

Hochschule Rhein-Waal
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Global Mobility

*Failure or Success and possible Improvements of the Reintegration
of International Assignments*

Bachelor Thesis

submitted by

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Abstract

In the current era of globalization and internationalization, markets spread across borders and companies need to line up internationally. The question is how to manage the employees in this global context. This study looks at the use of international assignments as a solution of transferring employees internationally. Especially, this paper focuses on the reintegration of internally assigned employees. Corresponding to the literature, the reintegration proves to be the most difficult stage in an international assignment, as most companies still underestimate the impact and do not invest sufficient in this phase. Therefore, the thesis aims to identify how the reintegration is handled in organizations and which aspects can be considered as critical in this process. Consequently, on the basis of analysis, the author comes up with improvement options. In order, to receive detailed insights in the experiences and opinions of dispatched employees and human resource managers of multinational companies, the author used a qualitative research method (expert interviews). Results show that there is not a great need for cultural reintegration measures, as expatriates assume coming home to be easy and human resource managers do not see the willingness and demand for such arrangements. Anyhow, interviewees described problems in the new work environment and mentioned the request for some enhancements. Therefore, this thesis discusses improvement options for the re-entry, including a reintegration plan set in agreement with the employee and the company before the assignment.

Keywords: Expatriate, repatriate, reintegration of expatriates, improvement options, qualitative content analysis

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1 Introduction

Today's business environment is adapting to the increasing globalized and international world where companies and organizations are no longer bound to a specific nation. With this rise of globalization, companies are becoming more and more global players within an international market, which reflects the importance of international economic activity, resulting in the increased mobility of human resources (Scullion & Brewster, 2001). For companies, in order to stay competitive, they need to send employees to foreign subsidiaries, to gain and share knowledge.

In the current state of research, it becomes clear that international companies do face a need of expatriation, the question is how to conduct international assignments successfully. Stated in their book *International Business Studies*, Buckley and Brooke claim that: "Empirical studies over a considerable period suggest that expatriate failure is a significant and persistent problem with rates ranging between 25 and 40 percent in the developed countries and as high as 70 percent in the case of developing countries" (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Harzing, 1995). Anyhow, actual studies show higher percentages on the success of international assignments. In a study from 2012, conducted by Brookfield Global Relocation Service, senior human resource professionals from 123 small, medium and large organizations were asked for their success within international assignments. Results show that only 7% of assignees returned prematurely, including a former completion of the assignment or the failure of the assignment. Anyhow, due to the indicated success rates, stated by the status quo of research, it is visible that challenges come along with the adjustment for expatriates. To organize and minimize these challenges, human resource departments of international companies have a special responsibility. They interact in the whole process, starting at the pre-departure phase, where they need to choose the right candidates to send abroad. Furthermore, they are responsible for organizing an appropriate during-assignment phase with continuous support possibilities. In addition to this, they should ensure a smooth reintegration phase. However, there is evidence that only a minority of organizations align a sufficient investment of resources in this phase (Paik, et al., 2002). Paik et al. (2002) also stated that the focus had only been on the expatriation part, whereas the repatriation part has not been seen as a problem. The cost of failed reintegration of delegated employees is high, financially for the organization, and personally for the employee. Therefore, this topic becomes essentially for multinational organizations, as well as for the current research gap and finally is also in personal interest of the author. There is a private motivation for further investigation, as the author also lived abroad for a longer period of time and therefore might be more amenable to the topic, as expe-

rienced similar situations and indications. According to Black and Gregersen (1999), many delegated employees are not satisfied with the reintegration process. Researchers have also mentioned several factors that could influence the re-entry. However, the current literature represents many studies on the preparation and the situation during the assignment, there are not many recommendations or suggestions how to manage a reintegration process efficiently. Given this evidence an examination of the factors that impact the reintegration seems warranted. Therefore, the author assumes that finding proposals and options how to successfully manage the reintegration could be helpful. Consequently, against this background, the research question that motivates this thesis, will be answered: *How to manage the reintegration of international assignments along members of multinational organizations?*

In order to find valuable information, the author conduct in-depth interviews with experts in this area. Thereby, only members of multinational organizations, who already conducted or supported an international assignment are considered. The research question will serve as a guideline throughout this thesis and will be answered after analyzing and discussing the results from the study.

The purpose of this thesis is to firstly find out how companies manage the reintegration of employees and furthermore how the delegated persons perceive this process. Therefore, the author will aim to receive a picture of the experiences and emotions individuals receive when reentering the home country. After identifying the situation, presented by the interviewees, the purpose is to see in which aspects and touch points of the reintegration process companies need to foster measures or where might not be an interest. Consequently, the author will identify how to manage the reintegration along members of multinational companies.

In order to receive insights in the experiences and opinions from the experts, the author will examine a qualitative research method by conducting six personal interviews with delegated persons and HR (Human Resource) -Managers. Prior to that, the author will outline the current state of research by investigating the literature. By the detailed literature search of studies, journals and textbooks a scientific foundation is guaranteed. Hereby, the author investigated sources from several researchers in order to receive a broad and comprehensive collection of information. After explaining fundamental aspects of this thesis, this study is structured as follows.

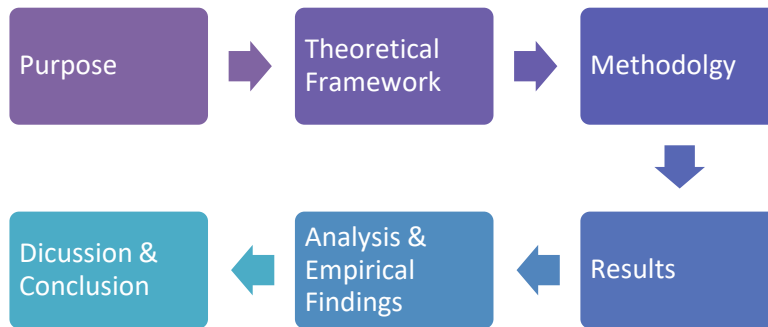


Figure 1 Structure of the Bachelor Thesis

Source: Own Visualization

Purpose (Chapter 1) - Chapter 1 explains the ambitions and the idea of this thesis, which is mainly based on personal interest of the author. Furthermore, the underlying problems are discussed and the purpose is derived from it.

Theoretical Framework (Chapter 2-4) - The theoretical framework is outlined in chapter 2 to chapter 4 and should provide the reader with a basic knowledge about the subject of matter. Thereby giving an introduction into the general topic and then illustrating the problem based on several theories and factors that have an influence on the reintegration.

Methodology (Chapter 5) - The used methodology is described in chapter 5. Therefore, the focus is put on the conducted expert interviews, since it seems to be the most suitable method.

Results (Chapter 6) - To present the findings of the empirical research, the results are illustrated in chapter 6. In addition, some further methods like the qualitative content analysis which are used to analyze the qualitative transcripts are explained.

Empirical findings (Chapter 7) - Subsequently, the analysis of the empirical results is shown in chapter 7, which is categorized into the focus areas of job related issues, social aspects and improvement options.

Discussion (Chapter 8) - Within the discussion in chapter 8, the validity and limitations of this study are outlined and the results are compared to findings of already existing literature.

Conclusion (Chapter 9) - To summarize the most important aspects of this study and with it to answer the research question, a conclusion is drawn in chapter 9.

2 Global Mobility

This chapter outlines staffing policies that demand for the implementation of international assignments and then further explains how an international assignment is defined and highlights the differentiation between an expatriation and an inpatriation.

2.1 Global staffing

In the international context, organizations must choose from several types of global staff members, who may be selected from among three different types: expatriates, host-country nationals, and third-country nationals. According to Mondy et al. (2012), an expatriate is a citizen in the country in which the organization's headquarters are located. A host-country national has a citizenship of the country, where the organization's subsidiary is placed, whereas a third-country national is employed by the companies headquartered location but works in another country and has a citizenship of a third country (Mondy & Mondy, 2012).

2.2 Staffing policies

When searching and hiring employees, organizations can follow different staffing policies. International staffing policies can be differentiated by ethnocentric, polycentric or geocentric approaches. In polycentric-oriented organizations home offices will be filled by parent-country nationals whereas foreign subsidiaries will only be staffed by host-country nationals. This approach is grounded in the assumption that host-country nationals are better provided to engage with local market conditions (Mondy & Mondy, 2012).

A geocentric approach attempts to staff key positions only by the best person available, therefore regardless of their nationality. Such worldwide integrated business strategies are normally used by global firms (Mondy & Mondy, 2012).

With an ethnocentric staffing policy, the organization aims to use parent-country nationals in order to fill the key management positions, rather than employing local expertise. Reasons why organizations pursue ethnocentric policies are shortages of high-qualified host-country nationals, the demand to retain a good communication between headquarters and subsidiaries as well as the transfer of values from headquarters to foreign subsidiaries (Mayrhofer & Brewster, 1996). An ethnocentric policy would be an example for an expatriate assignment.

2.3 International assignments

An international assignment is the process of dispatching employees from the home country to another country for work and business operations in a foreign office. The

direction of delegation can either be from the headquarters to a foreign unit of the organization (expatriation) or from a foreign unit to the headquarters of the organization (inpatriation).

The purpose to send employees abroad, either an expatriation or inpatriation, is greatly similar. For example, both are used, in order to decrease non-uniformity in information between headquarters of a company and the subsidiaries located abroad (Stein & D., 2011).

However, headquarters use inpatriation in order to integrate delegated managers into the corporate culture. Furthermore, inpatriates are used to construct formless networks to communicate (Reiche, 2006). Whereas, the expatriation process focuses more on the control over subsidiaries abroad, the coordination of their activities in relation to them of the headquarters as well as the transfer of knowledge from the headquarters to the operations in the host country (Reiche, 2006). In a study from 2017, conducted by Scheible, several human resource managers as well as expatriates from a mechanical engineering company were interviewed with the purpose to identify expatriation as a tool to manage diversity. Thereby, respondents mentioned aspects, like "the development of a global identification with the company, becoming acquainted with colleagues from the other sides, sharing experiences and passing on knowledge" as essential parts of an expatriate assignment (Scheible, 2017).

3 Expatriation

The term expatriate refers to "an employee sent by his or her company in one country to manage operations in a different country" (Noe, et al., 2006).

The most traditional model of an expatriation abidance is a person who is sent abroad for a specific period of time to conduct some kind of business assignment. This person is on an average a 40 year old married man with children. In the normal case the family accompanies him and the assignment will last for 1-4 years (Kangas, 2012).

3.1 Three-phase process of Expatriation

Corresponding to Ashamalla (1998), the expatriation process is divided into three phases: pre-departure phase, during-assignment phase and the after completion of the assignment phase.

3.1.1 The pre-departure phase

The main functions are the successful selection and the appropriate preparation of delegates. Most frequently employees are selected from within the organization. The au-

thor argues that those managers are more related with the company's culture and own the required technical knowledge (Ashamalla, 1998). Corresponding to Mc Donald (1993), corporations have recognized that managers need more than technical expertise in order to be applicable for an international assignment. To sum up, they strive to recruit individuals, who demonstrate a belief in the global philosophy of their organization, who illustrate a global awareness and show an interest in moving the company into a new millennium. Candidates should possess certain qualities: "Cultural empathy, awareness of environmental constraints, interpersonal skills, managerial and decision-making abilities and other crucial qualities for success overseas" (Ashamalla, 1998). The pre-departure phase also includes the preparation for the future assignment. Ashamalla (1998) describes that organizations therefore should develop a briefing program, including information regarding the host country, in terms of the work environment but as well as living-related issues such as schooling or housing. As most expatriates are accompanied by their families, organizations also need provide them with planned strategies. Especially due to the fact that family relatives are often more affected by the culture shock than the expatriate himself (Ashamalla, 1998).

3.1.2 The during-assignment phase

Ashamalla (1998) points out that support given by the organization during the assignment generates positive psychological effects on the expatriate and therefore increases his/ her performance. Feelings of being away from the corporate center of business and the sense of isolation from domestic issues can arise during an assignment. Therefore, it becomes highly important that organizations stay in contact with their expatriates and provide them and their families with continuous support. Corresponding to Ashamalla (1998), appropriate methods of keeping contact could be, visits to the home countries office, receiving executives from the home office as visitors and the continuous contact with departments from the headquarters, in order to reduce the feeling of isolation. Besides formal support, the organization can also offer a range of informal support for example activities like connecting to social groups and assisting the family in daily task or construct a social network of relationships (Ashamalla, 1998).

3.1.3 Repatriation phase

As often the expatriation is highlighted with a more evident importance, the repatriation is similarly crucial (Tung, 1988). Difficulties to adapt in a new country could also arise when re-adapting in the home country. The repatriation phase is often disregarded by human resource managers, however evidence indicate that repatriation is not simple and repatriates may experience both professional and personal re-entry problems (Ashamalla, 1998). The range of repatriation problems are basically dependent on the length and country of the assignment, the age of the delegated employee as well as

individual skills of the person and the management's approach for international assignments (Tung, 1988). The most common problems on repatriation are, firstly expatriation is often seen as an one-way flow process, secondly an insufficient communication during the assignment and thirdly the expatriate expectations towards career development are often not fulfilled and therefore expatriates and family relatives often experience a reverse cultural shock when returning (Ashamalla, 1998). Here, reorientation and reintegration programs should support employees to experience a smooth re-entry process.

3.2 The U-Curve model

When employees of organizations are sent abroad in order to conduct an international assignment, most of the expatriates do not have knowledge how to appropriately behave within the host culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Therefore individuals, who are entering a new culture, environment and working conditions need a period of learning about countries business and social standards before a personal adjustment and work productivity can appear (Black & Mendenhall, 1991).

This adjustment process can be divided into several stages, which are often illustrated in a U-Curve (Figure 2). The U-Curve should describe the cross-cultural adjustment process of an expatriate employee within a host culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1991) and was originally developed by Lysgaard 1996 (Ward, et al., 1998).

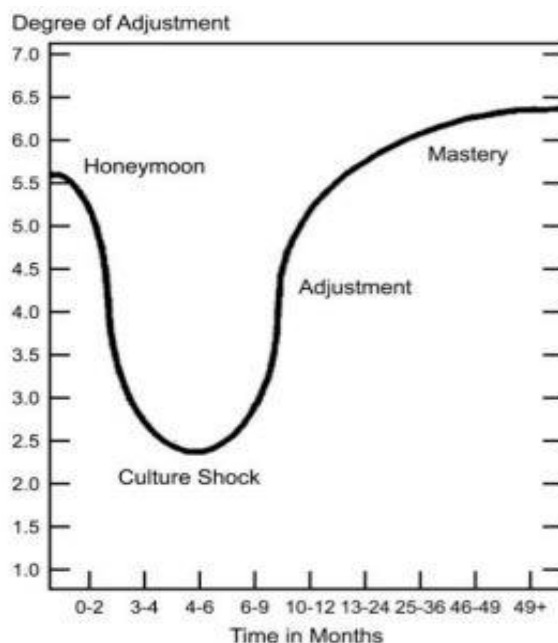


Figure 2 The U-Curve and the four stages of cultural adjustment

Source: Black and Mendenhall, 1991, p. 227

The U-Curve cross-cultural adjustment illustrates four stages, which the expatriate will experience during his/ her assignment.

In the honeymoon phase the expatriate recently arrived in the new country and everything is interesting and exciting (Thomas & Peterson, 2016). Within this stage the individual feels more like a tourist than like a citizen in the foreign country. He/ she is fascinated by the new culture and explores new "sights and sounds" (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). After a few months, the feeling of excitement is diminishing and the cultural shock occurs. At the disillusionment stage the expatriate realizes the absence of existing familiar surroundings, traditions and behaviors. The individual must actively handle to live in the new culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). The stage is characterized by emotions like frustration and confusion against the host country. During the adjustment-phase the expatriate begins to realize the cultural differences and adapts to new values and norms of the host country. Finally, the expatriate might reach the mastery phase where he/ she might be able to effectively function in the new culture, almost as well as in the home country. Not all expatriates are able to achieve the mastery, as some of them return back home earlier or they even finalize the assignment but were not able to adjust to the process throughout the period abroad (Thomas & Peterson, 2016).

3.3 The extension by the W-Curve model

When looking at the cross-cultural exchange experiences, researchers now recognize that the U-curve of international assignments is only a part of the whole scenario. Oberg (1960) supports the approach of the U-curve model, however Church (1982), by reviewing several studies, concluded that the empirical evidence supporting the U-curve is weak, as readjustment challenges exist over a wide range.

The U-curve was adapted and expanded by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) who developed a W-Curve (Figure 3), which more appropriately describes the individual reaction when returning to his/ her home cultures.



Figure 3 The W-curve model after Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1963

Source: Kovalski, 2013, p.12

Corresponding to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), the repatriation phase can be divided into 4 stages: Honeymoon at home, Crisis at Home (re-entry shock), Recovery at Home and Adjustment at Home.

First of all, many studies argue that the repatriation needs to be carefully managed, as it represents new challenges for the individuals (Paik, et al., 2002). Many individuals alter during the period abroad and it might seem to them that the home country also changed (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). Therefore, the preparation of coming home becomes an initial aspect of the re-entry. Expatriates should prepare their return by keeping contact with friends and colleagues of the home country throughout the whole assignment (Ashamalla, 1998). During the Preparation-phase it becomes important that they adjust their expectations and keep the expectations realistic. The individual probably expects difficulties upon arrival in the foreign country, also the family relatives and friends might assume this process to be difficult. Anyhow the delegated person itself as well as others are unlikely to expect difficulties when re-entering the home country, as the environment and people are familiar (Martin, 1984).

When the expatriate employee finally returns back home, the so-called honeymoon at home-phase begins. This stage can be seen as the reverse honeymoon-phase. The individual recognizes that he/ she missed family and friends, is excited about coming home and sharing his/ her stories. They finally say goodbye to new friends they have made and the culture they have enjoyed (Ting-Toomey, 2012). Similar to the expatriation process the honeymoon as well as the reverse honeymoon stage is only of short length, as soon as the re-entry shock begins (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). The excitement of coming home fades away and a feeling of not being someone special anymore brushes out. The individual realizes his/ her role as a local and faces challenges to re-establish routine in the daily life. The most significant feeling during the reverse cultural shock is feeling like a stranger in the own country (Wagner & Magistrale, 1995). Corresponding to Ting-Toomey (2012), the reverse cultural shock becomes more intense the greater the home culture and the foreign culture differ in "cultural values" and "communication dimensions". In work-related issues the expatriate does not feel valued for his/ her foreign experience and supposes to have less responsibilities (Allen & Alvarez, 1998). Similar to the expatriation process, at some point the individual adjusts to the culture and positive emotions occur, until the final stage, where he/ she can completely adapt, arrives. Others are never able to "fit back" into their home cultures again. Those might be called the alienators (Ting-Toomey, 2012). When and to what extent the adaption is achieved depends on personal issues of each individual (Gupta, 2013). The adjustment, resembling to the one in the host country, deals with accepting

and living traditional values and behaviors and feeling home in the own country again (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

3.4 Importance of Expatriation

The ever-increasing globalization evolves several challenges and adjustments for organizations. Due to global investments and mergers, organizations need to find an international exposure to stay competitive. Consequently, today's international organizations execute economic activity abroad (Scullion & Brewster, 2001). Therefore, the need of employees that are willing to work worldwide has increased. According to Webb (1996), living and working in a foreign country and work environment provides the most effective way to receive international experiences. Moreover, the multinational development within organizations constitutes new tasks and challenges like learning about operations of different countries, filling lacks of skills throughout the globe and transfer knowledge. These expansions in the global reach and the continuous change has increased the interest for expatriation management (Black & Gregerson, 1999). Referred to a study by Scheible, expatriation becomes highly relevant for delegated employees in order to share experiences, transfer knowledge and to evolve "a common international identity" (Scheible, 2015).

3.4 Problem Statement of Expatriation

Due to the globalization and the increased expansion of markets reaching across the world, international companies need to make use of expatriation in order to exploit the global market of qualified expertise. Anyhow, it is fundamental in the research that expatriation reveals high percentages of failures. "Empirical studies over a considerable period suggest that expatriate failure is a significant and persistent problem with rates ranging between 25 and 40 percent in the developed countries and as high as 70 percent in the case of developing countries" (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Harzing, 1995) as well as Black and Gregersen claim that 20-50% of expatriates return to their home country precipitate, within a year of beginning their global assignment (Stroh & Gregersen & Black, 2000; Stroh & Gregersen & Black, 1998; Harzing, 1995). A single delegated employee demand for a high investment. According to Black and Gregersen (1999), one package for an expatriate employee, including benefits and living costs, is estimated by 300.000 thousand till 1 million dollars annually. As companies spending two or three times more on expatriates than employing the same executive working in the home country, the success rates of assignments should be stabilized (Black & Gregerson, 1999). Important factors to establish a successful expatriation process are the continuous support by the company concerning accommodation or taxation, an early plan for career goals and advancements as well as a transparent recruiting process (Scheible, 2015).

4 Repatriation

This chapter explains the reintegration of expatriates and gives an overview about the problems coming along with a repatriation, including job-related aspects as well as social issues and further provides the viewpoint of the companies. The section also outlines possible causes for problems arising in the repatriation process.

4.1 Reintegration of Expatriates - Repatriation

As stated by Brian J. Hurn "Repatriation, or re-entry, is the transition from a foreign country back to one's own after living overseas for a significant period of time" (Hurn, 1999, p. 224). Living and working abroad for a period of time depicts a lot of effort and expenses for the company as well as a major change of life and work for the employee. Therefore, companies and individuals should ensure a smooth expatriation process but as well focusing on a successful repatriation. There is evidence that only a minority of organizations invest in the reintegration of expatriate employees and recognize the difficulties facing this phase (Paik, et al., 2002). Most expatriates and managers assume that reintegrating in one's own country and culture is easy (Stroh, et al., 1998). However, studies show that repatriating is often even more challenging than expatriating (Paik, et al., 2002). The cost of failed reintegration of international assignments is high, financially for the company, and personally for the employee.

4.2 Problem Statement of Repatriation

A lot of expatriates and managers underestimate the repatriation, as the employee 'only comes home', which is a process to be assumed as simple. That the re-entry process, certainly, is difficult becomes visible when looking at the attrition rates of repatriates in international companies. Studies show that managers returning to their home companies are more likely to discharge their position and consequently reside outside employment than other executives (Stroh, et al., 1998). Referred to Black and Gregersen (1999), 25% of employees leave the company within the first year after the assignment, which is twice as high as the number of employees who were not on an international deployment. From the figures it is apparent that organizations need to care better, since costs of losing repatriated employees is very relevant, as those employees can understand both the perspective of the headquarters and the overseas subsidiaries. Corresponding to Allen and Alvarez (1998), many multinational companies face poor repatriation processes. In the article concerned, they describe different reasons and causes why the repatriation proves to be a difficult issue in the expatriation process.

