

## REPATRIATION: REFLECTIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON INDIVIDUALS, AROUND THE GLOBE

### REPATRIAÇÃO: REFLEXÕES SOBRE PRÁTICAS ORGANIZACIONAIS E SUAS CONSEQUÊNCIAS PARA OS INDIVÍDUOS, EM TODO O MUNDO

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to understand and analyze the field and focus of study on repatriation, promoting a discussion based on specific literature review. The motivation of this research comes from some precariousness in the emphasis to this stage of the process given by academic studies. Having the organization as field of study, the reviewed studies reinforce the practices and roles on a universalistic approach and, afterwards, aggregate the perspective of differentiation between size and moment of the company. In most cases, they are theoretical propositions, which have not been tested. On the other hand, the studies that emphasize the individuals reinforce individual nuances and changing processes, questioning the organizational practices, challenging the adoption of the Universalistic approach. Subjects such as knowledge (retention and management) and ROI were little discussed by this paper due to the few references available, but will be key to the future of the field.

**Keywords:** Repatriation; strategic human resources management; internationalization.

#### RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo entender e analisar o campo e foco de estudo sobre repatriação, provocando uma discussão embasada em revisão bibliográfica. A motivação de pesquisa surge de certa precariedade na ênfase dada pelos estudos acadêmicos a esta fase do processo. Os trabalhos, que têm como campo de estudo a organização, reforçam as práticas e papéis de forma universalista e depois agregam perspectivas de tamanho e momento da empresa. Na maioria das vezes, eles são proposições teóricas não testadas. Por outro lado, os trabalhos que enfatizam os indivíduos reforçam as nuances e processos de mudança individuais, questionando as práticas organizacionais. As diferenças individuais parecem todo tempo confrontar a adoção de práticas universalistas. Temas como a retenção e gestão do conhecimento e ROI foram assuntos pouco discutidos por este trabalho, em função da pouca disponibilidade de outras referências, mas serão chave no futuro do estudo deste tema.

**Palavras-chave:** Repatriação; gestão estratégica de recursos humanos; internacionalização.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The repatriation of professionals is a consequence, or the last stage of an expatriation process. In the current competitive scenario, more and more corporations become multinational or international, and, ultimately, they may have the expatriation of people as a strategy for organizational or individual developments. This context makes this theme strategic and contemporary.

This work aims to analyze the subject of repatriation, based on specific literature review in order to understand the field, focus of study, the methods used, and then analyze the main findings and potential gaps in the academic field. Motivation comes from some precariousness in the emphasis given to this stage of the process by the academic studies. The subject of international management of people has the expatriation of professionals as the focus, caring more specifically about the preparation for the departure of the professional from his/her country than about his/her return.

In a first analysis of the studies carried out in the last decade, we perceive that they are mainly divided into two groups: the repatriation having the organization as main actor and the repatriation focusing on the expatriated professional.

The matter does not seem to be exhausted since some models proposed have not been tested and the theory is undergoing construction. Repatriation is an important event as far as bringing the dilemma between universalistic practices versus individual differences to the surface. It also brings up the issue concerning the alignment of organizational demands and individual expectations. Although the global environment and scenario are more complex, some thoughts taken from the International Human Resources Management may also contribute to the field of study of strategic human resources management considering any domestic business scenario.

This paper is divided into five parts: a descriptive analysis of the literature review carried out; definition and evolution of the repatriation subject; discussion on studies focusing on the organization and on the individual to, finally, integrate the themes, discuss the findings, gaps, and suggest future studies.

## 2. PARAMETERS AND FOCUS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The initial focus for the literature review, for the period from 2000 to 2014, considered eleven publications for the study of international human resource management. Those publications were retrieved from EBSCO and Scielo repositories, considering Journal Impact Factor and Web Qualis. As a result of the preliminary findings, the author has decided to enlarge the research with four others publications using specific papers supplied by those publications. Afterwards, the *ProQuest* database was used as a platform for expanding the initial research. Besides these findings, two contemporary books, in the format of compilations, which had International Human Resources Management as subject, were included.

The result of the research is found in Chart 1. Items 1 to 11 represent the first stage of the review, items 12 to 15 represent the publications included by the author, items 16 to 27 are the return of the *ProQuest* database and the last two are the publications in the format of compilation.

The column *keyword* represents the set of publications that appeared in the search for this item and the column *pertinent* lists the publications that actually deal with the subject of repatriation, regardless of the focus of the analysis within the context desired in the review. Then, the chosen basis for the initial review is of thirty-nine pertinent publications.

Regarding the findings, some considerations are important to be made. Some publications

dated before 2000 deal with the subject, and some are used by this paper. The period from 2000 to 2003 presents a larger incidence of research on the subject (eleven of the total). A special edition of *Human Resources Management*, in 2009, dealing with international human resources management emphasized this subject. A very large group of studies focus on expatriation, training, multicultural management and professionals' career, but not on the repatriation process. Thus, we perceive some gaps in the study of repatriation.

