

A study on motivational factors influencing the expatriate through the expatriation cycle

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1 Introduction

The increasing globalisation of the world requires new measurements for businesses if they are to succeed in the international market. Today's information society, increasing world trade due to market integration, and massive increase of foreign direct investment (Beardwell, 2004) are all factors influencing the way in which companies operate and manage their social capital – at home and abroad. Usage of expatriates as knowledge transferors has increased as a result of this alteration in the management of international companies (Black and Gregersen, 1999, Romero, 2002, Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar, 2006) and the ongoing change occurring outside the companies' domain is reflected in an internal organisational development. Internal company communication and coordination across borders, have become a necessity in order to control and encourage companies' interests abroad. In this, expatriates have become essential for the ability to compete on the international scene.

Unfortunately, a large proportion of expatriates fail to complete their assignments satisfactorily (Katz and Seifer, 1996, Romero, 2002, Sims and Schraeder, 2004), which is a consequence of the fact that many expatriates experience difficulties in adjustment, lack of social and organisational support, and a gap between reality and expectations. All of these can be led back to the motivation of the expatriate (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002, Black, Gregersen and Stroh, 1998). Motivation is therefore a key aspect to investigate when attempting to understand difficulties in the expatriation cycle, which is a prerequisite in order to improve the current, problematic situation.

Through a qualitative study we want to examine how motivation drives expatriates in their decisions and actions during the different stages of expatriation. The three stages are; pre-departure, expatriate stay, and repatriation. By examining the motivational factors for each stage individually, we will identify the key drivers of the expatriate effort. This knowledge may be useful for companies to understand what practical and relational measures they can take to support their expatriates' motivation throughout the whole process.

This study is based on interviews with former Danish expatriates where the following, more specific research question provided the foundation for the interview questions:

How are the three different stages of the expatriation process; Pre-departure, expatriate stay and repatriation, driven by motivational factors and which of these factors does the company have a direct influence on?

2 Thesis Framework

The following section will present a more detailed outline of the three-phased framework, which will form the basis of this thesis, explaining the reasons for choosing this particular approach and the logic of it. Furthermore, some of the most important concepts that are used in this thesis will be defined in order to establish a common ground for the discussion of the three expatriate phases in relation to the research question.

There is a rather extensive body of theory on the subject of expatriation. Expatriates are increasingly important as the need for international knowledge transfer has expanded due to the fact that markets for most businesses have grown to be international (Katz and Seifer, 1996, Romero, 2002, Hung-Wen Lee, 2007, Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar, 2006). Since the first scholars started writing about expatriation, the theory has evolved to include more and more aspects and as it is still a relatively young area of research, it is almost guaranteed that the development is not over yet. The latest area of focus is the problem of repatriation, which is concerned with settling the expatriate back into the organisation in the host country. This has proved to be much more important than earlier assumed as it is a major concern during the stay for the expatriate (Allen, Alvarez, 1998, McLean, Robbins, 2008). As expressed by Klaff: "... the key is to have a full-circle repatriation program, one that supports employees and their families, before they leave, during their stay, and – perhaps most important – after they return." (Klaff, 2002, p. 40). This view indicates that it was not until the introduction of repatriation into the body of theory, that the different stages of expatriation was viewed as a circular process (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002) where all stages influenced each other. Generally, everything regarding expatriate theory, definitions, terms, models etc. has evolved into encompassing these three phases that constitute the entire expatriate process. Based on Adler's 'Expatriate Global Career Cycle' (Adler, 2008, fig. 10-1, p. 276), the figure 1 below graphically represents the cycle. The outer three sections are the overall expatriate stages, where the inner sections represent the specific activities carried out by the expatriate and/or the company.

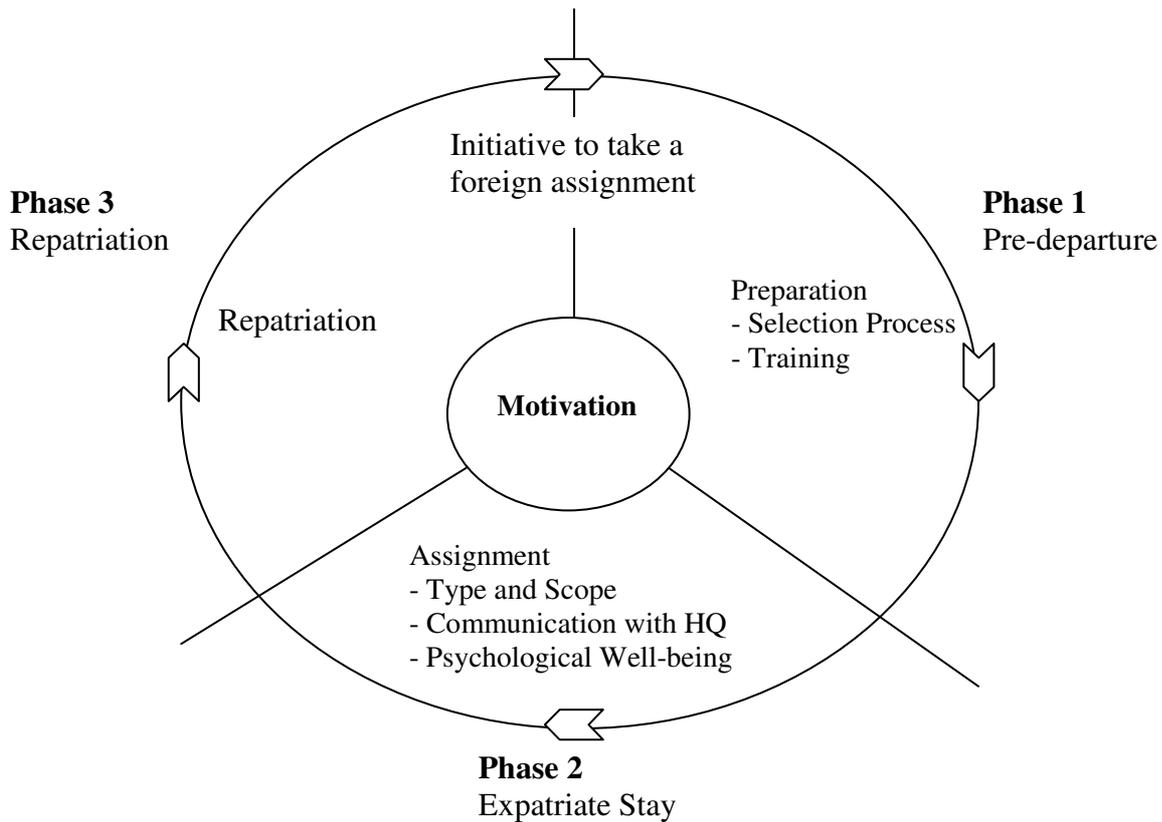


Figure 1 - The Expatriate Cycle (Adapted from Adler, 2008, fig. 10-1, p. 276)

The phases in themselves are the components making up an expatriate’s process but several processes can affect each other by the medium of motivation; the stay itself and repatriation will influence the motivation of prospect expatriates in their pre-departure phase and hence, shape the remaining phases of that expatriate’s process. Therefore, these three phases and matching activities will make up the definition of the expatriate process in this study and constitute the basic theoretical framework on which it is based.

The specific way theory has developed is interesting because it helps understanding what phases have been worked through thoroughly, and which are still in the early stages and could include more aspects than indicated in literature. It is clear that the theory on expatriation has developed chronologically, following the time line of the expatriate, which is interesting because it could indicate how it has gradually been acknowledged that support throughout the process is beneficial. Also, repatriation has proved to be a major issue but theory on the subject is still lacking in quantity, volume, and depth, which is important to know when searching for guidance on the matter.

The pre-departure stage concerns issues such as the expatriate's motivation for accepting a foreign assignment, selection criteria, and training. The second phase, expatriate stay, includes communication with head quarters (HQ), expatriate communities, culture differences and job description. The latter can be argued to belong to the pre-departure phase to a certain extent, as it may influence the motivational factors for accepting secondment. However, we have chosen to include it in the expatriate stay as it has more influence on motivation for performance on the job. The final phase, repatriation, concerns the expatriate's situation after returning to the home country, how they are received by the company and how they deal with the challenges of returning - both on a professional and personal level.

Another way of summing up the issues concerning the expatriation process is expressed by Black and Gregersen: sending people for the right reasons (relates to the overall motivation for expatriation), sending the right people (emphasising the importance of a proper selection process), and finishing the right way (establishing the need for repatriation programs in order to finalise the process) (Black and Gregersen, 1999).

2.1 Conceptualisations

Three concepts are important to discuss in order to understand what is meant by them; the expatriate, expatriate success and failure and finally, culture and culture shock.

2.1.1 The Expatriate

As a result of an increasing global market place, the need for exchanging employees between the different geographical locations have increased (Adler, 2006), and in this context expatriates have become extremely important for international companies. They are used for control and accountability, their technical skills, knowledge of products and ability to provide international exposure to key personnel for developmental purposes (Romero, 2002) or in more general terms, creation or transfer of knowledge and development of international management skills (Black, Gregersen, 1999). Other types of personnel sent out on international assignments are inpatriates (employees from subsidiaries on assignment in the HQ) and transpatriates (employees from one subsidiary stationed in another subsidiary) (Adler, 2008).

An expatriate has historically been thought of as an employee of relatively high hierarchical status, normally in a managerial role, acting as the link between a foreign subsidiary and HQ (Bonache, Zárraga-Oberty, 2008). Romero (2002) expresses it this way: "An expatriate is a highly skilled

worker with unique expertise who is sent to work in another unit of the same company located in a foreign country, generally on a temporary basis.” (p. 73). However, as the types of assignments abroad have changed, the profile of an expatriate has changed accordingly, or rather become less unilateral. More project-oriented work has opened up new opportunities for recruiting people from outside the company for certain tasks, as well as a new tendency of some expatriates to choose to either remain as an employee in the same country abroad or change employer within the foreign country. These new profiles are often known as self-initiated expatriates (Bonache, Zárraga-Oberty, 2008). The type of expatriates who are in focus in this thesis, fall within a category very similar to the earliest definitions: a temporary link between HQ and the subsidiary who returns after a limited time period. All interviewees in this study reflect this group.

2.1.2 Success and Failure

As the theory on the entire subject area of expatriation has developed, so has the perception of the definition of success and failure. Early definitions are overly simplistic and lacking in detail, which is evident in the fact that expatriate failure was only a matter of whether the employee returned prematurely from abroad (Hung-Wen Lee, 2007, Romero, 2002, Tung, 1987). No matter if it was voluntarily or on order from HQ. Later, factors such as low quality of work, repatriation difficulties (Romero, 2002), undervaluation of new skills by the parent company (Hung-Wen Lee, 2007), relationship building, and overall performance (Harrison and Shaffer, 2005) were taken into account. Several of these factors are interrelated and many scholars have argued that it is the level of adjustment achieved by the expatriate that determines how well they are handled. As Harrison and Shaffer expresses it: “The underlying assumption driving much of the expatriate adjustment and premature return literature is that maladjustment will result in both psychological and behavioural withdrawal from one’s assignment, ‘spilling over’ to poor observable performance” (Harrison and Shaffer, 2005, p.1455).

Loss of customer or business partners’ trust and goodwill are perhaps one of the most costly aspects of expatriate failure (Caligiuri and Colakoglu, 2007) because of the amount of time and effort it required to build it in the first place, and the difficult and expensive task of gaining it back, if even possible. Many of the expatriates that complete their assignment and return in planned time would have fitted the old perception of success but their work may have been less effective and of lower quality than in the home country.

In line with repatriation being added to the expatriate cycle, repatriation difficulties have also become part of expatriate failure. Companies tend to forget to utilize the new skills and experience acquired by the returning expatriates, as if they have lost track of why they were sent out in the first place. This is reflected in the many repatriates who change jobs relatively soon after arriving home from an expatriate stay, which means that a high level of turnover among repatriates also can be a part of the definition of expatriate failure (Nauman, 1993). Many of these issues will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

2.1.3 Culture and Culture Shock

Even though the difference between cultures is not a main focus in this paper, it is important to define because these cultural gaps have a great effect on the difference between living and working in one's home country and abroad. In order to understand the different levels on which differences occur, the concept of culture needs to be defined, which is a rather complicated task. Many theorists have contributed with theories on the subject, among them is Hofstede, who simply referred to culture as "Software of the mind" (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). This means that it is the values, norms, traditions and other factors that control the way people behave and construct their logic. To illustrate the differences in this fuzzy topic, Hofstede constructed a large survey of 60,000 people and derived five cultural dimensions that provide a practical framework for understanding fundamental differences in the behaviour of human beings, depending on their cultural background (Adler, 2006). These five dimensions are: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individuality, masculinity versus femininity, and long or short term time orientation. They vary between countries and have a distinct influence on how people of different nationality behave. It should be kept in mind, however, that the dimensions are merely guidelines and not every individual or group will fit the average stereotype composed on the basis of the theory. Every country can be profiled but most often several countries with the same tendencies are put together in clusters in order to generalise and simplify the use of the theory (Katz and Seifer 1996).

As the type of communication is one of the main features of culture, and essential to understand for the expatriate, the concepts of high and low context communication are also worth mentioning. High context communication is often found in Asian cultures where the hierarchical relationship between people influences behaviour strongly. It is characterised by few specifics when explaining an issue, few written rules and a high level of non-verbal communication (Triandis, 1994). Low

Methodology

context communication, on the other hand, includes many written rules and detailed instructions as well as a high level of verbal communication (Triandis, 1994).

The direct effect of these differences are experienced by the expatriates as a general psychological uncertainty, concerning how to behave and communicate with people who have a different perception of the world, based on the values they have learned in the course of their lives (Sims and Schraeder, 2004). This condition, referred to as culture shock, reveals itself in the range of symptoms that affects the self esteem of the expatriate: frustration, home-sickness and depression that usually ends up with a glorification of the home country (Pires, Stanton, and Ostefeldt, 2006). Usually, it happens according to a model referred to as the U-curve, which illustrate the different phases a foreigner goes through when on secondment. Briefly explained, it shows that at first the mood of the expatriate rises because of excitement of the new environment, then to plummet to the low point, culture shock, and slowly rise again as the behaviours of the new culture are learned (Pires, Stanton and Ostefeldt, 2006). It is the culture shock phase that is interesting for the expatriate, as it is one of the roots of the difficulties he experiences while abroad. Most companies seek to eliminate this, or at least reduce it significantly to get the most out of the investment made in the expatriate and the job he is to perform. In contrast to this, it has been argued by Adler (2004), that if the foreigner does not experience this 'low-period', they have not become properly involved with the other culture and hence, missed out on some significant cultural learning. This however, is an entirely different discussion outside the scope of this study.