4.2.1 Job-related aspects

When employees are sent abroad, they mostly come back with newly learned skills and knowledge acquired in the overseas position and environment, but executives report that often organizations fail to recognize the gained competencies. Such handling can provoke the feeling of not being appreciated in an appropriate way. According to Gupta (2013), the main motivation for employees to decide on an international assignment is the career advancement and the financial gain. Therefore, the main factor during the re-entry phase is the job anxiety. During their return many repatriates indicated that they faced a 'lost ground' in their career as no career advancement was promoted. Therefore, Allen and Alvarez (1998) state that high costs are wasted when expatriate skills and knowledge are not utilized by the organization.

Another potential reason highlighted by the authors is "the inability to recruit key personal into overseas positions" (Allen & Alvarez, 1998). Black (1991) declared that poor repatriation can illustrate an international assignment like a "kiss of the death" (Allen & Alvarez, 1998). In order to recruit potential candidates for a period abroad, such assignments need to be presented in an attractive way. Employees observing poor managed repatriation processes, might not be attracted in such a career. If companies become unable to make highly qualified employees interested in global assignments they are hindered in developing international capabilities in their workforce (Allen & Alvarez, 1998).

Gupta (2013) presents, in this context, the *kingpin phenomena*, which says that expatriates often face a high amount of promotion in overseas positions, resulting in a high level of responsibility and autonomy. When arriving at the home office they might experience a certain loss of status and autonomy (Gupta, 2013). A similar approach is explained by the *big-fish-small-fish* idea. Employees sent abroad, often experience to be a big fish in a small pot, as in smaller offices overseas often every employee is a key employee. When returning back to the headquarters they might be seen as a small fish in a big pond. Possible responsibility or autonomy did not change but the employee receives the feeling of being less important to the organization (Mc Evoy & Buller, 2013).

Expectations become highly relevant in the field of reintegrating an employee into the old work-environment. Often organizations do not realize the extent, in which an employee has adapted to a foreign culture and altered in their individual characteristics and may not expose their efforts in placing the expatriate in the cultural reintegration process (Paik, et al., 2002). Therefore, companies can have different expectations than the expatriate and may offer different opportunities. If no expectations or agreements

are discussed in form of a reintegration program, consequences can be high attrition rates and dissatisfaction of the repatriate. Referred to Stroh et al. (1998), expectations of expatriates need to be developed long time before the re-entry, even before the assignment has started at all. Sometimes it is even stated, that some kind of psychological contracts are formed, where employees' beliefs about the obligations that may exist between the employee itself and the organization, are aligned (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001). According to Allen and Alvarez (1998), the fulfillment of the employees' expectations is increasing his/ her job commitment and effectiveness.

4.2.2 Social aspects

Living in another country than your home country for a period of time comes along with changes. On the one hand the person itself changes. Due to the adaptation to a new culture, norms and foreign people the person may think different, act different and feel different. On the other hand, the organization and the home society changes (Stroh, et al., 2000). Therefore, expatriates are not aware that they might have changed as well and organizations do not reflect what expatriates have accomplished during the time abroad (Paik, et al., 2002).

As already explained earlier, repatriates experience some stages and phases when returning back home. As they may face a cultural shock when going abroad, they may experience a reverse cultural shock when entering their home country again. Corresponding to Black, the re-adjustment in the home country is more difficult than the adjustment to a life in another country (Black, 1992). He declares his argument by explaining that many expatriates do not have lived in their destination country before, therefore they do not pose any personal experience with this country till now. Consequently, their expectations are more based on stereotypes. On the other hand, all have lived in their home country and therefore the expectations, upon return, are based on personal experiences. Furthermore, the reverse cultural shock can be experienced in different intensities. Such extents may depend on aspects like the length the individual has been away from the home country, the country where he/ she completed the assignment as well as personal characteristics like the age (Gupta, 2013). Consequently, the reverse cultural shock is dependent on the variations in the home country as well as the degree to which the individual has altered.

When employees are conducting an international assignment, often the financial supply is guaranteed. They are heavily financially supported by the organization, costing the company two till three times more than a normal employee. Besides the high salary, they receive further compensation premiums. Expatriates and their families adapt to a higher living standard, in being able to join several clubs, driving an expensive car and

going to restaurants. Upon returning, they are probably no longer able to maintain such style of living. This loss of life quality often results in a loss of social interaction and disappointment in the home country (Gupta, 2013).

Often families returning to their home town, do have the impression that friends have moved away. Repatriate spouse can have the feeling that friends are unavailable for social interaction. All this can result in a sense of loss. Repatriates may not receive the same level of attention and support, they have got abroad (Gupta, 2013). Often repatriated families reported upon close unions in the foreign countries, even particular expatriation communities, who share the same concerns. Returning back home, they are given the feeling that everyone is in concern with their own lives: "The phone does not ring" (Gupta, 2013). Even in contact with people, repatriates indicate that other persons are rarely interested in hearing from the foreign experiences. As previously stated, companies often fail to appreciate the gained experiences and values a repatriate has collected, it becomes visible that this also happens in the private environment. As returned persons cannot share their experience or do not feel well-understood, the sense of isolation and disorientation can be increased. If expatriates decide to go abroad with their family, they also need to care for the reintegration of children. The children are confronted by reentering in their social groups. Peer groups could have changed, new group dynamics could have developed, new friendships to establish and new trends to follow. Children may face even more surfaces where to reenter again, like sport clubs, school systems and things like slangs and fashion (Gupta, 2013). Claimed by Gupta (2013) it can be speculated: "the more difficult the re-entry process for the children, the greater is the spill-over effect for the repatriate". Tension in relationships can also be an outcome of a poor reintegration, as partners face problems to find a new job or settle down again.

4.2.3 Viewpoint of the organizations

There is a lack of literature in the field of challenges international human resource faces upon expatriation management (Mc Evoy & Buller, 2013). Anyhow Buller and Mc Evoy conducted in-depth interviews with international human resource managers from seven successful American companies so as to identify new aspects of the expatriate management and to reduce the lack of attention on this topic. In the course of their study they found out that 70% of companies report to have a written repatriation policy, 98% tried to help expatriates finding new career options and 90% have discussions upon re-entry (Mc Evoy & Buller, 2013). It becomes visible, that companies might be prepared for repatriation processes as they depict certain policies. Anyhow within their study international human resource managers indicated that the support upon a new job is only done in informal approaches. With a not existing strategic career planning

upon return, employees are left, useless, with their new knowledge and skills (Mc Evoy & Buller, 2013).

As it has been mentioned above, an important aspect to increase certainty and satisfaction for the returned employee, the companies should settle agreements about career perspectives upon return. An empirical study from 1997 reports that 27% of companies held re-entry sessions to discuss career objectives and performance plans for the re-entry. Anyhow, responding firms said that they waited 90 days before conducting such sessions (Dowling, et al., 2008). However, authors of more recent studies have indicated an increase in re-entry discussions. Findings from the GMAC-GRS survey in reported that 73% of concerned organizations held such sessions in 2002, in comparison to 2004 already 86% implemented re-entry discussions (Dowling, et al., 2008). Anyhow 53% were only informally debated, 38% formally and 10% did not know (Gupta, 2013). Accordingly to these studies it can be assumed that improvements in the reintegration processes have been significantly made over time. Although the percentage have been risen it becomes visible, that re-entry sessions only rarely exist in a common formal procedure. As investigated, agreeing on career objectives and preliminary agreements is an essential part for a successful reintegration.

According to previous research, expatriates often fear that companies forget about them while being overseas and that the experience abroad will not be valued afterwards (Black & Gregerson, 1999). Referring to the study of Buller and Mc Evoy (2013), the international human resource managers reported that such experience is valued within the companies. Moreover, they indicated that companies provide programs for expatriates to stay in contact with the home country. Some implemented advanced video conferencing technologies, others chat rooms, where expatriates could chat with colleagues and bosses.

Corresponding to Black and Gregersen (1999), expatriates normally do not have a job guarantee when returning after an assignment. This was proved by the interviews hold in the study, where six of the seven firms confirmed this accordingly but added that it might be the same case for "at will" employment and repatriates challenge more with *the big-fish small-fish phenomena* when returning (Mc Evoy & Buller, 2013).

Referred to Linehan and Scullion (2002), repatriation should be a major concern of multinational companies as the lack of awareness to repatriation may consist a long-term impact on the performance of companies because of the problems coming along with the reintegration, both for the expatriate and the organizations.

4.3 Possible Causes of Reintegration Problems

Allen and Alvarez (1998) also outlined some possible causes that contribute to the problems arising with the reintegration of internationally assigned employees. First of all, the authors explained delegated employees often experience a so-called *out-of-sight/ out-of-mind* situation, during their assignment. Black (1991) defined these situations as "not to kept up-to-date by changes back home". Such settings can create administrative and personal distance to the home-office. On the one hand employees are no longer supported by the domestic HR Team but by an international unknown HR Team. On the other hand, employees might sense a physical distance to their colleagues as they were removed from formal and informal communication channels and may also not have a visibility for new job opportunities within their home countries office. Moreover, when returning home, expatriates might experience a hostile reception from their colleagues (Allen & Alvarez, 1998).

As previously stated, repatriates develop a certain amount of expectations when reentering, which one of them might be the perception that their international experience will be valued. Most assigned employees report that they were disappointed as they did not receive this level of recognition (Allen & Alvarez, 1998).

Another cause is the planning procedure of international assignments. Often there are missing job vacancies to be offered to repatriates, where they can implement their newly achieved knowledge. The authors state that the first job the returning person receives after the assignment is not sufficient to his/ her capabilities (Allen & Alvarez, 1998). Furthermore, the concerned persons mentioned that they are only rarely informed that companies have an interest in placing them in better jobs. This is explained by short-term planning, where organizations only plan just before employees return and solely a few jobs are available. Realizing this Stroh et al. (2000), argue that there is a strong connection between expectations and organizational commitment. Only if expectations and a fulfillment of the motives are met, employees remain committed to the organization.

4.4 Possible Improvements of Reintegration - Effective Reintegration

It is fundamental that reintegration involves many challenges. Firms still campaign to implement actions and initiatives to guarantee an effective reintegration. Certainly, such actions are not equally effective on every repatriate or company. Anyhow researchers specify that pre-planning is an essential part of the reintegration, as overseas assignments illustrate high levels of uncertainty and anxiety throughout the whole process (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). Therefore, pre-planning becomes essential. Thus far, several studies postulates that the expatriates return is being planned before they

leave (Poe, 2000). Therefore Jassawalla et al. (2004) have developed a model for an effective reintegration (Figure 4).

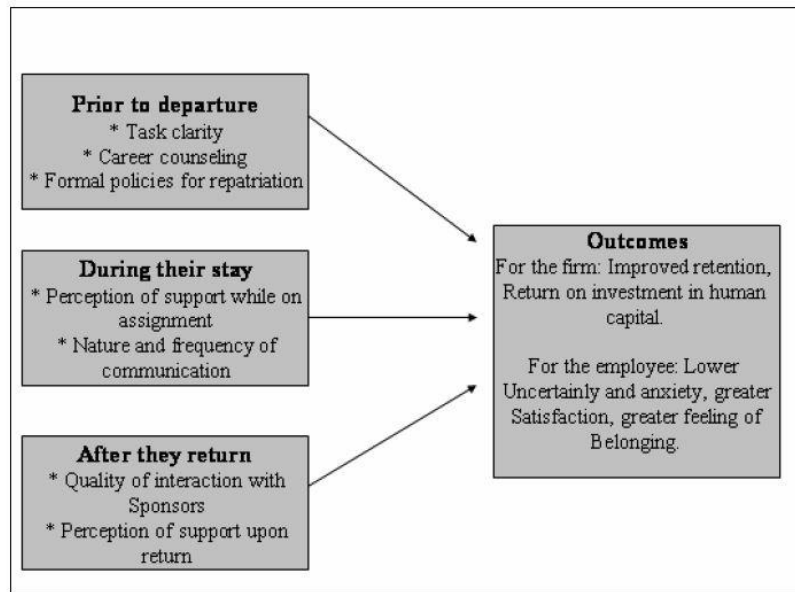


Figure 4 A model of effective repatriation

Source: Jassawalla, Connolly & Slojowski, 2004, p.40

Often expatriates report that there is a poorly planned design for the international assignments and that they are rarely provided with information about their tasks and career enhancements by HR managers (Jassawalla, et al., 2004).

Therefore, previously to departure task clarity, career counseling, and formal policies for repatriation becomes highly important. Expatriates who are satisfied with their reintegration often state a high level of clarity about their tasks (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). With other words, they knew what to do, what was expected and at which point in time their performance is evaluated. Task clarity emerge to be essential because (1) the expatriates increasing their focus on tasks (2) developing a feeling of accomplishment when tasks are concluded and (3) reducing their anxiety upon return and therefore establishing a smooth transition into the home country (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). Moreover, as undefined task expectations can lead to poor repatriation, a high level of task clarity can be ensured by the communication of performance expectations like milestones, due dates and explaining performance consideration criteria. According to Jassawalla et al. (2004), there is a clear link between career counseling and an effective repatriation. Using a formal career counseling including questions how the assignment suit to the companies' goals, how the firm can contribute from the task and how newly gained knowledge and skills can be transferred into career development, establishes a guidance for the expatriates. Career counseling can ensure that the expatriate recognizes the purpose to be sent abroad and defines their advantages and these aris-

ing for the company. Corresponding to Linehan and Scullion (2002), the presence and quality of policy guidelines for the assignment can increase expatriates' adaption. Such policies should cover agreements for pre-visits, visits and post-visits in the foreign country (Jassawalla, et al., 2004).

During the assignment, expatriates often lose the connection to the home company and therefore a sense of isolation can arise. The model of effective reintegration assumes to reduce such feeling of isolation and strengthens the connection to the home company. This should be guaranteed by the perception of support while on the assignment as well as the occurrence and frequency of communication. Many expatriates, who were satisfied with their reintegration, reported to feel supported by their company being on assignment. However, the presence of support from the home company did not improve the satisfaction, but the absence of support significantly enhanced dissatisfaction. For example, if expatriates need to organize their new accommodation by oneself the level of resentment will be high (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). If insufficient support is perceived by the delegated employees, while abroad, they are probably increasing their anxiety and are no longer completely focused on tasks (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). Consequently, it is important that companies implement continuous support for ensuring expatriates wellbeing. Expatriates, who have less communication often feel isolated. Therefore, regular communication between the expatriate and the home company is important. Referred to Linehan and Scullion (2002), the maintenance of social networks in the home company is considered to be favorable. It has been indicated that frequent communication improves the motivation of the employee, assures the expatriate of still feeling part of the company and keeps the expatriate updated to changes in the company, which can result in a feeling of trust (Jassawalla, et al., 2004).

After the completion of an assignment the expatriate might recognize that the organization has changed in structures, formal and informal systems. Besides work related issues also social issues are in concern. Anyhow, these problems are less significant than the lack of using newly acquired knowledge and skills (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). Repatriates need to have access to positions, where their capabilities are recognized and where they have the same career options like employees who were not on an international assignment. Given this evidence, Jassawalla et al. reported in their study that two out of nine interviewed participants left the company due to the underutilization of their acquired skills and knowledge. By comparison, repatriates that did not report upon poor planning and preparation of an assignment could use their capabilities in a new job position. Therefore, upon return the quality of interaction and the perception of organizational support becomes essential. Referred to the study of Jassawalla et al.

(2004), expatriates satisfied with their reintegration, often reported from a sponsor as an important element in the assignment. Jassawalla et al. defined a sponsor as "a person who has more formal authority (...) who has a personal stake in the success of the foreign assignment, and who is vested in the career growth of the returning expatriate" (Jassawalla, et al., 2004, p. 43). Sponsors are used to look for opportunities the expatriate can employ upon their return. During the assignment they keep the employee updated of key-decisions in the home company and ensure that the capabilities of the employee can be used in the home company upon return. Therefore, sponsors can play an important role, including problem solving during the assignment and upon return (Jassawalla, et al., 2004).

Often expatriates receive a feeling of being valued in foreign assignments. They normally possess greater autonomy and are receive a high level of attention (Paik, et al., 2002). Upon return, repatriates feel a loss of autonomy, attention, lifestyle and monetary benefits. Therefore, it should be ensured that the repatriate is recognized for the period abroad and therefore selected for a challenging position in the home country, can use his/ her new capabilities within the job, is adapting to the new level of autonomy and considers new responsibilities and can take part in repatriation programs (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). Consequently, it is assumed that companies should provide support upon return.

To sum up, there are several actions organizations can establish to support an effective reintegration process. A successful reintegration process is achieved when the repatriate is satisfied. Consequently, this leads to a reduction of the issues, indicating an unsuccessful repatriation, such as a lack of utilization of key employees, loss of employees in most essential functions and inability to recruit employees into overseas positions.

5 Methodology

This chapter explains and submits arguments for the chosen method in this thesis. First, the choice of the approach is outlined and the applied method is described. In general, the methodology is based on the idea of the qualitative content analysis of Phillip Mayring. Additionally, the theoretical background on participant recruiting, data collection and the in-depth interviews is based on the book *Qualitative Research Method* by Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter and Ajay Bailey. The qualitative content analysis can be seen as a mixed method approach. The central idea of qualitative content analysis can be derived from the quantitative content analysis but in addition organizes categories to text passages for analysis. Anyhow the analysis should be seen in the

context of a guided research process by which this thesis is followed. Mayring developed a step-to-step model of a research process, which can be used for qualitative and quantitative research methods (Mayring, 2014). This research process is outlined and followed in this paper.

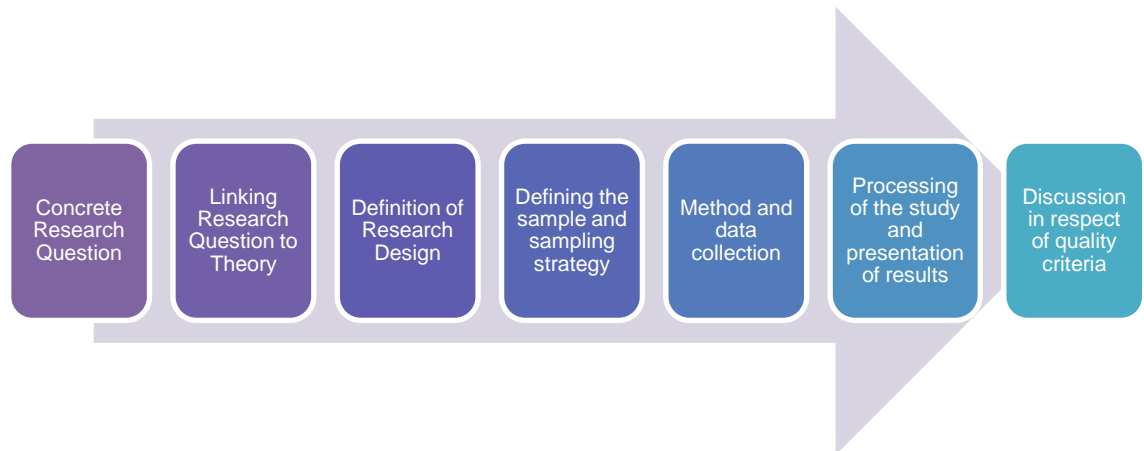


Figure 5 Step-by-step model for the research process

Source: Mayring, 2014, p.15

The Figure 5 visualizes the step-by-step research process. Formulating a concrete research question is the starting point. Mayring underlines that it is important to develop a research question and not only mentioning the topic, explained by the fact that a research question illustrates the examination in a more praxis-relevant context. The derivation and explanation has already been mentioned in section 1. Linking the question to be investigated to the theory is the following step in which the author collects first theories and research, in order to adapt the research question. In comparison to other theories, for example advocates from the grounded theory, they argue not to hinder an open vision by using theoretical concepts. Anyhow, according to Mayring (2014), every research is affected by pre-thoughts. However, in qualitative investigations, the research question can be adjusted throughout the first stages, as upcoming insights and new understanding of the examination can involve the need to consider further aspects in the research question. As soon as this question is defined and the theory examined, the author identified the appropriate research design, including the sample and sampling strategy. In this chapter the methodology, used for the empirical data, will be outlined. Even in qualitative samples, where sample sizes are often small, they need to be defined and certain characteristics as well as an appropriate strategy need to be chosen to select suitable participants. The sampling and the strategy is being explained in the following chapters. Afterwards, by the implementation of the method, the data need to be collected. After the data collection, the results need to be analyzed and discussed in terms of quality criteria (Mayring, 2014).

5.1 Empirical Method

A research design describes the framework in which a study can be conducted. There are principally two methods to be chosen between, quantitative and qualitative. The methodological approach is strongly dependent on the problem, the purpose and finally the research question to be investigated. In general, quantitative research is used to assess data and results, to measure and count a problem and finally to project the findings to a broader population. By using different research methods like in-depth interviews, discussions or focus groups, qualitative approaches aim to investigate ones experiences (Hennink, et al., 2011). In order to gather profound understanding of insights in the experiences from returned expatriates, the author of this thesis decided to conduct a qualitative research method. Such approaches allow to determine aspects from the perspective of the study participants and therefore understanding the meaning for certain behaviors (Hennink, et al., 2011). In order to investigate expatriates' experiences and analyze certain tendencies or differences upon the success of returning to the home country, it becomes essential to understand the point of view of the concerned parties. There is the advantage of being less structured and more adaptable to the individual, who is going to be asked. The purpose for the interviews investigated in this study was to provide enough freedom to the participants so as to respond to questions, which are in relation with their experiences and emotions. Anyhow, a semi-structured approach was chosen, in order to give a certain degree of guidance and direction and to establish a level of orientation during the interview. The idea is to understand and interpret the results of the methodology.

