EXPATRIATES SELECTION: AN ESSAY OF MODEL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The business expansion to other geographical areas with different cultures from which organizations were created and developed leads to the expatriation of employees to these destinations. Recruitment and selection procedures of expatriates do not always have the intended success leading to an early return of these professionals with the consequent organizational disorders. In this study, several articles published in the last five years were analyzed in order to identify the most frequently mentioned dimensions in the selection of expatriates in terms of success and failure. The characteristics in the selection process that may increase prediction of adaptation of expatriates to new cultural contexts of the some organization were studied according to the KSAOs model. Few references were found concerning Knowledge, Skills and Abilities dimensions in the analyzed papers. There was a strong predominance on the evaluation of Other Characteristics, and was given more importance to dispositional factors than situational factors for promoting the integration of the expatriates.

Keywords: Expatriates, Culture, Personnel Selection

JEL Classification: J61

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on personnel selection goes back almost a century (Salgado, Anderson, & Hülsheger, 2010; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998) and mostly concerned with criterion-related validity issues that gives sustainability for the choice of selection methods with more correlation with work performance guaranteeing the recruitment of personnel with the best potential for the organization (Steiner, 2012).

Personnel selection should aim to identify the person that ensures rapid adjustment to the job/situation and that has enough potential to progress in a career project (Bártolo-Ribeiro, 2007). Institutions are interested that this human capital becomes more competent and engages as much as possible across time and situations. This general principle guides the methodologies to ensure the success of this process and will have to adapt to certain specifications. The choice of the resources to pursue their careers in a different geographical and cultural location requires the adequacy of the evaluation and selection tools, in order to guarantee this general principle.

Currently we are witnessing a strong expansion of institutions to markets other than those where they were created and expanded. The internationalization of enterprises creates internal challenges to career management level of their human capital.

In the beginning of internationalization it is important that, on the one hand, most of their employees have local nationality in order for the company to expand and, on the other hand, ensures a number of effective headcount that can be used to disseminate business

strategy. In institutions strongly grounded in international markets, the career development is mixed with national and international career. The internationalization of organizations and the consequent movement of their human resources from one location to another is viewed positively by institutions in a professional perspective. Multinationals often send their managers and executives to other countries not only in an attempt to closely observe the changes in the international economic environment, but also to develop international management skills, and to facilitate the entry into new markets (Kim & Slocum, 2008; Van Emmerik & Euwema, 2009). Commissions abroad assigned to employees of multinationals are seen not only as leadership skills development tools, but also to acquire greater knowledge of international economic and market management capacity in different cultures (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Suutari & Burch, 2001; Tung, 1998).

According to Black and Gregersen (1999) the companies may have an approximate annual cost between USD300,000 and USD1 million a year, with the assignment of individual expatriates, sufficiently high level trims to make an effective choice of candidates for these positions within a pool of candidates. According to Global Relocation Trends Report Windham International, National Foreign Trade Council, & Management, 1999), referenced in Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001), multinational organizations lose a total of 25% of their staff after serving one expatriate commission, stressing the importance of repatriation in the international management of human resources. Lin, Lu and Lin (2012) report a failure rate in the expatriation process between 16% and 40%; and according to Kraimer, Shaffer and Bolino (2009) the estimated cost for the institution is 1 million dollars (USD).

Organizations can face different challenges on expatriate's selection leading them to use different approaches. Ryan and Tippins (2009) present different challenges that organizations have to deal with when they want to use an adequate selection system from one place to another: translation and adaptation to the local language and culture; resistance to change from current practices; dissimilarities in legal framework; differences in administration capabilities; availability of technology; skill levels of the local work force; diversity in jobs and job performance; and considerations of acceptability by local managers and applicants. On the other hand, organizations could metamorphosis their internal culture in order to make them more effective on human resources international mobility. Caligiuri and Paul (2010) defend that a strong worldwide corporate culture, where employees share their values and norms globally, may diminish the influence of other national cultures. In these stronger global corporate cultures a common frame-of-reference is created, facilitating the integration of international selection system. As Caligiuri and Paul (2010, p.795) refer "subjective constructs as «integrity», «teamwork» and «trust» will have a company-driven understanding leveling any nationally driven cultural differences".

