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THE REPATRIATION PROCESS OF FINNISH INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNEES



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The ever increasing influence of globalization requires many organizations to become global. This brings in the need for sending expatriates to the organization's other locations abroad. Expatriation process requires investment by the human resource department. Unfortunately the management of the repatriation phase is often left with little attention by the home organizations.

This thesis concentrates on the repatriation process of Finnish international assignees. The purpose of this research was to discover which are the factors the repatriates would expect from the home organization when returning from the international assignment and how do the repatriates feel the international assignment affected their professional career.

The research in this thesis was conducted in a quantitative method including some qualitative elements. The data was collected by a structured survey which included four open questions. The survey was completed by 20 respondents who had already repatriated from their international assignments. The conclusions of this thesis were created by comparing the survey results to the literature part.

Repatriates expect their home organizations to pay more attention to the entire repatriation process. Earlier information about the up-coming tasks, better utilization of the new skills and competencies and help with the various bureaucratic issues are expected by the assignees. Furthermore, the repatriates feel that their networks were expanded, they acquired new skills and knowledge and their professional performance was enhanced through the assignment. The expatriation is not considered to affect the repatriate's position at the home organization as such.

KEYWORDS:

Expatriation, expatriate, posted worker, repatriate, repatriation program

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SUOMALAISTEN ULKOMAANKOMENNUSTYÖNTEKIJÖIDEN TAKAISINTULOPROSESSI

Jatkuvasti kasvava globalisaation vaikutus edellyttää monia organisaatioita muuttamaan kansainvälisiksi. Sen seurauksena yritysten tulee lähettää työntekijöitään organisaation muihin toimipisteisiin ulkomaille. Ulkomaankomennus vaatii henkilöstöhallinnolta panostusta. Valitettavasti takaisintulovaiheen hoito jätetään usein kotiorganisaatioissa vähälle huomiolle.

Opinnäytetyö keskittyy suomalaisten ulkomaankomennustyöntekijöiden takaisintuloprosessiin. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, mitä repatriaatit toivoisivat kotiorganisaatioiltaan palatessaan ulkomaankomennukselta ja miten ulkomaankomennus heidän mielestään vaikutti heidän ammatilliseen uraansa.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tutkimus tehtiin määrällisellä (kvantitatiivisella) menettelytavalla sisälten myös muutamia laadullisia (kvalitatiivisia) elementtejä. Tieto kerättiin strukturoidulla kyselyllä, jossa oli neljä avointa kysymystä. Kyselyyn vastasi 20 ulkomaankomennukselta palannutta henkilöä. Opinnäytetyön tulokset saatiin vertaamalla kyselyn tuloksia kirjallisuusosioon.

Repatriaatit toivovat kotiorganisaatioiden panostavan enemmän koko takaisintuloprosessiin. Aiempi tieto tulevista työtehtävistä, uusien taitojen ja kompetenssien parempi hyödyntäminen sekä apu byrokraattisten asioiden hoidossa olisi toivottavaa. Lisäksi repatriaatit kokevat, että verkostojen laajentuminen, uusien kykyjen ja tietojen hankkiminen ja ammatillinen osaaminen parantuivat ulkomaankomennuksen ansiosta. Ulkomaankomennuksen ei koeta juuri vaikuttavan repatriaatin asemaan koti-organisaatiossa.

ASIASANAT:

Ulkomaankomennus, ekspatriaatti, lähetetty työntekijä, repatriaatti, takaisintulo-ohjelma

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
KELA	Social Insurance Institution of Finland, Kansaneläkelaitos
MNC	Multinational Company
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise

1 INTRODUCTION

Working abroad is very common nowadays. Continuously more people spend at least a part of their professional working lives outside of the borders of one's home country. Those people are called expatriates which comes from Latin words *ex* (out of) and *patria* (one's native country). (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2014)

However, not all international assignments can be defined as expatriation. Expatriates are always sent by the home organization and the length of their assignment is at least somewhat predetermined. Once the assignment is completed, they will return to the home country. According to Dowling and Welch (2004, 67), a short term expatriation assignment lasts normally up to 3 months and an extended assignment continues up to 1 year. An assignment which lasts from 1 to 5 years is defined as a long-term assignment and it is considered as a traditional expatriate assignment.

There are different possibilities on how the home organization, the employee and the host organization deal with the expatriation contracts. Sinkkonen (2009, 173-174) argues that quite often there is a clause in the contract which states that once the expatriate returns back to the home organization there is a return position available. Additionally, the position normally consists of work tasks which are at least at the same level which the expatriate used to deal with prior to one's international assignment. According to Sinkkonen (2009, 173-174) and Fondia's VirtualLawyer (n.d.), it is possible that the work contract with the home organization is terminated and a new contract is signed especially for the international assignment. In such cases there is evidently no certainty of a work position after the return.

There are three key reasons on why organizations want to use expatriates on a regular basis. Firstly there is a certain position that is to be filled. It can be that local staff lacks adequate skills and knowledge and therefore the organization settles on acquiring such person from a different location. Second reason is the management development. It might be beneficial for the staff to be moved into other locations of the organization in order to obtain training and to develop their

overall organizational know-how. Additionally, this can help in the development of common corporate values. Third reason is the organizational development. It is essential to ensure that the same procedures and practices are used throughout the organization, adequate knowledge and competencies are transferred, global market opportunities are exploited and that there is a possibility to control the overseas operations. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 66) This type of centralized control system is, however, applicable to only certain organizations. According to Moore and Hill (2011) there is a trend that highly hierarchical organizational structure is declining and therefore companies have to rethink and redesign their organizational structure accordingly. Paik et.al. (2002, 644) argue that the organizational structure in companies in Scandinavian countries seems to be flatter in comparison to the companies in the US. This in turn most likely has an impact on how the organization deals with the entire expatriation process.

Expatriates can have various roles in the host organization. Expatriates can be agents of direct control which basically means to ensure the compliance of the host organization procedures through direct monitoring. Additionally, expatriates can be agents of socialization guaranteeing that the corporate culture alongside with shared values and beliefs is followed. (Dowling and Welch (2004, 69-71) In the above mentioned cases the organization has an ethnocentric orientation and thus the strategies are exported from the home office to the rest of the organization. On the other hand, in companies with polycentric orientation the adaptation to the strategy is done in each location separately and therefore the strategies can differ significantly from the one that the home office is following. (Mattes, 2010, 18) In companies with polycentric orientation the two first roles of repatriates are naturally not applicable as such.

Third role is a network builder which essentially means that the expatriate is able to meet and become acquainted with various people through one's work tasks or otherwise. These new connections can be exceptionally valuable once the expatriate returns to the home organization. Furthermore, expatriates are boundary spanners i.e. gathering information that links internal and external

organizational contexts. They can collect information about the host country and act as a representative of the organization. Moreover, expatriates can act as language nodes which mainly means that they use a certain corporate language and through that the host country staff becomes more familiar with it. Additionally, expatriates can learn a new language and it can become very advantageous in the upcoming tasks. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 69-71)

1.1 Topic decision

I decided to write my thesis about expatriation focusing on the repatriation process because first of all I find the topic very interesting. I also consider the topic quite current because the globalization is a major trend and therefore the mobility of employees is common. While I was gathering information about the topic I realized that repatriation has in the past been left with far less attention than other parts of the expatriation process. According to Mutsuddi (2012, 130) the repatriation process is still extensively underestimated and unrecognized challenge by both the repatriate and the home organization. I believe that focusing more on the repatriation phase and ensuring its success would benefit both the home organization and the repatriate.

1.2 The objectives of the thesis

The objectives of this thesis are to discover how the Finnish employees feel about the repatriation phase and what are their expectations from the home organization during that stage. Additionally, this thesis attempts to investigate whether the Finnish employees feel that the international assignment was beneficial for their professional career. The thesis is therefore written from the perspective of the employee. The perspective of the organization is on purpose left with less attention because the content of this thesis might otherwise become too broad.

1.3 Research questions

- Which are the factors the repatriates would expect from the home organization when returning from the international assignment;

- and how do the repatriates feel the international assignment affected their professional career

1.4 Structure of this thesis

This thesis starts with the table of contents which shows an overview of the whole thesis including the figures and tables that were used. Next can be found the list of abbreviations which makes it easier to understand the terms used in the text. Introduction includes an overview of international assignments, reasons behind this thesis work and both the objectives and research questions of the thesis. Followed by this, there is the literature review where different theories and other sources are used in order to provide with a diverse knowledge about the topic.

Methodology that was used in the thesis is explained in the third chapter. There can be found information about the research strategy as well as the data collection. The fourth section presents the data analysis and results. In that section all the questions that were included in the survey are studied one by one. Conclusions can be found in the fifth chapter where the answers to the research questions are also presented. Lastly there is a list of source material that was used in the thesis followed by two appendices.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Expatriation process

The entire expatriation process starts with the organization's need to send someone to a foreign location. The decisions about recruitment are to be done in the beginning of the process. According to Global Relocation Trends Survey report (later GRTS) (2013, 10), global organizations use internal recruiting in the majority of the cases (89%) whereas external recruiting rate is only at 11%. Schawbel (2012) states that the reason organizations prefer internal recruiting is because it often is cheaper, quicker and good for the employee morale.

According to Harris and Brewster (1999, 497-498), selection to international assignments is often an informal process and it can be called as a coffee machine system. This system basically means that a manager meets a colleague at the coffee machine, they start a conversation about a potential international assignment and in that conversation certain names come up. These people are contacted and the process continues from there. (Harris and Brewster, 1999, 497-498) In such cases the formal recruiting and selection process is inherently left with less attention. According to Longatan (2009), the range for suitable candidates for an international assignment may not always be very wide because of the skills needed and the personal and family availability.

The next phase is for the organization to decide whether to send the candidate and for the candidate to accept or reject the offer. Many companies offer certain kind of orientation and preparation assistance to familiarize the expatriate with the global assignment and to help with practical issues. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 276-277) According to Rama Rao (2010), it is the person's ability to adapt to different situations that is crucial, some people adapt easily whereas others have substantial difficulties.

The following stage is the global assignment. According to KELA (Kansaneläkelaitos; Social insurance institution of Finland), "Workers posted by a Finnish employer to another EU/EEA member country or to Switzerland retain their coverage for social security in Finland throughout their employment abroad.

This requires that a contract of employment with the posting employer is maintained throughout the posting and that the posted worker was covered under the Finnish social security system at the time of posting.” (KELA, 2012)

When the expatriate is returning home there can be specific debriefing or repatriation programs available prior or after the actual re-entry. After re-entry the expatriate either returns to one’s original organization or finds a position in a new organization. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 276-277) The international assignment often gives the employee new perspectives and skills that can be exploited by the home organization. However, if the home organization fails to utilize those new skills, the repatriate can feel that the experiences that are gained abroad are not appreciated and that the time spent overseas is “missed”. (Longatan, 2009)

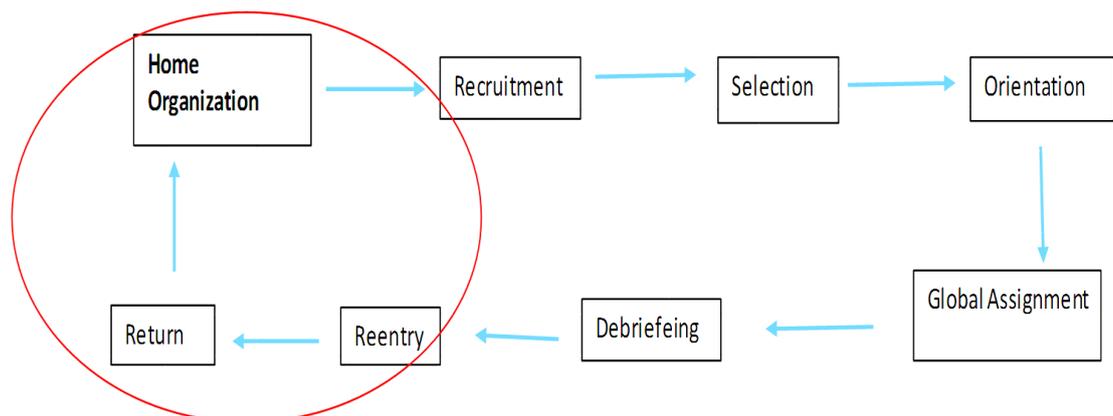


Figure 1. Expatriation process. Adapted from Adler and Gundersen (2008, 276)

In the figure above the expatriation process is presented in a fairly formal manner. As it has been mentioned earlier, the process is often executed somewhat informally and therefore the phases of the process can be slightly more difficult to detect. However, the basic idea in the both cases is the same. When returning to the home organization, the repatriate can stay in the home location or possibly go on a new international assignment. The red circle indicates the focus point of the process in this thesis.

