

Global Managerial Skill Sets, Management Development, and The Role of HR: An Exploratory Qualitative Study of North American and Indian Managers

Subramaniam Ananthram
Curtin University
E-Mail: s.ananthram@curtin.edu.au

Alan Nankervis
Curtin University
E-Mail: A.Nankervis@curtin.edu.au

ABSTRACT

Since Porter's (1986) seminal study, many researchers have focused on the key factors that assure competitiveness in increasingly global marketplaces, including both business and human resource management (HRM) strategies. With respect to the latter, the importance of developing managers with global skill sets has been a persistent theme in the literature on competitive strategy and HRM over the last decade. This paper extends such research by employing a qualitative methodology to explore the need for and to identify these global skill sets from the perspectives of 56 senior executives from multinational organizations in North America and India. The role of human resource (HR) departments in developing the identified skill-sets for global managers is discussed. The paper also presents the implications for HR professionals and practitioners and provides suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Globalization, Global Mindsets, Human Resource Management, North America, India, Management Development

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of business has arguably resulted from the demand for new markets, cost imperatives, increased competition, and a series of governmental initiatives facilitated by new information and communication technologies (Sealy et al. 2010). Such pressures and opportunities have created significant challenges for

multinational corporations. Apart from contextual and overall organizational issues such as diverse levels of government support, infrastructural issues, and technological capabilities, perhaps the most significant challenge relates to the perspectives, skill sets and capabilities of managers in global corporations. The possession of 'global mindsets', or 'the capacity to engage in a boundaryless and synthesized cognitive process that identifies opportunities and innovation in complexity' (Rogers and Blonski, 2010: 19), is considered to be the crucial component of these managerial attributes with significant potential for the growth of multinational corporations (Rhinesmith, 1992, 1993, 1995; Gupta and Govindarajan 2002; Bowen and Inkpen, 2009; Beechler et al, 1999; Cohen, 2010; Lovvorn and Chen, 2011).

Many authors have attempted to more precisely identify the essential managerial global skill sets. For Cabrera and Bowen (2005: 799), these skills encompass the capability to 'expand scale, network or knowledge economies beyond local markets, (to devise) business models that exploit economic inefficiencies across national lines'. Johnson (2011: 30) suggests that effective global managers demonstrate complex characteristics: 'change agents, ethical, decisive, confident, proactive, critical thinkers, versatile, process-focused, open-minded, and accountable'. Other researchers (Hofstede 1980; Bartlett and Ghoshal 1989, 1998; Black and Gregersen 1999; Stanek 2000; Baruch 2002; Cabrera and Bowen 2005) have focused on individual managers' characteristics (age, gender, marital status; nationality, personality) or behavioural dimensions (Stanek, 2000; Kedia and Mukherji, 1999). Cohen (2010) suggests that all of the above criteria for managerial global skill sets need to be evaluated in relation to the management of three key business dilemmas: global formalization versus local flexibility, global standards versus local customization, and global dictates versus local delegation.

While research on the criteria for global management skill sets and capabilities is relatively well-developed, especially among Western multinational corporations (MNCs), there has been considerably less attention on how such skill sets might be identified and nurtured by MNCs. Moreover, there have been few comparative studies of the global competencies of MNC managers from developed and developing countries. This paper addresses both of these issues by first seeking to identify the key components of these global skill sets from the perspectives of a sample of senior managers in US and Indian MNCs and by exploring the role of human resource management (HRM) strategies and policies in nurturing and developing these capabilities. The next section presents the relevant literature on global skill sets and the role of HRM in nurturing these management capabilities. This is followed by the

methodology which details the research design. The research findings are presented pursuant to this followed by the discussion and conclusion which present an analysis of the research findings, delineate the implications for future research and identify practical recommendations for HRM professionals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Skill Sets For Global Managers

Global managers need skill sets that facilitate efficient and effective functioning in the complex and dynamic global business environment. Clearly, the challenges associated with globalization, both external and internal, compel managers to develop appropriate skill sets (Ananthram et al. 2010). Thus, it is vital to encourage managers to develop skills, competencies, values and a culture conducive to operating successfully in the global economy (Rhinesmith, 1993, Bouquet, 2005).

