

## Chapter 2.

# THE RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF EXPATRIATES

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Waxin, M-F., Brewster, C. (2020). Chapter 2. **The Recruitment, Selection and Preparation of Expatriates**, in Jaime Bonache, Chris Brewster and Fabian Jintae Froese (eds.), *Global Mobility and the Management of Expatriates*, Cambridge University Press, UK: pp 31-57.

This version was accepted for publication, with very minor, formatting, modifications

### ABSTRACT

For organisations and for individuals, effective recruitment, selection and preparation of new employees or employees in new circumstances are always important. This issue is exacerbated in the case of international assignments, where issues of cross-national adjustment complicate the picture. The objective of this chapter is to examine and summarise the extant research on expatriate recruitment, selection and preparation. The chapter is structured as follow. First, we discuss expatriate recruitment sources, methods, and the expatriates' motivations to work abroad. Second, we examine expatriate selection criteria, methods, and how expatriates are selected in practice. Third, we present the variety of expatriate preparation methods, discuss expatriate training effectiveness and expatriate preparation in practice. We conclude by considering future avenues of research. Overall, there is good material for researchers to build on and a growing understanding of the key issues. Nevertheless, there remains here a rich field for exciting research in the future.

**KEY WORDS:** international mobility, international assignments, expatriation, recruitment, selection, preparation, training, effectiveness, agenda.

### INTRODUCTION

Effective recruitment and selection is “the most critical human resource function for organizational survival and success” (Collins & Kehoe, 2009, p. 209). For organisations and for individuals, effective recruitment, selection and preparation of new workers or workers in new circumstances are always important : get these crucial issues wrong, get people involved in the organisation who are not able to or do not want to do the work and everything involved in their management becomes more difficult - and the individuals are unlikely to get satisfaction from their work. This issue is exacerbated in the case of international work, where issues of cross-national adjustment complicate the picture even further. Although most expatriates cope well, are able to do a good job and to advance their careers, the cases where this does not happen, where the wrong person has been selected for that position, or where they cannot adjust to the new circumstances, can create misery for the expatriate, for their co-workers and their families and can severely damage an organisation's reputation

Effective recruitment, selection and preparation significantly impact expatriate performance (Cheng & Lin, 2009; Harrison & Shaffer, 2005; Mol, Born & van der Molen, 2005, Littrell et al., 2006). Unsurprisingly, therefore, there has been extensive research on the selection and preparation of assigned expatriates (Feitosa et al., 2014; McNulty & Brewster, 2019; Kim, Brewster & Chung, 2019). Research on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs)' recruitment, selection

and training is, however, sparse. The objective of this chapter is to examine and summarise the extant research on international assignees' recruitment, selection and preparation. Since nearly all the research on selection and preparation has examined long-term assigned expatriates (AEs), we will focus on these and only refer to the other options where appropriate.

The chapter is structured as follow. First, we discuss expatriate recruitment sources, methods, and the expatriates' motivations to work abroad. Second, we examine expatriate selection criteria, methods, and how expatriates are selected in practice. Third, we present the variety of expatriate preparation methods, discuss expatriate training effectiveness and expatriate preparation in practice. We conclude by considering future avenues of research. Overall, in the area of selection and preparation for international assignments there is good material for researchers to build on and a growing understanding of the key issues. Nevertheless, there remains here a rich field for exciting research in the future.

## **RECRUITMENT OF EXPATRIATES**

The recruitment process can begin as soon as the strategic planning of the international assignment has been done, and when (1) the goals of the international assignments, (2) the job description, (3) the job specification and (4) the ownership for the responsibility of managing the full expatriation/repatriation cycle have been established (Waxin, 2007, Waxin 2008a).

The main objectives of international recruitment are (1) elaborating ways and techniques that will allow the organisation to attract a sufficient number of motivated and qualified international candidates, (2) identifying, at the lowest possible cost candidates, capable of filling foreign positions, and (3) increasing, at the lowest possible cost, the pool of international candidates, anticipating the organisation's future needs in personnel (Waxin, 2008a, 2008b). At the recruitment stage, the major issues are the sources and the methods of recruitment, and the employee' motivations to accept an international assignment.