In the Brazilian publications included in this review, only one presents an article on the subject. There are two possible conclusions to be drawn within this context: either the subject is not relevant in Brazil or it is not big enough to be studied.

Regarding the study method, 41% of the papers (sixteen studies) have a theoretical approach, creating propositions or models to be tested, and the other part consists of empirical studies, qualitative and quantitative analyses with repatriated people.

The papers are divided into two fields of study: the company (emphasizing practices and policies)

**Chart 1** - Theoretical reference basis for analyzing "repatriation"

	Periodical	Keyword repatriation	Pertinent
1	Academy of Management Executive	2	1
2	Academy of Management Journal	3	1
3	Academy of Management Review	2	1
4	Human Relations	3	0
5	Human Resource Management	31	5
6	Human Resource Management Journal	3	0
7	Journal of International Business Studies	9	4
8	RAC - Revista de Administração Contemporânea	1	1
9	RAE - Revista de Administração de Empresas	0	0
10	RAUSP - Revista de Administração de USP	0	0
11	REAd - Revista Eletrônica de Administração	0	0
12	Academy of Management Review	1	1
13	Columbia Journal of Work Business	1	1
14	Journal of World Business	1	1
15	International Journal of Human Resource Management	1	1
16	Career Development International	3	3
17	CMA Management	1	1
18	European Journal of Training & Development	1	1
19	HR Magazine	1	1
20	International Journal of Manpower	7	4
21	Personnel Today	1	1
22	Review of Business and Finance Studies	1	1
23	S.A.M. Advantaged Management Journal	1	1
24	Scandinavian Journal of Management	1	1
25	Workforce	3	3
26	Workforce Management	1	1
27	Workpan	1	1
28	Handbook of Reaserch in Human Resource Management	2	2
29	International Human Resource Management	1	1
		83	39

Source: Own elaboration.

and the professionals (focusing on the readaptation to their native country and career development).

The validation of the propositions or even an analysis comprehending the company and the professional as a whole practically is not found.

When doing the sweeping in the academic studies, an article entitled "Current research paradigms in expatriate(s) research: a bibliometric approach", by Tseng, Chou and Yu (2010), was found in *The International Journal of Organizational Innovation*. This study reinforces the influence of the chosen publications for this review and recognizes "repatriation adjustment" as a study topic not totally discussed in the expatriate studies.

### **3. THE START OF THE STUDIES ON THE SUBJECT**

According to Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991), the international management of people has been a subject dealt by academics since the late 70s, when the transfer of people around the world increased as a result of the international expansion of the organizations.

The need for global staffing is a key for the success of global business and it can be executed by local recruiting and expatriation processes. Many times, the expatriation – abroad movements and assignments of employees – is preferable due to the lack of local knowledge on foreign operations, career opportunities and knowledge transfers (COLLINS; SCULLION, 2006), not excepting bigger possibilities for company's control.

The first studies on global staffing emphasize the multicultural adjustment. According to Black et al. (1991), the early return of American expatriates at that time was from 16% to 40% due to the non-adaptation. Bolino and Feldman (2000) add that 30 to 50% of those remaining until the end of the initially determined period were considered not effective or partially effective.

Despite these indicators, the number of expatriated professionals has been increasing because of the globalization, apparently as a strategic option to staff the organizational structure in multinational organizations. Therefore, the cost of maintaining these professionals in other countries reaches another magnitude. Baruch and Altman (2002) comment a cost of 2 to 4 times the annual salary of a professional for a year of expatriation.

If this data already seems to be a challenge for the organizations, the things may become a little more complex when looking at the turnover after the repatriation. Researches identify that 12% of repatriates leave the organization within the first year after returning and other 13% leave the organization within the second year after returning (LAZAROVA; CALIGURI, 2001; TYLER, 2006; COX, KHAN ; ARMANI, 2013). The researches of Kraimer, Shaffer and Bolino (2009) indicate an even larger number: 44% of expatriates leave the organization within two years after returning.

Probably because of these findings and the growing occurrence of expatriation, the academic studies started to gain a more systemic view, including preparation for the departure, the adaptation abroad and the return. The process gains a little more sophistication when the studies started to include subjects related to the differences between organizations like size and strategic moment; intention of the professional process – expatriation for individual or functional development and differences between the professionals involved considering personal profile and managerial maturation.

The view of culture shock upon return, brought by Harvey (1982), may have incited studies focused only on repatriation as the end of a cycle or restart of other. According to the author, there is a crisis in the reentry, which is little approached by the organizations. The return crisis may be associated to personal finances or readaptation to the native country (short-term processes) or, further, associated to the readaptation

to the organizational structure of the domestic base. This crisis may be longer and cause important consequences to productivity and career. According to the author, the crisis may start for aspects related to the expatriation process. Harvey brings a pessimist, but realistic view of the situation. International experiences are frequently one-way paths. The companies see the need for an expatriation experience, but give little planning to the process of return of the professionals allocated abroad. The lack of communication with the domestic base during the expatriation process makes people feel as if they were in an exile. This situation, considered from the company's point of view, may induce the professional to feel "forgotten" while out of reach. During the expatriation process, the professional does not discuss issues such as personal and career expectations. Upon his/her return, it is very probable that lack of planning makes him/her stay away from activities and, when allocated, he/she may assume a function with less autonomy. This will diminish his/her motivation and will aggravate the feeling that an international experience is more portable or important for other companies than his/her own.

