only a temporary solution, as concluded by Fotohabadi, Kelly, Naert, and Sopp (2015). Therefore, engaging employees in a constructive discussion on the subject is promising in the longer term. To build rapport, managers have to consider the respective opinions of subordinates carefully to find an agreement that is acceptable to all parties involved.

3.3 A model for success: the relevance of rapport and rewarding relationships in everyday work abroad

Respect is a significant feature of the company culture and part of the working life. Furthermore, it is a form of appreciation and interest towards colleagues. Companies often fail to establish manners that guarantee mutual respect among individuals and both employee satisfaction and corporate performance may suffer from that (Chang et al., 2013; Simmons, 1993). A study conducted by meinungsraum.at (2012) interviewed 300 employees and 200 executive employees and jobseekers regarding respect at the workplace. Eighty-one stated that they feel respected by others at work, whereas only two thirds perceived their work performance as sufficiently valued. In contrast, the 85 percent of employees belonging to the higher level management stated that their actions have been esteemed adequately. In conclusion, the greater the freedom of action is in the job, the more appreciation is experienced by employees, irrespective of the hierarchical position within the company. The authors observe that reasons for the differences in job-satisfaction between higher level management and employees and jobseekers are closely linked to the area of responsibility. The more companies and executives value their employees, e.g., showing sincere gratitude for things achieved or taking time for a conversation, the higher the engagement and productivity will be.

It is worth mentioning that monetary incentives have little influence on employees' motivation. Respect shown by superiors increases the motivation of employees towards assigned duties and, consequently, increases their commitment as well. The

result may be an increased participation and a greater interest in corporate matters beside the daily job routine. As a further consequence, respect is the basis for a partnership of mutual benefits and for reaching success, as illustrated below by the Pyramid of Success in Figure 5:

Figure 5: Pyramid of Success

According to Klimecki and Gmür (2005), the surrounding environment merely has an impact on single motives of people whereas behavioral patterns primarily depend on the respective person. Incentives to motivate and satisfy employees have to be in accordance with their attitude. The difficulty for MLMs is to assign tasks which are in accordance with the skills of subordinates. Constantly changing circumstances in the corporate environment, internationalization and demographic change consistently modify the requirements on the leadership behavior of MLMs, as highlighted by

Jian and Xiaolin (2011). Responding to the individual needs of employees is a promising approach, since offering dissatisfied employees more money does not necessarily imply that their satisfaction increases (Tolleson Knee, 2014). An improved working climate contributes to establishing rewarding relationships, i.e., Step 2 of the Pyramid of Success. An exchange of views and ideas takes place and everybody involved may benefit from that. According to Lienhart (2011), respect is an important prerequisite for engagement in the job. Wherever managers give high priority to respect, higher efficiency can be achieved due to an increased readiness for work, e.g., through lower sickness or lower staff turnover rates. Furthermore, a better working environment enhances the performance within companies since mutual appreciation and respectful treatment go hand-in-hand with corporate success, which is the peak of the Pyramid of Success.

Another way to reach respect is empathizing with employees. To achieve this, it is important to be aware of one's own feelings. Sometimes, situations need to be re-evaluated. Ignoring one's own feelings opens up a new view on given circumstances and contributes to a better and objective understanding of other employees. Collectively, empathy empowers managers sent abroad to sympathize with others' issues and helps to detect and interpret their feelings (Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013). Both empathy and sympathy should not be considered as emotions themselves, but rather as responses to emotions of people.

3.4 Cultural awareness training: building up relationships and trust towards different cultures

Primarily, the aim of ICP in the context of foreign assignments is to school cultural awareness and to highlight the relevance culture has for people. Before starting to work with other cultures, participants must become aware of their own origins. To interact successfully with people from other areas, it is essential to acknowledge different cultures with diverse backgrounds. Intercultural understanding together with the knowledge about diversity enables learners to behave appropriately towards for-

eigners (Weiss, 1995). Accordingly, intercultural awareness describes the ability to realize behavioral patterns of others and is the starting point for intercultural learning processes. As stated by Bloom (1974), cultural awareness is a key element which is very useful for decision-making and helps one to consider various cultural aspects. Since military executive committees involve cultural factors in mission planning, a parallel with the preparation process of expatriates may be drawn. Cultural awareness training consists of crucial elements which are similar to those in the military context: general education, practical education, military planning and performing missions. For the purpose of preparing MLMs, these similarities may be adapted to economic interrelations. The aim of cultural awareness training is to improve the expatriate's ability to develop affective, cognitive and behavioral skills. Consequently, these three aspects should be considered as well when designing ICP for foreign assignments.

3.4.1 Competences required by MLMs that can be provided through intercultural education

Cultural education is based on the assumption of showing equality towards all people irrespective of their origin, language or appearance. Furthermore, heterogeneity is used as a learning tool since it contributes to becoming acquainted with people who have various personality types and cultural background. (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Bloom, 1974). At the very beginning of ICP, participants get instructions to becoming aware of the own strengths and abilities as this contributes to generating self-esteem and helps to become more familiar with oneself. All aspects that cause personal satisfaction are highlighted as it encourages improving oneself. For this purpose, acquaintances or close related persons are requested to reflect on the participant's positive and negative aspects. At this point, one or the other trait may come up which has not been considered so far. Additionally, it is helpful to constantly get feedback from trainers to incorporate that during the learning process (Heijke, Meng, & Ris, 2003).

Since many employees have a critical attitude towards themselves, mistakes of others are rather tolerated than own one's. Being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses helps to benefit from constructive criticism and contributes to improving and developing oneself. As simple as it sounds, encouraging words addressed to oneself raises one's mood (Hannigan 1990). Self-confidence highly depends on success and, hence, feelings which are associated with success can be used to increase motivation in any situation.

Empathy, as mentioned in Section 3.2.1, makes it possible to understand each other better and helps to find a common basis for talks. It is mostly about putting oneself in somebody's position and to raising one's interest for the other person. To achieve this, a change of perspective is mostly required. By getting some distance from the given situation things may be considered from a different view, as Schaefer and Guenther (2016) underline. Thus, new approaches to solving problems may be created.

Cultural differences often cause conflicts by reason of religion or identity issues. It is hard to treat each employee according to their origin or cultural values. A certain degree of interest in other cultures is essential to respect people and to reach agreement. In this context, according to Hofstede (1986), it should be emphasized that people particularly differ in terms of attitudes and desires. Expatriates face the challenge to consider a large variety of different cultures quickly since foreign assignments are limited in time. Within companies, there may be staff who is open-minded towards innovations and changes as well as jobholders who prefer to leave everything as it is. Consequently, expatriate managers have to deal with various kinds of employees (Ruttkowski 1978). The first mentioned group, for instance, is characterized by searching for new challenges that make life diverse. They are eager to try new things and do not want to commit themselves without trying everything from hobbies to food or other activities.

Related to training measures, qualified behavioral trainers face the challenge to make managers receptive for signals shown by employees and to enable them to

act properly. Employees who remain loyal to their previous behavior, in contrast to open-minded staff, seek stability and security and prefer to avoid surprises. Friends and family are very important, things should remain the same, and alterations are considered as dangerous since these employees favor stability (Ruttkowski, 1978). Further details that help managers to appropriately respond to employees are extensively reviewed in Section 3.2.1.

To make managers aware of characteristics of their own culture, it is essential to supply them with information about their origin and home culture from the perspective of others, e.g., the way others perceive one's culture. How local employees perceive expatriate managers is an important aspect when creating ICP. There are various relevant methods, like self-awareness building or self-perception which help to optimize the managers' appearance towards employees. As stated by Hofstede (1997), thinking, acting and feeling are determined by the experience gained over one's entire life. One's social environment is a major component which forms and influences behavior.

Understanding current circumstances and the behavior of others when working abroad is a challenging task for MLMs. It is challenging to move away from habits and customs and to adapt to new conditions because fixed patterns of thinking, acting and feeling have been established over numerous years. Within the scope of ICP, it is important to understand that relearning is even more difficult than learning anew. Thus, the aim of creating ICP for foreign assignment is not to change fundamental attitudes, it is more about making learners aware of other cultures, enabling them to recognize and understand behavior shown by natives, and finally, qualifying them to accept and respect others. In particular, Wilson et. al (2013) highlight that this includes the willingness to deal with behavioral patterns of employees and to change one's demeanor on request. To link this to a broader area apart from the economic sector, the mentioned facts are also valid for one's daily life, for instance, when meeting migrants or when studying abroad.

