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**THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FUNCTIONAL ASSIGNEES AND
DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNEES ON EXPATRIATION MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES AND DETERMINANTS OF TURNOVER INTENTION**

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ABSTRACT:

This study reviews the distinction between functional assignees and developmental assignees on the availability of expatriation management practices given by the organization. In addition, this study compares the differences between functional assignees and developmental assignees on job related factors such as perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, career advancement, perception of underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity from employee's perspective. Moreover, the study investigates the determinants of turnover intention.

Quantitative method is adopted in this study. In particular, regression and descriptive statistics are used. The results of a study of 68 repatriates from various corporations suggest that there is no significant difference between different types of assignees with regard to repatriation practices, perceived organizational support, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity. In addition, the study justifies independent variables: perceived organization support, organizational commitment, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity all have an influence on employee's turnover intention. Besides, the study finds repatriation concerns, employability, and turnover intention differs from functional assignees and developmental assignees. The findings of the study contribute to the understanding of repatriates' difference in various job related factors. Furthermore, the study reveals the factors that have an effect on employee's turnover intention. Organizations can improve expatriation management and prevent human capital loss by taken into account the difference between assignees and the factors that influence turnover intention.

KEYWORDS: Expatriation, repatriation, assignees, turnover intention, retention

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background of the literature is introduced, followed by discussions about the research gap, the research objectives, and explanation of key definitions. This chapter ends with a research structure.

1.1. Background

With the era of rapid business globalization, employees with international experiences become prevalent amongst multinational corporations (use the abbreviation “MNCs” in the rest of the paper). International experience has become an advantage enabling employees to acquire better promotion and career advancement opportunity. It is very common for organizations to use international assignments as training and career development tool, simultaneously attracting and retaining high-potential employees (Stahl, Chua, Caligiuri, Cerdin & Taniguchi, 2009). In addition, MNCs use expatriate assignments as a leadership development tool. These MNCs often send their managers and executives abroad in an attempt to develop their knowledge of the international economic environment and their ability to work and manage effectively across national borders (Tung, 1998).

Repatriates, who have completed a global assignment, can help establish and expand an MNC’s international business because they possess first-hand knowledge of particular cultural contexts, including information about specific markets and customers. Moreover, repatriates understand how the company is perceived in another country and they are part of a global social network which can advance the company’s business around the world (Downes & Thomas, 1999). Furthermore, repatriates have an irreplaceable role in

organizational learning, taken into account the fact that they can accelerate the transfer of knowledge from host countries to headquarters, and vice versa.

Despite most companies have dealt with expatriates as if they are of a homogenous group (Evans et al., 2002), and recommendations for repatriation generally lump all international assignees into a single category. Caligiuri et al. (2001) point out not all international assignees are created or intended to be equal in terms of their strategic significance to the organization, the learning and development opportunities available to them during the assignment, and the need for the international assignee's competencies upon repatriation. Stahl et al. (2009) define international assignees with learning-driven or developmental assignment goals as developmental assignees and international assignees with demand-driven or task-related assignment goals as functional assignees. Developmental assignees execute short-term learning assignments, such as job rotations across several countries or regions, as well as longer-term assignments that constitute an integral part of the career development planning for high potential young managers. As for functional assignees, the main tasks include coordination and control, communication, knowledge transfer, and problem solving.

Organizations use both functional assignees and developmental assignees as unique vehicles for knowledge transfer and organizational learning, namely, the processes that constitute the foundation for building organizational competitiveness in a global knowledge economy (Berthoin, 2001; Bonache & Brewster, 2001). Moreover, international assignees are key for transferring tacit knowledge (i.e., based on individual experience and intuition, difficult to observe, codify and disseminate) across different organizational units (Riusala & Suutari, 2004). For these reasons, many companies view their repatriates as an important human capital investment (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2000; Downes et al., 1999; Tung, 1998). Nevertheless, such an investment has become a double-edged sword which brings about both opportunities and threats.

There is general agreement on the fact that 'overseas success' is evident if expatriates (1) remain in the assignment until the end of the term, (2) adjust to living conditions in the

new culture, and (3) perform well on the job” (Aycan & Kanungo, 1997: 251). Additionally, with the increasing concern over retaining expatriates upon their repatriation to the home-country, organizations consider retention of these former expatriates as an important success criterion (Black & Gregersen, 1991b; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Stroh, 1995). Consistent with this converging view of expatriate success, according to Kraimer & Waney (2004), expatriation success is defined in terms of expatriate adjustment, commitment to the organization, job performance, and intentions to complete the assignment. However, high expatriation failure rate have been reported in many studies (Hammer, Hart, & Rogan, 1998; Yan, Zhu, & Hall, 2002).

The cost of mismanaging the repatriation process is significant. Research has shown that an estimation of 20 to 50 percent of repatriates leave the organization within two years of returning home (Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 1998; Bossard & Peterson, 2005). Moreover, the investment of an expatriate amount to two to three times the average compensation of a comparable manager in the home country (Cummins, 2001). For organizations, being not able to retain expatriates upon return is a waste of money, time and human capital (Christina & Lisa, 2013). Organization should be aware of the phenomenon that different perceptions between functional assignees and developmental assignees may ultimately influence their turnover intentions (Stahl et al., 2009). In order to retain repatriates, it is necessary for organizations to examine the expatriation management practices, especially repatriation practices that available to repatriates. Furthermore, organizations should endeavor in improving expatriation management practices and better understanding of the difference between assignees so as to prevent organization human capital loss.

1.2. Research gap

It is always the case that expatriates with an international assignment expect that they can make full use of the experiences and skills they accumulated during expatriation period

by the time they relocate to their home company. Accordingly, they expect certain level of promotion by the time of repatriation. Nevertheless, evidence shows that international assignments can be a double-edged sword for both individual and organization, bringing about related problems such as expatriate adjustment, underperformance, career derailment, and high attrition rate (Stahl et al., 2009). Most of the problems can be attributed to the fact that many companies lack of effective repatriation management practices, therefore failing to integrate international assignments with long-term career development and succession planning. Owing to traumatic repatriation experiences or limited job advancement opportunities, a huge percentage of expatriates leave their company after the completion of international assignment. The reported high attrition rate reveals the mismatch between expatriation planning and expected outcome, which leads to a loss of organization's social capital (Bossard et al. 2005; Hammer et al., 1998; Stroh et al. 1998; Yan et al., 2002).

Study of the repatriation experience of international assignees shows that repatriates often feel that their international assignment had a negative impact on their career development as their reentry positions usually fail to reach their expectation. Moreover, many companies do not capitalize on the newly found skills and talents of repatriated employees (Stroh et al., 1998). For organizations, researcher has found that job performance of expatriates, development outcomes, and employee retention are the most critical issues that organization concerns about during the whole expatriation process. Whereas, for employees, career development and job satisfaction play a decisive role in their career advancement path. The root of employee dissatisfaction and attrition can be ascribed to the gap between organization expectation and employee expectation, which highlight the necessity to examine repatriation management practices more systematically and rigorously (Bolino et al., 2009). Moreover, employees who were posted abroad for leadership development purposes and career enhancement purposes are probably the most important assets for organizations to retain as these assignees are often groomed for higher-level positions within the global organization, and retaining them is critical to the company's leadership development and succession planning efforts (Caligiuri et al., 2001; Evans, Pucik & Björkman, 2002). However, a huge portion of expatriates, those who

were sent abroad to fill in an vacant job position for many years, received limited attention and support from organization in terms of career development, job advancement, and reentry position. Those expatriates, referred as functional assignees in this study, generally spending longer years than managers and developmental assignees before the completion of an international assignment, gradually become isolated as a result of being “out of the sight” from organization. For the organization, though functional expatriates are not as strategic important as managers and developmental expatriates, the departure of functional staffs still exert detrimental impacts on organization’s human capital. Out of this concern, there is necessity to turn our attention to the group of functional assignees and give some practical suggestions to organization on expatriation management. Moreover, organizations should aware of this phenomenon and make improvement on expatriation management practices as so to make better use of its human capital and in an attempt to alleviate organization human capital loss.

1.3. Research objectives

The empirical research took place at the managerial and developmental level of expatriates, where managers and high-potentials are critical social capital in organization and receive much more supports and attentions than ordinary employees during international assignments (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1992; Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992; Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001; Chambers, Foulon, Handfield, Hankin & Michaels, 1998). Differently, the focus of this study is to examine organization expatriation management practices on both functional and developmental level employees and their turnover intentions. In addition, our study aims to identify what factors influence the turnover intention of repatriates. Moreover, the study intends to examine the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees with regard to repatriation practices and job related issues. Lastly, instead of merely focusing on expatriates for developmental purpose and taking into account the relative scarce career advancement

opportunities for functional expatriates, the study compare the future career path of both functional assignees and developmental assignees. Namely, the study examines the change of position at home organization after the termination of international assignment at foreign organization so as to see whether the re-entry position involves a demotion, a lateral move, or a promotion.

The current research is orientated to address these three main research questions:

1. What is the difference between functional expatriates and developmental expatriates in terms of expatriation management practices?
2. What factors have an influence on repatriates' turnover intention?
3. What are the differences between functional assignees and developmental assignees with regard to their perceptions on a series of job related issues?

For the first research question, from the expatriate's perspective, a comparison of expatriation management practices between functional assignees and developmental assignees will be conducted after identifying what repatriation practices are commonly used by MNCs. Repatriation practices that prior to assignee's departure, during assignee's task, and before repatriation will be examined thoroughly in this study, followed by a summary of the availability of repatriation practices on different types of assignees. Namely, statistical method is used to reveal the difference of expatriation management practices between functional assignees and developmental assignees.

For the second research question, based on extant literature, various factors have been identified that contribute to repatriates' turnover intention. Determinants such as the duration of international assignment, perceived employability, organization support, perception of job advancement, perception of underemployment, commitment to organization, and repatriation concerns all played a role in expatriate's turnover intention. Propositions are raised to examine the influence of each determinant on turnover intention. Regression will be conducted in this study so as to test the relationship between variables.

The last research question aims to discover the difference of job related issues between functional assignees and developmental assignees from employee's perspective. In particular, our research intends to know whether the determinants of turnover intention differ between functional assignees and developmental assignees. Moreover, this study also reveals other factors that make a difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees.

1.4. Definitions

Functional assignees and developmental assignees

Caligiuri et al.'s (2001) classify international assignments into four categories: strategic assignment, developmental assignment, technical assignment, and functional assignment. In this research, expatriates are differentiated into two categories. With expatriates executing either a strategic assignment or a developmental assignment defined as developmental assignees, expatriates who execute either technical assignments or functional assignments are defined as functional assignees (Stahl et al., 2009).

Repatriation and repatriates

This period of re-entry, also known as repatriation, involves the expatriate's "reentry into the domestic environment and organization" following completion of their international assignment (Harvey, 1989). Repatriation refers to the process of returning to the home country (Dowling, Schuler & Welsch, 1994). The term "repatriate" refers to an employee who has returned from an international assignment and is undergoing this reintegration (Christina et al., 2013).

Turnover intention

Employee's turnover intention refers to the intention of repatriate to leave the home organization after fulfilling an international assignment (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979).

