



TRACK 21: Expatriate management: new trends, new challenges and new prospects

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Abstract:

As the globalization of the business world continues with ever faster changes, new trends have emerged within the field of expatriate management. This amounts to new challenges in research but also more opportunities to assess the theoretical and practical value of these emerging trends. The following are but a few examples of emerging trends in expatriate management that need more research attention.

Reasons for Using Expatriates. The traditional reasons for foreign assignments have gradually been replaced by a more strategic view of expatriation focussing on the global expertise that can be gained by expatriates and how this knowledge can be transferred to and benefit the parent corporation. To the extent that this knowledge is tacit in nature, expatriates are the basic vehicles to transfer such knowledge between organizational units. Hence, an emerging view of foreign assignments is that it may create a unique competitive advantage which is difficult to imitate by competitors.

New Foreign Assignments. As reasons may change for using expatriates, so may the types of assignments they are sent on. Self-initiated expatriates are becoming more common and there is little research on this category of employees. Especially, in the fast internationalizing academic sector, many academics have a global job perspective. Other virtually unknown types of expatriates are public sector expatriates or foreign assignees from NGOs and charity organizations. There are also emerging new types of foreign assignments; short-term assignments of less than a year's duration and itinerant expatriates only spending the working

week at the foreign location. Last, but not least, impatriation is a quickly growing trend in many economies. It is obvious that such types of foreign assignments may meet unique challenges that are clearly under-researched.

Female Expatriates. The steady increase in the share of female business expatriates is a positive trend, both for assigning firms and for those expatriates themselves. However, emerging research evidence suggests that circumstances may be different for women than their male counterparts, both before, during and after their foreign assignments.

Global Careerists. There are increasing numbers of expatriate managers on more permanent global careers involving different types of international positions across different countries during their careers. At the same time, the research on such global careerists is scarce since the focus of traditional expatriation research has been on a single international assignment from preparation to repatriation back to the parent country.

Although these examples are far from exhaustive, they suggest some new trends creating new challenges but also new prospects for expatriate management research. The purpose of this track is to congregate a critical mass of active researchers to discuss and debate possible future directions of research within the domain of expatriate management.

The best papers of this track will be selected for a Special Issue to be published in *Cross Cultural Management – An International Journal*. This is an added attraction and benefit of this track.

Keywords: reasons for expatriation, new foreign assignments, female expatriates, global careerists.