Steiner (2012), in his chapter concerning "Personnel Selection across the Globe", reviews research on personnel selection around the world focusing on surveys of selection practices internationally, psychometrics concerns on adaptation tools for use in another country, and fairness issues when applying selection techniques around the world. He found that surveys indicate considerable similarity in the use of various personnel selection methods across the globe, with some noteworthy exception. However, few studies on personnel selection internationally have systematically studied cultural variables associated with their effective application and few cultural variables are represented in the studies reviewed.
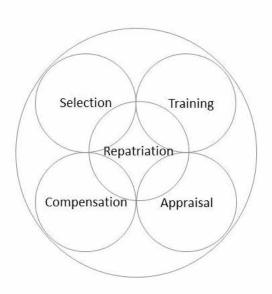
The most well-known study related to cultural differences, was made by Hofstede (1980). He used 116,000 questionnaires applied in 72 countries, to develop a cross cultural study and common dimensions. He presented four major dimensions of national culture: Power distance, focuses on the degree of equality, or inequality, between people in the society. A High Power Distance ranking indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within the society. A Low Power Distance ranking indicates societies where equality

and opportunity for everyone is stressed; Individualism/Collectivism, focuses on the degree the society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships; Masculinity/Femininity, which emphasis the emotional implications of the masculine work role model of achievement, control, and power. Or, on other hand, the feminine work role model of, caring, modesty and worries about quality of life; and Uncertainty avoidance, which stresses the extent to which a society feels threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations.

Based on Hofstede's dimensions, Josien (2012) propose an acculturation score. The development of this score needs the evaluation of each candidate (in the four dimensions), and a comparison with the host´s score. The smaller score differential represents an easier adjustment to culture. With this proposed acculturation score model, Josien shifts the focus from the necessary skills set to be able to adjust, to the influence of the acculturation.

As noted by Scullion and Collings (2006), people management globally is a significant challenge for companies at financial and strategic level. In international strategic management some practices are identified as potential variables that can increase the success of the International Human Resources Management (IHRM) of companies, particularly in terms of selection (Collings, Scullion & Morley, 2007). The efficiency of an IHRM can be maximized if followed by a holistic and systematic approach to component selection, training, compensation, evaluation and repatriation as reflected in figure 1 (Tung, 1998).

Figure 1. A holistic approach of International Human Resources Management. Adapted from "A contingency framework of selection and training of expatriates revisited," by R. L Tung, 1998, Human Resource Management Review, 8(1), p. 35.

SELECTION PRACTICES

Different selection practices are used across the world. Different countries give more importance to different methods according to their national tendencies based on practical orientations by professional associations. Steiner (2012) summarizes the results of the major surveys, retaining the selection practices that are common across 27 different countries from surveys and studies published since 1990. Selection practices included: Application Forms; Assessment Centers; Biodata; Cognitive Ability Test; Drug Test; Education; Graphology; Group Selection Methods; Integrity/Honesty Test; Interview: panel; Interview: Structured

and Situational; Interview: unstructured (or unspecified); Personality Test; Physical Ability Test; Psychometric testing; References (personal); Simulations Exercise; Situational Judgment Test; Vocational Interest inventory; Work Sample; and Work Trial. This review on different selection practices around the world gives an overall impression that there is little evidence of culture variations in the selection practices. This minor evidence does not mean that concerning expatriates selection, organizations do not use specific selection methods for determined dimensions assessment. However, it also does not mean that a country uses an expatriate selection practice that is common in the destination country, for what is important to the organization is a correct assessment of potential candidates for expatriation, and it is quite common that the selection practices for expatriation are not that different between countries.