1.5. Structure of the study

The rest of the study is organized as follows. In the next parts, a review of relevant literature is presented. Numbers of propositions are drawn and a model of testing the impacts of different expatriation management practices on employee turnover intention is taken. Thereafter, along with the theoretical framework, the methodology used in this paper is given, followed by the data analysis and interpretation. The discussion section includes the findings of each research question and explanations of new findings. At last, the thesis ends with theoretical contribution, managerial implications, limitations and future research orientation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Typologies of international assignee

Despite most companies have dealt with expatriates as if they are of a homogenous group (Evans et al., 2002), and recommendations for repatriation generally lump all international assignees into a single category. Caligiuri et al. (2001) pointed out not all international assignees are created or intended to be equal in terms of their strategic significance to the organization, the learning and development opportunities available to them during the assignment, and the need for the international assignee's competencies upon repatriation. Dating back to 1980s, Edström and Galbraith (1977) have identified three principal motives for the global transfer of managers: (1) to fill positions that cannot be staffed locally because of a lack of technical or managerial skills, (2) to support organizational development, which refers to the coordination and control of international operations through socialization and informal networks, and (3) to support management development by enabling high potential individuals to acquire international experience. Built on Edström et al.'s (1977) pioneering work, Pucik (1992) differentiates between two types of international assignments: (1) demand-driven (or task-driven) assignments, which includes coordination and control, communication, knowledge transfer, and problem solving; and (2) learning-driven assignments, which are initiated for competency development and career enhancement (Stahl et al., 2009). Learning-driven international assignments may include short-term learning assignments, such as job rotations across several countries or regions, as well as longer-term assignments that constitute an integral part of the career development planning for high potential young managers. From the organization's perspective, both elements may prevail but in most cases only one dimension dominates. Stahl et al. (2009) proposes that international assignees with learning-driven or developmental assignment goals (henceforth, developmental assignees)

and assignees with demand-driven or task-related assignment goals (henceforth, functional assignees) may have different perceptions that ultimately influence their turnover intentions. According to Caligiuri et al.'s (2001) measure, international assignments are classified into four categories. To be specific, Caligiuri et al. (2001) define technical assignment as one that "was solely to do a technical job and return to a domestic position" and did not require the employee to develop intercultural skills to be successful. As for functional assignment, it is defined as one that was "to do a specific job and return to a domestic position ... developing my cross-cultural skills was not a stated goal of my assignment; however, to do the international assignment successfully, I needed to be effective interculturally." With regard to developmental assignment, it is defined as one in which "the primary purpose of my assignment was for me to develop global competencies. This assignment was part of a long-term career plan with the company. To be successful on the assignment, I needed to be effective interculturally." As for strategic assignment, it is defined as one that "was an executive level position. I was both filling a key position and developing global competencies as a part of my long-term career plan with the company. For my career with the company, this 'global experience' is critical." Despite the taxonomy of international assignment varies, it can be classified into two main categories: functional assignment and developmental assignment. Accordingly, international assignees were classified into functional assignees and developmental assignees.

2.2. Expatriation and repatriation

Successful expatriation management involves not only assigning the right person to the right position, but also ending expatriate assignment with a strategically planned repatriation program so as to increase employee retention. A handful of companies have a good track record for successful assignment and executive retention. Those companies use international assignments as research opportunities, with carefully planned post-

assignment policies and repatriation (Bawany, 2010). It has been suggested that company needs to integrate employee's international assignment with career development. That is, career management planning should begin before the assignment starts and last until the assignment ends. Organizations use international assignments as a training and career development tool to attract and retain high-potential employees (Stahl, et al., 2009). Studies show that integrating international assignment with long-term career development is the most effective way to retain international assignees and facilitate repatriation success (Bolino, 2007; Harvey & Novicevic, 2006; Riusala & Suutari, 2000). Nevertheless, due to poor career planning, repatriates are often placed in a holding pattern and assigned jobs that are available without regard to the individual's abilities and preferences (Harvey & et al., 2006). Insufficient expatriation management practices may result in employee's underperformance, low commitment, underemployment, and even high turnover intention.

In the next sections, we examine what expatriation management practices do MNCs have before, during, and after expatriation, followed by the consequences of insufficient expatriation management practices. This section ends with a discussion of expatriation failure.

2.2.1. Expatriation management practices

The expatriation process consists of four stages: selection, training, foreign assignment, and repatriation. The key in selection stage is determining the right candidate to the right position. Training is the stage where organization prepares the expatriate with some briefings and descriptions about foreign firm and culture. This step is followed by foreign country assignment, which involves issues about working, living as well as adjustment in the foreign environment. The last stage is repatriation. Repatriation refers to the process of returning to the home country (Dowling, Schuler & Welsch, 1994). Black et al, (1999) emphasize the importance of having a well-defined repatriation program so as to

minimize repatriation problems. Similarly, Yongsun (2002) argues that it is crucial for organization to carefully manage the repatriation process in order to exploit the knowledge and resources upon repatriation. According to Vermond (2001), repatriation process is suggested to get started as early as possible during the expatriation period and to last until re-entry to home organization.

Research has shown that relevant repatriation practices can substantially reduce the turnover within this group of employees (Harvey, 1989; Lazarova et al., 2001). One example from O'Sullivan (2002) concerning the issue of managing repatriation transitions suggests that a successful repatriation transition can be attained when, upon return, repatriates gain access to a suitable job, experience minimal cross-cultural readjustment difficulties and report low turnover intentions. Nevertheless, repatriation practices do not always get enough attention from organization. As a consequence, poor repatriation policies have become a large barrier to firm's successful globalization and might therefore cause serious international human resources problems (Allen & Alvarez, 1998).

Jassawalla et al (2004), develop a theoretical model by identifying key action steps taken before assignment, during expatriation, and after repatriation. Prior to an international assignment, job clarity, career counseling, and formal policies for repatriation are considered as key repatriation practices. During expatriation, the perceived organizational support along with the frequency and intensity of communication between home organization and the expatriate play a decisive role in successful repatriation. Approaching to repatriation, the quality of interaction with sponsor and the organizational support become the most critical repatriation practices. Christina et al. (2013), summarize five best repatriation practices to support expatriates including: keeping expatriate updated on company changes, performing annual talent review specifically for expatriates, providing trips back to the home office, utilizing mentorship program based in home office, and managing expatriates through an international human resource division.

Organizational career support plays in decisive role in expatriation management. It provides repatriates with the opportunity to develop their human capital by helping to alleviate job concerns and allowing employees to focus on their jobs just before repatriating and once repatriated.

Organizational career support brings about benefits such as increasing expatriates' chances of being promoted upon repatriation. Moreover, research has found out organization support positively relate to expatriates commitment and intentions to complete the expatriate assignment (Kraimer et al., 2004). Furthermore, supportive repatriation practices including career support positively related to repatriates' intentions to stay, and this relationship was mediated by perceived organizational support (Lazarova et al., 2001). Therefore, organizational support becomes a key element in expatriation management.

2.2.2. Consequences of insufficient repatriation practices

It has been reported many organizations overlook the importance of repatriation practices in managing expatriates (Baruch et al., 2002; Gregersen et al., 1998; Yan et al., 2002). Effective repatriation practices play an important role in decreasing expatriate's turnover rate. Contrarily, one of the most straightforward outcomes of insufficient expatriation management practices is loss of human capital. The loss of an internationally proficient employee often indirectly translates into providing advantage to direct competitors, as repatriates are likely to find jobs with competitors, thus providing the competitors with valuable human assets. (Caligiuri et al., 2001) Additionally, high turnover among repatriates compromises the company's ability to recruit future expatriates because it signals to other employees in the company that, international assignments may have a negative impact on one's career (Downes et al., 1999). Other studies have highlighted the concerns of losing tacit knowledge where embedded in repatriates' mind, (Bender & Fish, 2000). When repatriates leave, the company is losing their knowledge and newly

developed skills, quite probably to competitors (Jana, 2000; Poe, 2000; Caligiuri et al., 2001; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Most importantly, high turnover rates among repatriates also potentially have a negative influence on the desire of new cadre to volunteer for international assignments (Tung, 1988).

Although various career-development practices have been outlined to assist companies in successfully career-pathing international assignees, including managing assignees' career expectations, providing career path information, organizing participation in networking activities that allow assignees to stay in touch with key people in the home organization, providing ongoing coaching, establishing mentor relationships between expatriates and executives from the home location, and improving expatriates' career self management skills (Mendenhall, Kihlmann, Stahl, & Osland, 2002; Selmer, 1999). Nevertheless, study of the repatriation experience of international assignees shows that repatriates often feel that their international assignment had a negative impact on their career development where their reentry positions have less authority than those positions they held abroad. Moreover, repatriate also complained about the fact that their international experience being not valued by their home organization (Adler, 2002; Bolino, 2007; Hammer, Hart, & Rogan, 1998; Stroh et al., 1998). As a consequence, the relational psychological contract of employees with organization shifts into a transactional one, giving rise to excessive concerns amongst expatriates about how to enhance their future employability and marketability rather than the contribution to organization during their international assignments. With employees' diminishing allegiance to home country, ensuring expatriates' performance and employee retention become even demanding for nowadays organizations.

Furthermore, expatriate becomes future orientated for the sake of not losing employability when dealing with their future employers. As the positions available for them usually fail to meet their expectation, they have to stay at the holding pattern waiting for a better opportunity (Stahl et al, 2009). Combined with reentry shock, changed working environment, and new acquired knowledge being not acknowledged or

used by organization, repatriates chose to leave the company looking for better job opportunity.

According to the 2004 Global Relocation Trends Report, 44% of repatriates leave their companies within the first two years of returning to their home countries. Even higher attrition rates have been reported for firms relatively new to the international marketplace (Baruch, Steele, & Quantrill, 2002). With firms spending an average of \$1 million on each expatriate assignment, this attrition rate has become a significant concern for most companies (Lazarova et al., 2001).

2.2.3. Reasons for repatriation failure

Reasons for repatriation failure can be associated with the concept of “culture shock”. In the repatriation process, the repatriate experiences a corresponding phenomenon, usually called “reverse culture shock” (Baruch & Altman, 2002; Bossard et al., 2005). To explain more, during the time of the expatriate assignment, the home environment changes and so does the expatriate. Whereas, the expatriate might still carry an old picture of the home society based on how it was before he/she left, and the home environment expects that the person coming home is the same individual as the one who left (Martin, 1984). Accordingly, the expectations of the repatriate are not in line with the reality, and a reverse culture shock occurs. Frequently there is no job guarantee upon return, and the policy is unclear (Bossard et al., 2005).

Getting access to a suitable job requires a match between the repatriate’s expectations and the actual willingness and capacity of the home organization to meet those expectations. Similarly, researcher found mismatch exists between organization and individual in terms of their top priorities. While job performance of expatriates, development outcomes, and employee retention are the most critical issues that organization concerns about during the whole expatriation process. For employees, career

development and job satisfaction are rated as the most important factors in their career path.

Kraimer, Shaffer, & Bolino (2009) define career advancement in terms of a three-level hierarchy—demotion, lateral move, and promotion—as perceived by repatriates. Employees' assessments of whether their positions involve a demotion, lateral move, or promotion were largely based on their subjective assessment on their movement within company's hierarchy. Developmental assignees, those who are generally younger in age than functional assignees and spend less time on international assignments than functional assignees, normally receive more support and resources from organization than functional assignees do. Moreover, they are often groomed for promotion upon repatriation. In comparison, functional assignees gradually become to the group of out-of-sight employees, seldom have them opportunity to get promoted upon repatriation.

Another reason for repatriation failure rests on the process of repatriation. Hyder & Lövblad (2007) argue what actually increases the likelihood of the individual staying in the organization is not the adjustment as such, but rather the experience the individual has of the repatriation process. The latter has been suggested indirectly in the research performed by Lazarova et al. (2001), as they conclude that when the repatriate experience that he/she receives the proper support from the organization during the repatriation process, the relational contract between the repatriate and the employer will be strengthened and the desire to stay in the organization will increase. As a consequence, repatriation adjustment becomes relevant and functional when repatriate experience is largely positive. In contrast, a repatriate will not be interested to adjust and stay with the parent organization if experience with the repatriation process is negative. In other words, When the expatriate's expectations about the repatriation process are met or perceived to be met, the relational contract between the employee and the organization will function and chance for repatriate retention will increase (Hyder et al., 2007).

2.3. Factors that influence turnover intention

Lazarova et al. (2007) have identified three sets of predictors of repatriation outcomes: individual variables (e.g., demographic characteristics), organizational variables (e.g., availability of repatriation support practices), and environmental variables (e.g., available employment opportunities in the home country). Focusing merely on organizational variables which are most likely to be controlled and influenced by human resources or line managers, Stahl et al. (2009) proposes three sets of variables which play a key role in international assignees' willingness to stay: (1) the perceived company support during the assignment, (2) the perceived effectiveness of repatriation management practices, and (3) the perceived long-term career advancement and growth opportunities inside the company relative to those available outside the company. Perception of underemployment occurs often when employees are moved into jobs that require fewer qualifications or reside at a lower hierarchical level in an organization than their previous position (Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002). The effects of perceptions of underemployment involve decreased job satisfaction, job performance, organizational commitment, and intentions to complete the expatriate assignment (Bolino et al., 2000).