2.2 Repatriation process

Similarly as the entire expatriation process consists of various stages so does the repatriation process. Once the expatriate is returning back to the home organization, one is typically referred as a repatriate.

The first part of the process is preparation. During that phase, the repatriate starts to develop a plan for the future and seeks for information about the potential new position in the same organization or in a new organization. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 161) Sinkkonen (2009, 167) states that the organization may help the repatriate through assisting in the moving process and in bureaucratic issues such as cancellation of the working permits and through tax consultation. Additionally, according to Mutsuddi (2012, 135), the organization may help with the shipment of personal goods.

The second stage is the physical relocation. It indicates the actual departure from the international assignment and parting from friends and colleagues in the host country. Additionally, especially larger multinational companies (MNC) assist in the move through using removal firms or relocation consultants in order to make the transition smoother. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 161)

The third phase is the transition. Sinkkonen (2009, 177) suggests that among others resolving the housing condition, leaving the notification of move, informing KELA and tax authorities and sorting about bank matters are issues that are often handled at transition phase.

The final stage of the process is readjustment. In this phase the repatriate deals with various changes such as reverse culture shock, career demands and company changes. Readjustment is often the least understood and poorly managed step by the home organization. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 161) Therefore readjustment is studied further in the upcoming section in order to understand the complexity of the matter.

According to GRTS report (2013, 22), 94% of the organizations stated having repatriation discussion with their returning employees. However, the same report

states that only 71% of the companies have formal repatriation policies as a part of their global program. Talent Management and the Changing Assignee Profile survey report (2013, 17) argues that 58% of the companies that responded in the survey do not offer a formal repatriation integration program. Out of those companies only a third offer a repatriation program for employees returning from a long-term assignment. In the same report lack of perceived value by the organization and cost considerations were mentioned as reasons on why organizations decide not to offer formal repatriation programs.

2.3 Culture shock

Culture shock can be defined as “the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes”. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014) There can be various symptoms which are results of culture shock. According to Marx (2001, 21) such symptoms can be anxiety, frustration, exhilaration, feeling isolated and becoming depressed. Additionally, culture shock is a normal reaction and therefore it should not be considered as a weakness or a hindering aspect for the international assignment. Next the four stages of culture shock will be discussed further.

Honeymoon phase: At this stage the expatriate considers the new environment exciting, interesting and positive. It seems there are endless opportunities and the expatriate is basically ready to accept whatever comes. In case there are certain minor irritations, they are suppressed and instead the focus is on the various positive aspects. (Marx, 2001, 23)

Culture shock: This stage is the low point. The expatriate feels very foreign in the new country and can suffer from insomnia or eating problems. The principle reason for the culture shock is the uncertainty about oneself, the surroundings and the future. It is beneficial to use this experience as an opportunity to engage in certain type of self-development and possibly modify emotions concerning oneself and the environment. Ignoring the symptoms is not wise and it can cause problems which are all the more severe. (Marx, 2001, 24)

Recovery: Normally this stage starts with accepting that there is a problem and that the expatriate is willing to solve it. Basically at this stage the compromise between the exaggerated expectations and the reality needs to be realized. (Marx, 2001, 24)

Adjustment: When the expatriate has managed to go through all the three phases mentioned above it is time for adjustment. At this stage the expatriate can work effectively and undertake new ways of working. Furthermore, the expatriate is overall extensively more flexible. (Marx, 2001, 24)

2.3.1 Reverse culture shock

It is often considered fairly easy for the repatriate to return to one's home country and the possibility of a reverse culture shock is not always recognized. However, the returning can be seen as a similar transition as the entering the country of the international assignment. (Mutsuddi, 2012, 130-131) Therefore, it is beneficial for the repatriate and the home organization to be aware of the reverse culture shock in case it occurs and in order to handle the possible symptoms in a smoother way.

It can be assumed that whether the international assignment was successful or not has an impact on the strength of the reverse culture shock. If the employee had substantial difficulties abroad it can be that it is a relief to come back home. On the other hand, if the international assignment went very well and the employee enjoyed the time overseas, it can prove to be hard coming back home. However, according to Paik et. al. (2002, 646), the international assignment very often changes the employee and the home environment changes, too. Therefore a reverse culture shock is a possibility when returning.

Leave-taking and departure: At this stage the repatriate is actually still in the foreign country. However, the repatriate's mind is already occupied with thoughts about returning home and how to say goodbye to everyone in the foreign country. (Storti, 2001, 70-72) According to Zavrski-Makaric (2008), the friendships that were created abroad can be rather deep and intense because they meant

enormously in an environment which was not familiar. Therefore it can be tough to leave such people behind.

Additionally, there is an immense amount of excitement and anticipation about the plans of what to do once back in the home country. The repatriate often visualizes the feelings and encounters that one expects to occur and one might become more critical towards the foreign country. Moreover, there can be tension among the family in case the repatriate is accompanied with a spouse and children. (Storti, 2001, 70-72) Every member of the family suffers their own reverse culture shock and it can be challenging at times. It can be that the children are very integrated to the host country through friends and school that they do not want to leave.

Honeymoon: The first few weeks that the repatriate is back home feel almost perfect. The repatriate is happy to see friends and family and everyone is happy to see the repatriate. At this time the repatriate often visits people and tells everyone stories and shows photos about the international assignment. It can be said that the repatriate is the center of attention. The schedule is often rather full and therefore the repatriate does not have time to notice the possible changes that have occurred in the home country or miss the life back in the foreign country. (Storti, 2001, 72-73)

At the honeymoon stage the repatriate does various matters that one has missed doing while being abroad, for example eats at a certain restaurant or visits a particular park. Additionally, everyone is excited to see the repatriate and understands that the repatriate needs time to relax. Therefore potential problems are not handled at this stage yet. (Storti, 2001, 73-74)

Reverse culture shock: This stage principally starts when the repatriate truly begins to settle down and live normal everyday life. Everyone around the repatriate is already used to having the repatriate back in their lives, however, the repatriate often feels out of place. It is common that the repatriate criticizes practically everything in the home country and is very judgemental. Nevertheless, the repatriate remembers the foreign country as a brilliant place and forgets the

less favorable issues. (Storti, 2001, 74-76) Additionally, the repatriate misses various matters from the foreign country such as food and the overall culture and therefore has mixed feelings about one's home country. (Storti, 2001, 74-76; Kohonen, 2008)

When the reverse culture shock strikes in the repatriate realizes how much one has actually changed while being out of the country. Often the repatriate has incorporated certain foreign values or habits to one's everyday life. Therefore it can be that the repatriate feels somewhat foreign in one's own home culture. (Zavrski-Makaric, 2008) According to Storti (2001, 76-80), it can feel almost as being a minority in the society because most of the people do not necessarily entirely understand the repatriates reactions or opinions towards diverse issues.

Additionally, it is possible to undergo doubt whether it was the right decision to return back to the home country if the process seems to be of such difficulty. The repatriate can experience that there is a need to start everything over in the home country and it can feel overwhelming. Routines are basically nonexistent and it requires plenty of energy to perform even the basic chores. (Storti, 2001, 76-80) Additionally, it must be taken into consideration whether the repatriation was the repatriate's own choice, part of the original plan or the plan changed by the home organization and the international assignment concluded prior than scheduled.

Resistance is very common at the reverse culture shock stage. The repatriate resists to adjust to the home country because one feels that if one adjusts it means that one will have to stay there. The repatriate can plan on going on another international assignment at some point and does not want to get stuck in one's home country. (Storti, 2001, 80-81) However, it can be that the employee would be willing to go on another international assignment but the rest of the family is against it. According to GRTS (2013, 19) report, the strongest reason for employees to refuse an international assignment is family concerns.

Another reason for the resistance is that the repatriate feels almost as if readjusting means that the international assignment did not exist. Additionally, escape and withdrawal can be results of the reluctance to readjust. The repatriate

may isolate oneself from the environment or have problems with sleeping and eating. (Storti, 2001, 80-81)

Readjustment: At the readjustment stage the repatriate realizes that it actually is possible to readjust to one's home country and yet value the international assignment. The repatriate is capable of putting both home and host country in perspective and have a balanced and more accurate view of everything. The repatriate begins to feel more at home and is therefore more relaxed, comfortable and settled. The environment starts to be more familiar and there is no need to be stressed or alert at all times. Additionally, it can be a relief to repatriates that it is possible to readjust and yet hold on to certain values and attitudes that were established abroad. (Storti, 2001, 82-83)

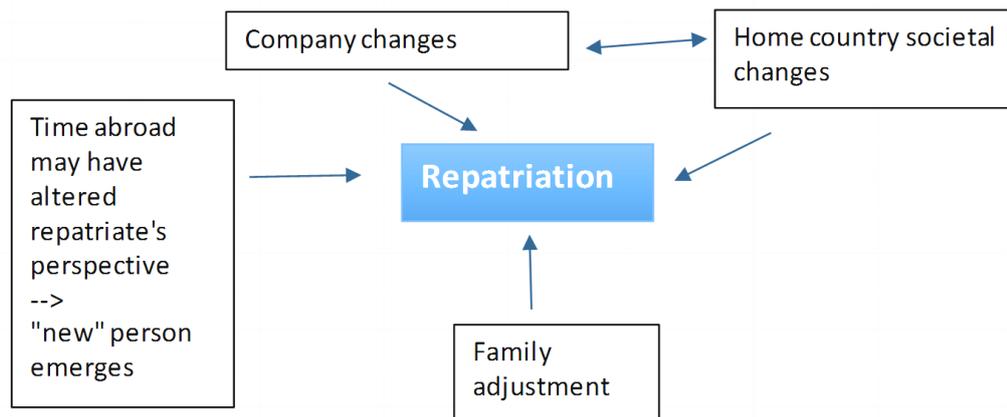


Figure 2. The readjustment challenge. Adapted from Dowling and Welch (2004, 168)

As can be seen from the figure above, there are various factors which influence the repatriation and particularly the readjustment phase. The repatriate might have changed abroad, there might have been changes in the home organization or even in the society in the home country. Additionally, if the repatriate had been on the assignment accompanied by the family, there are also family adjustment issues that have to be taken into consideration.

2.4 Individual's reactions to reentry

According to Dowling and Welch (2004, 162-171) individuals reactions to re-entry can be divided into two groups. The larger group is job-related factors and the other social factors. Next these concepts are explained further.

Job-related factors

Career anxiety is the first reaction to be mentioned. According to Dowling and Welch (2004, 162-163), expatriates normally state two key motivators for accepting an international assignment; career advancement and financial gain. Additionally, TMCAP survey (2013, 11) reports that the three main reasons for employees to accept an assignment overseas are personal career development, considered necessary for advancement and attractive compensation. Therefore career anxiety is a very fundamental reason for individual's reaction to re-entry. It can be that the repatriate has not been guaranteed a position after the return to the home organization. Additionally, the repatriate might be afraid that the time one has spent abroad has hurt or decreased one's status at work. Moreover, there might have been changes in the workplace such as a merger, an acquisition or the sale of certain business units. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 162-163) The Finnish economy alongside with basically the rest of the world has in the past few years been also struggling with recession. The recession has forced many companies to execute co-operation negotiations which can undeniably have an impact on the international assignees, too.