Reinforcing Harvey's proposal and defending that the repatriation stage is the most stressing in the whole process of reallocation abroad, Sanchez, Spector and Cooper (2000) report some important figures. According to the authors, 33% of professionals returning from expatriation remain in intermediary positions after three months of return; 75% of professionals believe that the prior position represents a demotion of authority and autonomy and 61% of them believe that they cannot use the acquired knowledge in the new work position. According to Richards (2004), the return from an expatriation process is only achieved when a repatriate is allocated in an expressive position, which values the use of competences and skills acquired during the international experience.

Thus, considering this context, the focus on repatriation becomes strategic. Some questions may arise: Is a gain-gain situation possible for both company and professional in these processes? How to minimize losses for both sides?

The academic studies supporting this reflection are divided between the company field of study and the professional field of study. This paper opted to approach each of these divisions in separate and, after all, it makes an analysis of the process on an integrated way.

#### **4. REPATRIATION WITH THE COMPANY AS FOCUS OF THE ANALYSIS**

The academic studies having the company as the field of study are mostly theoretical, which means that they suggest propositions and models and are focused on practices, policies and roles exercised in the Organization, but not tested empirically. The first studies were more prescriptive and, in some cases, they even seem to isolate the organization from its business context. The most recent papers reflect on adversities and conditions of return to the competitive arena that may bring new perspectives to the situation. We perceive a process of maturation and evolution in the field of study, but their theoretical nature remains.

##### **4.1. Organizational policies and practices**

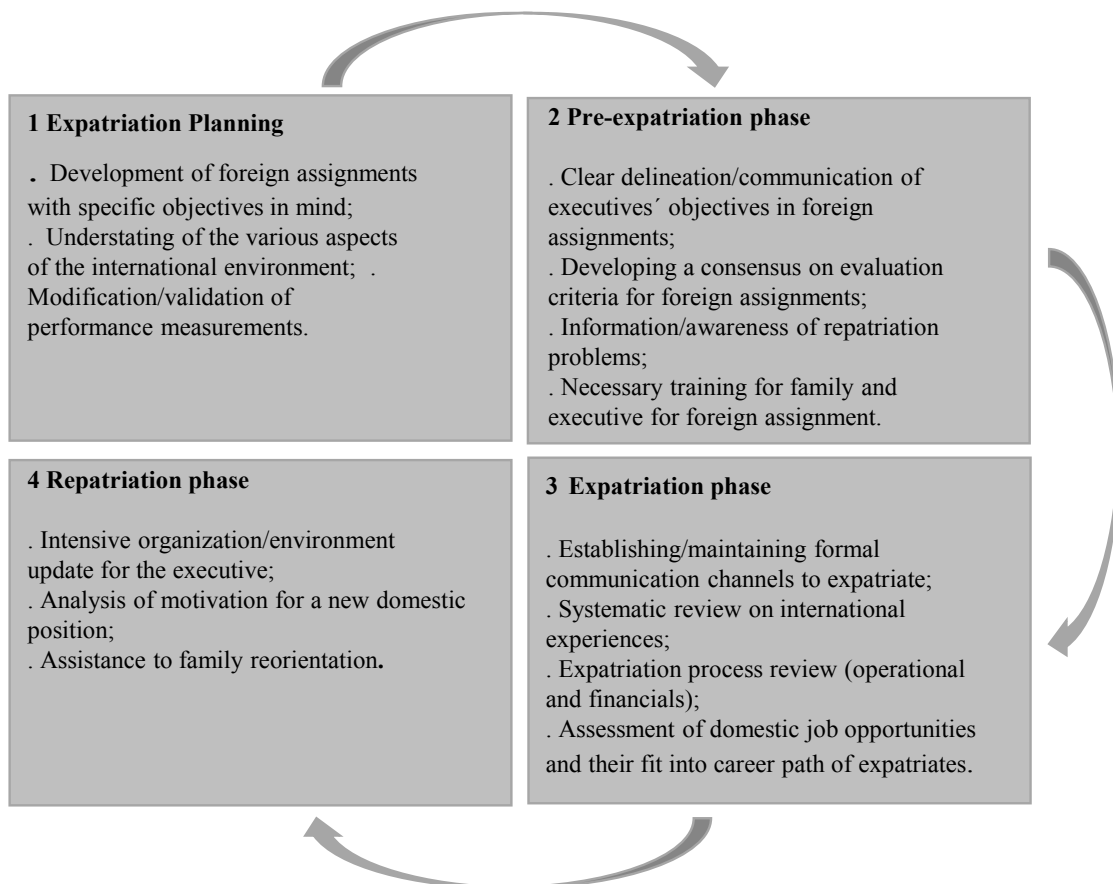
The first modeling paper used in this reflection is by Harvey's (1982). The author proposes a systemic view represented in Figure 1, which tries to answer to what he called cultural shock upon return. His model emphasizes the greater formalization and the involvement of the organization with the person being expatriated before, during and after this process. The model is very complete and demanding for both parties: expatriate and