Similarly, previous studies on repatriation have identified that various factors affect whether expatriates remain with their company upon repatriation. Some of these factors include: being placed in a non-challenging job, lack of promotion opportunities, loss of status and autonomy, lack of career planning and counseling, lack of support on behalf of managers and colleagues, sluggish career advancement, and repatriates' perception of how well the MNCs managed their repatriation process (Adler, 1981; Abueva, 2000; Black et al., 1992; Feldman & Thompson, 1993). Furthermore, in a study testing the perceived psychological contract with expatriates, the expatriates rated their general perceptions of their organization's support and judged its sufficiency at providing assistance while they were on assignment. This study found a negative relationship between the perception of the support practices offered to the expatriates and the expatriates' turnover intentions (Guzzo, Noonan & Elron, 1994).

In this study, five determinants were identified that influence the employee's turnover intention to a large extent. In the next sections, they will be discussed one by one.

2.3.1. Perceived organizational support

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa, (1986) define perceived organizational support as the employees' global beliefs that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. To conceptualize perceived organizational support (POS), Kraimer et al. (2004) develop a multi-dimensional concept including adjustment POS, career POS, and financial POS. According to organizational support theory, employees infer the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being through various policies, practices, and treatment. Employees then reciprocate such support with increased loyalty and performance (Rhoades et al., 2002). In line with Stahl et al.'s (2009) proposition, Yan et al.'s (2002) model demonstrates any mismatch of the two parties' expectations for an international assignment can result in assignment failure, both from the perspective of the organization (e.g., repatriate turnover) or the individual (e.g., career derailment). An underlying assumption from Lazarova et al. (2001) proposes that repatriates who perceive they have more support from their organization will be more committed to that organization—and thus will be more likely to stay.

Organizational support makes a huge difference in expatriate's immediate adjustment to new working condition. Adjustment includes personal adjustment, professional adjustments, as well as family adjustment (Harvey, 1989). Each of them may encounter hardships provided that inadequate organizational support is given.

Differently, Feldman et al. (1993) conclude what determines turnover intention is the repatriates' perception of how well the MNCs managed their repatriation process. This suggests that if the potential repatriation problems are considered, and appropriately

addressed, by the MNC in advance, repatriate turnover will occur less often (Harvey, 1989). As a result, the repatriates who perceive that they have more support from their organization become more committed to that organization and will be more likely to be retained after repatriation (Lazarova et al., 2001).

In terms of repatriation, previous studies have found out that many repatriates experience “reverse culture shock” by the time they are relocated to home country. Since they harbor an illustration that nothing has changed in their home organization, more importantly, expatriates believe that they are the same they were before they leave for assignment (Sanchez, Spector & Copper, 2000; Scullion & Brewster, 2001). Moreover, researchers have pointed out unexpected changes in life style, reduction in cash flow and disposable income, problems associated with loss of social status and lifestyle changes as examples of stressors experienced by returning repatriates (Lazarova et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, the expatriate’s well-being is determined by the perceived organizational support rather than organizational support. Perceived organizational support has been defined as the employees’ global beliefs that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Organizational support theory supposes that employees infer the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being through various policies, practices, and treatment (Rhoades et al., 2002).

Kraimer et al. (2004) developed a multidimensional conceptualization of perceived organizational support (POS) consisting of adjustment POS, career POS, and financial POS. Adjustment POS is defined as the extent to which the organization cares about the employee’s (including family) adjustment following a job transfer. Practices might include anticipatory and in-country adjustment programs such as cross-culture training, relocation assistance as well as language training (Black et al., 1991). Career POS is defined as the extent to which the organization cares about the expatriate’s career needs. Practices for expatriate’s career support might include a mentor while on the expatriate assignment (Feldman & Bolino, 1999; Florkowski & Fogel, 1999), which is in line with the functionality of a transition coach (Bawany, 2010). Other practices involves long-

term career planning (Selmer, 2000), and career-oriented performance appraisals (Feldman & Thomas, 1992). Financial POS is defined as the extent to which the organization cares about the employee's financial needs and rewards the employee's contributions in terms of compensation and employment benefits. Practices might be the amount of assignment bonuses, cost of living allowances, rest and relaxation leave time, and other perks associated with the expatriate assignment will be reflected in the expatriate's perceptions of financial POS (Kraimer et al., 2004).

2.3.2. Commitment to organization

Lund & Barker, (2004) defines organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization, as characterized by strong beliefs in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to retain membership in the organization.

According to one taxonomy of expatriate's commitment to organization with respect of attachment, expatriate can be attached to both home organization and foreign organization, or be attached to home organization only, or be attached to foreign organization only, or be attached to neither home organization or foreign organization while on assignment (Evans et al., 2011).

Employee's commitment to organization can indirectly reflect employee's turnover intention. That is, employees with no or low organizational commitment are more likely to undertake job hopping in the future than employees who are loyal to the organization. To those who are committed to the organization, even they are not given enough attention and support than those so called "high-flyers", they still may not have second thoughts, namely, turnover intentions.

2.3.3. Career advancement

According to Kraimer et al. (2009), career advancement, is expected to affect the repatriate's perceived underemployment and turnover intentions. Career advancement is defined as a three-level hierarchy—demotion, lateral move, and promotion—as perceived by the repatriated employee. Benson & Pattie's (2008) pioneering study compares the objective career outcomes and perceived opportunities of employees who are currently working overseas (expatriates) and employees who have recently returned from overseas (repatriates) to domestic employees. Human capital theory would predict that expatriate assignments are valuable learning opportunities that develop new knowledge and skills (Benson et al., 2008). Researchers have predicted that the increasing globalization of business should create a premium for professional experience working in other countries or working in multi-national teams (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999). Based on this we predict that expatriates should perceive positive impacts on their long-term careers within their current organization as well as external opportunities. Our prediction is in line with Bolino (2009) who expects that individuals' investments in international assignments will be positively related to career advancement upon repatriation. However, it has been proved that relatively few employees are actually promoted upon repatriation (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Bolino, 2007).

As Stroh, Gregersen, and Black (2000) point out, if employees expect an overseas assignment to help their careers, they are likely to be especially dissatisfied if their new positions are lateral or downward moves. Simultaneously, even if employers do not make promises about career advancement following overseas assignments, some expatriates may see their international experience as something that other employers will value, which means that repatriate retention may continue to be a real challenge for multinational organizations (Bolino, 2009). If repatriated employees are placed in jobs that represent a demotion or even a lateral move, however, they are likely to feel that their organization undervalues and underutilizes their newly acquired international competencies. A demotion especially signals a downward trajectory in the organizational

hierarchy (Bolino et al., 2009). Therefore, to clarify reasonable career advancement expectation to expatriates upon international assignment is an important practice in successful expatriation management. Otherwise, expatriates who spent several years abroad may feel their sacrifices are not paid off and they are not valued by the organization. Furthermore, they may even feel uncomfortable when they see other employees who work with them before their international assignments get promoted. As a consequence, they may choose to leave and seek for other opportunities.

2.3.4. Perceived underemployment

One of the top concerns for returnees' is the under-utilization of the skills and knowledge they developed. Many perceive their new jobs at home as lacking in autonomy, authority, and significance, compared with their global assignments. Being offered with limited number of career options and scarce opportunities for promotions, repatriates feel that they have been removed from the mainstream of career advancement (Lazarova et al., 2007). Furthermore, many repatriate feel that their contributions to the organization are discounted or completely ignored (Berthoin, 2001). Not surprisingly, the disappointment towards repatriation makes returnees uncomfortable where seeking for better career opportunities becomes the ultimate solution.

Perceptions of underemployment often result when employees are moved into jobs that require fewer qualifications or reside at a lower hierarchical level in an organization than their previous position (Feldman, et al., 2002). Among expatriate employees, it also led to decreased job satisfaction, job performance, organizational commitment, and intentions to complete the expatriate assignment (Bolino et al., 2000). Here, we regard perceived underemployment as another negative signal that indicates turnover intention as career advancement did. Moreover, we believe that feelings of underemployment will explain why a perceived lack of career advancement may lead to stronger intentions to quit the organization among repatriates.

2.3.5. Perceived Career Advancement Opportunity

Evidence has shown that expatriates who see a strong connection between their international assignments and their long-term career paths are more likely to stay with the company upon repatriation. Similarly, Stahl et al. (2009) propose that turnover intentions depend on assignees' perceived opportunities inside the company relative to the opportunities available outside the company. However, it is the international assignee's subjective perception about the availability or usefulness of the company's support and career development practices, rather than an objective assessment of the effectiveness of certain practices, has the influence on whether the international assignee will stay or leave (Lazarova et al., 2001). Moreover, what needs to be clarified here is the natural attrition which indicates that if international assignees see a gap between the career advancement opportunities available within their companies and what the job market has to offer, they may be inclined to pursue more lucrative and challenging opportunities elsewhere. As Lazarova et al. (2007) pointed out, "Retention upon repatriation may not necessarily be determined by repatriates' frustration, but rather by a rational choice to move elsewhere in search of a better career fit". Therefore, if the employee perceives better job opportunity outside the company than inside the company, turnover intention will exist.

There are many control variables that may affect employees' turnover intention. For instance, multiple assignments may also put employees at risk for repatriation difficulties and/or being labeled a "permanent expatriate" no longer in the minds of home-country managers (Bolino, 2007). In accordance with the view of Bolino (2007), Gregersen (1992) found that the number of years working in foreign assignments negatively related to repatriates' commitment to the parent company. Therefore, the duration and number of international assignments are indicators to examine the relationship with career advancement. Besides, Kraimer et al. (2009) propose that the purpose and success of the last recent international assignment have effects on employees' career advancement. In addition, organizations that plan for job positions and provide career support during

repatriation should be more likely to place repatriates in positions that match their freshly acquired skills, and repatriates should be more likely to perceive such jobs as promotions (Kraimer et al. 2009).

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

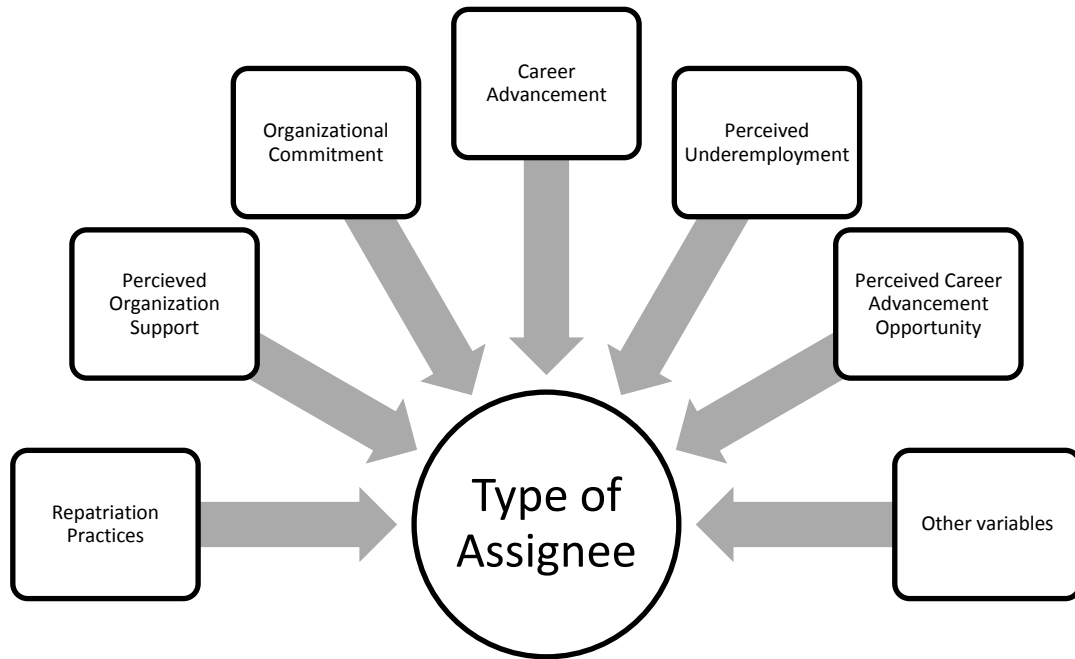
3.1. Conceptual framework and research model

