Cross-Cultural Training of Expatriates

A case study of Ericsson

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Abstract
Adjustment to a new culture is a slow and step-wise process, which can be facilitated by cross-cultural training. First, a comprehensive review of current theories about cross-cultural adjustment and different training techniques is presented. Then, the study looks at the preparation and training of expatriates at Ericsson in relation to these theories. In-depth interviews with two Area Managers at Ericsson have been carried out in order to establish how the company’s training program is structured. We found that Ericsson follows a sequential model with both pre-departure and post-arrival training, mainly didactic in nature. The pre-departure training is very culture general, whereas the post-arrival training is more specific for the host culture. The post-arrival training is, however, not offered in all host countries. Language training is also offered, and expatriates are encouraged to visit the host country prior to the departure. Many components in Ericsson’s training program are supported by theory, but several other techniques described in the theory are not in use. A suggestion is made to further formalize the post-arrival training and make the overall training more culture-specific.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background
Increased globalization has raised the movement of human capital, making efficient cross-cultural training (CCT) important for multi-national corporations. The early return rate for Ericsson’s international long-term assignees, i.e. expatriates, is as low as one percent (Rubertson, 2009). Early returns have globally been estimated to be as common as 16-40% (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). These numbers, together with the increased importance of the topic, encourage further research on CCT theory and how it can be applied on global companies such as Ericsson. No in-depth analysis on Ericsson’s CCT program has previously been performed, which further motivates a study.

Since the cost to send an expatriate on an international assignment is high – the first year has been estimated to cost at least three times the employee’s domestic annual salary (Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley, 1999) – a company will usually expect performance delivered. There is, however, evidence that many multinational corporations do not offer their expatriates any form of CCT, neither before departure, nor after arrival, and for the few companies that do, most of the training consists of just a short informal briefing session before departure (Pusch, 2003, pp. 21-22).

Many theoretical studies have covered the significance of CCT and concluded that it is important for the cultural adjustment process (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Tung, 1981b). While the effectiveness of CCT has been contested by some authors (e.g. Puck, Kittler & Wright, 2008; Kealy & Protheroe, 1999), most researchers agree on the positive effects of CCT on intercultural adjustment. Today there are many methods for conducting the training, some more used than others. Examples of training methods, explained in the theory section, are: didactic training, experiential training, attribution training, language training, cultural awareness training, interaction training and cognitive behavior modification (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985; Gertsen, 1990; Brewster, 1995, pp. 63-65; Bennett, Aston & Colquhoun, 2000). Different methods can also be combined to build a sequential training setup, designed

1 Ericsson is a Swedish telecommunication company with activities in 175 countries (Ericsson AB, 2008, p. 1).
to prepare an expatriate in different stages using different training methods (Selmer, Torbiörn & de Leon, 1998).

**1.2 Problem Discussion**

Ericsson is a Swedish telecommunication company acting on a global market, and the company has 71 different nationalities working in 110 different countries (Ericsson Internal, 2009b; Rubertson, 2009). Ericsson implements a CCT program for its employees, and has been doing so since 1978 (Rubertson, 2009).

This study investigates how Ericsson organizes the CCT of its employees going on international assignments, both the training methods the company uses and the time of implementation. The purpose of this study is to compare the training program with current scientific theory on cross-cultural adjustment and training. This study does not aim to evaluate the success of Ericsson’s strategy, nor will it seek to develop a general model for CCT implementation. The study will give input to the company’s department of International Assignments, since the department’s activities will be presented and analyzed from a theoretical perspective. It will at the same time present a comprehensive overview of current theories on the issue. No similar study has previously been performed about Ericsson. It will therefore be of use both for Ericsson and anyone who is interested in the subject.

To help us visualize the task, we have formulated a research question:

*How does Ericsson prepare and train its employees for international long-term assignments, and how does that compare to current theories about cross-cultural adjustment and training?*
2 Theory
The theories introduced in this section start with the adjustment process in the form of the U-curve model and the four adjustment phases, which are necessary to understand the challenges of cultural adjustment. Different dimensions of the adjustment process and ways to facilitate efficient adjustment are covered before a comprehensive review of the CCT methods is presented. The theory on training methods, including sequential training, serves as the main base for the analysis in this study. Finally, the concept of cross-cultural intelligence is presented and the importance of CCT is evaluated.

2.1 Cultural Adjustment
An employee who is sent to a foreign country on a long-term assignment, an expatriate, will in most cases need time to adjust to the new circumstances. In many cases the expatriate brings his or her spouse and children, and since the family will live in the country just as long as the expatriate, the whole family will have to adjust to the general environment and learn how to interact with host nationals. In addition, the expatriate will also have to adjust to new work conditions (Black & Gregersen, 1991b).

2.1.1 The U-curve
The adjustment process can be divided into several steps, or phases, very often displayed as a U-shaped curve (see Figure 1) where the expatriate first enjoys the situation of being in an “exotic” culture, then realizes the degree of adjustment that is necessary, before a slow adaptation takes place (Selmer et al., 1998; Selmer, 1999).

Oberg (1960) described the first of four phases as a period of fascination, where little contact is taken with locals and only in a polite and gracious way. A very important person would often be met with great respect and treated well, only getting the opportunity to see the good sides of the new culture. This phase is often called the “honeymoon phase” and only lasts until the individual starts to experience day-to-day life (Oberg, 1960; Black & Gregersen, 1991b; Selmer, 1999). It is sometimes referred to as the “tourist phase” (Selmer, 1999) or the “spectator phase” (Torbiörn, 1976, p. 155). Many circumstances affect the duration of this phase and it may last from only a
couple of days or weeks to six months (Oberg, 1960), but the honeymoon phase usually ends around two months after arrival (Black & Gregersen, 1991b).

The happy, fascinating and problem-free first period then makes a steep turn downwards towards a culture shock, where the individual realizes the difficulties in adjustment (Oberg, 1960). The reasons to why culture shock happens are many, but they can be concluded as a combination of these factors: stress as a result of feeling obliged to make many adjustments; a sense of loss in regard to friends, status or possessions; rejection by (or against) people of the host country; confusion in self-identity, roles and expectations; surprise, anxiety and even disgust over cultural differences; and feeling incapable of coping with the new environment (Selmer, 1999, p. 517; Oberg, 1960).

![Figure 1. The U-curve and the four phases of cultural adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991, p. 227).](image)

The culture shock phase is part of a normal process that a majority of all expatriates experience, even experienced expatriates who have been on many international assignments before (Selmer, 1999). What may start as minor things in the day-to-day life (e.g. trouble with school, transportation, language) may altogether evolve into something that can cause symptoms as anxiety, irritability, feeling of helplessness and a desire to depend on other long-termers from the same country (Oberg, 1960; Selmer, 1999). Some people never leave the culture shock phase and stay hostile towards the host nationals throughout the time of the assignment. Other people who
never learn to cope with the situation return home earlier or choose to only socialize with other expatriates until it is time to go home (Selmer, 1999).