Research on globalization has led to considerable discussion of global skill sets, in particular, global mindsets, as a crucial factor for the effectiveness of managers of MNCs (e.g. Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989; Rhinesmith, 1995; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002; Cohen, 2010; Beechler et al., 1999). Global mindset is increasingly considered as one of the key skills for global managers. Story and Barbuto Jr. (2011: 377), among others, note that ‘many frameworks of global mindset have been proposed in the literature but no clear consensus has been observed’. There is general agreement that global mindsets are essentially cognitive structures (Levy et al., 2007; Rogers and Blonski, 2010; Lovvorn and Chen, 2011), but their precise dimensions and antecedents are still contested (Perlmutter, 1969; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002; Bouquet, 2005; Rogers and Blonski, 2010).

The dimensions of global skill sets and associated mindsets are both organizational and managerial, as Gupta and Govindarajan point out: ‘organizations and their employees observe and make sense of their surroundings by processing information through their own unique cognitive filters’ (2002: 175). With respect to organizational dimensions, Kefalas (1998) proposed several objective indicators, including the representation of foreigners on the Board of Directors or in top management positions, the extent of previous international experience for potential managers, lack of barriers between headquarters and international subsidiaries, multi-cultural team-building workshops, and evidence of the implementation of new ideas or products suggested by foreign affiliates.

Most researchers have emphasized the managerial dimensions of global mindsets, arguing that ‘a core managerial group with a global mentality is an essential

component of a corporate global mindset' (Begley and Boyd, 2003: 26). This has been reinforced by research linking managerial global skill sets and mindsets with MNC performance (Jeanett, 2000; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002; Rogers and Blonski, 2010; Cohen, 2010; Lovvorn and Chen, 2011) based on associations between cognitive, existential and behavioural factors. These factors potentially contribute to the integration of highly complex structures which represent multiple cultural and strategic realities on both global and local levels (Levy et al., 2007).

These translate into particular personal skill sets which encompass certain attributes, qualities, philosophies and practices. Kefalas suggests that these include 'a predisposition to see the world in a particular way that sets boundaries and provides explanations for why things are the way they are, while at the same time establishing guidance for ways in which we should behave' (1998: 551). Nummela et al. (2004) describe them as 'a manager's positive attitude towards international affairs and also to his or her ability to adjust to different customs and cultures' (p.53). Personal qualities include macro-perspectives, risk-taking, reliance on organizational processes rather than structures, openness and inclusivity, and valuing diversity (Rhinesmith, 1992: 63). More recently, Rogers and Blonski (2010) and Lovvorn and Chen (2011) have linked global skill sets and mindsets to 'cultural intelligence' and 'emotional and social intelligence applied to a cultural context', suggesting that a manager's ability to adapt globally depends heavily on their tolerance for ambiguity, broad personal skill sets, and the 'capability of examining cultural cues from their international interactions' (Lovvorn and Chen, 2011: 279). Other authors have identified various complex personal qualities, including flexibility, sensitivity, analytical and reflective capacities (Rhinesmith, 1992: 3-4); curiosity, acceptance of complexity, diversity consciousness, a focus on continuous improvement, systems thinking, and a faith in organizational processes (Srinivas, 1995: 30-31); and 'mindfulness', encompassing 'a heightened awareness of and enhanced attention to current experiences or present reality' (Thomas, 2006: 84).

Thomas (2006) and Ananthram et al. (2010) link these personal qualities with specific knowledge, skills, behaviours, and managerial activities. While global skill sets and mindsets may derive partly from nature, they can also be nurtured through well-designed management development programs (Bhatnagar, 2006; Gaba, 2008). Such programs might focus on nurturing broad socio-political and economic perspectives (Kedia and Mukherji, 1999); the capacity to think globally and locally simultaneously (Begley and Boyd 2003); environmental scanning, negotiation and persuasion (Rhinesmith, 1992); or cultural agreeableness, motivation and

receptiveness (Baruch, 2002).