As the objectives of the study are: to identify what is the difference between functional expatriates and developmental assignees in terms of expatriation management practices, what factors influence the turnover intention of employees with international assignment, and what is the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees in terms of a series of job related factors. Therefore, the selected following measurements were used. For the first research purpose, Pucik's (1992) method is adopted as a foundation to differentiate between two types of international assignments, that is, (1) demand-driven (or task-driven) assignments, which include coordination and control, communication, knowledge transfer, and problem solving; and (2) learning-driven assignments, which are initiated for competency development and career enhancement. Furthermore, built on Pucik's (1992) work, our study proposes that international assignees with learning-driven or developmental assignment goals (henceforth, developmental assignees) and international assignees with demand-driven or task-related assignment goals (henceforth, functional assignees) may have different perceptions on various job related factors that ultimately influence their turnover intentions (Stahl et al., 2009). In terms of expatriation management practices, this study sets Caligiuri et al.'s (2001) 11 best human resource practices most often associated with a successful repatriation program as the conceptual framework. In line with what have been presented in the literature review section, five chosen turnover intention determinants are used as predictors of future turnover behavior. The five turnover intention determinants are: perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity. Furthermore, the model proposes that other variables may play a role in employee's

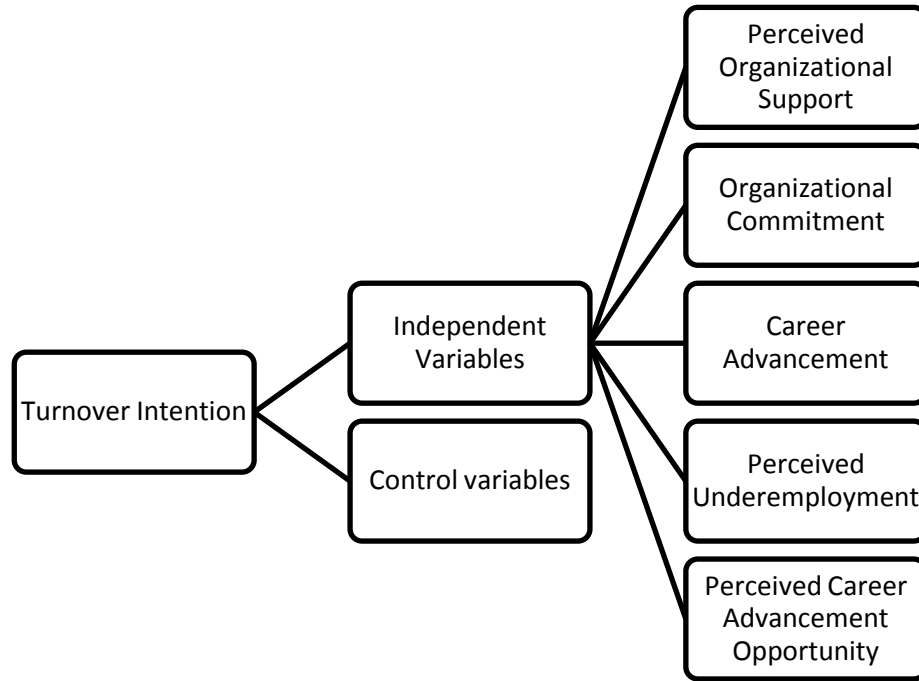
turnover intention as well. To examine what factors influence turnover intention, both independent variables and control variables are included into the proposed model.

To combine everything together, the proposed conceptual models are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 separately.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model 1



The first proposed conceptual model centers on the type of assignee. In particular, it proposes that the repatriation practices given to different category of assignees may differ. Moreover, the determinants of turnover intention, which are perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity, may differ from functional assignees and developmental assignees. Furthermore, the model proposes that other variables such as repatriation concerns, employability, and turnover intention may differ from assignee types.

Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Model 2

For the second proposed conceptual model, it proposes that independent variables such as perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity may play a decisive role in employees' turnover intention. The model includes control variables as well. More detailed illustrations are presented in the next sections.

3.2. Research hypotheses formulation

3.2.1. Differences of repatriation practices between functional assignees and developmental assignees

Developmental assignees, in this thesis, being defined to have executed either a strategic assignment or a developmental assignment, are either senior managers who have undertaken important strategic tasks or young, mobile, high-potential talents who were sent for development purpose. Therefore, developmental assignees are unlikely to be seen as “hard to fit back into the company” (O’Boyle, 1989). Also, they often know their next assignment well in advance of completing the international assignment, especially if the assignment is part of a formal management development or succession planning program, and the expatriate is well aware that he or she is being groomed for a given position (Caligiuri et al., 2001). Moreover, developmental assignees are valuable organizational human capitals, therefore, they are unlikely to fall victim to the out-of-sight, out-of-mind syndrome (Stahl et al., 2009). In addition, they are always connected to the home organization and being informed about the change of the home organization. Generally, they are provided with either a formal mentor or an informal coach for better adjustment and communication (Harvey et al., 2006).

In comparison, functional assignees, in this thesis, being defined to have executed either a technical assignment or a functional assignment, are generally technical staff or ordinary staff that used for filling in a position. Therefore, they are less likely to be part of company’s leadership development programs or succession planning activities (Stahl et al., 2009). Thus, the communication and interaction between functional assignees and the home organization are limited, resulting in lack of caring and support from the home organization. Moreover, although the organization needs technical and functional experts, there is a risk that their knowledge and skills will become obsolete or are no longer needed by the end of their international assignments, which makes it difficult for the company to fit them back into the organization (Caligiuri et al., 2001). As a consequence, by the time of repatriation, they are placed in a holding pattern and wait for arrangement.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Functional assignees receive less repatriation practices than developmental assignees.

3.2.2. Differences of perceived organizational support between functional assignees and developmental assignees

Perceived organizational support has been defined as the employees' global beliefs that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being.

Kraimer et al. (2004) developed a multidimensional conceptualization of perceived organizational support (POS) consisting of adjustment POS, career POS, and financial POS. Adjustment POS is defined as the extent to which the organization cares about the employee's (including family) adjustment following a job transfer. Career POS is defined as the extent to which the organization cares about the expatriate's career needs. Financial POS is defined as the extent to which the organization cares about the employee's financial needs and rewards the employee's contributions in terms of compensation and employment benefits.

Organizational support makes a huge difference in expatriate's immediate adjustment to new working condition. Adjustment includes personal adjustment, professional adjustments, as well as family adjustment (Harvey, 1989). Each of them may encounter hardships provided that inadequate organizational support is given. In addition, the expatriate's well-being is determined by the perceived organizational support rather than organizational support.

If the potential repatriation problems are considered, and appropriately addressed, by the MNC in advance, repatriate turnover will occur less often (Harvey, 1989). Taken into account the characteristics of functional assignees and developmental assignees, the underlying assumption is that repatriates who perceive they have more support from their organization will be more committed to that organization—and thus will be more likely to stay (Lazarova et al., 2001).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Functional assignees are less satisfied with POS than developmental assignees.

3.2.3. Differences of organization commitment between functional assignees and developmental assignees

Lund et al., (2004) defines organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization, as characterized by strong beliefs in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to retain membership in the organization. The repatriates who perceive that they have more support from their organization become more committed to that organization and will be more likely to be retained after repatriation (Lazarova et al., 2001).

Moreover, employee's commitment to organization can indirectly reflect employee's turnover intention. That is, employees with no or low organizational commitment are more likely to undertake job hopping in the future than employees who are loyal to the organization.

Taken into account the characteristics of functional assignees and developmental assignees, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Functional assignees are less committed to organization than developmental assignees after repatriation.

3.2.4. Differences of career advancement between functional assignees and developmental assignees

Career advancement is defined as a three-level hierarchy—demotion, lateral move, and promotion—as perceived by the repatriated employee. Human capital theory would predict that expatriate assignments are valuable learning opportunities that develop new knowledge and skills (Benson et al., 2008). In addition, Bolino (2009) believes that individuals' investments in international assignments will be positively related to career advancement upon repatriation. Nevertheless, in case of repatriates being placed in jobs that represent a demotion or even a lateral move, however, they are likely to feel that their organization undervalues and underutilizes their newly acquired international competencies. A demotion especially signals a downward trajectory in the organizational hierarchy (Bolino et al., 2009). Collectively, this study predicts that expatriates should perceive positive impacts on their long-term careers within their current organization as well as external opportunities.

However, taken into account the characteristics of functional assignees and developmental assignees, we conclude that the latter group of assignees is groomed for better career advancement positions than the former group of assignees.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Functional assignees get less promoted than developmental assignees upon repatriation.

3.2.5. Differences of perceived underemployment between functional assignees and developmental assignees

Many repatriates perceive their new jobs at home as lacking in autonomy, authority, and significance, compared with their global assignments. Being offered with limited number of career options and scarce opportunities for promotions, repatriates feel that they have been removed from the mainstream of career advancement (Lazarova et al., 2007). Furthermore, many repatriate feel that they contributions to the organization are discounted or complete ignored (Berthoin, 2001).

Perceptions of underemployment occur when employees are moved into jobs that require fewer qualifications or reside at a lower hierarchical level in an organization than their previous position (Feldman et al., 2002). Therefore, we conclude that career advancement is expected to affect the repatriate's perceived underemployment and turnover intentions.

Taken into account the characteristics of functional assignees and developmental assignees, we further conclude functional assignees will perceive stronger underemployment than developmental assignees.

Collectively, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: Functional assignees will perceive stronger underemployment than developmental assignees upon repatriation.

3.2.6. Differences of perceived career advancement opportunity between functional assignees and developmental assignees

Stahl et al. (2009) propose that turnover intentions depend on assignees' perceived opportunities available inside the company relative to the perceived opportunities available outside the company. If international assignees see a gap between the career advancement opportunities available within their companies and what the job market has to offer, they may be inclined to pursue more lucrative and challenging opportunities

elsewhere. As Lazarova et al. (2007) pointed out, “Retention upon repatriation may not necessarily be determined by repatriates’ frustration, but rather by a rational choice to move elsewhere in search of a better career fit”. Therefore, if the employee perceives better job opportunity outside the company than inside the company, turnover intention will exist.

Moreover, taken into account the characteristics of functional assignees and developmental assignees, we believe that developmental assignees will perceive better career advancement opportunities both inside and outside the organization than functional assignees.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 6a: Developmental assignees perceive higher career advancement opportunity within home organization than functional assignees upon repatriation.

Hypothesis 6b: Developmental assignees perceive higher career advancement opportunity outside home organization than functional assignees upon repatriation.

Hypothesis 6c: Developmental assignees perceive higher employability than functional assignees with respect to finding a job.

3.2.7. Determinants of turnover intention

As the conceptual models are defined, the determinants of turnover intention, which are perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity. This study expects each of the determinants will have an influence on employees’ turnover intention independently. Moreover, the study is interested in examining the collective effect of

these five determinants on turnover intention. Namely, this study adopts perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity as independent variables to build a model of testing employee's turnover intention.

Collectively, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 7a: Perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization each has an influence on employee's turnover intention independently.

Hypothesis 7b: Perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization collectively have an influence on employee's turnover intention.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research design

In previous chapters, an introduction, a literature review, and a research model and hypotheses have been presented. In this chapter, it first starts with a description of our research design, followed by sample and procedure, measurements. Last, this chapter ends with methods of data analysis.

4.1.1. Purpose of research

The purpose of research can be exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Yin, 1994). The study adopts a combined research purpose of both descriptive and explanatory aims. As the first research objective is to identify and describe the difference between functional expatriates and developmental expatriates in terms of expatriation management practices along with Caligiuri et al.' (2001) 11 human resource practices were used as the foundation, therefore, the research purpose of the first research objective is descriptive. For the second research objective which is to examine what factors influence the turnover intention of employees with international assignment, hypotheses basing on determinants that have been identified by previous researchers were designed. In other words, causal relationships between variables have been established. Therefore, the research purpose for the second research objective is explanatory. Since the third research objective is to identify and describe the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees in terms of career advancement path and turnover intention, which is similar to the first research objective. Therefore, a descriptive research purpose is defined.

4.1.2. Research approach

There are two kinds of research approach, qualitative and quantitative that decides how the selected data is analyzed and treated. Qualitative approach aims to gain deeper understanding of data basing on meanings expressed through words and analyzed through the use of conceptualization (Yin, 1994). In comparison, quantitative approach normally involves gathering information via surveys and questionnaires, then generalizing and presenting it in tables and diagrams. Therefore, the research approach used in this study is quantitative, aiming to examine and compare relationships between variables.