1.1. Dimensions on expatriate's selection process

Technical competence is an essential dimension for the work performance, but the capacity to adapt to a different culture from their own should also be considered, as it is an important human relationship skill that will allow expatriates to relate with natives from host countries (Tung, 1981). Li and colleagues (2012) based on a representative collection of journal papers on expatriation management over the past four decades (from 1971 through 2009), nine scholarly management journals published in Taiwan, and Taiwan National Science Council Research Reports and students, identified a set of criteria considered in the selection of expatriates in western countries and Taiwan: Skills (Technical Managerial, and Leadership skills); Performance (Past performance); Willingness (Expatriate willingness); Experience (Previous overseas work Experience); Ability (Potentiality and Creativity); Adaptability (Adaptability of expatriate and Adaptability of family); Personality (Cultural empathy, Initiative, Independence, Emotional stability, Maturity, Interest in overseas work, Willpower, Patience).

Cultural characteristics are considered one of the most critical variables to take into consideration on expatriate's selection (Tung, 1981; 1998). Culture is not an easy comprehensive term as it is also understood in different ways according the context where is studied (e.g., organizational culture, national culture). A unique national culture could also be also used as a vehicle to augment the tourism brand (Othman, Wee, & Hassan, 2014). For personnel selection analysis concerning expatriates, the focus is on national culture in order to identify dimensions and methods for a more successful selection process. Other constructs like cultural Intelligence, defined as the ability to adapt and adjust to multiculturalism and multicultural personality, a construct focused on multicultural effectiveness, should also be considered, because it facilitates cultural adaptation, intercultural competence, and multicultural effectiveness (Sousa, Gonçalves, & Pina e Cunha, 2015). Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley and Janssens (1995) considered 77 dimensions of national culture, which demonstrate the complexity of this construct on IHRM. These dimensions were grouped in six categories: Definitions of self and others (self-concepts and how a culture conceptualizes human nature); Motivational orientation (group motivational needs and ways of relating to achievement and failure); Relations between social members (how individuals typically relate to others in a society); Patterns of communication (importance of different elements in communication); Orientation toward time, change, and uncertainty or risk (general orientations regarding the past, present, and future and the role and importance of change and uncertainty in determining our actions); Patterns of institutions and social systems (types of governments and larger societal systems).

The culture could also be modified across time in organizations. There are a thousand small innovations that regular business managers and line workers can do every day in their jobs, as pointed by Fernandes (2013). Companies have to nurture this culture of

experimentation, through an expertise on how to run these kinds of business experiments and an infrastructure that makes it possible to replicate and scale up the resulting successful innovations. One way to do this is through the aid of enterprise information systems. This regular experimental culture is different than the old mentality of figuring out all the possibilities and then locking in on one (Fernandes, 2013).

1.2. A model analysis for expatriate's selection

The theoretical model used on selection research is essentially focused on work performance, and this theory is based on an analysis of the job and the organizational context in which it takes place (Schmitt & Chan, 1998). Most jobs also require employees to adapt and perform effectively in foreign countries, or have communication skills in order to interact effectively with those who possess values and world views different from their own (Chang, Yuan, & Chuang, 2013). Although job analysis could be used for several purposes (e.g., training, job design), when used for personnel selection, it provides the foundations of the work, illuminates the nature of the job and provides an examination platform that allow us to separate those well suited for the job from those poorly suited for it (Brannick, Cadle, & Levine, 2012). Pragmatically, job analysis, regarded not to be a very systematic and formal process, gives us the essential aspects for specification of important behaviors in a certain work place. The treatment of job analysis allows us to identify sets of required knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs). The relationship between KSAOs and work performance is known as validity and selection researchers have been concerned in discovering different predictors from KSAOs and methods that ensure criterion-related validity that generalizes across different context (Ployhart & Schneider, 2012).

For Schmitt and Chan (1998) *Knowledge* refers to the foundation upon which abilities and skills are built; materialized by facts, rules, and other formal procedures that embody organized information in order to perform the job well. *Skills* often involve psychomotor-type activities that workers perform using, among others, body movements, arms and hands, vision, that allow them to perform tasks with ease and precision. *Abilities* usually refer to cognitive capabilities that are necessary to perform a job function. *Other characteristics* aggregate a set of personal attributes directly involved in a job function performance but are not included in the previous categories. Personality dimensions are often given as an example of other characteristics. Other attributes of personality traits, values and motivation, such as willingness to work under adverse conditions (Schmitt & Chan, 1998) or non-job-related experiences (e.g., extracurricular activities as student) (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013) and could be considered as predictors on validity studies.

