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CRITICAL REVIEW OF SELECTING EMPLOYEE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT PROCESS AND ISSUES IN  
EMERGING/DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: The Management  
Perspective

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**Abstract:** The trust of this paper is to assess the **Critical Review of Selecting Employee for International Assignment Process and Issues in Emerging/Developing Countries: The Management Perspective**. In the context of this paper, information were collected through the use of secondary data and case study was employed, which was considered appropriate for providing a holistic approach to the study that make up, several types of data that are analytically adapted to suit its unique purposes including general data about the selecting employee for international assignment process and issues in emerging/developing countries. The paper concentrated more on the process addressing the employee's short-term needs that is moving from pleasant place to another, without much thought to long-term employee development or the strategic needs of the business and in addition, it attempt to provide a review of the literature on international assignment selection process as it centered on predicting to the environment in which the employee would work effectively rather than the technical or functional job to be executed. It also focuses on certain strategic or criteria in assessing and selecting of employee with challenging issues and the predictors affecting the outcome of international assignments. Finally, it draws recommendations and conclusion for international assignment process and issues in emerging/developing countries: the management perspective.

**Keywords:** Critical review, Selecting, Employee, International assignment and Management

## INTRODUCTION

The process and issues when selecting employee for international assignment should provide a truthful image of the life work, and culture to which the employee may be sent, which might be coped as a high-touch, low-volume action in some of the organizations. Selecting employee for international assignments is unique given that

the selection systems involve a primary focus on predicting to a job context (working internationally) rather than job content (i.e., tasks, duties, position or title) (Babin, 2016). The study concentrated more on the process addressing the employee's short-term needs that is moving from pleasant place to another, without much thought to long-term employee development or the strategic needs of the business' (Dixit, & Alka 2013).

Consequently, selection for international work starts where other systems stop in that only those employee who have demonstrated competence for the tasks and duties of the job should be considered (Paula, et al, 2009). In essence, the critical review of selecting employee for an international assignment process and issues in emerging/developing countries: the management perspective, take a group of employees that are qualified for an international assignment and to determine who can effectively deal with the challenges inherent in working with individuals, groups, and organizations that may approach work in a very different way.

The expatriate selection decisions should be done by the management of the organization as consideration should be much more strictly taking with the various aspects, rather than being skill oriented alone and it of great important to note, that no particular model or procedure will suit all organizations, as their requirements vary with every international assignee and project. Caligiuri, in Paula, (2009) 'suggested four expatriate assignment selection decisions classification such as: technical; functional/tactical; developmental/high potential, and strategic/executive. The author added that international assignments can be classified based on the degree of control required by the assignee and brings forth another classification that bears (direct personal control), bumble bees (control through socialization and shared values) and spiders (control through informal communication).

## METHODOLOGY

In the context of this paper, *"the critical review of selecting employee for international assignment process and issues in emerging/developing countries: the management perspective."* The paper employed case study in its analysis as it was considered appropriate for providing a holistic approach to the study. Zita & Wilson (2017) asserted that, 'in seeking for information is an individual activity undertaken to identify and select material to satisfy a previously detected information need, the satisfaction of which will enable the individual to solve a problem or make a decision.' Therefore, the choice of using the case study made up, several types of data and information were collected, mainly secondary data which is analytically adapted to suit its unique purposes.

### **International Assignment: The Management Perspectives**

"An international assignment is a time limited staffing across national borders mostly with the target of knowledge-transfer and for establishing a uniform corporate management" (Theresa 2014). Employees who work abroad are called assignees or expatriates, but there exist many definitions of an expatriate while, the concepts of management is described as a universal human activity in domestic, social and political settings, as well as in organizations. Koontz in Boris, and Jens, (2019) "described management as an art of getting things done through and with people in formally organized groups, the art of creating an environment in such an organized group where people can perform as individuals and yet cooperate toward attainment of group goals, the art of removing blocks to such performance, the art of optimizing efficiency in effectively reaching goals."

