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## Course of international assignment - individual and organizational perspective

### Introduction

Progressing degree of globalization and internationalization of companies has resulted in the fact that competition on the world market is greater than ever. Companies must, therefore, be managed both in the worldwide aspect - as if the world was one great market, as well as the local aspect, by perceiving the world as a group of many separate and loosely related markets [Armstrong M., 2005, p. 105]. Initially the interest of researchers and practitioners was concerned, first of all, with the issues related to production, marketing or strategy building, however, with time, it extended also on personnel issues. As a result, we have observed gradual departure from narrow treatment of international HRM often understood as hiring employees in an international company in its foreign branches, for the benefit of treating international HRM as all strategies and practical solutions concerning personnel problems in the process of internationalization of companies [Scullion, 2001, p. 288]. Therefore, we can assume, like A. Poczowski, that international HRM are highly qualified operations of regulating nature, focused on effective acquisition and use of human capital in a company operating on international markets [Poczowski A., 2008, p. 90]. As can easily be noticed, international HRM is more difficult than management of within the boundaries of one country. It results, among others, from [see Armstrong M., 2005, p.103 and Poczowski A., 2008, pp.91-92]:

- greater complexity of human resources resulting from greater heterogeneousness of employment in an international company (employees are differentiated by the country they come from) <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the basis of subject literature we can distinguish three categories of countries and

- greater number and complexity of factors affecting personnel decision making (macroeconomic environment, technological innovations, free flow of goods and services or changing legal regulations on a local and global scale)
- greater number of tasks/activities as compared to companies operating on only one market (e.g. trainings preparing for the departure, orientation in tax and legal regulations of host countries, preparation of special remuneration packages, etc.)
- the need for acquisition of the best employees for international operations, regardless of their country of origin and frequent interventions of the company in personal life of departing employees and their families which accompany them
- cultural diversity, including various cultures, social systems or legal requirements
- communication difficulties (geographic dispersion prevents personal contact which cannot be replaced by even the most modern electronic communication systems; an additional difficulty is language diversity of employees working in the company)
- greater risk of functioning of an international organization, including political risk, terrorism, financial risk, foreign exchange risk or risk related to failure of an employee sent to work abroad.

Taking into consideration the above factors, it seems obvious that multinational companies (MNCs) need managers and top class specialists who are able to think and act according to the standards of global markets, with simultaneous consideration for expectations of local markets. As a result, international assignments that managers and specialists are sent on, start to be a more and more common practice in international organizations [see Liu, Y., 2009, p. 307]. Thus, it is worth looking closer at the specific nature of an international assignment - its goals, costs, risk, but - first of all, employees participating in it.

### **1. Expatriation process - model perspective**

By analyzing subject literature, various terms can be found, referring to an international assignment as well as a person participating in it. We can observe evolution from a manager from the host country, employed in the mother country by an international company, through a manager-expatriate, delegated to a foreign branch of an organization, to a global and transnational manager

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the corresponding three groups of employees, i.e. PCN (parent-country nationals) the country of origin of a given organization and the group of employees working there, HCN (host-country nationals) the host country where the agency, branch or another organizational form of an international enterprise is located, hiring local employees, as well as TCN (third-country nationals) a third country where the company or its branch conducts business activities and from which financial, material and human resources are acquired [see Poczowski A (ed.), 1999, p.11].

with competencies enabling such a person functioning on various markets [Pocztowski A., 2008, pp.94-95 and Perkins S.J., 1997, p.513]. This evolution is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Competence evolution of an international manager

<b>Traditional expatriate manager</b>	<b>International manager</b>
Focuses on one overseas country/area	Deals with many countries, often in different regions
Adopts to living in one culture	Adapts to working in several cultures
Uses cross-cultural skills primarily on foreign assignments	Uses cross-cultural skills both at home and overseas
Works with and coaches people from one country	Works with and learns from many cultures
Expatriation is primarily to get the job done	“Transpatriation” is for career and organizational development
Develops a one-country perspective	Develops a global perspective

Source: Hurn B.J., 2006, p. 280.