The differences pointed out in Hofstede's five dimensions and the high/low context theory can aid in the understanding of why some expatriates experience culture shock during their stay abroad and subsequently lead to possible measures to help reduce it.

3 Methodology

Having defined our research problem, and considered secondary information in the shape of former studies on the matter, theoretical papers and teaching books, we proceeded to design the framework of our research. This is necessary when carrying out a thorough and precise analysis of a given subject. In this connection, it is essential to have the goal of the research in mind throughout the whole process and choose the most suitable available options in order to pursue that goal. We believed the results of our study could contribute to a broader understanding of motivation from the expatriate's point of view and hence be useful when applied to companies' expatriation strategies.

Methodology

The first step in designing research is to choose what variables to include, which was done by identifying the potentially influential factors surrounding the situation under study. In our research the expatriate himself is the starting point for the study and the factors affecting him was identified using theory and common sense. Due to the complex nature of expatriation, an actor's approach and qualitative study was selected to shed light on our problem formulation because the complicated relationships between the variables might have been difficult to capture in a quantitative study. The advantages of a qualitative study are reflected in the participants' diversity, reflexivity of the research and researcher, and variety of approaches and methods can be expressed more clearly (Flick, 2006).

3.1 Interview Framework

The research was seen in the light of a *symbolic interactionism* perspective (Flick, 2006), which means that we focused on the subjective meanings that the respondents attributed to their interactions. The basic assumptions attached to this approach are:

- 1) *Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.*
 - 2) *The meaning of such things ... arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.*
 - 3) *The meanings that are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.*
 - 4) *When a person defines a situation as real, this situation is real in its consequences.*
- (Flick, 2006 p.66-67)

These premises centred our analysis around the reconstruction of our respondent's subjective viewpoint in an attempt to see the world from their perspective. Hence, their understanding and opinion of their time abroad, definition of success or failure, view on work conditions, and most importantly what motivated them throughout the different stages, became the reality and the assumptions this research is based on.

In line with this, a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire was formulated. The advantages of this type of interview are very suitable for this particular kind of study; the flexibility of the approach allowed the subjects to construct their own reality throughout the interviews, making it a somewhat more dialog-oriented process, involving the subject in the making of the interview. The loose

structure allows the interviewer to make sure that the key areas of focus are all addressed but still leaves room for the respondent to drift off into other areas that they believe to be important. This secures a basis of comparison but also incorporates the possibility of discovering unexpected areas of interest and relevance. As a result of this, the questions were only guiding and subject to change within the limits of the areas of focus.

3.2 The interview Process

To start the interviews, several basic questions regarding age, family situation at the time, education, their employer at the time, location, time range, job experience, and other international experience were posed. We designed the research questions starting with these personal, specific questions which are rather basic, and then gradually pinning down the area of focus and simultaneously allowing the respondent to answer more broadly. This was done in order to make the subject feel comfortable enough to lead the interview. The posed questions aimed at capturing the theoretical relevance we wanted the answers to reflect, which was significant for our research question, probing particularly interesting responses. All questions were formulated rather simple in order to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings. Nevertheless, if any doubt about the questions occurred, the relaxed forum made it possible for doubts to be clarified with no serious interruption that might have had further consequences for the responses.

The overall frame of the interview was thus set by our pre-constructed interview guide with motivational factors in all three phases in focus. Subsequently, twelve categories were created, which we believe cover the factors influencing the motivation of the expatriate: reasons for accepting secondment, selection process, job description, preparation, training, subsidiary, communication with HQ, family, culture, social communities, performance, and repatriation. The questions were then organised chronologically according to the expatriation process for the sake of simplicity. This did not mean that the respondent had to follow the order; if they decided to go into the subject areas in another order, we followed their lead.

We might subconsciously have had some prejudiced expectations about the respondents' inputs, nevertheless, the aim was not to let these presumptions dominate the interpretation of the answers but rather encourage unexpected inputs.

3.2.1 Physical Settings

The settings of the interview were decided by the interviewees. We offered to arrange the physical settings or come out to them if preferred. All of them organized a meeting at their base, whether at home or at work. The interviews were recorded in order not to miss anything that was stated and that might have been interesting for the study and later organized by categories and printed in paper.

We chose to use a recorder in order to capture all information obtained in the interviews. An alternative approach could have been to let one person conduct the interview and the other take notes. However, we felt that by supplementing each other and maintaining the full focus on the interview we would be able to gain more detailed responses. Video recording could have been another solution because facial expression and emotions would have been captured in visual material (Flick, 2006) but it can create a somewhat unnatural situation that may affect the answers. The possibility for this unwanted situation is somewhat reduced with the audio recording, yet still present to some extent and must therefore be considered when analyzing the interviews. According to the ethics of using recording devices, the interviewees were therefore informed of the audio recordings but none of them seemed to pay it any attention.

Additionally, informing the interviewees about the purpose of our study was important in order to obtain relevant responses. If they know the research question, and are aware of the thoughts behind the study, they might be able to come up with factors that have been significant for them but not directly touched upon by us – these situations reflect the very core of symbolic interactionism and are thus very important for the study.

The first five interviews were conducted by both of us and gave us the possibility to interpret the answers of the interviewee and strategically choose the next questions during the interviews. Being two when interviewing also gave us a better overview and made sure we covered all aspects needed for the research. One could argue that it could seem rather exaggerated or even intimidating with both of us present, yet the interviews were all conducted in a relaxed atmosphere and were intended rather as a dialog and information sharing than an interviewer-interviewee situation. The last interview however, was conducted by only one of us due to geographical distances and time issues. As it was the last interview we already had quite some experience with interviewing and regard it as just as fruitful as the others.

3.3 Respondent Selection

The respondents were six Danish academics that have been conferred on overseas assignments in Mexico, Dubai, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and India, respectively, by the Danish Foreign Ministry, Arla, FLSmidth, and Emborg Foods. Contact with the interviewees was obtained through some acquaintances and family members who knew them and introduced us. Especially one acquaintance used his expatriate network and put us in contact with several of the respondents. Some of them have gotten to know each other after returning but they were all sent abroad independently and had no common denominator while abroad, meaning that they could not have influenced each other during their expatriate stay, which was a prerequisite in order to be able to compare and evaluate them.

The selection criteria the respondents were chosen from was not very strict. This is due to two things; limited resources meant that our possibilities of locating other expatriates than the ones through our private networks would have required too much time, and we wanted a certain width in the respondents in order to capture as many aspects as possible in their answers. Geographically, the respondents represented different parts of Denmark and age wise they were all between 28-38 years of age at the time they were assigned to expatriate jobs. Common for all interviewees were that they had been sent abroad to countries significantly different from Northern European and Western culture in general. This selection criterion was chosen to make sure that the expatriates were significantly far away from Denmark, increasing the likelihood of cultural aspects and deprivation to be mentioned. There were no criteria as to gender and marital status while abroad, however, only male expatriates participated in the study of which most had a spouse, and two respondents also had children who came with them during the expatriation. Also, as some of them had changed their marital situations after returning, hypothetical questions were posed on how they would have reacted differently and what would have mattered in their new situation.

When interpreting the responses it should be kept in mind that because all the participants have been home for a while, their memory about the different situations may be limited and affected by time, as one of the respondents put it: "Selvom der også har været sure tider så husker vi det egentlig det meste som en positiv oplevelse".

3.4 Data Treatment

After collecting the data we wrote down the main points and quotes from each interview using the audio recordings, amounting to about 4-5 pages per interview. The written answers were then sorted and categorised in accordance with the twelve factors in order to gain an overview of what had been said about them individually. Some of the quotes could be placed in more than one category, indicating that there may be an interrelationship between the factors in question. From this arrangement it was rather simple to find the relevant points and quotes to explain, support or contradict the theory as well as discovering new angles and interrelationships.

4 Motivational Theory

Before proceeding with the three expatriate phases, it should be kept in mind that the focus of the research question is the motivation in these phases. Therefore, the following section will examine the motivational theories we have chosen as the basis of the study.

Motivation is the very foundation for inspiring people to give their best, whether on a personal level or on a professional (Adler 2008). We will focus on the professional level to investigate how expatriates are motivated to take overseas assignments and how they maintain the motivation during the expatriation and after returning home. However, the two levels are intertwined and affect each other; the personal aspect influences the professional behaviour as emotional instability spill over into the professional motivation and performance. Motivation at a professional level can be defined by the employee's encouragement to perform well, to consistently attain high productivity and job satisfaction and produce high-quality work (Adler, 2008). It is "a multifaceted concept, which involves (a) factors that arouse people to action (b) choice of behaviour and (c) choices about the persistency and intensity of behaviour" (Beardwell, 2004, p. 85).

Whether it is described in one way or the other, the importance of the management's ability to motivate the employees and give them the right incentives to work is commonly accepted as fundamental for a dynamic and effective work place (Beardwell, 2004, Adler 2008, Brooks, 2006). By making work as satisfying as possible, the companies create an enjoyable workplace with satisfied employees who have the incentive to be more productive. Thus, bottom lines are argued to be a direct consequence of the general atmosphere at the workplace and the job-satisfaction the employees attain at a well managed work place.

Motivational Theory

Beyond motivation is inspiration and according to Adler (2008), good management can inspire people to contribute what they have to give for a cause (or work). Understanding the employee's needs and wants are fundamental in order to be able to inspire (Adler, 2008).

4.1 Development of Motivational Theory

The motivational theories have developed throughout the last century, starting with Taylor's view of money as the prime motivator to lead a workforce and achieve higher productivity (Beardwell, 2004). This however, is regarded as a rather primitive and overly simplistic approach to the subject. Herzberg's newer way of thinking, where motivational factors are divided into two groups (extrinsic and intrinsic factors), is still a simple way of regarding the motivational paradigm between the employee (the expatriate in this study) and the company. Yet it considers motivation as a two-branched concept: motivating factors associated with the job itself and de-motivating factors associated with all aspects influencing the environment surrounding the job (Adler, 2008). The extrinsic factors surrounding the job such as salary, work hours, company policy, status, job security, supervision etc. are thought to be potentially de-motivating if employees regard them as inadequate or inequitable. In this case the employee's lack of motivation becomes visible through decreasing performance at work, which is negative for both employer and employee (Brooks, 2006). This situation can be prevented when giving the employee the right incentives and fair work conditions, and it is, according to Herzberg, the very minimum an employee should have before motivational factors can be considered (Brooks, 2006).

The motivational factors (intrinsic rewards), are concepts such as sense of achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and personal growth. Good management encourages and enables employees to access intrinsic rewards, while avoiding de-motivating them with a lack of extrinsic rewards (Brooks, 2006). This balance is hard to define precisely as it is situational determined and depends on both parties involved: employer and employee.

4.2 Expectancy Theory

The simplicity of the expectancy theory can supplement Herzberg's two-factor theory. It suggests that:

$$\text{Motivation} = \text{Expectation} \times \text{Valence} \text{ (Brooks, 2006)}$$

Phase 1: Pre-departure

It indicates that any expectation the company can trigger, will increase the motivation proportionally to the expatriate's weighted valence. This has its effect on all factors, intrinsic or extrinsic, that are considered when motivating for foreign assignments. Connecting it to the former findings, it indicates that it can be rather difficult for a company to motivate the expatriates in their decision to take foreign assignments because of the complexity of the nature of intrinsic rewards. Companies can thus much easier affect salary, bonuses, and work hours than an employee's personal desire for exploring a new culture.

The progress in motivational theories is especially clear when considering Taylor and Herzberg's different views on the idea of the human mind, and how humans react to company initiatives. Expectancy theory and Herzberg's model are rather simple and one could have considered other motivational theories such as McClelland, and Porter and Lawler (From Brooks, 2006). Nevertheless, we base our motivational approach in both Herzberg's two-factor theory and expectancy theory. Their structural simplicity makes them easy applicable yet still highly explanatory.

It is clear that the companies have most power to change the extrinsic factors as the inputs surrounding the job are set by management and according to the company strategy (Lynch, 2006). When relating these conditions to expatriation, the extrinsic factors regarding this situation are shown through salary, housing, insurance, training, and so forth. They are all standards set by the companies and if they are not considered reasonable and fair by the expatriate, it will de-motivate him in his work while abroad. To prevent this from happening it is extremely important that the companies are aware of and act according to their expatriates motivational needs (Brooks, 2006).

5 Phase 1: Pre-departure

The pre-departure phase is crucial for the rest of the expatriate process as it is concerned with identifying the initial motivation for an employee to accept a foreign assignment and make sure the right people are sent for the right reasons (Black and Gregersen, 1999). Failure in this phase will almost certainly lead to failure in the following two phases.

The pre-departure phase encompasses the activities and concerns in the period before leaving the home country, motivation for accepting the foreign assignment, selection process, and training. The company enjoys absolute control over the last two factors, whereas motivation is driven by personal

needs, wants, perceptions, and values, which can mostly be categorised as intrinsic factors. As the company more easily can affect extrinsic rewards, they have difficulties when faced with intrinsic factors.

5.1 Motivational Factors Influencing the Decision to Accept Secondment

With the increasing number of people being expatriated, it is central to investigate the reasons and the motivation for them to give up everything at home and accept a foreign assignment. It is argued that salary and bonuses can motivate expatriates, which for some can be an opportunity to increase personal status (Cohen, 1977).

However, these extrinsic rewards are often secondary (Richardson and McKenna, 2001). Often expatriation takes roots in a higher level of needs when using Maslow or Alderfer's pyramids of needs as illustration (Brooks, 2006). One could argue that Richardson and McKenna's view of personal goals can be placed in the very top of the need hierarchy placing it in self-actualization (Maslow) or growth (Alderfer).

A study made in 2001 by Richardson and McKenna (2001), investigated the different motivational aspects for accepting secondment, and as their research question is rather similar to ours, it was interesting to compare our findings with theirs. Their grouping of motivational factors was through qualitative methods found to cover four main motives and categorised expatriates according to them: *the explorer*, *the refugee*, *the mercenary*, and *the architect*. We will use this taxonomy in relation to our empirical study.