HRM and Management Development

Central to contemporary human resource management (HRM) theory is the expectation that all HRM strategies and policies are directly aligned with the business directions of their organizations (Cascio 1989; Losey et al. 2006; Boudreau and Ramstad, 2009; Ulrich et al 2012). As Bhatnagar et al. (2010: 494) explain, ‘the HR role is found to be important especially when devising innovative HR practices which are designed to support business strategy, influence the attitudes and mindsets of employees, and align business strategies to HR strategies’. This is especially important in international human resource management (IHRM), given the complexities associated with managing employees across multiple regions and within diverse regional and national social and industrial relations contexts (Brewster et al. 2005; Scullion and Collings 2011; Nankervis et al. 2012).

With respect to the nurturing and development of global skill sets and associated mindsets, the full repertoire of HRM processes and techniques (including job design, recruitment and selection, management development, performance management and rewards systems), is helpful in attracting, developing, and monitoring professional global managers and effective management practices within their MNC environments (Brewster et al. 2005; Borwanker et al. 2009; Scullion and Collings 2011). Thus, crafting management roles which reflect global business imperatives, attracting new managers with cross-cultural experience and skills, providing ongoing management development programs, and appropriately rewarding acquired global competencies are fundamental to IHRM practice. Among these HRM interventions, ongoing management development programs are arguably the most likely to result in effective global managers (Jeanett 2000; Brewster et al. 2005; Scullion and Collings 2011). As Bhatnagar (2006) explains that ‘the competitive edge will come from a company’s ability to innovate, create and use the entrepreneurial energies of its people’ (p. 417) and suggests that this is best achieved through ‘formal and informal processes and structures in place for the acquisition, sharing and utilizing of knowledge and skills’ (p. 420).

As discussed previously, the particular skill sets required by global managers include the capacities for self-awareness, intuition, and contextual flexibility along with an over-arching global mindset. As Borwankar et al. (2009) suggest, these skill sets ‘help managers to recognize their capabilities (self-confidence); understand their own preferences better; prioritization of tasks; uncertainty management; (and)

interpersonal communication skills' (p.339), all of which can be transmitted through effective management development programs and which constitute the foundation for global mindsets. The nature of management development interventions will inevitably vary according to such factors as a company's global experience, the scope of its international operations, the degree of its exposure to diverse national or regional contexts, the existing global capabilities of their senior managers, and the competence of its HRM professionals. Depending on these factors, management development activities may be factual, analytical, experiential, or a combination (Phatak 1992; Brewster et al 2005; Scullion and Collings 2011) together with coaching and mentoring (Abbott and Stening 2006). These programs can take place before, during and/or after managers assume global managerial responsibilities (Copeland and Griggs 1985; Robock and Simmons 1989; Selmer et al 1997). It is generally accepted that HR professionals are primarily responsible for the identification of the requisite global managerial skill sets in consultation with executive managers as driven by MNC strategic goals (Brewster et al 2005; Abbott and Stening 2006; Scullion and Collings 2011).

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by exploring two central research questions from the perspectives of a sample of North American and Indian MNC senior managers:

1. What are the key components of global skill sets?
2. How can HRM nurture and reinforce these components among senior MNC managers through management development initiatives?

The following sections discuss the research methodology, findings and conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

The data reported on in this paper were derived from a qualitative research study undertaken in North America (United States and Canada) and India in 2009-2010. The data were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with a total of 56 senior managers (30 from North America with two-thirds based in the United States and one-third in Canada and 26 from India). North America and India were chosen as the contexts for this study in order to assess the relative perspectives of senior managers in two different contexts, i.e., Western and Eastern, respectively. This strategy adds to the generalizability of the findings.

Table 1 presents a summary of the participants' backgrounds. The two conditions for selection were that participants were senior executives with direct

involvement in global management responsibilities and were employed in an MNC in the private sector. All firms were well-established MNCs in both contexts. The North American participants were employed in a wide variety of business sectors including airlines, banking and finance, consulting, consumer goods, healthcare, information and communications technology, mining and pharmaceuticals. The Indian sample included senior executives employed in airlines, automobiles, banking and finance, chemicals, consulting, consumer goods, information and communications technology and shipping services sectors. Seven of the participants from the North American sample and four from the Indian sample were female.