Conversely, the concepts of international assignment and management has been described in a study conducted by Reiche, and Harzing, (2010) on international assignment, revealed that application of management skills play a significance roles in understanding appropriate ways in selecting employees for an overseas

assignment as in a developing country context which might be broken into five core management competency areas:

1. The competency in managing the dynamics of diversity: Here the manager should understand the social environment (oneself and one's culture, and how self and culture impact one's own management style) in order to manage its diversity as a key requirement for managing in the developing world.
2. The management skills that focused on competency in managing complexity: this signify that manager assigned for an international assignment must understand the critical operating constraints in the developing world.
3. The author identified that manager should possess the competency in accommodating multiple stakeholders. This process includes recognizing a wide range of interests both within the organization and in the larger social environment.
4. This segment of management skills required manager to have much competency in motivating the workforce. This skill involves obtaining commitment, motivation and participation. Reconciling conflicts between work and home/community life is a key aspect of motivation in many developing environments.
5. The final aspect of management skill according to the author is that the manager should have competency in assessing appropriate management approaches. This skill involves the assessment of appropriate management techniques in different socio-cultural contexts.

Consequently, there are many of the factors that relate to global management competences in the context of developing, emerging or transitional countries as it connected to other emerging countries and regions. All the factors discussed in the description of the competencies above, to the extreme. If managers can get it right in most emerging countries across the globe definitely the assignment would be successful.

### International Assignment Selection Process

International selecting process of employee or emigrant is an important strategic in avoiding the wrong individuals are sent out. Osland, in Du Plssis (2010) opined that, comprehensive reasons for choosing a particular employee for the assignment, and not just randomly filling a position or offering 'tokens'. It should be lawful and suitable selection processes is adopted. The selection is usually based on technical and functional expertise leaving out other qualities such as; personal characteristics and perceived adjustment which can contribute to an expatriate's suitability for an international assignment (Heirmsac, & Agwu, 2015). The authors added that, in selecting expatriates for overseas assignments certain criteria need to be adopted, importantly the technical and job-related skills, but less consideration is usually given to them compared to that given to technical competence. Conversely, Xian, and Chen, (2011) reported that, for selecting employee for an international assignment it should be consistent reflection on trust, open communication, supportive, problem solving groups, job autonomy, and exchange of information should be taking into consideration'.

However some scholars have long absorbed on two key questions in scheming selection processes: What should be assessed? How should we assess it? (Sanchez & Levine in Ryan & Ployhart 2014). These can be in attempt to develop selection tools to predict employee work engagement, which could lead to valuation of appropriate constructs as marital status, relationship stability in selection employee for international assignment which strength attempt to map out benches of ability to set boundaries on work assignments, time management, and decision making in contexts of challenging demands in emerging or developing countries.

**The Cultural Intelligence and its Component:** The concept cultural intelligence (CQ) in international assignment is an important strategy that assess the capability of an individual to function efficiently in culturally diverse settings (Earley and Ang in Van Dyne, et al, (2012).

Peterson in Kavar, (2012) identified cultural intelligence as the ability to show certain behaviours, including skills and qualities, which are culturally tuned to the attitudes and values of others. Therefore, in selecting employee for an international assignment, the component of cultural intelligence need to taken into consideration as a multi-dimensional construct that gives root to cognitive and metacognitive, motivational and behavioural components that shape the entire culture of an expatriates in an international assignment (Ang, in Balogh, et al. 2011). Contrary to this, in a study conducted by Chaney and Martin, (2011) pointed out that cultural intelligence covers other areas such as:

1. Linguistic Intelligence: It is helpful to learn about the costumers' native language and using international business English can increase effectiveness when communicating with persons of other cultures.
2. Spatial Intelligence: It involves the space used during meetings and introductions.
3. Intrapersonal Intelligence: It involves awareness of one's own cultural style in order to make adjustments to international counterparts.
4. Interpersonal Intelligence: It includes the ability to understand other people and their motivations.

The above concepts would help the management likewise the managers in deciding the types of employees to be selected for an international assignment as in the emergent/developing country.