For the expatriates who decide to stay, a long period of adaptation can be expected, usually referred to as the “adjustment phase” (Black & Mendenhall, 1991), the “recovery stage” (Selmer, 1999) or the “conformist phase” (Selmer et al., 1998), which constitutes the third phase. A good way to cope with the situation is to learn the local language, or at least some of it (Oberg, 1960). Knowledge of the local language does in most cases help the individual to understand “cultural codes” – norms in behavior and social patterns that can be typical for a certain culture. The ignorance of these cultural codes is often the reason for misinterpretations of signals and expectations (Torbiörn, 1976, p. 59). Instead of complaining about the misunderstandings and difficulties, in this phase it is not uncommon to start joking about the people and the difficulties that arise due to the cultural differences (Oberg, 1960). Even though the adjustment process has started, a lot of the feelings and experiences from the culture shock still remain, which makes it difficult to draw a clear line between the two phases (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985).

The fourth phase, the “mastery stage”, or “completion phase”, happens when the individual is so well adjusted that he or she can function effectively in the new environment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Grove & Torbiörn, 1985, Oberg, 1960). The individual’s cultural skills may develop further, but are at this stage sufficient to function without a feeling of anxiety or discomfort (Oberg, 1960; Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). Therefore, Oberg (1960) reasons that there are in fact two types of complete adjustment, one that is more complete than the other. Instead of just accepting the local food, drinks, habits and customs, the expatriate may actually start to enjoy them. When the assignment is finished, the expatriate may miss the culture and the people so much that it will be a difficult time to readjust to the home country (Oberg, 1960).

Several variations of the U-curve exist. The U-curve has sometimes been criticized for not taking the repatriation process into account, and therefore a W-shaped curve of the whole process has been presented, extending the U-curve until after the expatriate has returned to his or her home country (Selmer, 1999). A J-shaped curve has also been suggested, where the basic difference from the U-curve is that the honeymoon
phase is shorter or even non-existent (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). The U-curve is, however, the most commonly accepted as well as the most used model explaining the adjustment process, thus making it the chosen model for this study.

2.2 Adjustment Dimensions

The expatriate acculturation process is affected by many factors and can be divided into four cultural dimensions: (1) the “self-oriented” dimension; (2) the “others-oriented” dimension; (3) the “perceptual” dimension; and (4) the “cultural-toughness” dimension (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985, pp. 40-43). According to Black, Mendenhall & Oddou (1991), the first three dimensions are components of the individual skills that are important to master in order to be effective in a new cultural environment.

The “self-oriented” dimension is a term that encompasses skills that increase the expatriate’s self-esteem, and it can be subdivided into three sub factors: (1) “reinforcement substitution”, which includes the substitution of all home country activities that used to bring happiness and pleasure to similar activities that exist in the new country (i.e. sports, music, foods, art etc.); (2) “stress reduction”, since it has been proven that the ability to deal with stress in day-to-day life significantly affects the expatriate adjustment; and (3) “technical competence”, because being confident in how to accomplish the goal of the assignment is important for overall adjustment. The opposite has also been shown; expatriates feel a stronger ability to perform and accomplish goals if they have adjusted well to the host culture (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

The second dimension, the “others-oriented” dimension, deals with the ability of the expatriate to interact with locals effectively, and it can be subdivided into the two sub factors: (1) “relationship development”, which simply is the activities that build friendship with people in the new culture; and (2) willingness to communicate. The former factor is naturally important for the overall adjustment, and the latter factor is an important tool when building a relationship. It is not necessarily the level of language skills that foster adjustment, but rather the confidence and willingness to learn and use the host country’s language (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).
The third dimension that is mentioned, and the last one that looks at the individual, is the perceptual dimension. The skills that are necessary to understand foreign behavior and to predict future behavior of host-nationals reduce tension in the cross-cultural relations and foster adjustment to the local conditions; thus being part of the perceptual dimension (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

The fourth dimension, the “cultural-toughness” dimension (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) or “culture novelty” (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991), describes the differences in cultural distance (see Church, 1982 or Shenkar, 2001). The gender of the expatriate may also affect the culture distance; certain patriarchic cultures may for instance be more difficult for women to adapt to than for men (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). The only non-individual dimension thus explains that countries with a large cultural distance in relation to the expatriate’s home country simply are tougher to get adjusted to (Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991).

### 2.3 Facilitating Efficient Adjustment

Oberg stated as early as 1960 that knowledge about the nature of cultures and how it affects the individual is valuable to make it through the culture shock phase. The three individual dimensions mentioned (self-oriented, others-oriented and perceptual dimensions) are all important for being successful in a new cultural environment (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) propose two things to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment: (1) extend the selection criteria from only focusing on technical competence to also include skills in line with the individual dimensions; and (2) prepare the expatriates with appropriate CCT programs. Many other researchers have also suggested CCT to smooth the progress of the adjustment process (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Grove and Torbiörn (1985) state that a universal training program cannot be presented, but has to be designed according to both the context of the assignment and the individual characteristics of the expatriate.

According to Caligiuri et al. (2001), CCT has three main objectives: (1) enable the expatriate to determine how to perform job tasks and behave appropriately in the new culture; (2) help the expatriate to handle unexpected events and reduce cultural conflicts; and (3) help the expatriate to develop realistic expectations about the job
and the day-to-day life in the new culture. As for any learning process, there exist several training methods. Some may suit one situation better than another, and some may be combined to achieve better results. The most commonly used methods are presented in the following part.

### 2.4 Cross-Cultural Training Methods

Companies use a variety of methods to teach expatriates cross-cultural skills, aimed at facilitating interactions with a foreign culture. This section gives an introduction to the main methods, their focus, timing and activities used to convey the training. A summary of different training methods along with their attributes has been compiled and is presented in Table 1. The summary includes the training methods identified from the different academic sources presented in this section, as well as sequential training where different methods are combined. While some methods are more commonly used than others, they have all been included to give a comprehensive overview of the subject.

**Table 1.** Overview of the cross-cultural training methods, their focus, timing of implementation and general activities used to convey the training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didactic</td>
<td>Factual information, culture general and/or culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Lectures, informal briefings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Practical learning, culture general and/or culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Look-see trips, workshops, simulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>Learning to think and act as a host national, culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure</td>
<td>Cultural assimilator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Facilitating specific intercultural communication</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Traditional teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Understanding culture as a concept, culture general</td>
<td>Pre-departure</td>
<td>Role-plays, self-assessment exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Learning from previous expatriates, culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure and/or post-arrival</td>
<td>Overlaps, on-the-job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Behaviour Modification</td>
<td>Learning to focus on rewarding activities, culture general</td>
<td>Pre-departure</td>
<td>Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
<td>Synergies from combined training, culture general and culture specific</td>
<td>Pre-departure, post arrival, repatriation</td>
<td>Combining different training methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.4.1 Didactic Training

Didactic training is most often provided in informal briefings, which can be given in a classical lecture form or with less structured methods such as casual conversations with experts. It can also be provided with informational booklets, presenting facts on
the host country. Didactic training is the most common form of CCT and more than two thirds of all multinational corporations offer didactic training in the form of informal briefings to their expatriates before deployment abroad (Brewster, 1995, p. 63). This type of training provides factual information regarding working and living conditions as well as cultural aspects of the host country. The content of the cultural aspect does, however, mainly address practical issues, such as shopping and dress codes in the host country. It represents the traditional way of learning used in schools and universities, where information is transferred using one-way communication (Bennett et al., 2000; Gertsen, 1990). The content in didactic training is often hard facts like requirements for the job, policies, travel arrangements etc., but it also contains aspects that help prepare expatriates to establish a framework for understanding and adapting to a new culture when they arrive in their host country and facilitate lifestyle adjustments. Besides pre-departure issues, it can also include information on repatriation issues (Bennett et al., 2000). The didactic training can have a more general culture content or it can be aimed towards understanding a specific culture (Gertsen, 1990).