The explorer reflects the inner desire for living in a new culture and experiencing this culture in a way beyond vacation level. Additionally, personal fulfilment and development are also concepts captured by the explorer. It is "an opportunity both to explore another culture and to undertake this exploration in an independent way through living and learning in the new culture" (Richardson and McKenna, 2002, p. 70). Secondly, *the refugee*, covers the desire to escape and seek refuge from something connected with their home. It reflects the search of opportunities, which are thought to be possible through expatriation, for instance: "...there was a general feeling that respondents were in search of a better personal and/or professional life." (Richardson and McKenna, 2001, p. 71). The *mercenary* group consists of individuals with explicit considerations about salary as their main motivation to accept a foreign assignment. Finally, the forth group, *the architect* consists of expatriates whose main motives are based on career building and who identifies their incentives as a

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clear link to their professional lives. However, the last two categories were only supported by a few respondents whereas the explorer and refugee weighted the most.

It is important to emphasise the fact that the four motives are not mutually exclusive; an expatriate can have several reasons for accepting a foreign assignment. The valence connected to each motive does not appear from the study and the comparison among the variables is hence somewhat unclear and therefore not considered important in their study. The desire to experience new cultures at a much deeper level than vacations allow was a principal argument for accepting secondment for most respondents. Professional opportunities and career building were also main motives for some expatriates, nevertheless, somewhat subordinate in representatives of this group (Richardson and McKenna, 2001) - however, the reciprocal relation between the factors does not appear.

The three stages in the expatriation cycle are motivated by different factors. Pre-departure is mainly up to the expatriate in the sense that he has to express his wish to take a foreign assignment. When he has made up his mind and considered all immediate pros and cons, the situation proceeds to the company through selection process and training. Thus, the whole potential expatriation is triggered by the expatriate's motivation to take a foreign assignment. This motivation is needed throughout the whole process and is hence considered in the following two stages as well, even though the usage of motivational theories is originally based on the initial stage where the expatriate decides to accept the secondment.

The transference of initiative happens in the selection process where the employee has called attention to his wish and motivation, which is then considered by the company in order to make sure it can be matched with the available assignments

5.2 Selection Process

Early theorists focused heavily on the pre-departure selection, which was often only based on technical or managerial skills (Tung, 1987, Hung-Wen Lee, 2007). After Tung in 1987 brought out evidence for a positive relationship between adjustment and expatriate success, a sudden acceleration in the theory development took place (Shay and Baack, 2006). The first changes appeared in selection process theory, which has developed into considering personal traits and characteristics of the potential expatriate, as well as the technical skills (Katz and Seifer 1996, Romero, 2002, Hung-Wen Lee, 2007), because it was realised that what is good working practices in one country may not be as effective in another.

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First step on the way to successful expatriation is a well-thought out selection process. The best results are argued to be obtained when combining professional and personal traits (Hogan and Goodson, 1990). Casting a wide net by setting a minimum level for the technical skills required, leaves only the professionally capable employees to choose from. Thereafter, the more difficult evaluation of the potential candidates' personal characteristics can begin (McLean, 2008, Sims and Schraeder, 2004, Katz and Seifer, 1996). The logic in this argument is clear but the wide net only sets a minimum requirement and therefore catches many levels of competence, hence increasing the possibility of recruiting a mediocre employee instead of the very elite, which is argued to be very important for the success of the expatriate (Allen and Alvarez, 1998). This view again leads back to the discussion of what characteristics are most important for an expatriate: professional or personal skills - this time returning to the older perception about professional skills being superior in importance. Sometimes, companies even speculate in retaining the best employees in HQ because they cannot be spared and use expatriate assignments to get rid of problem employees (Allen and Alvarez, 1998). This can cause serious problems for the motivation of future expatriates as they will get the impression that secondment is for excess employees that are expendable!

A willingness to accept the challenge of expatriation is of course the first criterion but there are other characteristics to look for, such as empathy, work ethics, capability to relate to others and flair for working in different ways (Katz and Seifer, 1996). Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar (2006) combine the above into a key attribute; motivational cultural Intelligence (CQ), which refers to the drive and interest with which an individual adapts to a new setting. "Motivational CQ triggers attention and effort" (Temper, Tay and Chandrasekar, 2006, p. 157) indicating that intrinsic motivation is embedded in the concept. Actually, Temper, Tay and Chandrasekar (2006) indirectly implies that training, which will be discussed in a later section, is not as important as having this particular skill: "... information and/or knowledge is not enough; one must be able and motivated to use the knowledge and produce culturally appropriate responses. Individuals high in motivational CQ have the desire, drive, and efficacy to continually translate information to generate strategies to deal with working, living, and interacting in the new cultural environment." (Templer, Tay, and Chandrasekar, 2006, p. 160). This clearly suggests that motivation, which will lead to high effort, can have a strong positive effect on adaption and hence, performance in the foreign country. However, it is not always enough, the motivation often needs to be accompanied by appropriate personal traits, and sometimes even simple demographics can have a supporting effect.

5.2.1 Personal Traits and Demographics as Supporting factors

Both Katz & Seifer and Sims & Schraeder point out three dimensions of a person's psychological traits, self-orientation, others-orientation and perception. Self-orientation includes technical capabilities, the level of stress-reduction a person can provide for herself and the ability to find and take up other leisure activities than those enjoyed in the home country. Others-orientation relates to communication skills and willingness and ability to develop long term relationships with locals. The final dimension is perception, which is concerned with the capacity to take in the differences in a new culture and accept them as well as the ability to stay non-judgemental and non-evaluative (Katz and Seifer, 1996). Other traits mentioned are listening skills, team-orientation, collaboration and less of an ego (these are mentioned especially in relation to American expatriates) (McLean, 2008) as well as the cultural personality characteristics, such as cultural and cognitive flexibility and the level of ethnocentrism (Sims and Schraeder, 2004). It should also be kept in mind when choosing an expatriate candidate that different people are suited for different cultures, meaning that cultural fit is worth considering (Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty, 2008). In addition to these very individual characteristics, more simple facts about a person, in the shape of demographics, may also be relevant.

In relation to the actual job that has to be performed, the traits of the expatriate are of course the most important but Sims and Schraeder also suggest that some basic demographic characteristics of the potential expatriate are considered. Age, gender, experience, company tenure and family status have proven to have significant influence on expatriate success. Most expatriates are men (90% in 1990 (Sims and Schraeder, 2004)) which may be more efficient in some countries where women are not represented very strongly in the working environment. Older expatriates are also claimed to have a higher success rate than their younger colleagues, Sims and Schraeder (2004) setting 45 years of age as an ideal age. This belief in mature expatriates may be linked to both experience and company tenure. With experience comes patience, new skills and self-confidence, all very important when adjusting to a new working environment. Complimenting these traits, are the loyalty and belief in the company that comes from being an employee for a longer period of time, meaning that the expatriate might be more inclined to 'stick it out' in difficult times (Sims and Schraeder, 2004). The arguments for using older expatriates seem logical but in the spirit of comparison one might assess the qualities of younger expatriates also. These could be adventurous minds, strong health and less 'strings attached'. Older expatriates are more likely to have a family to take care of, which requires more resources for the company when planning the expatriate stay.

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Family status is probably the most important demographic. Actually, several sources claim the family to be the number one reason for expatriate failure (Tung, 1987, Hung-Wen Lee, 2007), as the well-being of family members have great influence on the well-being and motivation of the expatriate, but this relationship will be reviewed in depth in a later section. Some even recommend to involve the family of the employee in the evaluation leading up to secondment in order to prevent problems of this kind (Caliguiri and Colakoglu, 2007).

These considerations pose a dilemma when evaluating a good expatriate; on one hand experience is preferred, leading to the choice of an older employee but on the other hand, the presence of family complicates the expatriation process and makes the choice of a younger individual more attractive. Therefore, it is not possible to make one overall recommendation concerning the age of an expatriate - the individual circumstances have to be considered to make the right choice. This indicates that personal traits and demographics are factors that need to be evaluated in relation to the assignment in question and need to be matched in order for the expatriate to maintain his motivation during the expatriate stay.

5.2.2 Motivation as a Selection Criteria

By adding another piece to the puzzle of expatriate selection in the shape of motivation theory, the process may be even more efficient. As motivation is extremely important to secure a high degree of effort put into the job (Nauman, 1993) and should therefore be an essential part of the selection criteria for prospect expatriates. The underlying reasons for wanting to take on an assignment or challenge have a strong influence on how and with which enthusiasm it is approached, which is why it can be useful to the employer to identify these, both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons (Bonache and Zárraga-Obertý, 2008). Most often the company only has influence on the extrinsic motivational factors as opposed to the intrinsic factors, which are more difficult for the employer to promote and are likely a product of the personality of the employee himself. Hence, it may be advantageous for the company to know what intrinsic factors drive the expatriate's effort (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002) and if any of these are within the company's locus of control. For example, Reade (2003) suggests that psychological bonding with the organisation (not only the local subsidiary) has a positive effect on employee effort and refers to Foote's notion about actions without identification with the task or organisation are merely empty behaviour. It could be incorporated in the present process as a fourth level in the selection process after the scrutiny of personal traits because all the previously mentioned factors are prerequisites for the

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ability to cope with an assignment abroad, whereas motivation is the basis for the drive and energy with which the expatriate will engage his task.

From the discussion above, it can be seen that the selection process is a very important activity in the expatriate cycle. Based on the initial motivation of the individual employee, it is up to the company to evaluate skills, personal characteristics, and demographics in relation to the task at hand in order to assure sending the right people for the right reasons (Black and Gregersen, 1999).

4.3 Increasing Motivation Through Training

When a proper selection process has been concluded the company can proceed with training in order to prepare the expatriate for the further procedure. Training is an essential part of the pre-departure activities. If the expatriate is properly prepared and equipped before leaving, it will be easier to maintain the initial motivation and as a result perform better.

In newer research it has been discovered that a selection process is not enough to make sure that the expatriate thrives. Both pre-departure training and ongoing support on the assignment have been added since, and several theorists claim that a combination of selection and training will secure expatriate efficiency on the job (Tung, 1987, Hogan and Goodson, 1990, Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty, 2008). Pre-departure training includes both general information about the host country and can be much more detailed, such as case studies and personal skills courses.

It is seldom hard to convince companies to invest in a proper selection process but when confronted with the issue of training many firms are reluctant to make an investment (Hogan and Goodson, 1990) even though it is argued that "... training is closely correlated with expatriate skills and expatriate performance" (Brewster and Pickard, 1994, p. 19) and "It may be possible that expatriate training can be used to change expatriated leader behaviours during an assignment to meet the norms of the host country." (Romero, 2002, p. 76). This indicates that training increases the chance of success and therefore the motivation of the employee. However, the reluctance is in part due to the fact that the turnover for repatriates is very high, approximately 44% change job within the first two years of returning according to the Global Relocation Trends Report from 2004 (Kraimer, Shaffer and Bolino, 2009). The issue of training seems to have turned into a vicious circle; without the proper training, the likelihood of failing will increase and the employee might seek new challenges elsewhere, meaning that whatever resources invested in him will be lost. If, on the other

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hand, the investment is made, (uncertain as it may be) the chance of keeping the employee after returning will increase.

Harrison has suggested tools such as general orientation, language courses, case studies, stress management courses, and discussion of cultural awareness issues (Romero, 2002). Focus on dealing with change and mapping the strengths and weaknesses of the expatriate are also mentioned, which could be dealt with in standard workshops as preparation for posting abroad. Returning to Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar's point about certain characteristics being more important than training, they subsequently suggest training in enhancing certain characteristics of the chosen expatriate, especially self-efficacy, which they claim to be essential to intrinsic motivation (Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar, 2006). These issues are essential, regardless of host country, and could be standardised for all prospect expatriates as a way to limit the extensive costs of training.

5.2.3 Realistic Expectations as a Basis for Motivation

Training has a second justification as a mean of communicating realistic expectations and information in the first stage in the process. Not only about the task itself but general information about secondment and country specific facts (Romero, 2002). Knowledge is empowering, which is why it also promotes motivation (Brooks, 2006).

Nauman (1993) points out that these realistic expectations have a direct effect on satisfaction, hence motivation of the expatriate. Training, regardless of type, is based on knowledge about the situation an expatriate can expect, therefore: "In the international context, expatriate training may help clarify a wide variety of worker expectations, leading to a higher congruency between expectations and subsequent job experiences. This should lead to more positive attitudes, and ... more job satisfaction." (Nauman, 1993, p. 65). Clarification of job performance, expectations and accurate articulation of goal objectives are the first steps in preparing the expatriate as it reduces uncertainty and the feeling of being 'out of sight, out of mind' (Caliguiri and Colakoglu, 2007) and therefore helps motivation in the sense that when the expatriate know what to expect, there will be no disappointments. This may not be classified as real training but it is a step on the way, also for the company, as it helps in the process of determining what kind of training is required. Here it should be noted that despite the volume of theory dedicated to specifying detailed training programmes, there are also scholars who believe that it is not the actual subject matter and type of training that are most beneficial but the process of training itself (Brewster and Pickard, 1994).

4.3.2 Cross-Cultural Training

More specialised is the notion of cross-cultural training, which is recommended by several scholars (Tung, 1987, Hogan and Goodson, 1990, Sims and Schraeder, 2004). 30% of expatriate underperformance is due to lack of cross-cultural training (Bonache and Zárrega-Oberty, 2004), which indicates that cross-cultural training is an important aspect of expatriate preparation and should be prioritised on a higher level by companies. Katz and Seifer (1996) argues that training leads to less uncertainty about the new culture and hence, a reduction in culture shock. "Culture shock is essentially ... grounded in uncertainty." (Sims and Schraeder, 2004, p. 74) and knowledge about cultural differences along with information about what can be expected, will decrease this psychological uncertainty that subsequently can lead to motivational problems. When comparing European, Japanese and American companies' expatriate performance, it is clear that the latter is the least successful (Hogan and Goodson, 1990). This could be a result of the fact that it is only few American companies which make use of cross-cultural training (Katz and Seifer, 1996). Europeans and Japanese have a more solid tradition for secondment because of smaller local markets and are therefore ahead in the expatriate training (Tung, 1987). This point towards the assumption, that cross-cultural training really does make a difference.