### **Reasons for Expatriate in an International Assignment**

The term expatriation is often used to describe the process of international transfer of managers, while a term expatriate could literally be taken to mean any employee that is working outside his or her home country, or a person send by his employer to work in another part of the world. Expatriates generally arrive at a new assignment with a defined role, a set of responsibilities inherent in the job they are taking, through established organizational support system. Paula, et al, (2009) identified the reasons behind multinational

organizations selecting and sending employees on international assignments is for the purpose of developing global competence or cultural agility by building their knowledge of the worldwide market, developing cross-cultural understanding, and or the ability to speak a second language at work. Other reasons the business can use international assignments to implement coordination and control strategies from the headquarters, to develop managerial skills or to transfer technical knowledge. Rodrigues, in Ukessays, (2015) argued that 'an employee send for international assignment should be introduced to cultural differences before the start date in which the organization can plan how to engage in the cultural differences to make the assignment successful.' Babin, (2016) suggested that for international assignment to be successful there is need to some extent selecting someone who has been an expatriate before as a better alternative than considering someone who is very new to the experience. However, it is paramount importance to evaluate an expatriate assignment, so as to gives the management a clearer idea of the type of employee should be send for the specified assignment and the minimum expectations of the assignment to accomplish.

### **Critical Review of Related Literature**

Lin, et al, (2012) conducted a study in Taiwanese on the different perspective of expatriate management. The study has investigated and provides a comprehensive information associated with expatriates managements to includes selection criteria, staffing, training, the female expatriate, the expatriate spouse, and international adjustment. However the study also reveals that there are similar core concerns, such as an expatriate's professional knowledge, personality, adaptability, and international adjustment with context-specific concerns also emerge. Taiwanese companies care more about expatriates' personal skills and willpower compared to the West, where companies care more about an expatriate's past performance, adaptability, and spousal adjustment.

ThankGod and Olawumi (2018) conducted a study with main objective to assess the effect critical factors on expatriate assignment performance in the Nigerian oil and gas sector. The study revealed that, expatriates are indispensable in the oil and gas sector, owing to the numerous roles they play in imparting knowledge, and representing their home offices. The findings of the study revealed that expatriates on international assignment in Nigeria do face problems due to difficulty in communication, cultural differences, short-term assignment, expatriates personal characteristics and climate change.

Gahye, and Eunmi, (2019), the study also posits that open communication helps in creating an enabling environment that reduces communication difficulty for expatriates and then improve their performance. Majority of the expatriates noted that short term assignments have no negative impacts on their performance but long term assignment will be preferred, the culture shock experienced by most expatriates is counter-productive and can be reduced via cross-cultural trainings.

Therefore, the above review remain the form which influence an expats in an international assignment as the selection decisions done by the management of the organization and in which the findings of the study revealed that expatriates on international assignment in Nigeria and other countries do face problems due to difficulty in communication, cultural differences, short-term assignment, expatriates personal characteristics and climate change that give an insight to the topic under discussion.

### **The Strategic Tools for International Assignments**

It is of great importance to notes that Firms differ on the extent to which international assignees are central to their global business strategy and, in turn, whether selection for international assignments is a strategic priority. Brookfield Global Relocation Services, in Gabel-Shemueli, and Dolan, (2011) 'believes with strong evidence that multinational companies rely on international assignment practices in



implementing their international business strategies'. A study conducted by Tarique, et al, in Paula, et al, (2009) reported that, the relationship between international assignees and an organization's business strategy is observed from the basis of subsidiary staffing perspective. Here, the strategic in most cases largely affect the host countries due to attractiveness of expatriate destinations because expatriates, not only work, but also live in these destinations. The authors described multinational company as an appropriate subsidiary staffing composition which has a combination of parent country nationals, third country nationals, and host country nationals that contributes in order to balance the needs of autonomy, coordination, and control, and thus, enhance global competitiveness, flexibility, and learning. Mondy et al, in Jamila, (2018) reported that host-country national has a citizenship of the country, where the organization's subsidiary is placed, whereas a third-country national is employed by the companies' headquartered location but works in another country and has a citizenship of a third country.