Qualitative methods can further be distinguished by inductive or deductive approaches. Corresponding to Hennink et. al (2011), when trying to make sense of a situation without pre-determined expectations it is followed an inductive approach. Concluded, deductive analysis, on the one hand, tests hypotheses theoretically by a defined process, on the other hand inductive approaches induce an investigation of open questions rather than testing derived hypotheses. Mostly it is said, that inductive approaches are commonly used in qualitative methods. Anyhow, some researchers state that in qualitative methods one can make use of both, an inductive and a deductive approach (Ritchie, et al., 2013). The author of this thesis did not decided upon a clear inductive or deductive approach, rather a combination of both methods was used. The purpose was to investigate expatriates' experiences by letting them speak openly about how they perceived their reintegration process. Consequently, the interview was designed to not influence the respondents' answers with existing theories. Nevertheless, since the theoretical framework was examined before the empirical research, the author of

this thesis cannot claim that the study was conducted without any influence of theories. Hence the thesis follows more a deductive approach.

5.2 Data collection

There are two types of data which can be used: primary and secondary data. Primary data refer to data, which have been directly gathered by the author for a specific research problem by methods like interviews or questionnaires (Hox & Hennie, 2005). Secondary data are information which have already been created by other investigators. Most of the secondary data are used in the sense of quantitative data, whereas primary data often refers to a qualitative research method (Hox & Hennie, 2005).

The aim of this thesis was to gain insights in repatriates' impressions so as to identify possible improvement options for the reintegration process. The main advantage of collecting primary data is that the research design and data collection strategies can be adjusted to the individual research problem (Hox & Hennie, 2005). Therefore, in this thesis primary data was used in order to collect new understanding about reintegration problems faced by expatriates. Information collected then helps to resolve the research problem, in this case by finding improvement possibilities upon re-entry. Primary data was collected by the implementation of personal expert interviews. Secondary data was used for investigating information acquired from articles, journals, books and studies in order to provide a common understanding. Collecting secondary data allow the advantage of establishing a research base about the problem, to be investigated. Particularly, secondary data helped to develop an interview guide for qualitative interviews, as preliminary data was used in order to identify possible aspects that can influence the success of the reintegration of delegated employees.

5.3 In-depth Interview

"An in-depth interview is a one-to-one method of data collection that involves an interviewer and an interviewee discussing specific topics in depth" (Hennink, et al., 2011, p. 109). Normally, the interviewer asks semi-structured questions and therefore uses a pre-arranged interview guide. Anyhow, it is not only asking and responding but more trying to motivate the respondent to illustrate their perspective and to react to each other in order to generate appearance, identity and personality (Hennink, et al., 2011). Such an approach reflects the insiders' perspective that is distinctive for qualitative research (Hennink, et al., 2011). Consequently, this approach allows to gain detailed insights into the research aspects from the perspective of the respondent. Facing a purpose to strive for individual and personal experiences from concerned parties about a specific topic is named typical for an in-depth interview. Furthermore, it is used when researching for sensitive issues that lack for confidentiality and rapport (Hennink, et al., 2011). Such conditions describe the framework of the method, used in this thesis.

The purpose of the empirical method was to find out about expatriates' perceptions and opinions referring their international assignment, with the particular focus on how they have observed their re-entry back to their home country and work environment. It becomes clear, that those topics may greatly concern personal call-backs and address reports about confident issues. Therefore, it was important to develop a standard of confidentiality in the interview design. Company-names, participants-names, as well as age or contact details were not used in the transcripts and analysis. Before each interview, the participant signed a confidentiality clause and hereby agreed with the fact that the interviews will be recorded, transcribed and analyzed (Appendix 1).

For this purpose, six persons were selected for interviews. Three of them were expatriates, who had already finished an international assignment abroad and three of them were HR-Managers, who were professionally in concern of supporting an international assignment within a multinational company. In order to learn about the viewpoint of a company as well as the impressions by the concerned parties, expatriates and HR-Managers participated to share their experiences. Therefore, the analysis can consider and dispose two perspectives in relation to common issues and problems within a delegation. Before starting with the interviews, no fixed number of respondents to be asked were scheduled, as it could happen that new insights arise and more diverse opinions were needed. In-depth interviews are mostly conducted by a face-to-face approach, which was also applied within this study. Anyhow, as it could be possible that some participants were located in different bases, also interviews via Skype or telephone were to be considered. In total, four interviews were hold face-to-face and two interviews were conducted via phone, as the physical distance from the interviewer to the interviewee was too far. Face-to-face interviews serve with the advantage of synchronous communication, which allows for social indicators (Opdenakker, 2006). Such details, such as voice, body language, intonation and others, can give the interviewer additional information besides the verbal answers on the questions (Opdenakker, 2006). Within this study, such an approach can allow to interpret how the interviewee will respond on emotional-related questions, if he/ she is reluctant to report on something. Certainly, the face-to-face interview is more spontaneous method. Anyhow the interviewer, therefore needs to be well concentrated, to be able to react on impulsive answers and to adapt questions (Opdenakker, 2006). Telephone-interviews state the disadvantage of an irregular communication but allow a wide access to potential interviewees (Opdenakker, 2006). Using this approach, the interviewer was able to reach people from different locations and different companies in order to have a broader selection of participants. As this study concerns sensible questions and answers, a telephone interview could also deliver the advantage that an interviewee might answer differently than in person, as some issues are seen as to be too sensitive and partici-

participants might not be willing to answer them in a face-to-face interview. Consequently, the author of this study chose face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews in order to balance advantages and disadvantages and choosing the appropriate method for each participant. Anyhow, interviews should be aligned and organized and are therefore followed by a comprehensive qualitative interview process (Figure 6).

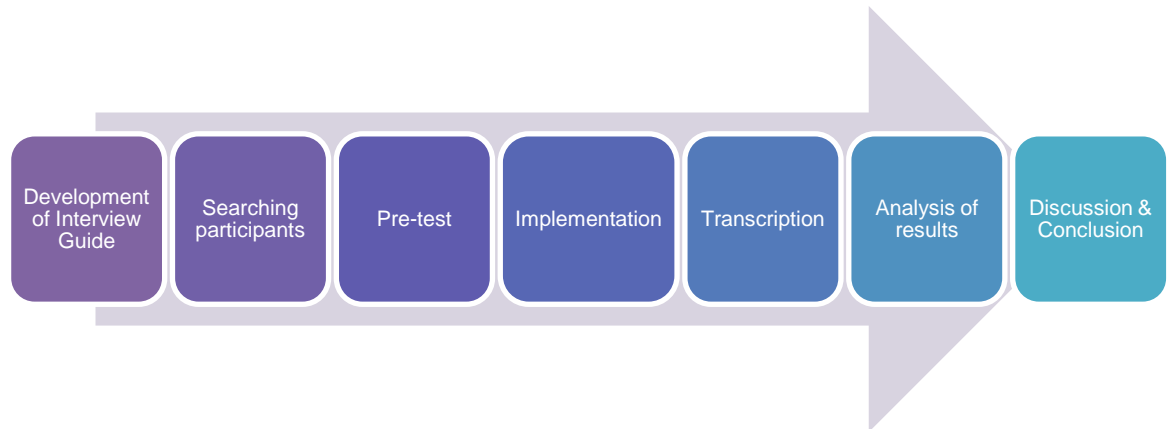


Figure 6 Qualitative Interview Process

Source: Own visualization

After identifying the purpose and the volitional goal of the method, the investigator of the study needs to develop an interview guide, including open-structured questions. Afterwards participants for interviews need to be searched and carefully selected. Before starting the interviews, the researcher should conduct a pre-test by selecting an appropriate person, who might have similar experience and can serve as a pilot. It can happen that the investigator needs to adjust certain questions or the length of the interview on the basis of the pre-test. Afterwards the interviewer can start with the implementation of the interviews and the transcription of the audios. Having all transcripts available, the interviews require to be analyzed. The researcher needs to select a certain method for interpretation, such as coding. When analyzed, results are to be summarized and a discussion and conclusion can be executed.

5.3.1 Development of the Interview Guide

Hennink et al. state that "An interview guide is a list of questions used by the interviewer, mainly as a memory aid during the interview" (Hennink, et al., 2011, p. 112). An interview guide is only used to help the interviewer leading the interview. It is a medium used for qualitative methods, other than the questionnaire, which is a structured instrument with prevalent closed questions (Hennink, et al., 2011). This study can be categorized as explorative with a semi-structured interview guide, where open-questions are being asked.

Anyhow the first step is finding questions for the interview guide. The author evolves questions, using the following approach:

1. Work through the collected literature
2. Summarize important aspects in relation to expatriation and repatriation
3. Work through the summary again and identify issues that can influence the expatriation and the success of reintegration
4. Formulate questions upon those criterions
5. Arrange questions in a reasonable order and formulate them in an open-question style

Consequently, by working through the existing literature the following areas, which can influence an efficient reintegration, were identified:

- Expectations upon return
- (New) career opportunities when returning
- Communication with colleagues from the home-office while abroad
- Re-entry of the family
- Support given from the company, when returning home
- Knowledge transfer
- Satisfaction in the (new) job back in the old work environment

Based on the identified areas the questions for the interview guide were created. Concerning this study, the author needed to develop two interview guides, as two different target groups were asked. Anyhow, both followed the same structure, whereas the interview guide for the HR-Managers is more structured than the one for the expatriates. Nevertheless, the interview guide is initiated by an introduction, where the interviewer explains the purpose "The interview will be conducted on behalf of a bachelor thesis by executing expert interviews with expatriates and HR-Mangers in order to investigate certain challenges on the reintegration process upon return after an international assignment and possible improvements". The introduction also includes the scheduled length of twenty till thirty minutes. Then the interview guide uses some information questions upfront, for example "How long did you realize your international assignment?". On the one hand, the aim of this questions is to establish rapport with the interviewee and allow both parties to feel comfortable (Hennink, et al., 2011). On the other hand, the interviewing party wishes to receive basic data, which can also be used for further analysis. The principal part of the interview includes open questions, which most probably allow insights in participants experiences. For example, in the interview guide for the expatriates, questions like "Could you briefly describe me your reintegration phase and related emotions you felt during this process" were asked. On the other hand, HR-Managers were asked "Please briefly describe me how reintegration pro-

cesses are being managed in your company." In the different guides the investigator paid attention to align questions in a similar structure and covering same aspects. This part is especially used to identify information in order to give insights for the research question and to further establish rapport with the interviewee in order to make him/ her feel free to share additional information (Hennink, et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is important to include a closing question for not abruptly finishing the interview and steadily decreasing rapport. Such questions could be future orientated questions (Hennink, et al., 2011). The investigator of this study used a question like "Can you think of any improvement options the company could implement in the future in order to guarantee a better reintegration program?". As mentioned, the interview guides were created in a similar structure, anyhow, some differences can be drawn. The interview guide for the HR-Managers was probably not so sensible. Here the investigator focused more on finding out whether companies offer reintegration programs, and if, in which kind. Whereas the interview guide for the delegated persons was more emotionally-driven, as it was even more targeted to receive personal opinions and emotions, since these persons were the concerned parties who collected experiences abroad, while the HR-Managers are holding the support function. Hence, two interview guides were created (Appendix 2).

5.3.1 Participants

In order to identify suitable participants for the study, initially a study population needs to be defined and then strategies for recruiting participants from the study population are to be chosen. Anyhow, participant recruitment is a different approach depending on either a quantitative or qualitative research method. In qualitative research, participants are not randomly selected as it does not assume to generalize findings to a broader population but whether to receive a detailed insight of a certain topic (Hennink, et al., 2011). In this study, participants are chosen due to a certain set of characteristics or conditions. Consequently, the investigator of this study chose a non-random approach, known as *purposive recruitment* (Hennink, et al., 2011) to identify potential participants. Therefore, it is guaranteed to select on purpose and aspire a diverse facet of participants, who can serve with different experiences upon one topic (Hennink, et al., 2011). Initially, a study population was declared. In this case, the study population were members of multinational companies. After defining the broad context of targeted persons, the author identified certain characteristics a participant needs to possess in order to be applicable for the research.

Certainly, in this examination, it needs to be differentiated between two participant groups, on the one hand expatriates and on the other hand HR-Managers, who might have a different determination set. Anyhow, all attendees should be members of inter-

national companies, as only those companies manage international assignments. Anyhow expatriates should contain the following characteristics:

1. Members of a multinational company, who already conducted an expatriation-experience
2. The potential candidate need to have been returned to the home country after a completed delegation, in order to be able to report about their reintegration
3. The expatriation-experience should not have been more than 10 years ago, in order to guarantee the relevance of the data

On the other hand, certain characteristics are identified for potential HR-Managers:

1. Members of a multinational company, who have a position in the HR-department, which supports international assignments
2. They needed to have accompanied at least one reintegration of an expatriate in the company

As the recruitment characteristics were set, the number of participants needed to be aligned. Normally, the amount of respondents in a qualitative research is small, as the variation of insights and the depth of information are of high relevance. Therefore, a high number of participants is rather unsuitable and not practical for analysis (Hennink, et al., 2011). In this study three persons from each category group were recruited. Anyhow the number was not predetermined, as already explained above. In this case, after six interviews the so-called *saturation* occurred. "This is simply the point at which the information you collect begins to repeat itself. After reaching saturation, further data collection becomes redundant because the purpose of recruitment is to seek variation and context of participant experiences" (Hennink, et al., 2011). At this stage, the investigator received sufficient information in order to analyze tendencies and differences. A balanced approach was chosen, in order to have the same number of expatriates and HR-Managers for a better comparison to each other.

As characteristics and number of participants were set, the author needed to choose a certain strategy how to recruit potential interview partner. Often it is said, that no method of recruitment might be fully applicable, and therefore a mixture of methods is preferable (Hennink, et al., 2011). The first approach used, in this study, were formal networks. LinkedIn served as a platform to search for people with expatriate experience, either self-concerned or company wise. Keywords like "expatriation management", "international assignment", "expatriates", "expatriate communities" served to identify two participants for interviews. Furthermore, participants were recruited by social contacts. Owing to certain relationships the investigator could establish connection with three

other participants. One participant was recruited due to the snowball method, an expatriate recommended his aligned HR-Manager, who supported him during the assignment.

5.5 Implementation

This chapter describes the implementation of the qualitative method, chosen in this thesis. Therefore, it outlines the preparation of the interview as well as the data collection itself and explains the method of the qualitative data analysis.

5.5.1 Pilot testing

Often it is difficult to presume how interviewees will interpret and understand questions out of the interview guide. Therefore a pretest was conducted in order to prove the interview guide for application. During pilot-testing, it is preferable to choose people who have similar characteristics as those from the study community (Hennink, et al., 2011). Within this study two pre-tests were conducted in order to examine the two interview guides. In order to check the expatriate guide a participant was selected, who already experienced a period of one year in America as an Au-Pair and was able to report about impressions, emotions and support received. The pilot-test was scheduled for 20 till 30 minutes and took place at the house of the participant in order to create a comfortable atmosphere. The interview guide served to follow the structure of the interview. The second one was conducted with a colleague of the HR-Team in the company the investigator is working for, who actually did not support any expatriation process till now but has got a general knowledge about human resources. This participant was used to test the HR-Manager Guide. Both assessments served well for preparation and for testing the guide, involving some slight adoptions in the interview guides.

5.5.2 Preparation for data collection

Preparing for an interview involves seeking permission, establishing rapport as well as making an appointment and select locations. As it has been mentioned, by signing a predetermined consent the interviewee accorded permission. Establishing rapport comes along during the interview and can already be influenced by the selection of the location. When selecting an appropriate setting for the interview, it need to be considered what place would make the interviewees feel comfortable and where they are physically able to speak openly (Hennink, et al., 2011). As the interviews of this study, deal with personal experiences and sensible issues, it becomes highly important to select a location, where the interviewees do not have doubts declaring their related emotions. All the interviews took place at different locations: (1) at home of the interviewee (2) at the office of the interviewee (3) at the Rhine Waal University and (4) via phone. These locations were selected due to different reasons. Establishing an inter-

view at the participants house generates a homelike and relaxed atmosphere for the candidate, where he/ she might feel free to report about personal experience. Nevertheless, here it need to be ensured that the interview will not be interrupted by distractions, like for example the presence of other people, as background noises can lead to an unclear recording or the presence of others might influence the interviewee on not mentioning personal or emotional aspects (Hennink, et al., 2011). Conducting the interview at the office of the interviewees still reflects the environment or territory of the participant, which let them feel more comfortable. It also establishes some kind of professional atmosphere, which can be set in relation to an international assignment, as this is work-related. Furthermore, the office, either for the expatriate or the HR-Manager is a place of daily life. One interviewee was interested in the project and the Rhine Waal University and therefore asked to have the interview conducted there. As he was interested, the motivation of taking part in the interview became clear and therefore this location was also suitable. As mentioned before, it was planned that several interviews should take part via telephone due to insuperable distances. This method represents the dynamic and movement of the target groups. These people might travel a lot and work from different places and therefore the phone is the medium, utilized most, as well as they feel comfortable using it and sharing information about it.

Moreover, the subjectivity and positionality of the interviewer should be adapted to the interview situation. Referred to Hennink et al. (2011), the positioning, how you portray yourself ("your positionality"), as well as the personal characteristics ("your subjectivity"), can influence the information to be received during an interview and consequently also the quality of the data. For example, an interviewer should dress accordingly to the socio-cultural situation of the research or role. The investigator of this study adapted to the socio-cultural environment, when conducted an interview. At the participant's home, casual clothes were used, whereas conducted in the participant's office more business clothes were chosen as the participants might feel more comfortable having the same clothing style.

The duration was set for twenty till thirty minutes, anyhow for each interview one hour was scheduled, in order to have sufficient time to sit, relax and talk. Qualitative interviews seek for rich information gathering, therefore it becomes necessary to dig deeper at some points in the interview, to ask further questions on a topic or to simply listen to the interviewee, which can result in an extension of time.

5.5.3 Data collection

The in-depth interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks. As mentioned, one interview was carried out at the home of the participant, two were executed at the

respondents' offices, another one was interviewed in the Rhine Waal University in a seminar room and two were interviewed via telephone. The interviews lasted on average thirty minutes per person. The first interview took more than 50 minutes, afterwards the guidance during the interview and the focus on the most relevant topics became well-rehearsed. All interviews were recorded in MP3 format via a Smartphone. Anyhow, one interview guide and a sheet for notes was always taken to the interviews. However, the examiner did not take numerous notes, as in a qualitative interview, open questions are asked, resulting in probably longer answers which cannot be noted word by word. Furthermore, during the interview the focus was on listening to the participant in order to show respect and interest and to be prepared if further questions on certain topics needed to be asked. Afterwards the recorded audio was transformed into a transcript for each interview. Transcription can either be done in a linguistic analysis, where the researcher focuses on the nature of the dialogue or in an ethnographic approach, where the transcription focuses less on how something is said but more on what is said. In this thesis, an ethnographic analysis were chosen and therefore, the transcripts were composed in a word-for-word replica. As the interviews were conducted under a certain confidentiality agreement the transcripts are anonymous. Each respondent is named by interviewee 1,2,3 and so forth and the investigator by interviewer. The location, date, position of the participant in the company as well as the duration is given. Any information, that can be traced back to the identity of the participants in the transcript were rephrased. The transcripts then served for the data analysis.

5.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

In the previous chapters the author described the qualitative method used in this study. As a result from the interviews, textual data is received in form of transcripts, which are analyzed afterwards. According to Hennink et al., qualitative data analysis can be seen as a process of discovery (Hennink, et al., 2011). Therefore, the experiences of the study participants can be understood. By using well-established methods and techniques for analyzing textual data, it can be referred to as a 'science'. Furthermore it is also set in relation to science as an evidence-based interpretation is developed (Hennink, et al., 2011). Qualitative data analysis also comes along with an interpretative approach of analysis. It is the individual investigator who analyses the written data and therefore needs to understand and interpret the experiences and the related behavior, which can be seen as an 'creative' process. Consequently, an analysis should consists of both, the 'scientific' components support the analysis with profound techniques and the 'creative' elements guarantee an individual interpretative meaning (Hennink, et al., 2011).

There are several approaches that can be used to analyze qualitative data. This thesis refers to the approach of the qualitative content analysis. This form of analysis has been developed by Philipp Mayring since 1980 and was constantly updated. It is seen as a research method in order to analyze textual data. Corresponding to Mayring, the content analysis exceed the analysis of the content of the communication but also investigates the formal aspects of the communication. Consequently, both becoming relevant in order to draw conclusions (Mayring, 2010). The analysis is being conducted in a systematic approach, where clear rules are to be followed. In his book *Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung*, Mayring differentiates the qualitative content analysis to other approaches by highlighting that the method analyses the material in several steps. The material is divided into different units, which are reworked consecutively (Mayring, 2002). Therefore, Mayring states in his book *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse* that the approach consist of a flow model, where each step is being conducted in a given order (Mayring, 2010). Thereby, a category system builds the basis upon which it is decided, what section to be extracted, by using codes. Codes become visible while reading data, as they are topics discussed by the interviewees. Such codes can be ideas, opinions or issues that become visible in the data. Codes can differ among topics raised by the interviewees themselves, called inductive codes or issues that have been pre-analyzed by the interviewer, using literature, theories or for example the interview guide, called deductive codes (Hennink, et al., 2011).

The development of the coding implicates various techniques to be used. Mayring describes differences among eight options, fragmented into three main categories (1) summary (2) explication and (3) structuring (Mayring, 2010). This thesis follows two approaches. Therefore the inductive category formation, based on the summary approach is adapted to this research design on the one hand. On the other hand, the deductive category assignment, based on the structuring approach, is explained and used in this study. As mentioned Mayring always reworked his approaches of the qualitative content analysis. Therefore, the techniques used in this thesis are updated methods, published in 2014 (Mayring, 2014).

5.6.1 Deductive Category Assignment

The deductive category assignment is based on the logic of structuring. According to Mayring, structuring is concerned with extracting parts of the material, identified by categories from a theoretical base. Anyhow, the categorization has to be determined precisely, in the sense, that deductive categories or codes are deduced from previous research, theories or studies.