Nowadays, not only managers go on international assignments, but also specialists, and sometimes ordinary employees. That is why the term ‘expatriates’ in this study refers to *all employees hired by an international company outside the borders of the country of their origin for a definite period of time in order to implement the tasks in business entities controlled by it*. At this point it is also worth taking into account the duration of an international assignment. Forms of international shifts, taking account of the period of staying outside the borders of the expatriate’s country of origin, are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Forms of international shifts of expatriates.

Long lasting stay	Long-term contracts, lasting 1-5 years (traditional) ( <i>permanent contract</i> )	An employee moves abroad for the duration of contract (1-5 years), usually with a partner and family. The purpose of the stay is implementation of the entrusted project/task
	Mid-term contracts, lasting 3-12 months ( <i>short term assignee</i> )	The purpose of the stay is to fill the skill gap in a given entity or to solve suddenly emerging difficulties and problems
Short-term stay	Turnover contracts, usually lasting from 1 to 3 months ( <i>rotational assignee</i> )	After several months of work in the country of the company’s origin, an employee leaves to work in a different country for several months
	Contracts for international commuting, usually lasting less than 1 month ( <i>commuter assignee; flexpatriate</i> )	An employee commutes to of a given organizational unit located in a different country, usually for weekly or two-week stays during which the expatriate’s family stays in the country of his or her origin

Source: on the basis of Juchnowicz M.(ed.), 2009, p.477.

Apart from the aforementioned types of delegation to work abroad, we can distinguish also other non-standard, but becoming more and more significant, forms of work on foreign markets. They include, among others, temporary task (employees from the country of origin regularly set out on weekly or two-week stays in a different country, performing fixed task there), design works (an employee leaves as a member of international research and development teams), virtual tasks in the form of teleworking (without the need to leave the country of origin). The aforementioned forms are intended to limit high costs accompanying traditional forms of expatriation.

The decision on which form of an international assignment to choose depends, above all, on the purposes of delegating an employee abroad by a company, a role performed there and the competence profile of the expatriate. Research findings available in literature show that expatriates are sent abroad in order to execute three groups of purposes that must exclude one another [see Collings D.G., Scullion H., 2007, pp.219-220 and Juchnowicz M.(ed.), 2009, p. 479]. These are:

- covering of designated posts (mainly managerial and specialist ones) in order to provide an organization branch with professional handling of processes implemented on host markets in accordance with the standards of the headquarters; it often results from competence gap among local staff
- transfer of knowledge and skills (training and improvement of employees on host markets or design works) and support in the process of developing corporate values
- development of operations on international markets.

Another classification applies to roles played by expatriates during an international assignment. Among available models, an interesting one seems to be the model developed by Petison P. and Johri L.<sup>2</sup> [Petison P., Johri L., 2008, pp. 744-756]. The authors base their model on two dimensions - readiness to perform tasks as well as management skills of local employees - and on this basis they determine the method and effectiveness of implementation of the entrusted tasks. These are:

- commander - the expatriate exercises direct control over a foreign branch of the company in order to minimize and avoid risk that may arise
- conductor - the expatriate is responsible for management of employees, so that they effectively performed their tasks, as well as guarantees cooperation among all entities involved in task implementation
- coach - the expatriate is responsible for training and development of potential, knowledge and skills of local employees; at the same time, the expatriate does not interfere with planning, organization and implementation of work in the teams, creating only an environment favourable for learning and development of local employees

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<sup>2</sup> This concept refers to the previous suggestion of A.W.Harzing [Harzing A.W., 2001, pp. 366-379].

- connector - the expatriate plays a control role through connection and building of long-term relations and commitment among the entities participating in the execution of tasks; these entities include a branch, headquarters, local suppliers and local communities.

The described roles are presented in the figure below.