Work adjustment is another key element as a reaction to re-entry. The employment relationship has a significant meaning especially for the repatriate. There might be certain career expectations, for instance the international assignment enhancing one's career and the possibility of a promotion, based on messages that have been sent by the top management. (Mutsuddi, 2012, 133) However, these expectations do not always actualize and it can cause tension. Furthermore, the re-entry position can trigger negative feelings. According to Dowling and Welch (2004, 163-166), it can be that the repatriate held a senior position abroad and once back in the home organization the position that is

offered is not parallel. This can create severe career disappointment. In addition, the experience that the repatriate gained abroad can be devalued or even considered as if it never happened. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 163-166)

Coping with new role demands can become an issue. Role can be defined as “a prescribed or expected behavior associated with a particular position or status in a group or organization.” (Business dictionary, 2014) The work tasks that the expatriate had abroad may have been somewhat different than the ones in the home organization. It can be that the expatriate had more independency and responsibility abroad and first it can be hard trying to get used to the tasks that are assigned to the employee back at the home organization. Suutari and Välimaa (2002, 631) argue that if the organization makes the role decision early enough before the assignment is completed, it has significant impact on the adjustment of the repatriate.

Loss of status and pay can be difficult for repatriates. They are used to the higher salary and autonomy abroad and when they return back to home organization the difference is often apparent. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 169) Additionally, the repatriate may be used to higher quality of life abroad and therefore it can feel difficult to return to the old environment and lose the special status. (Paik et.al., 2002, 642; Okpara, 2008, 133)

Social factors

The time spent abroad can distance the repatriate and his or her family both socially and psychologically. It can be that the status in the society and the financial level differ extensively and it can create anxiety. Additionally, if the repatriate had been accompanied by family members, each person experiences their own difficulties when returning home. Sometimes the home surroundings were glamorized while abroad and when returning these memories do not match the reality. This can work also the other way; glamorizing the international destination when returning home. There might have been societal changes in the home country which the repatriate may not have known about. It is also possible

that the re-establishment of social networks can take time. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 169-170)

Effect on partner's career is an aspect that might have to be considered. It can be challenging for the partner to find a new position after the return. Moreover, in case the partner had not been in the working life prior to the international assignment or if the partner was not working during the time abroad, it might potentially complicate the situation even further. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 171) However, Paik et.al. (2002, 643) states that the Scandinavian repatriates do not necessarily think that the company should be responsible for the spouse. It is also stated that the Scandinavians do not essentially want the intervention of outside parties into their private lives.

2.5 Transition strategies

According to Adler and Gundersen (2008, 292-293) the strategies that the repatriates use differ rather fundamentally. However, there can be distinguished three main types of strategies which are presented next.

Resocialized returnees are the group of repatriates who do not acknowledge or utilize their newfound skills and knowledge. They do not necessarily consider that the new skills are needed in their current position. Therefore they attempt to act as if they were never away and try to fit back into the domestic corporate culture. By regarding their international assignment in such manner it prevents the repatriate from improving one's status and effectiveness at work. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 292-293)

Resocialized returnees do not gain extensively from their assignment and hence the new skills are not applied correspondingly the organization loses possible advantage. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 292-293) According to Mutsuddi (2012, 135) and Kohonen (2008), organizations make a substantial investment in the entire expatriation process and therefore it would be crucial to ensure that the newly acquired skills are utilized. Resocialized returnees are common in multi-domestic organizations which lack global orientation. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 292-293)

Alienated returnees are repatriates who, during their international assignment, integrate the values and the lifestyle of the foreign country into their lives to the extent that they begin to prefer it over their home country and culture. Once they are back in their home country, they consider the foreign country better and as a result of that begin to reject their own culture. Additionally, such rejection can lead to them becoming personally isolated. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 293) Mutsuddi (2012, 133) states that the home organization may not realize that the repatriate has changed during the international assignment but expects everything to be similar to what it was prior to the expatriation.

Alienated returnees consider that their new skills and knowledge cannot be utilized in the home organization and therefore they suspect that they do not fit into the organization. Consequently, such repatriates feel professionally unproductive and are not satisfied which in turn hurts the home organization. Alienated returnees are common among people who have had multiple international assignments. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 293)

Proactive returnees are individuals who combine both their own and the foreign culture and attempt to create new approaches to living and working. They are optimistic and creative about their recently acquired skills and knowledge and they utilize them both at work and in personal lives. Furthermore, proactive returnees consider themselves effective and more pleased with their work. Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 293)

By using synergistic approach, which means combining multiple cultures' ways of working, returnees can especially benefit from their time abroad and remain effective in their new tasks in the home organization. However, the home organization should also recognize the returnees recently acquired skills and potential contributions in the future and not to merely try make them fit back in. (Adler and Gundersen, 2008, 293) According to Mutsuddi (2012, 134), organizations do not always seem to appreciate or exploit the fresh international expertise enough. It is crucial to try understand both the organization's and the repatriate's points of view in order to gain more from the overall process.

2.6 Managing re-entry

Realizing the importance and the need for activities at the repatriation phase would highly benefit both the home organization and the repatriate. According to Dowling and Welch (2004, 176-177), organizations can assign the repatriate a mentor who keeps contact with the repatriate throughout the assignment and helps the repatriate at the repatriation phase. The mentor is often in a more senior position than the repatriate and from the same work unit. The use of mentor is expected to lessen the “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” feeling that is often characteristic for international assignments. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 176-177)

It is possible that if the repatriates do not feel appreciated enough after the international assignment they decide to leave the company. Sending expatriates is costly for companies and therefore it is unfortunate if these people will not stay with the same company after the international assignment. However, Paik et.al. (2002, 643) argue that in Scandinavian countries the employee’s loyalty towards the company is considerably higher than that in the United States and the employees are more inclined in staying with the current company.

Organizations should recognize the need for assistance and preparation at the reintegration phase. Additionally, it is important to realize that the repatriation is indeed a process not a single event. The lack of repatriation procedures hinders the repatriate’s adjustment to the home organization which in turn negatively affects the repatriate’s satisfaction on the job. This can decrease the repatriate’s commitment and loyalty towards to home organization. (Nery-Kjerfve and McLean, 2012, 623) According to Paik et.al. (2002, 642) it can be that the repatriate considers the reintegration into the organization as a new job but has considerably more difficulties in reintegrating into the home culture. Therefore it would be valuable for organizations to recognize this aspect, too.

According to Nery-Kjerfve and McLean (2012, 624) “there is a strong connection between employee adjustment, job satisfaction and organizational commitment towards promoting reintegration of expatriate employees.” Therefore it is crucial that organizations take the situation seriously and act accordingly. Additionally, it

is vital that organizations realize the diversity and different needs of repatriates; age, gender and the duration of the assignment may all affect in a different way. (Nery-Kjerfve and McLean, 2012, 624) Hyder and Lövblad (2007, 277) state that it is not realistic to define a single one repatriation program that would benefit everyone but to offer flexible assistance and contact throughout the international assignment and after it.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methods

When conducting a research it is essential to choose a research method that provides with the most valuable results on that particular topic. Basically there are two different research method categories which are quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative method can be used for example through interviews or open questions. It generates non-numeric data and it can sometimes be slightly challenging to interpret accordingly. Quantitative method includes for instance the use of questionnaires and graphs in order to generate or use numerical data. (Saunders et al., 2012, 160-163)

In this thesis a mixed research method was chosen to conduct the research. Majority of the research was executed through quantitative means. However, there were four open questions included. Mixed method was chosen because I believe that the combination generates more comprehensive information on the research topic and therefore advances the quality of the study.

3.2 Target group

In order to ensure that the research findings have value it was crucial to define a relevant group for the survey. In this thesis the target group was decided to be Finnish employees who have completed an international assignment and were abroad sent by their home organizations. The international assignment had to have lasted at least for 3 months and it was important that the assignees had already repatriated home. The requirement of three months was chosen because as it was stated in the introduction by Dowling and Welch, an assignment that lasts for less than three months is considered a short term assignment. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 67) However, in this thesis I wanted to focus on the extended and long-term assignments in order to ensure that the repatriates had more experience and understanding of the whole expatriation process.

3.3 Data collection and research strategy

Research was conducted by using Esurv's survey tool. The survey consisted of 22 questions which were divided into five sections; general information, international assignment, expectations from the home organization, personal points of view and effect on professional career. The survey consisted of 18 closed and 4 open questions. The potential respondents were sent a cover letter explaining who I was and what I was intending to accomplish with the research by email. Additionally, the link to the survey was included in the email.

Finding suitable respondents to the survey turned out to be significantly more difficult than I had predicted. Through e-mail I contacted 59 companies which I either knew to organize international assignments or I assumed might do such activities. Due to confidentiality matters, I only requested the companies to forward my e-mail to the potential respondents among their employees and to inform me to how many people the e-mail was forwarded to. Out of the 59 companies, 5 companies replied to me that unfortunately for different reasons they could not help me. 3 companies forwarded my e-mail to a person who knew more about the topic but none of them replied to me after that. Altogether 4 companies agreed to forward the e-mail to their employees who potentially could answer the survey. At the end 12 organizations out of 59 replied to me in some way.

Additionally, I asked my friends, family and colleagues at work if they happened to know someone who would fit my target group. I acquired valuable help from them and it had a considerable effect on my thesis work. Altogether 14 people were contacted based on the help from the above mentioned parties. Moreover, I posted a status on Facebook explaining about my research for my thesis and asked if someone could help me with finding more respondents. Unfortunately this approach did not help me with the thesis very much.

The respondents were given approximately a week's time in the middle of May 2014 to reply to the survey. Had the time been longer, it can be assumed that the amount of responses could have been higher. However, the schedule was

extremely strict and at the end I was satisfied with the amount of answers I received.

At the end the survey was sent to 30 potential respondents out of which 26 responded. However, 6 respondents had only answered a few first general questions and thus were not relevant to the research. These six responses were left out of the final analysis of the results. Therefore the answers of 20 respondents were used for the research part.

3.4 Reliability and validity of the research

Reliability of a research means that the results can be repeated. Validity of a research refers to whether the research actually measures what it was supposed to measure. Additionally, validity measures how accurate the results of the research are. (Saunders et al., 2012, 192-193)

The research was conducted by using a structured questionnaire which had 18 closed and four open questions. Conducting a survey was an appropriate way to collect answers from the sample group. The answers could have been broader and more in-depth had the questions been asked in a face-to-face interview. However, the sample group was relatively large meaning that the interviews would have taken considerably long to execute and therefore were not considered appropriate in this research.

According to Saunders et al., (2012, 430) it is very beneficial to pre-test the questionnaire in order to minimize error in the final results. The questionnaire was reviewed by the thesis supervisor and sent to two friends to be pre-tested to ensure the understandability and technical easiness. Appropriate modifications were implemented according to the feedback that was received. However, as with all researches, the possibility of error cannot be eliminated completely.

The survey was conducted in Finnish because the entire respondent group consisted of Finns. I assumed it to be easier and quicker for the respondents to understand the questions and provide with valuable answers in their native language. I carefully translated the questions and answers into English but as I

executed it alone it can slightly weaken the reliability of the research in case there were some mistakes in the translations.

The respondents represented various age groups, industries and international assignment locations. This brings value to the research and makes it more vibrant. However, there was only one female respondent. It would have been interesting to have more females, nevertheless, females are still a minority on the international assignments and therefore the results can be altogether considered fairly reliable.

The sample group consisted of 20 individuals. The number of participants could naturally be higher as it would increase the reliability of the research. However, in my opinion through combining the answers of this group, the results can be considered reliable. I believe that the results of this research can be repeated which increases the reliability. Additionally, the sources used in this thesis have been carefully selected and I find them reliable.

I consider the results of this research valid with respect to the criteria stated earlier. I find the results of this research measuring the aspects that were intended to be measured. Additionally, even though the results may not be to generalized, I regard them as trustworthy.