Moreover, as deductive research approach is used to establish hypothesis using existing theories (Gill & Johnson, 2010). Further, deductive method entails the development of a conceptual or theoretical structure, which is then tested by observation (Gill & Johnson 1991: 164). As the research questions and variables are formulated and developed basing on the existing theories, and research hypotheses are built on empirical and theoretical findings, therefore, this study has a deductive research method.

4.1.3. Research strategy

The most suitable research strategy used depends on what the research questions are and what the research purpose is. In this thesis, survey was used as our research strategy to address our research questions. Questionnaires were distributed to participants with relevant qualifications through informal networks. Furthermore, this study chose to distribute questionnaire by email instead of traditional pencil-and-paper method so as to facilitate the collection process as well as improve data quality. In addition, distributing questionnaire by email can reach the target respondents without time and space limitations, which diversifies the sample data.

4.2. Sample and procedure

The sample of the study contains a variety of employees of different backgrounds who have international assignment experiences before. A well-designed questionnaire was distributed to those respondents mainly through two channels. Firstly, requests were sent to 8 human resource managers from MNCs in both Europe and China with attached a cover letter briefly explains the research objectives and procedural of data collection as well as a recommendation letter from thesis supervisor. 6 out of 8 MNCs' human resource managers declined our request by stating their inconvenience to help with the study. The rest 2 MNCs' human resource managers agreed to help distributing our survey. Hence, the surveys were able to approach to those employees who had international experiences before. In accordance with Kraimer et al.' (2009) method, the time since repatriating were limited to two years so as to minimize memory biases with regard to their international experiences. Afterwards, the human resource manager distributed the survey to the qualifying employees.

Another channel is to distribute the surveys via informal networks. That is, friends within personal networks were contacted. They were asked to identify the eligible friends within their personal networks. Afterwards, the designed questionnaires were sent to those respondents by email. All of the survey questions were designed into English and Chinese. Both the English version and Chinese version questionnaire were delivered to participants who were from China. As for the rest participants, the questionnaires sent to them were written in English.

All the respondents were informed that their participation is totally voluntary and the questionnaire did not ask the participants to leave their names on the survey due to privacy concerns. The whole data collection process takes about one month from mid August to mid September. Luckily, collect 68 copies of valid surveys were sent back from our target groups. 33 out of 68 respondents report their international assignment as a functional one. The rest 35 respondents report their international assignment as a

developmental one.

4.3. Measurements

Category of assignees

The first question is “Which one of the four categories best describe your last international assignment?” We adopt Caligiuri et al.’s (2001) measure for purpose of expatriate assignments as our method to differentiate between functional assignees and developmental assignees. Response categories for participants were technical assignment, functional assignment, developmental assignment, and strategic assignment. Each category was provided with a definition. For instance, a technical assignment was defined as one that “was solely to do a technical job and return to a domestic position” and did not require the employee to develop intercultural skills to be successful. Participants who selected either a technical assignment or a functional assignment were grouped as functional assignees. Accordingly, participants who selected either a developmental assignment or a strategic assignment were classified as developmental assignees. Therefore, participants were divided by two groups: functional assignees and developmental assignees. Thereafter, a dummy variable “Assignee Type” was created where functional assignees were coded as “0”, and developmental assignees were coded as “1”.

Repatriation practices

The next survey question is “What expatriation management practices have you received before, during, and after your last international assignment?” The study uses Caligiuri et al.’ (2001) 11 human resource practices that most often associated with a successful repatriation program as it covers all practices that might happen prior to the expatriate’s

departure, during the expatriate's stay, and after the expatriate's return. An example can be: pre-departure briefings on what to expect during the period of repatriation. Response categories are either yes or no.

Perceived organizational support

The third survey question is "To what extent do you agree with the following statement with regard to organizational support?" The study uses Kraimer et al.'s (2004) multidimensional conceptualization of perceived organizational support (POS) as research measurement. To be more specific, perceived organizational support consists of adjustment POS, career POS, and financial POS. One example of adjustment POS can be: (Company) has provided my family with enough assistance to help them adjust to the new situation. Response were made on a scale from 1="strongly agree" to 5="strongly disagree". As for items that are needed for reserve scoring, we wrote them down and recode them in the software we used in this paper. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.94.

Commitment to organization

To test employees' commitment to organization, the survey question asked respondents "To what extent do you agree with the following statement with regard to your current organization?" The statements are derived from Meyer, Allen & Smith's (1993) affective commitment scale. One example can be: I really feel that problems faced by my organization are also my problems. Response were made on a scale from 1="strongly agree" to 5="strongly disagree". Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.93.

Career advancement

Drawn from Kraimer et al.'s (2004) measurement of career advancement, the survey question asked respondents to indicate whether "compared to your last expatriate job position, is your new job position upon returning to your home country a ..." promotion,

lateral move, or demotion. Respondents were asked to mark only one of the stated options.

Perceived underemployment

In order to test employees' perception of underemployment, the survey question asked respondents "To what extent do you agree with the following statement with regard to the current job position of you?" The questions the survey used were borrowed from Bolino & et al.'s (2000) scale. Since their items were used for measure perceived underemployment while on assignment only, the items were adjusted to fit the research purpose: examining perceived underemployment on current position. One example can be: I have more formal qualifications than this job position requires; that is, someone with less formal qualifications could perform my job well. Response were made on a scale from 1="strongly agree" to 5="strongly disagree". As for items that are needed for reserve scoring, they were written down and recoded into the software the study used. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.92.

Perceived career advancement opportunity

Borrowed from Stahl et al.'s (2009) technique, perceived career advancement opportunity was measured by two items. For testing the perceived career advancement opportunity within the organization, the first item read, "In your opinion, what is the likelihood that successful performance in your current international assignment will advance your career within your company?" For testing the perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization, the second item read, "In your opinion, what is the likelihood that successful performance in your last international assignment will be important to your career opportunities among other possible employers?" Response were made on a scale from 1="highly likely" to 5="highly unlikely".

Turnover intention

To measure turnover intention, Bozeman & Perrewé's (2001) 9 item turnover intentions scale was used. One example can be: I believe I will be working for my company in the future. Response were made on a scale from 1="strongly agree" to 5="strongly disagree". As for items that are needed for reverse scoring, they were written down and recoded into the software used in this study. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.96. Moreover, we use Visual Binning to bin turnover intention into two groups in SPSS. We designed one cut point on 18. For the 9 items measuring turnover intention, a score of 18 indicates on average a score of 2 is given by the participant on each item. Moreover, a score 2 represents "agree". Therefore, a cut point on 18 was made in order to distinguish between participants who have turnover intention and who do not have turnover intention.

Control variables

Taken into account the sample size ($N=68$), the study decided to exclude unnecessary variables from analysis so as to maintain adequate power to test research hypotheses. A number of demographic variables were collected to act as possible controls in this study: age, gender, nationality, number of previous international assignments, duration of last international assignment, and the country's name of last international assignment. In line with Kraimer et al. (2009), in determining which demographic variables should be included as control variables, the primary concern was in reducing statistical artifacts. Controlling for variables that are correlated with both predictor and criterion variables improves the estimates of the independent variables by factoring out a control variable's influence on both the independent and criterion variables and at the same time reduces Type I and Type II error (Becker, 2005; Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000). The first step is to identify any demographic variables that significantly correlated with both dependent and independent variables. Of the six demographic variables to be concerned, five met this criterion (age, nationality, number of previous international assignments, duration of last international assignment, and the country's name of last international assignment). Then a second step was to run a preliminary regression for each of these

filtered demographic variables on turnover intention. The result indicated that none of these demographic variables was a statistically significant predictor of dependent variable turnover intention ($p = .158$). Thus, to conserve power and meet the research criterion to include no more than eight independent variables, all the demographic variables were excluded from the testing of our **Hypotheses 7b**.

4.4. Methods of data analysis

Regression analyses were broadly adopted in this study. Regression analysis is a statistical tool for the investigation of relationships between variables. Usually, the investigator seeks to ascertain the causal effect of one variable upon another. As the objective of the research is to identify the determinants of turnover intention, therefore, regression becomes a suitable method of analysis in our paper. Particularly, multiple regression was used in this research because there are more than one factors may have an influence on turnover intention according to our hypothesis. By definition, multiple regression analysis is a technique that allows additional factors to enter the analysis separately so that the effect of each can be estimated. It is valuable for quantifying the impact of various simultaneous influences upon a single dependent variable (Sykes, 1992).

4.5. Reliability and validity

Reliability refers to the extent to which the research instrument provides consistent and stable results (Hair et al. 2006). That is, if the researcher later follows the same method

and investigates the same research area with the same respondents, the results acquired should be the same as it first gets (Yin, 1994).

Validity is defined as the extent to which the measuring instrument measures what it proposes to measure (Tharenou, Donohue & Cooper 2007). Validity measures the extent to which the set of indicators accurately represents a construct (Hair et al. 2006). That is, the findings are really about what they appear to be about (Yin, 1994).

To enhance data reliability and validity, we developed the survey on the basis of existing theories and constructs. That is, the survey questions and terms are professional and understandable. The thesis supervisor also helped with the theoretical and conceptual model aspects concerning to the research design. Prior to the data collection process, human resource manager were contacted and informal networks were built so as to distribute the surveys to the right target. Henceforth, those respondents who were on expatriation or had a local contract were filtered. In addition, questionnaire was carefully translated into Chinese for those respondents who have a preference over English. Before analyze the data, a first examination is to check whether there is any outlier or missing value. Secondly, examination of internal consistency reliability by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated in SPSS. Moreover, scatter diagrams were performed to ensure regression linearity. Thereafter, as multi-regression was used in this paper, therefore, multicollinearity, heteroscedraticity, and autocorrelation were examined respectively. To be more specific, to guarantee no multicollinearity, the tolerance level in the regression was guaranteed of a value greater than 0.2 or VIF value smaller than 5. To ensure no autocorrelation, the autocorrelation test was included. All Durbin Watson values were ensured between 1.5 and 2.5. Lastly, plot diagrams were performed to ensure no systematic pattern of the residuals was appeared in the regression model.

According to Cohen (1992), to attain a power of .80, with an alpha of .05 and a large effect size, involving 8 independent variables requires a sample of approximately 50 subjects. With regard to the sample size of the data (N=68), a conclusion can be drawn that the sample size has enough power to analyze the independent variables.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Sample demographics

In total, 72 copies of returned questionnaires were received. The whole data collection process took more than one month, from August to September, including the time spent on interactions and communications with key persons. Among the 72 returned questionnaires, 68 of them were completely filled and valid. The rest 4 responses were either invalid (due to the current status of assignee was on an international assignment) or incomplete. Therefore, the valid data size in our sample equals to 68. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the sample.

To differentiate in nationality, the demographic profile indicated that 72.1% of the participants (N=49) in our sample were European. The rest 27.9% of the participants (N=19) in our sample were Chinese. As for respondents' gender, all the participants in our sample were male. In other words, the sample did include any data of female who has international experience before. In terms of age, the majority of the respondents (63.2%) were between 30 to 39 years old. Moreover, more than four fifth of the respondents (82.3%) had one or two international experiences before, the rest of the respondents were those who had more than two international assignments before. However, when it comes to the duration of last international assignment, the respondents whose international assignment duration were limited to two years (51.5%) and the respondents whose international assignment duration lasted more than two years (48.5%) nearly balanced. As for the destination of last international assignment, China accounts to the first place (45.6%). Second comes to Finland (27.9%), followed by Germany, Russia, Turkey, and Dominican Republic. Of the 68 respondents, 33 of them (48.5%) have reported their international assignments as a functional one. The rest 35 respondents (51.5%) reported

their international assignments as a developmental one.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Measure	Items	Total		European		Chinese	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	100.0	49	72.1	19	27.9
	Female	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Age in years	20-29	6	8.8	0	0.0	6	8.8
	30-39	43	63.2	30	44.1	13	19.1
	40-49	13	19.1	13	19.1	0	0.0
	Over 50	6	8.8	6	8.8	0	0.0
No. of previous International Assignments	One	27	39.7	15	22.1	12	17.6
	Two	29	42.6	24	35.3	5	7.4
	More than two	12	17.6	10	14.7	2	2.9
Duration of last international assignment	Less than 1 year	14	20.6	2	2.9	12	17.6
	From 1 year up to 2 years	21	30.9	15	22.1	6	8.8
	More than 2 years	33	48.5	32	47.1	1	1.5
The country's name of last international assignment	China	31	45.6	31	45.6	0	0.0
	Finland	19	27.9	0	0.0	19	27.9
	Germany	8	11.8	8	11.8	0	0.0
	Russia	6	8.8	6	8.8	0	0.0
	Turkey	2	2.9	2	2.9	0	0.0
	Dominican Republic	2	2.9	2	2.9	0	0.0
Assignee type	Functional	33	48.5	23	33.8	10	14.7
	Developmental	35	51.5	26	38.2	9	13.2
Valid sample size		N=68		N=49		N=19	

5.2. Independent sample t-test

Test of Hypothesis 1

The first proposition is that functional assignees receive less repatriation practices than developmental assignees. The results are shown in Table 2. Of the 11 best repatriation management practices given by Caligiuri et al.' (2001), while functional assignees receive an average of 5 repatriation practices, developmental assignees receive an average of 6 repatriation practices. Although the results justify the proposition, the results from independent sample t-test show us the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees with regard to repatriation practices is not statistically significance ($p = .118$). See Table 3. Therefore, **Hypothesis 1** is not supported by the sample group.