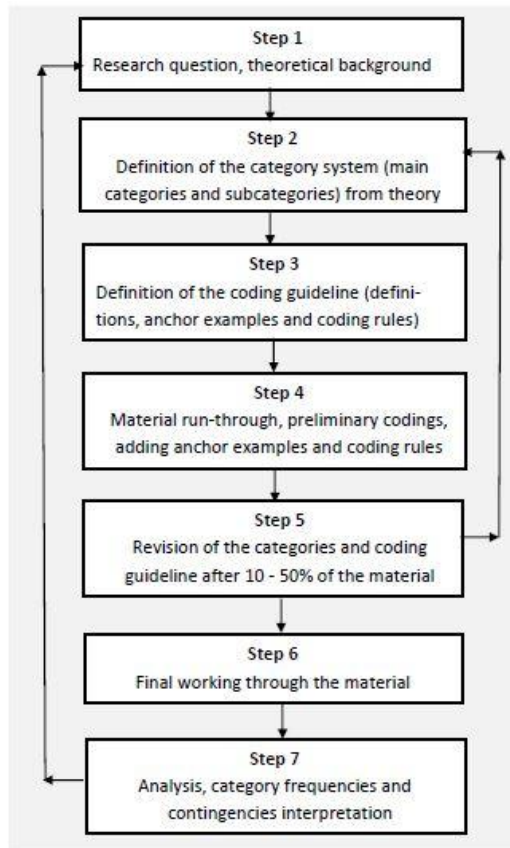


Figure 7 Steps of deductive category assignment

Source: Mayring, 2014, p.96

Referred to the model of Mayring (Figure 7) after having already identified the research question, the category system needs to be defined. As mentioned before, the categories are based on the existing theory. Therefore, all categories have to be grounded in theoretical methods, even though they do not have to be identified in the concerned literature. After identifying sufficient codes, it is necessary that they are captured in a codebook and aligned by coding guidelines, including giving categories a category label, a category definition, adding anchor examples and coding rules. The process of coding the material involves reading data and identifying codes in a certain section and then labeling this section with the appropriate code. Therefore, several strategies can serve to search the data for each code for example 'Search by code', 'Search by topic' or 'Search by subgroup'. However, this thesis used the approach of selecting a single code from the codebook in order to identify the segments of the material where the code can be identified (search by code). During reading, it can occur that the reader identifies new codes, which then can be added to the codebook. Such codes might probably be marked as inductive codes, as they are identified out of the written document. Similar to other approaches, a revision is necessary when coding is completed, which is usually done after reviewing 10-50% of the material. In order to identify a variety of codes one third of the data is sufficient to be investigated (Hennink, et al., 2011).

Throughout this process some codes might need to be adjusted as issues can become more distinct and therefore some codes need to be divided or other codes need to be merged (Hennink, et al., 2011). The revision should also include reviewing the amount of codes collected. Even during code development it can be recognized that sufficient codes have been collected. Corresponding to Hennink et al. (2011), the point of saturation indicates the stop of code development. This point is achieved when no more new topics can be identified in the material. Before analyzing results, the quality of the analysis should be proven. Thus, methods like inter-code agreements can be used. After the coding process the investigator needs to start coding again from the beginning of the material, at least for a part of the material, thereby without knowing the predefined codes. Afterwards those results are compared and give an understanding if the coding guidelines were applicable during the textual analysis. In case the results occur to be very different, it is necessary to revise the material again. Nevertheless, in case of only small differences, it can be reported as a measure of reliability. If the quality is proven, the results are to be analyzed. This can be done in terms of quantity, whether to see the frequency of assigned categories, or in the comparison of frequencies in different groups (Mayring, 2014).

5.6.2 Inductive Category Formation

On the other hand, Mayring revised the method of summarizing, in relation of the inductive category formation and assumed: "Even if the reduction of the material with summarizing content analysis is impressive, the procedure is very extensive. Compiling those summarizing tables need nearly as many pages as the basic material" (Mayring, 2014, p. 79). Furthermore, during in-depth interviews it often results that interviewees divagate from the topics to be investigated and in the sense of summarizing, all material has to be considered, even if it is not relevant (Mayring, 2014). Therefore, Mayring reduces the approach by implementing slight changes: (1) Only content relevant material is considered (2) paraphrasing is omitted and (3) the level of reduction is defined in the beginning (Mayring, 2014). When considering coding, it can be differentiated between inductive codes and deductive codes. Certainly in this sense, inductive codes are used, which are codes that are derived from the collected data or material itself and not from the theory. Inductive category formation is also an essential part in the grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss, called 'open coding'. Nevertheless, in the context of content analysis inductive category formation should be more specific and transparent (Mayring, 2014).

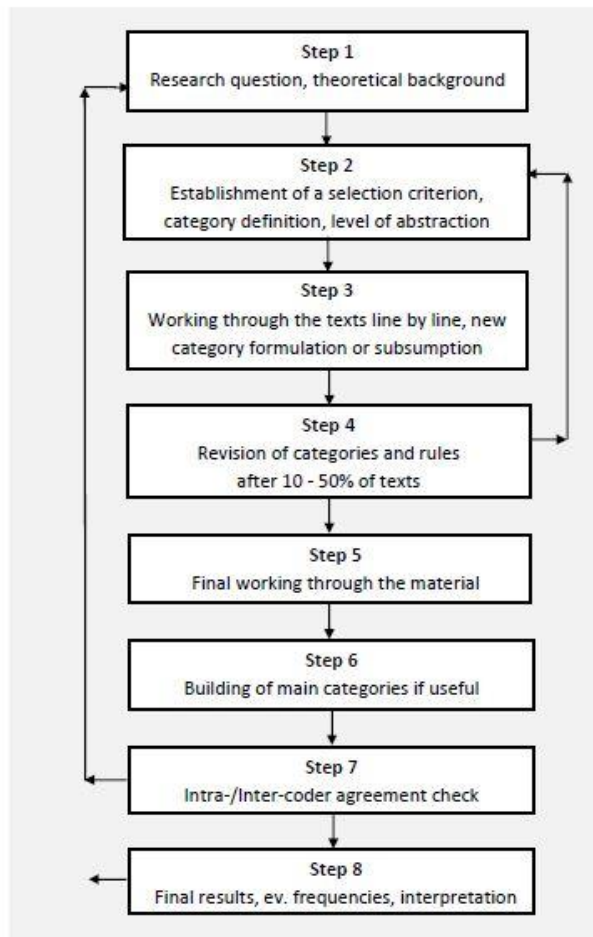


Figure 8 Steps of inductive category development

Source: Mayring, 2014, p. 80

Figure 8 shows the steps of the inductive category development. As soon as the deductive elements are identified, inductive categories are built. Therefore, the material is executed, line by line, and categories are to be developed. The following sections are examined in the same procedure. Anyhow if a new category is identified it has to be checked, whether this category can belong to previous ones or is developed as a new category. This process should be conducted until 10-50% of the material is analyzed in terms of categories. Then the author summarizes the categories in a codebook in order to see if they manifest a clear logic and follow best the research question. Moreover, an appropriate level of abstraction should be set. Mayring mentioned, as a rule of thumb, ten till thirty categories are applicable for analysis (Mayring, 2014). Before investigating the results, quality criteria need to be checked. Such a qualitative test is done in the same manner as described for the deductive code formation, by an inter-coder-check. After controlling quality, the results need to be examined in terms of a frequency analysis and set in relation to the research question (Mayring, 2014).

6 Interview Content Analysis

In this study the data was analyzed on the basis of approaches by the qualitative content analysis of Philipp Mayring. This section will outline how the approach was conducted, which codes were determined in a codebook, as well as the process of coding throughout the method applied. The first step of the analysis included the finding of deductive codes, on the basis of the existing literature and theories. Therefore, the author used different methods. According to Hennink et al. (2012), it can be chosen of several strategies to identify deductive codes: (1) "Topics from the interview guide" (2) "Concepts from research literature" and (3) "Professional and personal experience". This study mainly used the topics from the interview guide, which were already constructed on the basis of concepts and ideas from the literature. In total eight deductive codes were developed to be used for the further application. Afterwards, inductive codes were elaborated, which involved active reading of the material in order to identify issues raised by the participants. In general, inductive codes were assumed significant as they were repeated across different interviews. Anyhow Hennink et al. (2012), states certain strategies to identify inductive codes: (1) "Reading the overall content" (2) "Annotating data" (3) "Noticing repetition while reading" (4) "Identifying topic changes within an interview" (5) "Determine in vivo codes" and (6) "Analytical reading". The investigator of this study used different approaches. Initially, reading the data gives a broad overview and raises the attention on first repetitions, emotions expressed by interviewees or on specific words. Furthermore, the author used the method of annotation of data, by making notes, while reading, on issues that might be describing the same meaning, differently. Additionally, noticing repetition became essential after reading data more often and identifying which recurrences became relevant. Hence a codebook of nineteen codes were developed (Appendix 4).

On the basis of this codebook, the process of the coding was conducted, where all transcripts are to be investigated. Therefore, the author analyzed the material line by line, whether codes need to be marked. The first attempt of coding resulted in an adaptation of certain codes in the codebook, for example the code "underestimation of reintegration" was more generalized to "importance of reintegration measures". Furthermore, the code "emotions/ feelings upon return" was added, as expressing those was missing till then. After the adjustment, a second coding started, in which all codes were appropriately used and no more adjustments were needed. In order to guarantee the quality of the process, the coding with suitable codes was necessary to be repeated. Thus, the third trial served to see whether the codes are used in the same manner and nearly the same frequency. Therefore, the quality of data was guaranteed.

Corresponding to Hennink (2013), the data can be investigated along different stages (1) "Description" (2) "Comparison" (3) "Categorizing" (4) "Conceptualizing" (5) "Theory development" and (6) "Check validity of theory" in order to establish an analysis and develop a theory. The description serves to understand how issues are interlinked with each other and therefore receives an understanding of the participants perspective. Thereby the author should identify connections and interrelations between issues or codes for example if some issues are mentioned repeatedly or others are always mentioned in relation to each other. Therefore, the first approach of the result development was the code frequency analysis, where codes are listed accordingly to their repetitions. This analysis attends to measure how often or how less codes are marked in the transcripts. It is one method to conclude first interpretations from the data. For this purpose, the author developed a code frequency table (Appendix 5). This summarizes the total number of codes marked and differentiates between the two interviewee groups, expatriates and HR-Managers. To briefly highlight, the code "culture and environment" was in total, marked most frequently (17x) whereas the code "satisfaction" and "kingpin phenomena" were fewest marked (4x). Furthermore, the codes "importance of reintegration measures" and "job-related issues" seemed to be significant as they were marked often (16x/15x). By using the strategy of comparison it can be seen that throughout both groups the code "importance of reintegration measures" seems to be important. A comparison by deductive subgroups could be helpful to compare codes along different groups, in this case between expatriates and HR-Managers. In the context of the interviews with expatriates the code "emotions/ feelings upon return" can also be assumed as influential. On the other side the code "support and training" was marked more frequently in the interviews with the HR-Managers. In total it can be supposed that the codes "importance for reintegration measures", "culture and environment" and "job-related-issues" play an important role from the data collected.

7 Empirical Findings

In this chapter the empirical findings will be presented. They consist of the data gathered by six personal interviews with expatriates and HR-Managers from different multinational companies. The previous chapter already outlined which method of analysis was chosen. The code derivation and code frequency analysis were already explained and analyzed. As it can be concluded from the frequency analysis, "culture and environment" as well as the "job related aspects" and the "importance of reintegration measures" play an important role in the process of re-entering the home country. Therefore, first influence factors can be highlighted. Anyhow, within this chapter the codes will be fragmented in two comprehensive categories to further analyze in depth,

in order to gain more significant results. Thus, the process of categorizing is resulting from individual codes to wider categories, which represent a broader framework. Accordingly, categories can be derived inductively by identifying similar codes within the material, which then can be grouped together. During the analysis of the data and the codes it became visible that there are two main categories, which influence the reintegration of expatriates. These are job related issues and social aspects. The further analysis is thus separated into those two groups.

7.1 Job-related issues

In general, all expatriates mentioned job related issues to be the most difficult ones upon return.

Yes, so the reintegration in Germany itself it was hard at the beginning, not because I was back in Germany but because the team I entered in Germany was difficult to handle (...) Expatriate, Hungary, Interviewee 1 (I1)

The most critical, if I have to name the one critical thing, I would say the job. Expatriate, Qatar, Interviewee 3 (I3)

So, when I came back I had to start a new job, that was a complex situation (...) Expatriate, India, Interviewee 4 (I4)

Mainly all expatriates declare on agreements, that they have the right to come back to the organization, anyhow in which job they might return is often not discussed beforehand. Offering a new and challenging position before the expatriate comes back can generate a feeling of perception from the company, as expressed by interviewee 1.

Upfront was only the job offer, which was a new development for myself, which gave me the feeling that they will not leave me out of sight. Expatriate, Hungary (I1)

On the other hand, when the company does not invest in offering attractive new positions it can lead to disappointments, coming along with missing career perspectives.

More disappointing, because I really was looking for my career path in that company, when I came back home. As, they did not have a better idea, they put me on the same project, in which I was working in Qatar (...) Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

As expressed by interviewee 3, if the company solely returns the employee to the same position it can generate the feeling of missing out a new career path in this company. The satisfaction upon the new job highly depends on the attractiveness of the job position. Such situations can let expatriates feel to be not valued for their experiences.

At least adaptation, if you come back to the local market, there should be some kind of reintegration effort from your company and in this case it was not actively done.

Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

According to the literature, dissatisfaction can lead to the risk of attrition of high valued employees. Attractive and unexpected positions upon return can increase the commitment to the company.

Anyhow, the satisfaction in the new position can also be set in relation to the expectations expatriates develop before coming home. Referred to interviewee 2, the problem can also be seen on the side of the expatriates. When someone might not expect a higher position, its satisfaction about it might be higher than in the case of someone, who assumes to be offered a higher position, due to the assignment, and might follow the same kind of position.

The big conflict is often the expat expects to climb higher and higher, but it's not always said that they can use their experiences or capabilities they have learned abroad. Human Resource Manager, Interviewee 2 (I2)

Nevertheless, it cannot be stated that using the capabilities from abroad will lead to climbing higher in the hierarchy. Most interviewees did not refer to a link between using job related capabilities and higher positions, even interviewee 1, who received a satisfying position, reported that he could not use newly job related knowledge, as everything was unknown in the position.

For setting right expectations, the company should align agreements with the delegated person for the moment of return. Most expatriates only agree on the future position they will overtake when coming back. Anyhow some do not even agree on this. For example, interviewee 4 started a self-managed job search, as his company did not offer any other job positions, besides continuing in the host country. However, here it needs to be differentiated between companies, for example interviewee 6 reported:

It is clear which job they are overtaking when coming home (...) it's not like they are coming back and then we are going to see what to do with you (...)

Human Resource Manager, Interviewee 6 (I6)

It could be assumed, that companies should intend to agree on further agreements and establish a plan for the re-entry of the expatriates in order to draw a clearer path for the returning persons. Anyhow, by analyzing the given data it becomes clear that companies are not establishing further agreements, even though, it is conspicuous that interviewees not mentioned a clear need for further agreements upon return.

More than this we didn't agreed on nothing more. But to admit also not needed.
Expatriate, Hungary (I1)

No, there wasn't a plan. Expatriate, India (I4)

It also seems to be sufficient for some expatriates that the company guarantees the return to their organization or department. According to interviewee 4 this means being in a "comfortable situation". Analyzed by this data, when conducting an international assignment, it might not be expectable that expatriates will surely undertake another or higher position in the same company.

(...) it was sure that I am coming back to the same organization, which sent me, it does not include in which job position but they need to take me back, so I was in a very comfortable situation. Expatriate, India (I4)

(...) so it's often that 95-99% of all delegated persons return to the same unit.
Human Resource Manager, Interviewee 5 (I5)

Anyhow, all expatriates report from difficult situations entering a new team back in the home-unit. One explained, it took a while to establish trust and relation with the team members and building reputation. Including others, they reported that feelings of envy occurred, as other team members might have expected to receive the same position. Some interviewees also report on the problem of missing preparation and alignment upfront.

There was no alignment or preparation, XY is coming back and he will have this task, what will happen when I came back. Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

So the handover time should have been longer in my point of view and with a clear agenda what should be the main focus for the first month. Expatriate, Hungary (I1)

I have observed, no systematic approach. Human Resource Manager (I2)

Longer handover periods or familiarization phases could help expatriates to relocate in the new situations upon return. A clear agenda of what will happen and which responsibilities are taken by whom could foster the role perception of those people. In general, the management of the company or the HR departments are restricted to certain areas. This can be underlined by the statement of interviewee 6, who clearly explained that the expatriate managers only bring those people home, what happens afterwards is none of their responsibilities. Maybe it becomes relevant which management is followed within a company or what kind of responsibilities which player take on task. Consequently, missing perception of responsibilities of managers or other players result in

no scheduled support for the expatriates, as it becomes visible in the case of interviewee 3.

So if you have a good manager, who is asking how are you, can I help you with something, but when you don't have, which was maybe in my case, he weren't asked too much and there were no planned support. Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

In which aspects companies do support expatriates, according to the data received, is certainly the communication. Here companies invest in measures to establish a consistent communication between the expatriate in the host country and the home-unit. All expatriates reported on measures undertaken by their company to foster the communication during the assignment.

I still had regular contact with the colleagues from Germany (...) With colleagues it was really easy, like with phone and emails. It's also because there is huge finance community (...) and at that point in time I think XY invented something like Facebook, called XY where you can chat with your colleagues. Expatriate, Hungary (I1)

Internet, Skype etc. The company even paid us a phone line to call contacts in Germany and the internet in Qatar is also free of charge. Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

Also that was easy to me, as I was still connected with people over this time, somehow via the company, so there were international meetings, leadership meetings where we met. Expatriate, India (I4)

Referred to the literature, the existence of communication with home-unit colleagues and friends becomes relevant in not receiving a feeling of being forgotten. Consequently, this can foster the reintegration, as the person will still be present in the home-company and might not feel like a stranger when coming back. Furthermore, expatriates reported that companies acted flexible in terms of traveling to Germany during the delegation time, for example in the case of interviewee 1 and 4.

(...) always when I wanted to travel to Germany they organized it and could organize it with business meetings in Germany. Expatriate, Hungary (I1)

Even during my delegation I spend also time in Germany in form of a business trip (...) international meetings where we met (...) Expatriate, India (I4)

For sure, visits to the home country assist in not losing relation to the contacts, to the culture and maybe even be aware of changes in the home country, in order to reduce the alienation of the home country and prevent of coming back and seeing a completely new environment. Such initiatives can be grouped as reintegration tools. Companies

make use of some kind of reintegration tools, but often they are not scheduled and cultural issues are not considered. Some expatriates and HR-Managers reported that there are calls established before the delegated person returns, in order to discuss whether the person will continue or will return. In some cases, this was already done one and a half years before the end of delegation in others half a year before the end of the delegation. This can obviously help in order to draw a clearer path upon return. Then some companies serve with other measures for example interviewee 5 reported from a repatriation briefing in the host country before the end of delegation, where all local issues, like car sell, VISA agreements, insurance regulations and so forth will be discussed and the delegated will be provided about all information about the reintegration. In another company they provide a sponsor, who sit together with the expatriate in order to discuss what kind of job the person wishes to undertake upon return. It becomes clear, that companies handle the reintegration differently. Anyhow none of them mentioned cultural reintegration initiatives, platforms, where expatriates can share their experiences or scheduled trainings upon return. Likewise, HR-Managers, mentioned that there were no reintegration trainings conducted in the home country. One reason might be that those trainings are costly.

It's like we offer you an reintegration process but we are happy if you will not use it because it's costly. Most people I supported, there were no reintegration processes when they came back. Human Resource Manager (I2)

Anyhow, in the literature, there is often mentioned that the utilization and importance of reintegration measures is still undervalued. However, it was mostly not mentioned by the expatriates of this study and also not mentioned by HR-Managers, only interviewee 2 often highlights that further reintegration measures are missing and therefore the whole process is being underestimated.

But it's completely underestimated. (...) the impact is still underestimated. (...) but we still underestimate the reintegration. Human Resource Manager (I2)

Nevertheless, on the basis of this study, the importance and willingness for further reintegration measures is questionable as all other interviewees do not see a strong need for further support upon re-entry in the home country.

But I doubt reintegration trainings would have been necessary, I stayed in Europe, there were little cultural differences only. Expatriate, Hungary (I1)

As I said this was the easiest part, so we came back in our old environment [...] So coming back was not challenging. Expatriate, India (I4)

No, I mean it's a German coming back to Germany, so they don't need to do any cultural trainings. Human Resource Manager (I6)

Thus, the expatriates as well as the HR-Managers share the same opinion, there is clearly no need for them to have cultural trainings or further initiatives for the re-entry.

Anyhow, based on the given data, there is evidence to draw namely that the need of reintegration in the home country might depend on cultural aspects in the host country. Two expatriates informed about very different cultures abroad (Qatar, India). They mentioned environmental issues like a very hot climate or pollution, which impede the way of life. Moreover, they reported from great cultural differences in the host country.

Negative, I mean the country is not easy, you have a lot of pollution, lot of noise, probably you won't stay longer than 2-3 years in such an environment.

Expatriate, India (I4)

I needed up to 6 months to get a phone contract and a driver's license for my wife, that was really weird. Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

Such conditions have let them make feel relieved by coming back to Germany.

And then for sure the culture, that was always a relief to come back to Germany (...) I think relief is the word which covered it best. [...] that's what I meant with relief. (...) and that was a relief for us to leave (...) Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

Probably today companies would not send families with kids in such a polluted environment. So, for a time it's okay, but not for longer. Expatriate, India (I4)

It becomes evident, that environmental issues and cultural aspects can not only have an influence on the current situation in the foreign country, but also an influence on the re-entry in the home country, as those people, as stated, might feel eased coming back to Germany and therefore do not recognize problems upon return and highlight benefits from the home country.

But, it's still a negative, how do you say, I remember that as a negative point. Because we were used to the freedom we have here in such a country.

Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

Hence, cultural and environmental restrictions might stimulate a smoother transition into the home country. On the other hand, interviewee 1, conducted the assignment in Hungary, reported also on an easy reintegration, as there were no great cultural differences.

I stayed in Europe, there were little cultural differences only. It wasn't coming from South America and needing to adapt to a European lifestyle again.

Expatriate, Hungary (I1)

There might be a tendency, when conducting an international assignment in Europe that it might be easier to adapt to a European country again. Opposed to the previous statements, little cultural difference in the host country can also foster the reintegration in the home country. Anyhow, the author outlines this aspect more as a speculation, as it was only mentioned by one participant.

In total, expatriates tell that the reintegration is the easiest part but anyhow they spoke about difficult situations in their teams upon return, which gathers the impression that there are actually some reintegration problems, which could call for further measures.

7.2 Social aspects

Social aspects also play an important role when looking at the reintegration. Anyhow, in this study, it became relevant that job-related issues can be, to a higher extent, seen as drivers for the re-entry in the home country. Nevertheless, family issues were also mentioned as a difficult aspect. Throughout all interviews, family problems were raised, however often in concern of the wife, whether then in concern of children.

