Distinctiveness of self-initiative expatriates**

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A B S T R A C T

Existence of global rivalry between corporations causes the need for expatriation as one of potential sources of international competitive advantage. Expatriation is standard practice of multinational corporations to accomplish their missions. In this paper focus is put on self-initiated expatriates who represent contemporary trend among global working force. Their importance and uniqueness is elaborated broadly. Special emphasis is put on comparison between traditional and self-initiated expatriates. The most important differences between those two categories are analyzed as well as different motives that lead and encourage them to successfully finish their international assignments.

1. INTRODUCTION

Self-initiated expatriates are defined as individuals who, on their own initiative, decide to look for a job outside their country. Self-initiated expatriates are conceptualized as "free" agents who go beyond the organizational and national limits (Inkson et al., 1997). According to Lee (2005), self-initiated expatriate is every person who is employed on the contractual basis and is not reallocated abroad by organization. Generally, the term self-initiated expatriate is used in a positive context. They are considered as persons who contribute improvement and transfer of knowledge and skills on the local population (Savad, 2004).

Today, managerial literature distinct three types of international mobility; expatriation, self-initiative expatriation and migrations. Expatriation is a procedure of sending employees on an international mission by organization, while a self-initiated expatriation is departure on an international mission on their own initiative. The difference is reflected on defining a career, in case of expatriates the career is

considered as an organized process of collaboration between individuals and organization, while in case of a self-initiated expatriate and migrants a career is individual responsibility (Jokinen et al., 2008).

There are several main characteristics of self-initiated expatriates. Self-initiated expatriates choose on their own the country where they are going to move, exclusively by their personal motives. Mostly they come from developed countries such as USA, Australia, EU, New Zealand, while their destinations are Japan, France, Italy, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Men and women are equally represented and they are characterized by a high level of education and qualifications and having know-how, social skills and motivation. They occupy the positions of top management, head of department and middle management, and they mostly work in multinational companies and medium-sized companies. Self-initiated expatriates go on international missions on short or long term, and they are willing to change the country several times. Their international mobility is their privilege which they use for professional development. They don't have a defined period for staying on an international mission, and if they get a better chance they will move in other country (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013).

This paper is consisted of two parts. First part gives detail comparison of traditional and self-initiated expatriates, while the second elaborates the uniqueness of self-initiated expatriates. Conclusion summarizes previously explained theory and points out the most important thesis.

2. COMPARATION OF TRADITIONAL AND SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES

Traditional expatriate is defined as a person who temporarily leaves its country on a longer period of time (a few years) because of an international assignment in a foreign subsidiary of an organization in which he is employed. He or she returns to the home country after the expiration of the contract or after fulfilling an international assignment (Guzzo, 1997). Self-initiated expatriate is defined as a person who voluntarily moves abroad on his own initiative, independently of any employer and without organizational help, and he finds a job in a local firm abroad (Crowley-Henry, 2007).

The concept of self-initiated expatriates is much easier to understand through the comparison with traditional expatriates. Self-initiated and traditional expatriates can be observed as two sides of the coin, confronted with almost the same challenges of acculturation, but they differ from each other in few aspects.

Table 1: Comparison of traditional and self-initiated expatriate

Characteristics	Traditional expatriate	Self-initiated expatriate

Age	Older generation (above 40 y.)	Younger generation (above 25 y.)
Sex	Mostly men	Mostly women
Expatriation is initiated by	Organization	Individually
Length of stay	Defined by a contract	Undefined
Type of organization	International	International or local
Motives	Career	Combination of different motives
Mobility	Little, connected exclusively by one organization	Highly mobile, they change organizations and countries

For a traditional expatriate having international experience is usually a condition for their promotion within the corporation. Development of their career is closely tied to the parent company. On the other side, an international experience for self-initiated expatriates is part of their own personal career plan which doesn't have in advance structured development path. International experience is contributing to their development and experience accumulation which is required in international careers and ensures acceleration of future possibilities (Jokinen et al., 2008). Self-initiated expatriates are interpreting their international experience as a valuable competitive advantage on an international labor market; meanwhile traditional expatriates understand it as a possibility for acquiring necessary knowledge and personal promotion within the organization (Banai and Harry, 2004).

