Practical Skills as They Relate to Working Successfully in Cross-cultural Settings as Identified by International Agricultural Professionals

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Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify the skill set needed by individuals who aspire to have successful professional careers in international agricultural development. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and propose educational strategies that will increase the success of those professionals.

Subjects in this study included members of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education and the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development. Data were obtained from an online survey developed and tested for this population. Of the 509 professionals in the population, 179 participated.

Through the use of both parametric and non-parametric statistical analyses, several statistically significant relationships were identified as being indicators of success when possessed by international agricultural development professionals. The study revealed statistically significant relationships between perceived success in international work and length of time in other countries, number of international activities and work, and a consistency of skills learned and recommended skills found in the literature. There were no significant relationships between skills that respondents learned before training and the several skills recommended by the respondents. For open-ended items in the survey, the skill most frequently named was language, followed by the skills of flexibility, knowledge of culture, and skills of communication.

Respondents consistently listed “soft” skills as important for success in international settings and noted that communication skills of all types (e.g., social, oral, written, diplomatic) were essential. The findings provide insights into experiences of workers in international settings in agriculture that result in “lessons learned” to support particular content in programs to prepare individuals to work effectively in international settings.
Introduction

In past studies, professional workers in international settings have listed their training as a change agent or consultant as the second most important educational preparation they received that benefited them in their work, with actual past international experience being the most important (Batson, 1997). It is natural to assume that one would know his or her field of discipline before entering a work environment, but those who choose to work in an international setting have more to contend with in their preparation for employment. Project management experience has also been discovered to be considered a significant valued past experience (Batson, 1997).

Batson’s (1997) study recommended that the training of international workers should include managerial training. Developing communication skills was another area of training recommended, including personal communication, persuasion, and how to handle confrontations. Learning the language of the host country, if at all possible, is an added means of communication and will certainly contribute to the success of the worker, as well as contribute to success of the work.

Agricultural programs that have been deemed successful in areas of technology transfer and adaptation usually have a common characteristic—participation in decision-making and program-planning functions (Finley & Price, 1994). The success is due to the fact that professionals are working with locals about taking charge of their own lives to solve their own problems. But, the success of the program rests on the proper preparation of the agricultural worker who will be working in a cross-cultural setting.

Education of agricultural professionals is an intellectual investment devoted to contributing to the development of the agricultural segment of our global society. The best possible scenario is to prepare those who plan to work in international settings—for the success of the workers, for the success of the work/project to be accomplished, and for the success of the locals participating in the development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the skill set needed by individuals who aspire toward professional careers in international agricultural development. A secondary purpose of this study was to identify and propose educational strategies so as to increase the success of the professionals working in international settings.

Objectives

To achieve the purpose of the study, seven objectives were established. They were as follows:
1. Identify skills that practitioners believe have been considered essential in the past.
2. Identify skills practitioners believe will be necessary for the future.
3. Identify communication skills that affect a person’s success in a cross-cultural setting.
4. Determine if differences exist in practical skills needed by those persons working in cross-cultural settings as perceived by agricultural professionals.
5. Prepare a master list of practical skills considered necessary by respondents for success in a cross-cultural setting.
6. Identify educational strategies that will be successful in developing these skills in future professionals.
7. Identify strategies that will enable educators to ensure that appropriate skills are taught to future professionals working in cross-cultural settings.

**Theoretical Base**

The following postulates, which also summarize the theoretical base, were considered essential to the development of the theoretical base for the study. The theoretical base was established to undergird the research questions and to help accomplish the research objectives.

1. Skills exist that affect success of a person working in cross-cultural and/or international settings (Copeland & Griggs, 1985).
2. The communication skills employed will affect a person’s success in a cross-cultural setting (Alison, 1985).
3. Educational strategies exist that can be used to improve a person’s chances of being successful when working in a cross-cultural setting (Taylor, 1994).
4. These educational strategies have been found to be effective by people not working in agricultural settings. People working in agricultural settings are not very different from those in other disciplines. Therefore, it can be theorized that the educational strategies that have worked in other disciplines will work for and be equally valuable for people in agricultural settings (Christiansen, 1965).

**Research Questions**

The following research questions, established to achieve the objectives of the study, were developed in lieu of testing hypotheses because of the nature of both qualitative and quantitative data that were needed.