3.4.2 Behavioral competence: understanding decisions and actions made by staff of foreign cultures

Values shared by employees or whole departments indicate traits and qualities which are esteemed within companies and assign a desirable behavior to a certain situation. In some cultures, exact and formal conversational tones are preferred and constitute a value which is appreciated, whereas being open-minded is perceived as indiscreet. Many western cultures, however, consider it as important to seek a dialog with colleagues or business partners and perceive it as rejecting to treat somebody with reserve (Cottrell, Neuberg, & Li, 2007).

Accordingly, appropriate behavior is a very important aspect within companies and norms arise in terms of how things should be done. Exploring of such values and norms that influence and modify behavior is not easy as there are many impressions appearing simultaneously when perceiving a person. It is difficult to distinguish whether stimuli are observed consciously or not. Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) state that knowing somebody means to be able to anticipate somebody's actions based on motives and intentions.

3.4.3 The Onion Diagram: providing a better traceability of the behavior of staff from different cultures

The Onion Diagram created by Hofstede (1991), illustrated on the next page, is a pictorial representation which helps to understand one's own culture and to comprehend the behavior shown by others.
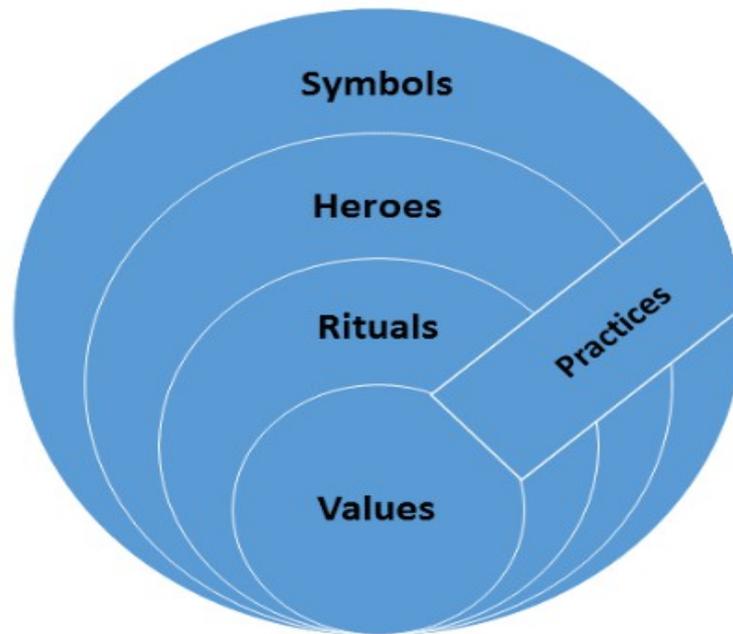
Figure 6: Onion Diagram
(adapted from Hofstede, 1991)

As shown by the Onion Diagram above, values, rituals, heroes and symbols are portrayed as an onion, whereas values are the most profound and symbols are the most easily accessible manifestations in terms of culture. The significance these four layers have for natives is not necessarily comprehensible for foreigners as it depends on the way values, rituals, heroes and symbols are interpreted (Hofstede, 1991). Values determine whether a specific behavior is accepted or not. Rituals describe constant and steady approaches which are embedded in the respective culture and are based on traditions of communities. Heroes are role models that possess traits which are highly valued within a culture. And finally, symbols are gestures or images with certain meanings that are exclusively recognizable by people of the same culture. The three layers rituals, heroes and symbols are called practices, as they are apparent to outsiders. As illustrated by the Onion Diagram, the level of diffi-

43

culty for understanding other cultures decreases from the inside to the outside. MLMs should be aware of hints like the style of clothing or the general way of speaking because such symbols can be assigned more easily to certain cultural areas than rituals, for instance, greetings or manners. Nevertheless, such rituals are aspects that are considered as necessary within communities and should be adopted quickly (Kádár & Ran, 2015).

3.4.4   Theory of Mind (ToM): helping MLMs to understand employees better

The ToM is a psychological approach which seeks to make assumption of the thoughts of others with the objective to put oneself in someone's position. When abroad, it is vital for managers to have a basic understanding of the culture of local employees and to comprehend that their perspectives or desires may differ from their own (Ondobaka, Kilner, & Friston, 2015). The way people behave reflects wishes, expectations or beliefs and, thus, it is possible to predict actions or intentions of someone else to a certain extent. For example, someone plays tennis regularly. Because the person is training, the person is convinced he/she is becoming better. In this case, people imply a desire (wish of becoming better) to a specific behavior (training). Moreover, the ToM to describe the behavior of others by referring to personal traits (Stone, Baron-Cohen, & Knight, 2013). It is an approach for managers to understand employees and their possible intentions. Based on that, one's own behavior can be adjusted and, consequently, managers may find a common basis for discussions with their employees.

3.4.5   Stereotyping: making MLMs aware of subtle differences that matter

Stereotypes are certain pictures of values and behavior that characterize people. Primarily, stereotypes provide support to understand and handle the numerous environmental impacts people are exposed to day by day. Indeed, it may not be advisable for MLMs to use such manifested categorizations to judge employees when ar-

riving abroad since cultures are involved in constant changes. Aspects which may have been applicable for specific cultural areas several years ago may no longer be appropriate (Hinton, 2000). Until the middle of the 20th century, findings from the area of anthropology expected a high degree of homogeneity within major groups or entire nations. Nowadays, the focus is increasingly set on smaller groups since researchers agree that the population of countries hardly share the same values and norms (Lyons & Kashima, 2001).

In the context of training, it is difficult to impart the importance and significance culture has for native workers to managers. Nations should not be defined as one unity, but are rather considered as a puzzle consisting of independent pieces that share common traits like values or norms (Breidenbach & Nyíri, 2009). ICP to that effect should generally focus on ways that make managers aware of prevalent cultural circumstances. The aim is to sensitize expatriates to treat each person individually instead of considering whole nations as one entity (Lyons & Kashima, 2001). The respective interests of staff should be considered as this says more about a person than one's native culture.

3.5 Leading staff appropriately and dealing with conflicts

Leading staff with different cultural backgrounds may result in disagreements. Since MLMs are mostly part of the operative business, it is their job to assign tasks comprehensibly to employees. When dealing with conflicts because of unclear instructions, it is important to recognize that disputes are quite often the result of insufficient tolerance and respect towards the behavior of others. MLMs have to assume that instructions may have not been illustrated clearly enough, and, hence, new ways of explaining tasks should be considered (Hemphill, 1959). Great emphasis should be placed on the exchange between future expatriate managers and former ones. Such a mutual exchange should contain details about the experience with native workers, social conditions or leisure opportunities (Brewster, 1995). If situations require an intervention, it is recommended to take suitable measures preferably

close to the time of misconduct. The inappropriate behavior is to be directly addressed to the issue and required problem-solving approaches should be elaborated based on the current situation instead of letting time pass (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991).

3.6 Didactic training: imparting basic information about the country of destination

The term didactic describes the process of teaching and learning. Since didactic theories describe how teaching and learning can be merged, the focus is set on making the process of teaching as effective as possible. There are some didactic aspects that require particular attention when creating ICP for managers going abroad (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985b). Firstly, the design of the training has to be specified in detail together with a clear vision of how information is provided. Basically, teachers or trainers can use face-to-face teaching, distance learning or a mixture of both. In case of face-to-face teaching, the teacher determines the extent of information that is taught during lessons. It is within his/her discretion whether classes start with sketchy information of countries and cultures or structured data and details. Sketchy information arouses interest towards several selected aspects and inspires and motivates listeners to think about the issues presented. It is up to the teachers and participants to decide whether detailed information is desired or not and, hence, any necessary adjustments may be done to guarantee effective ICP, as stated by Hofer, Soboll, and Jansen (2005).

In case of distance learning, prepared contents are made available via online tools. To a certain extent, the learners have the choice to decide which fields of information are of particular importance for them and which not. However, a fixed compilation of online units should be determined as well (Pathirana, Koster, Jong, & Uhlenbrook, 2012). Managers with prior experience in the field of foreign assignments may expect possibilities to generate new insights in addition to the supplied didactic training. Mostly, they are interested in a mutual exchange with other experts from the same area. This is explored more in detail in the following section.

3.6.1 Cognitive competence training: acquiring knowledge to find one's way abroad

Human experience and behavior is influenced by cognition. The term cognition describes the transformation of information into knowledge and, thus, the ability to conceive and understand the environment or what has been said (Rasmussen, 2012). A variety of competences are attributed to the area of cognitive abilities, like learning, attention, creativity, introspection or perception, to name a few. Cognition comprises almost everything that is related to thinking. The interaction between the respective situation and available cognitions leads to certain emotions and behavior. The processing of information uses schemes which are tools that help to ascribe a meaning to a given piece of information, and, thus, is a simplified representation of the current situation reduced to the essentials. This allows one to behave according to the respective circumstances without considering each aspect from the very beginning. Since MLMs are exposed to many new impressions after arriving abroad, using schemes facilitate the entry into work routine (Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004). In the context of learning, the use of schemes is of high importance as it helps to store information in the long-term memory. Moreover, schemes support the organization of knowledge as information can be assigned to one single scheme. Resulting from that, the cognitive effort is reduced significantly since only the required scheme has to be retrieved.