### **Recruitment sources**

The first decision to be made is whether to recruit internally or externally. In the case of AEs there is often not such a clear connection with recruitment, because most MNEs depend almost exclusively on internal recruitment for their expatriate positions (Shen & Lang, 2009): the candidates are already organisational employees before they are selected. According to KPMG (2019), 89% of the MNEs' international assignees were sourced by internal recruitment by the relevant business unit. This preferred recruitment option can be found even in local markets where there is plenty of skilled labour. This is largely because of the strategic value of these international assignments, and the importance for the expatriates of understanding the organisation's culture and systems. AEs are largely used to fill skills gaps, to control subsidiaries and to develop the organisation and themselves (Edström & Galbraith, 1977): although there have been subsequent taxonomies and amendments to this original list these continue to be the main reasons for the use of expatriates. Logic implies that for control and development purposes internal candidates have significant advantages over external recruits.

This does not necessarily apply to skills issues, so the external recruitment of specialists in the oil and gas, high tech., sports and cultural and other sectors is common. In many of these cases the expatriate works in an isolated (oil and gas) or very controlled (sports and culture) circumstance, where they may come into little contact with local people, certainly not ones who are not connected to their work. And in such sectors, it seems that the skill requirement is the crucial criteria for recruitment. Other issues (such as ability to cope in the new context) are rarely considered.

### **Recruitment methods**

The second decision to be made concerns the choice of recruitment methods. For larger organisations, the major internal recruitment method for AEs is the use of internal databases, including data on potential candidates, their work experience, performance, skills, availability, and their preferences regarding a potential international assignment: where he or she would be interested in working, in what capacity and on what sort of projects (Harris & Brewster, 1999). This international mobility database could be linked to a company's talent management database to keep track of internationally mobile talents (Cerdin & Brewster, 2014; Collings, 2014; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). For example, Tetrapack developed their 'Management Planning and Development' centralised database, which contains the profile of thousands of high potential employees and which is up-dated once a year. This database can be consulted at any time by the HRM specialist community and can be used to support the expatriates' recruitment process (Marchon, 2004).

According to KPMG (2019), MNEs are developing a stronger integration between global mobility and talent management policies throughout the employment lifecycle (Cerdin & Brewster, 2014; Collings, 2014). For the MNEs that have aligned their global mobility and talent management programmes, nearly half see global assignments as a formal part of their organisation's talent development, succession and retention initiatives. We note, however, that for smaller and newer internationalised businesses, systems are often more informal (Harris & Brewster, 1999).

When suitable candidates for international assignments cannot be found internally, companies turn to the external market. External recruitment methods for international positions include Internet job posting, media campaigns in international media, and using the services of recruitment agencies or international head-hunters (Waxin, 2007). Some SIEs are also recruited internationally. Key posts in organisations such as the United Nations and European Union, and in organisations such as Universities, are advertised on-line and in outlets such as *the Economist* and candidates have to go through rigorous application procedures. Most SIEs, however, are recruited locally, by local managers against local criteria. For low-status SIEs the recruitment and selection processes are almost always outsourced to agencies (Haak-Saheem & Brewster, 2017).

### **What motivates expatriates to accept work abroad?**

It is useful to examine the recruitment issue from the point of view of the employee. Expatriation willingness is defined as the likelihood of accepting a job offer that requires living and working in a foreign country for a temporary period (Mol et al., 2009). Expatriation willingness is an important predictor for expatriate success: employees with higher expatriation willingness are more likely to accept expatriate assignments (Tharenou, 2008), are more likely to remain in the host country until the end of their initial contract, and adjust better to the host-country environment than unwilling candidates (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009).

Why should an employee accept an assignment that will mean they have to uproot themselves and their families, where they have a nuclear family, and move to another country? Research has examined a wide range of antecedents of expatriation willingness. Globally, the main motivations to accept an expatriation are the opportunity for a wider and more exciting kind of work, sometimes referred to as cosmopolitanism (Froese, Jommersbach & Klautsch, 2013), the attractiveness of particular locations and the personal and developmental career opportunities the assignment offers (Dickmann, Doherty, Mills & Brewster, 2008; Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011; Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002). The financial packages that tend to go with expatriate assignment also play a part, but national differences in the significance of a financial incentive need to be viewed in relation to the other factors

considered important to the decision to move (Dickmann et al., 2008). It seems that global HRM experts, compared to the expatriates themselves, tend to overestimate the importance of the salary component and underestimate the importance of work-related and developmental opportunities.