Fact-oriented didactic training is based on the notion that knowledge will facilitate intercultural relationships. According to Tung (1981a) this concept is contested by some authors, claiming that there is little evidence to support a positive effect. Tung (1981a) also argues that since cultural differences between two nations are numerous, didactic training should not try to convey all the knowledge that an expatriate will need during his or her stay. Because of this, didactic training should not be used as the only way of preparing expatriates for a foreign assignment (Caligiuri et al., 2001), but should rather be combined with more experiential methods (Gertsen, 1990). Grove and Torbiörn (1985) also state that fact-oriented training on its own is not enough to prepare an expatriate.

2.4.2 Experiential Training
Experiential training is conveyed using a number of methods including, not only, practical exercises, workshops and simulations, but also more genuine concepts such as look-see visits to the host country (Caligiuri et al., 2001). Look-see trips can provide a first real experience of the country for the expatriate and sometimes his or her family. They give the opportunity to meet people in the new country and get a
view of the new environment and the workplace. To be effective they need to be well planned, which can make them costly. The problem can also be that since they are designed to give the expatriate a positive view, they may not show the true picture of the host country (Brewster, 1995, p. 63). Bennett et al. (2000) argues that pre-departure programs have the most effect if they are held after a look-see trip to the host country, since the expatriates get many of his or her basic questions answered and can build a sense of the host location before entering the training program.

Experiential training aims at preparing the expatriate in a more direct way, building beyond the mere intellectual experience. The experiential training can also be either culture general or aimed towards a specific culture (Gertsen, 1990). The training is based on the concept of learning by doing and is conveyed by using practical exercises. This prepares the expatriate intellectually and emotionally to adapt to the new culture and enables him or her to develop certain skills that can be used when confronted with the new culture (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). This is, according to Grove and Torbiörn (1985), one of the most promising training methods.

2.4.3 Attribution Training
Attribution training tries to give the expatriate skills in thinking and acting as a host national. It is aimed at giving the expatriate an insight into the cultural point of view in the host country. This enables the expatriate to explain and understand host national behavior. By teaching such skills, the aim is to make the expatriate’s attributes more isomorphic to the new culture. Attribution training is closely connected, but not limited, to a teaching method called “cultural assimilator” (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). This method consists of a series of intercultural short episodes, judged to be critical for the interactions between members of two cultures. In the episodes, encounters between members of two different cultures are used to practice interactions with a new culture (Tung, 1981a).

2.4.4 Language Training
Language training involves teaching the expatriate the native language and/or the business language of the host country. While fluency can take months or even years to attain there are still benefits of using this training method (Tung, 1981a). The method is often used in CCT and is an effective way of preparing an expatriate since lack of
language skills can slow down an adjustment process. Even though fluency in the native language is not attained, the ability to enter informal discussions, use common courtesies and show cultural empathy can help to facilitate adaptation to the host culture (Brewster, 1995, pp. 64-65). Forster (2000) also concludes that some knowledge of the local language is important to send visible signals of politeness and to better understand the culture of the host country. Language barriers can prevent the expatriate from processing information posted in the local language, both privately and at a professional level, and this prevents integration (Brewster, 1995, pp. 64-65).

Knowledge of the local language does, as mentioned, facilitate cultural adjustment, and Puck et al. (2008) mention language skills as the dimension with the strongest effect on expatriate adjustment. In a study by Forster (2000), respondents did not regard pre-departure language training as very important, but criticism from respondents partly included the short duration of most of the courses.

### 2.4.5 Cultural Awareness Training

The goal of Cultural Awareness training is to give the expatriate insight about the concept of culture and cultural differences, by teaching awareness about the home culture. Training activities include self-awareness building and value ranking charts, but the goals can also be reached with more culture-general approaches, such as simulation games and perceptual exercises (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). Other methods include role-plays and self-assessments and can be a good way of building self-awareness, which translates into acceptance of oneself and an ability to adapt to the host culture (London, 2003, p. 212).

### 2.4.6 Interaction Training

The method of Interaction training is based on interactions between new expatriates and expatriates with more experience of the local culture. It can take place before departure with previous expatriates or at the arrival in the host country. Overlaps in expatriate placements are a sometimes-used training method, which can be very beneficial for the expatriate’s adjustment process. Benefits with overlaps include the possibility to explain tasks, introduce contacts and otherwise coach in the management and operation of the workplace. Families can also benefit in a similar way from interactions with the outgoing family (Brewster, 1995, p. 64).
Although the benefits are clear with this model, most actors do not use it. The reasons
are cost issues and doubts in its value. There are also problems with organizing since
the development of expatriate placements are hard to predict, and often are the result
of short notice. This makes overlaps hard to manage even for very skilled
organizations (Brewster, 1995, p. 64).

2.4.7 Cognitive Behavior Modification
This method is among the less used training methods when training an expatriate. The
expatriates get to name what activities they find rewarding or punishing in the home
culture context. By making such distinctions, the expatriate can hopefully apply the
same process in the host country and enable him or her to identify and focus on
rewarding activities and feel positive about facing challenges of the host culture
(Grove & Torbiörn, 1985).

2.5 Sequential Training
The early ideas about CCT suggested that it should be carried out before the
departure, and some researchers still think that pre-departure training helps the
expatriate to form realistic expectations prior to arrival (Caligiuri et al., 2001). Several
researchers have, however, suggested the training to be more efficient when parts of it
are held after arrival in the new culture (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). One reason to
concentrate much of the training to the post-arrival phase is the very short time span
between selection and departure, in some cases less than a month (Torbiörn, 1976, p.
106). Another reason is that it may be difficult to understand, and later recall, abstract
social behavior of the host culture if it is learned in a non-authentic environment
(Selmer et al., 1998).

Consensus as to whether CCT should be held pre-departure or post-arrival has not
been reached, and a new model – Sequential training – has been developed to
combine the benefits of both pre-departure and post-arrival training (Littrell et al.,
2006). This model is not a method in itself but constitutes a combination of different
training methods applied at different times during the training process. It is based on
the notion that the capacity for learning varies over time; thus the training methods
applied should vary over time as well. Sequential training starts before departure and
then progresses in steps through the post-arrival adjustment phases, during which
different types of CCT is applied, and can extend all the way to repatriation issues
(Selmer et al., 1998). It can start a long or short period before the move and continue
for months in the new country (Forster, 2000).