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the research are presented and analyzed. The survey questions are studied one by one. The questions are divided into five sub-groups in order to improve the interpretation of the results. The figures were constructed by using Microsoft Excel and the percentages on the figures were adjusted (11,33% = 11%)

4.1 General information

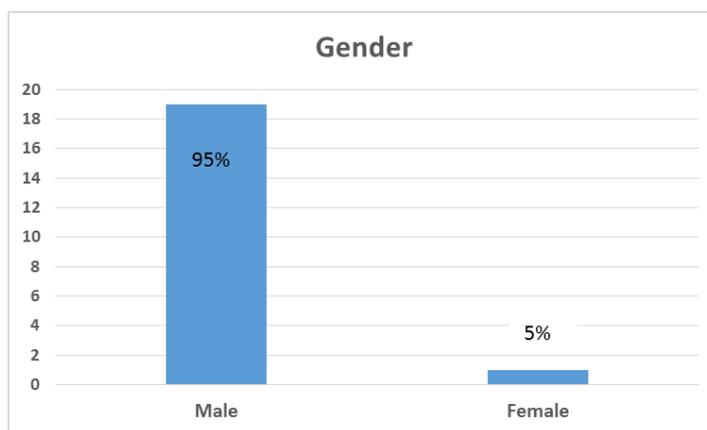


Figure 3. Gender

As it can be seen above, the vast majority (95%) of the respondents were males and only 1 female was included. Still in the 21st century females are a minority in international assignments and therefore the divide can be considered somewhat accurate. According to GRTS report, 23% of the expatriates who answered the survey were females. (GRTS, 2013, 11)

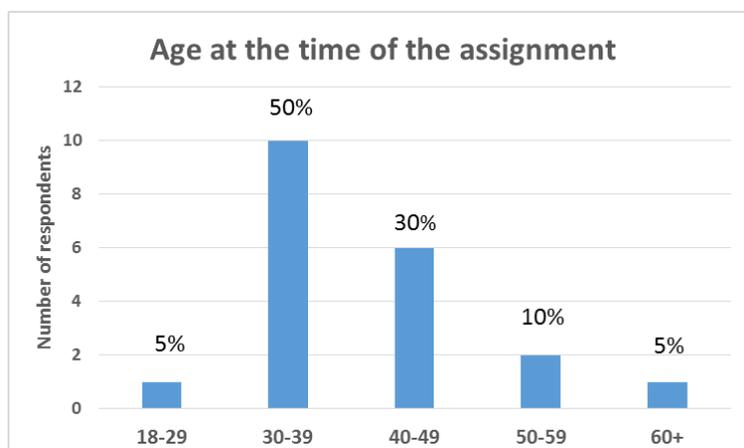


Figure 4. Age at the time of the assignment

Respondents' age at the time of the assignment varied. However, as can be seen from the column chart above, 80% of the respondents reported having been between 30 and 49 at the time of the assignment. That time phase can be considered to represent the years when an employee has already gained an education and professional knowledge and being "at the best working age". Additionally, one respondent was between 18 and 29 years, two between 50-59 and one over 60 years old.

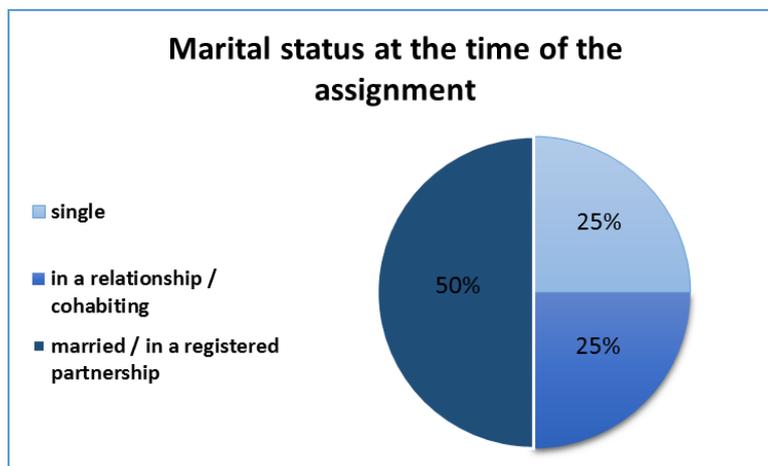


Figure 5. Marital status at the time of the assignment

The pie chart above represents the respondent's marital status. Half of the respondents (50%) reported having been married or in a registered partnership while on the assignment. A quarter (25%) were single and the other quarter stated having been in a relationship or cohabiting.

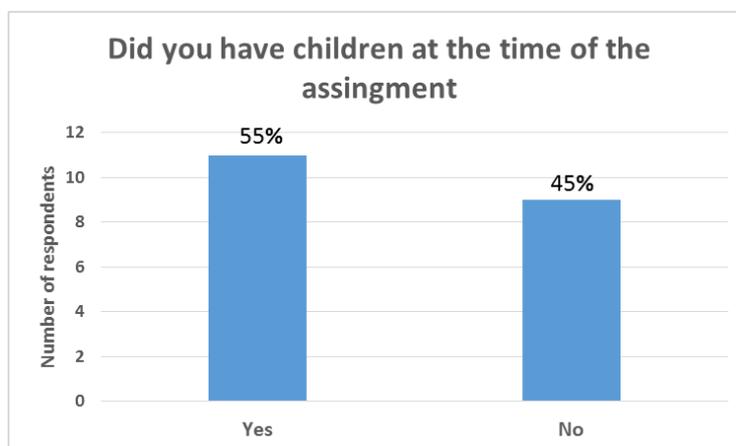


Figure 6. Did you have children at the time of the assignment

55% of the respondents stated they did have children at the time of the assignment whereas 45% reported they had no children.

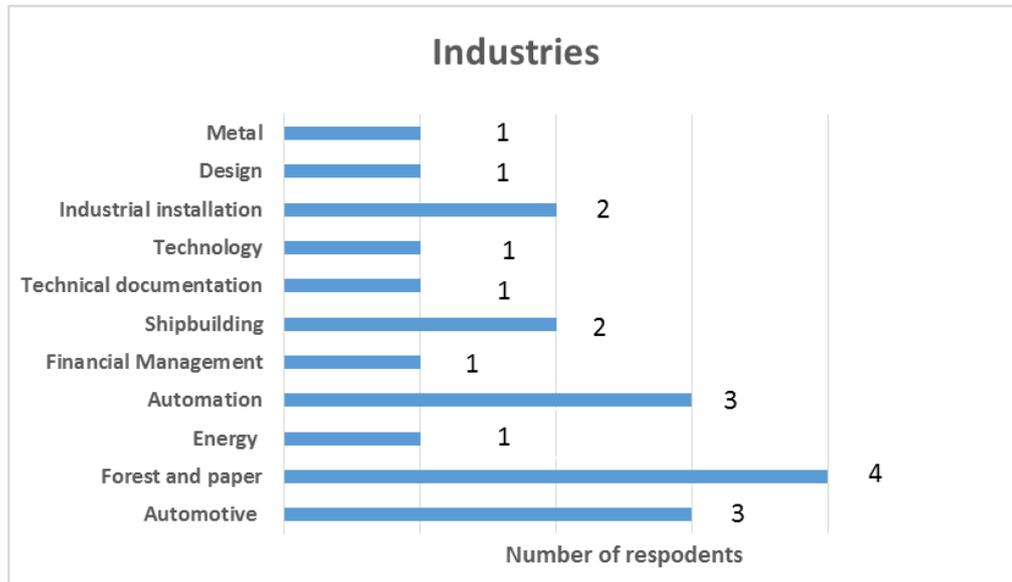


Figure 7. Industries

As it can be seen from the bar chart above, the respondents represented a broad range of industries. Forest and paper industry (4 respondents), automotive industry (3 respondents) and automation industry (3 respondents) represented altogether 50% of all respondents.

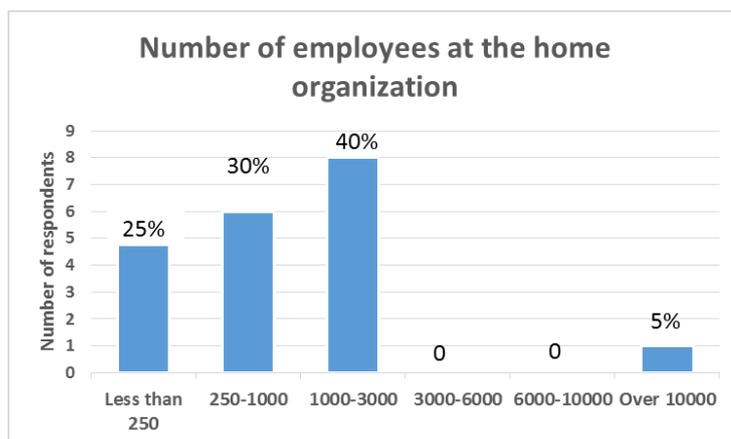


Figure 8. Number of employees at the home organization

Above can be seen how the respondents estimated the number of employees at their home organization. A quarter stated the home organization having less than 250 employees. This type of organizations are often referred as small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's). 30% of the respondents reported the home organization employing 250-1000 people and 40% 1000-3000. One respondent worked in a considerably larger company which had over 10 000 employees. However, it has to be taken into consideration that the respondents did not necessarily exactly know the number of the employees in their home organization and therefore these percentages can only be suggestive.

4.2 International assignment

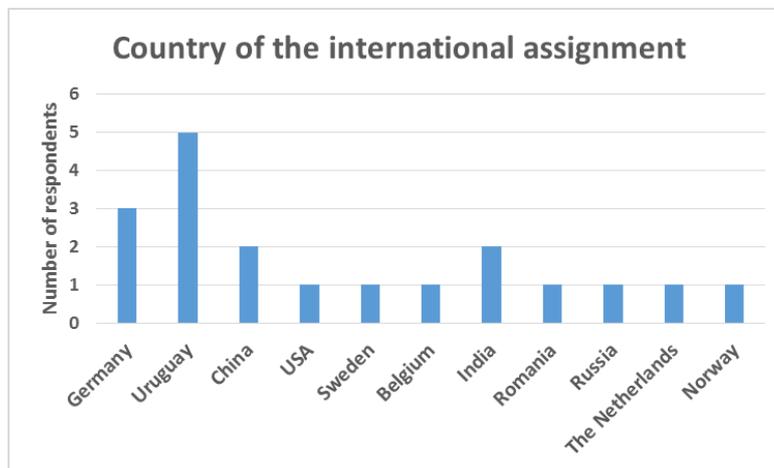


Figure 9. Country of the international assignment

Respondents completed their international assignments all over the world. Seven people were in Europe, two in Asia and one in North-America. Overall 5 people completed their assignment in Uruguay, 3 in Germany and 2 in both India and China. Other countries on the bar chart were experienced by one person.

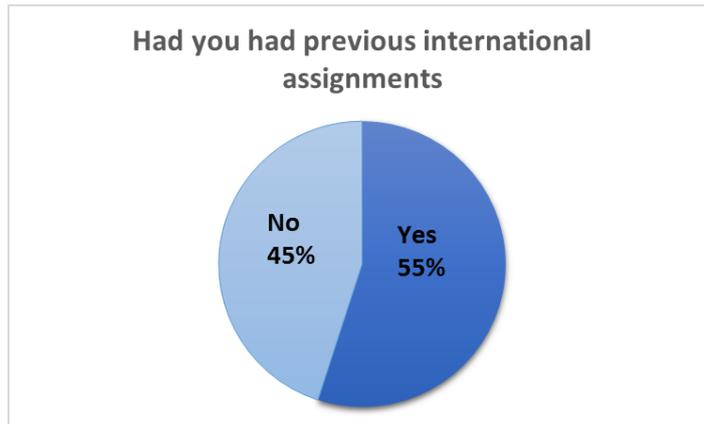


Figure 10. Had you had previous international assignments

Experience on international assignments divided the respondents in half. 55% reported having been on an international assignment before, whereas 45% stated they had no previous experience.

