

Management of individual expatriation: Case of the academics expatriates in France

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ABSTRACT: The globalization of the labor market has spawned new forms of mobility and expatriation such as individual expatriation. This communication is designed to expose the appropriate practices for better management of individual expatriates, in this case academics. A qualitative approach was undertaken with 10 "academics" expatriates in France from different nationalities.

Their statements show that their host universities have no clear policies for the management of a foreign academic staff. The practices observed (injustice, discrimination, etc.) create counterproductive organizational behaviors and often lead to voluntary departures.

KEYWORDS: Individual Expatriation, Organizational Expatriation, Motivation of expatriation, Career management, Job performance.

1 INTRODUCTION

The globalization of the labor market has spawned new forms of mobility and expatriation. Now, the decision of expatriation is not made only in the context of the Organization; it is the expression of an individual choice, driven by the motivations and the personal expectations of the employee. Thus, a new form of expatriation emerges: the individual expatriation. It's an individual career management which becomes proactive, predictable and unpredictable. It is relational and follows the change and evolution of the context (Collin, 1998).

The University is particularly affected by this trend. Many teachers decide to leave their countries and go to work elsewhere. "The international mobility of the academics is not imposed by organizations but rather dictated by an individual motivation and a risk taking" (Ackers, 2005, p 103). For the University, the international recruitment of foreign teachers help to enrich its academic network, improve the quality of teaching and research, and allows it to cope with international competition. It is also, a strategy that helps fill the gaps in terms of skills, particularly in specific disciplines.

In this context, several questions arise, such as: What is the difference between traditional organizational expatriation and individual expatriation? What practices of HR we can observe in the field of the management of individual expatriates? More specifically, how do universities manage individually expatriate academics? This research will attempt to answer these questions. Thus, a first theoretical part will be devoted, briefly, to the difference between individual expatriation and organizational expatriation, as well as to their antecedents and their manifestations on Organization and individuals. The second part will outline the results of a first qualitative study undertaken through semi-structured interviews with 10 "academics" expatriates in France.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THE ORGANIZATIONAL EXPATRIATION: (OE): A CONTEXTUAL REQUIREMENT – A CAREER ACCELERATOR

The evolution of organizational structures and the acceleration of changes in a competitive environment lead companies to seek greater flexibility in the globalized market. Thus, several subsidiaries were created all over the world. Organizations are then required to affect in their subsidiaries abroad a highly qualified staff, typically executives.

Despite its high cost, expatriation is a way to transfer skills and culture of the parent firm in the subsidiaries. Also, it provides activity control and coordination (Ondrack, 1985; Cerdin, 2004). Therefore, the expatriate, often a senior official, has the role to train and develop new skills in the new branch of the firm. The selection and allocation of this senior official is usually done following a complex and rigorous process. Interviews combined with psychometric tests will enable policymakers to be more effective in the selection of a suitable person. The selection is also made on the basis of several criteria, including for example the technical skills, the ability of the individual to adapt to foreign cultures, the marital status of the individual, the particularities of the host country and the mastery of the language (Adams, 2008). Organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of these criteria and their influence on the success or failure of the mission of the expatriate. If it fails, the cost of expatriation will be obviously higher.

For the individual, it is rather a progression in the career that depends primarily on the decision of the organization. Thus, a successful mobility allows the expatriate to develop his skills and to achieve its mission. This will give him the opportunity to access upon returning to positions of responsibility in the parent organization. Indeed, it appears as an opportunity to boost the career and a springboard to climb the ladder. However, several factors may lead to the failure of this expatriation. The perception and expectations of the company are not analyzed in the same way as those of the individual (Cerdin, 2004). The divergence of expectations and motivations of expatriation is certainly costly for the Organization and for the expatriate who decides to put an end to this experience and return before the end of the mission. Thus, according to Yan, Zhu and Hall (2002), traditional expatriation initiated by the Organization must be a process that takes into account the motivations and interests of different parties.

2.2 THE INDIVIDUAL EXPATRIATION (IE) OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

Until recently, the managerial expatriation literature focused on traditional expatriation (Brewster and Scullion, 1997; Inkson & al., 1997; Suutari and Brewster, 2000), imposed to a large extent by the requirements of internationalization of the organization. However, with the development of the economy and the globalization of the labor market, new forms of international mobility are emerging, namely individual expatriation (IE). It concerns all socio-professional categories and, in particular, University teachers.

According to some studies (Inkson & al., 1997; Bell & Staw, 1989, Baruch & Hall, 2004; Keep & al., 1996), University teachers are "free agents". The international mobility of academics is not imposed by organizations but driven by individual motivation and risk taking (Ackers, 2005). It is a personal initiative of the academics to improve their professional situations and develop their skills. Also, they have confidence in their ability to manage their careers, taking into account their priorities and personal motivations.