Selmer et al. (1998) argue that joint sessions for sequential CCT together with other
organizations operating in the same foreign culture can lead to synergistic effects;
logistical problems will be reduced, and the expatriates can share experiences and
learn from each other.

If the time for pre-departure training is limited, didactic training about the cultural
adjustment process should be in focus, to get the expatriate to develop realistic
expectations about the situation and become aware of the phases that will emerge
after the culture shock (Selmer et al., 1998). A fact-based training method may also
teach tangible and understandable information about the certain characteristics and
behaviors of the new culture that is important to know before, or just after, arrival.
This may be delivered either before departure, after arrival in the host country, or
both. If a cognitive-behavior modification approach is to be used, it can also be
applied either pre-departure, post-arrival, or in both phases (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985).

Both attribution training and cultural awareness training are best used before
departure, but since attribution training is culture specific it is not applicable in a
general training program. The cultural awareness training is very general in nature
and can therefore be an effective part of a pre-departure training program that is
directed at a group of expatriates that are going to very different regions (Grove &
Torbiörn, 1985).

Interactional learning is best used post-arrival, since the expatriate needs an authentic
cultural context. Not until then will the expatriate realize many of the challenges he or
she will be facing (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). These personal experiences and
realizations about the cultural differences between home country and host country
have two positive effects: they can be used effectively in the CCT, and they further
motivate the expatriate to participate in the training (Selmer et al., 1998).
A certain level of language skills is necessary to have directly after arrival in the new country, so that common courtesies and basic greetings are mastered (Forster, 2000; Puck et al., 2008). The amount of language skills needed is not defined, but Puck et al. (2008) state that the person’s previous language skills and ability to learn new languages should be taken into account already during the selection process. The better the language skills are, the easier will the adjustment process be, since language has a very strong effect on expatriate adjustment (Puck et al., 2008).

The culture shock phase is the stage where the expatriate is the most susceptible to CCT. Both didactic and experiential training can be used, as well as explanations of observed behavior. The latter method is an effective way to develop appropriate behavior and learn how to learn more about the host culture (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985; Selmer et al., 1998).

The adjustment phase is characterized by a growing consciousness with the expatriate, who at this stage needs to learn how to behave as the host nationals do. CCT should include on-the-job practice, both structured and unstructured situations, for expatriate-host national interactions (Selmer et al., 1998).

### 2.6 Cross-Cultural Intelligence

Interactions over cultural borders require skills that can be labeled as cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence can be present individually or collectively in the organization. Extensive training is required for a person to acquire sufficient cross-cultural intelligence. The training can include learning positive and negative aspects of the host culture, which can increase the cultural intelligence (Triandis, 2006). The concept of cultural intelligence can also be used as a tool in both the development process and the selection process of expatriates. Attributes connected to having cross-cultural intelligence are the ability to interpret verbal cues from persons of different cultures and to make correct social interferences during conversations. Another skill is the ability to reach social objectives through cultural negotiations, based on the own understanding and acceptance of the host culture. (Ascalon, Schleicher & Born, 2008).
2.7 Importance of Cross-Cultural Training

There are several causes of expatriates failing to achieve the expected outcomes of a foreign assignment. Language problems may be one obvious reason, but also problems with effective knowledge transfer between the expatriate and the host country (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Tung, 1987). It may further be a lack of personality skills for the expatriate to understand the cross-cultural interactions, a lack of technical abilities for the work to be done, a lack of motivation for the foreign assignment, or the expatriate may have difficulties to understand and adapt to either the physical or the cultural differences in the environment (Littrell et al., 2006). Even if the expatriate has adapted well to the new environment and experiences little or no problems with the assignment and general conditions, the situation for the accompanying spouse and/or other family members is just as important (Black & Gregersen, 1991b; Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Littrell et al., 2006).

The reason why an early return is often seen as the ultimate sign of failure is because it is much easier to identify than measuring underlying factors, even though it merely constitutes the tip of the iceberg (Bennett et al., 2000). Other indications of an unsuccessful assignment may be delayed productivity and start-up time, disruption of relationships between host and expatriate nationals, damage to company image, lost opportunities, negative impact on successors, and poor repatriation integration leading to high turnover (Bennett et al., 2000, p. 241; Littrell et al., 2006, p. 357).

There are, however, uncertainties about the effectiveness of CCT (Selmer et al., 1998). A study by Puck et al. (2008) tested the impact of CCT participation and comprehensiveness on the expatriate adjustment and found no positive relationship. According to Kealey and Protheroe (1999), there has been no study on perceived learning and effectiveness of CCT that meet all criteria for reliable research. Many studies have, however, come very close to meeting all criteria and shown strong empirical and methodological support for the value of CCT (Kealey & Protheroe, 1999).

In 1990, Black and Mendenhall presented a comprehensive theoretical study where CCT effectiveness was evaluated according to the variables “cross-cultural skill development”, “adjustment” and “performance”. From the results of previous studies
performed, it was found that all studies found a positive relationship between CCT and “development of greater feelings of well-being and self-confidence”, “self-reported measures of relationship skills” and “development of appropriate perceptions relative to members of another culture” (Black & Mendenhall, 1990, pp. 117-118). The study also found a positive relationship between CCT and adjustment in all previous studies. Finally, 11 out of 15 studies that examined the impact of CCT on performance found a significant positive relationship, whereas none of the remaining four studies found a negative relationship (Black & Mendenhall, 1990, pp. 118-119). The authors concluded that CCT had a positive impact on cross-cultural effectiveness.

Black and Mendenhall’s (1990) results were already challenged in 1991 when Black and Gregersen (1991a) found an unexpected negative relationship between training and interaction adjustment. The authors suggest an explanation of both low quantity and quality of the training to have given the expatriates inaccurate expectations (Black & Gregersen, 1991a), something that is further discussed by Caligiuri et al. (2001). The results by Black and Mendenhall (1990) were, however, confirmed by Deshpandey and Viswesvaran in 1992, as cited by Bhawuk and Brislin (2000).

In a comprehensive review of the cross-cultural research, Littrell et al. (2006) confirm the need for empirical evidence of CCT effectiveness. Although many studies point towards a positive relationship between CCT and effective adjustment and/or performance, it is evident that further empirical research is needed (Littrell et al., 2006).
3 Method
This section presents the research design, introduces the interview respondents and describes how empirical information was collected. The operationalization is further described, and ethical problems of doing this type of study are discussed.

3.1 Research Design
Since this study focuses on one company and in-depth information is required, the decision of conducting a case study was a natural choice. The information needed for the study is mainly of qualitative nature, making face-to-face interviews the chosen research design. There are several ways of conducting interviews but a semi-structured model was chosen, because it offers a guideline through the interview while opening up for the possibility of asking spontaneous questions (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 213). A less structured way of conducting interviews also offers the possibility to get more in-depth information (Fisher, 2007, p. 159), which suits this case study well. The study is based on primary information obtained at interviews with representatives at Ericsson’s department of International Assignments and secondary information with general facts and structures of the CCT program. The objective is to analyze the training of expatriates within Ericsson from a theoretical perspective.