Figure 1. The roles of expatriates

Managerial capabilities of local employees	high	<b>Coach</b>	<b>Connector</b>
	low	<b>Commander</b>	<b>Conductor</b>
		<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>
		Task readiness of local employees	

Source: Petison P., Johri L., 2008, p.748.

Apart from the above-discussed premises for sending an expatriate on an international assignment, an important thing are also motives directing this person, and these are - according to the declaration of the people concerned themselves: their desire to gain experience, professional development, improvement of the financial situation or creation of better possibilities of promotion and development of professional career<sup>3</sup>. However, we cannot forget that the successes and experience of an employee on the domestic market are not a sufficient guarantee of successful course of an international assignment. When delegating an employee to work abroad, it is necessary to take account of not only high technical competencies, but also personal characteristics and interpersonal skills facilitating work in an international environment (e.g. sensitivity to foreign cultures, tolerance or approval of a specific lifestyle involving frequent travels) or family situation<sup>4</sup>.

In the light of the presented analyses, there is no doubt that expatriation is a complex process that international organizations must learn to manage effectively. Therefore, many studies divide the entire process into stages, the most

<sup>3</sup> On the basis of the findings of empirical research conducted by the Chair of Human Capital Management of the Cracow University of Economics in the group of expatriates in the years 2010-2011.

<sup>4</sup> In many cases also the health condition of candidates and their families is taken into consideration, as well as the family members' attitude towards moving abroad and their acculturation capabilities [see Poczowski A., 2008, p. 95 and Trompenars F., Hampden-Turner Ch., 2005, p. 256].

frequent of which is a three-stage model distinguishing preparation (preparation of the assignment, selection of a candidate as well as preparation for the trip), the stay (being on an international assignment) and repatriation (return to the mother country). Such a division has been adopted also in the present study. Due to the complexity of the whole process, the issue of preparation and repatriation will only be mentioned, and the middle stage, i.e. the stay on an international assignment, will be discussed in detailed. This analysis will be supported by findings of empirical research carried out by the Chair of Human Capital Management of the Cracow University of Economics in the years 2010-2011 among expatriates and companies sending or receiving them for international assignments<sup>5</sup>.

## **2. Course of an international assignment**

### **2.1. Preparation**

Before the organization starts the broadly understood recruitment of a candidate for an expatriate, it must undertake a number of activities and settle several key issues:

- identify and define the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries of the process (the organization itself, its shareholders, customers, suppliers, etc., as well as the potential expatriate)
- assess alternatives of the assignment implementation (employment of a local manager, delegation of the expatriate to work or employment a global manager) and examine availability of material and intangible resources (among others, specify the amount of financial resources, availability of candidates, etc.)
- construct a profile of qualification and competence requirements for a candidate
- specify the strategy of an international assignment and indicate strategic objectives to be pursued by the expatriate
- specify the measures of the international assignment's success (the ratio of outlays to benefits, etc.)

The conducted research showed that the need to delegate an employee to work abroad resulted, first of all, from the need of creation and implementation of a new project, building and development of the company's operations abroad (including opening and subsequent management of a branch), as well as ensuring high quality of services, reorganization of the company or formation of an international team. For this purpose, the examined organizations searched for

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of preparing the article the author had only pilot research findings, covering a group of 7 expatriates and personnel departments of 2 companies - the headquarters and branches of an international corporation. Completion of in-depth research is scheduled for the end of 2011.

experienced candidates, capable of working in an international environment, open and flexible towards different cultures.

Only an organization prepared this way may begin the process of recruiting an employee sent on an international assignment. In the process of selection organizations most often reach to the analysis of documents, recruitment interview, recommendations or Assessment Center [Hurn B.J., 2006, pp. 279-286]. In the researched companies the process of internal recruitment started from obtaining from a candidate the declaration of willingness and readiness to leave and filling in surveys. Then the candidates underwent interviews, various types of selection tests, AC/DC, and in some cases - the decision was based on the superior's approval.