The distinction between knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics are irrelevant according to Schmitt and Chan (1998, p. 46) "… what is important is the notion that each type of human characteristics should be considered in the generation of a comprehensive list of capabilities". Despite this unnecessary distinction, in this paper we tried to analyze the role of different dimensions from KSAOs model. In *Other Characteristics* component we considered a differentiation between situational and dispositional characteristics. Dispositional characteristics are those that are acquired throughout our early years of modeling by family, friends and education systems (e.g., personality traits, values). Situational characteristics are more related to other characteristic with origin in a specific context of our life (e.g., work environment, national culture).

In this article we focused our efforts on the analysis of the criteria used in the selection of potential expatriates crossing the various destination countries.

2. METHODOLOGY

For the information analyses, we have adopted a content analyses approach. We considered the papers published since 2010 with "expatriates" and "selection" as keywords or included in titles or abstracts and that were available through databases hosted in EBSCO (e..g., PsycINFO, Business Source Complete, PsycARTICLES) and ScienceDirect (including journals of Business, Management and Accounting). Only 19 articles (marked with "*" on references), from a total of 335, have information that match our aim in finding specific aspects used on the selection of expatriates. The criteria for articles selection was based on evidences concerning aspects/factors that promote the integration of expatriates and that are used in the process of human resources selection. These papers reflect research done in the last five years in Asian, American and European countries.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We encountered a prevalence of research done in Asian countries (8 articles of 19). Were identified 104 competencies that have been referred to as contributors for expatriate's integration and as such, considered as success factors. All 104 competencies, were then, analyzed based on the content analyses approach by the authors as Social and Organizational Professors. KSAOs model was used as a framework as described before.

As presented in table 1, we found 59 references related with dispositional factors, 30 with situational factors, 9 with skills, and 6 with knowledge competencies. There is a clear predominance of *Other Characteristics* comparing with *Knowledge, Skills* and *Abilities*. In expatriates selection there is a strong evidence on *Other Characteristics* assessment, and were given more importance to dispositional factors than situational factors as these promote the integration of expatriates. The absence of references to *Abilities* leads us to a more restrictive model: KSOs

Table 1 – organization of the found competencies, with the KSOs model

Dimensions	References
K (Knowledge)	6
S (Skills)	9
O (Dispositional)	59
O (Situational)	30

A more detailed analysis was adopted for dispositional factors which were classified and differentiated in "personality factors" and "values factors". Factors, as extroversion, were classified as a "personality factor" and honesty as a "value factor". Other constructs not typically classified as personality or values factors were classified after consensus by the authors (e.g., open mindedness, diplomacy, good listener). "Personality factors" are the most predominant (46 references), compared with the "values factors" (13 references). This marked predominance of the "personality factors" could be seen by the organizations as a potential predictor of adaptability in foreign working places and crucial in expatriate's selection (Li et al., 2012).

In table 2 are given some examples of these "personality factors", and as we can see, we encountered different types of competencies, like resilience, emotional intelligence, emotional stability, extroversion and sensitivity among others.

Table 2 – Examples of principal competencies referred according KSOs model

Knowledge	Cultural training; learning work tasks, learning technologies and procedures; organizational knowledge.
Dispositional (personality)	Adaptability; ambition; communicating and persuading; cultural empathy; cultural intelligence; interpersonal adaptability; emotional intelligence; flexibility; emotional stability; extroversion; tolerance for ambiguity; open-mindedness; handling work stress; resilience; sensitive to cultural differences; work engagement.
Dispositional (values)	Honesty, integrity, loyalty, personal discipline, multicultural mindset, commitment to learn, tenacity.
Situational (personal)	Stable life style, family adaptability, family adjustment, family support.
Situational (institutional)	Ability to control production processes and workers, experience abroad, length of stay, mentoring behavior, solid technical and corporate expertise, supporting practices, trust from managers/administration, years in service.
Situational (national)	Cultural similarity.
Skills	Crisis management, management skills, relationship building, language abilities, professional skill, technical performance.