Otherwise I can't remember much trouble with the other kid, maybe it was a transition of a few weeks (...) For my wife, it was again to find a new job (...)

Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

And the way I observed the situation for the kids it took maybe only 2-3 weeks, for my wife it took 2-3 months, maybe more (...) Expatriate, Qatar (I4)

This might be due to the fact, that the wife also needs to find a new job in the home country and the children were 'only' returning to their kindergartens or schools. Problems, like reconnecting to their old life were mentioned, starting earlier activities, like sports and meeting friends. In any case, the men were the persons who went for the assignment and took their families, so they reported that for themselves it was not too hard getting back. Explanatory, it can be concluded that for man the re-entry might be easier than for the spouse as the man goes directly back to the work environment and therefore has a social interaction with colleagues and other people whereas the spouse might not be able to directly return to a working base. Furthermore, all expatriates mentioned that they usually do not have daily contact to their friends, which means the daily exchange with friends do not become highly relevant. This might illustrate a problem for the spouse, as she has resigned her job when went abroad and needs to find a new activity upon return. Thus, in this case a social interaction is not already given. As a

matter of fact, the spouse might be more dependent on friends. As they might also work or have other obligations, the spouse might receive a feeling of missing social interaction.

On the other hand, also HR-Managers consider family issues as a critical aspect in the reintegration process, anyhow they do not implement any initiatives in order to support in this process. However expatriates might also not be willing to be supported in such topics.

It would have been nice to receive more information and help but on the other hand I might have not been wished this help, as they suggest you three kindergartens to choice from and you don't like any of them. Expatriate, Qatar (I3)

Probably people are not aware, which kind of support, they could receive upon return. It may also depend on the degree of willingness to receive help in general. Anyhow, it should also be set in relation to different levels of support companies offering. Some interviewees reported on additional support, given by the company, for example a relocation service upon return.

The delegation centre is responsible to support me and there a certain things which are automated, for example for the move like bringing back your furniture to Germany, but that's more about administrative things not about cultural things or any trainings. Expatriate, India (I4)

I talk them through that they get relocation support again, so that they get an apartment, and then that they have someone when they arrive, that they have a place to stay. Human Resource Manager (I6)

Anyhow, other issues, besides the relocation service, are mostly not being supported from the company. As stated by interviewee 5, these are "personal issues" and not in concern of the company.

(...) but no personal issues are being considered, the things which are caused by the company they will be balanced, but nothing in private issues.

Human Resource Manager (I5)

As companies do not always support the process of coming back and the expatriates might not be willing to be supported, there is a clear path where expatriates see the need to manage themselves in the process of reintegration. They all report about items they undertook to reintegrate themselves, for example start meeting neighbors, visiting families, finding a new house in an attractive location or even planning agreements with the children's school to re-enter in the same classes and sport clubs. Based on this, it

becomes visible that delegates can do things by themselves to foster their reintegration process. Anyhow, corresponding to interviewee 2, there are missing platforms where expatriates can share their experiences with people.

(...) as they need some kind of window to share their experiences, as they cannot share with anyone else, as they might feel embarrassed (...)

Human Resource Manager (I2)

7.3 Improvement options

After analyzing aspects that occur during the reintegration of an international assignment, this chapter will outline how and with which measures companies might be able to meet the need of expatriates and therefore create an effective repatriation. In general, it needs to be stated that suggestions are not suitable for all companies. However, the author believes that some improvements can be used as a source of information and thereby giving an incentive for other companies to establish an effective reintegration process for delegated employees.

As concluded above, companies and expatriates do not see a great need for further reintegration initiatives, especially cultural measures. Anyhow, there are tendencies that the reintegration could be designed more effectively and improvement options were mentioned. All expatriates stated problems within the new team and management as most critical issues upon return. To counteract this, companies could establish a clearer path for the situation the expatriate enters in the new work environment. Therefore it is advisable to establish longer handover periods, in which the former worker or the manager, having been in this position, explains tasks and systems, relevant for the position, to the expatriate. This can establish a situation, in which the expatriate can feel comfortable in a confident appearance and reduces uncertainty upfront. Mostly, agreements are only set on the future job position, if even set at all, some reported from arrangements upon a new job position, others were independently assigned to search for new opportunities and others were only offered the same position. Therefore, it is recommendable that companies develop a career plan with the delegated employee for the period of the whole assignment, where they present available job opportunities, from which he/ she can choose. This may increase the feeling of recognition and decrease a sense of disorientation. One expatriate mentioned, that nowadays the company presents three different projects in which the person could work and they can choose what fits best for their capabilities and personal interest. Consequently, the position the employee will undertake after the assignment should be set upfront the beginning of the sojourn abroad. The purpose for the abidance should be clear for both

parties, so that expectations are aligned and every player is in concern of their roles. This can smooth the process of settling in job wise.

Furthermore, the communication becomes highly relevant. Even though, expatriates, in this study, already mentioned a constant communication throughout the assignment, it is commendable for companies to ensure a communication with the new team colleagues from the home country upon return. They could implement some digital reunions upfront where tasks are clarified. This can reduce situations, where colleagues could become disorientated or enviously, as responsibilities can be clearly set. It can also establish trust and relationships with employees even faster. As previously stated in the model of effective repatriation by Jassawalla et al., task clarity should be set prior to departure by communicating those and therefore setting expectations accordingly. In general, in the study investigated, the communication was greatly addressed, for example agreements like visits to the home country were mentioned. Furthermore, initiatives like free phone calls or exchange networks are recommendable to be implemented in order to get the expatriate in continuous connection with the headquarter. This can give the individual the opportunity to stay in contact with the home country and not to develop a feeling of alienation.

In this study, no need for any cultural reintegration training was declared. Only one HR-Manager specified to implement a reverse cultural preparation training abroad, including for example what to expect when coming back. This could definitely help expatriates to get prepared. However, based on the data, the author cannot identify an interest for this and therefore will not suggest it as a reintegration tool, even though the author personally estimate it as a relevant measure to implement upon return.

In summary, companies could establish a reintegration plan. As most often assumed. the preparation phase or the period during the assignment are differentiated and independent stages from the reintegration, those should be all aligned together in order to establish a comprehensive plan. From the beginning on, the purpose for the assignment need to be set. Therefore, the company and the delegated employee agree on possible future positions, which will certainly be available upon return. Consequently, the companies can well calculate the investments and the management for the employee and the individual receives certainty and decrease anxiety. During the assignment, a sponsor can be implemented, who informs the employee about potential changes in the organization or shifts in concern of the job opportunities. Such a responsible person can also contribute to the communication between the delegated employee and the headquarter, by keeping him/ her up to date about changes and novelty. As already outlined, communication becomes highly relevant during the assignment.

Hence, it is advisable to insert a communication plan, including internal company networks to exchange with other employees and scheduled meetings with the new team members to clarify responsibilities and establish relation. Such a training could also include job-related concerns, scheduled trainings for new systems, scheduled meetings with the manager to discuss handover issue and therefore giving the expatriate a guidance for the near future. A reintegration plan can illustrate a specified pathway for the delegated employee already before the assignment, by providing a plan upon return and after the assignment by giving orientation and task clarity.

8 Discussion

In this chapter the theoretical framework will be discussed and analyzed against the empirical findings of this study. Furthermore, the validity of the method will be proved and the limitations of the study are outlined.

8.1 Comparison to the current literature

Surely, the author received a first picture when investigating the current literature, whereas the data received from the interviews proved, partially, different results and therefore new insights into the research problem are evolved. Subsequently, the author will outline some differences and similarities of the results of this study and the existing literature. In the context of this study, cultural circumstances in the host country were of main importance. In countries, with major cultural differences and poor environmental circumstances, individuals might experience an easier adaptation in the home country. As reported from pollution and hot climate, interviewees mentioned that living more than 2 till 3 years in such conditions is not possible. Furthermore, they reported from feeling relieved and retrieving freedom by returning to the home country. Consequently, individuals might value the benefits from the home country in a different degree and promote several things upon return. Another explanation might be that, expatriates were not fully adjusting to the circumstances and the culture in the host country, due to dissatisfying conditions. According to Black et al. (1992), two factors influencing the readjustment in the home country, the difference between the foreign country and the home country as well as the degree to which the individual actually adapts during their period abroad. Consequently, the greater the cultural change, experienced in the host country, the greater the individual alters (Black, et al., 1992). Referring to this study, individuals might not have changed their characteristics and mindsets excessively and therefore difficulties result to a lesser extent, upon return. A further explanation is based on the number of assignments, employees already conducted. In this case, interviewee 3 and interviewee 4 were on assignments before. Adjustments in the past can alleviate further alignments, as individuals learn how to adapt, or solely accept new

circumstances. In general, the study participants mainly experienced cultural changes upon return in different degrees. In the case of interviewee 3, the cultural shock can be more assumed as positive, as the individual felt relieved coming back to Germany. In other cases, interviewee 1 reported from no cultural difficulties upon return as he has not experienced great cultural differences in the host country and therefore did not need to adapt significantly. In general, according to Gupta (2013), such extent may depend on the length of the stay, the country of assignment and the individual characteristics.

Furthermore, researchers often report about the kingpin phenomena. For example, corresponding to Gupta (2013), when expatriates returning, they can experience a loss of status and autonomy, as they often enjoy a high level of responsibility and autonomy in the foreign country. Such losses were not described by any expatriates. However, interviewee 4 outlined a great change of responsibility coming from the foreign country to the home country, anyhow, he explained that he searched a job with less autonomy when returning. Therefore, the author cannot state that there is an assumption of an existing phenomena. Coming along with a loss of responsibility, the literature often reports about a loss of life quality when expatriates returning to their home country. Certainly, expatriates often enjoy a higher living standard and benefits for example driving an expensive car. Gupta (2013) explained that such a loss of quality in life often results in a loss of social interaction. Anyhow, based on the data gathered, interviewees never stated that they miss a certain degree of luxury or that the social interaction suffered due to the removal of benefits.

One interesting finding in this study was that the acquired capabilities and knowledge from the overseas position might not directly set in relation to the new position. Although, study participants reported from using skills, they mainly focused in soft skills and foreign experiences they used upon return. None of them indicated that the purpose of the international assignment was set in relation to the future job position upon return, that they undertook the assignment in order to achieving specific knowledge, for example on systems, to be implemented upon return. Thus, a lack in previous planning, aligning a comprehensive plan for the period of the whole assignment with a specific purpose, becomes clear. Anyhow, according to Jasswalla et al., this missing utilization of achieved skills and knowledge is probably a driver to resign. Contrary to expectations, this study did not find a significant evidence that the lack of acquired knowledge usage fosters dismissals.

However, there are some similarities within the literature. As mentioned in the analysis, agreements and expectations are highly relevant upon return. Referred to Stroh et al.

(1998), expectations need to be developed before the re-entry, even before the assignment. It became visible in the data investigated that those were often not set before beginning the assignment, even, in some cases, not set at all. For sure this can lead to a 'lost ground' in the career, similarly in the example of interviewee 3 where no career advancements were promoted. However, interviewee 1 was offered a challenging job position upon return, which resulted in a feeling of not 'being out of sight'. Therefore, it can be stated that offering a job enhancement becomes relevant for the repatriate. Anyhow, already given evidence in the literature, delegated employees often return to the same position, they have performed prior to the assignment (Jassawalla, et al., 2004). Interestingly, the study participant of this investigation also referred that 95-99% of all delegated persons return to the same unit. However, there is evidence that in any case those agreements are to be set in relation with the employee and therefore right expectations can be aligned during the assignment.

Besides work related aspects, it has been identified that social issues are also in concern of reintegration. The study participants more often reported about problems arising with the spouse, who needs to be reconnected to social activities and might receive the feeling that friends are no longer available for company. As mentioned by the interviewees the spouse usually required more time to adjust in the old environment, even needed to find a new job upon return. This is also clearly outlined as a critical aspect, in the literature. As the men straight returns to his work environment, the spouse might experience missing social interaction.

Finally, the current state of research often report about a lack of existence of reintegration support. Especially, it is reported that most expatriates as well as the management of companies assume the reintegration of delegated employees to be easy (Stroh, et al., 1998). As previously stated, the study participants of this research also supposed reentering the home country as a simple process. This can be due to several reasons. Firstly, participants of this study already reported from existing re-entry measures, such as communication networks, sponsors or repatriation briefings and might assume those to be sufficient. Secondly, according to this examination, cultural reintegration processes are not needed. Surely, this can be based upon individual characteristics, for example one already conducted an assignment and is used to adjust to changing circumstances, others, solely, might experience reverse cultural shock in a different degree or do not have altered excessively in the foreign country. Anyhow, there are reintegration initiatives to be implemented that are similarly supported by other researchers, such as providing task clarity upfront, establishing networks and other communication measures and align the management to provide the delegated employee a situation of certainty and satisfaction.

8.2 Validity of the method

This qualitative study used six personal interviews with experts in the field of international assignments in order to identify how the reintegration is being managed in multinational companies and what companies possibly can implement to improve the process. In order to prove the validity of the study, the author will review the main quality criteria. Referred to Mayring (2014), the quantitative content analysis criteria, such as objectivity, reliability and validity have been released and are applied in a more general way for the qualitative content analysis. The objectivity of this study is given because the implementation, evaluation and interpretation of the results have not been influenced by the investigator. The preparation and development of the interviews were based on existing literature. The qualitative interviews were also carried out on a factual base without influencing the individuals. The interpretation is based upon statements made by the interviewees and all speculations are marked as those. Reliability is the trustworthiness of a measurement method. An examination is considered to be reliable if the measurement is repeated under the same conditions and the same results are obtained. In this study the reliability, in the first stages, was tested by a pilot test of the interview guide, where both interview guides were previously tested with voluntary participants. After slight changes were adapted, the interview guide presumed to be valid. In the content analysis the intra-coder agreement is of particular significance (Mayring, 2014), which was also used in this study. Therefore, the codes developed for the codebook were tested twice. When the author assumed to have completed the coding, this process was restarted in order to prove if the same codes will appear. Consequently, by choosing the method for re-testing, the reliability of the codes was reviewed and it can be assumed that other coders would receive similar code results. Validity tests the appropriateness of the study, if the choice of the methodology is reasonable, the design is valid for the methodology, and the sampling and data analysis are accordingly. Methods can mostly never be 100% valid. Anyhow, the author of this study, presumes the methodology to be applicable. By conducting expert interviews, personal opinions and related emotions from the interviewees could have been extracted. The way in which the interviews were implemented guaranteed a certain level of comfort for the interviewees. The sampling allowed to receive certain opinions upon two perspectives, the expatriates themselves and the HR-Managers. On the basis of the data received, the information could be analyzed by a coding method. This proved to be relevant as the investigator received tendencies of codes to be relevant, which correspond with aspects previously analyzed to be influential for the reintegration. Surely, the methodology is based upon scientific methods by Philipp Mayring. One qualitative content specific method was chosen to test the validity by using a semantic validity check. Referred to Krippendorff (1980), this approach deals with the appropriateness of the cate-

gory definitions (definitions, anchor examples, coding rules) in order to identify the correctness of the method in which the meaning of the material is constructed. The author created passages, which do have a known meaning. After the collection of this passages the author tried to reconstruct the meaning of this passages by using the existing analysis instruments. Therefore, it could have become visible which analysis instruments might not be sufficient to reconstruct a certain meaning. In this case, some codes and categories have been adapted and therefore the coding was newly done for the material up to the point where no further changes needed to be adjusted.

8.3 Limitations of the study

To critically review the study concerned, the author outlines certain aspects to be improved. Surely, when interviewing more people more tendencies could have been developed, anyhow as this study is a qualitative research it is not focused on the quantity. In this study, the author faces the limitations that sometimes the arguments from the expatriates and the arguments from the HR-Managers cannot be perfectly compared, as other viewpoints hold true. Retrospectively it could have been helpful to only focus on one target group to have a higher amount of statements, from a group of people with the same experiences, to be compared. Anyhow, the author was able to also compare opinions from two perspectives, which might generate other insights than only focusing on one target group with similar characteristics. Furthermore it could have been helpful to select expatriates from only one destination country or region for example Asia or Europe in order to compare experiences based on the same cultural and environmental circumstances. Therefore, it could have been investigated whether the foreign country and culture might have an influence on the reintegration in the home country or rather the adjustment in the own country depends on the degree of adaption in the country of assignment. In general, the author would have expected more insights into the research problem, as sometimes the respondents did not reported freely or only revealed further insights after some more detailed questions. Of course, thereby confidentiality plays an important role and might have influenced the respondents, as they were still cautious to reveal information about their companies, even though this is anonymous in the study. To counteract, for further studies it might be helpful to conduct a research in cooperation with one company. As this study only explores a very small extraction from people who either conducted an international assignment or accompanied those as a supporting function, the results should not be seen as a general solution, more as a suggestion on how to design an effective reintegration process.

9 Conclusion

This chapter presents the final conclusion of this study and is based on the initial research question, which was followed throughout this work: *How to manage the reintegration of international assignments along members of multinational organizations?* The research question was already derived in the introduction, which is based on the academic void of research in the area of the reintegration of delegates from international assignments. As the existing literature stressed out the preparation as well as the period of the assignment itself, the author concentrated on the reintegration. The motivation of this study was to identify how expatriates experience the reintegration in the home country as the problem states that the reintegration oftentimes fails.

In order to answer the research question, the results of the study need to be outlined shortly, as well as the analysis the author conducted. In general, the key findings showed that the interviewees do not see a great need for further reintegration measures, especially culturally, as they mostly assumed reintegration to be simple, even to be the simplest stage in an assignment. They did not report about many problems upon return and referred to measures experienced or implemented, that foster the reintegration. Such arrangements were repatriation briefings where mostly administrative issues for the return were clarified, sponsors that support upon job search or in general relocation services, that arrange the movement to the home country. Anyhow some problems were highlighted. Based on this data, the re-entry in the work environment can assumed to be difficult. Here, respondents faced problems entering a new team, coming along with problems upon relation-building with employees. Furthermore, the study identified problems with the management in the new work environment. There is a missing preparation for expatriates returning. Companies do not establish a clear path upon return and do not serve with appropriate handover times and a smooth transition for the employee into the new team and position. In general, companies did not arrange many agreements with the delegated employees. Interviewees mostly reported that organizations guarantee the return to the organization or even the same unit, anyhow, the job position thereby might not always be clear. Surely, this can led to situation of uncertainty and disappointment. Anyhow, further agreements, especially on personal scale were neither be expected or required by the expatriates nor offered by companies. However, the study results although demonstrate how certain issue can be managed in an effective way. Companies implemented networks, free-of-charge phone lines as well as visits to the home country during the assignment. Providing expatriates a constant communication with the headquarters and visits to their home country generate a feeling of not being out of sight. A further empirical finding of this study concentrates on the culture of the host country in relation to the reintegration. Some interview-

ees experienced cultures they assessed as difficult and therefore developed a feeling of relief upon return.

To effectively manage the reintegration of international assignments, companies should consider certain aspects. Communication is an essential part for an effective management upon return. The communication should be available and used throughout the whole assignment, companies should support in providing tools like networks or free of charge calls to the home country. Furthermore, scheduled meetings with the new team can be aligned upfront in order to establish some kind of relationship and discuss responsibilities and tasks. A scheduled meeting should also be hold with the manager in order to guarantee sufficient handover times, where relevant topics are to be discussed. A clear path in the new work environment can reduce feelings of uncertainty and disorientation. Therefore, agreements on the future job position are to be aligned with the expatriate employee, preferably even before the assignment. Companies need to provide the retuning person a situation in which the delegated knows their position, responsibilities, their team and their supervisors. This goes hand in hand with communication and agreements, which need to be aligned beforehand. In general, the management and support should rather focus on job-related issues. Interviewees see the support in family issues also critical. It might be that some kind of help would be of avail but it can be identified that the willingness for help in non-work related issues is not yet developed or needed. To sum up, such helpful measures could be implemented into a reintegration plan, which might be individually set for each employee before starting the assignment in order to result in a smooth reintegration.

Suggestions for further research

On the basis of the data investigated, the author would assume further research on the general willingness and the need for cultural reintegration measures to be interesting. As the existing research states that the reintegration is underestimated, it might be interesting to see whether only companies underestimate the impact or if also the expatriates themselves might underestimate the impact or solely they really do not need a cultural reintegration in the home country. Furthermore, the author would suggest investigations on the support of non-work related aspects upon return, in order to identify whether the willingness to be supported upon personal scale is not yet develop or not needed at all.

As the author identified a connection between the culture of the host country and the reintegration into the home country, it would be highly interesting to conduct further research whether the culture of the host country can enhance or worsen a reintegration in the home country. The author could imagine research with expatriates, who went to

a certain foreign country to see if it holds true that great cultural and environmental differences have an influence on the adaption back in the home country.

In addition, it would be relevant to see how the implementation of international assignments develop in the future, to identify whether there are tendencies concluded in which direction they might develop. Especially, how the globalization and international mobility can impact international assignments, used as a measure to globally transfer employees.

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Annex

Appendix A Confidentiality Clause

Research project title: Bachelor Thesis - Repatriation

Research investigator: Jamila Becker

Research participant name:

The interview will take 20-30 minutes. At any time you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. This consent form is necessary for me to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- the transcript of the interview will be analyzed by Jamila Becker as research investigator
- personal information, like name, age or address will not be used, only the position you are working in
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

Quotation Agreement

Please tick the box you are agreeing on.

	I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.

By signing this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future

Signature Participant

Signature Investigator

Date, Location

Date, Location

Appendix B Interview Guides

Appendix B.1 Interview Guide - Expatriates

Interview Guide - Expatriates

Research Title:

Research Investigator:

Research Participant Name:

Introduction

Today I will conduct a personal interview with you. First of all I will give you a short overview how the interview will be executed: Primarily I will briefly explain the aim of the interview, afterwards you will be asked some preliminary questions and then we will continue talking about your experience by asking you some open questions. I am a student of the Rhine Waal University, writing my bachelor thesis about the topic of international assignments. The interview will be conducted on behalf of a bachelor thesis by executing expert interviews with expatriates and HR-Managers in order to investigate certain challenges on the reintegration process upon return after an international assignment and possible improvements. The interview will be around 20-30 minutes. If there are any questions arising do not hesitate asking me any time.