3.2 Collection of Data
3.2.1 Primary Data
Two Area Managers, Charlotte Rubertson and Lieselotte Claydon, working at Ericsson’s department of International Assignments in Stockholm, were interviewed face-to-face to collect primary information. The two interviews were conducted separately from each other, to make the information more reliable. Critique against the reliability should, however, be mentioned. The interview questions were e-mailed to the respondents one day prior to the interview, on request by the interviewees, so the respondents had the opportunity to discuss and prepare their answers with each other prior to the interview. This could cause answers to be planned and less spontaneous. The purpose of this study is, however, to analyze the actual structure of the CCT program, which is less likely to be affected by this. The interviews were, as mentioned, semi-structured, which opened up the possibility to broaden questions
with new perspectives and ask additional, non-prepared, questions when interesting answers emerged. This should help balance this bias and increase the reliability of the study.

3.2.2 Secondary Data
Although this study mainly is based on primary data, we have used some secondary sources to verify information, as well as to gain a deeper understanding of the issues addressed. The main source of secondary information has been internal documents, such as the agenda for the briefing program (Ericsson Internal, 2009a), statistics on Ericsson’s expatriates (Ericsson Internal, 2009b) and recommendations to the host organizations on post-arrival activities (Göthlinder, 2009). These internal documents have all been provided by Charlotte Rubertson, Area Manager at Ericsson’s department of International Assignments. Some secondary information has also been accessed through Ericsson’s homepage, mainly in Ericsson’s annual report from 2008 (Ericsson AB, 2008).

There is an issue with reliability when obtaining information from the subject of the study, but since the information is unavailable elsewhere it had to be acquired from Ericsson. The secondary information is, however, very factual in nature and is mainly used to confirm primary data.

3.3 Choosing the Respondents
Two Area Managers at Ericsson’s department of International Assignments in Kista, Stockholm have been interviewed; Charlotte Rubertson and Lieselotte Claydon.

3.3.1 Charlotte Rubertson
Charlotte Rubertson is responsible for the region of Northern Europe, which includes Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, France, the Nordic countries and the Baltic countries. Rubertson was educated in Human Resource Management at Linköping’s University and has worked at International Assignments for several years. Her previous experiences include work as a teacher and voluntary work at Ericsson in the US.

We gained information about Charlotte Rubertson and her work with expatriates when going through secondary data and through a telephone call and e-mail with
Charlotte Eriksson at Ericsson’s department of Student Relations. The choice of interviewing Rubertson was based on the fact that she is the primary responsible for the pre-departure program at Ericsson International Assignments.

**3.3.2 Lieselotte Claydon**

Claydon is the Area Manager for North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. She is a market economist, has been working for Ericsson for the last 27 years, and at the department of International Assignments for five years. For almost three years, Claydon was locally employed by Ericsson in Egypt, where she was responsible for arranging the post-arrival “Induction Program”. She continued working at Ericsson in Sweden in 2007, but regularly visits Egypt.

Since Rubertson and Claydon have different responsibilities within the department, as well as different viewpoints on the importance for CCT, they complement each other and give our empirical findings more depth. By interviewing both, we also gained the possibility to cross-reference empirical data, which increases the reliability of the study.

**3.4 Operationalization**

This study has been performed using semi-structured interviews, where information on the attributes on Ericsson’s CCT system has been gathered to form the empirical base of the study. The questions for the interviews were formed using our theoretical framework, and is mainly focused on different CCT methods presented in papers such as Grove and Torbiörn (1985), Gertsen (1990) and Tung (1981a). However, theories explaining the concept of CCT addressed in papers such as Black & Mendenhall (1990), Selmer (1999) and Oberg (1960) were used to gain insight on the topic and also when constructing questions for the interviews.

The interviews were recorded to enable coding of the collected material at a later stage. When choosing the method of coding we were faced with the option of transcribing or not (Fisher, 2007, pp. 181-182). Because of the time consuming nature of transcribing we decided to take notes while listening back to the recorded interviews instead, which helped us sort out the usable information. To help ensure objectivity, the choice was made to listen back on the interview performed by the
other interviewer. We then compared our notes together to further promote identification of themes and usable information. Going through the notes this way helped establish the correctness and validity of the empirical data obtained at the interviews. Empirical data gathered at interviews has also been cross-referenced with secondary data to further help establish the validity of the data.

The theories mainly used when analyzing the empirical section is based on the different training methods presented in the CCT section of the theory as well as the U-curve and the adjustment phases. The empirical data has been analyzed using these theories, enabling us to identify the methods used in Ericsson’s expatriate training setup. The theoretical framework used in the analysis of the empirical data also include theories on how different training methods should be combined and applied during certain stages (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985), labeled as sequential training. Other theories have been used when explaining concepts to some extent, but the analysis focuses on identifying different training methods and how they have been combined.

By looking at the results from the analysis we have formed our conclusions. The conclusions are mainly based on the concepts identified in the analysis. Some recommendations to Ericsson on improvements of the expatriate training setup are also included. A discussion is performed at the end of the thesis, where concepts not addressed in theory are addressed and suggestions for future research are presented.

3.5 Ethics

The risk when performing interviews is making the respondent say more than he or she would like to. There is also a risk of influencing the respondent to give answers that fit our pre-conceived idea of what the study should result in. This is especially important in a qualitative study, where results are easier to influence compared to a quantitative study.

Another issue encountered is the fact that the respondents work for Ericsson’s department of International Assignments, which is the unit responsible for training expatriates in the company. This might make them biased towards wanting results that make the company look good, or afraid to make the own department look bad. The issue could have been solved with anonymous respondents, but because of the
relatively small number of people working at International Assignments this was not possible. Instead the questions asked were designed to obtain as objective answers as possible about the CCT programs, hopefully balancing this bias.

It is important to ask permission to record the interviews (Fisher, 2007, p. 69) and otherwise inform the interviewees about the study since this helps clarifying what they are agreeing to participate in. By explaining fully how the interview process will proceed, we were able to get the interviewees full-informed consent to participate. The fact that the respondents got to look at the interview questions beforehand also helped to ensure that their full informed consent was obtained (Fisher, 2007, pp. 64-65), while the factual nature of the study helped to prevent this from affecting the findings.
4 Empirical Findings

This section starts with a presentation of statistics on Ericsson’s expatriation activities. It continues with information about Ericsson’s pre-departure and post-arrival training based on the interviews as well as secondary information.

4.1 Ericsson’s International Activities

Ericsson was founded by Lars Magnus Ericsson in 1876 (Ericsson, 2009a) and has today grown to having 78,000 employees and customers in over 175 countries (Ericsson AB, 2008, p. 1). The company’s main business is telecom network equipment and related services, where it is the world’s largest provider. Contracts with most telecom operators mean that Ericsson today serve more than 40% of all mobile users. Ericsson also manages operator-owned networks, serving 250 million subscribers around the world (Ericsson AB, 2008, p. 1).