Didactic training as part of cognitive competence training delivers facts and figures which are needed to create schemes. In the case of ICP for foreign assignments, this includes details about the political situation, residents, religion, economy, lifestyle, historical characteristics like holidays, important personalities or geographical particularities (Hofstede, 1986). The aim is to provide general information right up to specific details of the respective culture in the form of films, lectures or written compositions.

3.6.2 Intercultural training as part of ICP: requirements on content and trainers

Often, the aptitude of intercultural trainers is measured by the extensive knowledge of other cultures, international experience or a profound pedagogical education. However, it is the role of trainers to serve as cultural mediators and to arbitrate between experienced and less experienced managers. The area of competence of intercultural trainers, for instance, includes the analysis of controversial situations managers may face abroad together with the development of solution approaches. Intercultural trainers must be able to deal with criticism or emotions shown by the participants during the lessons and have to take this into account when imparting teaching and learning contents. In this context, trainers need to be familiar with social competences like communication skills, conflict ability, empathy and motivational capabilities (Hijzen, Martins, Upward, & Schank, 2010). When it comes to raising consciousness towards other cultures, disagreements among the participants of ICP for foreign assignments may arise. On the one hand, it is up to the trainer to make these conflicts transparent and to ensure a joint handling of the issue. On the other hand, such disagreements offer a good opportunity to demonstrate possible methods of resolution with the aid of real conflict situations.

Occasionally, managers may complain about the obligation to participate in ICP since they consider it as criticism towards their previous performance. This is frequently the case if participants do not realize the necessity and potential of such trainings. Furthermore, it may happen that participating managers feel disappointed by the training as they expect to receive a concrete guideline or a course of action they can apply. Such generally valid approaches which provide solutions for all possible issues irrespective of the given situation do not exist. However, in the area of intercultural management there are no all-encompassing solutions, but there are various concepts which, depending on the situation, provide more or less promising problem-solving approaches (Healy & Bourne Jr, 2013). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the trainer to cope with individual circumstances of each participant.

Especially the number of participants plays a crucial role in designing ICP. The smaller the group, the more specific the program can be and the better the needs of the participants will be met.

3.7 Training methods to help managers adjust to foreign working conditions

To guarantee an optimal preparation of expatriate managers, several training approaches have to be considered. Basically, it is up to the sending company to decide which kind of training is most suitable for the respective purpose. The aim of interaction training, as one possible training approach, is to adequately prepare MLMs to handle various situations that are likely to occur abroad (Hijzen et al., 2010). Running through various scenarios is a promising approach in training sessions as it gives a basic understanding of how it may be in the host country later on. By giving participants the impression of having experienced almost everything that may happen abroad, they overcome most apprehensions associated with the foreign assignment.

To cope with everyday life abroad, foreign language training should be part of ICP since basic skills in English or in the local language of the respective country are essential. The language itself represents a significant part of the host country's culture and the knowledge of basic phrases is a sign of appreciation (Kidd et al. 2016). During foreign assignments, managers will have contact with both fellow workers and residents and, consequently, it has to be highlighted that an extended basic knowledge of the local language or English enables them to reduce the amount of misinterpretations and facilitates and shortens the acclimatization period.

3.7.1 Adapting the style of communication to respective circumstances

ICP in the area of communication seeks to give managers skills and abilities which are necessary to adapt appropriately to the cultural circumstances abroad. Since the way people communicate with each other varies greatly, Golden and Johnson (1983) underline that a mixture of several factors must be taken into account to interpret the information provided during a chat correctly. Irrespective of special peculiarities, employees show diverse modes of behavior when talking to colleagues or superiors. Expatriates should observe how local employees communicate with each other. Subsequently, it is important to identify aspects which are culture-specific and to take this into account for further interactions. To guarantee constructive talks, one person (the sender) passes on information to somebody else (the receiver) with the intent to convey a message clearly and comprehensibly. The so-called communication loop is considered as completed once the receiver confirms that all information provided has been understood (Traut-Mattausch, Wagner, & Jonas, 2015). When giving orders, for instance, the conversation is finished once the employee concerned gives the impression that everything is clear.

A well-known method to describe various styles of communication is The Platinum Rule, as stated by Alessandra (1996). It characterizes four different core behaviors and allows managers to categorize themselves in one of the four styles as illustrated on the next page.
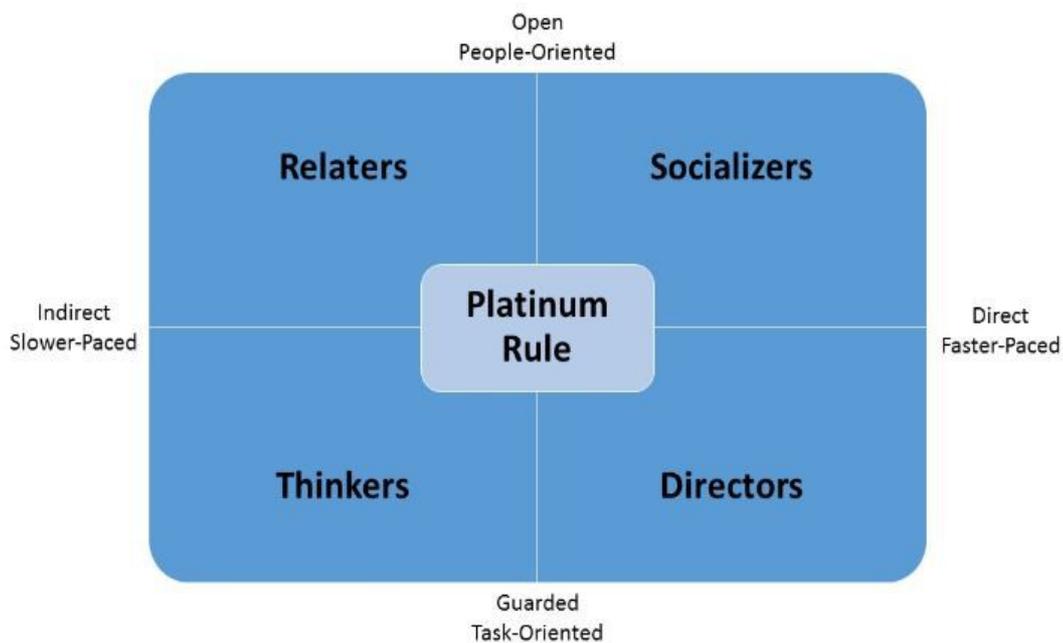
Figure 7: The Platinum Rule

(adapted from Alessandra, 1996)

The aim is to treat others the way they would like to be treated. In addition, it helps to better identify the type of communication of others to find the right approach for conversations. Especially within the context of foreign assignments, cultural differences are aggravating circumstances.People assigned to the type Relater are relationship orientated as they consider it important to share feelings and listen to issues, needs and desires of conversation partners. By sharing feelings, they get the chance to experience physical closeness and, hence, feel sufficiently confident to support others in handling their problems (Golden & Johnson, 1983). They want to be treated with restraint and bring along much gentleness and safety awareness. As Relaters tend to behave conservatively, managers should be aware of a careful wording when talking with them and should contribute to a pleasant and quiet discussion atmosphere. It takes some time until Relaters open up, but even if they do so, it has to be noticed that they have difficulties in dealing with pressure and need

time to make decisions. Invalidating statements through the use of arguments should be avoided as they prefer to exchange views and listen to each other. At the end of a conversation, expatriate managers should attempt to reach mutual agreement towards the topics discussed to set the further course of action.

Socializers attach great value to relationships as the interaction with other people is an important way for them to participate in social life. Personal appreciation is commonly used by them as it helps to increase reputation and to make new friends (Golden & Johnson, 1983). They are fast-moving and self-confident and welcome people with a direct and honest nature. Socializers are risk-seeking and suitable for team work. Conversation partners should seek to make eye contact with them to create a pleasant conversation atmosphere. Humor and charm together with necessary seriousness provide the basis for successful discussions with socializers. Nevertheless, they prefer to put results, agreements as well as further proceedings down on paper.

People of the type Thinker are known for their analytical approach and striving for perfection. They need time to approach others as they are cautious and prefer to work alone (Golden, 1983). It may take a while until they expose information about themselves, so conversation partners must take into account that this kind of behavior is not a sign of rejection or disrespect. Thinkers are of great importance for managers as they are reliable and follow directions. A formal conversational tone and a cultivated choice of words together with a relaxed manner are ideal when chatting with them. Causality is important to them since they need logical explanations of all options before making a decision. Thinkers favor punctuality and controlled procedures to avoid everything associated with risk.