1. Preliminary Data

1. When (year) and how long did you realize your international assignment?
 2. Where (country) did you realize your international assignment?
 3. In which company/industry have you been working at the point in time, when conducted the international assignment? (solely to know the industry)
 4. Are you still working in this company? (solely to know if continued in the same company)
-

2. Principal Part

5. Please briefly describe your experience abroad.
6. Tell me what positive/negative outcomes had the international assignment to you?/ What do you think was poorly managed during the process?
7. What was the most critical phase during the assignment (Preparation, During-Assignment, Reintegration)

Reintegration

8. Could you describe me your **reintegration/ repatriation phase** and related emotions you felt during this process.
If not mentioned family issues: How have you experienced the **re-entry of your family?**
If not already mentioned: What were the most difficult issues you needed to face during your re-entry?
9. Can you imagine of any **possible reason** why the reintegration proved to be difficult. Think of the whole expatriation process (selection, preparation trainings, compensation, communication).
10. What kind of **support** did you received from your company/ organization (reintegration programs, trainings, integration incentives)?
If not already mentioned: Did you settled any agreements with your organizations about expectations and plans when returning? If yes, please briefly explain.
If not already mentioned: Were the expectations met, when returned home?
11. What kind of **self-motivated incentives** did you undertake to support your reintegration?
If not already mentioned: How have you kept contact with friends and colleagues?
12. How would you describe your **satisfaction** in the position you have continued to work in and the atmosphere in the company when you returned.
(If changed the position or performs the same position: As you already told me you undertook another position/ the same position, how would you describe your satisfaction within this position and the overall atmosphere in the company when you returned?)
13. Could you implement **newly learned knowledge and skills**? How?
14. Can you think of any **improvement options** organizations can implement to guarantee a better reintegration process?

Thank you for participating in the interview!

Appendix B.2 Interview Guide - HR-Manager

Interview Guide - HR-Manager

Research Title:

Research Investigator:

Research Participant Name:

Introduction

Today I will conduct a personal interview with you. First of all I will give you a short overview how the interview will be executed: Primarily I will briefly explain the aim of the interview, afterwards you will be asked some preliminary questions and then we will continue talking about your experience by asking you some open questions. I am a student of the Rhine Waal University, writing my bachelor thesis about the topic of international assignments. The interview will be conducted on behalf of a bachelor thesis by executing expert interviews with expatriates and HR-Managers in order to investigate certain challenges on the reintegration process upon return after an international assignment and possible improvements. If there are any questions arising do not hesitate asking me any time.

1. Preliminary Data

1. In which company and position you are actually working? (solely for knowing the industry)
 2. Did you experience the work with expatriation within this company or another?
 3. For how long are you already working in the context of international assignments?
 4. Which task have you undertaken during the support of an international assignment?
-

2. Principal Part

5. Please describe me how have you experienced this work.
6. Tell me some positive and some critical issues you needed to manage during an international assignment?
7. What do you think was poorly managed during the process?
 - 7.1. What was poorly managed in the responsibility of HR?
 - 7.2. What did the expat do wrong in the process?
8. Which stage of the expatriation process (Preparation, During-Assignment, Reintegration) do you consider to be the most difficult to manage?

Reintegration

9. Please tell me how is the **repatriation process** being managed in your organization?

If not already mentioned: What kind of **trainings** do you implement?

If not already mentioned: Did the HR department settled any **agreements** with the expatriates about expectations and plans when returning? If yes, which ones?

If not already mentioned: Was the expatriate also supported in **non work-related issue**?

10. How would you describe the **situation** when an expatriate returned to the home office?

10.1. Can you think of certain challenges the expatriate might have experienced?

11. Can you think of any **improvement options** organizations can implement to guarantee a better reintegration process?

Thanks for participating in the interview!

Appendix C Transcripts

Transcript 1 - Participant 1 (Men)

Interviewer: Jamila Becker

Location: Participant's office

Position: Team Leader - Expatriate

Duration: 53 minutes

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

I: So now we will start the interview and the recording. Just to give you a general overview about the interview. The interview will be around 20-30 minutes, I will start asking you some preliminary questions and then coming to some open questions where you can tell me some of your experiences and opinions abroad.

I: Fine then I will start with some preliminary questions.

I: When (in which year) and how long did you realized your international assignment?

P: I started in 2013, January 2013 and was planned for 3 years but I returned after 2 years.

I: In which country did you realized your expatriation?

P: In Hungary, Szegd.

I: In which organization have been working at the point of the international assignment?

P: XY. In the division of XY.

I: In which position have you been working at the point of the international assignment?

P: During the international assignment in financial management. I was responsible for Finance, Controlling and IT.

I: Did you had this position also before you went overseas?

P: No, before I was the Head of Controlling in the plant.

I: Coming now more to the principal part. So first please briefly describe your experience abroad, just some first things that come to your mind.

P: Where to start.. the main focus was in the beginning to discuss with my girlfriend about the assignment. I lived in Göttingen and Carena, my girlfriend, in Duisburg, so we were mainly checking the distance to Hungary. So we booked a lot of flights for visits beforehand and had a pre-visit in the country. So Carena and me we went together, where we had the chance to see the city and I spoke with the general manager from Hungary and we made a short roundtrip through Hungary. Then we decided that I will do the assignment. When I arrived in Hungary, it was like this, there was no real integration phase needed. You needed to get into contact with the locals but on the

other side I was in contact with the general management from Hungary already before the assignment. And out of the team I already knew three or four of my employees. So in the first stage it was really easy to get into contact with people. The job, for sure, was different than the job before, now I was responsible for finance, controlling and IT. I had a lot interviews beforehand to know what will happen in the team and even more to learn about the plant, the plant was not only producing conveyable but also especially hoses and they were very very good at this one. So I needed to get in touch with two general managers. The second one was Hungarian one, that was a little bit more difficult because he was a little bit afraid that we dig to deep in his figures, not like a typical German leader, who is quite open but his approach was more the hierarchy approach, so pushing people more in a direction rather than open discussion, as far as I experienced. That was how it started and it went really well along. The flat was one issue, I remember, the company organized everything for me, so I had the change to select between two or three flats, it was pretty easy at the end, they send over all the staff from Göttingen. It was really easy to get in touch with the people over there, they were really open. I started learning Hungarian, I took language classes, but I have to admit I failed. After ten weeks training, which is obligatory, I could understand the basics, like ordering food and drinks, but at the job as well we only spoke in English. So it was pretty easy to stay in touch as everyone spoke English. They are used to expat, they are in the environment. I tried at the beginning, but it's not easy for me to learn language but it was easy to use English in the daily work. Also German was quit spread.

I: Good, so you mentioned some positive and negative aspects, can you highlight two or three positive and negative outcomes, what was good or bad managed during the process?

P: We had long discussions about the current calculation tool. In the past they had huge variations and an approach to first calculate the costs and later target costs and because that product can be produced on several lines, can be shifted a lot around and therefore in the process we had the agreement to do a mixed calculation, which was ok at this time. But at this time we faced downsizing markets, the conveyable market broke down because our investors didn't spend money so what we did at this time we shift our calculation from an average calculation to line IT calculation and there were huge concerns at the beginning, that this can't work out and that this would always generate negative variations, so a lot of pressure. So when we started the project we had negative variations but due to the adjustment it went positive, it was a huge team work, we were very open what we want, so we communicated very well in the plant, I think. And based on that I think it was a huge success and finally we could offer products on a current level and not an average. It was one of the major projects. Then for sure, from an financial point of view, it was a good year, we could make investment, which we were not allowed to do in advance. It was a really good team work, the leader was extremely open, that is what we need, we couldn't finance certain aspects in the past and knew we were very flexible with shifting around the investments. These were two major aspects. From a personal point of view with the IT manager I had there I had a very good development plan, so he was interested in going abroad but on the other side he was struggling leaving Hungary. So what we made we contacted the overall IT team in Germany and they found an position on a project based plan and then he even had the plan to go as an expat to Germany or South America. I didn't remember if he is now abroad, but that was an example that we really worked good together. From a controlling point of view, that was the part where I was struggling at the beginning, be-

cause I was really good in the job, so I knew what and how to do but the people from Hungary, their work behavior was really good but they had a different approach, they were always hiding positive aspects and said there are always negative aspects to align, so we said ok we do not delete this approach but we can somehow align it to our approach and after a period of three or four months they got used to it and even have seen the advantages out of it, so due to the positive aspects they were willing to change, so to sum up I had a good experience with them, still standing in contact with them. A negative thing was we hired a new person, she had no controlling background but excellent finance knowledge and she was really good in language skills and quit open minded but she was struggling with the environment, she was working in, it was really, well how to say it, she was in the first career steps and she didn't trust a lot and she wasn't feeling really well in the relationship with his boss, so then we said it does not work out maybe we needed to split but we decided to give another half a year change and after that we found out that it was working out slowly and was better for both sides, she is still in the company and I think now it's a good entitlement for both sides.

I: Ok, the next question, keep in mind you have mostly three stages, the preparation, the phase during the assignment and the reintegration, what do you see was the most critical stage? And why?

P: I need to say it was quiet good from all stages I don't have so many negative things to tell. Perhaps from the locals point of view, there is someone coming from Germany taking the job, which perhaps one of the company itself had the change to take the job, that was perhaps negative from the organizational point of view but I have to permit there weren't really negative things, always when I wanted to travel to Germany they organized it and could organized it with business meetings in Germany. So the whole organization was quite flexible so I could arrange a 'late Monday' and maybe will not be the last person staying in the office on Friday, so there were also late flights available at Friday at night so that people do not have the feeling I am only there from Tuesday to Thursday. That was really good. So there was really no bad topic.

I: Ok, and the preparation before, was this also satisfying?

P: For Hungary it was more like so you go down there, you check, see how the environment is down there, how the city will look like, how people can and probably will react, that was all pre-arranged.

I: Did you took some trainings?

P: Yes, there was an integration training for two days in Germany but that was shit, I need to say, there were handling it a little bit how is a typical German and Hungarian. On the one side yes it was a bit of connecting with the Hungarian culture but on the other side it was based on a lot of stereotypes, Germans are only working and are strict and Hungarians are in this way maybe the same but might be more open minded and their management style is different. But to be honest I learned more about this during my assignment. So to be honest that wasn't the best part.

I: And the administrative things were all prepared?

P: Yes there the company is very prepared. You got a calculation how your salary will look like and your net salary, so from that point you could already know what you ex-

pect. With the flat they were arranging the movement, laundry, car insurance from Germany and Hungary, so you don't need to worry about that kind of stuff, you look only what they are doing and you don't need to do anything. Maybe with a family it would be more difficult. So the during assignment phase might be the most difficult part because you need to adapt at some stage to the new culture.

I: Ok, perfect, now coming a little bit more to the aspect of reintegration, the point in time when you returned back to Germany, can you briefly describe me how was your reintegration and what emotions you felt when returning?

P: The process of reintegration we have a yearly employee dialogue meeting, thinking about what was good what was bad, which training you are interested in and during that, as you are an expat, they have an even stronger focus on that, it was sure when I am coming back I was interested also in other areas not only in financing and controlling, then it was not clear if I am coming back to Germany or going to another country. So after 1 1/2 years I had an interview with the business unit manager, he was in Hungary and they offered me at this time a job in US, also as financial manager. In this interview was also an integration manager, as they had a team for this in America, but I said I don't want this, I want to finish the experience in Hungary right now and also I said it's the same kind of job so it's better to do minimum two years in Hungary instead of changing again after 1 1/2 years and he agreed to it and said that we will have another interview two months later and at that time was no job offer in Germany so I thought what they might offer me and he told me in the interview we have a possible job offer but I can't tell you more now, after another two months I had another interview, so in this interview they offered me a job in Moers for a long time base. So this might have been a very emotional moment for me because firstly I didn't expect this kind of job offer and get back to Germany. So my girlfriend lived in Duisburg, so as we already had a relationship on long distance I was really happy to have the change to live with her together in a city on a long term base. So I was really happy as I didn't expect this job offer and a job I like and then a job offer for a long period in Moers. The job was a Head of plant manager, for a plant in Moers and a plant in UK. It was nice as it was not only coming back to Germany but staying on an international base by supporting UK. So there was not a long discussion about this job, just discussing the final salary.

I: So thinking of your reintegration you relate only positive emotions?

P: Yes, so the reintegration in Germany itself it was hard at the beginning, not because I was back in Germany but because the team I entered in Germany was difficult to handle, all team members had a lot of job experiences and some of them even thought that they could get the job. So I was struggling at the beginning to get use to the new job challenges. So all the cultural things were fine.

I: So the most difficult issues you faced were work related?

P: Yes.

I: So facing these work-related issues can you think of any reasons why these reintegration problems could have been arise. So you mentioned the troubles within the team, can you think of any reasons why this occurred, if maybe a contact with the team before or some trainings could have been helpful?

P: The point in time when it was announced that I will take the job was at the Christmas party here in Moers, where I didn't participated and as I already mentioned some of the people thought that they might take the job as well, that was probably not the best point in time for announcing. And then the plant leader at this time, we had some overlapping time but from my point of view the overlapping time we had, was not very efficient. I had a very strategic approach to work but he had a more hand down approach. So we didn't had an agenda to visit the machines and get in touch. In relation to Hungary, where I got the time to get to know everyone. So here it was more difficult in Germany by re-entering in the new team. So the handover time should have been longer in my point of view and with a clear agenda what should be the main focus for the first month. In general we had different viewpoints on many things, which was a bit challenging in the beginning.

I: Ok, what kind of support did you received from your company when reintegrating, like trainings, reintegration programs, something was offered?

P: I don't remember that something was offered but as I remember there weren't trainings offered. Anyhow in Hungary I still had regular contact with the colleagues from Germany. But I doubt reintegration trainings would have been necessary, I stayed in Europe, there were little cultural differences only. It wasn't coming from South America and needing to adapt to a European lifestyle again.

I: Ok, did you settled any agreements with your company for your reintegration? You already mentioned that they offered you a new job, which is a pretty good agreement but did you settled any further agreements beforehand?

P: No, neither upfront. Upfront was only the job offer, which was a new development for myself, which gave me the feeling that they will not leave me out of sight. More than this we didn't agreed on nothing more. But I have to admit also not needed.

I: Ok, you might have developed some expectations before coming back to Germany, can you say these expectations were met or do you think you had expectations which were not fulfilled?

P: Difficult to say, sure, you have expectations. From one side for example it was really good to finally rent a flat in Moers with my girlfriend. Furthermore it was hard with the private life because in Hungary I had my free time, designing for myself and maybe here the expectations were wrongly set because I needed to adapt now sharing a life, so every day, with another person and you have no time at the end of the day to really forget because you are directly in conversation. It was not a long adjustment period but it was a bit difficult, from what I remind. From a job point of view I think with the change of the job I would have experienced the same even if I would have not taken an international assignment as the new job in production and sales is a completely different area, you need different skills, you need to learn all that, so the adjustment face was simply there.

I: On the other hand what kind of self- motivated incentives did you personally do to reintegrate?

P: We hide a new flat, which was for sure a big thing, we ensured that we are living close to Düsseldorf to have an attractive location nearby. Then we made a lot of trips for visiting families. It was now more spontaneous, in Hungary it was all planned like

next weekend I am in Duisburg with my girlfriend, the weekend after I am visiting my family and the holidays were also planned a lot of front due to the plane tickets and that have left from one day to another, which was good but before was less planned. So we had to learn what are we doing with our time. So we have travelled a lot during the two years in Hungary and now at the weekend you sit on the sofa and doing nothing. So the feeling of every weekend you experience something new because you travel a lot was now gone, which was good but also a little bit frustrating not knowing what to do, so there was a little adjustment needed.

I: Ok, how have you kept contact with friends and colleagues?

P: With colleagues it was really easy, like with phone and emails. It's also because there is a huge finance community, as I came from finance I knew a lot of networks, so that was really good to stay in touch and at that point in time I think XY invented something like Facebook, called XY where you can chat with your colleagues but we haven't chat a lot but we had a regular contact. And with friends, I have three really good friends and with them I am not that much in contact, anyhow, whenever I had the change we arranged meetings with friend, also some visited me in Hungary. Same with my family, my sister and Carena's sister went down, several times. So we had a good time always, because the flights were cheap, it was not a big deal.

I: And as you mentioned you undertook a different job when you came back home, can you describe me how was the satisfaction on this job and how was the atmosphere when you entered the job? You already told me about some problems in this new job, were you satisfied in this new job?

P: I have stopped the job now since May 2017 and therefore for me I already made a break with this job. During that job the first year was really exiting, I learned a lot of new things, I met a lot of people and I was travelling a lot. And even if I mentioned a lot of negative things the total outcome was still okay. The market went down but anyhow we had a positive result. In the second year it changed a little bit, the market were still down, people left and this was definitely effecting the organization and the atmosphere. And third year was really critical for both side, one plant was closed and the other plant needed to take products from this plants. People needed to leave the company, friends you had before where now strange to you, and there was a general feeling of uncertainty. That's why the third year was really difficult, but still I need to say that it was a really good experience.

I: And within this job could you implement some new learned knowledge or skills you have gained abroad or couldn't you implement what you have learned?

P: Implement is maybe the wrong word, you used the experience you made over there in Hungary but it were completely two different jobs as it was now more important to think about product quality and product portfolio. I think the work knowledge I have learned in Hungary didn't helped me in this new position. But I had a good financial knowledge background, which helped in general but not specific for this job.

I: So maybe more learning soft skills and using the experience living in another country?

P: For sure, for example leading people was something I can always use. Beforehand I had three till four people to lead and in Hungary in total around twenty people, so it was helping learn how to lead.

I: So one last question, even if your experiences seemed to be really nice, can you think of any improvement options your company can implement to guarantee an even better reintegration?

P: I don't know what they are doing know, to be honest, but what I would do different is definitely to have longer handover period with your former job colleague and especially in my case that would have been needed as I wasn't in concern with sales and production. That would definitely help. Because I wasn't with family and kids that wasn't a point to adjust, but from people I know it was quit frustrating, frustrating is maybe the wrong word, but they face a difficult situation, when you going overseas as an expat money it's not the issue, you are often quiet accepted, maybe they don't see you as a long term leader but you're quit accepted in the firm and you have leading skills and a good network, so you have some advantages but when they come back you have to work a lot with the new job again and its normal for the family in foreign country they stay in their own and do a lot of social staff and stay in touch with locals, it's a positive experience for them but when they are coming back its difficult to get a job , especially for the women, and an appropriate house. And when you are integrating and your wife is at home its difficult for her. When overseas people try to connect as they have something in common as they face the same problems as the others, and if this is not working in the home country now it's very frustrating for example finding a new kindergarten. So going abroad the company helps you with everything like finding a kindergarten, school, a house or flat, all insurance but when coming back home it's just coming back home and they don't help you, perhaps they are helping a little bit at the beginning but it's not you are getting full support, and its quit hard to organize everything on top of your daily job. In my case Carena and I had the same goal where we wanted to move and that we wanted to move for a longer period to a city, so interesting and exciting about finding a new house and Carena was already connected in Duisburg. So coming back its difficult, at least as what I have heard.

I: And with which purpose have you gone to the international assignment? Was it like offering a new position or project based?

P: It was offering a new position, it was a career step for myself before I was Head of controlling for big plant, the overall amount of controlling wasn't different but the finance and IT part was new. Also I wanted to go abroad once again, I wanted to learn new cultures, anyhow it was Europe, it's not like going to Asia or South America.

Transcript 2 - Participant 2 (Women)

Interviewer: Jamila Becker

Location: Participants' office

Position: Human Resource Manager - Freelancer

Duration: 31 minutes

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

I: So, just to give you a short overview about the interview. The interview will be around 20-30 minutes. Anytime you have a question just ask me or if you want to add something. First I will ask you four preliminary questions and then some open questions where you can tell me about your experience. First of all just to introduce myself. I am student at the Rhine Waal University, studying International Business and Social Sciences and on behalf of my bachelor thesis I am conducting expert interviews within the topic of expatriation, and especially the reintegration of expatriates.

I: Ok perfect, then we will start with some general questions. In which company and position you are working?

P: Actually I am kind of a freelancer, as an consultant for expatriates, who where send from global companies abroad or independent international engineers, who are going abroad for projects. So I am guiding them. This is what I do in the expat business. My other business is Coaching, seminar and workshops, but for other topics.

I: For how long have you been working in the context of expatriation?

P: In the context of expatriation now for 22 years.

I: 22 years always in the context of expatriation or did you covered also other parts?

P: Actually first I studied an MBA of economy, where I realized what I actually don't want to do. Then I changed my perspective and started studying people and their relations, so I became sociologists, became psychologist, to see how people relate in work situation, to make them believe this is good or not, and then I realized when you are abroad it really makes a difference from which cultural background you are coming from, because what happens is the Germans are like "Ah I know everything" and then they are coming from different cultural backgrounds for example Thai cultures, which are more shy. I have been living in Far east so I am quit exposed to this culture, what happened then that German leaders try to dominant the situation but they failed and then I got this idea to help them out, I needed to support them and becoming aware of their cultural situation.

I: What are typical task when you speak of an consultant for expats?

P: So, the main topic is really that people who are going abroad they do not really expect what is coming, those people who decide for a person, who is going to be an expat, this is most probably the percentage who have never been abroad themselves, and then they make wrong promises, like you will be great, you will be paid, but some-

times money is not a good motivation factor, sometimes it's better to be personally successful. But then on the other hand it is very difficult to create what does this mean.

I: So, how does your support look like?

P: I support them with trainings, so one or two day trainings or workshops, to give them some general information about the country itself, they are going to, and then usual Do's and Don'ts, but it's not really that you can book that. I have been living abroad for a long time and everything I am sharing with my clients is out of my experience, there are so many faults I stepped into abroad, so I can really talk about my own experience, in order to prevent my own clients of making the same mistakes and then they are like "Oh this can really happen, nobody told me this, are you crazy". And then I always answer this is exactly what can happen and you need to be prepared for this. So they answer "Nobody told me this, it's so typical German" and then we are really laughing, because Germans have a different way, they are driven by the money-approach, but that's not the thing. Then also the question is, as 90% till 95% are male, who are send abroad and often send with their family, what is going to happen with the wife, sure then in most of the cases there is a wife behind with a very good education, they are bank managers, teachers etc. what are they going to do. So there are many companies, who saying the wife can make different things like a drawing course or a cooking course and then the answer of this women is frustrated "I am not about to draw, I am not stupid from my brain", so what are you going to tell them? Take a sabbatical of three years and drawing pictures the whole day?! So you really need an alternative for them that they can create their identity abroad because it's from one day to another, they cut off their identity. So drawing classes, tennis classes or shopping is not what they are looking for. Also kids can be a concern, then you are asking what about the children. They need help by finding sport clubs, peer groups, so you need to design or help them do design their life abroad, otherwise they are failing, and my job is to prevent them from failing. Like 10 years ago it was like this, when I was working for international firm, they were like "ah don't worry they are there for a week and then they can adjust". But nowadays companies are saving money and may save in this preparation, which means in my job I need to prepare them precisely, so they leave Germany on a Friday, they are landing on a Saturday, wherever they are landing, they have Saturday to unpack, Sunday for adjusting and Monday they need to start working. So from this day on they need to function 100%, so they need to be prepared locally, and then this process has completely changed. 10 years ago the preparation was conducted abroad, you go there try out and if it fails it doesn't matter but nowadays its much to expensive only to try and afterwards face a failure, so nowadays in terms of image and philosophy of companies, they send high-qualified people and train them locally, we prepare them extremely precisely of what they need, so then they have two days to adjust and for these people it's enough and then its fine.