At the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the career, expatriation is an invaluable and beneficial advantage for the academics career in terms of cultural exchange, experience, social networking. Also, it is an opportunity to discover another system of teaching, research and observe other academic practices. Consequently, new trends in research on individual expatriation pay more attention to the individual and his interests.

2.3 OE AND IE: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

A comparison between these two types of expatriation allows us to understand and identify the dissimilarities, particularly in regard to the motivations and expectations of expatriates, to better manage human resources.

Thus, the first difference concerns the decision-making of international mobility. Indeed, in the case of an OE, this decision is the prerogative of the organization. Expatriates are like a "Ping-Pong Balls of HRM" with little power (Inkson & al. 1997). Unlike the OE, the IE is controlled and managed by the individual himself, and is considered more flexible and more proactive than traditional career often operated by an employer (Inkson & al, 1997). It is based on improvisation, invention and individual flexibility rather than the 'traditional' method of the Organization (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

Another difference raised by Cerdin & Le Pargneux, (2009) notes that the organizational expatriate remains attached to his organization in his country of origin, while the individual expatriate breaks, partially or totally, its links with the organization. In addition, in an OE, organization accompanies its expatriates from the designation until the return. This support does not exist in the case of individual expatriates.

Career anchors also differ between the two types of expatriates. Indeed, a research undertaken by Cerdin and Le Pargneux (2009) about the motivations of expatriation of French expatriates - organizational and individual - shows the similarities and differences between these two types of expatriates in terms of career anchors. They mention that the anchor of quality of life is the most important in both types of expatriates.

In regard to security, the authors anticipate the results of the research and argue that corporate expatriation is safer than individual expatriation. However, the results showed that this type of anchor is more developed in individual expatriates. Another type of anchor (International) seems to be more present among organizational expatriates, who are firmly convinced that the organization makes the international experience easier.

Like the career anchors, motivations are clearly different, in individual or organizational experience. The professional development, the importance of the position and the personal challenge are key factors to consider in the decision-making of expatriation among French corporate expatriates. Among individual expatriates, the personal challenge ranks first, followed by the professional development and the importance of the position. With regard to the changes affecting values, motivations, behaviors and dissimilarities in career management, organizations are certainly facing new challenges in the management of the individual expatriation phenomenon.

3 METHOD AND KEY FINDINGS

The research question is formulated as follows: what GH practices can be revealed in the management of individual expatriates? More specifically, how do universities manage expatriate teachers? To address this issue, we have implemented a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews, using an interview guide.

Our research population consists of teachers expatriate in France individually since at least six months, to ensure a sufficiently rich expatriation experience which provides us with relevant information. More than 50 e-mails were sent to teachers working in several universities and colleges in France (public and private). Only 10 agreed to grant us an interview. The sample of 10 teachers is composed of 3 women and 7 men (Table 1).

We present in the following key results of this research.

Table 1. Distribution of expatriate teachers

Teacher / Nationality	Age	Diploma	In this position for	Host university
A. A. Lebanese	31-40 years	PhD in Management	3 years	ESC Paris
B.K German	41-50 years	PhD in Management	4 years	Catholic University - Lille
B.K Turkish	20-30 years	PhD in HR	2 years	Rouen Business School
H.B Tunisian	31-40 years	PhD in Management	3 years	Business school - Bordeaux
H. M English	41-50 years	PhD in Management	12 years	Catholic University - Lille
R.S.R Brazilian	41-50 years	PhD in Management Control	2 years	Business School -ISG -Paris
S.B Tunisian	31-40 years	PhD in Finance	2 years	School of Management - Champagnes
S.K Tunisian	20-30 years	PhD in Management	2 years	University Paris II
O.J. Cameroonian	41-50 years	PhD in Management	5 years	EDHEC
M.H.C Tunisian	31-40 years	PhD in Management	8 years	EDHEC

How the idea of expatriation has emerged? The answer to this question is very important because it highlights the role of the individual - the University teacher - in the decision of expatriation.

For all of the interviewed academics, expatriation is a personal choice: "it's my own decision", "it's a personal choice". They describe their expatriation as being thoughtful and a planned action. Also, they mention that they are actively seeking opportunities in foreign universities: "I sent my resume everywhere; Canada, USA and France", "I have always sought an opportunity. I sent my CV to several universities".