In North America, 21 interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the remaining nine were conducted by telephone. In India, 14 interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the remaining 12 -were conducted by telephone. All interviews used the same questions. The interviews were conducted by an experienced researcher with cross-cultural awareness using the criteria of a successful interviewer recommended by Kvale (1996). These criteria include being knowledgeable about the themes in the interview, structuring the interview to facilitate the process smoothly, maintaining proper interview etiquette including being culturally sensitive, being open to new directions that are important to the interviewee and giving the interviewee opportunities to raise any concerns or issues. Furthermore, as suggested by Kvale (2007), the interview schedule and questions were pilot tested with two colleagues with significant international research experience who verified the questions and suggested minor changes in order to maintain vocabulary equivalence between the two contexts. There did not appear to be any confusion about the questions among the interviewees in both contexts.

The interviews averaged 40 to 45 minutes in duration. The interview questions were mailed to participants beforehand so that they could prepare for the interview. The interview included questions related to the skill sets required by global managers in order to negotiate the challenges for global businesses. There was also a broad question on the role HR in developing these skill sets. The participants were encouraged to use anecdotal evidence to justify their opinions. The structure of the interviews was deliberately kept loose (i.e. semi-structured, open-ended format) in order to allow unexpected and emergent themes to emanate. Permission was obtained from each participant to record the interview.

Sinkovics et al. (2008) advocate the use of formalised and software-based procedures for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative interview data. The current study is another example of how qualitative, open-ended interviewing,

analyzed using formalized software, can lead to new conceptual insights and themes (Buckley and Chapman, 1997; Welch et al. 2008). Each interview was transcribed verbatim, and the interview transcripts were imported into NVivo Version 8, a widely used software package that enables a systematic process of qualitative content analysis. According to Lindsay (2004, p. 488), NVivo can provide ‘more rigor and traceability’ than manual coding and is useful for identifying emerging categories and themes. A variable-oriented strategy was used in order to find themes across cases (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As such, an initial set of codes was devised from the relevant literature on global mindset and later refined (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Two researchers independently coded the same piece of data from the transcripts and compared the codes by discussing the similarities and differences in their application in order to maximize intercoder reliability (Keaveney, 1995; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). This technique of using multiple independent coders has been widely acknowledged to reduce coder bias (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Purchase and Ward, 2003). After ongoing discussions between the coders and three iterations the linkages between the codes were identified based on the skill sets required by global managers to negotiate the challenges associated with globalization. The inter-rater reliability after the three iterations was 85 percent (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These findings are presented in the next section.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Skill Sets To Negotiate Global Challenges and The Role of HR in Management Development

The interviewees were asked to explain the most important skill sets that they needed to possess in order to negotiate the challenges associated with globalization. The responses were coded into twelve major themes during the first round of coding. Careful observation and ongoing discussions between the coders in the second round led to twelve themes condensed into ten identified skill sets. Based on a frequency analysis, the five most important skill sets (with a minimum of five responses for each skill set) in both contexts are reported in Table 1. These skill sets are reported in the order of importance in terms of the number of responses from the 56 interviewees. Qualitative comments in support of these skill sets are presented in the following sections.

Table 1 Key Skill-sets for Global Managers

Skill-sets	Frequency (# of responses)	
	North America (n=30)	India (n=26)
Global mindset	29	22
Cross-cultural sensitivity	21	17
Adaptability	13	14
Communication	8	7
Knowledge of markets	7	11

Global Mindset

Many studies (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989; Rhinesmith, 1992, 1993, 1995; Kefalas, 1998; Murtha, et al. 1998; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002; Arora et al. 2004; Levy, et al, 2007; Taylor et al, 2008; Bowen and Inkpen, 2009; Cohen, 2010; Beechler et al., 1999; Rogers and Blonski, 2010; Lovvorn and Chen, 2011) have emphasized the cultivation of a global mindset as an essential skills for managers involved in cross-border business. Murtha et al. (1998) and Harveston (2000) contend that a critical success factor for any organization is the level of global mindset orientation among its managers. A vast majority of the senior executives in both contexts explained that having a global mindset was imperative for them to negotiate the challenges associated with globalization and linked this to performance in their organizations (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002; Rogers and Blonski, 2010). Two of the most poignant comments from the North American executives were:

“I think it is not even an option anymore, it’s a mandatory thing that every senior manager in any global organization needs to have a global mindset. Companies like ours recruit consciously people from different countries who possess that mindset”. (US12: Senior Manager – US Multinational Accounting and Financial Services Firm)

“A global mindset I think is critical if you going to work in a global world and part of it I think is just being open to differences. This openness has an impact on our performance.” (CA5: Divisional Head/Director – Canadian Multinational in Mining)

Almost 85 percent of the Indian executives explained that a global mindset was the most important skills. They also pointed out the outcomes of a global mindset and explained its importance for global managers (Cohen, 2010; Lovvorn and Chen, 2011). Two of the most supportive comments were:

“It’s very critical to say you are a global company but also you act, breathe and behave like one. And the way to do that would be for its managers to have a global oriented mindset.” (IN19: Vice President – Multinational Bank in India)

“If you ask me, a global mindset is the most fundamental skill-set for a global manager. Such a skill-set allows you to negotiate the complex operational and strategic challenges on a day-to-day basis.” (IN10: Chief Executive Officer – Indian Multinational in Information Technology and Communications)

The comments made by the executives highlight the growing importance of a managerial global mindset, which can help create intelligent global organizations (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002).

Cross-Cultural Sensitivity

Accepting and appreciating similarities and differences across cultures and contexts is vital for global managers (Adler 1983, Rhinesmith 1995). A majority of the managers explained that cross-cultural sensitivity was essential to deal with the complexities of globalization. The North American respondents also alluded to the concept of cultural intelligence and cultural dexterity (Beechler et al., 1999; Lovvorn and Chen, 2011) as aspects of cross-cultural sensitivity:

“The first thing you need to do is broaden your understanding of different cultures, Cultural sensitivity, cultural dexterity and cultural intelligence which firm leadership has agreed is a very strong imperative for us.” (US1: Senior Manager – US Multinational in Consulting)

“Cultural sensitivity is vital and to me, it is the ability to understand, adapt to and leverage the locally unique aspects of a team which you have to become part of. It’s your ability to connect from somebody else’s perspective.” (US3: Senior Partner – US Multinational in Consulting)

For the Indian executives as well, cultural sensitivity was rated as the second most important skill. The comments were in line with understanding different cultures and managing stakeholder expectation due to cultural differences (Adler 1983; Rogers and Blonski, 2010). Two of the most poignant comments were:

“A key part of how businesses will succeed overseas is understanding geographic differences. So when you are looking at different geographies you need to have a look at the different cultures that they might have. Appreciating and understanding cultural similarities and differences is an important skill” (IN11: Divisional Head – Indian Multinational in Information Technology and Communications)

“Need to understand what they expect and what they don’t expect. And what they mean when they say certain things (culturally). These are some things that we really need to be aware of. This is what other people in the organization should also be aware of.” (IN7: Assistant Vice President – Multinational Bank in India)

Adaptability

The interviewees in both contexts emphasized the need for managers to adapt to changes in external and internal environments in order for them to manage effectively. Adaptability was synonymous with flexibility and the ability to change. This was seen by the interviewees as important for understanding important initiatives such as benchmarking towards global standards, business development, being strategically agile (Doz and Kosonen 2008, 2010; Young 2008) and introducing change management practices (Hamel 2003; Hellström and Jacob 2003) as evidenced by these comments in North America:

“I’d clearly say the number one competency that’s really required is agility, and it’s the ability to adapt and react.” (US3: Senior Partner – US Multinational in Consulting)

“Ability to manage change in an agile way and I think there’s always a kind of a global skill-set - the ability to work effectively across functions. The adaptability is a huge factor for us when we look at leadership and senior management potential.” (C8 – Senior Manager – Canadian Multinational in Consulting)

The Indian executives explained the importance of adaptability and flexibility to negotiate the complex challenges of the dynamic global business environment. The executives linked this to the importance for organizations to possess dynamic capabilities and strategic agility (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Ambrosini and Bowman 2009)

“Flexibility is very important - one cannot be successful if they are not willing to be flexible in this type of a globalised environment.” (IN7: Assistance Vice President – Multinational Bank)

“One would be the ability to change I mean look for change yourself, learn to change with the environment, make sure you don’t have any opportunities that don’t allow you to accept change and the mindset is also important in the ability to accept the change. You need to have multiple specialities, you can’t just be a specialist in one particular product.” (IN8: Vice President – Indian Multinational Bank)