The pre-departure phase is essential in the sense that it is here the basis for a successful expatriation is laid. The initial motivation for accepting secondment is a requirement for entering the further process. Richardson and McKenna (2001) has suggested that this motivation is often due to a wish to explore new cultures, though they also mention other main motives such as refuge, monetary compensation and future career concerns. The objective of the selection process is then to make sure that the proper combination of motivation, personal traits and demographics is chosen to match the assignment. As the last activity in the first phase, training serves as a mean of preparation of the expatriate in order to maintain the motivation throughout the rest of the process.

5.3 Empiric Results Related to the Pre-departure Phase

5.3.1 Motivational Factors Influencing the Acceptance of a Foreign Assignment

Our findings about motivational aspects of the expatriate in the pre-departure stage compared to Richardson and McKenna's study were to some extent similar, however, introducing a somewhat different approach combining some of the motivational factors in new concepts. In other words, the interrelationship between the four factors is argued to be different according to our respondents.

Through our qualitative interviews we had the possibility to probe further into these considerations for our respondents' experiences. An interesting aspect of the pre-departure considerations was found: the idea of one main motive did not exist according to our respondent but there were several motivational factors involved in the considerations before accepting secondment. Hence, separating the motives, as Richardson and McKenna did in their study, did not give a true view of our respondents' situation. A more differentiated picture was necessary in order to capture the essence of our respondents' pre-departure motivation. They all agreed on the importance of the exploratory importance, an "adventurous attitude" as it was put and is shown through the following quotes:

"Man skal altså ville det her eventyr, man skal ville oplevelsen for at få success ... Det var lysten efter eventyret, udelængslen der trak."

"Det var en mulighed for livet... Jeg tænkte det kunne være en spændende udfordring at prøve."

"Jeg tror sådan ganske almindelig eventyrlyst – prøve noget nyt, se noget spændende."

This indicates that exploring could be seen as a prerequisite for accepting and succeeding secondment rather than a motivational factor in itself. As a matter of fact, it was argued that an expatriation, which was solely based on other motivational factors without this personal desire and curiosity included in the concept of exploring, it would become much harder to succeed. Thus, the other motivational factors were all connected to this adventurous approach - in fact they could be argued to originate in this very attitude!

In combination with the adventure the architecture and mercenary factors were in some way or the other, also mentioned, in contrast to Richard and McKenna's study. Keeping in mind that their study dealt with main motives, the career opportunities might not have been the principal reason mentioned by their respondents but it could still have an important influence, which does not appear due to the structure of their study. Our respondents however, mentioned the mercenary and

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architectural aspect - not in a direct way but in combination with their career opportunities and thus in a forward-looking manner: “Ønsket var en udstationering så jeg kunne få noget mere på mit CV og få noget mere ansvar så det var et led i min karriere” Another respondent mentions the mercenary aspect indirectly in combination with his further career:

”Det havde ikke noget med status og penge at gøre som sådan. Men det har det jo nok i den sidste ende alligevel. Det var et klart led i min karriere plan. Jeg kunne se at det kunne bruges til noget aktivt, fremadrettet. Jeg kunne også se på de andre medarbejdere der havde været igennem det forløb (...) at de havde nogle bedre positioner når det kom tilbage og det var den retning jeg gerne selv ville.”

These claims illustrate the importance of career and how the expatriation is considered not only to be an exploration opportunity; but is also closely linked with a dynamic career leading to financial compensation – not necessarily during the expatriation itself but in the long run. Through our respondents’ answers we found that both mindsets occur in the pre-departure stage. The motivation is thus intrinsic when illustrating it through the personal challenge sought in an expatriation, and additionally, the desire to explore and plunge oneself into adventures. This can be related back to Maslow’s pyramid of needs where the motivation, at this stage of the expatriation, would be in the upper part of the pyramid, located in the self-actualization or Aldefer’s growth section. This is in accordance with the motivational understanding of the expatriates.

On the other hand, the extrinsic rewards we found were thought of strategically in the long run, meaning that monetary compensation was not necessarily considered while abroad but as a part of the compensation they would obtain in the long run as a result of their career. The extrinsic rewards were not the principal reason for any of our respondents, and they even argued that an expatriate’s chances of succeeding considerably deteriorated if his expectations were solely thought of as a career building tool. This would eventually result in an economical compensation: “Hvis man kun tager afsted for pengenes skyld så skal man simpelthen ikke gøre det. Så får man det hårdt,” which is related back to the adventurous attitude as a prerequisite for succeeding.

The mercenary aspect, that Richard and McKenna found to only represent a small part of their respondents main motives for expatriation (Richardson and McKenna, 2001), was only found in combination with other factors, and was hence not a motivational variable in its own nature but existed in connection with other motivational factors.

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The refuge factor was only expressed through a wish for personal challenge in a way which could not be found at the workplace or at home and could simply be grounded in boredom:

“Efter 1½ års tid, synes jeg at jeg kedede mig lidt i mit job, så det var der jeg begyndte at ytre ønske om at komme ud i og med at Emborg havde nogle kontorer rundt omkring og at der sad andre danskere derude – så tænkte jeg, hvorfor ikke mig? Det vil jeg da også gerne.”

None of our respondents had a direct refuge reason in the way that Richard and McKenna argued was significant in their study. Again, the combination of motivational factors seemed to be the most important finding as to motivational behaviour in our study where none of the factors were clearly separated.

The combination of motivational factors influencing the decision to apply for a foreign assignment, we found to be merely an issue rooted in exploration. An adventurous approach was the main incentive for all of our respondent's decision for applying and accepting an assignment abroad and could thus be seen as a prerequisite rather than a variable. It was argued that without this adventurous attitude, the expatriate would have a significantly harder time adapting and succeeding abroad than those who did have this attitude.

Relating these findings to the companies and their power when influencing their expatriates, it can be seen that the valence and expectations of the expatriates are more difficult to affect. The adventurous attitude is an intrinsically based motivational factor, which can be seen as a prerequisite for a successful expatriation. The desire to explore differs in the cases, from the nature of exploring to the valence attached to it by each individual, making it difficult for the companies to influence. A career-oriented approach could seem more useful as to companies influencing motivational factors in the pre-departure stage. Giving the expatriates expectations for the following two stages could be an interesting initiative in order to increase companies' ability to motivate their expatriates. When applying expectancy theory, this tactic would increase one of the two motivational variables determining the motivational level. The remaining factor on the other hand, the valence attached to the expatriation, is deeply rooted in personal traits and hence difficult for the company to have an effect on.

5.3.2 Convenience for the Company as a Selection Criterion

As we have not consulted representatives from the companies directly, it is difficult to determine what skills, qualifications, and characteristics the expatriate was selected on. However, the reasons

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given by the interviewees themselves suggest that focus had been on both technical and personal skills: "Både personlige kompetencer og du skal selvfølgelig sikre dig du har de faglige kompetencer de efterspørger til stillingen. Det kommer an på din personlighed. Hvad du vil og hvad du signalerer du vil". The mentioning of what signals the employee sends out, indicates that the selection of expatriates based on the motivation they bring with them from the beginning, is already incorporated in the selection process, even though it is still only mentioned in theory by very few scholars.

Personal competences were emphasised to a large extent but always in connection with professional competences, indicating that the respondents regarded these as being somewhat linked with the work context, meaning that the personal skills, such as communication abilities and openness become a part of the professional set of skills when working. Therefore, it could be worth reconsidering the sharp division between personal and professional skills, and begin to classify them more in relation to the context in which they are used.

Surprisingly, convenience for the company, a factor which is not mentioned very often in the theory, also appeared to be significant. Demographics, such as age, gender and family status, have been mentioned in theory on a rather shallow level, with some scholars claiming that older expatriates are generally more successful (Sims and Schraeder, 2004) and that men tend to be more common and efficient because they are easily accepted in the professional scene in countries where women are rare on the labour market. The new angle discovered in these interviews is that certain combinations of these demographics constitute a type of person who is 'easy' to post abroad, hence proposing new selection criteria based on convenience and cost reduction for the company. It should be mentioned though that this is based on speculations made by the expatriates, and have never been communicated directly from the company. A suggestion of a combination of demographics that makes an easy expatriate, could be the description one of the respondents gave of himself:

"Jeg havde jo på det tidspunkt den rette alder, synes jeg, jeg havde lige fået den nødvendige erfaring men ikke fået børn endnu, hvor jeg kunne se at de andre erfarne havde fået børn. Så de regnede nok med at jeg tog af sted."

Especially the lack of family tended to be a key issue when labelling an expatriate as 'easy': "Jeg tog afsted alene så jeg var en meget, meget nem udstationering".

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The tendency of companies avoiding candidates with a family is a strong indicator of the legitimacy of the theory claiming family influence to be crucial; an issue that will be presented in more detail in the second-phase-section. Instead of dealing with problems associated with family ties of an expatriate, the companies simply avoid it by choosing employees who does not yet have a family. This way costs are significantly reduced along with the decrease in demand for family support from the expatriate, and there may even be a better probability of success because there is no family to divert attention from the assignment. On the other hand, family often constitute the best support in difficult times, meaning that lack of the very same could also lead to failure (Rishøj, Hildebrandt, 2001). One must assume that these pros and cons have been weighted before choosing what family situation to prefer.

5.3.3 Experience vs. Family Situation – a Dilemma

However, there seemed to be a factor, which had the power to cancel out the negative effects for the company of bringing the expatriate's family: experience. If experience was a prerequisite for the assignment at hand and the candidate who possessed it had a family, the company seemed to be more inclined to deal with the more complicated expatriate, as one of the respondents put it:

“Jeg kom med den rigtig uddannelse og den rigtige alder og med spansk som baggrund så det var temmelig oplagt ... Vi havde vist at vi som familie kunne få det til at fungere. Vi kunne sproget og vi havde den rigtige uddannelsesmæssige baggrund, og det er ligesom de ting, der er afgørende.”

The two factors, experience and absence of family, are yet somewhat intertwined as they often pose a dilemma. With age and hence experience, comes an increasing likelihood of the employee having a family to take care of, therefore companies also need to decide what factor carries more importance in the particular task the expatriate is supposed to take on. Experience is also considered in another context we discovered. It was mentioned that the company not only considers who will be fit for a foreign assignment but also who they can and cannot spare in the HQ.

”Firmaet tænker jo egentlig først og fremmest profit. Så de ser hvem de kan få af sted og hvilken gavn de ville have kunnet gøre herhjemme. Så jeg kunne nok nemmere undværes i forhold til en ældre og mere erfaren medarbejder, men stadigvæk så erfaren at jeg er sikker nok til at sende af sted.”

This approach may be useful in the HQ management perspective but it does not make sense in a broader strategy perspective as it basically puts the needs of the HQ before the subsidiaries that

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constitute the company as a whole. It can also have great negative influence on the motivation of other employees to take foreign assignments, as it puts forward a message saying that people who are sent abroad are in fact not top-performers and can therefore be expended. As will be addressed in phase three, it can also influence repatriation negatively to have a tradition for posting only mediocre employees abroad.

Generally, it can be argued that the different selection criteria depend on each other and in many cases represent trade-off situations where the employer will have to weigh up the importance of the different criteria and decide what is best suitable for the assignment at hand. It is also indicated that in some situations certain criteria apply and in others they do not, also in the sense that they can substitute each other. It may not matter that the expatriate is young and lack experience if he does not have a family, or it may not be the best accountant that is sent if he has superior communication skills. However, the motivation of the individual expatriate to accept secondment is a key factor for the expatriate to succeed and should therefore be the criterion that carries the most weight in the selection process.

5.3.4 Training as a Facilitator for Motivation

A general observation from all interviews is the very limited amount of training provided before departure, which is surprising on one hand because it constitutes a rather large section of expatriate theory but on the other, it is also well-known that companies are reluctant to provide expatriate training. As one respondent put it: "Ikke andet end at jeg fik en vaccination (...) og [de] gav os en lille bog." However, the results of the interviews bring us to an interesting finding that challenges common theory. One would think that expatriates would gladly accept any training provided to prepare for a different working environment and control uncertainty emerging from unanswered questions. The interviewees in this study are divided when it comes to evaluating whether it would have been useful to have undergone training before leaving. On one hand they can see the usefulness:

"Det kunne have været en fordel at have haft sprogtræning. Men alt forretning foregik på engelsk så derfor blev det nok valgt fra. Der var heller ikke noget kulturundervisning. Det kunne man måske godt have haft noget mere af"

and were somewhat dissatisfied with the fact that the company did not provide it:

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”Det kunne have været smart at have det... Det er lidt for dårligt man ikke har det på sådan et sted som Grækenland. Det stod ikke lige i kursus håndbogen. Men ville jeg have haft nytte af det? Ja, bestemt!”

On the other, there is a certain scepticism about whether it really would have made a difference, referring to experience as the best training or method of learning:

”Det kunne da godt være at det havde hjulpet at få to timers introduktion af en der havde studeret kulturen... men jeg tror ikke at man nogensinde kan blive 100 procent klædt på før man står i situationen, det er der man lærer at begå sig og suge til sig.

Because of this scepticism it could be the case that if training had been offered, or even required, the expatriates would not have benefitted from it to the full extent. To get the most out of any kind of training or teaching, it is important to be motivated in order to take in the information given. This motivation may be achieved by clearly stating the purpose of training but that requires the firm itself to realise the importance of training - otherwise they themselves will not even know the purpose! This, along with another factor could also provide a partial reason for why companies do not offer more training. If they do not experience any pressure from prospect expatriates to provide training, or even just introduction courses, it is easier to understand why it is so uncommon. Furthermore, the expatriate does not know any better when they have not participated in any training, and may therefore underestimate the difference training can make during their expatriate stay. This could also have an influence on what kind of feedback regarding training they provide the company with after returning home. This issue however, will be addressed in more detail in the section concerning repatriation.

In a few cases, the expatriates sought information on their own, intimating that they did recognise a need for knowledge before relocation but somehow did not expect the company to provide it for them.

”Jeg havde selvfølgelig undersøgt lidt inden jeg sagde ja, og tog også kontakt til dem dernede både på telefon og e-mail sådan lige for at få basis-tingene på plads. Jeg vidste jo ikke andet end at der var en masse sand og en flok beduiner dernede.”