The last action undertaken by international organizations in the first stage of the expatriation process is preparation of the already selected candidate to go abroad. These activities usually include [Leopold J., etc., 2005, pp. 294-295]:

- cultural awareness improvement programs (these can be cultural trainings, more often however, organizations only provide information about the country of destination)
- language training (they may cover expatriates and persons accompanying them)
- study trips preceding the international assignment (their purpose is to become familiar with the new workplace, co-workers or the country itself; they are also often associated with looking for an apartment, school or day nursery for children)
- settlement of the trip's objectives, the method of their evaluation, the planned professional development as well as determination of remuneration package<sup>6</sup>.

Frequent practice applied by organizations is also assistance in finding or ensuring of an apartment for an expatriate, assistance in relocation and care for any formal issues (among others, work permit, visa, tax consultancy). These practices seem to confirm the findings of empirical research. In nearly 1 of cases, organizations provided expatriates with: language courses, relocation organization as well as provided a visit to the host country. Although the respondents emphasized that organizations prepared them for being expatriates mostly through care for current professional development (often they were expatriates many times), they completed most of the preparations (concerning, first of all, culture and preparation for the departure of the accompanying people)

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<sup>6</sup> Remuneration of employees delegated abroad usually differs from remuneration of employees not taking part in such assignments. Most often - apart from basic remuneration, it includes allowance for increased costs of living, expatriation allowance, housing allowance and allowance for the costs of relocation, allowance for the costs of travel of the expatriate and persons accompanying him/her, allowance for the costs of education or allowance for the accompanying person [see Leopold J. et al., pp. 294-295].

on their own. It is surprising that only in one case the organization covered also the expatriate's family with preparations for the trip. Therefore, we can be under an impression that companies send their best employees on international assignments (often those who already have such experience), assuming that they will deal with a new situation on their own. Thus, we may assume that organizations - despite technical preparation, still do not pay sufficient attention to activities facilitating the acculturation process of the expatriate and his or her family.

## 2.2. Stay

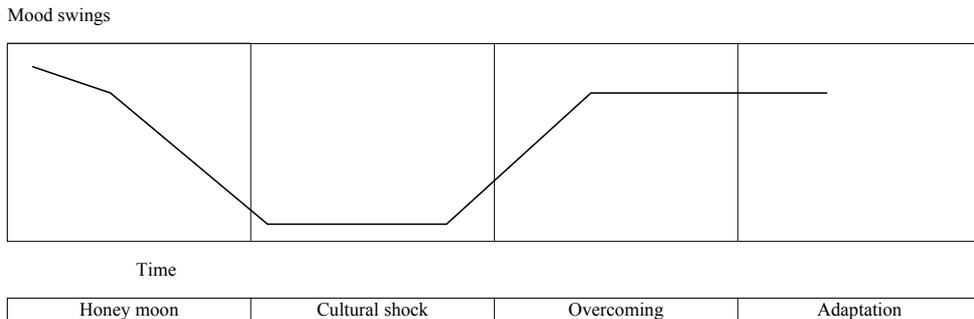
The process of preparation presented above is of strategic importance in the process of expatriation, since it directly affects the success of an international assignment. As shown by foreign research, the percentage of employees returning earlier ranges from 25 to 40% in developed countries and up to 70% in developing countries [see Luthans K.W., Farner S., 2002, p. 781 and Hofstede G., Hofstede G.J., 2007, pp. 338-339]. Organizations are reluctant to talk about outlays on international assignments, especially about the costs generated by unsuccessful international assignments. It is estimated that - depending on a post and location, direct costs of earlier ending of an international assignment, including training, remuneration and costs of relocation, can reach up to USD 80.000 [O'Sullivan S.L., et al, 2002, p.79]<sup>7</sup>. To this amount we should also add indirect costs, difficult to be estimated, associated with interruption of tasks implementation, sustained losses or lost possibilities for the development of markets or/and products [Luthans K.W., Farner S., 2002, p. 781]. Most of these returns are associated with inability to adapt to a new culture of the expatriate and/or - which is much more often, of persons accompanying him or her. The cultural shock referred to here is the phenomenon of emotional disorientation resulting from living and working in a cultural environment different from culture of the country of a given person's origin [Leopold J., etc., 2005, p.295]. The cultural shock usually does not happen straightaway, but after some period on the market of the host country. When the family goes with the expatriate, this shock is usually experienced more intensively by the partner staying at home (often also with children). It results from the fact that the person going to work is supported by local personnel and dedicates him- or herself to work, whereas accompanying persons must struggle with "the prose of everyday life" [Trompenars F., Hampden-Tuner Ch., 2005, p.256]. These theses seem to confirm the findings of empirical research. Even despite best preparations mentioned earlier in the study, it is not possible to avoid the problems or even difficulties in the first weeks of the stay abroad. In the provided answers we can identify 4