The images of a country and its companies are attracted due to its economic, technological, and political development and in that effects the subsidiary staffing composition is more precisely the relationship that specified the internal ( business strategy) and external environmental factors ( country culture) which attracted expatriates destination's. Gahye, and Eunmi, (2019) opined that, it might be likely that prospective expatriate applicants would highly attracted at a less expatriate destinations in emerging countries, than those in advanced economic. The authors added that in a recent survey conducted on expatriates it has indicated that emerging countries, such as China, Brazil, and India, are selected as the most challenging assignment locations for expatriate. A study conducted by Edström and Galbraith in Reiche, and Harzing, (2010), explains theoretically the three motives why international transfer of managers or employees occurs:

1. **To fill positions:** This is concerns with the transfer of those that possess technical and managerial knowledge. This motive is quite

important for developing countries like Nigeria, where qualified local nationals might not be available, but specific knowledge transfer might be necessary to subsidiaries in developed countries as well. Expatriates can be seen as the key bearers of tacit knowledge.

2. **Management development:** This is the fact that, transfer gives the manager international experience and develops him/her for future important tasks in subsidiaries abroad or with the parent company. This kind of transfer would be carried out even if qualified host-country nationals were available.
3. **International transfers:** The author identified international transfer as the final goal that linked not to individual development but organization development. This motive are divided into two elements: socialization of both expatriate and local managers into the corporate culture and the creation of a verbal information network that provides links between subsidiaries and HQ

Therefore, the above motives are the points to notes for a companies that uses expatriation as a strategic tool to achieve specific organizational goals and needs. More recent research has highlighted the link between the reason for the international assignment and different dimensions of success as in Balan, (2016) suggested that for an international assignment to attained success the employee most possess knowledge, attitude, skill and hospitality (KASH balance) of the organizations to enable him to compete and an expatriate sent by companies must be more capable than that of the employees of foreign rivals and competitors.

### Challenges of International Assignment

The expatriate is confronted with so many challenges concerning the international assignment in different periods. Goby and Ahmed in Divilè, (2017) reported that, the challenges of expatriates encounter range from cultural shock, differences related to work norms, isolation, home-sickness, different system of healthcare protection and children education, different language, cuisine, other costs of living. In another approach supported by Banerjee and Gaur in Divilè, (2017), who

noted that the adaptation of expatriates might be affected by individual, work- and family-related factors. The diverse cultural environment is a problem in international assignment where both organizations and employees are facing the challenges of cultural diversity in a global world (Chen et al., in Rajaseka & Renand 2013). The authors identified three challenges periods that affects the expatriate are:

1. The pre-departure period concerns the preparation,
2. The on assignment includes all the challenges living through abroad and
3. The re-entry phase describes the challenges when the status of an expatriate change into a repatriate that means that the assignee comes back to the home country.

Looking at the second phrase period on the assignment, the expatriate go through cultural adjustment which is determined by a cultural shock, while the third aspect of it as explained earlier, identified the challenges the expatriate assignment face due to failure that are not measured only from the perspective of premature re-entry into the expatriate's home country but are likely affect those that do not return prematurely but stayed without accomplishing their assignments which eventually do more harm to their organizations (Harzing in ThankGod & Olawumi 2018).

**The Culture Shock** is one of the significant challenges that employee may be confronted by in their new environment. Culture shock is felt more profoundly by people whose community differs greatly from the one they migrate to (Guy & Patton, in Carper, 2014). The author added that, culture shock as an inability to "find our feet" as appropriate description for the feeling of intense bewilderment that can accompany contact with submersion into a new culture.' A study conducted by Al-Ghamdi, (2015) 'argued that culture shock as an anxiety that results from losing all or some familiar signs and symbols of social contact. The author gave a clear insight with Saudi students who come into the United States with different culture may find it

difficult to adjust to the traditions, lifestyle, and customs of the host society.'

**Organizational and National Culture:** 'Culture encompass the mutual cooperation that are deal with in religion and local knowledge, democracy, friendliness, and regional fanaticism, as well as positive individualism which gives root to organizational culture that are influenced by national culture' (Hofstede; Basu & Miroshnik; in Kustyađji, 2014). The author described organizational culture as a control mechanism that guides and shapes the attitudes and behaviors of employees while, national culture is a manifestation that can create a culture that values unique differences related to the practice of management that can influence company culture. The significant cultural distance between the home and host countries is a typical the case between developed country MNEs and developing country host subsidiaries as they are linked to the use of PCNs in key positions in subsidiary operations, for instance, when we explore the Nigerian culture through Hofstede model, we can get a good impression of the deep drivers of its culture relative to other cultures that will help when selecting employee for an international assignment



Source from: National Culture Dimension (2013)

The adopted staffing approach, has its advantages and disadvantages with Nigeria taking as example, recruitment situation among multinationals in oil and gas which discourages workers solidarity and described as an unpredictable form of employment practices that has long been an integral part of the oil and gas business in Nigeria.