Generally, it seems like the expatriates can understand the selection criteria put forward by the companies to support adjustment and efficiency as well as minimising costs of sending employees abroad. But they have not thought of the influence of training and/or information on the same factors until asked directly in the interviews. Maybe this has something to do with the fact that

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expatriates are very well compensated extrinsically with extensive pay packages and support in practical matters, and therefore adopt the same view as many companies: “when people are issued first-class tickets on a luxury-liner, they’re not supposed to complain about being at sea” (Black, Gregersen, 1999, p. 54). Hence the expatriates believe it is their own responsibility to prepare prior to departure and handle problems along the way.

5.4 Phase 1 Conclusion

The first phase is characterised by a more complex situation as to motivation, selection-process, and training. The motivational aspect was found to be a combination of the factors that determined the motivational level of the expatriate when considering secondment. Assuming an adventurous attitude as a prerequisite for succeeding abroad, the interrelation between the other factors becomes clearer. The selection process turns out to concern trade-off situations and individual matching between the expatriate and the assignment, as opposed to defining universal selection criteria. Personal motivation, competences, current situation in relation to demographics and family situation were found to have different levels of importance in relation to different assignments, meaning that suitable combinations of factors depended on the individual situation. Training was viewed as something the expatriate himself is responsible for, indicating that the companies did not take advantage of the opportunity to influence the retention of the expatriate’s motivation. The process of identifying, developing and finally retaining the motivation in the initial phase is essential to make sure the expatriate enters the second phase well-equipped.

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Upon arrival in the host country the expatriate is faced with the reality of his decision and in the new situation the motivational factors influencing his performance may change. Therefore, it is essential to continually follow up and support the expatriate in the second phase in order to obtain high professional performance.

The second phase in the expatriation cycle consists of the expatriate’s actual stay in the host country, and is concerned with the professional aspect through communication with HQ, job description, the practical arrangements that need to be handled in order to create an everyday life and social networks. Adaptation and support on the professional but also personal level while abroad can have a significant effect on expatriates’ motivation during their stay, which is what this section will examine.

6.1.1 Practical Arrangements as Extrinsic Motivational Factors

In the transition between the first and second phase the first thing felt by the expatriate is the effects of the practical arrangements initiated by the company prior to arrival. These more extrinsic factors can be used to equip the expatriates by contributing with more practical initiatives, such as pre-departure visits, help with setting up financial arrangements, finding appropriate housing and schooling for children, post-arrival orientation, host country social support and general counselling (Sims and Schraeder, 2004).

The mere quantity of practical issues the expatriate is confronted with can add to the pressure of being in a new country, while this is relatively uncomplicated for the company as an organisation to deal with. Variation in bureaucratic systems and paper work is a less complex concept to grasp than cultural differences and can be dealt with even if not physically present in the country. It also has a double purpose, as it is a very clear way for the firm to show support and care, which has a beneficial effect on the psyche of the expatriate. However, some argue that the level of involvement accepted in private affairs is different between cultures. Americans accept a higher level of involvement than Europeans, and especially Scandinavians have a stronger sense of division between family and company business (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002). This is sometimes reflected in the fact that Europeans do not require as much help for their individual family members because they regard it as inappropriate involvement from the company (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002). In this paper focus is on Danish expatriates and hence, it will be taken into consideration whether companies are too intrusive but in a broader scope this knowledge enables companies to adjust the level of involvement to match the employee in question. Help and support with practical issues could be argued to be the minimum investment a company makes in an expatriate, simply because they are extrinsic factors that may be potentially demotivating if they are not handled well.

6.2 Type and Scope of Assignment

In continuation of the discussion of realistic expectations as an influential factor on motivation, the purpose of the foreign assignment should be clearly specified to the expatriate in the job description (Black and Gregersen, 1999). It happens that these factors have not even been realised by the company itself, and this can cause serious problems. For secondment to be useful, the basic reason for sending expatriates abroad should be clear. Additionally, the overall strategy of the multi national company (MNC) and the type of task the expatriates perform should be in consistence with

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each other (Caliguiri and Colakoglu, 2007). On the more personal level for the individual expatriate, it is also important to be aware of the exact task because of the effect it has on motivation. Therefore, a thorough examination of the purpose and content of the foreign assignment, as well as the match between the task and overall company strategy, is not only helpful to the company but also to the employee

Early expatriate jobs were expected to last for a longer period of time and involved a great deal of technical knowledge because it could be difficult to find skilled personnel in some countries. However, this is often not the case today as skilled personnel are present in most parts of the world (Caliguiri and Colakoglu, 2007). Now many tasks are of a shorter duration and mainly involve the transfer of tacit knowledge, such as company culture and manager experiences in the area of implementing strategic changes (Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty, 2008).

On the personal motivational level for the expatriate, the type of assignments offered can be divided into two categories; *demand-driven* and *learning-driven* assignments (Pucik 1992 in Stahl et al, 2004). Demand-driven assignments concern issues such as coordination and control, communication, knowledge transfer, and problem solving, which have a rather clear functional purpose for the company. Learning-driven assignments, on the other hand, are more focused on development of skills in the individual expatriate such as career enhancement and competency development, sometimes even ‘grooming’ for a specific position upon return (Stahl et al, 2004). This can seem to be most beneficial to the employee himself; however, it is also in the interest of the company as it is: “... an essential staffing strategy for building global talent.” (Kraimer, Shaffe and, Bolino, 2009, p. 27). Kraimer, Shaffer and Bolino (2009) actually argue that the latter type has the distinct advantage of easier repatriation of an employee with this kind of assignment, as the job may already be waiting for them when they return.

The two types are not always clear-cut and can overlap but the impression the expatriate himself gets about the purpose of the assignment, can have significant influence on his personal motivation. By making him aware of the role he plays in the overall company strategy, intrinsic motivation may be achieved according to Herzberg’s motivational theory, as the value and purpose of the job is visible to the employee and therefore they experience a sense of being an important part of the company future. A common complaint of expatriates is that they do not feel they have sufficient information about this purpose, need, and importance of being posted abroad – a factor which is important for the motivation of the expatriate (Black and Gregersen, 1999).

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The actual job description also carries significant importance in relation to motivation because the employees need to know the scope of their task, whether they are expected to merely assist with a technical project, establish a new office, or change the way things are done in the subsidiary (Katz and Seifer, 1996, Morgan, Winter and Young, 2004). The latter form of assignment may be more complicated and draining because it puts a strain on the social relationship with the foreign colleagues, as opposed to a more simple task where the expatriate is not actively trying to change prevalent procedures (Morgan, Winter and Young, 2004). A detailed job description also has immense importance to the individual intrinsic motivation of the expatriate as it is the recipe to follow, if they want to achieve the goals set out for them (Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty, 2008). Taking a step further and increasing the intrinsic rewards by involving the expatriate in the process of developing this description, may have an even more positive effect. Relating the issue of job description to expectancy theory, it is highly likely that it will increase the valence of completing one's task and hence, affect overall motivation positively.

6.3 The Role of Head Quarters in Communication and Support

Communication between the expatriate and HQ is essential for motivation because it reduces the feeling of being 'out of sight, out of mind' (Caligiuri and Colakoglu, 2007) as well as serving as a consistent reminder of his importance while abroad.

Communication between HQ and subsidiaries has been described by many scholars as a part of the theory on expatriation, and is considered to be extremely important for the functioning of the company (Adler, 2006). After scrutinising this communication, a division into two types can take place, depending on what level it holds importance to the expatriate: the official *organisational communication* concerning tasks, business objectives and strategy, and the *personal communication* concerning contact with a body or person who takes an interest in the individual expatriate's needs to stay visible in the HQ. Organisational communication is conducted on a formal level and concerns mutual status reports, instructions regarding the expatriate assignment, and negotiations between the departments where the expatriate takes the role of a subsidiary representative and not as an individual private person (Allen and Alvarez, 1998). Personal contact, on the other hand, concerns issues such as conversations with a mentor or the HR department (Tung, 1987), discussions about future career opportunities (Klaff, 2002) and support when facing difficulties during the secondment (Dupuis, Haines, and Saba, 2008).

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In order to best understand both levels, organisational communication will be explained first as it is a prerequisite for understanding personal communication properly. Effective communication between foreign subsidiaries and HQ is absolutely essential for a multinational business to function and survive (Adler, 2006). Parts of this communication go through expatriates, especially if their assignment concerns transfer of knowledge between the departments. As mentioned before, knowledge transfer is one of the main reasons for sending employees abroad but their job description and role depends on what strategy is pursued by the company (Caligiuri and Colakoglu, 2007), and the type of knowledge that needs to be transferred (Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty, 2008). According to Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty (2008), expatriates are only necessary when there is a need for transferring tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge can be communicated by the many modern information technology (IT) tools that have been developed in the last years. It may not be as straight forward as that though, as the efficiency of these tools and what purposes they are fit for, have been discussed extensively. However, tacit knowledge does require personal contact as it cannot be explained in words but needs to be demonstrated and learned through trial and error (O'Brien and Marakas, 2006). The communication between the expatriate and HQ employees varies with what task they are sent out to do, which is basically dictated by the overall strategy of the company.

In line with the importance of realistic expectations of other factors of expatriation and repatriation such as practical issues, cultural differences, and jobs upon return (the latter will be discussed in detail in the following section on repatriation), the employee needs to know what is expected of him in his professional assignment. Specific knowledge about what exact tasks are supposed to be carried out will reduce uncertainty, putting the purpose of the job in perspective will increase intrinsic motivational factors, and knowing how much and what kind of contact with HQ can be expected can smooth out another uncertainty. Uncertainties generally have a negative influence on the psychological well-being of the expatriate, whether they spring from practicalities or more personal issues. The following section will discuss some of the more personally oriented issues and how they can be dealt with.

6.4 Psychological Well-being and Motivation

The motivation of any employee, and especially an expatriate, is influenced by many factors that are not directly linked to their professional life. This personal level of an expatriate's life consists of family situation as well as expatriate communities, and has great influence on the psychological

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well-being that is crucial for creating a stable environment outside work, which has a positive effect on professional motivation.

Even though the focus of this study is on the professional level of the expatriate's life, the personal level cannot be omitted as it has significant influence on the professional level. The personal level influences the entire expatriate cycle (figure 1); but it is described under this second phase because social support and networks are factors that are most visible in this phase.

The expatriate's general well-being is deeply rooted in both aspects and solely considering the professional level could be somewhat misleading as personal factors, social support, and interaction are also reflected in the expatriate's job-satisfaction and success at work (Bonache and Zárraga-Oberty, 2008). Thus, the importance of investigating the personal level and social support is a necessity to understand the conditions and circumstances on the professional level, and is thus included in the study.

A study made by Wang and Kanungo in 2004 about the connection of expatriate's social network/communities and expatriate's psychological well-being, found that these two aspects were closely linked. Psychological well-being, as a result of stability and balance on the personal level, has been seen as essential from the companies' point of view, as it is reflected in the expatriate's motivation. However, social networks have received rather little attention which is unfortunate because of the interdependency between the two concepts which was found in the study. (Wang and Kanungo, 2004)

The significance of reducing job uncertainty and stress for the expatriate can partly be done through social support (Osman-Gani and Rockstuhl, 2008). The family is the core part of the expatriate's social network (Cohen, 1977). The other group consists of other expatriates and their families, local colleagues etc, and to maintain the psychological well-being of the expatriate which appeals to a lower level of Alderfer and Maslow's pyramids of needs and is thus a prerequisite in order to be motivated intrinsically.

6.4.1 Family Adjustment and its Effect on Expatriate Motivation

The family life of an employee is also essential for the well-being and performance of the employee and a prerequisite for intrinsic motivation at work. Many expatriates return prematurely because of the lacking adaption of their family (Adler, 2008) and it is estimated that up to 60% of expatriation failure is due to family issues (Sims and Schraeder, 2004).

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The family constitutes a part that has an immense influence on the expatriate and the psychological well-being that his performance at work is affected by: “Sammenhæng mellem arbejdsliv og familieliv er et vigtigt tema for de forandringer, der finder sted (...) i disse år” (Rishøj and Hildebrandt, 2001, p.14) whether at home or abroad. Family members influence the expatriate in the decision of accepting a foreign assignment, while abroad in the adaptation and everyday life, and after returning in the re-adaptation in the home country. Throughout all phases the expatriate must consider his family’s position and means to success in the new situation (Adler, 2008).

The company, employee, family, and their interrelationship are important. The three aspects are intertwined to such a high degree that a change in any of them would have a strong impact on the others (Rishøj and Hildebrandt, 2001). As Rishøj and Hildebrandt argue, the constant change occurring and the unrest in the world today, demand certain stability on the home front, in order to be able to perform ideally at work. This is even more important when looking at expatriation where the expatriate is surrounded by so many fluctuating variables, and where the family becomes an anchor in the instable surroundings.

The mutual dependency between the expatriate and his family, where one party encourages and influences the other and vice versa, is for instance shown through the expectations that the parties set for each other. The family is an important part as to secure stability in the local and expatriate communities. It is expected by the expatriate that the spouse and children should perform well outwardly (school, community etc). The expatriate is then expected to obtain good results on a professional level and perform well at work. Thus, there is a mutual dependency between the expatriate and the family (Cohen, 1977).

The expatriate will have an organized, professional network whereas the family is left to themselves when arriving in the new host country. Adler argues that this is a determinant factor that should be considered by the company when sending an employee abroad (Adler, 2008). The focus is inclined to be set on the expatriate, while the role of the spouse is often disregarded. However, the spouse is often entering the most difficult role, as Adler argues. He or she often gives up a job at home, and has the overall responsibility for the family’s everyday life in the new surroundings. Figures show that the majority of spouses are employed prior to departure while less than a fifth is employed while abroad (Adler, 2008). The spouse’s career can thus be a restricting factor for the expatriate’s success while abroad due to the reluctance and scepticism associated with the spouse’s career opportunities if going abroad. This could indicate that there is a relation between the spouse’s

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willingness to move and the performance level of the expatriate as Dupuis, Haines, and Saba (2008) argue. The spouse's inability to take on work in the host country is regarded as a significant stress factor for the expatriate, and can hence de-motivate the expatriate at work because of a lacking general adaptation for the whole family through the spouse's work issue. (McLean, 2008)

Additionally, the mismatch between the spouse's need for her spouse's presence and support, and the expatriate's availability is an issue when attempting to establish an everyday life in the host country. Adler (2008) argues that the gap is greatest within the first three months, hence if they manage to stay longer than this first crucial period, the chances for the expatriate to succeed in the long run is significantly increased. This relation is visualized in a graph by where the availability and need is a function of the time abroad.