<sup>7</sup> According to other sources, these costs can amount to USD 55.000-150.000 or even more than USD 1.000.000 [see Lee H.W., 2007, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa5440/is\\_200709/ai\\_n21295139/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5440/is_200709/ai_n21295139/) and Luthans K.W., Farner S., 2002, p.781].

main categories of emerging problems, i.e. problems with language, daily life (logistics), problems resulting from cultural differences as well as those related to work in a new place of employment.

People staying abroad for some time also often mention mood swings, the course of which is quite accurately reflected by the acculturation curve, namely the curve of adaptation to new culture. It is presented in the figure below.

Figure 2. Typical course of the process of experiencing cultural shock



Source: Poczowski A., 2008, p. 97.

In the presented figure the feelings (positive or negative ones) are the function of time. The first phase (usually relatively short) is called a “honey moon” period<sup>8</sup>, when the expatriate is curious about new experiences, and the local community tries to be nice. After this period there can appear problems associated with different approach to work, the need to perform tasks or with home sickness. The symptoms of cultural shock may have the form of rash, loss of appetite, depression, insomnia, swelling or palpitation [see Poczowski A., 2008, p. 97 and Trompenaars F., Hampden-Turner, 2005, p. 256]. Cultural shock and the accompanying symptoms of physical ailments may be so strong that sometimes it is necessary to dismiss such a person from the international assignment. However, it is possible to overcome the cultural shock, thanks to the gradual learning of the rules of operation, assimilation of some local values or gaining greater confidence and building relations with the local community [G., Hofstede Hofstede G.J., 2007, p. 337]. F. Trompenaars and Ch. Hampden-Turner provide several possible scenarios of overcoming the cultural shock:

- two paths of severe cultural shock (applying to ca. 20% of managers) which lead

<sup>8</sup> In the subject literature we can encounter various terminology for particular phases of cultural shock. G. Hofstede calls them euphoria-cultural shock-adaptation-state of balance [see G., Hofstede Hofstede G.J., 2007, p.337-339]. On the other hand, De Cieri et al. suggest the following phases: the period of waiting and concerns - honey moon - the party is over - regeneration [see De Cieri H., et al, 1991, pp.379-380]. For the purpose of this study the nomenclature proposed by A. Poczowski [Poczowski A., 2008, pp.97-98] has been adopted.

to decrease in work efficiency and often involve dismissal of a manager from the international assignment; the first one consists in expressing contempt for local population, isolation or escape into alcohol, while the other one - in transferring responsibility for their failures on the local population as well as the conditions in the host country, often also indicating their families as victims of unfair local culture

- two paths of relative adjustment (applying to the group of 80% of managers) lead to gradual adaptation to the conditions of life and work, as well as achieving the expected effects of work; the first one is reached through awaiting and counting the time to return to the mother country, while the other one applies to persons who fully adapt to different conditions, benefit from cultural diversity, improve their position, increase innovativeness, and at the end of the trip often regret that the time of the international assignment has come to an end.