Individual and family factors matter. There has been research focused specifically on the individual and family related antecedents of willingness to expatriate. Dupuis, Haines, and Saba (2008) examined willingness to accept an international assignment in employed MBA graduates from dual-earner couples in Canada. They found that the perceived willingness of partners to relocate, beliefs regarding their partners' and the couples' mobility, relative income, and the presence of children are all associated with willingness to accept an international assignment. They also found significant gender differences in willingness to expatriate, across low and high cultural distance country destinations.

Host country characteristics matter too. Kim & Froese (2012) examine the direct and moderating effects of host-country characteristics (economic level and language) and employee's role commitments (work and family) on the expatriation willingness of Korean employees. They show that host-country characteristics and occupational role commitment have direct effects on employees' expatriation willingness and that host-country economic level interacts with occupational role commitment: for Korean employees, working in advanced or English-speaking countries was more attractive to working elsewhere. Generally, proficiency in the host country language, the host country's perceived level of safety and cultural attraction were important factors explaining decisions to work in emerging economies (de Eccher & Duarte, 2016).

Finally, Doherty, Dickmann and Mills (2011) and Suutari, Brewster and Dickmann (2018) compared AEs and SIEs' motivation to go abroad and found that location concerns and host country reputation were more important to SIEs, while AEs placed significantly more emphasis on career development motives.

The question for the organisation then is how they can encourage these employees to accept a foreign assignment? In order to enlarge the pool of candidates for international assignments, companies develop, implement and communicate their international mobility policy, and link their international mobility to their talent development programmes (Waxin 2008a), as discussed above.

Improving alignment between business objectives, mobility policy types and assignees' selection continues to play a part in supporting the talent agenda (KPMG 2019).

However, according to Brookfield (2016), while 61% of the MNEs communicated the importance of international assignments to employees' careers, only 23% of them had a formal process for identifying potential international assignees, and 73% of them did not maintain a candidate pool for future IAs. Only 23% have a specific process for career planning from assignment acceptance. When we remember that these are consultancy reports, drawn from the consultants' databases and therefore probably including businesses that are most concerned about these issues, it is clear that there is a considerable distance to go.

## **SELECTION OF EXPATRIATES**

The main objectives of the expatriate selection process are: 1) enabling the company and the employee to determine whether candidates possess the competencies and motivation to successfully accomplish their international assignments; 2) minimising the risk of assignment failure and the related costs; and 3) assigning candidates to suitable positions, thus maximising the posting to the organisation's and the candidate's benefit (Waxin, 2008b). Because of the specificity and importance of the tasks the expatriate will have to perform, multinational

companies try to ensure that they have an appropriate selection process for international assignments. Below we review the selection criteria and methods.

### **Expatriate selection criteria**

In theory, the choice of selection criteria for international employees should be based on an analysis of the characteristics of the multinational (internationalisation stage, business strategy, staffing policy, international HRM orientation, organisational culture), the subsidiary (ownerships mode, role), host country characteristics (culture, regulations), and the position to fill (function of the IA, duration, job description and specification)(Waxin, 2008a, 2008b).

Many researchers have examined the individual characteristics of expatriates that predict success in the assignment: these include job factors, personal traits (flexibility/ tolerance for ambiguity, self-efficacy), relational abilities/ cross cultural competencies, motivational state, language skills, family situation, (Anderson, 2005; Reiche, Harzing & Kraimer, 2009; Waxin, Brewster & Ashill, 2019), and previous international work experience (Caligiuri, Tarique & Jacobs, 2009; Culpán & Wright, 2002; Kim, Brewster & Chung, 2019). These criteria have been found to be critically related to expatriate performance in international assignments and their consideration depends on the role of the expatriates (Tungli & Peiperl, 2009) and the expatriates' country of origin (Waxin et al., 2019).