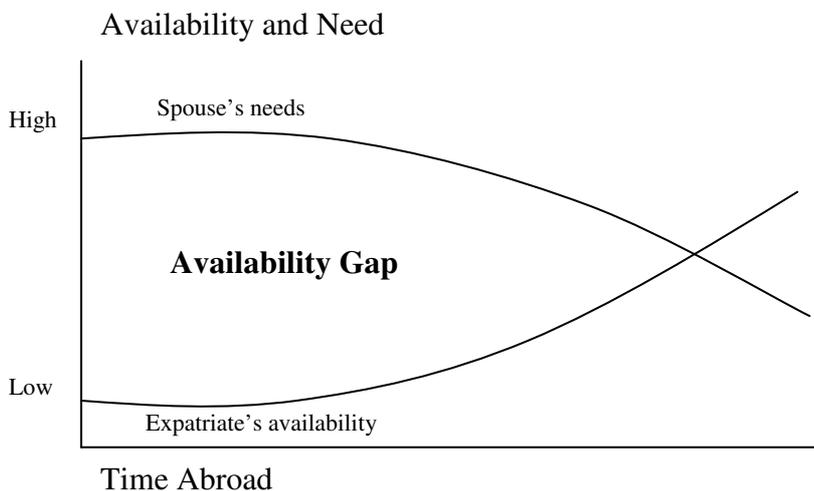


Figure 2 - Availability gap (Adler, 2008, p. 327)

There is a lacking balance between the expatriate, family, and company in the beginning of the expatriation period, which is important to be aware of in order to change it. Creating and upholding a balance that allows the three parties become involved with, interact and influence each other positively, is essential for all of them to succeed – independently and as a group (Rishøj and Hildebrandt, 2001).

6.4.2 Social Support: Networks and Expatriate Communities

The social network besides the family is a result of the need of interpersonal relations, which is fundamental for any human being (Guirdham, 2005) and is thus also a prerequisite for the expatriate to be motivated to perform well at work. In an expatriation dimension, the immediate loss of social

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support when arriving in the host country, is a major stressor to the expatriate. (McLean, 2008) In order to compensate for the inability to take part of activities at home, the social network in the host country must be developed from the very beginning to obtain an optimal basis for the time abroad (McLean, 2008).

Wang and Kanungo (2004) argue that this loss of immediate social network in the new country leads to a threat of the psychological wellbeing for the expatriate, and is a concern for both levels of the expatriate's situation. Due to the interdependency between psychological well-being and family, this loss of network for both parties can lead to psychological instability that could cause job uncertainty and stress, which will become a barrier to adapt (Osman-Gani and Rockstuhl, 2008).

The sense of belonging to a group can be reflected in the grouping where nationality is a principal criterion. People with similar cultural background tend to group together rather than seek contact with people of greater cultural differences. Here, Hofstede's cultural dimensions are useful tools when categorizing and understanding expatriate communities and grouping. (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Hence, clustering of expatriates with similar cultural background is the most obvious basis for expatriate communities and social interaction in the host country. The larger the expatriate community is, the less the expatriates need to interact and construct social networks with locals and thereby adjust to the local environments with its norms and standards. Also, the size and power of an expatriate community can be a determinant in the degree of which the expatriate maintain own meaning of concepts in the host country (Cohen, 1977). Even expatriates who intend to adapt socially in the host country, tend to gradually become part of an expatriate community with similar cultural background, despite their curiosity and willingness to adapt and construct a local social network. Professionally, they interact with locals but outside work hours they are inclined to spend time with others from the expatriate community (Cohen, 1977).

From this it can be seen that psychological well-being of the expatriate during his stay is reflected in professional performance through the stability and support in the personal life. As the concept of social support is intertwined with professional performance, not including the personal level would have been somewhat insufficient when aiming at a broader understanding of motivational behaviour of expatriates.

6.5 Empiric Results Related to the Expatriate Stay

6.5.1 Practical Arrangements: From Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivational Factors

Help and support with practical issues was widely used among the companies who sent out our interviewees. Housing, transport, logistics and visa applications were often a part of a package deal offered in connection with secondment, and the respondents seemed to be very satisfied with their employers' efforts in this area. The rhetoric in the descriptions almost indicates surprise as to how thorough this part of the preparation was:

“De praktiske ting ordnede de egentlig, vi skulle selv sende visumpapirerne af sted, men de var stort set halvt udfyldt allerede da vi fik dem af firmaet. De har gennem hele processen hjulpet med det praktiske. Forsikringer har de også ordnet.”

”Der var faktisk ikke nogle ting jeg selv skulle ordne, jeg skulle bare skrive under. Bare lade dem rode med det, det var dejlig nemt.”

Practical assistance seems to be one of the only stages in the expatriate process that is handled satisfactory by companies but it is perhaps also the most basic aspect and minimum effort that can be expected from the firm. Even though the interviewees were satisfied and to a certain extent expressed gratitude for the effort, they were also clear about the practical arrangements being a prerequisite for accepting the foreign assignment in the first place:

“Det er meget vigtigt at tingene er på plads når man tager afsted. Man skal ikke føle sig til grin, det skal være retfærdigt. Man skal have den kompensation som man nu skal have. Man skal have en bolig og man skal have en bil. Det var det jeg forventede og det er det jeg vil forvente som minimum hvis jeg skal afsted igen.”

This supports the categorisation of practical issues as an extrinsic motivational factor and underlines the necessity for companies to provide this. However, it may have the potential to transform into an intrinsic factor if it is carried out as extensively as seems to be the case for our respondents as the gratitude and surprise suggests.

Exactly where the difference between essential and extra help lies is difficult to determine. Some expatriates expect a private car to be a part of the standard package, for others access to a car when needed is enough, and a third group does not regard a vehicle as a necessity. This can of course be because of differences in personal opinions but it can also be a result of expectations fuelled by what they have heard from earlier expatriates or what their job description dictates. Regardless of

the reasons, companies should be aware of the expectations and make sure that they live up to them in order to avoid disappointment and hence, directly de-motivating factors.

6.5.2 Matching Challenge and Ambition to Create Realistic Expectations

The interviewees had very different assignments ranging from specific projects with a predefined role to starting up a foreign office from scratch with no precise recipe to follow. Therefore, the opinions about their purpose and expectations concerning life and working conditions abroad were very different and have influenced their experience accordingly.

The clarity of the job descriptions turned out to be very dependent on the job each of them was supposed to complete. The respondents sent out on project related assignments or who took up permanent positions that are occupied by changing expatriates had rather clear descriptions: "Jobbeskrivelsen var klar da jeg tog af sted. Jeg vidste hvad jeg skulle, der var nogle projekter der skulle gennemføres." And one even argued that it would not be economically reasonable to send people abroad without this specific job description: "Det var forholdsvist specifikt. Jeg tror at i dag er det de færreste der bare kommer ud og får lov at skyde i blinde. Det er der simpelthen ikke økonomi i."

Others had conflicting opinions as they were sent out with a much more fuzzy description because they were to take on completely different assignments. Contrary to the other respondent quoted above, it was emphasised that it would be meaningless to be too specific:

"Selvfølgelig ligger der altid en overordnet beskrivelse hvor man forsøger at ramme nogle nøgleord. Men det korte i det lange er man kender målet og så er det det handler om. For at forudse hvad jobbet lige nøjagtigt kommer til at indeholde når man står et nyt sted og skal starte noget nyt op, det er der ikke nogen der kan. Så det er det at få det til at ske med alt hvad det måtte indebære, at det handler om. Det at lave en detaljeret decideret jobbeskrivelse for den slags jobs er meningsløst."

Clearly, the respondents do not agree on the level of detail in the job description! An explanation for this may be found in the type of assignment they were actually sent out to do. The project oriented positions were very limited in scope and therefore possible to describe in a rather precise manner, the surroundings and other staff already being in place. The other assignments, such as opening up a cheese factory or establishing a new subsidiary in a new host country, had a clear goal but part of the challenge lay in the fact that the expatriate had to invent the procedure to realise that goal as a part of his assignment – resulting in an unclear description.

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This difference leads back to the fundamental reasons for accepting a foreign assignment. No matter what their job was, all of the respondents felt satisfied with the instructions regarding the professional assignments before they left, which indicates that their motivation for wanting the foreign assignment differs from each other. Assuming that all respondents had the exploration motive for going abroad, as it is argued to be a prerequisite for success, the additional reasons led to different jobs. One respondent stated boredom at home as a reason for going, and he got a specified job, replacing a former expatriate in the same position. Another stated a need for more responsibility and a professional challenge, and he was sent out to open up a cheese factory from scratch. This is another indicator that companies actually do match motivation of the individual employee with the nature of the job, knowing that the challenge should be in keeping with the expatriate's ambition – what he is ready to and capable of handling. In combination with this, another link can be drawn back to the notion of realistic expectations in relation to motivation as it is important for the expatriate that his expectations about what he is supposed to do are realistic and that he has faith in his ability to succeed.

6.6 Psychological Well-being affecting Motivation

The personal level of the expatriate's situation was argued by scholars to be a significant factor when considering professional performance and motivation during expatriation. The two branches of the personal level, family and expatriate communities, make up the foundation of psychological well-being. The importance of this well-being and the relation between family and expatriate, is shown clearly in the following example by one of our respondents where stability at the personal level is reflected directly at work:

”Hvis de har det godt, har man det også selv godt. Så det er ekstremt vigtigt at familien kan tage at man er væk. I det job jeg havde var jeg ofte i Danmark så familien skal være forberedt på ofte at være alene.”

This mutual dependency between the expatriate and his family is essential – especially when working abroad (Rishøj and Hildebrandt 2001). Here, other factors may influence the situation and create more unstable conditions for the expatriate and his family.

6.6.1 The Role of the Family in Determining Expatriate Well-being

By choosing our respondents to be both former expatriates who did not have a spouse to consider during the expatriation, and expatriates going abroad with both spouse and children, we sought to

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capture a broader range of opinions and cases. The ones that did have a family to consider emphasized the importance of the support achieved through these family ties when abroad.

The difficulty for the spouses to give up their careers was also argued to be a significant factor for expatriates' motivation for applying for the job and their work while abroad. In many cases women must be prepared to give up years on the labour market (Adler, 2008), and this can be very complicated:

”Mange kvinder har det jo lidt svært ved at skulle ud og være nummer to og måske ikke kunne arbejde i en årrække (...) og så blive taget ud i fire år og bare følge manden, hvis det er manden der skal afsted.”

”Når man nu tænker tilbage så var det da hårdt – d var enormt hårdt til at begynde med. Specielt for min kone. Hun droppede sin egen karriere.”

This is also interesting for the repatriation phase where the family and spouse tend to be neglected in the process but where they too have difficulties in re-adapting. Their psychological well-being is just as threatened as that of the expatriate. Because of the relation between the two parties, the former expatriate is still dependent on his family's well-being after returning (Rishøj and Hildebrandt, 2001).

The situation of the spouses while abroad was not supported by the companies our respondents argued. Issues that could have been dealt with through the company were often neglected. An example with work permits was mentioned. The respondent argued that it was a problem for many spouses that they could not apply for jobs while abroad – at least officially - because of lacking work permits. However, not only the permits themselves are problematic. As expatriations differ in nature, the lengths of the stays also vary. This is an issue when spouses attempt to involve themselves in a job, for instance: ”Hvis du ikke har et langt forløb i et land, så kan det være utrolig svært (...) Det der med ligesom at få ordentlig fat i sproget, det tager lang tid.” This issue was dealt with by the spouses by involving themselves in other activities such as education, volunteer work, children etc.:

“Det der var det gode for os, det var at hun gik igang med at læse sproget helt op til det højeste niveau. Og det har været utroligt berigende for hende og holdt hende igang.”

”Vi havde småbørn og det er jo så en af fordelene ved at være udsendt - at hun så har haft tid til børnene de første år.”

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This is in accordance with the theory where the motivation of the spouses to build a meaningful everyday life is essential. Through these activities the spouse and family could involve themselves in projects, and thus create a balance in their own psychological well-being which would eventually influence the expatriate. Education was argued by our respondents to be a great opportunity for the spouses due to the time and resources available: "Min kone var igang med noget fjernundervisning da vi var afsted. Det kan man jo sagtens gøre.". Either language courses at the actual location or distance teaching through the internet. Thus, a meaningful everyday life for the spouses in our respondents' cases was created through language proficiency and other forms of educational inputs.

In continuation of the discussion regarding the well-being of the family, we found an interesting relationship between Adler's availability vs. need model (fig, 2) and the U-curve, expressed by a respondent in the following quote:

"Den der første tid efter de første tre måneder er for langt de fleste temmelig traumatisk. Der får man ligesom sådan et chok hvor man skal få tingene til at fungere, hvor det hele ikke er nyt og spændende, men skal virke. Der kommer en dagligdag der rammer en i ansigtet."

It is partly in accordance with Adler's availability and need model however, with an interesting difference in the first time period. Through the respondent a connection to the U-curve was found – nevertheless, Adler argues that the spouse's need for the expatriate's presence and support is greatest immediately after arrival and only decreases afterwards. This is of course subject to change as no situation is fully average and therefore cannot be seen solely in the light of a model; but it is in contrast to the more dynamic U-curve that considers the mood of a person through cultural experiences as a function of time. It should be seen as a general model for stays in culturally different places, and must therefore be assumed to apply both for the expatriate and the spouse (Pires, Stanton, and Ostenfeldt, 2006). Here, the first time period is characterized by vacation-like conditions where everything seems new and interesting. The spouse's need for her husband's support can hence not be assumed to be as extensive in this first time period when applying the U-curve as Adler argues in her availability and need model.

Despite the simplicity of Adler's model, the core idea could be related to the respondents' situation. In that respect there were some suggestions of how to decrease the gap and hence make the first time period smoother, affecting the motivation of the expatriate as well as the spouse during this difficult stage.

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“Der synes jeg man godt kunne gøre noget på den front der nu går derhjemme og sørge for at de får nogle at snakke med, nogle der havde været afsted før. Der kunne man godt gøre noget på den front så de havde nogen at lukke ud til”

It was suggested that it could be done through a formal network of former expatriates and their family allocated through the company if needed. The suggestion could be seen in connection with the interdependency between the expatriate, family, and company and where the expatriate clearly liaise between family and company. The psychological well-being can be seen as a product of the good relation and support in the three parties' reciprocal relation.