Some examples of the "values factors" encountered (table 2) are: honesty, integrity and commitment to learn.

As mentioned previously, "situational factors" are related to external factors, that when positives, could potentiate the adaptability of the subject. Some examples are lifestyle, family adaptability and cultural similarity (see table 2). A deeper analysis of these factors was done and consequently classified three types of categories within "situational factors": personal, institutional and national situational factors. "Personal factors" are related with external, but personal factors that contribute to the fitness/adaptation of the expatriate (e.g., family support). The "institutional factors" are related to external factors that can be controlled by the organization where the expatriate is working (e.g., mentoring behavior). And last, the "national factors" are related with aspects of the host country, like cultural similarity. We can observe the analysis of these "situational factors" occurrences in table 3, where institutional factors (15 references) are predominant, followed by the personal factors (12 references).

Table 3 - Organization of the situational factors

O (Situational)	References
Personal factors	12
Institutional factors	15
National factors	3

Lastly, we encountered fewer references to *Knowledge; Skills* and *Abilities* dimensions. In table 2, we can observe some relevant examples of *Knowledge* and *Skills* factors. *Knowledge* references encountered are concerning cultural training and organizational knowledge, amongst others. These factors are aspects that can be acquired through learning, and that can be incorporated in training plans. On the other hand, *Skills* are related to management skills, language abilities and technical performance among others, and not as defined by Schmitt and Chan (1998) as competences that involve psychomotor-type.

To summarize, we can infer a predominance of the dispositional factors followed by the situational factors. In fact, we believe that there are some "core" personality factors that

with the presence of some situational factors, can contribute for the effectiveness of the adaptation of the expatriate to an unfamiliar environment.

These findings have lead us to propose a model presented in figure 2. In this model we can observe the importance of core "personality and values factors" that are promoted by some personal, institutional and national factors. To these last factors, we can add some specific skills and knowledge factors.
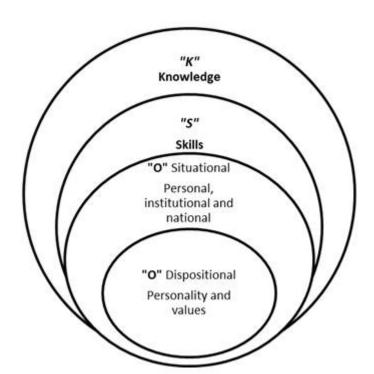
Figure 2 – Model of competencies determinants for the selection of expatriates (KSOs model).

We can state that "personality factors" are the most referenced factors in the group of dispositional factors (46 references), but we should not forget that we found more articles published in the last five years from Asian countries which could influence the generalization of our research.

The non-reference to the need of abilities assessment on expatriates selection should be carefully interpreted. Most of these studies were conducted with employees with university degrees, managerial responsibilities, proven work experience and considerable years within an organization to be considered for an international career. These human resources have already shown abilities for the position where they are. We could consider that work experience could replace other personal attributes, such as abilities, when we have access to the worker's performance. Abilities are an important dimension to consider in personnel selection when we know a few of the individual abilities and he/she is trying to get into the company. It is an unusual situation on expatriate's selection (Tung, 1998), where we are considering an expatriation commission as a process to develop human resources in his/her career, especially managerial career.

In an international personnel selection, technical issues are important, however implementing selection system globally requires more than validating employee selection tests in different countries; the HR professionals from different cultures and different levels of expertise on assessment and selection must work on globally integrated selection system (Caligiuri & Paul, 2010). These selection systems developed globally can be easily validated and accepted by

different national cultures, and the major challenge for IHRM is to choose those, in the selection process, that adapt efficiently to an environment with great cultural diversity.

Another key to success in international employee selection, including expatriates, is that selection and assessment should be integrated with other areas of IHRM, like, training and development, performance management and compensation (Caligiuri & Paul, 2010; Tung 1998). These different areas interact and have a mutual influence on a globally performance prediction of organizations.

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