To complete the different types of communication illustrated by Alessandra (1996), the last type called Director is introduced. People of this type are task-orientated and show competitive behavior but put less effort into interpersonal relationships. Independence is a prime objective since results are more important for them than sharing feelings (Falkheimer & Heide, 2015). They do not care much about interpreting

the behavior of others. Although Directors appear dominating, it is possible for superiors to successfully work with them by giving clear instructions. Similar to Thinkers, punctuality is absolutely necessary and points of an agenda have to be edited step by step. Although they may seem intimidating, managers should talk in a decisive and firm voice with clear instructions. Since Directors are always well-prepared, they expect the same from the counterpart.

Basically, it is more enjoyable to talk with people who share the same values and attitudes because fewer things are misunderstood and mutual trust can be established more easily. To avoid ineffective conversations and problems, all four communication styles mentioned previously should be considered by managers as far as possible when talking with superiors or subordinates (Falkheimer & Heide, 2015). To summarize, the type of communication people belong to vary greatly and depend on numerous elements. It is vital to observe the shown behavior with a certain distance to avoid the drawing of wrong conclusions. Furthermore, it does not make sense to force one's communication partner to use the same communication style. Well-prepared expatriate managers constantly seek to find a consensus and adjust to the dialog structure of others

3.7.2 Ways to adjust to the respective situation: improving one's style of communication

At a first meeting, people tend to make an initial assessment of the person vis-à-vis. In case of bad initial impressions, people may communicate denying signals which create insecurity among the communication partners. Subsequently, if managers desire a certain behavior of their subordinates, they act in a manner that favors the desired behavior. This approach called Pygmalion Effect is based on the research of Rosenthal and Babad (1985). Instead of the usage of intimidatory behavior towards staff, an encouraging and respectful leadership style may lead to better results. Thus, if managers treat employees the way they could be instead of how they actually are, employees may unleash their true potential.

To share the perspectives of others, several aspects have to be considered. If people want to exchange views regarding an event, they have to exchange representations as well (Frye & Moore, 2014). A representation is the visualization of unapparent aspects which only exists in one's mind, similar to imaginations or perceptions. When having a discussion, people discuss various details of a topic and represent their own position. In case of different views, managers should be aware that one's perspective is merely one among many others and should avoid to getting involved in disputes (Isoda & Noritake, 2013).

To summarize, representations are designed to store and organize interpersonal experiences, desires and emotions. These mental states are reproductions of the environment. A change of perspective helps MLMs to consider different points of view from staff of various cultural backgrounds. Social cognition, a term within the area of social psychology, describes how people make thoughts, feelings, aims and incentives of others accessible. Furthermore, it is a process of understanding people, relationships and social groups (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). One major aspect of social cognition within the context of preparing MLMs for going abroad is to bring to mind that people observe events or social occasions differently. Naturally, each person experiences the environment in various ways, and, hence, social cognition should urge managers to include the current situation of others before making decisions.

3.8   Language as manifestation of the origin of people

From a cultural view, languages reflect the evolutionary adaption of groups to environmental changes. As the acquisition of speech highly depends on the social environment, implicit and unconscious processes modify languages from time to time. This makes it difficult for managers sent abroad to correctly interpret statements of locals (Bonvillain, 2013). Languages reflect social norms, values, the intercultural surrounding as well as the way people treat each other. Keeping this in mind, language is not exclusively used for communication as it comprises values and identities and constitutes an opportunity to express one's culture.

English is the most widespread language used worldwide and, hence, a profound knowledge of English is necessary for managers. Whilst linguists predict that many of other languages will disappear during this century, English will increase in significance. The majority of secondary languages is spoken by less than 10 000 people (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Languages change as a response to economic and social alterations that happen all over the world and migration shows to what extent languages adapt to new surroundings.

4 Research Method

4.1 Assumptions to be checked

Since there are not many findings in regard to preparation processes of MLMs for foreign assignment, a qualitative research approach is most suitable. Therefore, this diploma thesis is primarily exploratory in nature. Several experts with a profound knowledge in the area of intercultural management and personnel provision have been interviewed. The following section includes the formulated hypotheses (in italics) which display the main area of research.

As stated by Gertsen (1990), it is suggested that experience based learning approaches are particularly suitable in the area of intercultural management. The assumption that has been tested to that effect is:

H1) *The more specifically MLMs are prepared for foreign assignments for particular areas, the better they will implement managerial tasks and the more successfully they will implement intercultural ways of thinking and acting in everyday work.*

In addition, trainings can be vital for a successful start of work in the target country. Hence, the hypothesis has been formulated as:

H2) *The better preparation programs prepare for the stage after arrival, the faster and easier managers can start their daily business on-site and the better they will implement the objectives defined.*

As the ability of putting oneself in someone's position plays a key role in interpreting non-verbal messages and signals of others, the effect of empathy has been examined:

H3) *The more empathy MLMs possess, the better they will interpret the behavior of others and the easier they will reach rapport.*

4.2 Research design and description of the research approach

The choice of the research design for creating a diploma thesis is of high importance as the quality of the results highly depends on the type of survey. To get appropriate information, interviews with experts from various companies and fields of activities have been conducted. A mixture of online questionnaires and face-to-face interviews has been applied for the collection of information (Creswell, 2013). For the face-to-face interviews, a questionnaire was prepared. Furthermore, the aim was to engage the interview partners in a conversation to get to know additional information about their area of expertise. The interface of the online questionnaires was designed in such a way that the interviewees could easily answer the questions. The three persons participating in the online survey received an e-mail which consisted of an introduction of the research purpose, an online link to access the online questionnaire and an acknowledgement for participating in the research project. The questions were the same as in the face-to-face interviews, supplemented with additional information to define each question in detail. One single click opened the online questionnaire and an easy-to-understand surface guided the interviewees through the questions. Additionally, the participants were asked to answer the essay questions in a transparent and plausible way.

All results of the conducted interviews are covered in Chapter Five. The questions asked and the corresponding replies are prepared in textual form and are categorized according to the contents. The opinions of the managers primarily represent the preparation of managers for foreign assignments in their company but also include personal statements to that effect. As the interviewed managers come from a variety of countries across Europe, the results give diverse views on how training for foreign assignments may be arranged. Moreover, all of the interviewed persons have extensive experience in international management.

Interview Partner A is currently part of the business development department of the Lagermax Autotransport Straßwalchen. He has been working for the company for 12 years in various departments. His main function is the evaluation of future business

subsidiaries in foreign areas. Another task is to maintain relations and contacts between branches in Middle and Eastern Europe.

Interview Partner B is part of the car transport management at GEFCO Benelux Automotive in France. His area of responsibility covers the development of planning, controlling and optimization processes of the company's international fleet management. Due to the application of standardized software to facilitate the work of dispatchers in several countries, he has to handle the exchange of computer specialists who are deployed in various branches.

Interview Partner C is head of the management department at the Lagermax Autotransport d.o.o. in Croatia. Several expatriate managers from other branches are part of his team for a limited amount of time.

Interview Partner D works in the human resource department of a producer of textile and non-woven cellulose. Among other things, she is responsible for the support of expatriate managers all over the world. The company regards the positioning of future executives as very important, since they are operating worldwide.

Interview Partner E is a marketing manager at the company Sport 2000, a sports retailer with its headquarters in Austria. Because of her position as head of marketing, she is responsible for the coordination of the marketing appearance of the retailer group within Central Europe.

Interview Partner F is part of the human resource management department at a company from the timber production sector and serves as a project manager for sales representatives. She is occasionally responsible for the preparation of employees for their deployment abroad and for giving them support during that time.

Interview Partner G is part of the international management division of a transport company with fields of activity in Austria and Eastern Europe. Since the extension of business to sea freight services, two new harbor sites were added which require appropriate line managers from the middle hierarchies.

Interview Partner H is director of production in an engineering company specialized in manufacturing foils. Prior to his current position, he has worked in the USA and Arabian regions in subsidiaries for several months.

4.3 Data evaluation

Based on a qualitative content analysis, all relevant aspects are summarized in the concluding section to ensure a transparent interpretation of the statements given by the interviewees. All face-to-face interviews have been recorded and conversations which strayed from the questions asked have been separated. In case of the online questionnaire, the intention was to formulate the questions in a clearly understandable way to avoid too much deviation from the issues asked. Therefore, the amount of irrelevant information given via the online questionnaire has been low. The aim of the use of a qualitative content analysis was to form categories and to make the process of analysis fully understandable to outsiders (Morse & Mitcham, 2002). The information gathered from both face-to-face interviews and online questionnaires enable pointing out problems in making ICP for MLMs going abroad and provide suggested improvements for the preparation processes.