The company has a longstanding tradition of sending employees abroad, the company’s founder Lars Magnus Ericsson even spent two periods abroad in 1873 and 1875 working and receiving training (Ericsson, 2009b). Ericsson’s international presence has also led an extensive movement of human capital within the organization. The company’s training program for preparing future expatriates started in 1978, as a result of a big order to Saudi-Arabia (Rubertson, 2009). Today the company has expatriates from 71 nationalities working in 110 different countries (Rubertson, 2009). A total number of 1,615 expatriates (or Long-Terms Assignees – LTAs, as they are referred to within Ericsson) are currently working at Ericsson, out of which 1492 (92%) are men. Sweden is the predominant host country, hosting 152 expatriates (9%) as for the first quarter of 2009 (Ericsson Internal, 2009b). The ten most common host countries are presented in Table 2 below.
Table 2. The ten most common host countries for expatriates at Ericsson, and the exact numbers of employees in the various countries as for the first quarter of 2009 (Ericsson Internal, 2009b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host country</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Emirates</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common country of origin is Sweden, from which 40-46% of all Ericsson expatriates originate (Ericsson Internal, 2009b). The ten most common home countries for expatriates are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The ten most common home countries for expatriates at Ericsson, and the exact numbers for the first quarter of 2009 (Ericsson Internal, 2009b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home country</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The trend when it comes to international assignments at Ericsson has had a positive development over time. The burst of the IT bubble represented a step back from which expatriate numbers have started to recover, but still has not recuperated fully. Absolute expatriate numbers from 1993 until today are presented in Table 4 below. The department of International Assignments has also been affected. In 2001, International Assignments employed 30 people (Paues, 2001). Today, the department employs 12 people (Rubertson, 2009).
4.2 International Long-Term Assignments

An international long-term assignment at Ericsson lasts 1 year or longer, but most commonly 2-3 years (Claydon, 2009; Rubertson, 2009). The most common group of expatriates is people working with services or service delivery (Rubertson, 2009). The second most common group is people working with sales followed closely by R&D personnel. (Ericsson Internal, 2009b).

Premature returns for expatriates represent about 1% of the total numbers, with the predominant reason for early returns being illness (Rubertson, 2009). During Claydon’s time at International Assignments, it has only happened once, and it was due to health problems. She can remember one family that disliked the situation in Egypt and therefore was transferred to Tunisia where the expatriate could perform the same job tasks and the family felt more comfortable (Claydon, 2009). Both Claydon and Rubertson hypothesize that one reason for the premature returns being so rare is Ericsson’s strong corporate culture. Ericsson is known for taking care of its employees, and the company has a similar structure and organization all over the world, according to Claydon (2009). Rubertson thinks that the cultural attributes of Swedish people in general may contribute to the good statistics (Rubertson, 2009).
4.3 Pre-Departure Training

Swedish employees are offered to attend a one-day briefing session before departure. Expatriates from other countries than Sweden receive a DVD with information as a substitute for the briefing session (Claydon, 2009; Rubertson, 2009).

Before the expatriate attends the pre-departure course they receive information, mainly via e-mail and Internet. This information serves the purpose of inspiring and motivating participants to start investigate and read more on their own, but a booklet containing checklists with important things to do before departure is also received (Rubertson, 2009).

The pre-departure briefing program consists of several steps spread over six hours. Area Manager Charlotte Rubertson is responsible for the program and briefs the participants with information about salary policies and the adaptation process, as well as information and advice for the accompanying spouses (Rubertson, 2009). Speakers from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency also attend to inform the employees about important regulations and policies (Ericsson Internal, 2009a). Other issues that are covered include pension, security, insurance, and travel medicine. During a short coffee break, the employees can meet the different Area Managers (Ericsson Internal, 2009a). Finally, there is a course evaluation of the briefing program (Ericsson Internal, 2009a; Rubertson, 2009).

Each briefing session attracts 5-18 participants. Both expatriates and their spouses, but not children, are welcome to attend the course. As an average, 1.67 persons follow an expatriate from Ericsson on their assignment abroad. Returned expatriates have earlier participated in the pre-departure course but this does not occur anymore due to low attendance. Instead, previous expatriates’ contact information can be conveyed to participants on request (Rubertson, 2009).

The pre-departure training in itself is of a general nature and contains no cultural or country specific training. Neither is the pre-departure briefing customized to the individual or the specific working task (Rubertson, 2009). Instead, the training includes information on how to solve more tangible problems that have to be settled before departure. Participants are also informed on adaptation issues and the different
adjustment phases (i.e. honeymoon phase, culture shock etc.). They are encouraged to seek out information about the specific country before departure. The doctor Olle Norrbom is there to give general medical information and answer medical questions (Rubertson, 2009).

Expatriates and their spouses are also offered at least 20 hours of language training each before departure. This training is carried out by external actors (Rubertson, 2009) and is concentrated on the host country’s business language (Claydon, 2009). The business language is not always the same as the social language. As an example, Arabic is both the official and the business language in Egypt, whereas French is the business language in the otherwise Arabic-speaking Algeria (Claydon, 2009).

Ericsson International Assignments recommends the expatriates to visit the country beforehand together with the spouse. This is aimed at giving expatriates a taste of the culture and prepares them for what they will be facing during their placement. The host organization has to approve to this trip since it will pay for it, but this is generally not a problem (Rubertson, 2009).

4.4 Post-Arrival Training
Culture-specific training, as well as other general information, is received in a post-arrival Induction Program, organized by the host organization. Contacts with current expatriates, who are already familiar with the country, also occur here (Rubertson, 2009).

According to Ericsson’s General Conditions of Long-Term Assignments Abroad, “The Host Organization is responsible for arranging an induction program for the Assignee and accompanying family members upon arrival and for providing essential information related to working and living conditions in the country of service” (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 1).

The coordinator for the Induction Program is a local Ericsson HR officer, but external service providers are used when needed (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 3). A welcoming e-mail is usually sent to the assignee before arrival, and he or she should get help to organize accommodation and school as well (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 4). The local HR department
also has an introduction meeting with the expatriate (Claydon, 2009; Göthlinder, 2009, p. 4).

Since the Induction Program is performed for a group of expatriates, who may arrive at different times, it is sometimes held 1-2 months after arrival. The nature of the Induction Program is very general since it is difficult and time-consuming to construct individual-based programs (Claydon, 2009). Individual-based programs would, according to Claydon, not be possible to give to many nationalities since the personal integrity is much stronger with some nationalities.

According to Ericsson’s internal recommendations, all expatriates and accompanying family members must be registered, but an additional assignee/family list including age, number of children, hobbies, interests, telephone number, e-mail etc. can be established and distributed to other expatriates if the assignee wishes so (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 3). A handbook with emergency contacts, general living conditions, shopping, public transportation, public holidays etc. as well as information pamphlets about schools and hospitals should be distributed to the assignees (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 3).

The expatriate and accompanying family members are then offered to participate in language training after arrival (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 5). The local HR department should also accompany the expatriate to relevant local authorities, assist in organizing social activities, give information about general living conditions and have a follow-up meeting 2-3 months after arrival (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 4-5).