Test of Hypothesis 2

The second proposition is that functional assignees are less satisfied with POS than developmental assignees. Based on Kraimer et al.'s (2004) multidimensional conceptualization of perceived organizational support measurement, the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees with regard to perceived organizational support was explored. The results shown in Table 2 suggest that the gap of satisfaction on perceived organizational support between functional assignees and developmental assignees is quite small. Particularly, while functional assignees have a score of 31 on average, developmental assignees have a score of 33 on average. That is to say, functional assignees are a bit more satisfied than developmental assignees in terms of perceived organizational support. However, the difference between groups does not show statistically significance ($p = .405$). See Table 3. As a consequence, **Hypothesis 2** is rejected according to the results from the sample.

Table2. Independent sample t-test group statistics

Groups	Assignment Type	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean
Concerns	Functional	33	2.42	1.200	0.209
	Developmental	35	1.83	0.985	0.166
Perceived Organization	Functional	33	31.2121	11.28815	1.96501
	Developmental	35	33.2857	8.87684	1.50046
Finding A Job	Functional	33	16.5152	4.85490	0.84513
	Developmental	35	14.0571	2.66726	0.45085
Turnover Intention	Functional	33	31.8788	10.83616	1.88633
	Developmental	35	23.7143	7.96526	1.34638
Commitment	Functional	33	9.3636	4.37191	0.76105
	Developmental	35	12.0857	4.03201	0.68153
Repatriation Practices	Functional	33	4.9697	3.48645	0.60691
	Developmental	35	6.1143	2.31073	0.39059
Under Employment	Functional	33	15.7576	5.49449	0.95647
	Developmental	35	13.9714	4.79268	0.81011
Career Advancement	Functional	33	2.03	0.637	0.111
	Developmental	35	2.00	0.767	0.130
CAO within Organization	Functional	33	2.39	1.519	0.265
	Developmental	35	2.77	1.239	0.209
CAO without Organization	Functional	33	1.64	0.742	0.129
	Developmental	35	1.51	0.507	0.086

Note: CAO stand for Career Advancement Opportunity

Test of Hypothesis 3

The third proposition is that functional assignees are less committed to organization than developmental assignees after repatriation. Built on Meyer et al.'s (1993) affective commitment scale, the testing indicates that while functional assignees have on average a

score of 9.5, developmental have on average a score of 12.

Table 3. Independent sample t-test results

Groups	Types	Leven's Test for Equality of Variances				
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Concerns	EV Assumed	5.151	0.027	2.243	66	0.028
	EV not Assumed			2.230	62.015	0.029
Perceived Organization	EV Assumed	0.469	0.496	-0.845	66	0.401
	EV not Assumed			-0.839	60.755	0.405
Finding A Job	EV Assumed	17.813	0.000	2.608	66	0.011
	EV not Assumed			2.566	49.065	0.013
Commitment	EV Assumed	0.109	0.742	-2.671	66	0.010
	EV not Assumed			-2.664	64.726	0.010
Repatriation Practices	EV Assumed	7.338	0.009	-1.604	66	0.113
	EV not Assumed			-1.586	55.100	0.118
Under Employment	EV Assumed	0.054	0.817	1.431	66	0.157
	EV not Assumed			1.425	63.583	0.159
Career Advancement	EV Assumed	1.800	0.184	0.177	66	0.860
	EV not Assumed			0.178	64.980	0.860
CAO within Organization	EV Assumed	0.885	0.350	-1.126	66	0.264
	EV not Assumed			-1.119	61.823	0.267
CAO without Organization	EV Assumed	7.896	0.007	0.796	66	0.429
	EV not Assumed			0.787	56.124	0.434
Turnover Intention	EV Assumed	3.476	0.067	3.554	66	0.001
	EV not Assumed			3.523	58.596	0.001

Note: EV stands for Equal Variance

CAO stand for Career Advancement Opportunity

The difference indicates that functional assignees were more committed to organization than developmental assignees. More importantly, the results from independent sample t-test reveal that organizational commitment indicates statistical significance between functional assignees and developmental assignees ($p = .01$). See Table 3. Therefore, **Hypothesis 3** is rejected basing on the results generated from the sample.

Test of Hypothesis 4

The fourth proposition is that functional assignees get less promoted than developmental assignees upon repatriation. In accordance with Kraimer et al.'s (2004) measurement of career advancement, respondents were asked to answer: "comparing to your last expatriate job position, is your new job position upon returning to your home country a promotion, lateral move, or a demotion." The results presented in Table 2 indicate that there is almost no difference between functional assignees (mean = 2.03) and developmental assignees (mean = 2.00) with regard to career advancement. That is, both functional assignees and developmental assignees report that their new relocated position compared with the position during international is a lateral move. Moreover, the results shown in Table 3 indicate that no statistical significance between functional assignees and developmental assignees in terms of career advancement are found ($p = .860$). Therefore, **Hypothesis 4** is rejected.

Test of Hypothesis 5

The fifth proposition is that functional assignees will perceive stronger underemployment than developmental assignees upon repatriation. The questions used in this survey were Bolino & et al.'s (2000) perceived underemployment measurement scale. The results in Table 2 show that while functional assignees have on average a score of 16, developmental assignees have on average a score of 14. The difference between the groups indicates that functional assignees perceive less underemployed than developmental assignees. In other words, developmental assignees perceive stronger underemployment than developmental assignees upon repatriation. However, the

difference is not statistically significance ($p = .159$). See Table 3. As a consequence, **Hypothesis 5** is rejected by the tested results.

Test of Hypothesis 6a, 6b & 6c

The sixth proposition is that developmental assignees perceive better career advancement opportunity both within and outside home organization than functional assignees upon repatriation. Moreover, our study hypothesizes developmental assignees perceive higher employability than functional assignees with respect to finding a job. To test our hypotheses, Stahl et al.'s (2009) measurement of career advancement opportunity within and outside the organization was used. In addition, the perceived employability of assignees with respect to finding a job was measured. The results in Table 2 show that functional assignees (mean = 2.39) perceive better career advancement opportunity within the organization than developmental assignees (mean = 2.77). Nevertheless, functional assignees (mean = 1.64) perceive worse career advancement opportunity outside the organization than developmental assignees (mean = 1.51). With regard to the perceived employability of finding a job, functional assignees (mean = 16.52) report less confidence compared with developmental assignees (mean = 14.05). Nevertheless, the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees with regard to perceived career advancement opportunity both within and outside the organization indicate no statistically significance. Only the perceived employability of finding a job between the groups shows statistically significance. That is, developmental assignees perceive higher employability than functional assignees with respect to finding a job. See Table 3. To summarize, **Hypothesis 6a** and **Hypothesis 6b** are rejected by the tested results. Only **Hypothesis 6c** is supported by the results.

Test of repatriation concerns and turnover intention

In addition to test the above mentioned hypotheses, the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees in terms of repatriation concerns and turnover intention was examined. The results in Table 2 show functional assignees have on

average a score of 2.42, whereas developmental assignees have on average a score of 1.83 with regard to repatriation concerns. The results indicate that developmental assignees are more concerned than functional assignees upon repatriation. In terms of turnover intention, developmental assignees report on average a score of 24, while functional assignees report on average a score of 32. That is to say, developmental assignees have stronger turnover intention than functional assignees upon repatriation. The results in Table 3 show that both the difference of repatriation concerns ($p=.029$) and turnover intention ($p=.001$) between functional assignees and developmental assignees are statistically significance.

5.3. Regression analysis

Test of Hypothesis 7a

The seventh proposition is that perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization each has an influence on employee's turnover intention independently. To test the hypotheses, regression analysis with each of the independent variable on turnover intention was conducted. The results are presented in Table 4. The figures indicate that each of the five independent variables has an influence on turnover intention. To be more specific, perceived organization support significantly decreases turnover intention ($\beta = -.585$, $p < 0.01$). Organizational commitment significantly reduces turnover intention ($\beta = -.840$, $p < 0.01$). Career advancement significantly decreases turnover intention ($\beta = -.763$, $p < 0.01$). Underemployment significantly increases turnover intention ($\beta = .845$, $p < 0.01$). Perceived career advancement opportunity outside organization significantly enhances turnover intention ($\beta = .613$, $p < 0.01$). As a consequence, **Hypothesis 7a** is supported by the results.

Table 4. Test of hypothesis 7a

Statistics	Standard Coefficient (β)	Regression Significance	R²	Adjusted R²
Perceived Organization Support	-0.585**	0.000**	0.342	0.332
Organizational Commitment	-0.840**	0.000**	0.705	0.701
Career Advancement	-0.763**	0.000**	0.582	0.576
Under Employment	0.845*	0.000**	0.714	0.709
Perceived CAO Outside the Organization	0.613**	0.000**	0.375	0.366

*Note: *stands for p value smaller than 0.05 and ** stands for p value smaller than 0.01, both for the standard coefficient β ".*

CAO stands for career advancement opportunity

Test of Hypothesis 7b

In addition to assume causal relationship between turnover intention and all those independent variables separately, this study further proposed that perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization collectively have an influence on employee's turnover intention. To test this hypothesis, a multi regression with perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization as independent variables on turnover intention as dependent variable was conducted. The results of the regression are presented in Table 5. The multi-regression model is significant ($p < 0.01$). To be more specific, except perceived organization support does not have a significant influence on turnover

intention ($\beta = -.074$, $p = 0.336$). Other predictors all have an influence on turnover intention. Particularly, organizational commitment significantly reduces turnover intention ($\beta = -.446$, $p < 0.01$). Career advancement significantly decreases turnover intention ($\beta = -.238$, $p < 0.01$). Underemployment significantly increases turnover intention ($\beta = .253$, $p < 0.05$). Perceived career advancement opportunity outside organization significantly enhances turnover intention ($\beta = .192$, $p < 0.01$). As a consequence, **Hypothesis 7b** is supported by the hypothesized model.

Table 5. Test of hypothesis 7b

Statistics	Standard Coefficient (β)	Regression Significance	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Perceived Organization Support	0.074	0.000**	0.844	0.831
Organizational Commitment	-0.446**			
Career Advancement	-0.238**			
Under Employment	0.253*			
Perceived CAO Outside the Organization	0.192**			

*Note: *stands for p value smaller than 0.05 and ** stands for p value smaller than 0.01, both for the standard coefficient β .*

CAO stands for career advancement opportunity

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Discussions and key findings

To examine the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees in terms of expatriation management practices, the availability of Caligiuri et al.' (2001) 11 best repatriation management practices on both functional assignees and developmental assignees was compared. To identify what factors influence the turnover intention of employees with international assignment, regressions on each variable and further we tested the collective effect of all the variables on turnover intention were done. To discover the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees with regard to turnover intention and turnover intention determinants, a holistic comparison between the two groups of assignees was made. The summary of the key findings of this study is presented in Table 6.