I: Ok, perfect, is it actually that these people who are coming to your trainings, are those people who will be sent abroad from companies and might get your training additionally to the training from the company?

P: Yes, so its normally that they are advised to get in touch with me. Nowadays my clients have this obligation of these trainings. So you need to undergo certain trainings before you can work in these countries. Like 10 years ago it was optional, so that was fine. When I was living abroad 22 years ago, no one ask me if I have done an international training and the word intercultural training was like excuse me what kind of class

is this, what is it? Now you can study it, as you know writing a bachelor thesis about it, and it became much more interesting.

I: And, are you preparing people to go to other countries or also people coming from other countries and will stay in Germany?

P: Yes, I do both expatriation and inpatriation. I prepare people going to these countries I had been living in, which means Singapore, Bangkok, Thailand and Philippians but since I am German I also support inpatriates. As I have been living in Germany nearly my whole life, I exactly know their mindset when they are coming here, as I know the problematic of adjustment in another country, it was the same feeling when I was going abroad, missing my family, strange food, missing Frühlingsquark and Lakritz. I really understand what it means when they have to cut their roots.

I: And, have you once been working in a company where you supported expats as well?

P: Yes, this was in a company in Bangkok, it's a psychological consultancy in their national hospital in Bangkok, so we had cases where people were suffering from the local culture, mainly Americans. And then they started drinking, the wife got depression, the kids got eating disorder, so we talked a lot what is different and they were like everything is different and nothing will change. I worked there for 3 years and it was really intensive because it was always about culture.

I: Then coming to the more open question, just please briefly describe me your experience with your work?

P: I observed that people are more aware of going abroad, intercultural skills become a daily habit. Each and every global player they talk about intercultural diverse workgroups, international philosophy, international feedback culture, so people are more aware of the internationality, the world is a big village now, we know each other. Sometimes it happens, being an expatriate, that you see people, you know from many years ago in Singapore and they tell you "Yeah we went some years to Africa and now we are back to Singapore".

I: Can you tell me some, maybe two positive and two negative issues that directly come to your mind when thinking about to manage international assignments?

P: Positive is open-mindedness and flexibility, tolerance of problems, negative is difficulties in reintegration, difficulties in keeping friendship with people at home.

I: Good, and what do you think is most poorly managed in an international assignment, what is maybe the most critical issue a company is struggling to manage?

P: There is most of the time, I have observed, no systematic approach. It's often that expats don't know whom to contact from the company when moving abroad, there are questions who is the person to contact. And then it's not sustainable, they have the training here and then are send abroad and then there is no chance to link with a local partner, like there is someone over there who can pick them up and is there for them abroad, like for 2 months, they need a support, like is everything okay, can I do anything for you, so you had the training with Petra and now you are here since 2 months

how do you feel, so this is not happening. The training was for something, because somebody would connect to what I have established beforehand.

I: Ok, thinking about what is poorly managed, what do you think is poorly managed by HR?

P: HR, many of them are not having a clue how the HR structure abroad is working, so they take all the ideas from the German system and then they have no idea how it works in the other countries and they come up with their own idea with their own culture and profiling, so this is what really drives me crazy sometimes because they just don't know how it feels. So I would really recommend every HR manager who is in contact with expatriates, please have one semester abroad, then you know what you are talking about, because they don't have a clue what they are talking about, how the person feel and what they are suffering from. But then most of the HR reaction is you have a lovely life over there, you have a lot of money you should be happy, but can't imagine it's about different things, that you can suffer from homesickness. They are underestimating the impact on a person's mindset.

I: Then on the other hand what do you think most of the expat do wrong?

P: They feel that they need to save the world, and everything at the same time. They put a lot of pressure and a lot of workload on them self. They feel responsible for everything in the company. Because most of them are sent as very responsible people abroad but that doesn't mean that you are responsible for everything in the company.

I: So we have some different stages within an assignment, like the preparation, during-assignment phase and the reintegration. What do you think is the most difficult stage to manage?

P: So, we talk about preparation a lot, there is a lot of change but we still underestimate the reintegration. But why is reintegration necessary as I am coming back to the place I started from. You have changed a lot but the place probably did not changed. You can't share your life or experience with people, because then they might call you arrogant as you may report I had a housemaid, I had a pool boy, I had a driver and so on and so on. What they see is the sunny side but there are a lot of problems coming along, and maybe people at home do not understand that this can cause problems as well or what did the whole experience with you, it's not only about shopping but you might had some sickness, there were maybe even natural disaster like an earthquakes, whatever you had.

I: Ok, focusing a little bit more on the reintegration, so from your experience working in your company, can you tell me how normally reintegration processes are managed in a company?

P: Poorly. It's like we offer you an reintegration process but we are happy if you will not use it because its costly. There might be some programs but companies argue that you don't need it "You are a German come on you don't need a reintegration program". But it's completely underestimated. Most people I supported, there were no reintegration processes when they came back.

I: Do you know about some kinds of trainings, which were implemented for the reintegration?

P: Mostly not. But trainers like me, so who do independent trainings, they also do reintegration trainings and since I am German I do a lot of these reintegration processes. The last five years many reverse cultural trainers came on the market, which is good. The word reverse cultural shock didn't exist 10 years ago, the impact is still underestimated.

I: Can you describe me how such a reintegration training look like? What do you do?

P: We do like a plan, or let's say, an analysis of the current situation and what you would like to share about your experience, as they need some kind of window to share their experiences, as they cannot share with anyone else, as they might feel embarrassed for example because they went to the country club 3 times a week, but that's normal in the country abroad, or for example if they played golf, in Germany it's like "Oh you play golf so you are in a better social group". So it's about sharing and planning. Do you have any ideas about your sports, how about your contacts and then bring it in line, what is your most important wish, getting in contact with family and then helping them reorganize in the school system, apply for certain school things and how to recognize some certificates from the school. So then I help them to reorganize everything. Then also checking with the no bread-winning spouse, if she is willing to return to their old job or is willing to start from new, so giving them time to adjust again, at least 3 months, and then not to put them self under pressure, everything is fine.

I: Do you know if the HR departments or supporting functions settle some kind of agreements with the expat for the reintegration for example when you coming back we might offer you this or this?

P: So, the situation is that a lot of expats are send back to Germany as they are very expensive. So nowadays you send high potential abroad, but then only for one or two years and then to make them coming back to Germany, so that they are still bendable and trainable, because if someone is abroad for too long you can't retrain them on certain headquarter philosophy. So the contracts are shorter and then the headquarters try to have some kind of cheaper contracts, so they send a youngster, single, so they don't have to pay for a partner or kids. And the overwork is not an issue, as you don't have a family you stay easy 12 hours in the office.

I: Do you think some expats have different expectations when they are coming back, so do you assume it's necessary that the company will do some kind of agreements beforehand?

P: The big conflict is often the expat expects to climb higher and higher, but it's not always said that they can use their experience or capabilities they have learned abroad. So they need to be aware to be back to this just being a number in a big system, and then being abroad means they are a hero in a little kingdom, and here there are nobody they are number 40711 and then these ego-problem is big, you need to find a routine back to your daily business, it's like losing face, losing power, losing motivation because now I have a boss, and the boss has a boss, and the boss's boss and I am in the whatever fifth step of the hierarchy and abroad I am number one or at least number two and I have connection to every kind of secret and I am involved in companies strategic meetings and now, back in the headquarter, I am no longer, because I am a small little employee.

I: Do you know if expats are also supported in non-working issues?

P: Yes, they do, most of them they have a personal HR service, so they support with the school systems, doctors and so on, there is a reintegration support within the company.

I: Do you think for the expat it's nice that the companies support them also in non work-related issues or do you think this might be uncomfortable for those people?

P: I think the company should support also in non-work related issues in order to give a certain appreciation to value the expat, as such experiences have a big big impact on your whole life structure and I think this needs to be appreciated with some kind of extra treat. And I think expatriation is not typical German, if you go to America for example they have so many expatriates or Australia, so they are really used to this, so there they have a lot of expat communities and also Germans have quiet strong expat communities abroad but missing within Germany for inpats. Maybe because for Germans it's still strange to think why are you coming from abroad to Germany.

I: Can you describe the situation when an expat returns home. Like keep in mind administrative things or emotions. What comes to your mind when thinking about the situation when the expat returns back to the home-office?

P: The first impression of them is everything is easy, but then the second impression is everything is more difficult than before. Comparable to the honeymoon phase and the cultural shock abroad. And the thing is Germans are not used to ask for help, so they are not willing to ask for support.

I: Can you think of certain challenges the expat might experience when coming back, like the most critical things?

P: So, the most critical things, is to find a work life balance again, to connect with old friends and to share experience with other people, in which way and to which degree.

I: Can you think of any improvement options a company could undertake to guarantee a better reintegration process?

P: Yes, that there are supposed to be reintegration coaching's, and this supposed to be obligatory. So not optional and really like a coaching session once a month for six months for example. And then really to have a handout with the communicating partner, because what I experienced was with all of my clients they were wondering who is responsible in my company and then I was the one to find out who is responsible for the expat. So this should be focused on a more obligatory and more sustainable approach.

I: And also thinking of improvement options you can already do during the assignment, which will help the reintegration afterwards, do you have some ideas?

P: To have a kind of reverse cultural preparation training abroad, let's say four weeks before moving back, like what to expect and also the whole mindset change, the psychology of migration or remigration, that is going to happen that you are not feeling well, that you might be sad, so planning your farewell procedure, it's also good to have a good farewell as you never know if you are going to return to this place.

Transcript 3 - Participant 3 (Men)

Interviewer: Jamila Becker

Location: Participant's house

Position: Team Leader - Expatriate

Duration: 30 minutes

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

I: So, just to give you a short overview about the interview. The interview will be around 20-30 minutes. Anytime you have a question just ask me or if you want to add something. First I will ask you four preliminary questions and then some open questions where you can tell me about your experience. First of all just to introduce myself. I am a student at the Rhine Waal University, studying International Business and Social Sciences and on behalf of my bachelor thesis I am conducting expert interviews within the topic of expatriation, and especially the reintegration of expatriates.

I: So firstly in which year and how long did you realized your international assignment?

P: Actually it was twofold, but the one we are going to talk about was in May 2010 until June 2013. So more than 3 years.

I: In which country did you do it?

P: That was Qatar. No one knew Qatar, I needed to look it but. Nowadays everyone knows it, but I needed to check where it is, how many people are there. So now Qatar is very famous.

I: In which organization have you been working at this point in time?

P: You mean where I am working? The company is called XY in XY. It's a quite international company.

I: And are you still working in this company?

P: I do.

I: Perfect, than we are coming to the more principal part. So, please briefly describe me your experience abroad.

P: Different culture, very different culture. Disaster environment, desert, and rocky desert, which means leaving the capital, there was nothing to do. Otherwise family-friendly, that's typical for the Arabic world. What else.. luxury.

I: Can you tell me some positive and negative things coming to your mind, when remembering the time abroad?

P: Then I need to think a little bit, one negative thing was maybe, they had a sponsorship-agreement there. So the sponsorship goes from a local to a business, then the business itself sponsors the employees, and then in return employees sponsor fami-

lies. If this was all set up, you have to install many processes, and get a lot of paper work done, for us this meant that we needed up to 6 months to settle with this. In my case it meant that I needed up to 6 months for getting a phone contract for my wife or the drivers license permission, that was really weird. So, it's just their law, maybe coming from the situation where a lot of expat left the country when there was an economic crash, and all the loans for cars etc. were not paid. So actually you are not allowed to leave the country when your sponsor does not allow you to leave the country. So we got something like an exit-visa, that mean we personally could enter and leave the country as we liked, any time. But, it's still a negative, how do you say, I remember that as a negative point. Because we were used to the freedom we have here in such a country. Anyways, the whole paper work took a lot of time. Positive, I think the family-friendliness, for instance in a public swimming pool, you have certain times when male person can only swim and certain times where only women can swim and then time slots for families, which also existed in many public services, like sport clubs, cinemas. So on the one hand its strange that its separated but as we are a family we could benefit from such time slots.

I: And, in relation of the work?

P: Positive, the international context, you are working with anyone from everywhere, that was extremely interesting from the beginning, so you widen your horizon actually. And from the work negative, yes for me personally I went to the Middle-East, and then I was assigned to a project that was in Egypt, so personally I needed to travel a lot, every 2 weeks, 5 days long, I needed to travel to Cairo, which means I was 50% of the assignment in Qatar and the rest of the time in Cairo. Therefore the adaption in Qatar was more difficult, as we needed more time to settle, to find friends and to integrate. And as well as I needed this spouse allowance that was very difficult, in the beginning she couldn't do much, she needed to wait that I return from the work.

I: So, keeping in mind, that an international assignment always has mostly three stages: Preparation, During-Assignment and the Reintegration, what do you assume to be the most difficult stage for you?

P: Critical is difficult. Because the preparation, there was actually none, or at least not that I can remember. So I was given a fact sheet, which was like Do's and Don'ts, other than that I can't remember, actually they send me 2 weeks beforehand to see the country. But no cultural trainings, nothing. Coming back, was actually easy, as I knew everything there, I did not changed the team, the department has a local team here in Essen and there in Qatar, and we were collaborating a lot. So my work did not changed. Of course, the project changed, but that was not causing a headache.

I: Coming more focused to the reintegration, can you describe me how went your reintegration, maybe related emotions?

P: So, coming back from Qatar, the first thing I experienced was the environmental change, the change of humanity. We came from a dry country back here, that's the first thing you notice. And then for sure the culture, that was always a relief to come back to Germany, because Qatar is very different, different is the word. I think relief is the word which covered it best. In Qatar it becomes up to 45 degrees, so you can't spend much time outside, and here you could do this. When we were on a holiday at Christmas here, that's what I meant with relief. Anyways at the end it was a decision for myself to

continue there. After the three years they offered me to continue in Qatar but we decided to come back home. From a career perspective it was really attractive there, as there is a lot of construction business, of course you have much more opportunities there. So we said let's step one step back and not advancing more in the career path, but therefore coming back to Germany, and that was a relief for us to leave, we were not forced, it was just our decision.

I: And how have you experienced the re-entry of your family?

P: The little one was too little to experience something. Otherwise I can't remember much trouble with the other kid, maybe it was an transition of a few week but nothing difficult. With us, me and my wife, coming back home I continued to work in the same company in a team I knew already. For my wife, it was again to find a new job. And then luckily we found a position, even in the same company, which is not that normal. Otherwise we had a full restart here in Essen, we have never lived before in Essen, so we didn't had friends in Essen yet (only colleagues), as we are not originally from here. So we had a full restart, finding a place to live, finding friends, and this takes a lot of time in a growing an environment. At least we needed a year to settle in.

I: What do you think was the most critical thing when you came back home?

P: The most critical, if I have to name the one critical thing, I would say the job. I needed to find new projects in a new gap within the team. There was no alignment or preparation, Christian is coming back and he will have this task, what will happen when I came back. As I am working in a consulting firm it's very project-based, so it's like, there is a project coming up, so you need to take it, even if you don't fit in it. So it was quit uncertain. So it also took a lot of time to settle job vies, so to get used to the new job.

I: So, keep in mind these critical things, can you think of possible reason why this occurred?

P: So the team from the work was not the problem, trainings, it's always in a consulting firm that there are no scheduled trainings but more training on the job, as you are going to be trained for the next project. Anyhow the company offers trainings, like general project management training or how to organize yourself, but that doesn't help, you need to find your role in your team, and therefore they don't have trainings, and if that is not prepared or not guided, then it's simply not the best management they have, and that was maybe the problem in my company, the managers they are waiting for opportunities rather than planning such opportunities.

I: What kind of support did you received, when you returned home?

P: Nothing. With my company you need to organize yourself fully. The only thing they do is paying and organizing the move. Other than that, I cannot recall any support. The other things are on personal scale. So if you have a good manager, who is asking how are you doing can I help you with something, but when you don't have, which was maybe in my case, he weren't asked too much and there were no planned support.

I: Have you wished additional kind of support?

P: Yes, I have wished. But actually now, out of the box, I can't tell you in which area. As I said the nature of this business, there is not much changes to be trained by standard processes. They should have made a plan, but I am facing still these days, with colleagues coming back, they give them their time and settle down, to have a look in three different projects and then they can decide with the manager, which project they like and in which they like to work. I think that's a good approach, as they are given freedom to decide and flexibility on the other hand and so on and also a safe feeling at the same time. With me three years ago it was more like uncertainty what will happen.

I: Have you also wished more support for non-related work issues or did you might felt uncomfortable if they would have helped in family issues?

P: This is quit hard to answer. On the one hand it have been nice to receive more information and help but on the other hand I might have not been wished this help, as they suggest you three different kindergartens to choice from and you don't like any of them, so I think such things I liked to do within my family. And anyhow I knew the country so I didn't need any help with paper work, it's just settle in the region, find a home etc. And I do understand that they can't look for a home for you here, abroad, but not here.

I: Did you settle any agreements with your organization, what job you are going to undertake when you are coming back?

P: No, there wasn't a plan.

I: And you might have had some expectations when you thought of coming back home, can you remember if such expectations were met or was it more disappointing?

P: More disappointing, because I really was looking for my career path in that company, when I came back home. As, they did not have a better idea, they put me on the same project, in which I was working in Qatar, meaning instead of going from Qatar to Cairo I was now going from Germany to Cairo, which was a lot more of travelling. So there was no plan.

I: So have you wished more of career options?

P: At least adaption's, if you come back to the local market, there should be some kind of reintegration effort from your company and in this case it was not actively done.

I: And on the other hand, what did you undertake to reintegrate yourself?

P: You start meeting your neighbors, when you walk the dog, in the kindergarten. We took our private efforts to reintegrate. But that was actually not a reintegration as being abroad, it was the first time in Essen. If you put Qatar aside, we would have done the same thing.

I: How have you kept contact with friends and families abroad?

P: Internet, Skype etc. The company even paid us a phone line to call contacts in Germany and the internet in Qatar is also free of charge.

I: As you already mentioned they didn't offered you a new job, can you describe me your satisfaction in your new job when you came back home and the overall atmosphere in the team or company?

P: The overall satisfaction.. job-related there wasn't too much in the beginning, it all evolved. If I would say today I am quite happy what I am doing there, and the project I lead, if I call three years ago there wasn't too much excitement, to be honest, it was quite difficult. I took up to one year as first satisfaction came in, that was a quit difficult time, I need to look after myself, work- related and outside the company as well. It was all self-managed.

I: And how was the atmosphere within the team back in Germany?

P: In our case I was positioned in the same team, with whom I worked in this project from Qatar. The case was, the employees on this project in Qatar earned a lot more money. Which means, if you come back to the German team, on the one side you get the full support, as you worked abroad under different conditions and keeping the company quiet a life, on the other hand you get more money than the people in Germany, so there arose a feeling of enviousness. That is something you have to overcome individually, but on the other hand it's their free choice, they have been offered the same job abroad. It wasn't much of a problem, but anyhow it was there.

I: Could you implement new learned knowledge and skills?

P: Yes, of course. A lot. Soft skills and cultural things in many regards, dealing with different cultures. I found a lot of friend over there, we made friends we still meet in Germany.

I: So, one last question, can you think of any improvement options your company could undertake to improve the reintegration process?

P: Providing a better environment for the people coming back, in returns of describing a more clear, how to say, a clear path that they would go when they come back. But on the other hand I understand in a small company, with mine, it's difficult, as there is no room for developing a career path, so they can't do much on it. And in that regard there is not much I can say, but I think it would be better if they would have expressed or subjected something.

Transcript 4 - Participant 4 (Men)

Interviewer: Jamila Becker

Location: Seminar Room in the Rhine Waal University

Position: CEO Vice President - Expatriate

Duration: 31 minutes

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

I: So, just to give you a short overview about the interview. The interview will be around 20-30 minutes. Anytime you have a question just ask me. First of all just to introduce myself. I am a student at the Rhine Waal University, studying International Business and Social Sciences and on behalf of my bachelor thesis I am conducting expert interviews within the topic of expatriation. So firstly in which year and how long did you realized your international assignment?

P: This assignment, we talk about, in May 2014 till May 2016, the family came over in August 2014 and went back to Germany in January 2016.

I: In which country did you realize your international assignment?

P: In India.

I: In which company have you been working at this point in time?

P: XY company.

I: And you are still working in this company?

P: Oh yes.

I: So now coming to the principal part, please briefly describe me your experience abroad.

P: For us and for me, it was not jumping into a black box. I was dealing with Indian people for a long time, I was travelling India for a long time. For the last 4 till 5 years I was looking for options to go abroad. But then 2014 there was an international merger in the company and then this opportunity came up. Then I discussed with my family, I mean I have told them long before that I want to do it some point in time and then we decided for it as the opportunity came up. So, this was nothing decided by shock or by alarm, it was more a long term thinking process. And that also made it very easy, I had lots of contacts and friends in India, so local people. I knew even 80% from the team in India, what I was taking over as responsible person and even some key stakeholder of the organization. So that made it very easy for me to transition into it.

I: Can you tell me some positive and some negative outcomes from your international assignment?

P: I can probably refer to 20 positive things and not so many negative things. The most positive thing is for sure, to live in a different culture, integrate with your family, enjoy

life in a very different culture and gain some strength, especially for the kids, the language, how they deal with foreign cultures. For me, it has been kind of ideal job. I was the vice president, CEO of a part of the organization, so I had so many responsibilities I would not get in USA or Germany. So I was responsible for an entire business, profit and loss, which is nearly impossible to find somewhere else, so I could for 2 till 3 years really work where I liked to work. Negative, I mean this country is not easy, you have a lot of pollution, lot of noise, probably you won't stay longer than 2 till 3 years in such an environment. Probably today companies would not send families with kids in such a polluted environment. So, for a time it's okay, but not for longer. So environmental things mostly. Culturally, we got used to everything, different rules, attitudes. Never on time, you always be late. You have to learn but it's not a big thing, you just accept at the end of the day.