Most of the Ericsson employees going on long-term assignments to North Africa, Eastern Europe or Central Asia are, according to Claydon, non-Swedish. The countries that receive most Ericsson expatriates in these regions (Egypt and Algeria in North Africa, and Russia and Ukraine in Eastern Europe) offer Induction Programs after arrival (Claydon, 2009). The other countries in these regions and the Central Asian countries receive very few expatriates, sometimes only one or two persons in each country. These expatriates receive comprehensive printed materials that address cultural aspects and give advice on behavior and appropriate dress codes (Claydon, 2009).
As an example, Claydon describes the Induction Program in Egypt, which consists of very formal and organized activities during one day where specialists on cultural issues give speeches about cultural differences and representatives from Ericsson speak about security and the work itself. Accompanying family members are welcome to participate in these activities and evening activities are arranged to give the opportunity to extend the social network. The participation in these activities is more significant by some nationalities than others. Swedish expatriates are often active participants, and accompanying spouses are sometimes keen on getting in touch with other expatriate spouses to discuss school issues for their children. Some nationalities are less participative and some expatriates even refuse to register their accompanying family members in any company register or database (Claydon, 2009).

The Ericsson policy says that a well-designed Induction Program generates value for both the company and the expatriate with family, thus the recommendation for the host organization is to always organize an Induction Program. The company will get cost management control and at the same time increase the chances of high performance with the long-term assignment. Additionally, Ericsson will be a “Company of Choice” to work for (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 2). The Induction Program will help the expatriate and family to adjust to the new environment, prevent socially related problems and establish “a safe and secure position in the country of service” (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 2).

4.5 Additional Findings

When the expatriate has finished the overseas assignment, he or she should get assistance with transfer preparations (Göthlinder, 2009, p. 4). Ericsson recommends the local organization to use a checklist (see Appendix) during the assignment that must be signed by both the HR department and the assignee (Göthlinder, 2009). Previously a repatriation course was offered to returning expatriates, but this was cancelled due to low participation. The repatriation training was replaced by a questionnaire that was filled out at the return, but this has been cancelled as well (Rubertson, 2009).
According to Rubertson, no methods have consciously been excluded when designing the pre-departure training; instead International Assignments have tried to keep an open mind. If any additional elements in the training of expatriates are to be included, Rubertson (2009) states that she would like to re-introduce questionnaires for returned expatriates and perhaps also include some more country specific training in the pre-departure course. If the assignment is to be evaluated, Claydon (2009) claims that it is the responsibility of the home organization to gather the knowledge an expatriate has gained on his or her assignment. She says that the resources would be more useful to develop the Induction Program locally. The post-arrival training should be formalized and resources should be put on security and culture training on a local level, according to Claydon (2009).
5 Analysis
Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) proposed that CCT should be recommended since it prepares the expatriates and facilitates cultural adjustment. The program Ericsson uses to prepare its employees before a long-term foreign assignment is culture general in nature and not adapted to individual characteristics or different professions (Claydon, 2009; Rubertson, 2009). This strategy does not follow Grove and Torbiörn’s (1985) suggestion to always design the training program according to the context and the personal characteristics. According to Claydon (2009), this would prove to be very difficult and time-consuming and at the same time intrude too much on the expatriate’s personal integrity. Gertsen (1990) argues that a combination of general and country specific methods can be used when preparing and training expatriates, and Selmer et al. (1998) even suggest training sessions together with other organizations to logistically be able to adapt the training to a specific culture.

Ericsson uses a sequential approach in their CCT setup. While they provide training during some of the phases identified for sequential training, some of them have been neglected. The company provides pre-departure training, which mainly consists of fact-based didactic training, with some small aspects of experiential training. They also provide training during the honeymoon and culture shock phase, which include interaction training and experiential training. Training during the adjusted phase of the U-curve is generally not given. While repatriation previously was an aspect of the CCT in Ericsson, it is has now been cancelled.

5.1 Pre-Departure Training
The pre-departure training consists of several aspects, with the main part being a pre-departure briefing given to expatriates. It contains several different training methods and aims at facilitating cultural assimilation of the expatriate.

Ericsson’s pre-departure briefing for Swedish expatriates is held over one day with lectures conveying information about policies, practices, insurance, security, health issues and an overview of the cultural adaptation process (Ericsson Internal, 2009a). This is a didactic training held for a group of expatriates with no individual adaptations, and the only culture-specific element during that day is a coffee break
where the expatriates get the chance to have an informal conversation with one of the Area Managers.

The non-Swedish expatriates get a DVD with general information (Claydon, 2009; Rubertson, 2009), which can be classified as didactic training. The fact that Ericsson uses didactic training in the form of informal briefings is not surprising, as this method is used by more than two thirds of all multinational corporations (Brewster, 1995, p. 63). As the pre-departure course only gives general information on how to solve practical problems (Claydon, 2009; Rubertson, 2009), excluding country specific aspects, some of the responsibility for the fact-oriented training is transferred over to the expatriate. Some fact-based information is distributed to the expatriates, but the expatriates are also encouraged to seek information about the specific country they are going to, which, if done so by the expatriate, increases the culture-specific aspect of the training.

The pre-departure training also contains experiential training when the expatriates together with their spouses are encouraged to go on look-see visits to the intended host country (Rubertson, 2009). This also adds a country specific aspect to the training, which is missing in the pre-departure briefing. These look-see trips provide a first genuine taste of the host culture and the future workplace, which can be important before deciding about moving overseas (Brewster, 1995, p. 63). Bennett et al. (2000) recommends having the look-see trip prior to the pre-departure training. The problem that can be identified with these trips is that the visitor is likely to only encounter the good sides of the host country, thus only experiencing the honeymoon phase of the U-curve (Black & Gregersen, 1991b; Brewster, 1995, p. 63; Oberg, 1960; Selmer, 1999, Torbiörn, 1976, p. 155). Look-see trips seem to be the only experiential training method used by Ericsson before departure. Grove and Torbiörn identified experiential training as one of the most promising methods in their study 1985. None of the other experiential training activities, such as practical exercises, workshops or simulations, are used.

Ericsson also offers at least 20 hours of language training prior to departure. The company cannot monitor the content of this training since it is performed by external actors. Ericsson is not involved in the language training, other than by being
responsible for the payment to the external actors that provide the training. The language training is also offered to the expatriate spouse but the responsibility is again on the expatriate to make sure that they receive this type of training (Rubertson, 2009). The language that is taught is always the country’s business language (Claydon, 2009), which helps when greeting new people and exchanging common courtesies in the workplace or other business settings (Brewster, 1995, pp. 64-65; Forster, 2000).

Interaction training was previously used during the pre-departure course, when returned expatriates got to meet with course participants. This aspect of the pre-departure training is, however, not used anymore (Rubertson, 2009). Interaction training is mostly recommended after the expatriate has arrived in the host country (Brewster, 1995, p. 64).

Other types of training that Ericsson is not using in their pre-departure training are attribution training, cultural awareness training or cognitive behavior modification (Rubertson, 2009). The latter one is not commonly used (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). Both attribution training and cultural awareness training is very individually focused (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985; London, 2003, p. 212) whereas Ericsson has a more general approach to its CCT program (Rubertson, 2009).