Communication

The North American executives identified communication with internal and external stakeholders across different cultures (Ali and Horne 1986, Kedia and Mukherji 1999) as important for managers. They also emphasized that communication was vital in cross-cultural negotiation (Deresky, 2011). The following comments from the North American executives highlight the importance of communication:

“Communicating to different audiences, different levels, different cultures, different drivers, you know, who is your audience, what are they driven by, what they need to hear, whether they are managing up, down, across diverse customers...that is a critical skill-set” (CA7: Divisional Head – Canadian Multinational in Banking and Finance)

“Communication skills, especially written and verbal communications skills in English are a key skill-set.” (US20: Senior Manager – US Multinational in Informational Technology)

The Indian executives also emphasized the importance of communication. They explained that communication across different cultures posed a significant challenge and that it was necessary to develop oral and written communication skills to mediate this challenge. Issues such as language sensitivity and cultural norms were considered

vital nuances in this regard (Kedia and Mukherji, 1999):

“Communication would be number one. This includes all forms – oral, written and both communicating internally and externally. How to engage and communicate with stakeholders in home and host country is something that is very, very important for us.” (IN15: Senior Manager – Multinational Consumer Goods Firm in India)

“Well firstly understanding people that work under you and how to communicate with them. Managers need to keep the customer happy and talk to the employee and give them feedback. Need to make sure that all areas are satisfied.” (IN10: Chief Executive Officer – Indian Multinational in Information Technology and Communications).

Knowledge of Markets

Knowledge of markets (Fatehi 1996) was identified as vital skill set for global managers to make informed decisions. This knowledge includes constant updating of various political, economic, socio-cultural environments and competitor strategies (Kedia and Mukherji 1999):

“The first and foremost thing that comes in to my mind is learning ability – by this I mean whether the manager can develop a knowledge of different contexts relevant to our business – that is a key skill-set or skill-base” (US6: Senior Manager – US Multinational in Healthcare)

“I think managers need to have knowledge of the culture, of the type of people they’re dealing with and the country, of the laws, the regulations and the localities involved. I think they have to be aware of the different work styles and work ethic, different management and communication styles.” (US13: Director – US Multinational in Healthcare)

The Indian executives also highlighted knowledge of markets as a necessary tool, especially for MNCs doing business in different contexts. Like their North American counterparts, the Indian managers also emphasized the importance of constantly updating their relevant knowledge base (Kedia and Mukherji, 1999):

“I think knowledge and understanding the market is the key. Each and every market is very different so understanding the needs there and understanding

the core strengths in each and every country is very important.” (IN5: Senior Manager – Multinational Chemicals Firm in India)

“With the current economy, in the line of work we do, knowledge is important. We cannot always know everything about a certain environment and what is in store in the country. It’s about knowledge, and update knowledge. It is also important to know political differences and individuality.” (IN7: Assistance Vice President – Multinational Bank)

The participants also identified the role of HRM departments within their respective organizations in developing and nurturing the identified skill sets. The study participants generally agreed that multiple levels of interventions are appropriate, depending on the nature, history and international exposure of the MNC as well as the existing competencies and experience of senior managers. More specifically, reinforcing Phatak’s (1992) and Scullion and Colling’s (2011) arguments, there was considerable support for a range of management development initiatives, including experiential training, formal in-house learning, and management development programs; and manager coaching and mentoring (Bhatnagar 2006, 2007; Cohen 2010; Rogers and Blonski 2010; Lovvorn and Chen 2011). It was suggested that these should be complemented with more conventional HRM activities such as more focused talent attraction and career development strategies (Nankervis et al. 2012).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As the research findings suggest, the study revealed that there were more similarities than differences in the perspectives of the North American and Indian senior managers with respect to the crucial skill sets required for success in global business. The table 1 illustrates that there was significant agreement on the five key components and their (descending) order of importance—namely, global mindsets, cross-cultural sensitivity, adaptability, communication, and finally, knowledge of markets. This is consistent with earlier research studies (for example, Brewster et al 2005; Ananthram et al 2010; Deresky 2011) but also reflects the likely homogeneity of the expectations and experience of senior managers in MNCs from North America and India. The components of global skill sets appear to transcend regional or local contextual prisms, or at least to complement them in the operations of MNCs (Cohen 2010; Rogers and Blonski 2010; Lovvorn and Chen 2011).