1. What skills are necessary to accomplish successfully international agricultural development programs as perceived by professionals who manage such programs in the field?
2. What are the skills possessed by people working in an international setting that are considered essential to their success?
3. What educational strategies are needed to train agricultural professionals successfully?
4. What successful educational strategies are needed by agricultural education professionals in order to perform successfully in an international setting?

**Methodology**

Following are the steps that were taken in collecting and analyzing the data of the study. The target population for this descriptive study consisted of members of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) and of the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development (AIARD). Members of these two professional organizations were selected because they have had work experience and project management in cross-cultural and/or international settings.

In November 2000, the membership of AIAEE numbered 254, and the membership of
AIARD numbered 255, representing 46 different countries. Most (94%) of the membership of AIARD was U.S.A citizens, while the membership of AIAEE was more diverse (64% U.S.A. citizens and 36% from other countries). Not all members listed e-mail addresses, so the 509 members who had e-mail addresses were considered. The survey was pilot-tested (Dillman, 1978) with 11 agricultural professionals employed at Texas A&M University, all of whom had experience in international or cross-cultural work settings. The survey was offered online to the members of the two professional organizations and conducted throughout all of 2001 via the website http://www.aged.tamu.edu/survey/trainingsurvey. By January 2002, there were 179 valid responses received, and these contributed to a 48% return rate based on the 371 surveys delivered to professionals.

The analysis process involved descriptive measures, and open-ended survey questions used to obtain responses that were categorized and ranked. Survey questions were grouped, and the reliability (Cohen, 1988) revealed a 0.8 effect size and proved the groupings to be reliable subgroups for statistical analysis. Because most of the survey questions had multiple possible answers for respondents to select, those questions were considered categorical. Chi square analyses and crosstabulations were run on each of the categorical questions containing multiple variables, and a 0.05 level of significance was used in analyzing data. Descriptive findings were reported in the style and format of McNamara's chart essay (Haensly, Lupkowski, & McNamara, 1987).

**Findings**

The average age of the 179 respondents was 53.7, with a range from 37 to 75 years of age. By and large, respondents were not forthcoming with personal information. Of those responding to the questions regarding personal data, there were 30 males and 3 females; 146 did not report gender. There was no significance between gender and any skills or strategies, and there was no significance between marital status and any skills or strategies. But there was significance regarding both age and educational background and the experiences in cross-cultural work experience and activities.

The ethnic group membership self-reported by the respondents was as follows: 31 White, 1 Hispanic, 0 African, 1 Asian, 0 Other. Marital status of the respondents’ was 22 (12.3%) single, 3 (1.6%) married, 8 (4.5%) divorced, 0 (0%) separated, 0 (0%) widowed, and 146 (81.6%) not reporting marital status. Of the 27 who responded to this question, the educational levels of the respondents were reported as 18 (10%) with Ph.D., 9 (5%) with Master’s, 0 (0%) with Bachelor’s, with 152 (84.9%) not reporting degree status. Due to the wording of the question asking for “highest level of formal education,” it is assumed that all respondents who responded as having a Master’s or Ph.D. degree already had a Bachelor’s degree. Respondents were asked to list universities where degrees were obtained. The response to this question was 27 (15.1%). Respondents reported international experience in three methods, including the range of one to 35 international activities, one to 41 years of international work experience.

When respondents were asked if they were currently involved in international or cross-cultural activities, 133 (74.3%) responded yes, 22 (12.3%) responded no, and 24 (13.4%) didn’t respond. Numbers of activities per currently involved respondent ranged from one to 35. However, the total number of activities actually listed by those same respondents was only 108.
Respondents also were asked for the number of international or cross-cultural activities in a country other than their own in which they had been involved throughout their professional career. Of the 179 respondents, 126 answered the question. The mean was 14.9 with a range of one to 200 activities. These activities spanned over years ranging from one to 41 with a mean of 14.5.

Respondents reported that 84 were members of AIAEE, 44 were members of AIARD, 33 were members of both organizations, and 18 were “other” without claiming membership in either organization. While the intent of the study was to elicit responses from respondents who were members of AIAEE and AIARD, the “other” responses included respondents who no longer were members of the association but were still on organizational information and distribution lists, or acquaintances or colleagues of those who participated in the survey who then were recommended to the study. The number of years of membership in one or both organizations ranged from 0 to 39, with a mean of 8.2. Of the respondents who responded to the question about how they were currently involved in the organization(s), 130 (72.6%) responded that they were active, 20 (11.2%) responded that they were not currently, and 57 (31.8%) did not respond.