Self-initiated expatriates do not have time-defined international experience. They independently plan their stay, and it isn't determined in advance by certain period of time. In case of a traditional expatriate, time period is defined by a contract (4 or 5 years) or by completing international assignment. Further difference is reflected in fact that self-initiated expatriates decide independently about repatriation, while traditional expatriates don't have the rights to decide because their repatriation is determined by organization (Suutari and Brewster, 2000).

Traditional expatriates work in international organizations, while self-initiated expatriates can work both in international or local organization. Traditional expatriates are employees of parent company in their home country, while self-initiated expatriates are employed as local employees in companies in foreign country. Unlike traditional expatriates who have full compensational packet, self-initiated expatriates have additional difficulties (Biemann and Anddresen, 2010). Compensational packages of self-initiated expatriates are more likely local employees and don't include accommodation costs or costs for moving their families (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010).

Self-initiated expatriates are motivated with several motives. Most important motives are: desire to work abroad, researching, new life style, financial motivation and acquiring experience for career management (Richardson and McKenna, 2006).

Mobility among different organization of traditional expatriates is limited. They rarely change organization and their promotion is exclusively in one organization. On the other side self-initiated expatriates are extremely mobile, and they are used to change organizations and countries (Thorn, 2009). Self-initiative expatriates, according the definition of their career, belong to "boundary less career" concept, which is defined as a career that takes place through multiple international missions (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

3. UNIQUENESS OF SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES

Uniqueness of self-initiated expatriates gives a brief insight in key items for understanding this group of individuals. Key items are motivation, the impact of family, competences and the problem of repatriation.

Self-initiated expatriate makes the decision for leaving abroad as a matter of personal choice and determination so he or she has stronger motives than the traditional expatriates. They are motivated by combination of various motives that have different proportion of importance for every individual (Inkson et al., 1997).

For each person exists equation that consists of a mixture of motivating factors. It is unique for every individual and the importance of every factor will be converted as the life and career develops.

Motives of self-initiated expatriates can be grouped in five basic categories:
1. Economic factors
2. Factors related to professional development (career)
3. Factors related to the lifestyle
4. Cultural factors
5. Family factors (Carr et al., 2005).

Research had shown that self-initiated expatriates are not primary motivated by economic factors because they are willing to move to other country even for lower wages. The importance of this motive depends from individual to individual and from country to country (Suutari and Brewster, 2000).

Factors related to professional development are representing person's motivation for professional development, career progress, learning new competences and realization of international experience (Thorn, 2008). Self-initiated expatriates are usually motivated by career possibilities. Their international experience is focused on developing transferable knowledge and skills across organizational and national borders today known as "boundary less career" concept. Self-initiated expatriates will seriously consider going abroad if there is a chance for career development (Suutari and Mäkelä, 2007).

Perceived differences in lifestyle of people in their country and foreign country can be motive for mobility. Most frequent motives are climate and infrastructure of country that improves living conditions. Self-initiated expatriates will choose a country by desirable characteristics (Thorn, 2008).

For many people, the desire for learning about the world and new cultures, and experiencing life in a new culture presents a strong motive for leaving their country. The desire for learning about new cultures can have a great impact on accepting international assignments. Self-initiated expatriates are choosing cultures which are similar to theirs, if there is such a possibility (Shenkar, 2001).

The family has an important role in decisions of self-initiated expatriates. Some authors consider family as a key component for making the decision because the family will either support self-initiated expatiate or try to stop them. This type of motivation is complex. Therefore, the family of self-initiated expatriate is becoming the focal interest of many researchers (Anderson, 2001).

Recent study (Tharenou, 2008) suggests introduction of the term "significant other" that besides the term family (and extended one) includes spouses, children, close friends and coworkers. "Significant other" considers a person who is extremely important to self-initiative expatriate, who he or she wants to impress, whose opinion they respects, he or she even identifies with that person. In case of self-initiated expatriates, the impact of a family will probably be positive and the decision for going abroad is a result of a consensus within a family (Thorn, 2008). The literature shows that self-initiative expatriates are extremely globally mobile and most of them are married so their spouses follow them abroad (Palthe, 2004). It is obviously that spouse is a great source of support and encouragement for self-initiative expatriate (Lauring and Selmer, 2010).

In literature, a spouse is an advantage for a man, but a disadvantage for a woman. A study on women self-initiative expatriates in Australian companies had identifies problematic issues between couples, especially where one spouse needed to leave the position in company. In a situation when a female spouse is underemployed in a country, there is a great probability that she is going to adjust to the supporting role, while in case of a male spouse the situation is quite different. These facts make a huge

pressure on female self-expatriate and cause dissatisfaction and distractions at work (Selmer and Leung, 2003).