The security and preparation provided by the company were factors influencing the adaptation of the family in the first time period abroad. If fewer worries were left to the expatriate and his family, it became considerably easier for them to adapt and motivate them at home or at work, resulting in a more stable situation, which was positive.

”Den pakke de tilbød til den her form for udstationering, det er en udstationering med livrem og seler. Udstationeringen var usandsynlig godt forberedt. (...) Jeg synes det var en stor hjælp. Det havde vi det fint med, specielt min kone tror jeg. ”

There was a positive attitude towards the companies' initiatives for helping with the practical arrangements. They did not find the companies to be too probing when deciding practical matters as earlier studies had indicated (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002). It was argued that so many new inputs occur when being expatriated. Changing the focus from the practical matters, allowing the expatriates and their family to spend more time on the actual adaptation, was only regarded as a helping hand.

Most of the factors involving the family in the expatriation situation are circumstantial and related to external aspects. Practical issues such as housing, visa, insurance, and so forth were found to be helpful in order to adapt faster and create stability at home, and hence, balancing the psychological well-being of the expatriate. As a consequence of this, the expatriate can be more motivated in the work place and increase performance.

The importance of the family adapting and creating a meaningful everyday life in the new host country was found to be essential as to the expatriate's motivation to perform and obtain good results at work. The spouses are often neglected in the process and our respondents called for more attention as to this aspect. Nevertheless, practical arrangements were seen as a help and something

the company actually provided and succeeded in. Companies can thus influence the performance indirectly through the family. By arranging practical issues for the expatriate and family, the company can create an easier start and thus a faster adaptation, resulting in higher expatriate performance.

6.6.2 Stability through Social Support Networks

Our respondents all differed in the expatriate community situation. Despite the immediate differences of the nature of the communities as to size, diversity, degree of establishment, and so forth, they all experienced the need for socializing and that most often with other expatriates. Also, it was important for our respondents to be part of a community as to their families, because of the instability and uncertainty they experienced while abroad – especially in the beginning. The security the expatriate and family can obtain through expatriate communities was argued to be essential to create a stable life and improve their psychological wellbeing. Through the creation of this balance on the home front, the expatriate is motivated to perform better at work. This was formulated by one of our respondents through the following quote where he emphasises the importance of the communities:

“Det fungerede fantastisk godt. Typisk var alle mændene jo væk i løbet af dagen og så blev kvinderne tilbage og lavede alle mulige aktiviteter. Det var et stort plus for min familie. Og også for mig selv. For når jeg var ude at rejse så vidste jeg at der var nogle der ville tage sig af min kone hvis der skete noget”

By applying Maslow’s theoretical pyramid of needs and considering the safety aspect that is a prerequisite for psychological well-being, a clear connection between family and social communities is found, and their interdependency is important for the respondents. Security in the sense of a social network cannot be assured by the company as it depends on the individuals in the community. Nevertheless, security is an essential part in order to be psychologically balanced (c.f. Maslow).

Despite our respondents’ different experience of the nature of the communities, they all agreed on the importance of them. In the case of an extremely well-established community or ‘compound’ one of our respondents compared the expatriate community to a family – the two groups discussed earlier:

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“Man bor i sådan et compound, det er nærmest sådan et kollektiv man flytter ned i. Der var ikke andre valgmuligheder (...) Vi havde alle de der danskere vi var sammen med hele tiden, det blev jo næsten ligesom en familie. Hvis sønnen ovre ved naboen havde fødselsdag så var alle inviterede derover til fest – det var ligesom en familie.”

This kind of interaction was found to be extremely important because of the loss of the expatriate's immediate social network when arriving in the host country. Whether the establishment of new circles of acquaintances was through compounds or on a more independent and informal level, it was crucial and expressed by another respondent:

“For mig var det nødvendigt at få et socialt netværk ret hurtigt. Jeg tog afsted alene og kendte ikke nogen. Men jeg tænkte at nårh ja, mon ikke der er nogen der drikke en øl et eller andet sted? For mig var det en prioritet at få det sociale oppe at køre, finde nogle andre danskere som jeg kunne relatere mig med.”

The communities were most often geographically demarcated, naturally isolating the expatriates from the local communities: “Du finder dem typisk omkring de internationale skoler. De boede i bestemte bygninger. Alle dem der boede i vores bygning var expatriates. Vi kaldte det United Nations.” This physical grouping of expatriates in the host country varied among our respondents but nevertheless showed tangible evidence of cultural clustering in the host country.

According to before mentioned cultural traits and need for social belonging (Guirdham, 2005), our respondents all emphasized the importance of other Danish expatriates in the host country. Other Danes were most often the main group of which our respondents interacted and established social contacts. Our respondents clustered together in groups with same cultural background which according to cultural theories (Katz and Seifer, 1996, Guirdham, 2005), is a natural consequence of the need for socializing:

”Det er klart at dem der kommer fra samme kultur og den samme alder, har nogenlunde de samme arbejdsopgaver, jamen der er jo noget der matcher og noget at tale om og få ud af hinanden og så mødes man.”

”Vi var rigtig meget sammen, kun danskere. Det var både godt og skidt. Vi var udstationerede og vi fik en masse oplevelser omkring det at være i mellem Østen men vi kom nok ikke så tæt på kulturen.”

On one hand our respondents emphasized the importance of this cultural similarity which could be found among other Danes but simultaneously they called for more interaction with locals in the host country. It is interesting though, that one of our respondents argued that this lack of local

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interaction, was merely an issue thought of after returning to the home country and hence not directly influenced him while abroad:

“For mit eget vedkommende, hvis jeg tager en udstationering igen, vil jeg gøre mere for at få mere ud af at opleve den kultur jeg kommer frem til og få lidt mere kontakt med kulturen, måske forsøge at lære sproget.”

This could indicate a more pressing need for immediate social contact, making expatriates choose a more obvious social network through other expatriates from similar cultures, rather than considering the cultural benefits they could gain through a more differentiated social spectrum. While abroad this was not quite as important as upon returning. Pires, Stanton, and Ostenfeldt (2006) argue that establishing relationships with locals is not a key issue in expatriate failure. The connection is hence more related to the thoughts and potential regrets after returning to the home country, influencing the overall thoughts of the expatriation. The motivation for accepting secondment was mostly rooted in a desire for exploring new places and cultures, therefore the mismatch of the earliest motivation and the expectations connected to these, influence the whole experience negatively in the post-returning considerations.

The interaction with local colleagues was restricted to work hours – beyond these hours our respondents did not have social interaction with them. This was argued not only to be a consequence of cultural differences but also a balance between work and spare time:

”På kontoret var der ingen relationer med de lokale efter arbejdstid (...) Jeg tror det er meget vigtigt at man har nogle aktiviteter ved siden af sit arbejde når man er ude, således at man kommer lidt væk fra arbejdet, og man ligesom får lidt indhold i sit liv udenfor arbejdet. Det er vigtigt, at der er en balance.”

”Det var væsentlig for mig, at jeg havde nogle planer i weekenden, når jeg tog hjem fredag eftermiddag”.

The temporary aspect of expatriations was also an issue influencing the way of socializing while abroad. It created an ever-changing group, an acceptance of replacements within the network, which with time became a natural factor in the expatriation. It was argued that the dynamic atmosphere at work, as well as the non-working conditions surrounding the expatriate in the communities, was marked by this heavy replacement but was a common known issue and a natural part of these kinds of relations:

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”Det der med at rejse til og fra var svært i perioder. Man kommer ned, og så er der måske nogen, der har været der et år i forvejen som du så bliver tæt knyttet til, og som du har arbejdet med og har en hverdag med i måske et år. Så tager de hjem, og det var da en træls ting at skulle igennem hver gang, men det synes, jeg man vænnede sig til.”

”Alle er klar over at det på tid, og alle agerer derefter. Det er ikke dybe bekendskaber jeg fik (...), men den form for netværk er vigtige - men de er flyvske ,og der bliver jo hele tiden skiftet ud. ”

When asking our respondents if they still had contact with the people from the expatriate communities today, the general opinion was that the relationships they had enjoyed while abroad were due to the circumstances at that particular time period and the given circumstances. Some were still in touch with former colleagues or people from the expatriate communities – however, it was surprisingly few relationships that had been maintained. This illustrates the temporary nature of the relations expatriates live under while abroad.

The importance of expatriate communities while abroad was argued to be crucial in order to balance the psychological well-being of the expatriate. Not only did the communities provide security, which is a basic criterion in order to create a stable life in the new host country, they also constituted the main social group and source to cover social needs while abroad. The stability through security and social interactions are factors influencing the expatriate’s psychological well-being and thus also performance at work. The professional motivation is hence intertwined with the social. This is illustrated through our respondents that all emphasized the importance of social networking when abroad in order to perform well at work.

The cultural differences between the Danish expatriates and the locals in the host country created natural physical boundaries through isolated compounds for instance, and additionally on a mental level because of the similarities of the situation the expatriates experienced while abroad and their need to share it with others. Despite the temporary aspect of expatriation, the communities were the very core of social activities after work hours. The temporary aspect had its effect on the type of relationships created through the expatriation but was argued to be commonly accepted.

6.7 Phase 2 Conclusion

During the actual expatriate stay, several factors influence the motivation of the expatriate. Both the professional and personal level of the expatriate’s stay are considered to be influential in this phase. On the professional level practical arrangements organised by the company were found to be

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potentially intrinsic, as it was not necessarily expected by the expatriate. Hence, it was beyond what was expected and thereby these extrinsic rewards had potential to become intrinsic. Not only expectations about practical issues were in focus during the expatriate stay; realistic job expectations lead to greater professional motivation and was therefore seen as important for the overall motivation in this phase.

Additionally, stability and support through family and social networks provided security and psychological well-being which was also beneficial for performance at work. Communication with HQ on a continuous basis helped increase the motivation for the expatriate. Knowing that he was not “out of sight, out of mind”, led to a sense of belonging and purpose. This communication also plays an important role in the third and final phase of the expatriate cycle as it can ease repatriation.

7 Phase 3: Repatriation

Repatriation is the final link in the circular expatriate process, and a necessity to finish it (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002). It is in this phase that the motivation of the repatriate to stay within the company is formed, and the motivation of prospect expatriates is influenced by the attitudes and experiences the repatriate brings home. Repatriation is a crucial and special phase in the sense that it is the point in the cycle that acts as both a beginning and an ending and binds the individual expatriate cycles together.

Repatriation is one of the latest areas within the theory to be developed and is still on a rather young stage, although many scholars have taken an interest in the topic. For a company to be able to fully benefit from its investments in the expatriate, it is a necessity that the person in question is properly re-integrated into the home country society, both at work and in a more social and general context (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002). As mentioned earlier, the rate of repatriates that change job after returning from secondment is very high, meaning that the loss of resources for international businesses is very large. When a repatriate decides to change employer, almost the entire amount invested in sending the employee abroad is lost. Not only does the repatriate leave with the knowledge accumulated during the secondment; that exact knowledge also renders him more attractive for competitors to hire, hence he brings it free of charge to a competitor to utilise (Allen and Alvarez, 1998, Carpenter, Sanders and Gregersen, 2000). Many thoughts have been done on how to retain employees in the company, as the firms have realised how costly the loss of repatriates is - generally up to \$1.2 mio (Allen and Alvarez, 1998).

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It is a general issue for international companies to improve the re-integration of employees who have been on secondment, as the majority of returning expatriates express dissatisfaction with the repatriation process (Stahl et al, 2004). The main problem in repatriation lies in the fact that most companies do not provide a meaningful job upon return (Klaff, 2002, Morgan, Winter and Young, 2004). Sometimes holding positions are created for the sole purpose of retaining the repatriate in the company when there is no position available (Allen and Alvarez, 1998). This can have the effect that repatriates do not feel they are received with the proper respect and acknowledgement, because many expect a promotion or merely a job at the same level as before leaving (Black and Gregersen, 1999). However, it is often the case that there are no suitable positions available for the repatriate, who is then placed in a job where he has no opportunity to utilise the skills acquired abroad. (Black and Gregersen, 1999). This wish for utilising newly acquired skills is often so important to the expatriate, that a job that provide the opportunity for this may even be perceived as a promotion, even though it is not a higher position in organisational hierarchy (Kraimer, Shaffer and Bolino, 2009).

Another problem is the almost hostile attitude the repatriate can encounter from their colleagues. Having completed an assignment in a foreign country is regarded as a personal achievement by the repatriate who feels a need for it to be recognised, which some colleagues do not contribute to (Black, Gregersen and Stroh, 1998, Allen and Alvarez, 1998).

Successful repatriation is important for the expatriation cycle because it not only retains the investment in the firm but also encourage other potential expatriates to apply for positions, when it is implied that international experience is needed for top positions (Allen and Alvarez, 1998, Carpenter, Sanders and Gregersen, 2000). There is one problem with this however, one of the main causes for repatriation failure, according to Black, Gregersen and Stroh (1998) and Paid, Segaud, and Malinowski, (2002), is the gap between the expectations of the repatriate in relation to possibilities in the home country and the reality of their situation. If they get the impression that international experience will unquestionably lead to a higher position and this is not met, there is an increased possibility of losing them to a competitor. In relation to motivation in this phase of the expatriate process, the company therefore needs to find the balance between inspiring prospect expatriates, by showcasing international experience as a way to high positions and, at the same time, avoid raising expectations disproportionately. However, it should be noted that not all

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employees are motivated by the outlook of advancement. Intrinsic motivation comes from personal and professional growth itself (Bonache and Zárrega-Oberty, 2008).

Many solutions to the repatriation problem have been proposed as the problem has gained more recognition. Repatriation is in the mind of the employee from the moment he considers to accept an expatriate assignment, and has great influence on intrinsic motivation all through the circle - also in the first two phases. This can be utilised to the benefit of both employee and employer, as Karen Schwindt from Deloitte & Touche expresses it in an interview with *Workforce*: “If you have a vision of what you want to bring back, you can build those skills when you’re there.” (Klaff, 2002, p. 42). This implies that repatriation should already be thought of in the pre-departure phase, which is an opinion shared by Allen and Alvarez (1998) among others. At least the active process of repatriation should be initiated early, approximately six to eight months before the expatriate returns (Klaff, 2002).