Indeed, they give the image of assertive and ambitious career professionals who leaves nothing to chance. They have academic relations and research projects with other researchers in different countries and with internationally renowned universities. These networks play a key role in the international recruitment: "I had colleagues and friends who worked at the ISG. They asked me to join them. So I sent my CV and I quickly got an offer because they have supported my candidacy. "

Sabri, Octave, and Rosana confirmed that links with colleagues abroad are often the starting point of an expatriation experience: "The dean knew me and knew that I was looking for a job abroad", "I met a teacher in a conference, he told me about a vacancy in his University". They may, in some cases, recommend them and support their candidatures: "A friend convinced me to apply for a vacant position. So I sent my CV", "I was introduced by my teachers. One of my teachers in Lille has helped me to join the EDHEC Faculty".

However, a few teachers interviewed mentioned the chance and coincidences. They say that expatriation was unexpected: "I did not plan this expatriation; it was a coincidence," "this position is the result of chance, I have not planned my expatriation," "everything is unexpected".

Interviewed teachers confirm that they are able to manage their careers. Highly motivated, they conduct planned and individual researches for the "best offer" in the international academic market. This shows clearly and unequivocally that individual action is often crucial in expatriation, unlike the managerial literature that presents the expatriates as "HRM ping-pong balls" (Inkson et al. 1997).

However, several motives encourage the individual to work elsewhere. According to interviews conducted with 10 expatriates in France, we identified four main reasons, namely; career, academic research, financial interest and change of lifestyle.

The career is the main reason for expatriation for the majority of the interviewed teachers. They argue that international experience has a positive impact on their academic career: "work abroad brings added value to my cv and my academic career". The majority of those interviewed believe that this international experience is an opportunity to learn how to work in a different academic context: "this experience gives me a know-how to manage different situations that I encounter in my work".

As for academic research, the majority of respondents mention that the French government spends an estimable budget in research and development. Thus, they declare that French universities are well-equipped and offer good conditions of work and scientific research.

The financial interest is another reason for expatriation for university teachers. They evoke pay attraction in France compared to the countries of origin. This allows them to achieve financial ambitions as the purchase of material goods in their country of origin, saving and improvement of the standard of living: "I wanted to improve my standard of living and that of my family", "salary allows me to pursue my dreams and give my family a better standard of living".

For some academics, the expatriation in France allows them to achieve their wish to live a new experience, and change their lifestyle: "I wanted to try a new life with new friends and a new culture".

The decision to expatriation cannot be taken without mentioning the recruitment procedure. Indeed, the majority of the interviewed teachers say they were selected and contacted shortly after sending their CV: "shortly after sending my CV, I received the offer", "I got an offer a month after I sent my CV". A telephone interview with the head of Department or the Dean was needed as a second phase that seems to be decisive: «I sent a resume and I had an interview via phone», «I was selected through phone interview. They report that the recruitment procedures were fairly simple and fast: "Procedures were fast enough. Forty-five days after sending my CV, I received the job offer".

However, some believe that this period was particularly long: "The recruitment process was long, interviews, file review...". ». Brigitte, German teacher working in Finland says that she passed a competition to get the vacant position of Lecturer: "There was a vacant position in France and I passed a competition. As I was a European citizen, I was treated as the French and Finnish".

With regard to the selection of candidates, most of expatriates interviewed agree on: "The choice of candidates is made according to their skills. The criteria for selection of candidates are cv, diplomas, experience and skills".

Intercultural training seems to be important in the success of expatriation. It strengthens the adaptation and reduces the effect of culture shock. However, most of those interviewed say they have not received cultural training before travelling in France. They simply consulted information on the internet concerning the climate, currency, lifestyle, etc.: "I did not have training or cultural preparation... I just did a search on the web". They argue that universities do help for common tasks only; housing, bank account, residence etc. Some acknowledge that they followed French language courses before their journey: "I followed French language courses. I was at an American University, so I just refreshed my memory, because I forgot the language", "I just took French lessons before leaving for Lille".

However, they mention that this linguistic training was insufficient: "The French that I studied in school is not enough to communicate with others". Some, in particular Europeans and Tunisians say they don't need a cultural training and their adaptation is easily done: "as I am German, working in France or England is without significance; It is as if I was in Germany. I have no problem coping with culture", "I have no problem with French culture, because I believe that, even in Tunisia, we live almost in a French style".

Thus, the cultural preparation considered by the literature of international mobility as a means of preparation of expatriates is non-existent in individual expatriation. Most of those interviewed expatriates say that "the host university is aware of the intellectual capacity and skills of teachers. It is not difficult for them to be in harmony with the new environment".

However, the majority of respondents draw attention to inequality and discrimination in the management of human resources in French schools and universities.