### **The Philosophical Approaches to International Assignment**

In an international context, organizations must choose from several types of global staff members, who may be selected from among three different types: expatriates, host-country nationals, and third-country nationals. A study conducted by Perlmutter in Waxin, (2007) identified three approaches to international assignment, the linked that affects attitudes of the employees as well as the top management such as ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric toward building a multinational enterprise. The author added a fourth attitude to be regiocentric.

**1. Geocentric philosophical Approach:** With this approach, the MNC designs its strategy from an international standpoint right from the beginning. The organization favors ability and experience over nationality. Geocentric has the advantage of using human resources management efficiently and helps build strong culture and informal management network. Parent country nationals (PCNs), third country nationals (TCNs), and host country nationals (HCNs) are thus equally mobile internationally. In order to be successful, this approach to staffing without regard to nationality must be accompanied by a worldwide, integrated business strategy. These emphasizes collaborative determination between headquarters and subsidiary units of operations around the world (Heenan, et al, in Akpoyomare, & Mbah, 2012).

**2. Ethnocentric philosophical Approach:** This approach uses the strategic decisions made at headquarters, and foreign subsidiaries have little autonomy. The advantage of ethnocentric overcomes lack of qualified managers in host nation unified culture and helps transfer

core competencies. Heenan, et al, in Akpoyomare, and Mbah, 2012) 'reported that, all key decisions and foreign subsidiaries have little autonomy or input.' Therefore jobs at both domestic and foreign operations are held by headquarters management and subsidiaries are managed by expatriates from the home country headquarter.

4. **Polycentric philosophical Approach:** This approach called for the expatriation who is no longer at the center of the international development strategy because the MNC is treated in each subsidiary as a distinct national entity and empowers it with some decision-making autonomy (Maxin, 2007). The polycentric has an advantage that alleviates cultural myopia and inexpensive to implement. However, the local management controls the foreign subsidiary, although headquarters still makes broad strategic decisions. One of such strategic decisions is the adoption of contract labour and outsourcing as strategic means of costs reduction (Heenan, et al, in Akpoyomare, & Mbah, 2012).
5. **Regiocentric Philosophical Approach:** The MNC that favors a regiocentric approach adopts uniform practices for all managers within the same geographical zone. Like the MNC that functions with a geocentric approach, it utilizes a wider pool of managers but in a limited, regional way. Personnel may move outside of their countries, but only within their particular geographic region. For instance, European managers are mobile solely within Europe. Regional managers may not be promoted to headquarters positions but they enjoy considerable regional autonomy in decision-making.

## CONCLUSION

Management as a steering influence that directs work operations, it remain the form which influence an expatriates in an international assignment as the selection decisions should be done by the management of the organization which should be much more strictly taking with the various aspects, rather than being skill oriented alone.

The paper concentrated more on the international assignment process and issues in emerging/developing countries that addressed the employee's short-term needs of moving from pleasant place to another, without much thought to long-term employee development or the strategic needs of the business. It is a great important to note, that no particular model or procedure will suit all organizations, as their requirements vary with every international assignee and project. The study further exposed some of the challenges expatriates encounter when on assignment ranging from cultural shock, differences related to work norms, isolation, home-sickness, different system of healthcare protection, children education, different language, food, other costs of living has been discussed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Management of an organization should be conversance with culture shock of new employee send to other community or country in given an appropriate description for the feeling of intense bewilderment that can accompany contact with submersion into a new culture.
2. To avoid bias management should base selecting employee for an international assignment on consistent reflection on trust, open communication, supportive, problem solving groups, job autonomy, and exchange of information should be taking into consideration
3. It's a great important for both parent country nationals (PCNs), third country nationals (TCNs), and host country nationals (HCNs) to adopt an equal mobile international order and approaches for staffing without regard to nationality must be accompanied by a worldwide, integrated business strategy.

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