Success Indicators

Respondents reported on skills and characteristics that they perceived to be needed for success. When categories of respondents’ years of involvement in international work, as well as a list of the number of international activities over respondents’ careers in years of international work, were cross tabulated, these were determined to be success indicators for those individuals working in international settings, as perceived by them, e.g., suggesting longevity in the international field indicates success or they would no longer be working in this arena. Interestingly, many respondents who have had few years of international work experience noted how they were surprised at how unprepared that they felt they were for the differences in culture when working in another country. Additionally, those respondents who had many years of experience continually emphasized how knowledge of cultures is extremely important in international or cross-cultural work.

Questions were specifically geared toward addressing the four research questions, then analyzed and significance found in relationship to the objectives predetermined also to address the research questions.

Findings Related to Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To accomplish this objective, a literature review was conducted to identify common “hard” and “soft” skills. “Hard” skills are skills needed to do a job for which one is hired, skills learned through education or through on-the-job training, and skills listed in a job description for a particular job. A list of eight common “hard” skills were offered to online survey participants as choices, with a ninth open-ended opportunity to list ideas of “hard” skills. A summary of them includes: 1) customs and culture, 2) field of study or technical expertise, 3) family structure knowledge, 4) problem-solving skills, 5) communication skills and language, and 6) business skills. “Soft” skills are personal or coping skills in working with other people that a person needs in order to be successful. A list of sixteen common “soft” skills were offered to online survey participants as choices, with a seventeenth open-ended opportunity to list ideas of “soft” skills. A
summary of those skills include: 1) flexibility and adaptability, 2) leadership and willingness to assume responsibility, 3) adventurous spirit, curiosity, and sense of humor, 4) oral and written communication skills and ability to learn, 5) cultural sensitivity and cultural empathy, 6) maturity, ethical behavior, and emotional stability, and 7) initiative and willingness to take risks. Respondents were also asked to provide skills that they acquired on their own. The major differences were in skills that respondents noted were needed but not taught to professionals in training for international work assignments, e.g., plumbing, carpentry, basic auto mechanics, and first aid. The examples given revealed a concern with the problems of everyday living commonly faced by the respondents. These may be skills that individuals acquire during the course of their lives but were not identified as skills actually taught to professionals preparing for cross-cultural work but are deemed necessary by those in the field. Because respondents named skills that were not related to the professional aspects but were related to everyday living, an implication exists that designers of orientation programs should prepare people going into international settings for everyday environments in the cross-cultural setting.

2. To accomplish this objective, specific questions of the online survey were asked to respondents. Responses were compared to common skills found in the literature. Unquestionably, respondents to the survey agreed that any and all skills that professionals can acquire before and during an international work assignment will be valuable. In fact, many times respondents mentioned that there cannot be enough training for individuals going to work in another culture. Absolutely, the most named skill was language. Not only does knowledge of the local language increase ability to communicate, but the knowledge of language carries with it a knowledge of the culture and customs and acknowledges to the local people that there is a commitment and interest beyond the job with which an individual is working. As mentioned above, the skills that respondents noted were needed but not taught to professionals in training for international work assignments included plumbing, carpentry, basic auto mechanics, and first aid. Also noted by respondents as important skills are learning the processes of local politics, how and when to listen, economics and history of a culture as well as its customs, time management and recognizing differences in time concepts. Many skills noted in previous responses by individuals were repeated and affirmed as essential, but some unique skills appeared in this list as well, i.e., midwifery, mechanics, and keeping a daily log. Respondents noted skills that they considered needed and wished that they had been taught. The skills that respondents wished they had learned include: language skills at high level, group dynamics, coping strategies, business skills, people skills, diplomacy, protocol, sociability, culture, working with political administrators, adaptability, patience, how to ask questions, time management in a different time value environment, how to deal with difficult people and large egos, report writing, problem-solving, conflict management, and other skills such as car knowledge, basic health, and plumbing. Interestingly enough, many of the skills listed in this “wish” list are also skills that respondents continued to list as essential in which to be trained. Evidently, simply ensuring that the “known” needed skills are included in a thorough orientation and training for individuals entering into cross-cultural work should help alleviate many of the anxieties and needs that respondents have expressed in skills that they wished that they had been taught. Most respondents indicated that the best place for training is in-country and that most training must be specific to the locale.
3. To accomplish this objective, a review of the literature was made to list communication skills commonly used within successful international projects. Skills that are taught to an individual who is preparing to work in an international or cross-cultural setting that are conducive to better communication include language, along with written and oral communication skills, knowledge of the local culture and customs, knowledge of family structure of the country, and competency within his/her own discipline or field of study. Supporting skills for good communication include sensitivity and tolerance of others, adaptability, flexibility, ability to learn, curiosity, cultural and ethical sensitivity, as well as maturity and emotional stability which produce more credibility. The critical skills appear to be hard skills such as language, interpersonal communication skills, leadership, management, decision-making skills, tact, and soft skills such as sensitivity, openness, respect, desire, empathy, patience, creativity, and listening.