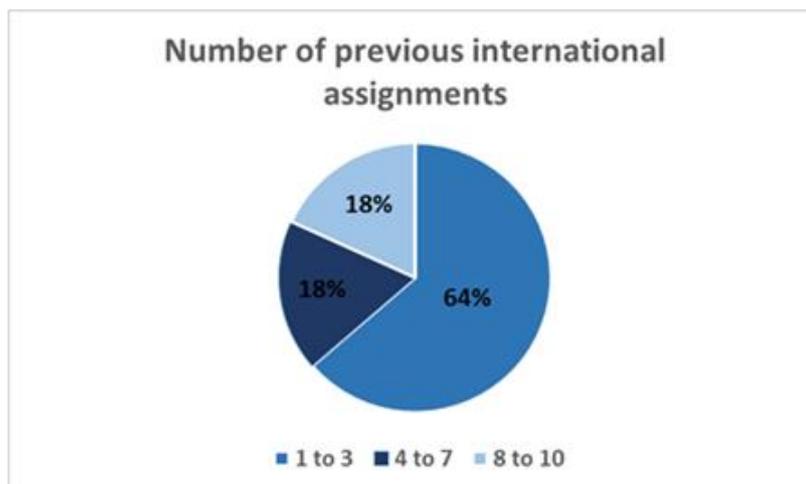


Figure 11. Number of previous international assignments

Out of the 11 respondents who had had previous international assignments 64% reported having completed 1 to 3 assignments. Both 4-7 prior assignments and 8-10 prior assignments were completed by 18% of the respondents.

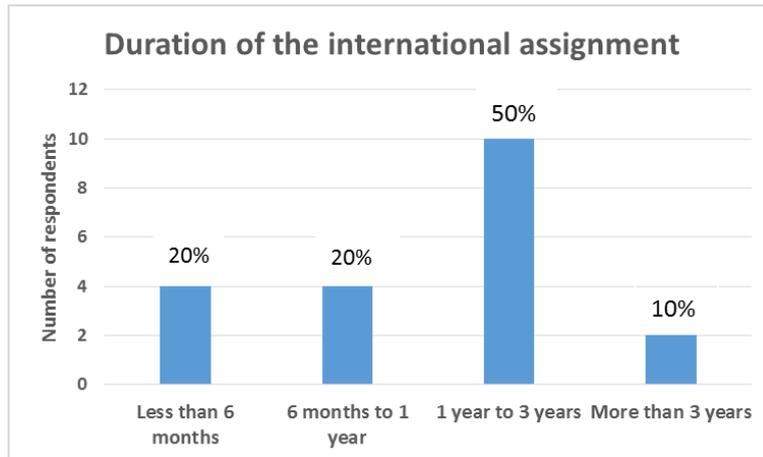


Figure 12. Duration of the international assignment

As can be seen from the column chart above, altogether 60% of the respondents spent at least a year abroad. That type of assignment can also be considered as the traditional expatriate assignment. 40% of the respondents' assignments lasted between three months and one year.

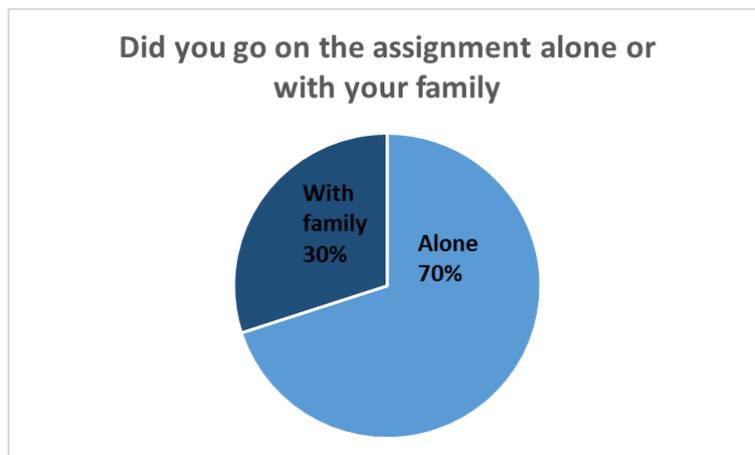


Figure 13. Did you go on the assignment alone or with your family

Majority (70%) of the respondents completed their international assignment alone. However, as can be seen from the figure 3 (on page 26) only 25% of the respondents reported having been single at the time of the assignment. This reveals the fact that according to this sample group, the assignees are more inclined to going abroad alone even if they had a family in Finland.



Figure 14. Quality of the stay professionally

The column chart above represents the perceived quality of the stay professionally. 85% of the respondents stated "strongly agree" to acquiring new skills and knowledge abroad. The answers on understanding the organization better as a whole were more deviated. However, 75% answered the question with "strongly agree" or "partly agree". All of the respondents answered "strongly agree" or "party agree" to widening network whilst on the assignment.

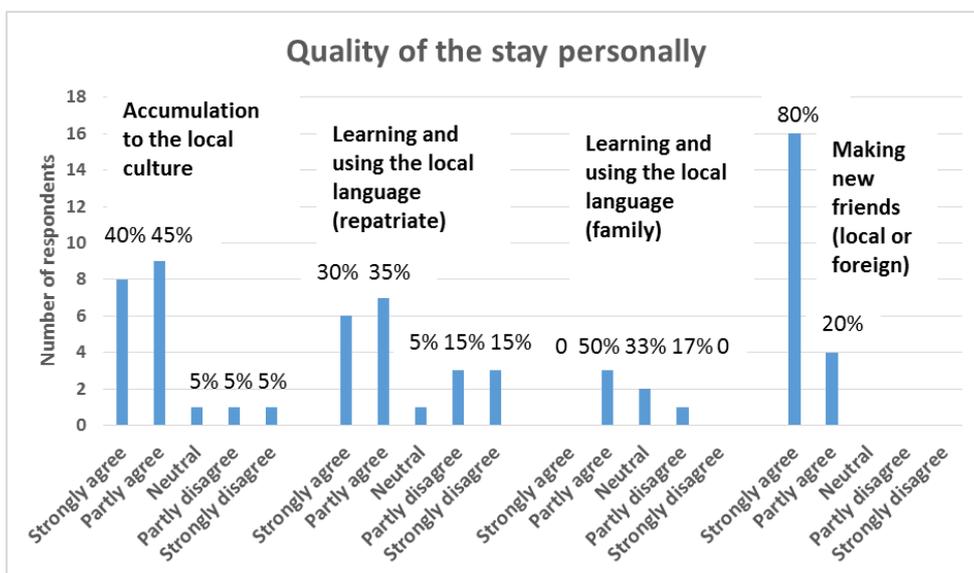


Figure 15. Quality of the stay personally

Above can be seen that 95% of the respondents answered "strongly agree" or "partly agree" to accumulating to the local culture. International assignees'

opinions differed extensively on how the local language was learnt and used. Overall it can be seen that 65% agreed and 30% disagreed.

6 respondents were on the assignment accompanied by their families. Out of them 50% stated the family learnt and used the local language with "partly agree" and 33% with "neutral". Making new friends was answered with "strongly agree" by 80% of the respondents.

4.3 Expectations from the home organization

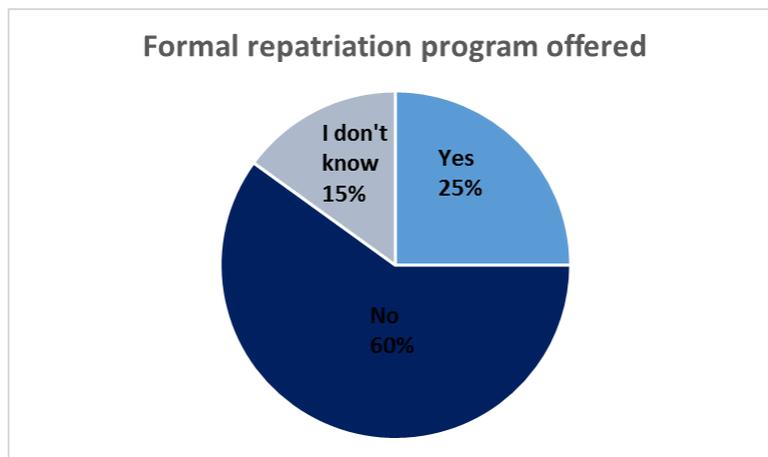


Figure 16. Formal repatriation program offered

60% of the respondents told that there is no formal repatriation program offered in their home organization. Additionally, 15% stated that they do not know about the situation their organizations.

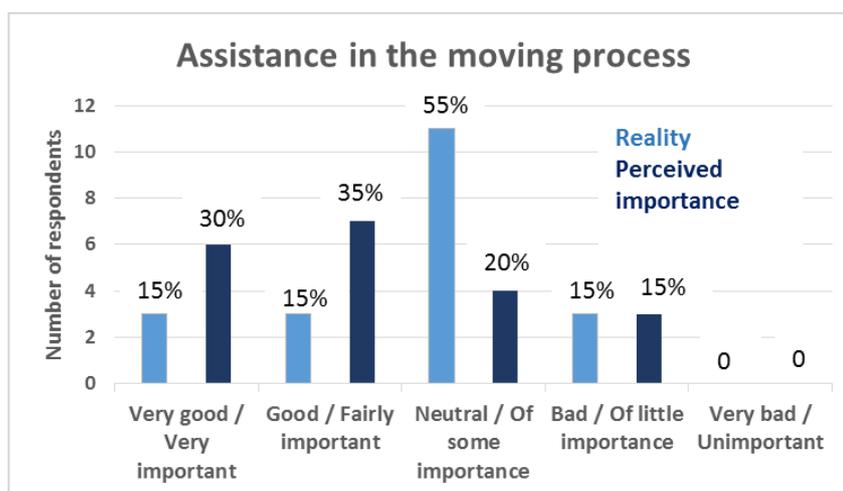


Figure 17. Assistance in the moving process

In reality, 55% of the respondents estimated the home organization's assistance in the moving process with "neutral". However, 65% of the respondents would consider the assistance either "very important" or "fairly important".

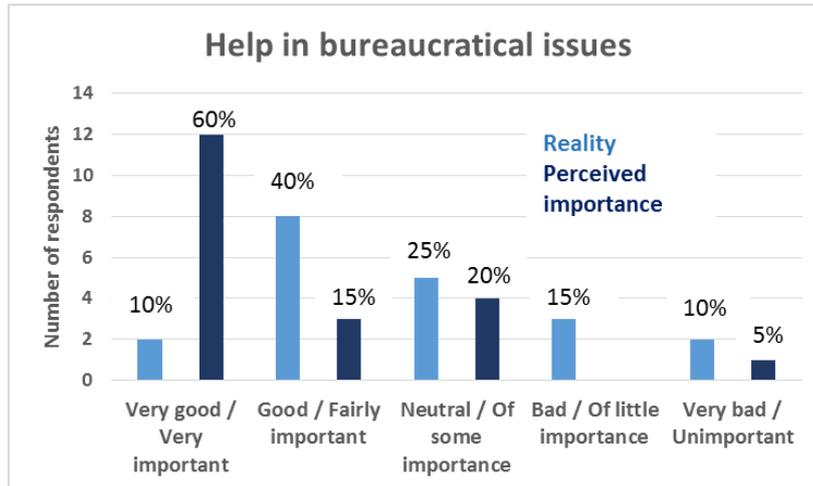


Figure 18. Help in bureaucratic issues

Altogether 50% of the respondents estimated the home organization's help in bureaucratic issues either "very good" or "good" in reality. 75% of the respondents would consider the help very or fairly important. In comparison, 10% of the respondents estimated the home organization's help very bad and 5% reported they consider the help unimportant.