The length of the time scale of overcoming the cultural shock depends on the time of stay abroad. Persons leaving for short foreign stays (up to 3 months) declare going through all of the first three phases in such a short time. On the other hand, people on several-year long international assignments claim that the phase of cultural shock lasts approximately one year or longer and only after such a long time are they able to proceed to the next phase [G., Hofstede Hofstede G.J., 2007, p. 337]. These declarations seem to be confirmed by the surveyed expatriates. When asked for defining the emotions that accompanied them in the initial period of stay abroad, they most often indicated curiosity, sense of challenge, sense of appreciation as well as excitement and euphoria. In addition, they also mentioned home sickness, anxiety, frustration, sense of loss or solitude. As regards solitude, it was experienced mainly by everyone who went on an international assignment alone (without a partner). All expatriates agreed as to the fact that the experienced emotions were coming in waves – from anxiety or confusion at the beginning, through curiosity, euphoria and the sense of challenge, to the sense of appreciation (in most cases). The duration of such a “cycle” was individual and lasted from several weeks to approximately six months. Only the sense of solitude or home sickness came in waves and with various intensity.

An important part in overcoming the cultural shock may also be played by support of the headquarters and/or the host entity. When asked about the level and effectiveness of such support in the first weeks of their stay, the expatriates assessed them from very satisfactory, through „not bothering”, to the total lack of support. This evaluation was based, to a large extent, on subjective measures of actions actually undertaken by the company with regard to beliefs (expectations) of the expatriate as to the company’s obligations towards him or her. The forms of support for expatriates from parent companies include:

- permanent readiness **of the HR department in the country of origin** to provide assistance (the possibility of reporting every problematic situation or any other case, the possibility of sending complaints and comments to the organization mediating in the process of expatriation)
- **a coordinator** in the parent organization who visits the agency at various time intervals, so as to check whether everything goes properly (he has the opportunity to report the need to change the expatriate for emotional, organizational reasons, etc.), provides information about the situation in the country or helps in handling local issues of the expatriate, due to his or her rare presence in the mother country
- assistance of **a relocation agent**, whose task is to find an apartment, car, etc. in the host country
- support **in professional development** associated with the trip (providing coaching, language course, trainings)
- **financial support** of the expatriate's initiatives by the company (*"we will pay for insurance, but you have to find it"*, payment of the children's tuition fee, etc.)

Also the management and/or HR specialists supported expatriates in the first weeks of their stay. Although the respondents felt support of the aforementioned entities (e.g. through the possibility of turning to the team or the superior in any problematic situation), these entities have not undertaken pro-active steps towards the expatriates even once. Only in one case did the expatriate have **a sponsor** - a person on a managerial position in the corporate structure of the visited company, selected by the expatriate before the departure. The sponsor's tasks included assistance in matters requiring non-standard approach to solving professional problems abroad. Such a solution is also supported by M. Armstrong, encouraging companies to appoint the so-called career sponsor who is constantly in touch with an employee entrusted to him and, if necessary, provides help and acts as a mentor [Armstrong M., 2005, p. 112].

When discussing expatriation, we cannot however, forget about the main purpose of an international assignment - an employee delegated to work abroad must not only cope with different conditions and culture of life, but, first of all, fulfil professional duties. A tool often used for this purpose is performance management. In the case of employees delegated to work abroad we should bear in mind that one of the main determinants of their work's effectiveness is the effectiveness of the aforementioned adaptation process. As a result, the actual effects of the expatriate's work should be evaluated not earlier than after six months of the assignment. When assessing the expatriate's work on the basis of performance, we should, among others, use a tool examining the expatriate's behaviour at the working post, take into account the time needed for adaptation, consider the level of difficulty of any entrusted tasks as well as

determine evaluating entities cooperating with the expatriate on a current basis [O'Sullivan et al. 2002, p.81]. When asked whether they know how the goals related to their expatriation are assessed, the expatriates usually answered that they were subject to the global system of evaluation, binding in the whole organization. Usually two types of criteria were used in such a situation:

- **quantitative** (hard) ones – achievement of the agreed results (e.g. financial results of the branch), achievement of the assumed plans (e.g. sales plans) or relevance of the made decisions
- **qualitative** (soft) ones –, the course of cooperation in a foreign institution, relations with co-workers (superiors and/or subordinates), satisfaction of subordinate employees, involvement in the social life of the organization, etc.