organization. Two aspects arise from the model: even though the timeframe is not clearly specified, a preoccupation with objectives and performance measures all along the phases and, the contact with the domestic location during the expatriation phase were observed. A question may be asked when observing this model: Are the organizations able to focus on the execution of the process for just a reduced group of people, the expatriates, when comparing to the demands of the whole company workforce?

With a little different logic, Solomon (1995) deals with the allocation process in two stages: the before and the after. While the before deals with the process of exit of the professional from his/her native country, with training, job scope

definition and physical arrangements; the return is much more focused on the organization support to the readaptation in the country and personal finances – issues understood by Harvey as having a shorter impact. Klaff (2002), basically, proposes the Harvey’s model with another format, but mentions two important points on repatriation: preparation for the managers to deal with the cultural shock upon return that some of their subordinates may go through and the reallocation of people to positions that does not demand any of the new skills and competences acquired during the expatriation process. These points may be a frustrating process for the repatriated professional. Complementing the view, Harvey (1982) and Keogh (2003) emphasizes the mentorship for

**Figure 1** – Harvey’s model for the expatriation-repatriation cycle



Source: Own elaboration based on Harvey (1982)

the repatriate upon arrival as a way to address personal expectations not reached by the formal process installed.

It may be observed that the evolution of proposals for the systemic models that deal with the full expatriation cycle does not deviate a lot from the initial idea by Harvey, adding some new nuances though. Within this context, the work of Dowling, Festing and Engle (2009) is worthy of mention. In their model, the authors place the responsibility of the locations in the stages of the process. According to the authors, the domestic base has an important role before expatriation, the hosting country has a very strong influence during the expatriation process and, upon return, there is a new perspective with an integrated global view. Maybe the authors wish to reinforce more the change in the minds of people after an international experience than an integrated role of the

parties, since the process depends more on a management model than on the roles exercised by the Head Company and subsidiaries.

Since the contributions mentioned are theoretical, it is necessary to understand the way employees react to these models. A well-structured practice, not perceived as effective, may not bring the desired organizational or individual result. In this way, two empirical studies try to validate practices of expatriation and repatriation processes. Lazarova and Caliguri (2001) and Jassawalla, Connelly and Sloykowski (2004) researches findings are compared in Chart 2.

The findings are similar, showing that preoccupation with career, communication while out of the base and expectations upon arrival are the central points to be observed by the company, taken into account the employees' point of view. The Harvey model may be detailed and complex, but

**Chart 2** – Analysis of the expatriation practices

Colunas1	Lazarova & Caliguri (2001)	Jassavala; Connelly; & Sloykowski (2004)
unity of study	58 repatriates from USA and Canada.	11 expatriate and 9 repatriates distributed in many countries.
research metho	survey application and quantitative data analysis based on 11 expatriation practices.	semi-structured interviews emphasizing the living experience, opportunities and further recommendations.
results	practices perceived as fundamental are: turnover limitation/control and knowledge retention.	proposed model reinforcing: more people retention, bigger return on investments, less people anxiety, more satisfaction and better sense of belonging.
practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visuable signals that reinforce the importance of international experiences;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career planning sessions;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continued communication with base office;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support of expatriates already repatriated;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Warranty or agreement around possible future positions after repatriation;</li> <li>• Expatriation timeframe reduction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear expatriation assignment definition;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career counseling;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Formal patriation policies and practices (known before departure date);</li> <li>• Perception of support from the domestic base when expatriated;</li> <li>• Communication frequency with the domestic base;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of interaction with leadership upon return;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Perception of support upon return.</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration, considering Lazarova and Caliguri (2001) and Jassawalla et al. (2004)

the attention to the points empirically tested must have a strategic importance for the organizations operating in the global market and context.

With a distinct research approach, searching twenty multinational Brazilian organizations, more specifically the areas responsible for employee expatriation, Lima and Braga (2010) found that when asked about repatriation, the respondents tend to focus back on the expatriation phase. Additionally, the companies show small usage of repatriation practices. Some of the mentioned ones were: keep the expatriate informed about changes occurred in the home base; payments of round trips back during the time of expatriation; payment of back home trip and executive outplacement if no position is available when the executive returns. For this sample, the possibility of not reintegrating the executive and all her/his new knowledge is already considered by the organizations. Cox, Khan and Armani (2013) also reinforce some of the same practices: having a fluent communication system; having a mentor in the domestic organization during the assignment abroad; providing training to employees prior to their return; the compensation package the company offers to repatriates and how the organization manages repatriates' careers upon return.