4.4 Results of the quantitative interviews

As already explained in detail in Section 4.3, categories have been formed to summarize the findings of the interviews. In order to ensure a better overview, similar statements of the interviewees are summarized as follows: most/some interviewees stated, Interviewee A and B mentioned or most companies use.

4.4.1 Identifying the need for sending staff abroad and selection criteria

In most interviews conducted, the selection of appropriate managers is an important aspect when planning foreign assignments. It depends on the need in respective countries or branches whether the headquarters send staff abroad or not. An indicator for personnel demand in foreign branches are new projects, as Interview Partner A stated when asked how demand is identified within his department. In order to attract new customer groups in regions outside of existing markets, particularly experienced employees are chosen to guarantee a successful processing of the project.

Furthermore, Interview Partner C underlined that processes at the headquarters have to run smoothly before managers are sent abroad, and, hence, disagreed with the previously mentioned statement of Interview Partner A. Sending competent MLMs abroad for new projects is a good idea when a project is absolutely crucial and indispensable for the further existence of the company, but as he highlighted, just in this case. Since managers from the middle hierarchies usually take responsibility for entire divisions, removing them from a department to send them to subsidiaries may weaken the branch where the manager previously worked. As a result, full support from the headquarters for projects abroad cannot be given. However, if sufficient personnel resources are available, only then the company of Interview Partner C starts a project and sends managers abroad.

Interview Partner G stated that a preliminary selection is usually done by taking age and educational level into account. For extended periods abroad, the family status of managers will be considered additionally. He added the need for open-minded and flexible employees who are ready for continuous training. Interview Partner D, part of a MNC, mentioned that one single branch has no decision-making authority as the headquarters are responsible for key decisions. However, she gives reason to doubt such an approach because the headquarters do not really know much about respective branches where MLMs will be deployed. In her opinion, the headquarters should not decide on its own whether managers are qualified for foreign assignments or not.

As mentioned by some interviewees, openness to other cultures is necessary to ensure that assignments are completed to the satisfaction of the company. Tolerance as a crucial aspect has been explicitly mentioned by Interview Partner H, since the company has very close trading relationships with Arabic countries. Due to the current situation, the company gives much attention to religious aspects. In most companies of the interviewed experts, a mixture of specific job requirements and language proficiency related to concrete projects is applied for the selection process. Furthermore, age and educational level are right at the top of the agenda. Depending on the duration of the assignment, the respective marital status of the candidates is just as relevant as expertise.

4.4.2   Educational training measures for successful preparation

The time period companies make available for preparation programs vary greatly. Beginning with some lessons up to several weeks are usual for ICP according to most interviewees. Most programs are created based on the current situation and measures are taken close to the departure of the managers. As emphasized by Interview Partner B, too little attention is paid to the concrete requirements of the the target country as briefings and preparation processes often fail to equip managers with appropriate skills.

4.4.3   Findings and views concerning the pre-departure and post-departure phase of foreign assignments

To guarantee a successful pre-departure training, most interviewees agreed that information needed for foreign assignments should be made available via an online platform. Most companies use intranet systems to provide relevant information digitally and to give managers the access to relevant data. These datasets contain basic information of the target country like the currency and the current exchange rate, the

most common religions, insurers or the number of inhabitants. It has also been high-lighted that it is useful to convey basic principles of the legal framework and the health care system. The determination of a contact person who is available for any matters even before departure may help to avoid ambiguities beforehand. If problems in private matters arise, a contact person may help to solve such issues. Visiting the target country in advance seems to be a good way to become acquainted with the local circumstances, as some interviewees stated, but due to lack of time and willingness from the managers concerned, look-and-see trips are rarely performed.

To a great extent, the trainings consist of general culture specific preparation measures but support in how to solve occurring problems on-site is rarely given. Pertaining to the post-arrival phase, the respective branches on-site are mainly responsible for providing information, organizing meetings for a first acquaintance or making contact with other expatriate managers. Most interviewees stated that support for the spouse or family of the expatriate managers is desired, since their welfare influences the manager's welfare as well. Regarding this, language training for the whole family and activities to get in contact with the new country have been mentioned. For the period after returning from foreign deployments, no concrete procedures have been stated by the interviewees. Interview Partner A mentioned that feedback discussions take place, but this is more about reflecting on the whole deployment without drawing certain conclusions for future foreign assignments.

4.4.4 Suggestions of the interviewees to qualify managers and employees to speak the same language

Within most companies of the interviewees, there are no specific measures taken that help to guarantee an ideal exchange of communication among managers and employees within branches and departments in various countries. More or less, MLMs are sent abroad without getting information about the way employees communicate between each other in the target branch. As indicated from Interview Part-

ner E, she confirms that managers and employees learn to deal with the manners on-site over time. The corporate philosophy, as she mentioned, is used to convey the basic principles of the organization and invites employees to orientate their behavior towards these principles. However, a mere fraction of the interviewed managers mentioned that language problems apart from other communication issues occur frequently.

Most interviewees are clearly aware that the headquarters and all branches should have similar standards about how employees should treat each other, but, due to cultural differences, it is almost impossible to establish such standards of conduct. Cultural preparation programs are an option which has been mentioned by some interviewees. Communication trainings which instruct assertive and reserved behavior according to the given situation would be necessary according to Interviewees B and E, but are almost non-existent.

4.4.5   Usage of online tools for intercultural learning

Online tools for the preparation of expatriate managers are used in almost every company of the interview partners, except in the ones of Interview Partners G and H. In these organizations, printed information sheets and folders are usually used. The other interview partners confirm great benefits from applying online tools as a supplement to didactic learning approaches and call it a holistic approach that helps to communicate intercultural competence. As Interview Partner G emphasized, the mediation of some considerable facts at the beginning of ICP is a good way to give managers a first impression, but the exchange with returning expatriates or very experienced employees is essential too. Since countries have a variety of manners and customs, such aspects may be understood when spending some time on-site.

4.4.6   Results concerning preparation and training needed for MLMs

As stated by Interview Partner C, it is very important to adapt to the manners and customs of foreign countries immediately after arriving to prevent major discrepancies. "The personal resilience of the people you are sending abroad is crucial", is the opinion of Interview Partner B. He mentioned that many managers, especially MLMs, are sent abroad to gain experience. It is part of the corporate philosophy to "throw them in at the deep end" to evaluate how the chosen person is doing. It does not mean that managers are assigned abroad without preparation, but, as he emphasized, it is considered as a practical test whether they are able to handle difficult situations or not. Concerning a manager from the timber production sector, Interview Partner D is convinced that it is very important to prepare employees appropriately in respect of language, cultural behavior and work function. Especially when managers are sent to non-European countries, e. g. China, India, or the USA, she highlights that they will face numerous problems, and it may take a long time to get the acceptance of natives if they are not sufficiently prepared.

4.4.7   Problems that may occur when MLMs are sent abroad

This section includes additional statements on questions from the interview partners which have not been explicitly asked but resulted from the dialog Nonetheless, these statements are of importance for generating a meaningful list of recommendations for ICP.

The term forthrightness is interpreted differently in many countries. Although it suggests acceptance towards the conversation partner, not all people practice this. In case of criticism, a careful choice of words influences the course of conversation dramatically. Nonetheless, interviewed managers agreed with the fact that a firm and decisive tone is essential to voice opinions clearly. The way information is as-

similated strongly depends on the cultural context, as mentioned by Interview Partner B. When briefing employees in China, for instance, he regularly experiences that they remain silent whether or not the task has been understood. As several interview partners stated, it is very difficult for expatriates to judge one's counterpart. Numerous new impressions cannot be handled appropriately and may cause uncertainty or, subsequently, lead to doubts. When confronted with different cultures, it is difficult to call up one's knowledge of human nature within a short period to show an appropriate behavior.

Verbal communication is much dependent on both personality and cultural surrounding. As mentioned by three interviewees, it is difficult to interpret words and contents of conversations correctly. Expatriates often have fewer problems with interpreting expressions and gestures than with interpreting words. Disagreements presented in a rough voice are clearly comprehensible, whereas words expressed without gesticulation make it difficult to understand statements. Since gestures vary greatly, problems might occur in recognizing whether an agreement took place or not. On the one hand, a nod may imply that a conversational partner agrees to what has been stated or, on the other hand, just indicates that one's attention has been attracted. Moreover, the level of language does not mirror whether a manager is interested in the culture of a foreign country or not. On the contrary, insufficient language skills do not necessarily imply that managers are not interested in the local culture.