6.1.1. Difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees

The study found that functional assignees and developmental assignees did not vary with regard to the repatriation practices they received, perceived organizational support, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity within and outside the organization.

Table 6. Summary of key findings

Category	Hypotheses	Results	Table
Repatriation practices	Hypothesis 1: Functional assignees receive less repatriation practices than developmental assignees.	Rejected	Table 3
Perceived organization support	Hypothesis 2: Functional assignees are less satisfied with POS than developmental assignees.	Rejected	Table 3
Organizational commitment	Hypothesis 3: Functional assignees are less committed to organization than developmental assignees after repatriation.	Rejected	Table 3
Career advancement	Hypothesis 4: Functional assignees get less promoted than developmental assignees upon repatriation.	Rejected	Table 3
Underemployment	Hypothesis 5: Functional assignees will perceive stronger underemployment than developmental assignees upon repatriation.	Rejected	Table 3
Perceived career advancement opportunity within the organization	Hypothesis 6a: Developmental assignees perceive higher career advancement opportunity within home organization than functional assignees upon repatriation.	Rejected	Table 3
Perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization	Hypothesis 6b: Developmental assignees perceive higher career advancement opportunity outside home organization than functional assignees upon repatriation.	Rejected	Table 3
Employability	Hypothesis 6c: Developmental assignees perceive higher employability than functional assignees with respect to finding a job.	Supported	Table 3
Turnover intention	Hypothesis 7a: Perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization each has an influence on employee's turnover intention independently.	Supported	Table 4
Turnover intention	Hypothesis 7b: Perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization collectively have an influence on employee's turnover intention.	Supported	Table 5

For repatriation practices, the conclusion supports the opinion from Evans et al., (2002) who believes most companies have dealt with expatriates as if they are of a homogenous group and recommendations for repatriation generally lump all international assignees into a single category. Admittedly, this study did not find huge difference between

functional assignees and developmental assignees in terms of the repatriation practices they received from their organizations. Namely, repatriation practices did not differ in assignee's type. Furthermore, whether repatriation practices may differ in nationality was examined. Surprisingly, the results showed repatriation practices differed with regard to nationality. In general, Chinese expatriates received more repatriation practices than European expatriates. Therefore, the findings justify the necessity to include nationality as a control variable in comparing the availability of repatriation practices between functional assignees and developmental assignees.

For perceived organizational support, this study did not find much difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees. According to Harvey (1989), organizational support makes a huge difference in expatriate's immediate adjustment to new working condition including personal adjustment, professional adjustments, as well as family adjustment. However, company regards their assignees as a homogeneous group and does not differ in the organizational support provided. This indirectly reflects the fact that functional employees are as important as developmental employees while on the international assignment period.

Out of the author's expectation, this study did not prove the career advancement path differs between functional assignees and developmental assignees. Taken into account the difference characteristics between functional assignees and developmental assignees, it is always the latter group of assignees who are usually groomed for a given position by the organization (Caligiuri et al., 2001). In addition, developmental assignees are more valuable organizational human capitals than functional assignees, therefore, they are less likely to fall victim to the out-of-sight, out-of-mind syndrome (Stahl et al., 2009). Besides, human capital theory predicts that expatriate assignments are valuable learning opportunities that develop new knowledge and skills (Benson & Pattie, 2008). Therefore, the study proposes that expatriates should perceive positive impacts on their long-term careers within their current organization. Nevertheless, the results did not support the proposition. That is, developmental assignees get more promoted than functional assignees upon repatriation. Moreover, the majority of the repatriated position involves a

lateral move rather than a promotion. The conclusion is in line with the empirical studies where relatively few employees are actually promoted upon repatriation (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Bolino, 2007).

Furthermore, the study proposes that functional assignees will perceive much underemployment than developmental assignees on the repatriated position and job. However, the finding did not support the proposition. An explanation can be on one hand the majority of the repatriated assignees had a position either refereed as a lateral move or a promotion, and the career advancement did not differ between functional assignees and developmental assignees. On the other hand, when the respondents were asked about their perception of career advancement opportunity within the organization, only a few of them reported their international assignment will definitely exert a positive effect on their career advancement opportunity within the organization. Therefore, it can be inferred that though no promotion is given to the repatriated assignees, they are generally satisfied with their current job position as a result of reasonable expectation.

The study proposed that developmental assignees will perceive better career advancement opportunity both within the organization and outside the organization than functional assignees. Nevertheless, the conclusion did not support these propositions. Both functional assignees and developmental assignees reported same optimism towards the perceived career advancement opportunity within and outside the organization. In other words, all the repatriated assignees were optimistic towards their career path in the future.

However, the study discovered that functional assignees and developmental assignees varied with regard to the organizational commitment, repatriation concerns, perceived capability to find a job, and turnover intention.

Although the design of the study did not include the difference of repatriation concerns between functional assignees and developmental assignees into the propositions, the questionnaire included the question to identify whether assignees were worried about the limited opportunities to use their experiences and skills acquired during the international

assignment. The result showed developmental assignees were much more concerned about the limited opportunities to use their experiences and skills acquired during the international assignment than functional assignees. This difference can be accounted by the characteristics between functional assignment and developmental assignment on one hand. Since functional assignment was defined as solely to do a technical job and return to a domestic position and developing cross-cultural skills was not a stated goal. Compared with developmental assignment where the primary purpose of the assignment was to develop global competencies, developmental assignees regard their acquisition of experience and skills as one objective of their international assignment. Therefore, they become more concerned about the usefulness of their freshly acquired skills and experiences. On the other hand, developmental assignees regard their international as part of long-term career plan within the company. Moreover, they have a high expectation towards the repatriated position. As a consequence, they are more concerned than others with regard to the limited opportunities to use their experiences and skills acquired during the international assignment.

The study proposed that developmental assignees will perceive higher employability than functional assignees with respect to finding a job. This proposition was confirmed by the results. In particular, developmental assignees perceived much stronger employability than functional assignees in terms of finding a job. As the perceived employability of finding a job actually measures the gap between career advancement opportunity within the organization and outside the organization. Therefore, it can be inferred from the equation that developmental assignees are more confident than functional assignees with regard to finding a job. This conclusion paves the way for the follow-up study of turnover intention.

With respect to organizational commitment, functional assignees were much more committed to the organization they belong to than developmental assignees. The research conclusion turned out to be the opposite of the proposition. In other words, conclusion was drawn that functional assignees are more committed to the organization they belong to than developmental assignees. It can be accounted by the fact that the repatriation

practices and perceived organizational support do not differ between the two groups. Moreover, as natural attrition refers to the situation that if international assignees see a gap between the career advancement opportunities available within their companies and what the job market has to offer, they are inclined to pursue more lucrative and challenging opportunities elsewhere. In addition, as Lazarova and Cerdin (2007) pointed out, “Retention upon repatriation may not necessarily be determined by repatriates’ frustration, but rather by a rational choice to move elsewhere in search of a better career fit”. Therefore, if the employee perceives better job opportunity outside the company than inside the company, their commitment to the organization will be low. The summary of new findings is available in Table 7.

Table 7. Key conclusions

Category	Conclusions
Repatriation practices	Conclusion 1: Functional assignees and developmental assignees did not have enough difference with regard to repatriation practices.
Perceived organization support	Conclusion 2: Functional assignees and developmental assignees did not have enough difference with regard to perceived organizational support.
Organizational commitment	Conclusion 3: Developmental assignees are less committed to organization than functional assignees after repatriation.
Career advancement	Conclusion 4: Functional assignees and developmental assignees did not have enough difference with regard to career advancement.
Underemployment	Conclusion 5: Functional assignees and developmental assignees did not have enough difference with regard to perceived underemployment.
Perceived career advancement opportunity within the organization	Conclusion 6: Functional assignees and developmental assignees did not have enough difference with regard to perceived career advancement opportunity within the organization.
Perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization	Conclusion 7: Functional assignees and developmental assignees did not have enough difference with regard to perceived career advancement opportunity within the organization.
Concerns	Conclusion 8: Developmental assignees are more concerned than functional assignees with respect to the usefulness of their experiences and skills acquired during the international assignment.
Finding a job	Conclusion 9: Developmental assignees will perceive higher employability than functional assignees with respect to finding a job.
Turnover intention	Conclusion 10: Developmental assignees have stronger turnover intention than functional assignees.

Lastly, the study compared the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees in terms of turnover intention. The results showed that developmental assignees generally had stronger turnover intention than functional assignees. This can be explained by the fact that developmental assignees perceived better employability than developmental assignees with regard to finding a job. In the following section, a detailed discussion of the determinants of turnover intention is given.

6.1.2. The determinants of turnover intention

The study proposed that perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization each has an influence on employee's turnover intention independently. The propositions were supported by the results from the regression. To be more specific, the study finds perceived organizational support is negatively related to turnover intention. This conclusion is in line with Lazarova et al.'s (2001) study who proposes that the repatriates who perceive that they have more support from their organization become more committed to that organization and will be more likely to be retained after repatriation, therefore, repatriate turnover will occur less often. Moreover, in accordance with the view of previous researcher who believes employee's commitment to organization can indirectly reflect employee's turnover intention. Namely, employees with no or low organizational commitment are more likely to undertake job hooping in the future than employees who are loyal to the organization. The study finds that organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover intention. With regard to career advancement, Bolino et al. (2009) asserts that if repatriated employees are placed in jobs that represent a demotion or even a lateral move, they are likely to feel that their organization undervalues and underutilizes their newly acquired international competencies, especially when a demotion signals a downward trajectory in the organizational hierarchy, turnover is irrevocable. Thus, the drawn conclusion that career

advancement is negatively related to turnover intention is justified. Moreover, the study discovers perceived underemployment is positively related to turnover intention. Once being offered with limited number of career options and scarce opportunities for promotions, repatriates feel that they have been removed from the mainstream of career advancement (Lazarova et al., 2007). Along with many repatriate feel that they contributions to the organization are discounted or complete ignored (Berthoin, 2001). As a consequence, the disappointment towards repatriation makes returnees uncomfortable where seeking for better career opportunities becomes the ultimate solution. Lastly, in line with Stahl et al.'s (2009) proposition that turnover intentions depend on assignees' perceived opportunities inside the company relative to the opportunities available outside the company. The study concludes that perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization is positively related to turnover intention. Lazarova et al. (2007) has pointed out, "Retention upon repatriation may not necessarily be determined by repatriates' frustration, but rather by a rational choice to move elsewhere in search of a better career fit". Therefore, if the employee perceives better job opportunity outside the company than inside the company, turnover will happen. To summarize, perceived organizational support, commitment to organization, career advancement, perceived underemployment, and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization each has an influence on employee's turnover intention independently.

Moreover, the proposed conceptual model was tested to identify the collective effects of the above mentioned turnover determinants on turnover intention. The results showed the hypothesized model had enough power to explain the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. In particularly, while perceived organizational support has no significant effect on turnover intention, organizational commitment and career advancement are negatively related to turnover intention, perceived underemployment and perceived career advancement opportunity outside the organization are positively related to turnover intention. The reason that why perceived organizational support failed to exert a significant effect on turnover intention in the collective hypothesized model is that after we examined the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment. The study found that

organizational commitment was a mediator of the effect of perceived organizational support on turnover intention. Therefore, the fact that perceived organization support is not directly related to turnover intention is justified.

6.2. Theoretical contributions

The conceptual framework and hypotheses of the study were built on the former research and theory. Under the umbrella of human resource management, this study makes contribution to the expatriate management dimension especially on repatriation management. In particular, the study highlights and supports the argumentation that expatriates are not a homogenous group by nature although the expatriation management practices provided to them within the same organization may have little difference (Evans et al., 2002). Moreover, the study reveals the fact that different type of assignees may have different perceptions on a series of measurements which evaluate their performance and competencies. Taken into account the effects of globalization, international assignment no longer favors merely the group of high-flyer and high-potential employees rather becomes a common practice in organization as a career developmental mechanism that available to everyone. As for career advancement, the study find there is no longer the old pattern that expatriates get promoted in the organization upon repatriation as a reward for their sacrifice of time, energy, and family. Differently, in line with the empirical study, relatively few employees are actually promoted upon repatriation (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Bolino, 2007). In addition, according to the hypothesized conceptual model, the study confirms the determinants of turnover intention raised by previous researchers. Last but not least, the study digs useful insights on the extent and coverage of repatriation practices given to international assignees.