#### 4.2. Contemporary approach

Most recent studies approaching the subject of repatriation opt to a most differentiating view than discussing practices and models to be adopted by an organization. However, most of them continue to be theoretical studies, suggesting reflections. Harvey and Novicevic (2006) retake the subject of repatriation from the perspective of a most aggressive competitive scenario (larger influence of technology, faster decision-making and work process). In this view, two critical subjects are the integration of knowledge and the learning capacity of the organization (HARVEY; NOVICEVIC, 2006; DOWLING et

al., 2009; FURUYA et al., 2009; ODDOU; OSLAND; BLAKENEY, 2009; NERY-KJERFVE; MCLEAN, 2012).

The first issue raised is what knowledge is that. Oddou et al. (2009) refer to knowledge as data, information, ideas, rules, procedures, intuition, experiences and models developed overtime that guide action and/or decisions. Therefore, they are mentioning tacit or explicit knowledge. This knowledge would renew companies' competences or leverage potential companies' capabilities.

Furuya et al. (2009) argue that the repatriation of knowledge is related to some organizational support and repatriation policies. These authors also concluded that intercultural personality and self-adjustment are responsible for the sharing process and can lead to motivation and performance (an interesting finding that aggregates and combines company and individual's characteristics for the success of the process).

Therefore, the repatriation of knowledge may bring more flexibility to the organizations. The development and maintenance of competitive advantages may be associated to the crossed fertilization of ideas and practices, and expatriation is used as a management strategy.

Other analysis brought by Harvey and Novicevic (2006) focus the organization profile and the implications this profile would have in the repatriation process. According to the authors, the companies are moving more and more to a global model, executing the work as a network between Head Company and subsidiaries. In this context, the repatriation would become patriation – return to the native country of a professional after a cycle of several reallocations in the global company. This new modality would be much more complex from the point of view of management than the traditional model, since it would involve a lot of effort, a new focus for the Human Resources area and would deal with multiple and changing expectations of the professionals.



Although the analysis by the authors is contemporary, it seems a little too universalistic to frame all the companies in the global modality, because the market segments are different and the organizations are in different stages of development. The typology suggested by Baruch and Altman (2002) may be a better answer to what would be the evolution for repatriation. Large multinational corporations represent the *global company* (in these companies, the expatriation process is part of the career development model and the management of permanent flow of people is part of international management). *Emissary Companies* would be the organizations that create subsidiaries to expand – in this type of company, professionals are expatriated to assume controlling positions, as an acknowledgment of his/her importance and loyalty. The professionals are supposed to accept the process and return to their native country. The *peripheral company* operates in specific regions and specific niches (the expatriated people go to markets that are more conventional and it will probably be difficult to bring them back). The *professional company* buys knowledge from other bases and maintains its personnel in the head company. Instead of expatriation, it uses a lot the resources from subcontracting third parties or natives in the hosting country. Finally, the *expedient company* is an expanding company, with opportunist behavior, answering to opportunities. In this case, there are few standards and decisions are taken *ad hoc*. Through experience and development, this company may become professional or global.

With the inclusion of variables such as profile and size of the organization, the subject of repatriation gains another outline. Maybe the initial prescriptive model has to be analyzed case by case, with more focus on the global and emissary companies, being characterized as patriation only in the global ones.

Another point risen by Harvey and Novicevic (2006) in their most current studies would be the

greater complexity of management demanded from human resources professionals. Conversely to what is defended by the authors, the involvement by the human resources professionals is associated to administrative and logistic issues in order to send a professional to his/her new base. Even when an organization has an international human resources management department, the participation of the human resources in the selection, management and repatriation is limited or does not even exist (HALCROW, 1999; KLAFF, 2002). Tyler (2006) suggests some noble activities for the human resources professional: help to clarify the objective of the expatriation, advise the professional on the preparation for departure, keep him/her in contact with the domestic base and, on the stage of repatriation, value the experience, help with the mentorship on career, strengthening the relationships among repatriates throughout the time. Physical location of the practices may also be analyzed. Carraher, Sullivan and Crocitto (2008) concluded that a host-country mentor could be more important than a home-country one, having a greater positive impact on knowledge sharing and performance.

Following the process of understanding the role or the quality of the intervention of human resources in the expatriation and repatriation processes, Osmar-Gain and Hyder (2008) conducted a research in the East of Asia with 15 repatriates. In this research, 60% of the interviewed indicated the non-existence of repatriation policies; 54% confirmed that they had no training upon depart and 71% declared that they had no specific support upon return. Although these figures are not conclusive, they reinforce the perception of a non-strategic action of the human resources professionals.

More specifically in the last years, themes such as the world economic crisis and the lack of talents have brought more challenge for the management of expatriates. Rafter (2009) reports important indicators from a survey made by Mercer, with 200

companies throughout the world. According to the survey: 25% of the companies with expatriated professionals say that they cannot promise a position after their return; 32% of the domestic bases wait for the opening of new positions to repatriate talents and only 7% of the expatriated professionals would have guaranteed their original position upon return from a period of allocation abroad.