Job-related selection criteria are based on the international assignment's job description and competency profile and knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to perform the job role (Waxin, 2008a; Waxin 2008b; Avril & Magnini, 2007). Confidence in technical skills has been found to predict work adjustment and reduce expatriates' time to proficiency (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Waxin, 2003, Waxin et al., 2019), and previous international experience to predict expatriates' success (Caligiuri et al., 2009). Green (2012), focusing on American expatriate officials, found that the length of previous international experience was positively related to adjustment scores. Some SIEs are deliberately selected for their international experience, as boundary-spanners between the local environment and the country of origin, for example (Furusawa & Brewster, 2018), or for their language skills and knowledge of their home country, as often happens in airline sales offices. Most, however, are simply additional members of the workforce, employed on the same criteria.

Based on the works of Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) and Black (1990), Cerdin, Chandon and Waxin (1999), identified six dimensions of the expatriate's adjustability that positively impact the expatriates' work, interaction and general adjustment (Campoy et al., 2005; Waxin, 2003, 2006; Waxin & Chandon, 2002) and reduced their time to proficiency (Waxin et al., 2019): confidence in their own technical competencies, social orientation, willingness to communicate, substitution capacity, cultural openness, and stress resistance. These individual determinants of expatriate success significantly varied across country of origin.

Other studies show that a proactive personality (i.e., high extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness and openness) predicts proactive behaviour (e.g. social networking and information seeking) which, in turn, reduces turnover intention and re-adjustment problems (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). Active stress resistance has been found to reduce expatriates' TTP (Waxin, et al., 2019). Research also suggests that a repatriate with a higher level of motivation is more likely to marshal personal resources to overcome challenges and is found to be positively related to desirable repatriation outcomes, such as knowledge transfer (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007).

Foreign language ability has also been noted as a key criterion, particularly in studies of European MNEs (Ling & Harzing, 2017). Among non-US expatriates, foreign language competence was found to be significantly correlated with adjustment (Peltokorpi, 2008; Puck, Kittler & Wright, 2008). Green (2012) found that when host language fluency increased among official American expatriates, so did their general and their work adjustment.

So, based on these research' results, MNEs' selection criteria for international assignments should not only include job related criteria, but also cross-cultural skills, the right mix of personality traits (e.g., proactive personality), motivations (e.g., extrinsic or intrinsic), and attitudes (e.g., highly motivated, willingness to learn). However, in practice, organisations tend, when selecting expatriates, not to look far beyond technical expertise and previous performance in the country of origin (Brookfield, 2015). They are beginning to include other criteria. Tungli & Peiperl (2009) found that globally, the most used selection criteria for international assignments were technical/ professional skills, expatriates' willingness to go, and experience in the organisation. The next most cited selection criteria were personality factors, leadership skills, ability to work in teams, and previous performance appraisals. The importance of these criteria in the selection process varied with country. As ever, most of our research comes from developed western countries. Other factors may be significant elsewhere.

### **Expatriate selection methods**

Linehan & al. (2002), found that interviews were the most common selection method - and seen as the most effective method to select overseas assignees. According to Finn and Morley (2002), cultural awareness and adaptability tests were almost never used because they were expensive and difficult to construct and interpret. More recently, Tungli & Peiperl (2009) examined international staffing practices in four countries, and found that references, structured interviews and self-nominations were, globally, the most used selection methods. Then came cultural awareness assessments, more used in Germany and Japan, and behavioural assessment, also more used in Germany than the other countries, but still to a much lower extent. Cognitive and psychological tests were very rarely used, except in UK organisations, but even here their use was still low.

Harris and Brewster (1999) proposed a typology of selection methods for international assignees comprising four categories, organised on two axes: open/ closed procedure, and formal/ informal procedure. First, the selection process can be open or closed. In an open system, all vacancies are advertised. All the candidates are interviewed with greater or lesser degrees of formalised testing, and selection decisions are made by consensus amongst selectors. In contrast, in a closed system, selectors at corporate headquarter choose or nominate 'suitable' candidates, who are informed once the decision has been made between headquarters personnel and the line manager. The selection interview consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment. The selection process can also be either formal or informal. In formal systems, vacancies are advertised internally, job related selection criteria are specified, psychometric tests are likely to be used, and selectors need to agree among themselves about the best candidates. In informal systems, selection criteria are often not defined, selectors assume that personality characteristics are already known: networking, reputation and team fit play a great role, and individual preferences of selectors can predominate.