In response to the first research question, global mindsets were equated with

business aspects such as international benchmarking and the appreciation of different regional markets as well as personal qualities such as an understanding and acceptance of social and cultural diversity and the capacity to adopt an appropriate repertoire of recruitment and negotiation styles. Cross-cultural sensitivity, also described by participants as cultural intelligence or cultural dexterity (Rogers and Blonski 2010; Lovvorn and Chen 2011), was perceived as the capability of senior managers to interpret and adapt their strategies, policies and techniques to local rather than purely global circumstances (Cohen 2010). Both of these concepts were applied by the respondents to the multiple stakeholders associated with their businesses (headquarters, subsidiaries, employees, shareholders, suppliers, customers).

The next two key components of global managerial skills-sets identified by the participants were adaptability and communication. With respect to the first, synonyms such as flexibility, agility, dynamism and change management were frequently mentioned as both an organizational and a managerial characteristic. These qualities are commonly referred to in the associated international business and HRM literature (Rhinesmith 1992, 1993, 1995; Jeanett 2000; Gupta and Govindarajan 2002; Bhatnagar 2006; Ananthram et al. 2010). Similarly, the capacity to communicate with both internal and external stakeholders through verbal, non-verbal, linguistic, and cultural forms was regarded as a significant component, particularly for understanding and adapting to diverse regional contexts (Gupta and Govindarajan 2002; Brewster et al. 2005; Deresky 2011). Finally, knowledge of markets was identified as vital and included managers' learning ability and knowledge of contextual issues about different regions' work ethics and management styles, but only as an ancillary issue. In response to the first research question, this study has contributed to the literature by defining five of the key components of global managerial skill sets.

With respect to the second research question, participants identified experiential training as a significant management development initiative with potential to nurture the identified skill sets (Phatak, 1992). Specifically, they explained the role of cross-cultural simulations and cultural sensitivity training as components of experiential learning. Overseas postings as well as long- and short-term foreign assignments were also identified as vital components of experiential training. Furthermore, the respondents noted the importance of in-house learning afforded by HRM departments (Nankervis et al., 2012). Some of the organizations had well-established in-house training centers and corporate universities to facilitate the development of the identified skill sets. Managers also highlighted the importance of management development programs and manager coaching and mentoring (Bhatnagar 2006; Cohen

2010: Rogers and Blonski 2010; Lovvorn and Chen 2011), which are often developed in conjunction with the HRM department. The managers indicated that these programs should be aligned with the traditional HRM activities such as talent management, capacity building and career development strategies (Nankervis et al 2012) in order to systematically identify and fill the skill and knowledge gaps in their senior managers.

Notwithstanding the qualitative nature and relatively small sample of senior North American and Indian MNC managers included in this study, the findings add to extant knowledge by reinforcing earlier research which suggests that the development of global skill sets (in particular, global mindsets) is crucial to the success of international business, regardless of the national origins of the MNC. The study identifies five components of global managerial skill sets which are considered key to success in international business and the HRM roles and interventions which would assist in the nurturing and developing such skill sets. The findings also have practical implications for MNCs and their HRM professionals in terms of assessing the levels of global skills currently possessed by their senior managers, identifying alternative sources of potential future global managers, designing management development programs which address deficiencies in these areas, and evaluating the ongoing effectiveness of their associated strategies. Future researchers might conduct comparative quantitative and qualitative studies on the criteria for global managerial skill sets in a broader global context involving more Western and Asian countries and perhaps in diverse industry sectors. They might also utilize more comprehensive research methodologies, including surveys, detailed case studies and interviews with multiple stakeholders.