4. To accomplish this objective, a comparison was made of responses from survey participants about their work experiences in cross-cultural or international settings. Nearly half (44%) of the responses indicated that professionals were working in other countries due to requirements of their job in their own country. Nearly a third of the respondents (26% each) said that either a foreign government or a foreign company requested them to work in the international setting. Volunteer for self and volunteer for work-related events were each noted at 20%, while volunteering for a foreign government was calculated at 11%. This particular analysis also helped reveal whether or not respondents were working for their own governments or other governments. Data indicate that most professionals are working in conjunction with a job in their own countries, thus working internationally on a short-term basis, in the host country, and not as expatriates. Those respondents who were working for foreign governments or foreign companies could be employed as expatriates.

5. To accomplish this objective, a list of skills was made from the literature review and included in questions within the online survey. Participants in the survey had options to select these skills as well as add more skills that they believed were necessary. An extensive master list of all the skills was compiled. From the eight hard skills offered as choices to the respondents and from the 15 additional practical suggestions by the respondents, a combined master list of 23 hard skills that need to be taught for professionals to work in international settings can be found below. While some of these skills were acquired by respondents before international training and others need to be emphasized during training programs, these are all hard skills that the respondents emphasized as needed. In addition to the 24 soft skills compiled from the literature and presented to the respondents, the respondents suggested 20 additional skills or modifications of those existing skills. Taken all together, a listing of 44 soft skills were identified.

6. To accomplish this objective, a literature review was conducted to learn what strategies are already used and are considered successful for training professionals to work in international settings. Specific questions were posed to the online survey participants in order to solicit their views on what strategies are used, what strategies are successful, what strategies need to be added, and what strategies need to be omitted. Overall, respondents and literature agreed that any and all educational strategies should be used in order to help professionals obtain the necessary, specific skills needed for working in international settings. By far, the most commonly named strategy was learning skills on
site, on location within another country, and, according to respondents, there is absolutely no substitute for it. Learning in the classroom is not enough.

7. To accomplish this objective, a literature review was conducted to learn what strategies are considered successful for training professionals to work in international settings and should be used in the future. Specific questions were posed to the online survey participants in order to solicit their views on what strategies would be best to continue or add for future training of professionals in cross-cultural or international settings. Respondents were asked whether those skills actually prepared the respondents for their international work. Of the 139 responding to the question of whether the skills actually prepared them, 127 responded “yes” while 12 responded “no.” Additionally, respondents were asked whether training for an international setting should include training about personal life, to include coping with a spouse and/or family. Of the 121 who responded, 111 (91.7%) replied yes, and the kinds of training were listed.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Based on the perceptions reported by the 179 respondents with up to 41 years of experience in activities numbering from one to 200, the following conclusions are presented.

1. The more experiences in both years and activities that a professional is able to acquire in actual cross-cultural or international settings, the more successful that person is likely to be in managing a project, and the more likely that person will be to have the skills necessary for success. The more on-site learning of skills that occurs, the more successful the project and the individuals involved. An implication could exist that what respondents perceived was happening was “survival of the fittest.” However, there is also the implication that someone with experience in cross-cultural or international work should mentor a new professional in the field, at least for one to two projects. New professionals should also seek out a mentor to learn about working in international settings, especially a particular country. Working in teams of both experienced and inexperienced personnel could also help provide mentors and needed experience to increase the likelihood of later success.

2. Politics, local government, and knowledge of the local law seem to dictate to some degree whether an individual or the project with which he or she was associated will succeed in an international setting. Prior knowledge of the political landscape or who the local leaders are would help managers in international settings increase the likelihood of success. Several implications from responses indicate that failure to learn up front about “how things are run” or politics and government will almost certainly doom a project or an individual working in an international setting. A further implication is that such information should be included in training and orientation programs.