5.2 Post-Arrival Training

Most of the countries that receive expatriates regularly follow the recommendations and organize an Induction Program (Claydon, 2009). This is, however, optional for the host organization, and the training can therefore differ a lot between countries. The recommendations include distributing a handbook and information pamphlets, which are purely fact-based. According to Grove and Torbiörn (1985), fact-based training must be complemented by other relevant methods in order to be effective. The fact-oriented material may, however, be distributed both before departure and after arrival and can be very useful (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). Claydon (2009) described the Induction Program in Egypt as very formal with well-organized activities such as speeches by specialists on cultural issues. Hence, the Induction Program has a didactic perspective.
The evening activities that are arranged in some of the Induction Programs aim at getting the expatriates to socialize and extend their social network (Claydon, 2009). Socializing with host nationals increase the understanding of the local culture and facilitate a more effective adjustment process. Expatriates with much experience from the specific cultural setting can also be important as they add another, perhaps for the new expatriate, more familiar perspective than the host nationals. Socializing with host nationals and/or experienced expatriates is a form of interaction training, which can be more or less formal (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). A more formal form of interaction training, overlapping or on-the-job training, which was discussed by Brewster (1995, p. 64) and also covered by Selmer (1999) and Littrell (2006), is generally not used within Ericsson (Rubertson, 2009). Hence, interaction training is not part of Ericsson’s intentional CCT, but can rather be said to be a positive side effect from certain activities in the Induction Program.

Many host organizations wait until a “large enough” group of expatriates has arrived before they start the Induction Program, which, according to Claydon (2009), can take 1-2 months. At this time, the expatriates that arrived early may already have entered the culture shock phase (Oberg, 1960; Selmer, 1999) and are likely to respond differently to the training than newly arrived expatriates.

Language training is an important part of the Induction Program, in addition to the language training offered in the home country before departure. Since language is the key to personal interactions and may ease the adjustment phase in the U-curve (Oberg, 1960), knowledge of the basic phrases and the ability to exchange courtesies in the host language are important factors on the way to a more effective and fast adjustment (Caligiuri et al., 2001; Selmer, 1999). Puck et al. (2008) stated that language constitutes the most important factor for cultural adjustment.

Host countries that receive a smaller number of expatriates do not conduct an Induction Program but distribute comprehensive printed materials instead (Claydon, 2009). Since this material is fact-based, it is, according to Grove and Torbiörn (1985), not sufficient to facilitate effective cultural adjustment.
6 Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis is to describe Ericsson’s preparation and training of its employees for long-term assignments abroad, and compare it to current research and relevant theories about cross-cultural adjustment and training. Even though relevant criticism has been presented on the topic, a majority of researches has found strong evidence for the benefits of CCT.

We identified that Ericsson uses didactic training during the briefing day in the pre-departure phase and offers experiential training in the form of look-see trips to the host country before the start of the assignment. Ericsson also offers language training – both before departure and after arrival in the host country. The post-arrival training is conducted by the host organization and is not offered to expatriates in all countries. According to Ericsson’s internal recommendations, the training should be organized in an Induction Program and comprise written information and help with practical issues. We identified the Induction Program as mainly didactic, occasionally with some features of informal interaction training during socializing activities. Ericsson is not using attribution training, cultural awareness training, cognitive behavior modification, organized interaction training (e.g. overlaps, on-the-job training) or experiential training in the form of workshops or simulations.

Ericsson’s training program fits relatively well into the sequential training model. If the host organization follows Ericsson’s internal recommendations, the expatriate will receive post-arrival training in addition to the pre-departure training received in the home country. The pre-departure training offered to Swedish employees is more extensive than for employees in other countries, which is both due to the fact that the department of International Assignments is situated in Stockholm, and that Sweden is the country that noticeably send the most expatriates.

The look-see trips offered by Ericsson are well based in scientific theory and make Ericsson’s pre-departure training more culture specific, which is something that otherwise constitutes the largest divergence from recommendations in theories on CCT. Ericsson provides a very general pre-departure program with no individual adaptations and, except for the optional look-see trips and the language training, no
geographical or cultural variations. Almost all research recommends culture-specific training.

No attempts to evaluate Ericsson’s CCT have been made, but a few suggestions for further improvement from a theoretical perspective are presented here. The didactic pre-departure training can be extended to include more culture-specific aspects if a few returned expatriates are invited to talk about the specific host culture and answer questions from the expatriates-to-be. The post-arrival Induction Program should become more formalized with more clear recommendations about the content and especially timing of the activities so that it can be implemented according to the different phases of the U-curve. It is obviously important to make sure that the host countries follow the recommendations and implement the Induction Program properly. Some kind of formalized repatriation training and/or evaluation of the assignment could provide valuable feedback for the planning of future training programs.
7 Discussion

This section goes beyond the theoretical framework that was used in the analysis and conclusions. We present our own observations and reflections, which can provide interesting perspectives and suggestions for further research.

According to Ericsson, the company experiences few problems with premature returns of expatriates. Both Rubertson and Claydon hypothesized that it may be due to a strong company culture. This can, perhaps, be connected to cross-cultural intelligence inherent in the organization. Cross-cultural intelligence could also explain why Ericsson can use mainly culture general didactic training methods and still keep the early return rate at a low level. The low number of premature returns could, possibly, also be connected with an effective selection process of expatriates. These hypotheses must be investigated more thorough in further research before any conclusions can be drawn.

The language training that is offered by Ericsson is focused on the host country’s business language. A few countries have several official languages, or spoken languages other than the official one. While knowledge of the business language is necessary for the work-related adjustment, some knowledge of the language that is spoken by people outside the workplace may be just as important for the overall adjustment process, especially for the spouse and other accompanying family members. Thus, we give the advice to extend the language training to also include teaching of the most common language in the specific cases.

This thesis have identified the training methods Ericsson uses and can thus not be used to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the training. It is, on the other hand, a fact that early returns are rare within Ericsson. Further research should bring about interviews with both present and returned Ericsson expatriates to make a comprehensive analysis on the value of Ericsson’s CCT and determine the reasons behind its good performance.
8 References


**Interviews**

Claydon, Lieselotte, Area Manager at Ericsson International Assignments, Stockholm, April 22, 2009 Ericsson, Stockholm. Personal interview.

Rubertson, Charlotte, Area Manager at Ericsson International Assignments, Stockholm, April 22, 2009 Ericsson, Stockholm. Personal interview.
Appendix – Checklist for the Induction Program

Source: Göthlinder, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>SIGNATURE</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introd meeting with assignee/family</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Handbook briefing</td>
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<td>Accommodation</td>
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<td>General living conditions</td>
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<td>Cross cultural training</td>
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<td>Safety/ Security</td>
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<td>Health care</td>
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<td>Schools</td>
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<td>Language training</td>
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<td>Taxes/bank services/local authorities</td>
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<td>Work permit, residence permit, visa</td>
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<td>Social activities</td>
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<td>Local company information for spouse</td>
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<td>Follow-up adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for repatriation/transfer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exit interview</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Assignee name:                                    Division:

Family members' names:                             Cost Centre:

Welcome Checklist