Some expatriate teachers say that their universities do not take into account their evolution of rank. This creates a situation of injustice that influences their attitudes and organizational behavior at the University. Sonia, expatriate at the University of Paris II, says: "Our career development is not occurring naturally as for the French. We must work much more (...) The expatriate cannot achieve its objectives without struggle. It is almost impossible for expatriates, particularly for us Arabs, to have the rank of associate professor because that rank gives them the opportunity to access to public service. Our career is blocked because of our origin". Brigitte (German) confirms the words of Sonia: "In France, the direction of academic

institutions is often headed by French. Generally, the expatriate may not be in a position that allows him to take major decisions. Apparently, my colleagues are nice and friendly, but in reality there is always a gap. We are always foreigners".

Some respondents argue that participation in decision making is a privilege for the associate professors and professors, especially at well-known universities. "The heads of departments and deans involved in decision-making have generally the rank of associate professor or Professor", "In France, it's different. We don't take decisions, even for courses to teach".

These statements are relativized by other colleagues (working in business schools) who explain their participation in decision making by the size of their institutions: "we are not numerous. We think together and take decisions collectively, not only to the Department but for the whole school."

Finally, half of the interviewed teachers raise the problem of communication with the staff in the host universities. Indeed, administrative staff uses the French language to communicate with our five respondents who do not speak French since they come from Brazil, England, Turkey and Egypt.

They accuse the University of a lack of professionalism and maturity to successfully manage an international activity. "The relationship with the administration is not always easy, because staff do not speak English. Well, I try to communicate with them with the little French I know. In Brazil, the staff speaks English. Here, although the students are international, and courses are taught in English, they prefer to use the French language. But they must speak English especially with the international staff at the University". "In an international institution, it is more appropriate to communicate in English. Why should I write formal letters in French to apply for a certificate of work for example, while I do not speak the language? »

4 DISCUSSION

The internationalization of academic labor market and mobility of university teachers have increased competition to attract the best foreign talents. Universities are intended to strengthen their performance and enrich their research teams. However, would the universities be ready to meet the challenge of internationalization of their academic teams and better management of these new skills?

University teachers expatriate in France encounter communication problems and suffer varying degrees of anomalies and injustice. Also, they must resolve the problems that arise from the lack of professionalism and maturity of administrative staff in some French universities.

The administrative staff does not speak English and uses French language with all academics, local and expatriate. It is worth noting that the courses are given in English to local and international students. Indeed, this makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, with the expatriate academic staff. This situation is inconsistent with the internationalization policies undertaken by the universities.

Expatriate teachers are permanently exposed to misunderstandings with administrative staff which, according to them, discredit the international reputation of the University. As a result, some expatriate teachers prefer to change their workplace.

Thus, it would be appropriate that universities include training workshops in terms of linguistic and communicative skills in their professional development policies.

Thus, staff will be well prepared to increase significantly the performance of the university and the organizational commitment of expatriate teachers.

In addition, interviewed teachers emphasize the feeling of injustice and inequality they endure. Inequalities are related to decision making and access to executive positions. This significantly increases the sense of injustice and leads, over time, a lack of motivation and the disengagement among expatriate teachers; a situation which sometimes leads to voluntary departures.

The policy which would strengthen the competitiveness of the university should eliminate all forms of discrimination and inequality between the expatriate teachers and local teachers. Also, participation in decision-making and access to management positions should be part of a transparent policy based on objective criteria such as skills and seniority.

Career management is particularly important in the development of the commitment to the university. Some universities have no clear and transparent policies for the professional development of their expatriate academic staffs, as access to executive positions. Promotion and career development opportunities would enable the university to achieve a high rate of retention of expatriate teachers. In addition, career management policy should be clear, fair and based on skills.

It should recognize as the true value of the teacher, promote creativity and enhance its action. This will have a great impact on the development of motivation, performance and organizational commitment.

5 CONCLUSION

Self-management of career, in particular individual expatriation, constitutes a new phenomenon that allows teachers to explore new teaching and research experiences, acquire new knowledge and skills and build / expand a professional network. However, this phenomenon as well as new organizational challenges is not sufficiently explored in the management literature.

This qualitative analysis allowed us to explore the different contexts and interactions that have an influence on the success of the experience of individual expatriation of the University teacher. We suggest that the university should pay more attention to its performance management system to generate higher levels of performance at work. These levels of performance may be best achieved through a performance management system which promotes organizational engagement of academic staff. Thus, the University should establish a policy of fair management to avoid counterproductive behavior as a result of dissatisfaction, injustice and the discrimination.

We believe that these results cannot be generalizable given the reduced number of sample. A wider exploration is required. We will extend this exploration to other universities and comparisons between them with greater emphasis on the socio-cultural contexts.

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