3. Because of the number of responses and the number of times noted in the literature, it was concluded that specific skills are absolutely essential in order to work in a cross-cultural or international setting. The main categories of specific skills included language, sensitivity (to people and for culture), flexibility (time and people differences), coping with loneliness, and knowledge regarding one’s own discipline/field. Other skills were considered needed also by respondents, as reported in open-ended responses, and these skills included categories such as communication skills (i.e., listening, tolerance of other people and time value differences), business skills, adaptability and problem-solving.
skills (e.g., plumbing, carpentry, first aid), specific to particular situations, knowledge of local family structures, risk-taking and curiosity and initiative, maturity and emotional stability. Implications are clear that training is absolutely crucial before entering into a cross-cultural or international work setting, and most agree that the more training, the better. However, an implication exists, based on comments by respondents, that such training should be adapted to the particular setting in which a person will be working. In other words, a “one size fits all” training or orientation program is not effective.

4. Soft skills consistently were listed by respondents as most important for success in international settings. Communication skills of all types (e.g., social, oral, written, diplomatic) were consistently noted by respondents. The implication is that, although trainings and orientations normally focus on hard skills, soft skills must be included and emphasized.

5. When respondents were asked to provide the one practical skill that they considered the most important to achieving success when working in an international setting, there were responses consistent with many previous responses with a few unique skills listed. It should be noted that three of the first four practical skills ranked can be taught to those preparing to work in cross-cultural settings, but that the one, flexibility, tied for first place as the most important practical skill, is one that typically is not addressed in training programs.

6. Some skills considered necessary are not taught in formal settings, and these include mostly “soft” skills that are learned by living through specific types of experiences. These experiences either bring out potential traits from the professional or teach the professional ways to utilize latent traits, i.e., adventurous spirit, cultural empathy, willingness to assume responsibility, leadership skills, adaptability. Case study methodology could focus on exploring some of the more basic skills. Experience on the job and actually in an international setting are the only methods to learn some skills. Once again, there is the implication that a mentor (or mentors) who has this kind of experience should work closely with a new professional in initial international project assignments. Interesting implications from survey results were that, although all of the common skills mentioned in the literature are definitely needed on the job, many respondents noted more “practical” skills needed that are not usually included in international work trainings (i.e., basic auto mechanics, first aid, plumbing, carpentry). Additionally, skills which are normally considered intangible and not considered “teachable,” e.g., flexibility, adaptability, could be addressed in case study and/or scenario types of training environments. As stated in Objective Number Five, the respondents reinforced and affirmed what the literature has stated, naming skills that everyone needs. Additional skills were suggested by the respondents. The implication is that all skills are needed, and as environments evolve, then skills needed by professionals working in international settings will be updated.

7. Although not normally included in formal or informal education or training strategies, the curriculum should be stretched to include basic household and survival skills. Additionally, although methods of teaching and/or training individuals are sound, additional methodology for educational strategies and curricula could be adapted to include feedback from respondents, i.e., from a variety of different settings. As indicated from respondents, curricula should include information that is appropriate for the setting.
8. Relationships existed among factors on the survey and personal background variables of gender, age, educational background, work experience, years in other countries, numbers of activities of involvement. Although relatively few had implications for ensuring success or failure of professionals working in an international setting or success of a project, there were some conclusions that could be drawn from the correlations. Because so few respondents reported personal information, then statistically, there was no significance between gender and any skills or strategies, and there was no significance between marital status and any skills or strategies. But there was significance regarding both age and educational background and the experiences in cross-cultural work experience and activities. The implication here is that just because an association exists with respect to longevity in this particular type of experience, it may or may not be an indicator of success. If professionals are not successful, they will not continue to work in international settings.

9. Respondents indicated concern for finding employment for an accompanying spouse, providing training for a spouse in how to cope with stress and frustrations of everyday living (i.e., transactions at the market, banking), and providing training for how to deal with loneliness. The implication here is that providing services and/or training for the family of the individual who is working in a cross-cultural setting can help alleviate stress for the entire family, help to prevent loneliness occurring on the part of the professional who must leave behind his/her family, and helps build a relationship with an employee that will foster loyalty and longevity.