Besides that, for control and cost contention, some expatriates have to return to the domestic base in an abrupt and hasty way. It is evident that a variable contingent, such as the recent economic crisis, affects not only professionals allocated in a base other than the domestic one. However, since the focus of this analysis is repatriation, the analysis of these figures is important.

When observing the analysis of the contents developed at the company as the focus, such as policies, models, current scenario, poor human resources support and a certain lack of empirical analysis, some questions appear to anchor the bibliographic review emphasizing the individual as the main player: What do professionals expect from an expatriation? Which implications would it have in their personal and career development? How do these professionals deal with the adjustment in repatriation?

## **5. REPATRIATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL AS FOCUS OF THE ANALYSIS**

The academic studies which have the professional as the field of study are marked by reflections, narrative interviews and surveys that test defined hypotheses. An important aspect of these studies is that they were built in several parts of the world. A series of studies came from the USA, but, following them, several studies were carried out in European and Asiatic countries, increasing the validity of the analyses.

The content brought by these studies differs a little from the line of studies focusing on the company. If the studies focusing on the company may be analyzed in a chronological way, practically working in a sequential path, in an approach that builds propositions and models and aggregates contingent variables; the surveys focusing on the individuals do not follow this same logic. The subjects do not follow a chronological evolution and, in many cases, the reflection is marked by empirical data supporting a deductive analysis.

The findings or reflections of this line of studies circulate around the changes that take place in the individual after an expatriation phase, processes of adaptation in the repatriation and implications on career and turnover.

### **5.1. Changes perceived by the individuals after expatriation processes**

In order to analyze the process of change by which an expatriate goes through, Osland (2000) interviewed 35 American repatriates. He used, as framework of analysis, the metaphor of the journey of the hero by Joseph Campbell that suggests the phases: the expectation before the journey, the first adversities, the presence of a magician friend, the process of change and the perception that something new has happened.

The researcher was able to align these stages with the ex-expatriated professional's journey, concluding that an expatriation is a transformational process to any person. Before leaving, the professional undergoes a phase of anxiety and expectation; following that, he/she undergoes six months of many uncertainties regarding personal and family adaptation, fear of language usage and of the cultural adaptation. As some kind of magic, he/she discovers references in the destination country that help him/her go through the process. He/she starts to live several paradoxes related to his/her role in the new society; a certain fear of marginality;

uncertainties as regards to his/her actual effectiveness and issues related to identity, "After all, who am I?".

The transformation takes place when the person understands and is able to talk to other cultures, assume a position of learning, including flexibility to his/her decision-making process and, when he/she perceives that he/she is a winner, it is time to go back. Almost 60% of the interviewees report that the worst phase is repatriation, because the person, in the end, is not able to find himself/herself in the same initial position, similar to the one before the process.

This is the phase when all the symptoms of the cultural shock of return (HARVEY, 1982) appear. Kohonen (2008) also deals with transformation, even though this author analyzes the process through another path and finds a few little differences in the results. She focuses on the change in the identity of a person, understanding identity as the socially built definition of the individual, based on social interaction and self-reflection. Within this context, for the author, the company regulates the building/transformation of the identity.

The research suggested a typification of three profiles of professionals. The "identity shifters" are the people who reported that they have changed, stated a sound experience marked by reflections and increased knowledge of their own limitations, self-confidence and perception of managerial capacity. The "balanced identities" are the people who stated to have incorporated other characteristics, enlarged the horizons, were able to relativize their own culture and became people with different perspectives. The people who said not to have changed are the "non-shifters", those showed a non-reflexive position, kept the influence of their native country with a great focus on this task. For Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison et al. (2012), identity construction is an ongoing process, made of significant and meaningful experiences and change of roles. The expatriating and repatriating roles

transition is more complex than a domestic evolution because it involves work and living changes. Through this perspective, what may have happened with the "non-shifters"? When comparing the two studies, it is perceived that the hero of Osland is the "identity shifter" of Kohonen. The expatriation process may be transforming depending on individual perceptions and meaningfulness at work. However, this process may not happen to everyone.

A new hypothesis to be raised is that the adaptation in the repatriation tends to be more critical for people that were involved and soundly capitalized the international experience.

## 5.2. Processes of adaptation in repatriation

Several studies on adaptation focus on the stage of departure of the professional from the domestic base, but the same approach may be used in the stage of reentry, as mentions McDonalds and Arthur (2005). Most of the times, the studies place the company as the protagonist, mentioning the roles it must have in the support upon the return of the professional, as the Harvey's model (1982) already discussed.

