

Mentoring across cultures: implications in managing expatriates' cultural adjustment

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International businesses are flourishing and the displacement of key employees has become a common practice within multinational organisations. International assignees, commonly referred to as expatriates, are of vital importance for the success of international operations. However, expatriates are also faced with major challenges. In addition to the normal rearrangements such as climate, nutrition and place of residence, expatriates need to adjust to new work tasks and new organisational and national culture (Blom/Meier 2002). In order to succeed they must learn how to interact effectively in a completely new environment where people think, feel and act differently, and often speak a different language. This ambiguous situation can lead inexperienced expatriates to a state of frustration and depression, called culture shock (Hofstede/Hofstede 2005). The inability of expatriates to adapt to the new working and social environment might lead to poor performance and organisational ineffectiveness, damage the relationship with local employees, and may even end with a premature repatriation (Briscoe/Schuler/Claus 2009). For these reasons one of the biggest challenges for international and multinational businesses is to introduce a valuable instrument to prepare, assist and integrate expatriates into the new cultural environment. Therefore, an effective cultural mentoring programme can be suggested to provide the expatriate with the necessary understanding of cultural influences on attitudes, expectations, and behaviours needed to adjust to both the new environment and the new employment role (Osula/Irvin 2009).

However, despite the number of studies in related subfields of mentoring, only limited research has focused on mentoring as means of managing expatriates' cultural adjustment. Furthermore, programmes to develop international employees through mentoring are generally lacking (Crocitto/Sullivan/Carraher 2005).

Based on these assumptions, a review of relevant literature on globalisation, labour migration, cultural diversity and mentoring will be undertaken in order to combine these different elements within one study. This paper will elaborate how mentoring can contribute to a successful introduction and integration of expatriates in multicultural enterprises. Following detailed questions will be answered: How are globalisation and labour

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migration related? What cultural differences might expatriates encounter in the new environment? Which influence has cultural diversity on expatriates' cultural adjustment?

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