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APPENDIX

A Summary of Participants' Background

No.	Code	Face-to-face/ Telephone	Position	Industry	Gender	City
1	CA1	Face-to-face	Senior Vice President	Mining	Male	Toronto
2	CA2	Face-to-face	Vice President	Mining	Male	Toronto
3	CA3	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consumer products	Male	Toronto
4	CA4	Face-to-face	Executive Manager	Consumer products	Male	Toronto
5	CA5	Face-to-face	Divisional Head/Director	Mining	Female	Toronto
6	CA6	Telephone	Vice President	Information technology	Male	Vancouver
7	CA7	Face-to-face	Divisional Head	Banking and finance	Female	Toronto
8	CA8	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consulting	Female	Toronto
9	CA9	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Airlines	Male	Toronto
10	CA10	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consumer products	Male	Toronto
11	US1	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consulting	Male	Boston
12	US2	Telephone	Divisional Head	Consumer products	Male	Atlanta
13	US3	Face-to-face	Senior Partner	Consulting	Male	Boston
14	US4	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consulting	Male	Boston
15	US5	Face-to-face	Vice President	Financial services	Male	Boston
16	US6	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Healthcare	Female	Boston
17	US7	Face-to-face	Vice President	Healthcare	Male	Boston
18	US8	Face-to-face	Vice President	Healthcare	Male	Boston
19	US9	Telephone	Senior Manager	Information technology and communications	Male	New York
20	US10	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Information technology and communications	Female	New York
21	US11	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consumer goods	Male	Philadelphia
22	US12	Telephone	Senior Manager	Accounting and financial services	Male	New York
23	US13	Telephone	Director	Healthcare	Female	Boston
24	US14	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Information technology	Male	Seattle
25	US15	Telephone	Vice President	Information technology and communications	Male	New York

A Summary of Participants' Background (continued)

No.	Code	Face-to-face/ Telephone	Position	Industry	Gender	City
26	US16	Telephone	Senior Manager	Information technology	Male	New York
27	US17	Telephone	Divisional Head	Information technology	Male	Seattle
28	US18	Telephone	Senior Manager	Consulting	Female	San Francisco
29	US19	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consumer products	Male	San Francisco
30	US20	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Information technology	Male	San Francisco
31	IN1	Face-to-face	Vice President	Consumer products	Male	Mumbai
32	IN2	Telephone	Chief Executive Officer	Information technology and communications	Male	Mumbai
33	IN3	Telephone	Associate Director	Telecommunications	Male	Mumbai
34	IN4	Telephone	Chief Executive Officer	Consulting	Female	Mumbai
35	IN5	Telephone	Senior Manager	Chemical Industry	Male	Mumbai
36	IN6	Face-to-face	Divisional Head	Automobile Industry	Male	Mumbai
37	IN7	Face-to-face	Assistant Vice President	Banking	Male	Mumbai
38	IN8	Face-to-face	Vice President	Banking	Male	Mumbai
39	IN9	Face-to-face	Divisional Head	Airlines	Male	Mumbai
40	IN10	Face-to-face	Chief Executive Officer	Information technology and communications	Male	Mumbai
41	IN11	Face-to-face	Divisional Head	Information technology and communications	Male	Mumbai
42	IN12	Face-to-face	Vice President	Banking	Male	Mumbai
43	IN13	Telephone	Senior Manager	Consultancy	Male	Mumbai
44	IN14	Face-to-face	Vice President	Banking	Male	Mumbai
45	IN15	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Consumer products	Female	Mumbai
46	IN16	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Banking	Male	Mumbai
47	IN17	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Shipping services	Male	Mumbai
48	IN18	Face-to-face	Senior Manager	Telecommunications	Male	Mumbai
49	IN19	Telephone	Vice President	Banking	Male	Mumbai
50	IN20	Face-to-face	Divisional Head	Chemical Industry	Female	Mumbai
51	IN21	Telephone	Senior Manager	Airlines	Male	Mumbai
52	IN22	Telephone	Divisional Head	Consumer products	Male	Mumbai
53	IN23	Telephone	Senior Partner	Consultancy	Male	Mumbai
54	IN24	Telephone	General Manager	Consumer products	Male	Mumbai
55	IN25	Telephone	Senior Manager	Banking	Female	Mumbai
56	IN26	Telephone	Divisional Head	Telecommunications	Male	Mumbai

Note: C1-C10 represent interviews conducted in Canada; US1-US20 represent interviews conducted in the USA; IN1-26 represent interviews conducted in India