As mentioned by Interview Partner E, building teams abroad is difficult as most local workers are not educated in how to work with managers from abroad. Instead of forming efficient teams that support each other adequately, cliques consisting of members coming from the same region or with equal educational backgrounds may come together. Usually, such formations do not cause direct harm to the company, however, much potential due to insufficient mutual support gets lost.

Employees often have different ideas of what is in the company's interest or not, as Interview Partner E suggested and added that different expectations between team members towards the results of certain projects make it even more difficult to find

common ground. Some employees attach particular importance to personal relationships and acquaintances may turn into friendships over time. As Interview Partner H implied, within his company it has been observed that interpersonal relationships do not influence the work performance significantly but stand in close connection with overall satisfaction. Cooperation is highly valued within the company's philosophy and, hence, expatriates should focus on getting as much information as possible from local employees, according to him.

Several interviewed managers complained that there is a lack of encouragement from local employees, especially from those that are directly subordinated to expatriates. Quite often, the local staff is not privy to the working methods displayed by expatriate managers and therefore, reacts with incomprehension and refusal. As almost all of the interviewees confirmed, the first couple of weeks seem to be crucial whether deployed managers get accustomed to the new environment or not. Furthermore, it highly depends on the personality if managers involved successfully adapt to new circumstances or not. As provided by interview partner C, activities and hobbies should be adapted to the new living environment as quickly as possible to feel comfortable for the rest of the stay. It is difficult to find the right balance between keeping up with family, friends and acquaintances at home and engaging oneself in new things on site. To help MLMs to feel welcome, offering a wide range of activities is one possible approach, but in conclusion, managers should decide by themselves to what extent they want to make use of it.

5 Conclusions: recommendations for the preparation of MLMs for foreign assignments

According to Neill (2008), the literature points out that an adequate preparation of managers before starting foreign assignments is of vital importance for success. Providing adequate information combined with training approaches that prepare for tasks abroad are essential. Since many project managers or heads of department are part of the middle management, as stated by Zhou (2016), it is usual that employees of this hierarchy level are preferably sent abroad. Another reason for sending this specific group of employees abroad is that they have experience in fulfilling management functions, executive duties and project-related tasks. Since the literature mostly refers to expatriate managers without reference to the level of hierarchy they belong to, this thesis seeks to examine what has to be explicitly considered to successfully prepare MLMs for foreign assignments. Furthermore, all advices for the preparation are given for stays that last at least one year.

Findings in the area of cross-cultural training confirm the need of ICP for expatriates to fulfil assignments satisfactorily. As stated by most of the interviewees, it is of high importance to customize ICP to fit the needs of managers. Responsible staff for designing such trainings has to consider among other things the personality of future delegated managers to find the ideal procedure that conveys the diversity of various cultures. Since it is hard to predict the learning progress of each participant, allowing them sufficient time is important.

There are high demands on expatriate managers towards traits and skills needed for tasks abroad. However, it must be noted that a rise in requirements for foreign assignments goes hand-in-hand with a decrease in effectiveness of the training since too many aspects can be hardly incorporated. Basically, it has to be decided whether ICP is created for one target country only (a culture specific training) or for several cultural areas (a general culture training suitable for many cultural areas). ICP created for one area only seems most promising, as Section 5.1.1 confirms.

The basic steps when creating preparation programs for MLMs before sending them abroad vary and have to be adapted to the respective organizational circumstances, according to the interviews. At the very beginning, it is essential to determine a single person or a group of people who are responsible for all training and preparation measures. Such a central contact is essential to guarantee a successful co-ordination of all participants and persons involved. Subsequently, instructors, mentors, and administrative personnel who design the classes and serve as a place to go for all possible organizational issues have to be determined. In case of ICP which includes several managers going to several countries, it has to be set whether they receive individual training according to the respective target country or group trainings that cover various countries. Based on the experience gained from the expert interviews, a general introduction for all participating managers which imparts information in how to deal with foreign cultures appears promising. This introduction need not contain country or area specific details but should be equally suitable for all participants. In further consequence, the respective level of knowledge of the participants along with their motives and expectations towards the ICP should be taken into account.

Basically, participants with similar experiences in terms of foreign assignments should be grouped together. As already mentioned, one benefit in this respect is the possibility to adjust the training to the existing skills and knowledge of the participating managers. Subsequently, the preparation program can build on a certain basis of knowledge and, hence, a best use of available resources is given. Grouping together participants according to the cultural area they will be working in is another way to design ICP. The advantage of such a method, in contrast to grouping together participants with similar experience, is that the focus can be laid on cultural aspects rather than on prior knowledge. Prior knowledge can be taken into account as well but should only serve as support when conveying the course contents. Experience from experts who have exclusively operated in one specific area is less influenced by cultural diversity and various views and, hence, disagrees with Hypothesis H1, *"The more specifically MLMs are prepared for foreign assignments for particular areas, the better they will implement managerial tasks and the more successfully*

they will implement intercultural ways of thinking and acting in everyday work", in terms of showing a better work performance during foreign assignments. The findings from the interviews confirm that putting too much focus on several areas presents as counterproductive since MLMs may not be adequately prepared for further deployments somewhere else.

The method of teaching also depends on the group size as the number of participants is limited for face-to-face teaching in contrast to distance learning approaches where almost an unlimited number can attend. Based on the expert interviews, a mixture of frontal teaching and distance learning seems promising. The percentage of distance learning (providing edited documents and online learning tools) should correspond to the percentage of face-to-face classes. Face-to-face teaching should be primarily used to apply the learned contents from distance learning and to address arising questions to the trainers.

Initially, a structured course of action which contains all necessary steps of the ICP should be determined. Findings confirm that participants show more involvement when they are integrated into the planning stage of ICP as they feel co-responsible for its success or failure (O' Neill, Feldman, Vandenberg, Dejoy, & Wilson, 2011). In addition, participants will give more likely suggestions for improvements and contribute to the development of such programs. Upon completion of the ICP, sufficient opportunities for giving feedback on the training should be provided to evaluate its success.

One major aim of ICP is to enable MLMs to perform well in the intercultural context (Zakaria, 2000). It is of high importance for executive personnel to be able to change from the management style practiced at home to a management style adapted to a foreign culture. Within the usual working environment as already mentioned several times, MLMs act as mediators between the strategic top level management and the operative core. However, when abroad, it is possible that the manager's tasks will change since new functions may include executive duties as well. New sets of circumstances often come along with the problem that managers have to deal with

contradictory tasks which may lead to conflicts, e.g., they have to handle both setting strategic goals and being responsible for the operational implementation. This confirms Hypothesis H2, *"The better preparation programs prepare for the stage after arrival, the faster and easier managers can start their daily business on-siteand the better they will implement the objectives defined",* and highlights the importance of preparatory measures for the time after arrival. It is important to give managers the certainty to be sufficiently prepared for their tasks abroad as they may get instructions from superiors and have to lead employees and departments at the same time. Based on the findings from the interviews conducted, it has to be highlighted that the psychological stress related to the new working environment may influence the performance of delegated MLMs.

5.1 Various training approaches to convey the skills needed

A promising training approach to convey contents via group work is cooperative learning. Managers work together in small groups, share their experiences and give mutual support to maximize the learning success for each participant. Since MLMs are often deployed as project managers abroad, it is advisable to use cooperative learning to give the opportunity to apply the knowledge learned. During the introduction phase when working abroad, it is vital that MLMs know how to communicate with colleagues from the top and the lower management level on site. This is an indication that targeted preparatory trainings are necessary for the successful start of the daily business of managers on-site and verifies Hypothesis H2, *"The better preparation programs prepare for the stage after arrival, the faster and easier managers can start their daily business on-site and the better they will implement the objectives defined".* Moreover, MLMs need to be taught how to work together and how to work in the interest of others since they often represent the company towards external parties like authorities or stakeholders. During foreign assignments, they are involved in numerous projects and should gain an understanding whether it is essential to work independently or whether it is better to work in teams.

In case of teamwork, they need to know how to behave according to the given situation. Interpersonal social manners are as important as the acceptance of the opinion of others.

To return to teaching measures, cooperation in terms of learning brings along many advantages. The discussion of given issues within groups may contribute to finding solutions which are extensive and complete since various opinions are presented by various participants. Hence, trainers should assign tasks which demand a sense of community to foster the team spirit. When fulfilling the given tasks, participants may realize that mutual support brings advantages for the group and each group member. In regard to intercultural learning approaches, didactic learning should be used as an entry measure to impart basic information, as several interviewees confirmed. Primarily, managers should get basic information about the culture and usual patterns of the inhabitants of the host country. Facts and figures about the way of life of people from the target country offer great support for expatriates. Together with information concerning the current political situation and economic conditions, expatriates will get first impressions of the given living circumstances. However, it must be noted that didactic learning approaches do not replace personal interactions but rather help managers to better cope with people abroad.