**Figure 1. Typology of expatriate selection processes (Harris et Brewster 1999).**

	<b>Formal</b>	<b>Informal</b>
<b>Open</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined criteria</li> <li>• Clearly defined measures</li> <li>• Training for selectors</li> <li>• Open advertising of vacancy (Internal/External)</li> <li>• Panel discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less defined criteria</li> <li>• Less defined measures</li> <li>• Limited training for selectors</li> <li>• No panel discussions</li> <li>• Open advertising of vacancy</li> <li>• Recommendations</li> </ul>
<b>Closed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined criteria</li> <li>• Clearly defined measures</li> <li>• Training for selectors</li> <li>• Panel discussions</li> <li>• Nominations only (networking/reputation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selectors' individual preferences determine criteria and measures</li> <li>• No panel discussions</li> <li>• Nominations only (networking/reputation)</li> </ul>

Closed and informal selection systems present three major disadvantages (Harris and Brewster, 1999). First, they limit the degree to which interpersonal and intercultural skills are taken into account when selecting international managers. Second, they restrict the pool of potential candidates to those who are appreciated by the selectors. Third, they prevent the strategic management of international assignments, as the role of the HR Manager is limited to dealing with the financial, physical and social aspects of international selection, instead of strategically managing international assignments.

### **Selection of international assignees in practice**

In 1999, the majority of organisations operated predominantly closed and informal selection systems, and many AEs were selected according to what has been called the ‘coffee machine’ system (Harris and Brewster, 1999). In other words, the key criterion was being known to a senior manager. Twenty years later, this happened much less in major multinationals but this method was still commonly used: according to KPMG (2019), the applicable business unit drives the selection process for sourcing the prospective international assignees in 89% of the MNEs surveyed. While 38% of MNEs assess an international assignee’s suitability for a transfer through an informal review by line management/ human resources or via self-assessments, the majority of participants (60%) do not use any kind of process at all to assess an assignee’s global skills suitability. Overall, management of the assignment planning process is lacking, with 35% of the respondents saying it is not well managed and 25% having a neutral point of view. According to Mercer (2015), poor candidate selection was the first reason why international assignments fail. Again, let us remind ourselves that these consultants’ reports are likely to be based upon the larger, more formalised, organisations – the majority will be a lot more informal and personal contacts will be the only thing that matters.

In conclusion here, although the researchers unanimously agree about the significance of an objective selection system for international assignees, there is still a big gap between their suggestions and the MNE’s practices.

Against common assumptions, this is different for the recruitment and selection of public sector expatriates (Waxin & Brewster, 2018). Public sector expatriates are employees who have signed up to a career that they know will involve international transfer. In the different parts of the public sector, employees are selected after careful screening and their contracts include an international mobility clause.

In any case, the objectives of the position, the job description and specification, and the details about the management of the expatriation/repatriation processes should be explained to the candidate by the end of the selection process. The expatriate should know the exact purposes of his assignment before the beginning of his assignment. Several studies have showed that job clarity was a significant predictor of expatriate' work adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Waxin, 2000; Waxin, 2003;), and reduced time to proficiency (Waxin et al., 2016).

## **PREPARATION FOR EXPATRIATION**

The purpose of international assignees' preparation is to provide them with the necessary elements that will help them perform and succeed during the assignment (Waxin, 2008a; Morey & Waxin, 2008).

### **The different expatriate preparation methods**

To prepare international assignees before their assignment, MNEs can provide pre-assignment visits, practical assistance, language, cross-cultural training, coaching and partners' training.

*Pre-assignment visit.* The organisation offers a trip to the host country to the assignee so that they can get an idea of their future work and living environment. This option is sometimes used at the end of the selection process so that the candidate can confirm their acceptance of the position. During this trip, the assignee finalises the contract and settles some issues like finding accommodation or a school for the children (Waxin, 2000; Waxin 2008a, Waxin, 2007).

According to KPMG (2019), 87% of MNE provided a formal pre-assignment visit to the host location, and the majority (57%) included both the assignee and their partner in the trip.