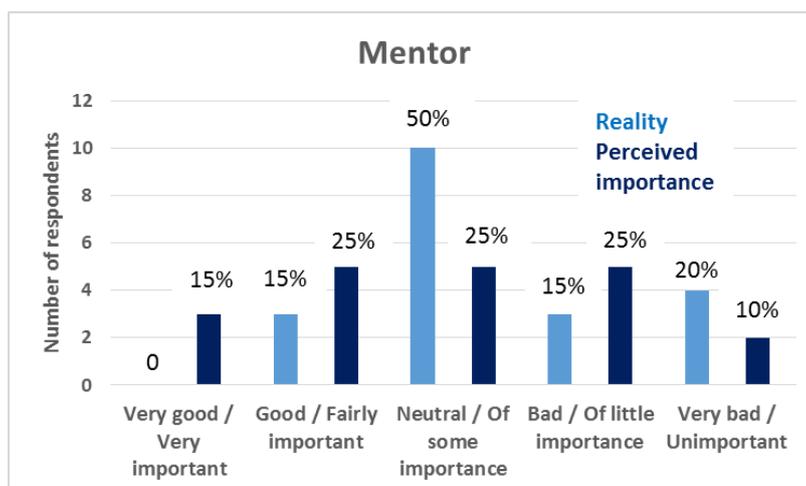


Figure 19. Mentor

As can be seen from the column chart above, the opinions about a mentor varied significantly. In reality 50% of the respondents estimated a mentor with "neutral". Additionally, 15% of the respondents evaluated a mentor good and the other 15% bad. Overall 40% of the respondents would consider a mentor either very or fairly important. However, 35% of the respondents think mentor is "of little importance" or "unimportant".

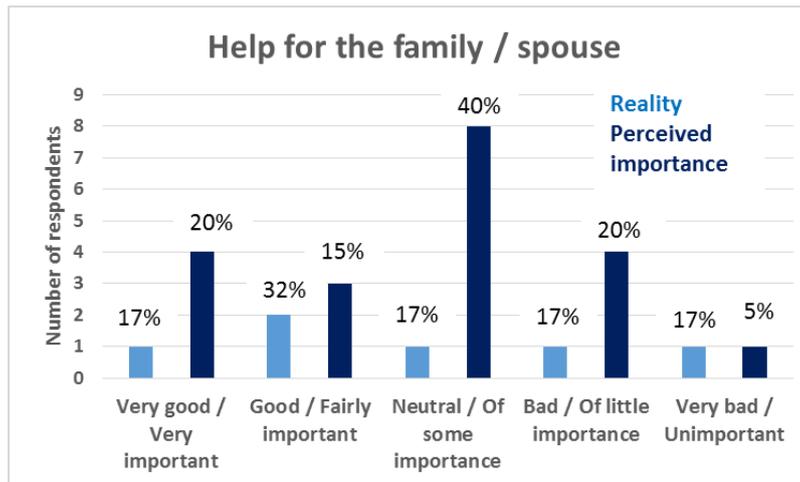


Figure 20. Help for the family / spouse

In the figure above the 6 respondents with accompanying family or spouse answered on the reality of the help the family received and all 20 respondents on how important the help for the family or spouse is estimated to be. In reality 49% of the respondents stated the help for the family from the home organization was either "very good" or "good". On the contrary, 34% reported the help having been "bad" or "very bad". The perceived importance varied among the respondents. However, 40% of the respondents evaluated the help to be "of some importance".

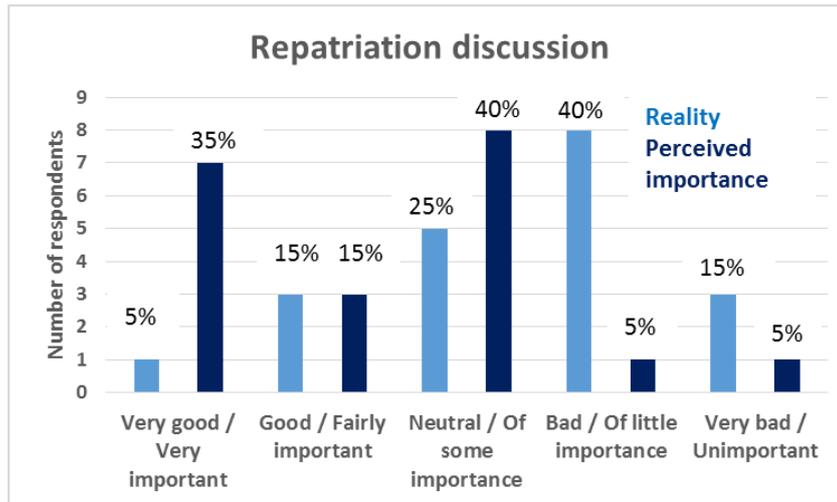


Figure 21. Repatriation discussion

Repatriation discussions were considered "very good" or "good" by 20% of the respondents. On the other hand 55% stated the discussions having been "bad" or "very bad". Overall, 50% evaluated repatriation discussions very or fairly important and additional 40% estimated them being "of some importance".

Table 1. Was there something else you would have expected from the home organization when returning home?

Was there something else you would have expected from the home organization when returning home?
"I did not receive the tax compensation"
"Help in the tax issues"
"I would have liked to get information about my up-coming tasks earlier"
"Better utilization of the new talents after the return, new work tasks were not appropriate"

“Repatriation discussion would have been very beneficial and additionally the whole repatriation process could have been better organized”
“I stayed at hotels (2 years, 3 different hotels) on expense of my employer. It was an easy and carefree solution for a person alone at the assignment. When I returned home there were no discussions, I returned back to somewhat similar tasks as prior to the assignment.
“The clarification of the work position”
“No because the work tasks continued in Finland”

In the table above are the answers that the respondents wanted to add concerning the expectations from the home organization when returning from the assignment. Three main aspects can be concluded from the answers; more help on the tax issues, adequate information about the work tasks back in the home organization in time and better utilization of the newly acquired skills and knowledge. Additionally, the need for repatriation discussions can be noticed.

4.4 Personal points of view

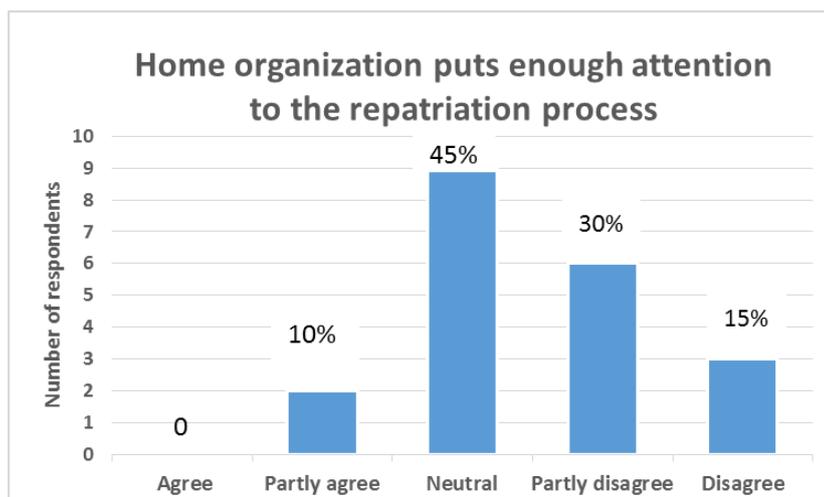


Figure 22. Home organization puts enough attention to the repatriation process

45% of the respondents either "partly disagree" or "disagree" that the home organization puts enough attention to the repatriation process. Another 45% of the respondents answered the question with "neutral".

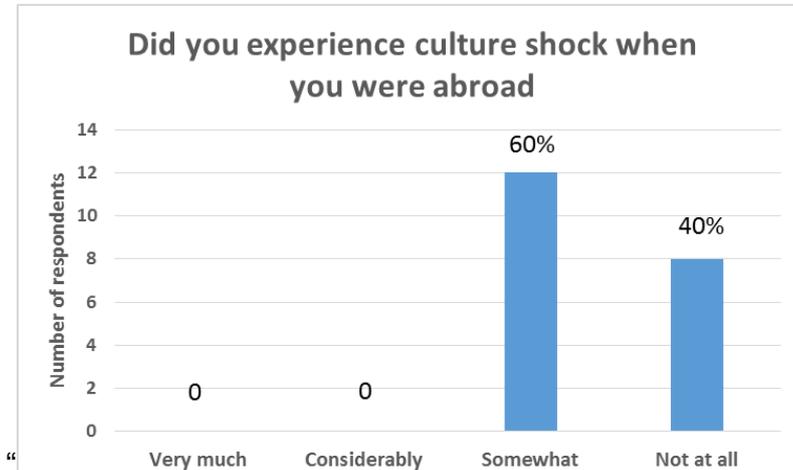


Figure 23. Did you experience culture shock when you were abroad

As can be seen from the column chart above, 60% of the respondents reported experiencing somewhat culture shock when they were abroad. 40% of the respondents claimed that they did not experience culture shock at all.

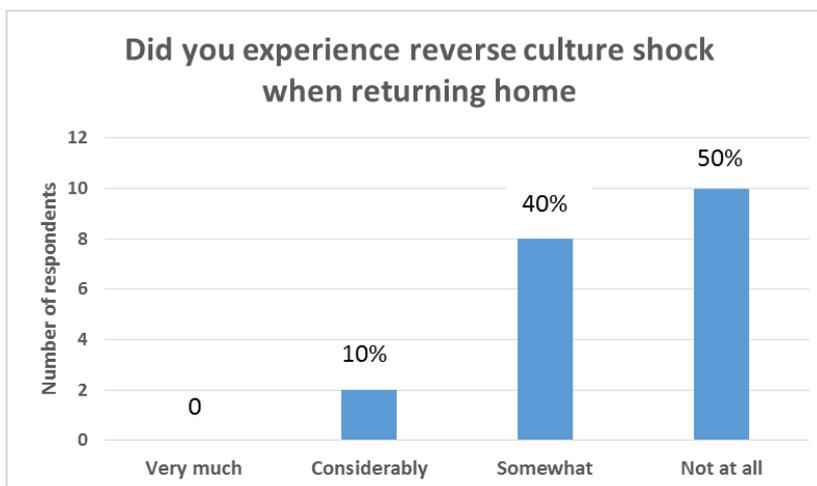


Figure 24. Did you experience reverse culture shock when returning home

Above can be seen that half of the respondents experienced no reverse culture shock when returning back to Finland. 40% reported having experienced reverse culture shock "somewhat" and 10% stated they experienced considerable

reverse culture shock. It should be noticed that in the figure 23 no respondents claimed experiencing culture shock considerably or very much while abroad but when returning 10% experienced considerable reverse culture shock.

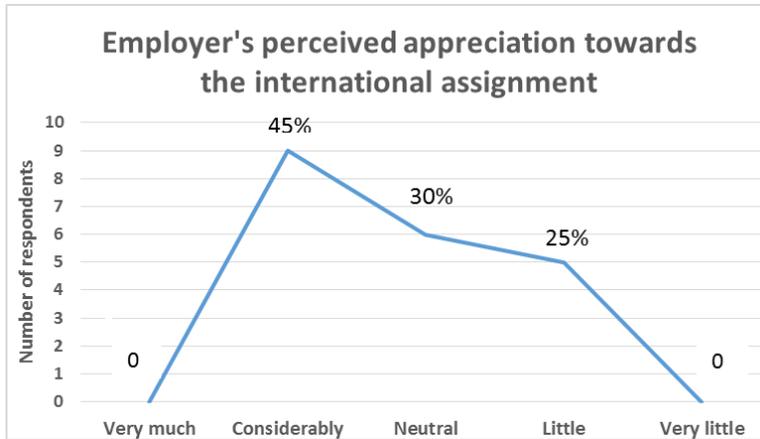


Figure 25. Employer's perceived appreciation towards the international assignment

As can be seen from the line graph above, 45% of the respondents feel that their employers appreciate the international assignment considerably. 30% stated that employer's appreciation is "neutral" and 25% claimed it to be "little".