Experiential learning represents a good supplement to didactic learning approaches (see also Section 3.6) since a practical use of the learned contents takes place. In contrast to standard teaching methods, teachers present problems that may arise when being abroad and participating managers are encouraged to actively deal with them. In this context, learning mainly happens through the confrontation with real-life situations. It is the teacher's job to provide help when required, but primarily, it is the task of the participants to find common solutions independently. For instance, the use of role plays facilitate the simulation of possible conflicts. By giving feedback on the behavior shown by the participants, valuable information can be gathered to train new behaviors and reactions that help to cope with difficult situations and foreign cultures. As a result, managers may become more open-minded towards native cultures and adapt better to foreign circumstances. Moreover, findings from the in-

71

terviews highlight the benefits of role plays and affirm that appropriate behaviors and reactions need practice and should be part of ICP. Showing empathy is of central importance in this context since recognizing and understanding the person vis-à-vis is indispensable to resolve conflicts and verifies Hypothesis H3, *"The more empathy MLMs possess, the better they will interpret the behavior of others and the easier they will reach rapport"*.

Nevertheless, it should be stated that experiential learning does not intend to change personality traits of the participants. Consequently, didactic learning should be embedded when experiential approaches are taught as a basic knowledge towards cultures is a prerequisite within any intercultural meeting. Additionally, didactic training creates cultural awareness towards the culture of the host country and supports the use of experiential learning.

5.1.1 Recommendations for the pre-departure training

It should be noted that cross-cultural training is of high importance for the adaptation phase in new surroundings because managers have to realize the relevance culture has for local employees. It is vital that MLMs deployed abroad are able to adapt their behavior and conversational tone to the given conditions, as highlighted by most interviewees. Cooperative, didactic and experiential learning have to be part of the pre-departure training. It is the intention of didactic learning approaches to give participants basic information, as mentioned in Section 3.6, and, hence, it should be part of the introductory phase of ICP.

Since almost two thirds of all companies operating worldwide use briefings, as stated by Brewster (1995), this is an established method to give a basic understanding of foreign cultures. In addition, the role of work ethics in the target country should be highlighted as this is perceived differently in many places. Posted managers should get an idea of the loyalty local employees have towards their employer or

how much commitment they show at work. Providing sufficient information in this respect is important. Hence, this should be part of the preparation measures for the stage after arrival and confirms Hypothesis H2, *"The better preparation programs prepare for the stage after arrival, the faster and easier managers can start their daily business on-site and the better they will implement the objectives defined".*

ICP must not be designed exclusively for one country. In a first step, teachers and trainers may give an introduction of how it is to work abroad in general. A mixture of face-to-face teaching and encouraging participants to do research on their own about the target country appears promising in further consequence. With the aid of face-to-face teaching, trainers can give participants a first insight into how it may be to work abroad. The purpose is to encourage them to deal with the country or region they are assigned to. Österdahl and Hånberg (2009) mention look-and-see trips as a good way to give a first impression of the target country and to help to decide whether the manager really wants to go abroad or not. Moreover, such trips are a great opportunity to acquaint oneself with the local customs. Based on the information gathered from the study, look-and-see trips are a great opportunity prior to a first deployment, but have no significance for regular or recurring foreign assignments as companies consider the organizational effort for this not justified.

Due to the complex and diverse requirements of managers when sending them abroad, Hypothesis H1, *"The more specifically MLMs are prepared for foreign assignments, the better they will implement managerial tasks and the more successful they will implement intercultural ways of thinking and acting in everyday work",* cannot be confirmed completely. The insights of the Sections 4.4.4 and 4.4.5 confirm that too high a level of specialization may be unrewarding in certain cases since foreign assignments are characterized by steady changes and managers have to adapt to the altering circumstances. Imparting country-specific features are very important and should be part of any ICP, but primarily, as mentioned by Hypothesis H3, *"The more empathy MLMs possess, the better they will interpret thebehavior of others and the easier they will reach rapport"*, ways

of how to behave towards employees of other cultures and the acceptance of foreigners need to be emphasized. Furthermore, very specifically prepared managers can hardly be deployed somewhere else and may not be able to adjust to changing circumstances.

The spouse or family, if existing, should be included as well in the preparation process. In this regard, a distinction should be made between whether spouse and family remain at home or move abroad. In the first case, it is sufficient to provide them with some basic information regarding the target country, comparable to the aspects mentioned in Sections 3.6 and 4.4.3. If spouse and/or family come along, the preparation process is similar to the one offered to managers but without management specific contents, as the findings from the interviews confirm. Naturally, all job-related aspects mentioned in Section 3.5 do not belong to the ICP of spouse and family. With the aid of offering them appropriate preparatory measures, many problems aside from work life may be kept away from managers.

5.1.2 Recommendations for the post arrival training

After arrival, facts and figures of the target country should be provided in a handy form, for example, as a handbook to take away. Street maps, an address list of doctors, children day-care centers, leisure facilities, public authorities or educational establishments are some of many useful contents. Apart from general information that helps new arrivals to find their way around in a foreign country, information about the workplace and the further proceedings should be provided as well. The organization of meetings which support the socializing process is advisable as the knowledge derived from the interaction training may be applied (see also Section 3.7). Thus, the Hypothesis H2, "*The better preparation programs prepare for the stage after arrival, the faster and easier managers can start their daily business on-site and the better they will implement the objectives defined",* can be confirmed since the initial phase of acclimatization may be facilitated by the provision of necessary information to-

wards the new workplace. The imparting of cultural basics enable managers to integrate quickly into the company structures abroad and good practices in dealing with new colleagues allow a smooth implementation of the tasks set. Moreover, Section 4.4.7 provides additional information for approving this assumption. To integrate oneself and to get in touch with locals, talking about common hobbies and interests are a great way. Guided excursions on site with the focus on discovering the variety of the landscape or becoming familiar with customs help to give a more precise insight into the daily life of locals compared to the impressions gathered from theory. This may enable deployed managers to apply theoretical knowledge in practice to perceive a foreign culture even more intensely. Moreover, the aim of such excursions is to support MLMs to cope better with the daily routine abroad and to help them to develop a more extensive understanding of the new living environment. In order to achieve this, a certain degree of respect for locals and their habits is required and, hence, confirms the imperative nature of empathy formulated in Hypothesis H3, *"The more empathy MLMs possess, the better they will interpret the behavior of others and the easier they will reach rapport".* Additionally, language skills can be deepened by the memorization of useful phrases which are applicable from the very beginning (see also Section 3.2.1).

5.2 Open-mindedness of trainees as a main requirement to make intercultural education accessible

When having interactions, characteristics and attributes of other people are hardly perceived in the right way. As mentioned by Bong and Clark (1999), prejudices are often used to get a first idea of others. Especially when meeting people and groups with various cultural backgrounds, prejudices come to the fore and influence one's perception, judgement, emotion and social behavior. Findings from both literature and the performed empirical study provide several ways to reduce the influence of bias and evaluation errors for MLMs sent abroad. By recognizing the similarities among cultures in terms of behavior and patterns, the categorization into fixed groups decreases (Gertsen, 1990; Hannigan, 1990). Openness for new cultures,

fairness and respect helps to overcome clichés. Moreover, findings from the interviews conducted confirm that appreciation towards working colleagues is essential to perceive the uniqueness of every person.

5.3 Topics to start a chat

Since small talk primarily signals the openness and willingness to communicate, this is a good occasion to get in contact with persons from other cultures. According to the empirical study conducted, being informed about workmates and showing interest and rapport towards them is a good way to start some small talk. A prerequisite for reaching rapport is being a good listener. This includes asking appropriate questions, accepting the opinion of the person vis-à-vis and showing honest interest. Questions about one's origin, local characteristics or one's opinion in terms of the workplace and the department are a good way to start a conversation, whereas questions regarding politics, religion or personal matters should be avoided.

5.4 Range of abilities needed to become a good manager abroad

Taking into account previous research results of Hofstede and Hofstede (2001), cross-cultural qualification for delegated employees consists of various abilities. As previously mentioned in Section 3.2.3, it is important to be able to convey respect, to act without prejudices and to accept the existence of cultural differences. Aside from professional competence needed to overcome typical professional tasks, social competence is essential to work effectively and successfully in teams. Assertiveness, critical faculty, conflict ability as well as flexibility are important skills, to name a few. This is in accordance with Hypothesis H3, *"The more empathy MLMs possess, the better they will interpret the behavior of others*

and the easier they will reach rapport", as the aforementioned abilities are crucial to consider things from the point of view of others. Since the success of foreign assignments depends on a smooth cooperation with the workforce on site, ICP has to include the interpersonal level as well as professional competences. Being open-minded implies showing empathy towards others and is a prerequisite to build up relationships with colleagues.