*Practical assistance.* This includes arranging for the visas, transportation, finding a new accommodation for the family, new schools for the children, if it has not been done during the preliminary visit. Many MNEs use the services of relocation specialists to provide this practical assistance. The goal is to facilitate the expatriate's transfer and settling in the host location. Waxin (2000, 2006) found that the home country's logistical support facilitates expatriate general adjustment. According to KPMG (2019), pre-assignment consultations and tax briefings are widely provided as core policy benefits (81% and 87%, respectively) to thoroughly review the prospective assignment terms and conditions prior to relocation.

*Language training.* The assignee is taught at least the basics of the language of the region where they will be sent. According to Ashamalla (1998), language ability facilitates the adjustment in the local environment and enhances effectiveness in dealing with foreign counterpart groups including government officials, bankers, labour organisations, suppliers and customers. The rigour of the training should depend on the relational aspect of the expatriate's job.

*Cross cultural training (CCT).* CCT is defined as the educative processes used to improve intercultural learning via the development of the cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies needed for successful interactions in diverse cultures (Morris & Robie, 2001). CCT programmes can be analysed in terms of training content, process and elements (Feitosa



et al., 2014). In terms of content, there are two possible orientations: either the training focuses on the notion of culture in general and aims at sensitising participants to the notion of culture, or it focuses on one specific culture in particular (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Gertsen, 1990). In terms of process, Brislin (1979) identifies three methods of cross-cultural training: cognitive, affective, behavioural. The cognitive method corresponds to a diffusion of information, using conferences or non-participative sessions, on a foreign cultural environment. The affective method aims at provoking individual reactions so the subject can learn to deal with critical cultural incidents. The behavioural method aims at improving participants' capacity to adapt their communication style, and to establish positive relationships with members of another culture. The training process can be broadly categorised as either intellectual/ conventional or experiential (Bennett, 1986; Gertsen 1990). With conventional training, the trainee is passive, information is transmitted through a unidirectional communication, while with experimental training, the trainee actively participates in 'real life' situations. Littrell & Salas (2005)'s framework identified six training approaches, in ascending level of rigour: attribution, culture awareness, interaction, language, didactic and experiential. The most rigorous, experiential, training programmes are based on simulations, role playing, field trips, and intercultural workshops. Finally, information, demonstration, practice, and feedback (IDPF) are the basic four elements of any training programme, and Feitosa et al. (2014) extrapolate this logic to expatriate training.

According to KPMG (2019), language training and CCT are offered by the majority of their client MNEs' with an observable trend of these training programmes beginning before arrival in the host country to support a quicker transition and integration. The assignee's partner and children are likely to be included in training.

*Expatriate coaching.* Some MNEs offer home-country sponsors or mentors to help international assignees remain visible to the organisation and to prepare for their return (Carraher, Sullivan & Crocitto, 2008). Other MNEs offer the social support of a local coach or tutor (Andreason 2008). Jassawalla, Asgary and Sashittal (2006) examined the functions of both types of expatriates' mentors, and found that while host-country mentors typically helped the expatriates with cross-cultural adjustment, home-country mentors linked the expatriates to the global organisation and assisted with repatriation issues. Carraher et al. (2008) examined the impact of home- and host-country mentors on eight measures of expatriate effectiveness, in a large service MNE that had a formal mentoring programme. They found that having a host-country mentor had a positive effect on five measures of effectiveness (organisational knowledge, knowledge-sharing, team work, performance and promotability), and having a home-country mentor had a positive effect on three measures of effectiveness (promotability, performance and organisational knowledge), showing that both kinds of mentors are beneficial to a successful IA. They suggested that if their organisation did not provide formal mentoring programmes, expatriates should be encouraged to develop such a relationship in order to improve their own international experience.