The stay on an international assignment cannot also release employees from their further professional development. Therefore, they very often participate in trainings. The surveyed expatriates mentioned that cultural trainings conducted in the mother country brought them no or hardly any benefits. This may result from the fact that at that time the expatriates were “placed” in the cultural conditions of their mother countries. For this reason, a more sensible solution seems to be undergoing such a training during the stay abroad (usually 3 to 6 months from arrival) , when the expatriate has already experienced the first cultural shock. Such a training should be focused on the structure and relations with the local people, perception of the world, mentality, values or lifestyle patterns. Having already the first experiences and observations about the country, the expatriates will have the possibility of systematizing their knowledge about the country they have to live in as well as looking for the most effective solutions to the problems they have to deal with in a given moment [Selmer J., 2010, p. 43].

Apart from cultural trainings referred to before, the expatriates pursue their own path of trainings (set by the headquarters) or they are subject to the same trainings as local employees [see Armstrong M., 2005, p. 110-111]. A frequent practice is continuation of language trainings. All these actions depend, to a large extent, on the adopted policy of trainings and development (HRD). In the subject literature, we may find a statement that *international assignments need to be regarded as a phase in a systematic job rotation process*. This means that professional career of the expatriate should be planned carefully. It cannot be treated only as a form of promotion, but must also enable taking a series of posts after coming back to the country, taking account of the acquired knowledge, intercultural experience, as well as capabilities developed abroad [O'Sullivan et al. 2002, p.81]. As shown by the conducted research - negligence in this very sphere are most painfully perceived by expatriates and very strongly affect effectiveness of the next stage of an international assignment, i.e. repatriation.

### 2.3. Repatriation

Repatriation ends the process of delegation to work on a foreign market and involves the return of the expatriate and his or her family to the mother country and company. In the subject literature we can often find the opinion that the greatest problem encountered by international companies is re-adaptation after coming back to the country [Armstrong M., 2005, p.112]. expatriates frequently experience secondary cultural shock<sup>9</sup> that often seems to go unnoticed by their organizations, perceiving repatriation as a natural action, not another challenge. Expatriates staying for a long time outside their countries and parent organizations complain that they are beyond the centre of events, do not have a proper status, lose autonomy and are left on their own (both in terms of further career development and exclusion from professional environment) or - that their knowledge and experience gained abroad are not used properly [see Armstrong M., 2005, p.112 and Leopold J. et al., p.296]. Therefore, it is suggested that the organization should get involved in the process of preparing the expatriate to return from the international assignment, which will bring double-sided benefits. Such activities include, among others, trainings preparing for return (often associated with what is happening in the company, new legal regulations being prepared, if they have changed during the stay abroad, mentoring, etc.), creation of a career development plan (written guarantee of employment, covering a sequence of posts on which the expatriate may be employed after return), visits to the mother country (keeping in touch with the domestic unit so that the expatriate was "up to date" with the events in the company), logistic support (related to relocation and all associated formalities). In fact much more attention is paid to filling the gap after the expatriate in the structures of the host organization rather than his or her individual return [Leopold J., etc., 2005, p.296-297]. Negligence in this area is surprising because - as mentioned before, expatriation is very costly and organizations cannot afford to lose an employee that they have invested so much in, and who, in connection with disappointment - leaves the organization after coming back to the country. Expatriates covered by pilot research proved to be of similar opinion. On the basis of the conducted research, it seems that organizations were not always prepared for receipt of a returning employee and were not able to offer to such a person a post being a form of promotion. The respondents frequently emphasized that they had to prepare for return on their own (mainly actions of organizational nature) and their families were involved only in planning of issues related to life after coming