4.5 Effect on professional career

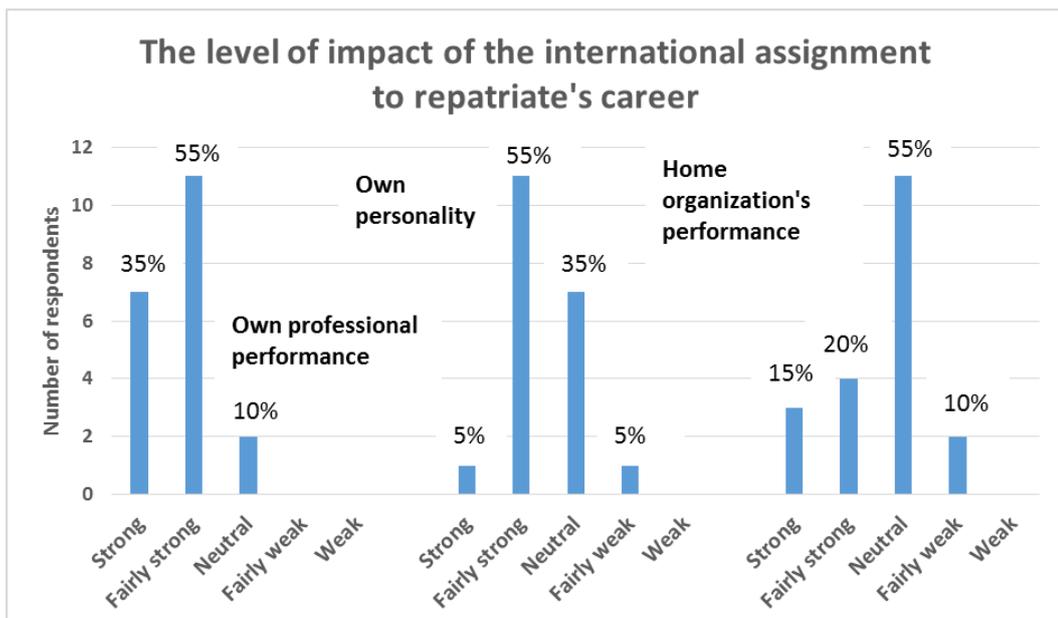


Figure 26. The level of impact of the international assignment to repatriate's career

Altogether 90% of the respondents consider the impact of the assignment to their own professional performance having been "strong" or "fairly strong". The impact of the assignment to their own personality has been "fairly strong" by 55% of the respondents. The impact on the home organization's performance had more deviation among the respondents. 35% stated the impact having been "strong" or "fairly strong" and 55% considered it to have been "neutral".

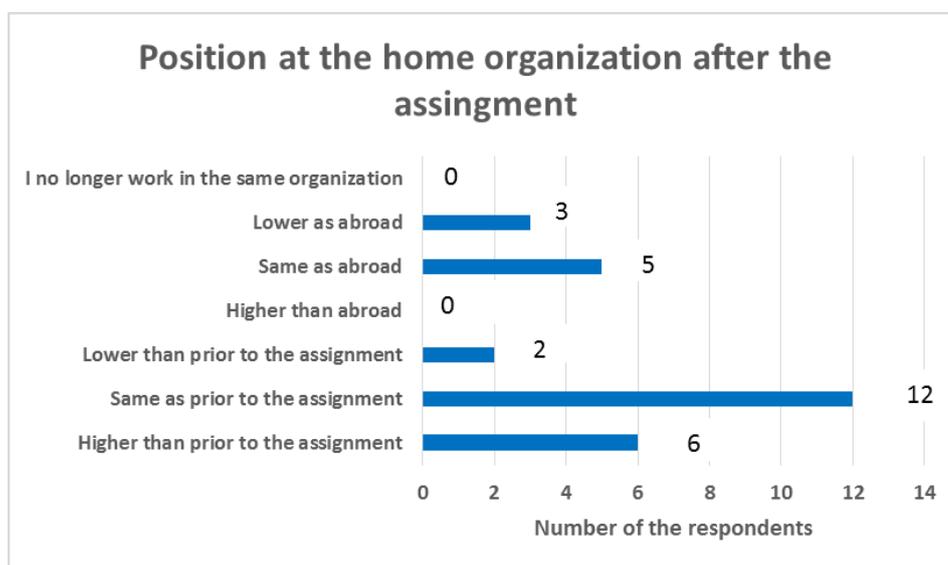


Figure 27. Position at the home organization after the assignment

The bar chart above represents a multi-choice-question where the respondents were asked to mark all the statements that apply. All the respondents stated still working in the same organization, 3 people at a lower position than abroad and 5 at the same position as abroad. 2 respondents reported the work position being lower than prior to the assignment whereas 6 people claimed the position being higher than prior the assignment. 12 people stated that the work position after the assignment is the same as before the assignment.

Table 2. Feel free to add some own comments concerning the topic

Feel free to add some own comments concerning the topic
<p>“Assignments can be very varying. Some people move most of their belongings and their whole family for 1-3 years to a certain location – it is very different than going alone for 1-2 years basically with only a suitcase as a hotel room or a furnished apartment is offered on the expense of the employer. In such cases it can also be that the assignee visits Finland every 2-3 months for a week or two again on the expense of the employer. ”</p>
<p>“The organization should better utilize the assignees experience both at the assignment and after it.”</p>
<p>“Abroad I did not have to pay for housing and I received daily allowance but I did not have any other benefits. Pension was accumulated also from the work that I did abroad.”</p>

The last question in the survey was to add own comments concerning the topic and the comments can be seen on the table above. One of the respondents raised an important point in annotating how versatile the assignments can be. Another respondent wanted to raise more awareness on better utilizing the whole expatriation process. Third respondent reminded that pension is accumulated from the work that is done abroad as well.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction to conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to further investigate the entire repatriation process and discover how the Finnish international assignees feel about that particular phase. The research questions which were first presented in the introduction section are:

- Which are the factors the repatriates would expect from the home organization when returning from the international assignment
- How do the repatriates feel the international assignment affected their professional career

5.2 Conclusions of this thesis

5.2.1 Expectations from the home organization

According to the research of this thesis most repatriates consider repatriation discussions important. Additionally, the same topic was raised in the open question about the expectations from the home organization where repatriation discussions were mentioned by several respondents. According to the results in this thesis majority of the respondents estimated their discussions with the home organizations to have been bad or nonexistent and therefore it is something that the organizations could improve.

Assistance for the family and spouse at the time of repatriation is in this research perceived to have some importance. This is in accordance with Paik et al who stated that Scandinavians do not necessarily want outside intervention into their family lives and do not think that the employer should be responsible for the spouse. (Paik et.al., 2002, 643)

The research of this thesis revealed that the home organization's assistance in the moving process was expected by the respondents. Moreover, the respondents considered help in the bureaucratic issues being very important and expected. Especially tax issues were highlighted by several respondents.

Many respondents in this research would have expected the employer to be more up to date on the up-coming work tasks that the assignee was supposed to perform back in Finland. The information about the future did not seem to reach the respondents and this created dubiety. According to this survey, the perceived importance of a mentor was deviated. It can be assumed that this type of peer support is not something that everyone considers they need. However, organizations should take this into consideration and offer mentoring to the employees who regard it as helpful.

Better utilization of newly developed skills and competencies was expected by many respondents. They felt like the employer did not fully exploit their firsthand experience. Furthermore, in the open question about the expectations from the employer after the return multiple respondents expressed similar thoughts about the better utilization of the new skills. The same situation was mentioned by Adler and Gundersen (2008, 292-293) who argued that the resocialized returnees do not consider that their new skills are needed in their work back in the home organization.

Respondents in this research would additionally expect their home organizations to put more attention to the entire repatriation process. Majority of the international assignees were not satisfied with how the repatriation process was conducted in their home organizations. This aspect has also been raised by Nery-Kjerfve and McLean (2012, 623) who argued that the lack of repatriation procedures hinders the repatriate's adjustment back to the home organization.

5.2.2 Impact on professional career

According to this research the respondents were capable of extensively expanding their networks whilst they were abroad. As Dowling and Welch stated, the connections that are created abroad, can be very valuable when the repatriate returns back to one's home organization. (Dowling and Welch, 2004, 69-71) Furthermore, the research in this thesis revealed that a vast majority of the respondents think that the international assignment helped them in acquiring new skills and knowledge which inherently helps the respondents in their professional

career. Majority of the respondents estimated that their persona was affected by the international assignment. This is in accordance with Paik et al. (2002, 646) who argued that the international assignment very often changes the employee. Additionally, Mutsuddi (2012, 133) has stated that it is very important for the home organizations to recognize this change and act accordingly.

Majority of the respondents considered that the international assignment had a strong impact on respondent's own professional performance. It can additionally be presumed to have a positive impact on the employee's professional career. Additionally, in the respondents' opinion their international assignment had some impact on the performance of the home organization. According to the survey, the better understanding of the organization as a whole was increased during the international assignment and it can be seen to deepen the employee-employer relationship.

Results of this survey expose that the assignees' positions back in the home organization were somewhat deviated. However, majority of the respondents hold a position similar as the one prior to the assignment which leads to the conclusion that the international assignment did not affect the repatriate's career in terms of position. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that after the return some respondents had a higher and some a lower position than prior to the assignment. It should be noticed that all the respondent's reported still working in the same organization as prior to the assignment. This is consistent with Paik et al. (2002, 643), who argued that Scandinavian repatriates loyalty towards the employer is high and they are inclined in staying with their current company.

As one of the respondents stated in the survey's open question, the international assignments together with international assignees are exceedingly diverse. It is very difficult to come up with solutions and procedures which would be fitting in every situation. This has also been stated by Hyder and Lövblad (2007, 277)

5.3 Suggestions for further research

As the repatriation phase is still left with fairly little attention, it would be beneficial to study the topic further. It would be interesting to research whether there is a

difference in what males and females expect from their employers when returning back to Finland. Another interesting topic would be to design a repatriation program for a given organization.

For the future researchers I would recommend starting the search for the respondents early enough to ensure a sufficient number of responses. Most likely there will be obstacles during the thesis process but it is important to stay positive and focus on the end goal.

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Appendix 1. Survey in Finnish

Suomalaisten ulkomaankomennustyöntekijöiden takaisintuloprosessi (The repatriation process of Finnish international assignees)

Hei,

olen Netta Löyvä ja opiskelen Turun Ammattikorkeakoulussa kansainvälistä kauppaa englanniksi. Teen opinnäytetyötäni suomalaisten ulkomaankomennustyöntekijöiden takaisintuloprosessista. Kun keräsin tietoa ulkomaankomennuksista, huomasin, että työnantajat usein jättävät takaisintulovaiheen pienemmälle huomiolle. Tästä syystä halusin keskittää opinnäytetyöni juuri tähän aiheeseen.

Jos olet ollut vähintään 3 kuukauden ulkomaankomennuksella työnantajasi lähettämänä ja olet jo palannut takaisin Suomeen, on sinulla nyt loistava tilaisuus osallistua kyselyyni ja kertoa, miten takaisintuloprosessi hoidettiin sinun kohdallasi. Kyselyn täyttäminen vie noin 5 minuuttia ja siitä olisi äärettömän suuri apu opinnäytetyöni teossa.

Kysely tehdään täysin anonymisti ja ketään ei ole mahdollista tunnistaa siitä. Kyselystä saatu tieto on luottamuksellista ja sitä käytetään vain opinnäytetyössäni. Toivon, että vastaisit kyselyyni mahdollisimman pian, viimeistään 16.5. Opinnäytetyöni julkaistaan myöhemmin englanniksi osoitteessa www.theseus.fi.

Kiitos paljon jo etukäteen!