*Partner Training and Support.* Inclusion of all family members in cross-cultural training is important (Webb, 1996) because of the strong impact of their global adjustment on the expatriate's adjustment (Andreason, 2008; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Merignac & Roger 2012). In particular, specific training programmes need to be developed for the unique challenges faced by expatriate partners (e.g., how to get work permits and develop personal careers in the other country) and children (e.g., education-related issues). While organisational support has been associated with enhanced partner personal (Simeon & Fujiu, 2000) and cultural (Abdul Malek, Budhwar & Reiche, 2015) adjustment, as well as well-being (Gupta, Banerjee & Gaur, 2012; McNulty, 2012), there is no indication that such support facilitates

partner interaction adjustment. Perhaps organisations do not offer training that targets the development and maintenance of effective relationships with host country nationals, or such relationships require more time than what is generally allotted to expatriate assignments.

### **Expatriate training effectiveness**

There is a continuing need for valid and reliable methods to assess cultural learning outcomes, to identify the most efficient training methods. Research results on the effectiveness of expatriate training are mixed, however: while some researchers find that pre-departure preparation is important and effective (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Waxin and Panaccio, 2005); others find no evidence that it works (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Puck, Kittler & Wright, 2008).

Waxin & Panaccio (2005) studied the impact of the four types of pre-departure CCT on expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. They found that: 1) pre-departure CCT had a positive impact on adjustment (with the smallest effect on work adjustment); 2) experimental types of CCT were the most effective; 3) the larger the cultural distance between the home and host countries, the more significant were the effects; and 4) CCT's effectiveness was stronger for managers with less international experience. Another study showed CCT effectiveness was also influenced by the expatriate's self-efficacy: higher self-efficacy was related to a stronger relation between CCT and adjustment (Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009). However, a meta-analysis by Morris and Robie (2001) shows that CCT effectiveness is not as high as expected and that results vary widely. Puck, Kittler, and Wright (2008) analysed the impact of pre-departure CCT on expatriate adjustment, taking into account variations in participation, length and comprehensiveness of training, for expatriates from 20 German MNEs sent to a broad range of host countries. They found that CCT had little if any effect on expatriates' adjustment. However, they found a significant impact of foreign language competence on expatriate adjustment.

The findings on the effectiveness of partners' CCT are also mixed, with Black and Gregersen (1991) reporting a negative relationship between CCT and partner cultural adjustment and Gupta et al. (2012) suggesting that such training will facilitate partner well-being. Cole (2011) found that employment assistance offered by companies related to partner interaction adjustment. Insofar as training and organisational support help to reduce the uncertainty and stress of adjusting to a foreign culture, organisations that offer assistance to expatriate partners will support a positive experience and enhanced adjustment.

To conclude on the effectiveness of preparation, since the training programmes vary widely, and are not systematically evaluated, it is difficult to ascertain which programmes are effective and which are not. McNulty & Brewster (2018) identified at least four reasons for the lack of consistency in expatriate training effectiveness: first, researchers are studying different kinds of preparation and training; second, expensive preparation programmes might be less effective than informal learning from former expatriates and their families; third, most MNEs make their CCT and other training programmes voluntary/ non-mandatory, resulting in a perception that preparation is 'not needed'; and, fourth, thanks to technology, changing the way preparation and training are delivered (Wankel, 2016), it is possible to discover many aspects of a host country without moving away from your screen.

### **Expatriate preparation in practice**

Although the consultancy surveys of the larger companies show that in some cases there is extensive preparation for international assignments, beyond these companies it seems clear

that, in most cases, most expatriates get very little preparation. This is largely because of the very short time between the decision to send them and them leaving for the new country (McNulty & Brewster, 2019): this is a period when the new expatriate has to finish up the work they are doing and pass it on, to decide what to do about their house or apartment at home (sell, rent, leave it empty?), to find new accommodation in their new location, to sort out their children's schooling, to get round to see all their friends and relatives before they leave - and a host of practical issues concerned with the move itself. Trying to squeeze preparation or training into a very crowded few weeks is almost impossible. Most expatriates are reduced to informal methods of preparation – speaking to people who have been to that country, reading company reports, checking the websites ... or reading the Rough Guide to Wherever on the plane!

SIEs, in comparison to AEs, receive little organisational training and support from their employers: in most cases they have to find out about the institutional, social and cultural characteristics of the host country by themselves. They will get little training about the host country and have to navigate by themselves their work contract issues and the specific local employment and immigration laws (Waxin & Brewster, 2020).