Especially at the beginning of foreign assignments, managers face many new impressions. To manage this accumulation of diverse feelings and emotions, emotional stability is essential to succeed. Another aim of ICP is to transmit how MLMs should deal with various situations they may face abroad to prevent being overwhelmed by doubts. This includes, for instance, considering situations in an objective way, to ascertain the reason for one's own unease and to identify the positive aspects of various circumstances (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015).

A high degree of responsibility is a prerequisite for MLMs who have to satisfy both the top management and employees of lower hierarchies. With respect to foreign assignments, the experts consulted within the empirical part of this thesis highlighted that the sending organization, e.g., the company's headquarters, can hardly control all actions performed abroad because the physical distance does not allow this. Thus, the manager sent abroad must be particularly trustworthy.

Since foreign assignments are a great challenge for any MLMs, methods for coping with stress need to be part of training measures. In this context, knowledge which enables managers to protect themselves from stress should be transmitted like an optimization of the person-environment-fit. This is the interaction between the leadership personality, its managerial functions and its resources (e.g. employees, finances), as stated by Edwards (1996). If this interaction is faulty or is not working properly, the intended results will not be achieved and a loss of motivation may occur. During the initial phase of foreign assign-

ments, getting accustomed to the local working conditions is vital and is in accordance with Hypothesis (H2), *"The better preparation programs prepare for the stage after arrival, the faster and easier managers can start their daily business on-site and the better they will implement the objectives defined".*

Within the scope of ICP, managers should be instructed to act sensitively and cautiously while being abroad. To achieve this, they must be able to draw appropriate conclusions from attitudes, clothing or even dialects shown by staff on site, as mentioned in Chapter Three. Since many elements should be considered at the first meeting, managers may run the risk of misinterpreting signals. Hence, training concerning the classification of people in an objective manner is important (Carney et al., 2007). A smooth adaption to new circumstances is necessary to avoid culture shock caused by a sudden change from initial euphoria to feeling out of place. Furthermore, the time factor is crucial since sufficient time is needed to deal with new cultural circumstances abroad, as emphasized by the results from the empirical study. Whenever different cultures meet, managers should be aware of non-verbal signals as this has a strong impact on the first impression people get of each other. Numerous ICP focus too little on conveying such necessary skills that are applicable. In this regard, preparation measures targeted and customized to the requirements of certain areas are promising and confirm Hypothesis H1, *"The more specifically MLMs are prepared for foreign assignments for particular areas, the better they will implement managerial tasks and the more successfully they will implement intercultural ways of thinking and acting in everyday work".* The aim is to design programs that focus on both conveying theoretical requirements and teaching skills that can be used on site.

5.5 How to motivate managers to go abroad

Apart from the preparation of expatriate managers, it is important to provide them incentives for a deployment abroad. Basically, it should be highlighted that

they may benefit from foreign assignments in two respects, on a private and on a professional level. On a private level, the gained skills in terms of language, cultural awareness or social manners are useful in the everyday life and contribute to one's personal development. On a professional level, various aspects are noteworthy. As already mentioned in Section 3.3, managers sent abroad are trusted with greater responsibility and, hence, may be in charge of tasks they would not be allowed to carry out otherwise. Furthermore, the experts consulted within the empirical part of this thesis underline that possible career prospects after returning should be discussed in advance to remove any worries. Within the scope of ICP, it is the task of the sending company to show the participants the possibility to improve their CVs, to get new business contacts or to make new acquaintances (Edström & Galbraith 1977). Moreover, returning managers are considered as experts in their area and have best opportunities on the labor markets.

5.6 How to reach rapport

In the area of psychotherapy, emotional mirroring describes the attempt to understand the perspectives of others. The aim is to express in one's own words feelings and contents from the person vis-à-vis to show that whose concerns and wishes have been understood. To achieve this, a high degree of empathy and respect is required as well as mutual agreement between the dialog partners. If managers understand the concerns of their employees, a first step towards reaching rapport has been made. Rewarding relationships, as illustrated by Figure 5: *Pyramid of Success (*page 37*)* and described in detail in Section 3.3, are first steps towards achieving success abroad. Reaching a high degree of consensus with colleagues, subordinates and superiors is important for MLMs due to their role as mediators. Thus, the aforementioned statements verify Hypothesis *H3, "The more empathy MLMs possess, the better they will interpret the behavior of others and the easier the will reach rapport with employees".* Be-

ing able to communicate with fellows on the same level requires a good knowledge of human nature paired with an appropriate choice of words.

For delegated managers, norms and values of natives are not necessarily accessible in the beginning of foreign assignments. A training exactly tailored to the requirements of managers is necessary and affirms Hypothesis H1, "*The more specifically MLMs are prepared for foreign assignments for particular areas, the better they will implement managerial tasks and the more successfully they will implement intercultural ways of thinking and acting in everyday work".* To adjust well to one's new working environment, understanding norms and values is indispensable and verifies Hypothesis H2, *"The better preparation programs prepare for the stage after arrival, the faster and easier managers can start their daily business on-site and the better they will implement the objectives defined".* In this regard, one aim is to get involved in the everyday business on site as soon as possible. Whether a certain behavior is appropriate or not often depends on the specific conditions within companies. Consequently, posted managers should agree with existing norms at best as the empirical findings of this thesis approve. To achieve this, it is important to become acquainted with the attitudes of resident employees towards privacy issues, hierarchy or group membership. Getting to know the work behavior of local employees is another demand. This is about learning to understand other colleagues or entire teams. The objective of ICP in this respect is to educate managers in the area of social perception to find out intentions or mindsets of the person vis-à-vis based on their opinions or statements.

5.7 Summarized recommendations: basic principles for companies associated with the posting of managers

Companies should keep in mind that spending money for the preparation of MLMs can save costs if managers become quickly integrated into the organization abroad. Time-consuming processes of adjustment should be avoided.

Moreover, sending companies have to do research in the target country regarding visa or entry requirements to ensure that managers can bring along their spouse and/or children if desired. Before departure, meetings between future expatriates and managers who have been in similar or even the same country should be arranged whenever possible.

Aside from experiential training, preparation measures should comprise classic didactic instruments like lectures as well as discussions and various learning media. The aim is to teach essential skills that enable managers to perceive verbal and non-verbal communication appropriately. As discussed in detail in Chapter Three, various methods and instruments for the preparation and implementation of expatriates haven been presented. An ideal ICP does not exist but by including various aspects an expedient preparation can be achieved. Apart from training measures offered before departure, continuous learning during the assignment probably requires the highest level of ambition and commitment. Nevertheless, even well-prepared managers have to adapt to the permanently changing circumstances abroad.

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Appendix

Interview DIPLOMA THESIS

Recommendations for successful intercultural preparation of middle managers in the context of language, culture and learning.

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The task of this thesis is to investigate ways how middle managers should prepare for foreign assignments. In order to get managers ready for going abroad, I will give a list of recommendations focusing on language, culture and training. The empirical part of the thesis focuses on qualitative research methods in order to gain required information on business practices. The goal is to get expertise of decision-makers in the area of corporate culture, organization and human resource regarding their views and sufficient information. As a result, different methods of training should be created in order to prepare people for going abroad. Another goal is to show how to implement learned skills in practice. I expect sufficient information given by theory and interviews to enable me to prepare an application-oriented guideline of actions for companies and their middle managers.

All questions focus on managers of the middle-level hierarchy and should be considered in this context.

1. Do you think it is important to prepare people before sending them abroad?

2. How do you determine whether there is demand for sending staff abroad (e.g. foreign branches, projects) or generally, how will the need be identified (approaches)?

3. Within your company, how do you chose/decide which people are ideal for foreign assignments. Which criteria are crucial? Which personal requirements and basics do you think people need before starting the training?

4. Within you company, do you provide any educational or training measures? If yes, how do you decide what kind of training chosen managers receive?

5. How do you qualify staff to speak the same language (communication on the same level) as in the target company and to remove the main linguistic and cultural problems they may face within organizations?

6. In hindsight of the commitment of managers engaged in preparation processes for foreign assignments, what are they afraid of and how can they be motivated?

7. How does one effectively listen cross-culturally? How can people be taught to sensitively gather accurate information from someone who likely grew up in a culture in which a word, a look, a question, or a comment can easily take on a very different meaning?

8. What do you think about intercultural learning via online tools? Is personal contact essential or is it negligible?

9. How much time in advance do you think is necessary to prepare people for foreign assignment?

10. How do you make use of people's knowledge after returning from foreign assignments?