Some studies, however, also bring an approach focused on the individual. The Black et al. (1991) model tries to integrate the literature of international adaptation with the literature of domestic adaptation. The first entry variable mentioned in this model is exact expectations of the professional. According to the authors, the more accurate the expectation, the better will the adjustment and smaller will dissatisfaction be. The issue is that the individual may have expectations and demands on several areas such as position, work, life style, and adaptation of the family, other than his own perceptions (HYDER; LOVBLAD, 2007; VIDAL; VALE; ARAGÓN, 2010). It would be opportune for both players, professional and organization, to maintain a continuous and profound dialogue to try to align demands (VERMOND, 2001).

The changes that took place in the professional during the expatriation stage end upon return, strengthening another changing process. It is in this stage that the fear of lack of control or effectiveness, including future decisions, may make the process harder (MCDONALDS; ARTHUR, 2005).

Dowling et al. (2009) divide the factors of influence in the adjustment of repatriation into two groups: the ones linked to work and the social ones. The factors linked to work are related mainly to the demands of the new position and career, involving the company and the employee. The social factors, on their turn, are strongly related to the individual and his new personal moment. These factors may perform a facilitating or hampering role upon the return home.

The first social adaptation mentioned by the authors is the family adaptation. Each member of the family will be living his individual adaptation process. Most of the times, the expectation is to retake life exactly as it was before the "pause" of expatriation or gain a different social status, and either of them may fail to happen. In this sense, multiple feelings of gains and losses may hamper the reentry.

A second factor of social adaptation is the social networks. Distance separates people and retaking some contacts may not be simple. For the children, the situation can also be complex. Returning to the same school and social group may not be as easy as expected.

The effect in the career of the spouse may also be an adjustment factor. The reentry in the job market may not be easy given the pause during the expatriation phase. This impact is greater if the family structure that has the couple working in a dual income configuration.

Paradoxically, Vidal, Valle and Aragón (2010) also concluded that the fact that an expatriate did not completely adjust overseas may facilitate the readaptation, which may not be the final object of the organization or the individual.

### 5.3. Implications to career and turnover

The discussion on expatriation/repatriation and career may be carried out from two perspectives: the individual's demands and the characteristics of the expatriation experience and its consequences for the organization and the individual.

The typology suggested by Kohonen (2008) brings a view exclusively centered in the individual. For the author, the professionals who declared a change of identity or an incorporation of other characteristics in their identity are committed to the subjective career, that is to say, their own definition of path, built with a series of relevant experiences. This definition is well aligned to the term career without frontiers and to the protean career, which confronts the model of career developed in one company, through the traditional hierarchical path (ARTHUR; ROUSSEAU, 1996; HALL, 1996; O'SULLIVAN, 2002; YAN; ZHU; HALL 2002; DOWLING et al., 2009).

In this sense, those professionals stay in an organization if it is able to offer them opportunities of relevant experience. We may then also infer that transforming experiences of growth may make the professional assume the command of his/her career. An individual protean characteristic can be seen inside an organization. It will be perceived when the professional shows proactive behavior like seeking for information before transition, using her/his internal network in the organization to influence its support on the repatriation process (O'SULLIVAN, 2002). On the other hand, the professionals who said not to have changed, showed themselves committed to the company that made the expatriation feasible, but with no expectations of career.

This finding brings a paradox, since apparently people who developed and may be important in the future for a certain organization would be more inclined to leave it in case their expectations are not reached. The negotiation between organizational demands and individual expectations would

become, in this context, a strategic subject for the organization. Paik, Segard and Mallinowski (2002) conducted an in-depth survey in USA, Scandinavia and UK and realized that the main issue related to expectations is that the expatriates, when back, are committed to the reintegration with the country culture, while the companies place a greater value on the reintegration to the company culture.

Stahl et al. (2009) carried out a survey (1779 professionals from the USA, Europe and Asia who immigrated to 93 different countries) to understand the relationship between types of expatriation with satisfaction, career and concerns about repatriation. The typology used was based on two main directives: expatriation directed by the demand, when the company has a functional need and allocates a professional and the one directed by learning – the experience would be a defined process within the path of development taken by a professional in a certain organization. The authors have tested a set of hypothesis and confirmed that, as regards to the career, the people involved with experiences of development believe that this opportunity will be more important for their future than the people participating in experiences occupying a functional position. Not a lot related to competence gain or characteristics of the international projects is mentioned in the studies. Due to it, the career development perception may be only related to different opportunities instead of a clear perception of new knowledge and competencies.

The studies discussed in this paper reach similar conclusions: impact on career is related to the changing experienced by the individual. The model suggested by Kraimer et al. (2009) survey's extends this analysis a little more and tries to test if other variables, such as the number of international experiences, the development of managerial skills and the result of the work in the expatriation are related to the development of career, but they were not able to confirm the hypotheses.

When the researches try to understand the directives of turnover, the findings are revealing. The research of Stahl et al. (2009) confirms that the satisfaction of the professionals with the support that the organization supplies during the expatriation period is negatively related to the intent of departure and that, while professionals perceive career opportunities outside, it increases the opportunities for exits. Kraimer et al. (2009) have included a variable in their test model called "perceived underemployment". This term can be explained as the perception of underutilization of skills. It takes place when the professional feels that his/her challenge is smaller than his/her capabilities and his/her intent to leave the organization increases.