During the expatriate stay, close contact with HQs can aid in this process. Communication is important but HR managers often leave the initiative to the expatriate, in contrast to their wish for corporate communication initiative (Paid, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002). Contact can be with several different people in the organisation and contributes to solving two problems with expatriation; facing unemployment or an unsatisfactory job upon return and the lack of visibility in the organisation when abroad (Allen and Alvarez, 1998). Often it is an HR manager or several employees that are in charge of this communication but the Japanese concept of a mentor, a single person who follows the expatriate during the entire process, and looks out for their interests and potential jobs when they return (Tung, 1987), have come to be more common (Hogan, Goodson, 1990). This concept has been adopted by other companies especially in Europe, and has gained support and foothold in the theory.

Repatriation is often neglected by companies as it is the phase where the expatriate returns to familiar surroundings after the actual foreign stay. It is a common misunderstanding among companies that re-adjustment is easier than adjustment abroad, and hence does not require the same amount of support. However, by failing to acknowledge this and therefore not supply the necessary resources and support, companies are unknowingly increasing the risk of losing their investment in the first two phases of the expatriate process. In order to maintain the expatriate’s motivation to remain in the company in the third phase, it is important to prepare the successful return of the employee during the previous two phases. Furthermore, as the repatriation phase also liaises

between former and future expatriates, it needs to convey a positive image of expatriation in order to motivate other employees to accept a foreign assignment.

7.1 Empiric Results in Relation to Repatriation

Dissatisfaction with the way their respective companies handled repatriation was a main issue for all of our respondents, and most of them expressed a high degree of frustration. Finding a suitable and meaningful job for the repatriate was not achieved in time for their return and resulted in long waiting times until something interesting and relevant became available.

”Hjemstationeringen var dårlig. Det forløb var håbløst (...) Jeg blev placeret i en afdeling, hvor jeg følte mig fuldstændig malplaceret. Og der sad jeg så i seks måneder, indtil jeg mere eller mindre selv brugte alle mine kontakter i Arla for at finde frem til den position, jeg skulle have været i.”

”Det fungerede overhovedet ikke (...) Da jeg kom hjem til Danmark, kom jeg absolut ikke hjem til mit drømmejob. Havde jeg vidst det, ville jeg måske have valgt at blive lidt længere, indtil muligheden havde været mere rigtig. Jeg har været igennem nogle første jobskift, som nok ikke lige var dem ,jeg havde i tankerne.”

”Men der var ingen job, så det var et, de skulle ud og kreere. Altså når der står i kontrakten, at han skal genhuses, så må de jo finde på et eller andet.”

The gap between expectations and reality regarding job offers after expatriation that Black, Gregersen and Stroh wrote about in 1998, seemed to be the essential issue. It does not mean that an instant promotion upon return was expected but merely a job on the same level as they left - or the very least a position that had a purpose except from retaining them in the company, until a better job was available. As can be seen from the statements, the general feeling was that the respondents were put in random positions depending on what was available, and meaningless holding positions were created in the case where there were no vacant positions. Nevertheless, the interviewees do understand the difficulties the companies are facing when they are planning repatriation and accept that their wishes may not be fulfilled immediately.

“Min erfaring er, at den stilling jeg har fået nu, er lidt en venteposition til noget mere. Man kommer ikke hjem til de helt topposter. Man får lige et par år i en oplæringsposition, inden du får tilbudt noget rigtig godt. I mit nuværende job savner jeg lidt udfordringer, men det forventer jeg kommer i det næste job. Det er en udvikling”

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The real problem is that the organisations often neglect to follow up once the repatriate has been reinstated somewhere in the company, or that they did not put enough effort into the repatriation process when they had the chance to make a difference. A classic mistake is to wait too long before beginning the job search, believing that a suitable job will be available on short notice. Klaff (2002) suggests that companies should initiate repatriation planning six to eight months prior to homecoming and in that process begin the search for jobs. The problem is, as some of the interviewees mention, that for a job to be vacant, the former employee will need to leave that position for one reason or another (if it is not a newly created job) and a rotation of people in different positions may follow. This organic development of jobs, and who is filling them, does not mix well with the rigid structure of expatriation where it is standard practice to set a fixed date for the return of the expatriate.

”Man kan sige det der er lidt træls, på den måde man nu vælger at kigge på udstationeringen på, er den her tidsafgrænsning (...) der skal være en vis timing for at få tingene til at fungere. Når du så sætter nogle kontrakter op med folk ude i verden med en bestemt skæringsdato, så sætter man pludselig hele systemet under et pres, det ikke kan klare.”

By incorporating some flexibility into the duration of an expatriate stay, it could ease the stress of freeing a position in time for the return of a repatriate. This is of course not simple; completion of the expatriate assignment also has to be secured, as well as 'stand-by time' abroad should be avoided. None of the respondents' companies employed this strategy, which could be a result of the lack of suggestions made by theorists.

Being placed in a job with no interest or purpose is absolutely fatal for motivation. Key intrinsic factors are missing and when the company furthermore neglects to hold out any realistic prospects of improvements in the near future, it is almost an inevitable consequence that the repatriates start to look for employment elsewhere. One respondent also pointed out that this aspect has a second negative side:

“Den oplevelse af at komme hjem og blive sat på hold i en parkeringsplads, den kunne jeg godt have været foruden. Og den er efter min bedste overbevisning dræbende for motivationen for de næste der skal afsted. Det er frygten for at slippe det med man sidder med, den skal man passe på med. Den bedste motivation for at få nye folk af sted, det er trods alt at se at dem der har været afsted har været glade for det og kommer videre.”

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This brings us back to the dilemma concerning repatriation; finding the balance between motivating prospect expatriates by showing off repatriates in important, and avoid raising expectations beyond reasonableness. Though the responses verified the actual existence of this dilemma and underlines the seriousness of the problem it poses, it was more difficult to derive any possible solutions from the answers. First step in any case though, would be to recognise the severity of the issue and begin investigating, what could be done.

Besides the failure by the companies to find appropriate jobs for the new repatriates, there are also some more personal factors complicating the return, which are out of the organisations' reach. Often assignments abroad involve a great deal more responsibility and authority than the expatriate is used to from home, which means that coming back after getting accustomed to these privileges, can be difficult.

”... [det er] den der følelse af at have været en del af et salgsteam og hvor der bare havde været knald på i fire år, og hvor man har opnåede nogle gode salgsresultater og så komme hjem og sidde i en afdeling, hvor man føler sig fuldstændig overflødig og ikke rigtig kan bidrage med noget.”

”Når man er ude, så er man jo lige pludselig ikke nummer 99, men nummer to eller tre, så at komme hjem og blive genhuset på et hovedkontor, hvor du bare er et nummer i rækken igen, det er svært. Derfor er det jo ufattelig svært for en virksomhed at fastholde folk, der har været ude, når de har været vant til at være en del af mange beslutninger og være først i rækken.”

The radical change of coming back from a longer stay abroad is generally enough to put pressure on a person but the combination of dissatisfied expectations, a new habit of having more authority and importance, and an unusually purposeless job can lead to repatriates being even more impatient than normal. Again, these are issues the repatriates realise and recognise but it does not make them any more lenient when they at the same time have become more attractive to competing companies that offer desirable positions. The company that sends out the expatriate needs to realise these mechanisms and address them if loss of experienced employees and the investment made in them are to be avoided.

Companies need to handle this problem if they want to keep their employees and investments, and the difficulty lies in the lack of a patent solution that can be applied to all businesses (If this was the case the problem probably would not be of this magnitude). All our respondents were sent out by

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relatively large companies that had Human Resource (HR) departments and a fairly established practice for sending out expatriates. Smaller companies will have different problems and secondment may not be as common, which creates a whole other set of difficulties. However, as both theorists and the expatriate interviewees point out, it is surprisingly rare to involve the HR department in the common practice concerning expatriation.

“... HR afdelingen meldte sig fuldstændig ud af kampen. Den ene person sad og tog den beslutning alene – og det gjorde han bare af pommeren til. Det kunne have været gjort væsentlig bedre hvis fx en fra HR-afdelingen var blandet ind i sagen.”

Centralising expatriate and repatriate management in the HR department, or even setting up a sub-department, will not only ease the work due to clearer communication channels; it will also show recognition and accept of the problems that need to be handled. Concerning motivation in the expatriate process, the latter is very important as it rubber-stamps the validity of the difficulties expatriates experience during the various phases, and can motivate prospect expatriates to take the leap if they believe in the support, guidance and structured process set up by the organisation. In defence of the companies it should be mentioned that setting up new practices, maybe even hiring experts and new personnel is costly, and management therefore has to have a valid reason for the investment. If there are not enough people being sent out, it may not be advantageous to establish these departments because the necessary expertise will not be obtained and costs are too high compared to outcome.

Another factor, which tends to be neglected in the process, is the re-adaptation for the spouse and family. The former expatriate may have severe problems returning to the home country and finding an appropriate job – however, the spouse often returns with no connection to the labour market due to the fact that she has made the decision to follow her husband at the expense of her own career, and hence need to start from scratch: “Det koster. Det koster på den front. Og det koster rigtig meget. Og det finder man nogle gange først ud af når man er kommet hjem igen ” as one of our respondents put it. This is another factor indicating the difficulties of returning – consequences whose proportion often only become clear upon returning.

The expatriates interviewed were in different stages post secondment: one was still waiting in a holding position, some took the consequence of repatriation failure and changed employer, and finally some who stayed in the company for a longer period of time and then changed jobs later due to other reasons than repatriation difficulties. This gives us an insight in some different thoughts

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about repatriation and the different outcomes. Some general conclusions can be drawn, such as the fact that all of them returned to job offers that did not suit them, indicating failure in the company to make the necessary preparations to absorb the employees back in the organisation. Yet it should be considered that personal characteristics, circumstances, and motivations have had an influence on where they find themselves today. It can never be assumed that two different people going through the same process will end up in the same position, with the same feelings about what happened. This is also worth considering during the selection process in combination with all the other relevant factors.

7.2 Phase 3 Conclusion

As the repatriation phase functions as the link between the individual expatriate cycles, the lack of resources invested in it is surprisingly limited. The investments made in the first two phases are lost when the cycle is not 'finished the right way' (Black and Gregersen, 1999), as the expatriate experiences frustration due to irrelevant jobs and holding positions, and thereby loses his motivation to stay in the company. It seems as if the companies are simply not aware of the importance of the third phase, considering the amount of resources they invest in the first two phases, as opposed to the very few means they commit to re-adaptation of the expatriate. However, the problem is not entirely due to the lack of economic resources but also to the fact that the problem is often not considered to be legitimate. Therefore, the companies need to acknowledge the existence of the problem in order to acquire a deeper understanding, and subsequently change their resource allocation. By doing this the company can avoid directly de-motivating the expatriate, and instead maintain the level of motivation throughout the whole expatriate cycle. Additionally, it can influence future expatriates' motivation to accept secondment.

8 Conclusion

The structure of the study was constructed on the basis of the expatriation as a circular process, encompassing three phases: pre-departure, expatriate stay and repatriation – an approach suggested by Klaff (2002), Paid, Segaud and Malinowski (2002) and supported by Black and Gregersen's (1999) idea of sending the right people for the right reasons and finishing the right way.

The motivational factors influencing the expatriate throughout the whole process are crucial to the success of the cycle as a whole. Intrinsic factors were found to be the most important driver of motivation, while extrinsic rewards were somewhat subordinate. This poses a problem to the

Conclusion

companies as they have greater influence on extrinsic factors than intrinsic factors, which often lie outside their locus of control. Furthermore, companies can affect expectancy of the foreign assignment but have difficulties in increasing valence for the individual expatriate. Through this qualitative study several motivational factors were considered in relation to the three phases.

The motivation for accepting a foreign assignment is based on an adventurous attitude and is argued to be a prerequisite for success. In addition to this, a combination of career concerns and monetary compensation are influential aspects on the decision to accept secondment. The process is triggered by this motivation on initiative of the expatriate and hereafter the company becomes involved through the selection process and training activities. The initial motivation should provide the background for the selection process where matching the ambition of the expatriate with the assignment in question is the key factor. Furthermore, a trade-off between expatriate traits is held up against general convenience for the company in order to find the best combination suited for the task: an expatriate motivated to address the particular assignment with superior effort. Training is the final activity before departure where the company has a chance to influence expatriate motivation, however, this opportunity is often wasted.

During the expatriate stay the challenge for the company is to maintain the motivation of the expatriate. Certain practical arrangements ought to be a minimum in order to avoid directly demotivating factors; nevertheless, these normally extrinsic rewards can transform into intrinsic rewards if they are beyond the expatriate's expectations. Realistic expectations are generally the key factor during the actual stay abroad - also in relation to job description and communication with HQ. De-motivation can be a direct consequence of disappointment from unmet expectations, which means that it is extremely important for the company to communicate the purpose and expectations of the job. Through communication the company can keep the expatriate connected and prevent an "out of sight, out of mind" situation and thereby reduce general uncertainty and create stable work conditions. Stability and psychological well-being is essential in all aspects of the expatriate stay as it promotes motivation – also in relation to personal life. Family and social networks constitute the social support and provide security, which are factors that cannot be omitted when considering psychological well-being.

Conclusion

It is important to maintain the motivation from the pre-departure and actual stay when repatriating because it is the link between former and future expatriates. The importance of this phase has still not been fully realised by companies, which is why it is often neglected. This is reflected in irrelevant jobs and holding positions for returning expatriates, which are fatal for the motivation of both groups of expatriates. Repatriation finalises the cycle and is therefore a crucial but fragile link in the process.

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10 Executive Summary

The thesis discusses expatriate motivation during the three phases of the expatriation cycle: pre-departure, expatriate stay, and repatriation, based on qualitative interviews with former Danish expatriates. By examining the motivational factors for each stage individually, key drivers of the expatriate effort are identified. The study discusses motivation where an adventurous attitude is a prerequisite for succeeding abroad. Furthermore, arguments for motivation to be part of the selection process are presented. Additionally, the interrelationship between the professional and personal aspects of an expatriate's life are examined, as well as the importance of realistic expectations all through the cycle. Repatriation is seen as the connecting link between former and future expatriates but appears to be neglected by many companies, resulting in vast losses.