<sup>9</sup> In the first phase the expatriate has hopes and some concerns associated with coming back to the country, then - just after coming back to the country, there is a stage of excessive euphoria which develops into solitude, disappointment and doubts. Secondary cultural shock ends with achieving mental balance, however, it may turn into a crisis associated with the expatriate's failure to adapt to domestic conditions of working and living [see De Cieri H., et al, 1991, p. 380].

back to the mother country. The return to the country often involved the sense of uncertainty and discomfort in connection with the lack of knowledge as to how their further career in the parent organization would look like. Therefore, it seems justified to suggest that the companies should be more involved in the process of repatriation in a way making another change of the place of residence the least troublesome, the expatriates should know their future in the company, and organizations should fully use knowledge and experience gained by employees during international assignments.

### 3. Summary

In many cases an international assignment is deemed successful when it is finished in time and there is no need to “dismiss” the expatriate from the agency. On the other hand, a failure is the unplanned quitting of the employee during the stay abroad or immediately after his or her return [see Lee H.W., 2007]. A more and more frequent opinion, however, states that an international assignment should be treated as unsuccessful also when the entity (the expatriate and his or her organizational unit) does not reach the planned effects of work, the expatriate is not able to adapt to living in a new professional and cultural environment and experiences psychological withdrawal or the trip is interrupted by accompanying persons [see Lee W.H., 2007 and Lee P.-Ch., 2007, pp. 29-30]. Ambiguity of the definition of success/failure of expatriation is reflected also in the diversity of the ways of evaluation of an international assignment by the organization and expatriates themselves, and therefore these assessments may vary. In pilot surveys the expatriates unanimously assessed their assignments as totally successful. Among the determinants of success they listed: individual characteristics, attitude and skills (first of all building relations in the host country) and then the family situation, local context and actions of the organizations (both of the parent and local ones). On the other hand, companies participating in the research considered successful an assignment ended in time, with simultaneous lack of or very limited analyses of the mission’s efficiency (e.g. ROI).

In the light of the aforementioned analyses and the conducted research, it seems reasonable to popularize among international companies the concept of increasing involvement in preparation and coordination of the mission, greater care in management of a professional career of expatriates, as well as measurement of expatriation’s effectiveness. And the expatriates themselves - or persons aspiring to such type of professional career - should pay great attention to the development of their technical competences, interpersonal skills, intercultural sensitivity, as well as take into account acculturation capabilities of their families. Only such an approach will make an international assignment be assessed as completed with double success - of the organization as well as of the expatriate.

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### **Abstract**

*Progressing process of globalization and internationalization of companies puts new challenges in front of human resources management, which should undoubtedly include expatriation process management. Sending employees to international assignments entails the need for appropriate selection of candidates, their preparation for the journey, support during their stay, continuous monitoring of works, as well as preparation for return to the mother country. Errors or negligence in any phase of the expatriation process have unpleasant consequences for organization - both in connection with finance as well as the loss of prestige of the company itself or departure of the most talented employees who - discouraged by the international assignment, will leave the organization. How, therefore, should international assignment be organised to be successful?*

*In the presented paper the author wishes to focus mainly on the expatriate's stay on international assignment (the two remaining ones stages - preparation and repatriation, will be discussed in brief), by analyzing it from the point of view of the expatriate as well as the parent and the visited organization. Apart from the strictly organisational aspect of support of the expatriate's stay, the issues of socio-cultural adaptation as well as cultural shock, being an indispensable element of an international assignment, will be discussed.*

The paper has been supplemented with research findings which covered expatriates and organizations sending or accepting them for international assignments. The research was conducted by the Chair of Human Capital Management of the Cracow University of Economics in the years 2010 and 2011.