In a certain way, all the surveys, here analyzed, confirm that the negotiation between organizational demands and individual expectations would become a strategic subject for the organization, especially after the inclusion of a transforming experience. In this sense, Hyder and Lovblad (2007) reinforce the notion of contract between company and professional. According to the authors, there are two types of contract between company and employee: the transactional and the relational one. The transactional contract is exclusively marked by the exchange of work-compensation between company and employee and has a more ephemeral term. On the other hand, the relational contract includes further social and emotional aspects of a relationship in a longer term besides the exchange of work-money. The expatriation has characteristics of both types of contracts.

Yan et al. (2002) understand expatriation more like a transactional contract, since, many times, the expatriated assumes a protean attitude using the expatriation in an opportunistic way. On the other hand, it can be perceived more like a relational contract, filled with social and emotional aspects and it can be strengthened or weakened depending on the answer to the expectations of both parties.

This relational contract performs the feature of the psychological contract defined by Rousseau (1989) as

an individual's belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and the other party. Key issues here include the belief that a promise has been made and consideration has been offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations (p. 123).

An empirical analysis of this issue was made by Chi and Che (2007) using the psychological contract. In a quantitative work, with 135 repatriates in 16 companies from Taiwan, the authors have concluded that the perception of reciprocal exchange is correlated to a smaller intent of exit and a greater organizational commitment.

Since this study has already shown some turnover data, it is relevant to mention data related to career. Tyler (2006) mentions a survey reporting that 33% of repatriates receive a promotion; 58% of them return to positions at the same level they had and 9% of the professionals return to positions below their prior one when returning to the domestic base.

Maybe a more contemporary perspective to be analyzed by the organizations is the one brought by Starr (2009) when discussing short expatriations, with an average term of six months and varying from 3 to 12 months. The researcher has interviewed 22 professionals originated from the USA and England, in a period of three years. According to some interviewees, a short expatriation can mean an important experience, a meaningful break in the routine. Conversely, for some of the interviewees, short expatriations are a little traumatic, but serve as a connection between experiences, building a path of career. Reiche, Kraimer and Harzing (2011) also brought another interesting approach. Their research in 10 German

multinationals companies concluded that the "in-patriation" strategy (bringing subsidiary people to the headquarters temporarily) can be positively related to retention (2 to 4 years) and is perceived as a career developed opportunity provided by the organization and also a way of increasing organizational learning and knowledge.

Observing these findings, the following questions arise: Do these new modalities help retaining people, providing better cost control in the process of managerial development and is it a relevant career experience? Up to now, these subjects have not been exhaustively studied or analyzed in the academic literature.

## 6. REFLECTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The subject of repatriation had its great moment at the beginning of the last decade, when it was deeply analyzed, first in a more restrained way and later, in a more explicit one in the academic literature on international human resources management. This was probably a result of the increase on expatriation processes. Even though the studies were divided between "company focused" and "professional focused" and started from different methodological processes, they evidenced the same findings and focused on the same needs of continuity.

The studies that had the organization as field of study reinforce the practices and roles in a universalistic approach and, afterwards, aggregate the perspective of differences between the size and the momentum of the company. As it was expected, a common finding to those studies is that the organizations must reinforce better actions for the whole expatriation process, guaranteeing a treatment that values the relationship with the group of professionals and the aggregation of knowledge. The issues to those studies are that they are mainly theoretical propositions which have not tested

and, they are not able to focus or understand the individual demands.

On the other hand, the studies that emphasize the individuals reinforce the nuances and the individual changing processes as a way of questioning the organizational practices. The personal differences seem, every time, to challenge the adoption of universalistic practices. There is also a further perception that better adaptation and personal success in the expatriation process leads to greater personal commitment with the subjective career, protean and with no frontiers.

Some good theoretical models have not been exhaustively tested and, therefore, many propositions have not been formulated yet, especially the ones related to knowledge (retention and management), ROI (return on investment) and the development of both actors, including competence development. These subjects were scarcely dealt in this study due to the few references available.

Consequently, the subject under study is far from being solved or exhausted. Continuing changes in the organizational contexts and perceptions on individual differences indicate towards a strategic issue still to be discussed.

Apparently, expectations of the two player's (company and professional) seem not to be treated in a systemic way, even though some insights appear on each side, like retention, turnover, competencies development and cost figures. Maybe this is the inflection point on the mobility process and its study; a new orchestrated design process incorporating the two actors with certain flexibility for organizational practices taking individual differences into account. This can represent a good field for further studies.

The subject of repatriation, or further, the management of people mobility within an organizational strategic environment in the global scenario is not so different from the issues of strategic

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management of human resources in general; even though, in the global case, we deal with a more complex business context including national culture and corporate culture.

The subject of international human resources management is contemporary, strategic and a lot of innovation in the study is yet to be carried out.

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