6.3. Managerial implications

The findings of the study support the syndrome of “reverse culture shock”, which describes the situation by the time assignees are relocated to home country (Sanchez et al., 2000; Scullion et al., 2001). To be more specific, unexpected changes in life style, reduction in cash flow and disposable income, problems associated with loss of social status and lifestyle changes become the main stressors of returning repatriates (Lazarova et al., 2007). Indeed, the study finds repatriation practices that provided during the international assignment and prior to the repatriation are insufficient especially compared to the repatriation practices provided prior to the expatriation. That is, organizations are inclined to be over strategic orientated which may result in the repatriates’ frustration upon repatriation since organizations still appear to be less than responsive to the needs of their returning assignees (Riusala et al., 2000; Suutari et al., 2001). In accordance with the suggestion from Feldman et al. (1993) who conclude what determines turnover intention is the repatriates’ perception of how well the MNCs managed their repatriation process. While it highlights the importance of repatriation process, this also implies that if the potential repatriation problems are considered, and appropriately addressed, by the MNC in advance, repatriate turnover will occur less often (Harvey, 1989).

Another reason that leads to employees’ turnover intention is that many repatriates believe that demand for the skills and competencies they develop on assignment is substantial (Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004). Not surprisingly, the study finds the respondents very assertive and confident with regard to the usefulness of their freshly acquired skills and competencies. However, despite having international experience is generally valued by most organizations, the expectations of the repatriate must be aligned with the expectations of the organization. Otherwise, any misalignment between the expectation of employer and the expectation of employee may result in turnover. As Stroh, et al. (2000) point out, if employees expect an overseas assignment to help their careers, they are likely to be especially dissatisfied if their new positions are lateral or downward moves. Therefore, to clarify reasonable career advancement

expectation to expatriates upon international assignment is of great importance to ensure successful expatriation management. In addition, human resource manager has the necessity to integrate international assignments with employee's long-term career development and succession planning. Therefore, turnover intention will be diminished.

6.4. Limitations and future research orientations

The study was not intended as a comprehensive test of all possible antecedents of repatriate retention, but rather was designed to present an empirical test of an emerging set of ideas in relation to traditional views on repatriate retention. A few limitations may exist in this research.

First of all, the sample size was relatively small compared with the sample size of prominent researches on expatriation, repatriation, and turnover intention. Along with the fact that the respondents this survey approached were quite dispersed geographically and the majority was originated from two MNCs, therefore, it was hard to tell the difference between functional assignees and developmental assignees on much dimension as the expatriation practices in a specific organization may of little distinction. In addition, the study was unable to include more control variables and investigate the effects of all potential variables on the dependent variable. Therefore, future study should orientate to analyze large sample systematically.

Second of all, the survey answers the study acquired were self-reflected. Therefore, percept–percept inflation and self generated validity should be considered as potential sources of bias (Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Crampton & Wagner, 1994). Hence, the study suggests evaluate repatriates from various angles by including such as mentor, line manager, and colleagues to do the assessment together in the future research.

Third of all, the dependent variable was perceived turnover intention rather than actual turnover. Nevertheless, the literature on retention provides systematic evidence of a consistent positive relationship between the turnover intention and turnover decision (Michaels & Spector, 1982; Mowday, Koberg & McArthur, 1984; Bhuian & AlJabri, 1996). Moreover, many comprehensive turnover models suggest that the antecedents of turnover affect turnover indirectly, through intent to turn over (Lazarova et al., 2007). Thus it is believed that turnover intention mediate nearly all of the attitudinal linkage with turnover decision (Tett & Meyer, 1993: 259). However, at the time of our data collection, all the participants still stayed in the organizations once sent them for assignment. Therefore, the study was unable to investigate any systematic distinction between those who stayed and who left the organization after repatriation. Future research can avoid this limitation by investigating employees who have just quit their organization instead of examining those who have turnover intention only.

Fourth of all, the research method adopted was quantitative rather than qualitative, where the latter, may dig critical insights by deep and detailed interview on participants who are differently in turnover intention. For this study, it is unable to evaluate turnover intention from various perspectives. Therefore, another suggestion is focus future research on holistic and systematic investigation of repatriates' turnover intention. Furthermore, suggestion is given that future work should include individual, environmental and organizational predictors of retention, and further identify the specific variables from the three domains suggested to relate to retention (Lazarova et al., 2007).

To end with, though some limitations exist in the study, it contributes practical implications to organizations and individuals who have an interest in better expatriation management.

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APPENDIX

Cover Letter for Data Collection To Whom It May Concern

Currently I am a Master degree student in University of Vaasa, Finland majoring in International Business. At the same time, I am on a double-degree learning program in Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), Germany. I am to write a Master thesis entitled “The Relationship between Expatriate Management Practices and Employees’ Commitment to MNCs”.

The questionnaire aims to collect information of employees in MNCs with international experiences. The data collected will be used to identify the practices used in MNCs with regard to expatriation management. Moreover, we aim to identify factors that may have an influence on employees’ turnover intention. Lastly, we compare the difference in expatriation management practices between functional employees and developmental employees.

The managerial implication of this thesis is to provide human resource manager with some effective expatriate management practices which enhance expatriates’ adjustment, performance, and commitment to organization. Moreover, based on the organizational support practices, human resource managers become more aware of the importance of organizational support to employees’ well being before, during, and after international assignment. Lastly, human resource managers can gain insights from both functional employees and developmental employees for effective expatriate management.

The author promises that the information collected in this questionnaire is used for writing Master Thesis only.

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Questionnaire for employees with international assignment experiences

Age:

Gender: Male/Female

Nationality:

Number of previous international assignment(s):

- A. One
- B. Two
- C. More than Two

Duration of last international assignment:

- A. Less than one year
- B. From one year up to two years
- C. More than two years

The country's name of your last international assignment:

Q1. Which one of the four categories best describe your last international assignment?

Response categories: A, B, C or D

- A. Technical Assignment
- B. Functional Assignment
- C. Developmental Assignment
- D. Strategic Assignment

Technical assignment was defined as one that “was solely to do a technical job and return to a domestic position” and did not require the employee to develop intercultural skills to be successful.

Functional assignment was defined as one that was “to do a specific job and return to a domestic position ... developing my cross-cultural skills was **not** a stated goal of my assignment; however, to do the international assignment successfully, I needed to be effective interculturally.”

Developmental assignment was defined as one in which “the primary purpose of my assignment was for me to develop global competencies. This assignment was part of a long-term career plan with the company. To be successful on the assignment, I needed to be effective interculturally.”

Strategic assignment was defined as one that “was an executive level position. I was both filling a key position and developing global competencies as a part of my long-term career plan with the company. For my career with the company, this ‘global experience’ is critical.”

Q2. What expatriation management practices have you received before, during, and after

your last international assignment?

Response categories: yes or no

1. Pre-departure briefings on what to expect during the period of repatriation. (Yes/No)
2. Career planning sessions to discuss concerns regarding repatriation. (Yes/No)
3. A written guarantee or a repatriation agreement outlining the type of position expatriates will be placed in upon repatriation. (Yes/No)
4. Communications with the home office about the details of the repatriation process. (Yes/No)
5. Mentoring programs while on assignment. (Yes/No)
6. Continuous communications with the home office. (Yes/No)
7. Repatriation training seminars that prepare you and your family on what to expect regarding the emotional response upon returning home. (Yes/No)
8. Lifestyle assistance and counseling to prepare you for the changes that are likely to occur in their lifestyles upon return. (Yes/No)
9. Financial counseling and financial/tax assistance to help you adjust back to your lifestyle at home. (Yes/No)
10. Reorientation program provided immediately upon return to brief you on the changes in the company. (Yes/No)
11. Visible signs that the company values international experience demonstrated within the organization that global experience is beneficial to one's career. (Yes/No)

Q3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement with regard to organizational support?

Response categories: from 1 to 5

(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

1. (Company) has taken care of me financially. 1 2 3 4 5
2. The financial incentives and allowance provided to me by (Company) are good. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I have received generous financial support from (Company). 1 2 3 4 5
4. I **cannot** complain about the financial benefits associated with my expatriate assignment. 1 2 3 4 5
5. (Company) takes an interest in my career. 1 2 3 4 5
6. (Company) considers my goals when making decisions about my career. 1 2 3 4 5
7. (Company) keeps me informed about career opportunities available within the organization. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I feel that (Company) cares about my career development. 1 2 3 4 5
9. (Company) has shown an interest in my family's well-being. 1 2 3 4 5
10. (Company) has provided my family with enough assistance to help them adjust to the new situation. 1 2 3 4 5
11. (Company) has provided me with many opportunities to ease the transition to the foreign country. 1 2 3 4 5

12. Help is available within (Company) whenever I have questions or concerns about living in the foreign country. 1 2 3 4 5
13. Generally, I am satisfied with the organizational supports provided to me prior to my international assignment. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Generally, I am satisfied with the organizational supports provided to me during my international assignment. 1 2 3 4 5

Q4. How concerned were you about limited opportunities for using your newly acquired knowledge and skills upon repatriation?

Response categories: A, B, C or D

- A. Very concerned
- B. Concerned
- C. Not very concerned
- D. Do not worry about it at all

Q5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement with regard to finding a job?

Response categories: from 1 to 5

(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

1. It is possible for me to find a better job than the one I have now. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I believe that acceptable jobs can always be found. 1 2 3 4 5
3. There is no doubt in my mind that I can find a job at least as good as the one I have now. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Even if I really looked for a job, I probably could not find a better one. 1 2 3 4 5
5. There will always be another job as good as this one that I could get. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I have no intention to look for new job because I cannot have a better position than the one I have right now. 1 2 3 4 5

Q6. To what extent do you agree with the following statement with regard to the current job position of you?

Response categories: from 1 to 5

(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

1. My job gives me a chance to do the things I do best. 1 2 3 4 5
2. My job enables me to make full use of my abilities and skills. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I have more formal qualifications than this job position requires; that is, someone with less formal qualifications could perform my job well. 1 2 3 4 5
4. My current job position is less demanding compared with the last international assignment I have had. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I feel underemployed on this position. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I believe I will be working for my company in the future. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I often think of quitting my job at [name of organization]. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I will probably look for a new job in the near future. 1 2 3 4 5
9. At the present time, I am actively searching for another job in a different organization.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I feel very little loyalty to this organization. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I will probably leave this organization in search of more challenging job. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I will probably leave this organization in search of job that fits me better. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I will probably leave this organization in search of job which pays me more. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I will probably leave this organization since I feel there is limited career advancement opportunity for me. 1 2 3 4 5

Q7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement with regard to your current organization?

Response categories: from 1 to 5

(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

1. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I am proud to tell others I work at my organization. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I would be happy to work at my organization until I retire. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I really feel that problems faced by my organization are also my problems. 1 2 3 4 5

Q8. Compared to your last expatriate job position, is your new job position upon returning to your home country a promotion, lateral move, or demotion?

Response categories: A, B or C

- A. Promotion
- B. Lateral move
- C. Demotion

Q9. "In your opinion, what is the likelihood that successful performance in your last international assignment will advance your career **within** your company?"

Response categories: A, B, C, D or E

- A. Definitely
- B. Very likely
- C. Perhaps
- D. Unlikely
- E. Impossible

Q10. "In your opinion, what is the likelihood that successful performance in your last international assignment will be important to your career opportunities among other possible employers?"

Response categories: A, B, C, D or E

- A. Definitely
- B. Very likely
- C. Perhaps
- D. Unlikely
- E. Impossible

Thanks for your participation!



Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

STATEMENT OF ABIDING BY GOOD SCIENTIFIC PRACTICE

“I confirm that I have made this Master’s thesis by myself and that I have followed a good scientific practice. All the citations and quotations mentioned as well as all the references to the source materials have been reported completely and identifiable.”

Vaasa 15.09.2013

Mengzhao Xia

Information and guidelines regarding the studies:

Abiding by Good Scientific Practice

(www.uva.fi/en/for/student/materials/regulations/)

University of Vaasa Degree Ordinance

(www.uva.fi/en/for/student/materials/degreeordinance/)

Directions for assessment of the basic degrees and arranging examinations

(www.uva.fi/en/for/student/materials/regulations/)