Public sector organisations usually provide better preparation for their international assignees than private MNEs. International assignees are often given training specific to their region of destination, including language training, cultural familiarity training, or political area studies (Honley, 2005). The US Department of State, for example, offers several publications and courses to families with the aim of mitigating culture shock and maximising successful adjustment (Green, 2012). The US Department of Defense provides more extensive programs (Abbe & Gouge, 2012), although even here expatriates want more (Fenner & Selmer, 2008).

**Example: Cultural training at the US Department of Defence**

The US Department of Defence established cultural centres to develop and deliver training. Special Forces personnel always had a cultural and regional element in their roles and training. For the US Department of Defence, providing effective training to large numbers of personnel within a short period of time is a big challenge. The US military services adopt both culture specific and culture general content: while professional military education covers regional or culture-specific elements and more general principles and skills, pre-deployment cultural training tends to be highly tailored to the country and cultures that personnel will encounter on their upcoming deployment. A wide range of pedagogical methods are used: readings, lectures, critical incidents, case and problem-solving based instruction, opportunities to apply cultural knowledge and skills, though different media. Live role play is still commonly used at training centres, but the use of computer-based simulations is increasing.

While substantial resources have been deployed to develop and implement cultural instruction, the evaluation of its impact on learning or performance has been neglected. The US military services developed instruments to assess the effectiveness of cultural training on performance and relevant competencies, but these instruments have not been implemented for institutional use. Training effectiveness has been evaluated in some cases, showing that training had a positive effect on cultural learning in the short-term, but its impact on performance was even less often assessed.

Source: adapted from Abbe & Gouge (2012).

Trochowska (2014) examined the implementation of cultural training in pre-deployment and operational training and activities by NATO (including Canada, the UK, Germany, Poland, and Turkey) and other armies (such as Australia, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore and Nepal). They found that in most of the armies studied (except the United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany), cultural training and support only consists of a few hours lecturing during the pre-deployment preparation for the mission, and the use of cultural advisors during the operation. Moreover, training involving universal cultural skills that could facilitate the adjustment process and the gaining of regional knowledge during the vocational education of soldiers, commands, staff, and reserve officers are not carried out in a systematic manner in any of the armies studied.

## CONCLUSIONS

Research has given us considerable information about the recruitment, selection and preparation of AEs, in large MNEs from developed countries. We see that most assigned expatriates, apart from subject specialists, are recruited from already existing employees; the question for the organisation then is how they can encourage these individuals to accept a foreign assignment. Some, the cosmopolitans, need little encouragement, others will weigh issues of salary and career, location and family to reach a decision. When it comes to selecting expatriates, MNEs tend to have rather informal systems and to privilege performance in previous, non-expatriate roles. But there is some evidence of MNEs beginning to understand the weaknesses of such an approach and to develop criteria that include cultural adaptability and to operate more formal selection systems. We also reviewed the preparation that MNEs offer those selected. We found that most expatriates get very little in the way of preparation, because of the lack of time, in most instances, between them being selected and having to leave for the new location. However, those that do receive training are very positive about its value and those that receive the most intensive training are the most positive.

But there is still much that we do not know: the field remains a rich source of potential research. We know much more about long-term expatriation than we do about other types of international work (McNulty & Brewster, 2019). The biggest gap concerns SIEs: how do they get their jobs? How are they recruited, selected? What preparation do they undertake for themselves prior to moving?

There is a dearth of research into public sector expatriates (Waxin & Brewster, 2018). There are millions of people working as public sector expatriates around the world, in governmental armed and diplomatic services, and also in inter-governmental organizations. We need more research on the different types of international assignments in the public sector and how these international assignments are managed.

Other research gaps reflect the common lacunas in expatriate research. There is a major dearth of research into the practices of emerging economy multinationals. It seems likely that the selection systems and preparation practices may not be the same for international workers from less studied countries, in less-studied cultures and for less-studied jobs. There may, for example, in some cases, be a significant influence of extended family and a significant impact from religion in Asia-Pacific, Muslim country-based MNEs. There is an almost entire absence of research into the management of international assignees in smaller businesses.

Overall, in the area of selection and preparation for international assignments there is good material for researchers to build on and a growing understanding of the key issues. Nevertheless, there remains here a rich field for exciting research in the future.

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