There are several reasons why male spouses have difficulties in tolerating transformation than female. Firstly, they have problems with staying at home and taking care of the offspring. Female spouses quickly make social network and connect with local people, while male do not. Inadequate financial independence and career possibilities can negatively influence on male spouses.

The presence of children or older dependent household member has an extreme influence on mobility of self-initiated expatriates (Linehan, 2002). Also, self-initiated expatriates hardly choose having children due to permanent reallocation (Ackers, 2003).

In order to successfully work in a multicultural situation, self-initiated expatriates need to have intercultural competences and competences related to their career (Stone, 2006). Intercultural competences is multidimensional concept in which different factors can be successfully combined for efficient functioning in different cultures (Arasaratnam and Doerfel, 2005). Also, these competences provide suitable communication in intercultural situations based on intercultural knowledge, skills and behavior (Deardorff, 2009).

Intercultural competences are divided into three categories:
1. Knowledge/awareness
2. Skills/ personality traits
3. Attitudes/ behavior (Earley and Ang, 2003).

Individual needs to have certain skills to be efficient in an international environment. Also, there are several personality traits that are important for an individual living abroad: cultural empathy, open-mind, emotional stability, social initiative, flexibility and adjustment. They are important for appropriate cultural adaptation and success (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2001).

There are seven basic attitudes and behaviors that are crucial for efficient intercultural communication. They are expressing respect, empathy, tolerance of ambiguity etc. It's important that individual adjusts the behavior and attitudes to the culture where he or she lives, so that he or she could show his knowledge and skills and that the competences related to the career can be expressed.

Repatriation is a process of returning expatriate in his country as the contract expires or the mission ends (Rahimić and Podrug, 2013). Self-initiated repatriation is defined as independent decision of self-

initiated expatriate to return in his country, without any help of organization (King, 2000). According to Allen and Griffeth (2000), there are three factors influencing impact influencing repatriation decision:

1. Push factors
2. Pull factors
3. Shocks.

Push factors are consisted of career position, lifestyle, family support and national identity and dissatisfaction with foreign country (Harvey, 2009). Pull factors are called factors of domestication, and are consisted of domestication in a foreign country, career domestication and domestication in local community. If self-initiated expatriates domesticate in a foreign country, it encourages them to stay there. In career domestication, a self-initiated expatriate will resign repatriation if it means reducing the value of their career. Regarding domestication in local community, if self-initiated expatriate has to break social activities and relationships with friends and family they won't come back. Shocks are situations that can happen from once a day to once in a few years, and give a great impact on changing attitude of self-initiated expatriate. A shock can shake a self-initiative expatriate to estimate if the life in a foreign country fulfills the values, goals and plans, and if it doesn't, it can provoke dissatisfaction, and cause repatriation.

Studies show that the main reason for self-initiative repatriation is characterized by combination of weak pull factors of foreign country and strong pull factors of home country, while shocks represent just a trigger for implementing the decision (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010). Also, studies had shown that the governments can encourage repatriation by promoting inflows of high-quality workforce with an international experience (Forstenlechner, 2010).

5. CONCLUSION

In global world economy with fast technological progress, demand for globally moveable and flexible individuals is growing extremely fast. On the other side, more individuals are deciding to move from their home country. Self-initiated expatriates are defined as individuals who are, on their own, decided to look for a job outside their country, without initiative of any organization or a state. In lot of countries there is lack of quality and adequate employees, so there is a rise in demand for intercultural competences of employees who are flexible and that have different range of skills. Self-initiated expatriates represent strategic valuable resource for organizations that have plans to expand on global markets.

Professional literature differentiates migrants from self-initiated expatriate and traditional expatriate, in that way showing certain uniqueness regarding these groups. A great number of researchers show that

self-initiated expatriates have certain characteristics that they share, such as adventurism, impatience, cultural globalism etc. Further on, their motivation is made of different motives that have different ponders for every individual regarding their personal preferences. The impact of the family is especially important. Decision about choice of the country is made according to the family's preferences. Self-initiative expatriates have intercultural and many other competences that help them to adjust to different cultures and jobs. There are many other particularities and advantages of self-initiated expatriate that should be subject of future academic interests.

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