Ystävällisin terveisin,
Netta Löyvä

Yleiset tiedot

*

Sukupuoli

- Mies
- Nainen

*

Ikä ulkomaankomennuksen aikaan

- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 tai vanhempi

*

Siviilisääty ulkomaankomennuksen aikaan

- Sinkku
- Parisuhteessa /avoliitossa
- Avioliitossa / rekisteröidyssä parisuhteessa

*

Oliko sinulla lapsi(a) ulkomaankomennuksen aikaan?

- Kyllä
- Ei

*

Millä alalla työskentelet?

Yrityksen henkilöstömäärä Suomessa (noin)

- Alle 250
- 250 - 1 000
- 1 000 - 3 000

- 3 000 - 6 000
- 6 000 - 10 000
- Yli 10 000

Ulkomaankomennus

*

Missä maassa olit ulkomaankomennuksella?

*

Olitko suorittanut aiempia ulkomaankomennuksia?

- Kyllä
- En

Jos kyllä, kuinka monta?

*

Kuinka pitkä ulkomaankomennuksesi oli?

- Alle 6 kuukautta
- 6kk - 1 vuosi
- 1v - 3v
- Yli 3 vuotta

*

Olitko ulkomaankomennuksella yksin vai oliko perheesi mukana?

- Yksin
- Perheen kanssa

Seuraava kysymys koskee ulkomaankomennuksesi laadun arviointia niin ammatillisella kuin henkilökohtaisellakin osa-alueella. *Vastaa toiseksi viimeiseen kysymykseen vain, jos perheesi oli mukana ulkomaankomennuksella.*

- | | Täysin samaa mieltä | Osittain samaa mieltä | Neutraali | Osittain eri mieltä | Täysin eri mieltä |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Saavutin uusia kykyjä ja tietoa | <input type="radio"/> |

Ymmärrän yrityksen kokonaiskuvaa paremmin	<input type="radio"/>				
Laajensin verkostoani	<input type="radio"/>				
Sopeuduin paikalliseen kulttuuriin	<input type="radio"/>				
Opin ja käytin paikallista kieltä (työntekijä)	<input type="radio"/>				
Opin ja käytin paikallista kieltä (perhe)	<input type="radio"/>				
Tutustuin uusiin ihmisiin (paikallisia tai ulkomaalaisia)	<input type="radio"/>				

Ennako-odotukset kotiorganisaatiolta

*

Onko yrityksessä, jossa työskentelit ulkomaankomennuksen aikaan, muodollista takaisintulo-ohjelmaa ulkomailta palaaville työntekijöille?

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

Miten arvioisit työnantajaltasi saamasi avun takaisintulovaiheessa seuraavilla osa-alueilla:

Avustus muuttovaiheessa (uuden asunnon löytäminen, kodin tavaroiden siirto)
 Avustus byrokraattisissa asioissa (työlupien peruminen, veroneuvonta)
 Mentori (aiemmin ulkomaankomennukselta palannut henkilö, joka tukee omien kokemustensa kautta)

Avustus perheelle (lasten kouluasiat, puolison työnhaku) *Vastaa vain, jos perheesi oli mukana ulkomaankomennuksella.*

Takaisintulokeskustelu (keskustelu esimiehen tms. kanssa siitä, miten työkomennus meni, mitkä työntekijän odotukset ova nyt ja miten työntekijä näkee tulevasuutensa yrityksessä)

	Erittäin hyvä	Hyvä	Neutraali	Huono	Erittäin huono
Avustus muuttovaiheessa	<input type="radio"/>				
Avustus byrokraattisissa asioissa	<input type="radio"/>				
Mentori	<input type="radio"/>				
Avustus perheelle	<input type="radio"/>				

Takaisintulokeskustelu



Arvioi kuinka tärkeäksi kokisit työnantajan avun edellisen kysymyksen osa-alueilla.

Avustus muuttovaiheessa (uuden asunnon löytäminen, kodin tavaroiden siirto)

Avustus byrokraattisissa asioissa (työlupien peruminen, veroneuvonta)

Mentori (aiemmin ulkomaankomennukselta palannut henkilö, joka tukee omien kokemustensa kautta)

Avustus perheelle (lasten kouluasiat, puolison työnhaku)

Takaisintulokeskustelu (keskustelu esimiehen tms. kanssa siitä, miten työkomennus meni, mitkä työntekijän odotukset ova nyt ja miten työntekijä näkee tulevasuutensa yrityksessä)

	Erittäin tärkeä	Melko tärkeä	Jonkin verran tärkeä	Ei kovin tärkeä	Ei lainkaan tärkeä
Avustus muuttovaiheessa	<input type="radio"/>				
Avustus byrokraattisissa asioissa	<input type="radio"/>				
Mentori	<input type="radio"/>				
Avustus perheelle	<input type="radio"/>				
Takaisintulokeskustelu	<input type="radio"/>				

*

Oliko jotain muuta, jota olisit odottanut työnantajaltasi takaisintulovaiheessa?

Omat tuntemukset

*

Panostaako työnantajasi mielestäsi tarpeeksi ulkomaankomennuksen takaisintulovaiheeseen?

Täysin samaa mieltä Osittain samaa mieltä Neutraali Osittain eri mieltä Täysin eri mieltä

*

Koitko kulttuurishokkia, kun lähdit ulkomaankomennukselle?

- En ollenkaan
- Jonkin verran
- Huomattavasti
- Erittäin suuresti

*

Koitko takaisintuloshokkia, kun palasit Suomeen?

- En ollenkaan
- Jonkin verran
- Huomattavasti
- Erittäin suuresti

*

Koetko, että työnantajasi arvostaa ulkomaantyökomennustasi?

- Hyvin paljon
- Paljon
- Neutraali
- Vähän
- Hyvin vähän

Vaikutus uraan

*

Millainen vaikutus ulkomaankokemuksella on oman arviosi mukaan seuraaviin osa-alueisiin

	Suuri	Melko suuri	Neutraali	Melko pieni	Pieni
Oma ammatillinen suoriutuminen	<input type="radio"/>				
Oma persoona (muutuitko matkalla)	<input type="radio"/>				

Työnantajan suoriutuminen



*

Arvioi asemasi työntekijänä kotiorganisaatiossasi ulkomaankomennuksesi jälkeen. Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat.

- Korkeampi kuin ennen komennusta
- Sama kuin ennen komennusta
- Alhaisempi kuin ennen komennusta
- Korkeampi kuin ulkomailla
- Sama kuin ulkomailla
- Alhaisempi kuin ulkomailla
- En enää työskentele samassa organisaatiossa

Tuleeko mieleesi jotain muuta asiaan liittyvää? Kerro vapaasti.

Suuri kiitos kyselyyni vastaamisesta! Oikein mukavaa päivänjatkoa!

Appendix 2. Survey in English

The repatriation process of Finnish international assignees (Suomalaisten ulkomaankomennustyöntekijöiden takaisintuloprosessi)

Hey,

I'm Netta Löyvä and I'm studying international business in English in Turku University of Applied Sciences. I'm writing my thesis about the repatriation process of Finnish international assignees. When I was gathering information about international assignments I noticed that the repatriation process was often left with less attention by the home organizations. Therefore I wanted to focus my thesis on this exact topic.

If you have completed an international assignment which lasted for at least 3 months, were abroad sent by your employer and have already returned to Finland, you have a brilliant chance to participate in my survey and let me know how you think the repatriation phase was handled in your case. The survey takes about 5 minutes and it would help me tremendously in my thesis process.

The survey is done absolutely anonymous and it will not be possible to trace anyone from it. The information gathered from the survey is confidential and will only be used in my thesis work. I hope that you can answer my survey as soon as possible, at the latest 16th of May. The thesis will be later on published in English on www.theseus.fi.

Thank you very much already in advance!

Best wishes,
Netta Löyvä

General information

*

Gender

- Male
- Female

*

Age at the time of the international assignment

- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

*

Marital status at the time of the international assignment

- Single
- In a relationship / cohabiting
- Married / in a registered partnership

*

Did you have children at the time of the international assignment?

- Yes
- No

*

In which industry do you work?

How many people does your home organization employ in Finland? Approximately

- Less than 250
- 250 - 1 000
- 1 000 - 3 000
- 3 000 - 6 000
- 6 000 - 10 000
- Over 10 000

International assignment

*

What was the country of the international assignment

*

Had you had previous international assignments?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how many?

*

How long was your international assignment?

- Less than 6 months
 6 months – 1 year
 1 year – 3 years
 Over 3 years

*

Did you go on the international assignment alone or were you accompanied by family (spouse, children)?

- Alone
 With family

Next question is about estimating the quality of the stay both professionally and personally. *Please, answer the second last question only if you were on the assignment accompanied by you family.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Acquiring new skills and knowledge	<input type="radio"/>				
Understanding of the organization better as a whole	<input type="radio"/>				
Widening network	<input type="radio"/>				
Accumulation to the local culture	<input type="radio"/>				
Learning and using the local language (repatriate)	<input type="radio"/>				
Learning and using the local language (family)	<input type="radio"/>				
Making new friends (local or foreign)	<input type="radio"/>				

Expectations from the home organization

*

Is there a formal repatriation program in your company?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

How would you rate the assistance and support you received from your home organization when you returned on the following issues

Assistance in the moving process (assistance in finding an accommodation, shipment of household effects)

Help in bureaucratic issues (cancellation of the working permits and tax consultation)
Mentor (someone who has been through the same experiences in the past and through that supports the repatriate)

Help for the family/spouse (assistance on the school issues, for the spouse to find a new job) *Please, answer only if you were on the assignment accompanied by your family.*

Repatriation discussion (discussions with supervisor or similar about how the international assignment went, what are the employees expectations now, how does one see one's future in the company)

	Very Good	Good	Neutral	Bad	Very Bad
Assistance in the moving process	<input type="radio"/>				
Help in bureaucratic issues	<input type="radio"/>				
Mentor	<input type="radio"/>				
Help for the family/spouse	<input type="radio"/>				
Repatriation discussion	<input type="radio"/>				

Please estimate, how important would you consider the help from the home organization in the issues from the previous question:

Assistance in the moving process (assistance in finding an accommodation, shipment of household effects)

Help in bureaucratic issues (cancellation of the working permits and tax consultation)
Mentor (someone who has been through the same experiences in the past and through that supports the repatriate)

Help for the family/spouse (assistance on the school issues, for the spouse to find a new job)

Repatriation discussion (discussions with supervisor or similar about how the international assignment went, what are the employees expectations now, how does

one see one's future in the company)

	Very important	Fairly important	Of some importance	Of little importance	Unimportant
Assistance in the moving process	<input type="radio"/>				
Help in bureaucratic issues	<input type="radio"/>				
Mentor	<input type="radio"/>				
Help for the family/spouse	<input type="radio"/>				
Repatriation discussion	<input type="radio"/>				

*

Was there something else you would have expected from the home organization when returning home?

Personal points of view

*

Do you feel like the home organization puts enough attention on the repatriation process?

- Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

*

Did you experience culture shock when you were abroad?

- Not at all
 Somewhat
 Considerably
 Very much

*

Did you experience reverse culture shock when coming back to Finland?

- Not at all
 Somewhat
 Considerably
 Very much

*

Do you feel like the employer appreciates your international assignment?

- Very much
- Considerably
- Neutral
- Little
- Very little

Effect on professional career

*

What is the impact of the international assignment in your opinion in the following issues:

	Strong	Fairly strong	Neutral	Fairly weak	Weak
Your own professional performance	<input type="radio"/>				
Your persona (how much did you change during the international assignment)	<input type="radio"/>				
The home organization's performance	<input type="radio"/>				

*

Please estimate your position as an employee at your home organization after your international assignment. Mark all that apply.

- Higher than prior to the assignment
- Same as prior to the assignment
- Lower than prior to the assignment
- Higher than abroad
- Same as abroad
- Lower than abroad
- I no longer work in the same organization

Feel free to add some own comments concerning the topic.

A large, empty text input field with a light gray border. On the right side, there is a vertical scroll bar with a small square slider. At the bottom left and right corners, there are small navigation arrows (left and right respectively).

Thank you very much for answering my survey! Have a great day!