10. Data have indicated that many respondents agree that some people are not suited to working in cross-cultural settings, no matter how much training they receive. In this respect, the “soft” skills were mainly considered, i.e., maturity, modesty, values in place. Implications are that specific screenings be implemented to test individuals before someone from a specific discipline decides to expand his/her professional networking to an international work setting.

11. Although respondents had been taught skills, they also listed skills they wished that they had been taught. When comparing these two sets of skills, the “taught” skills were listed on the “wish” list, but additionally, skills such as diplomacy, protocol, sociability, political administration, patience, how to ask questions, and time management were listed. The implication is that a variety of skills needs to be addressed, particular to the setting, and that the two organizations (AIARD and AIAEE) need to have this information in order to inform their members.

Recommendations for Action

The following recommendations are for individuals preparing to work in international or cross-cultural work assignments:  (1) Participate in as much in-country or immersion training as possible. Over and over, current professionals have said that there is no substitute for training in the country where one will be working. Most recommended a total immersion program, usually at least three months in length (for long-term work assignments). (2) Begin training at an early age by participating in international internships, classes in high school and college related to international work, and travel to other countries as often as possible. The general agreement is that the more a person is exposed to other cultures, the more that individual will understand about how many other types of cultures there are in the world. (3) Continue to train or become educated in formal settings for work in cross-cultural or
international settings in order to develop needed skills for this work, i.e., languages, business skills, knowledge of cultures and customs, communication skills, knowledge of chosen field of study. (4) Learn basic intrinsic skills that you possess as an individual and develop those skills, i.e., flexibility, problem-solving, adaptability, taking initiative, leadership, sense of humor, sensitivity to other cultures, willingness to take risks or examine what is outside of the lines/box. (5) Get a well-rounded education, including many liberal arts fields, i.e., anthropology (knowledge of cultures), philosophy (tolerance of different peoples), psychology (nature of people), languages, arts, sciences (to include math), vocational fields of study for practical knowledge.

The following recommendations are for training and orientation programs for individuals preparing to work in an international or cross-cultural setting: (1) Teach or train individuals in-country, on site, immersed in the culture where they will likely work. All of the current professionals responding in this study recommended this. (2) Encourage the use of nationals from the country for trainers. They can offer a great deal of knowledge to which only they have access. (3) Use real scenarios or case-study methods as teaching tools, using real laws and situations to govern the parameters of the problems addressed in the training. (4) Teach the individuals their own country’s history. Professionals have noted that knowing one’s own country’s history helps a person’s credibility, understanding of history, and relationships with locals. (5) Offer mentors to those individuals by pairing them or having mentors meet with groups of trainees. The mentors can offer stories, recommendations, advice, and answer questions that perhaps only they can know. (6) Include training for administrative responsibilities, as indicated by respondents. Those respondents working in international settings who were selected as team leaders for specific technical expertise were also expected to fulfill both roles of supervisor/manager and technical expert, and were not prepared to do so.

After experiencing the process of conducting this research and considering the responses of those people who had worked in cross-cultural international settings, the following questions are raised for related future research: (1) Could a standardized test be developed to screen for individuals who are unsuitable to work in international settings? (2) How can we develop an educational program whereby individuals from underdeveloped countries are welcomed into the United States educational system to teach Americans? (3) Rather than training Americans to work in international settings, could we attract and teach individuals from underdeveloped countries here in the U.S. and have them return to teach their own people? (4) How can modern technology be used to help the agricultural development specialist gain instant knowledge while in the field with the help of computers, satellites, the internet, cell phones, engineering technology, and other instant communication and information technology? (5) If a professional gains more international experience, then are more skills gained, and is that person better equipped to serve as a mentor and/or trainer of others? (6) Why not replicate this study for other disciplines, using the skills named by the current respondents? (7) Can appropriate types of social interactions be identified that should be included in training professionals, e.g., music, dance, sports?

It was the intent of this study to help identify specific skills that individuals as well as institutions should ensure are included in education and training in preparation of work in an international or cross-cultural work setting. Ideally, an educational institution, a training program, or an orientation program would include methods of addressing the acquisition of these skills for individuals planning international work. With results of the study, though,
even individuals or institutions who are not able to offer formally the training needed, at least knowledge of which skills are needed can be utilized and these skills acquired, even if by individuals’ own volitions. It is the hope of this researcher that the knowledge acquired through this study will help both individuals and institutions preparing people for work in international work settings. The responses and feedback provided by participants of this online survey are most appreciated and have helped a great deal in providing the information needed by fellow professionals.

References