I: Keeping in mind, that an assignments has mostly three stages, preparation, the assignment itself and the reintegration. What do you assume to be the most difficult stage?

P: By far the most difficult is the preparation. So in our case coming back to the old place, to our old house that's easy. Due to preparation, there is a lot of processes where you need to go through, signatures, paperwork, iterative loops with contracts, than the first versions of the contract they do not reflect what you have aligned with the management, so it's, it's very typical, it's not only me, I have people I send people on assignments, so even on the other side you can observe this, it's never straight through, it's always go front and back and always you face some stages of frustration, where you think Oh my goodness, I will not do this. The company is not given that or this for example think of accommodation, if you are looking for a flat or house, so the company is taking care for housing but then you realize the houses are way more expensive than what the company gives you for accommodation, and then it's really hard to find and you have only a given period given to find something, which then puts a lot of pressure on you and then maybe how the rules are being interpreted.

Interviewer: So the company is not helping you searching accommodation, just paying for it?

Interviewee: No, they offer you an allowance, that's a monthly allowance you have, and then you might be lucky to find something or you might be not and then the trouble starts. And it happens to everybody nearly I know.

I: And do you have another example why the preparation is difficult?

P: Yes, I think also, not so easy to align time vice everything, because you only have certain window to travel, so you can't be 4 weeks in a role in the host country, then you might come as a business trip for 2 weeks to visit the new country and within these two weeks you need to organize all the paperwork for example, our company is hiring contractors for certain services, like housing or registration, and you have to contact these people, find a way explain them what you want, and then find the right time line, and then at the end everything is there, I think it's impossible.

I: Then coming a little bit more to the reintegration, can you describe me briefly how your reintegration went for example what emotions did you felt when coming back home?

P: As I said for us it was the easiest part, so we came back in our old environment, so we didn't rented out our house, so our house was there, we just went back to our house. I had some agreements with the kid's school, so the kids went back there, so that the kid's could went back to their old classes, which was also not taken for granted. So they went back to their old sport clubs like soccer, so only after I would say after two or three weeks it was all like before for them. For me it was not really a big step or a big emotional thing, even during my delegation time I spend also some time in Germany in form of a business trip. Than even in the summer, school holidays, we spend like 6 till 7 weeks in Germany. So coming back was not too challenging. So that was not too emotional.

I: And how have you experienced the re-entry of your family, your wife and your kid's?

P: That was maybe not so easy, especially emotionally. De-touching from your ground, neighbors and friends. Maybe you keep contact with 10 or 20% with your people back home and then coming back you might feel a little bit like in a hole for a while. And the way I observed the situation for the kid's it took maybe only 2 or 3 weeks, for my wife it took 2 or 3 months, maybe more, so to reconnect and also start all their earlier activities, like sport, meeting friends, there I would say at least three months. Anyhow my wife was not fully in work before we left and she is doing the same activity right now, which is not full time, only a few hours per week.

I: So, what was the most difficult issue you faced during the reintegration? Also it was easy for you, just think about the whole situation, was it the culture, family or friends?

P: So, when I came back I had to start a new job, that was a complex situation, taking over a new team, which is nearly 400 people now. So it took me a lot of energy to overtake a new job. But even in my new team I have an international team, even people from India. So when you are changing the country, coming back to a new job nothing is there, so you have to install new systems, so its work, which needs to be done. That was one thing that strives me, but other, no more significant problems we faced.

I: Ok, so you mentioned with the job in India you were Vice President, where you had a lot of responsibility, coming back to Germany and a lower position, did you felt something like a loss of responsibility or autonomy?

P: What we have is regions and headquarters. Now I am more responsible for headquarters, which is a different set-up, where you have less responsibility, but that was really clear, taking and accepting that job what I have now. But that's not so much related to the country, more related to the job profile.

I: Facing these critical issues, can you think of possible reasons, why this happened, just thinking of the whole process of an assignment (like for example more trainings, communication)?

P: I think, my feeling is that the answer is no. You need to know at a certain level in the hierarchy your are self-responsible for your plan, there is not so much what HR and anybody else can do to make it easy, so I don't see anything what I can expect from my boss that something could be better.

I: Ok, and what kind of support did you received from your company, were there reintegration trainings, cultural trainings?

P: No, because again, we came back to Germany to our old environment. I am not sure, I think it's available, I could surely ask for it or put some request for it but I did not see a need for any training. The delegation centre is responsible to support me and there a certain things which are automated, for example for the move like bringing back your furniture to Germany, but that's more about administrative things not about cultural things or any trainings. One thing what we accepted was a medical check in the company, when we came back and that we did, because India is somehow also a risky environment to stay in.

I: Ok, before coming home did you settled any agreements with your company for the situation when coming back?

P: No, I settled agreements, but verbally, most was verbally, and the contract anyway was in a way, I have signed for an delegation and it was automated it was sure that I am coming back to the organization, which sent me, it does not include in which job or position but they needed to take me back, so I was in a comfortable position from the contract. Anyhow I started on my one, maybe 12 months before coming back, the process was that proximately one year prior at the end of the delegation, I went to my boss and told him I will not continue, because this would have been also an opportunity, based also on family issues, and again this pollution and these things, he said ok its fine, accepted, and then it was up to me to look for opportunities inside the company. And when it came to the last 3 months I had 2 options to decide and then I think 2 months before I came back I signed the new contract for the job I will undertake in Germany.

I: Good, so you might have had some expectations, do you think they were met when you returned?

P: Yes, absolutely. I mean, I spent a lot of time on what is the right job in terms of what I expected, so I am happy.

I: And then on the other hand, what did you do yourself to reintegrate, so self-motivated incentives?

P: That's an interesting questions, the case was that the family came back to Germany in January and I stayed till the end of May or April and this April in Easter Holiday I took over the family during the school break for 2 weeks, which was somehow another goodbye to the country, so we were enjoying something, visiting friends and people, so it was more say goodbye to the host country, then saying hello to your home country, so again it's just coming back to your old environment. I mean, one aspect, there was a significant driver, also not to extend the assignment, my mother was very sick, she died in the meantime on the lung-cancer and my father was somehow in hospital, so it was a really driven situation, so when we came back there were a lot of things we needed to take care of, not so much what we want to do. Because for a longer time, even at the end of the delegation, I took weeks to go to Germany or Europe to take care of these things and then it was even a relief to be there again and have more time.

I: How have you kept contact with friends and colleagues?

P: Also that was easy to me, as I was still connected with people over this time, somehow via the company, so there were international meetings, leadership meetings were we met. For private life, for many many years, as my job is travelling a lot, being in oth-

er places, so with my friends, anyway it's not that regular and I kept that. Somehow that set-up was already there.

I: And, did the company offered you some network?

P: Yes, also in India with other expats.

I: Good, thinking now about the new job, we already talked a bit about the new job, are you satisfied that you took over the new job?

P: Well, in my case, it was also the idea to work a little less, but the job in India was really a 24/7 job, having the full responsibility, which I loved, but when I came back I wanted to have a job, which is still challenging but gives me more flexibility to have more free time, that comes along with little less responsibility for sure, and this balance is exactly what I have been looking for.

I: And how was the overall atmosphere in the new team, like there is a new guy coming from India, not knowing, did the new team accept you well?

P: It was, at least, an experience for me in a way that I had to build up trust in a new way, when I went to India, changed the location and responsibility but when I came back I really jumped out of the traditional company into something completely new, totally different environment, so nobody had a history with me ,a reputation, so it took quiet, at least 6-12 months, to gain back the trusts and the relation in order to run my team.

I: And in this new job, could you implement some new knowledge and skills?

P: Definitely, as I was in India I had the broad range of responsibility, from which some parts are undertaken by people from my team, which I can support, educate or train them what is really going out there, what is really the need for the business. That's the one aspects, the other one is that we are still now in my new organization, we build up teams in India, to establish an international footprint, so reduce people in US or Germany and build them up in India. Now I can bring all my experiences and recommendations in my team.

I: Can you think of any improvement options your company could implement to guarantee a better reintegration process?

P: There is a really general term I see, it's that these international companies have a lot of rules and regulations, which makes it really easy to what is expect and gives you structure, but on the other hand it does not really reflect the need of the individual. So what I would really ask for is that the company is more open to see the specific case of one person with his family and his situation, because even sometimes it feels, once you want something from the company you are not part, like two different companies. So HR tells you what regulations exist and me being 20 years in the company, knowing that's bullshit what you tell me, because I had released better things to other people, so that kind of relation, so I think a lot of people, who are going on delegation will tell you that is not a friendly or real engaging way of helping people, it's more like here is the rule, here is the contract, take it or leave it. That's the kind of situation.

Transcript 5 - Participant 5 (Men)

Interviewer: Jamila Becker

Location: Telephone

Position: Human Resource Manager - Case Manager

Duration: 28 minutes

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

I: So, just to give you a short overview about the interview. The interview will be around 20-30 minutes. Anytime you have a question just ask me or if you want to add something. First I will ask you four preliminary questions and then some open questions where you can tell me about your experience. First of all just to introduce myself. I am a student at the Hochschule Rhein Waal, studying International Business and Social Sciences and on behalf of my bachelor thesis I am conducting expert interviews within the topic of expatriation, and especially the reintegration of expatriates.

I: Ok perfect, then we will start with some general questions. In which company and position you are working?

P: XY as Case Manager for an Asian team, so I am responsible for different regions in Asia.

I: For how long have you been working in the context of expatriation?

P: So let's say, around about 20 years.

I: And which task are you undertaking in the area of expatriation?

P: So, we are responsible to trigger the complete process of an assignment, starting from the preparation of the delegated person, advising them what they have to do, and take care of during the assignment and then also till the end of the assignment.

I: So, now coming to the more open questions. Can you briefly describe me how do you experience this work with international assignments?

P So, this task is very interesting, you have many different obligations, we are also working with different service providers, for example tax service provider or moving provider, we connect the delegates with these service providers and then we are responsible for creating the income calculation during the delegation and you have to deal with the delegates and their families and then also the heads of the business units in Germany and also the business units in the foreign countries, to which the delegates are send to. So all the tasks are very different, so you have to do also a lot of meetings in different languages.

I: So can you tell me some positive and some negative issues you need to face during an assignment?

P: So, first one is most of the time, the income matter, of course as the delegates are often not satisfied with the income they shall receive in the host country, and for exam-

ple if the income is paid in host currency and not in EURO, anyhow that's not possible anymore. Also the personal situation in the host country, regarding housing and schooling, it is often much more difficult when a delegated is going with their family because then the children need to enter new school systems, which are mostly international ones or German ones but then it's often a problem to reintegrate to the German school system after the assignment. Positive, I would say, that most of the delegates, also they have concerns before the delegation, but after delegation they are all satisfied, it was a good development for them self and for the families. I would say 99% of delegates, who have already been abroad, they would agree to another delegation again.

I: So, what do you think was most poorly managed by HR during such an assignment?

P: Everything is perfect organized, with keeping one exception, which is always in concern to the spouse, often the spouse is not taken in account at all, nowadays they keep some support, if they want to work in a host country, but for example if spouses would have worked in Germany, this income would not be considered during the delegation, only the income from the delegated itself. In some cases, for example, delegation could not take place, as the spouse earned more money here in Germany than the husband. But the other guidelines are aligning all the processes very well.

I: And coming to the other perspective, what do you think most expats do wrong in the whole assignment, what do you think they might manage wrong?

P: This issues is really rare because most of the expats we are handling, most expats have been on assignments abroad, it's often the same clientele who is going abroad, so you met some of them several times during these years and in this cases the expectations are not that high, as they are informed really clearly about incomes etc. For sure, they are always some special cases, for example some people have a lot of property in Germany, this should also be considered in the upcoming income of the delegated, but no personal issues are being considered, the things which are caused by the company they will be balanced, but nothing in relation to private issues. And this is maybe where delegated have wrong expectation that they are being supported in private issues.

I: Ok, so as you know, as you already mentioned, an international assignment has mostly 3 stages, the preparation, the assignment itself and the reintegration, which of those stages do you assume to be the most difficult one?

P: For us it's the preparation definitely. At this time, of course, we have the most work to do with the delegates. We align them with a personal meeting, a so called, host briefing, where we discuss all the guidelines and regulations, as soon as they have been started the delegation they will be taken care from the colleagues from the host country department, and for the return, conditions will be clarified from the HR in the host country and then when the expat has returned furthermore the HR in the home country will overtake again, by signing a new contract for example. Which means for us the preparation is the most difficult stage. For the expat I think also the preparation might be the most difficult issue and also the first stage in the new host country, where they need to get used to a new culture, to new colleagues to new rules, strange people, strange country, everything like this. It always depends on the host country but it can take up to 2 years to get used to the new country.

I: Ok, perfect, now coming a little bit more to the reintegration, how is a reintegration process being managed in your company?

P: First we always ask half a year before the end of the delegation, what shall happen after the delegation, so we contact our partner and ask for their future plans, either we advise them that the assignment will end in half a year and what we should do, keep it going or as planned terminating the contract or extended to preliminary and then the same procedure 3 months before end of delegation, we ask again, in case the delegated person has not answered. And then if the delegation terminates as scheduled in our organization there will take place a so called repatriation briefing in the host country before end of the delegation, where all local issues, like car sell, issues about the VISA agreements, insurance regulations, like that, will be discussed and we provide the delegates with all information about reintegration, so what I have to do in Germany, also an exchange rate calculation because certain amounts of their income is currency loss protected and then as soon as they start here, everything will be done by the home HR department, like a new contract and all these things.

I: What kind of trainings did you implement in the company to foster the reintegration?

P: There are no trainings in the home country when expats are coming back. Only preparation trainings, like inter-cultural trainings or they can have language lessons, either before or during their assignments. These trainings take place but all of them taking part before the assignment.

I: And did any employee ever asked for such reintegration trainings?

P: No, not that I know.

I: Do you settle any agreements with the employee, when they are still abroad, for example about job position?

P: No, that will be arranged by the home unit, we are not involved in the position finding, this will always agreed between the home unit and the delegated themselves. Each delegate make use of the right that is guaranteed that the delegated can come back to the same department or home unit from which he had been send out, so it's often that 95 till 99% of all delegated persons return to the same unit and then all future agreements will be handled directly between the home unit and the delegated. We have no direct contact to the home unit, and the so called account manager is in charge of finding a new job with the delegated person. The account manager is the contact person to the home unit, we always forward this to the account manager and then they give us back the information.

I: So, does your company also support the delegated in non-work related issues?

P: No, these are all private issues. Of course we try, if somebody would ask if I will give information's I would try to help out, do whatever I could, maybe finding addresses via internet or internal XY contacts, we try to support, but generally officially it's a private issue.

I: Perfect, so how would you describe the situation when the expat is returning to the home office, can you think of any situation when an expat returned, how he/she felt, for example disorientated?

P: Not very much. Maybe I have some delegates, you have a better relation to some delegates than others and maybe from experience I can tell they tell me sometimes that they feel unhappy now being back in Germany, but this might have different reasons, the one left the country and is angry being back in Germany and facing bad weather and other ones are not satisfied with the new position, in the foreign country I had my own job I had my own secretary, my driver and here I am sitting in a big office with 50 other people and everything is done by myself, of course it's very often a big difference from the personal situation.

I: Can you think of certain challenges an expat might face when coming back home?

P: Yes, one big challenge is with the reintegration of the children, into the German school system, so they need to reintegrate in the school system, the language, to find new friends and people. And then it also depends on the new function they will have here in Germany again, that they might not be very satisfied, depending on the position, the situation at XY is also very difficult, not for every expat they found a new job and delegates then expect to get a job with a higher level and position than before they went on delegation, but it's not that easy to find such positions nowadays.

I: So one last question, can you think of any improvement options your company could undertake to guarantee a better reintegration process?

P: Yes, maybe if they would also conclude a contract with a service provider and provide the expat with a relocation service, which will overtake all the issues they need to clarify, so that they not already need to start looking for a house in the home country, for car, school, everything like this, and of course it's really hard, and you can only use the internet or some private addresses like friends or contact which support you here, and of course it would be better that the relocation service could take over all these aspects. And job-related, it might be helpful to establish a better communication beforehand with the new team of the home country.

I: And do you think some improvements in relation to cultural reintegration could be helpful?

P: No, I don't think this is important.

Transcript 6 - Participant 6 (Women)

Interviewer: Jamila Becker

Location: Telephone

Position: Human Resource Manager - Expatriation Management

Duration: 29 minutes

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

I: So, just to give you a short overview about the interview. The interview will be around 20-30 minutes. Anytime you have a question just ask me or if you want to add something. First I will ask you four preliminary questions and then some open questions where you can tell me about your experience. First of all just to introduce myself. I am a student at the Rhine Waal University, studying International Business and Social Sciences and on behalf of my bachelor thesis I am conducting expert interviews within the topic of expatriation, and especially the reintegration of expatriates. Ok perfect, then we will start with some general questions. In which company and position you are working?

P: XY as an Expatriation Specialist within the HR department.

I: Perfect, and did you experienced this work also in this company and position?

P: Yes, I have done it here in XY, I have never done it before.

I: For how long have you been working in the expatriation management?

P: Six years.

I: Ok, now coming a little bit more to open question. Can you briefly describe me how have you experienced the work with expatriation management?

P: Challenging.. It's a lot of times that the transfers are short notice, there are different expectations, that you have to align. I also experienced some expats, they are quiet demanding, where again you have to manage the expectations, so that it will be a good experience for everyone, that are first things coming to mind.

I: And can you tell me some positive and some negative things that come to your mind when thinking about expatriation?

P: The people, best and worse. I mean, you have to work very closely with people or with employees and, as I mentioned, some of them are quiet demanding and can be not so nice sometimes but at the same time there are others, where you feel that you really contribute, you know where you support them and they are grateful that you know that it really works well.

I: And what do you think was poorly managed in this process?

P: In the whole process, it's the management or even the communication. If the employee expects a high salary and this has not been communicated or even sometimes

the transfer date, when there is a need, and they have to be transferred quickly and they have to discuss it with their family, you know it's the management of the process and the communication. It also always depends on the case, sometime its poorly managed to let the employee soon enough known where they have to go, in terms of poorly managed. The business needs, we need someone now and they don't think of having a work permission, producing a work contract, the business sometimes needs to be able to turn around in few weeks, so again you have to manage the expectations of the expat.

I: And now thinking of what was poorly managed by HR? What do you think is the most critical thing managed by the HR responsible?

P: Well HR, I am part of HR but I also work closely with the HR business partner, so I am part of a centre of expertise, so actually the business partner is the link between the expatriate and us, so sometimes there are too many people involved, so information's gets lost or delayed, you know if I need some information from the delegated person, it can happen that it delays due to the business partner in the middle.

I: And on the other side, what do you think is most poorly managed by expats, maybe that they have different expectations, what do you think is the most critical issue they do wrong in the process?

P: I don't know if you are only looking for expats going out, you might also look at inpats, people who come to Germany and what we found recently is that they get support from relocation agency and what is been quiet frustrating, they really ignore the relocation agency, like ah I don't need the help, I can do this and that but then problems arise, for example Tax ID, all of a sudden they have tax ID 3 but they should have tax ID 1 and they don't work with the relocation agency, I mean we are paying for the relocation agency, and that is really a point we found frustrating, so that they say we look after them but then they don't really work hand in hand with us, these are things, which came up recently, so ignore help or with the expats where I need them to sign documents where they don't see the urgency and we have to keep track on these information's.

I: And keeping in mind that the expatriation has different stages, like the preparation, the during -assignment and the reintegration, what do you think is the most critical stage in this process?

P: Probably the first one, so to discuss the assignment and then what is important what is important for the expat, I mean if I send someone to I don't know China I can only prepare them what I can do, like social security in Germany and so on, so I can only do half of it but also this is important but then the colleagues in China they need to do some on boarding. And the same with people coming in, I think it is important to do an call with them beforehand and then when they are here to discuss with them face to face, what life is all about in Germany, not really what life is all about in Germany, we don't have cultural trainings, we try to tell them as much as possible, like the tax issues or insurance issues and then we have the relocation agency in terms you know this is your apartment, this is the public transportation to get to the supermarket and so on, so maybe cultural preparation is missing, in times, it is not done in the company, I know that there are cultural seminars but even if we are sending someone to Iraq, that are totally different cultures, then it might help that we can tell them to send you there but

there will be people over there, where people will tell you how it's like but it's nothing done by the company upfront, I mean how should we know how life is over there.

I: Ok perfect, focusing a little bit more on the reintegration. Can you tell me how the reintegration process is managed in your company?

P: Ah so you mean, when someone returns home after three years?

I: Exactly, when an expat returns home after an international assignment.

P: The same again, I have a call with them and discuss, you know, which job, I don't discuss with them which job, it is clear which job they are overtaking when coming home, then I need to see where in Germany it is because we have different locations and I talk them through that they get relocation support again, so that they get an apartment, and then that they have someone when they arrive, that they have a place to stay. And then usually, it is quiet straight forward, because they are Germans and they know what it is like, it is not a lot about sitting down and thinking how life works in Germany, maybe they have some questions but usually it's a call before they return about some questions they have, but usually these are administrative questions also.

I: So you mentioned, that the new job is already set beforehand, with whom is the new job set?

P: That's the HR business partner and the expat itself, they make an offer to them, I mean they will have to discuss in what kind of job the expat want to go into, what we have to discuss as an expatriate manager are more like calculations, salary calculations, so the HR business partner aligns with the expat which job the person, well what job is offered to that person, what the job will pay and then we make a calculation, we have salary details, we have the costs of the host country the expat will live in and then we have a net calculation to see, you know what they have and then we take into account cost of living and then we calculate a salary what they offered.

I: And in the sense of reintegration, do you offer some kind of trainings when the expat is coming back to Germany?

P: You mean, on the job or cultural issue?

I: Yes, just general trainings, like reintegration trainings for example.

P: No, I mean it's a German coming back to Germany, so they don't need to do any cultural training. I mean could be some trainings on new systems, but actually I wouldn't know that because when they go back, they go back into the business and I don't have contact with them, so actually I am not sure if they come back that they need to use certain systems they will given certain trainings but I am not sure, I am not involved. So we, as expatriate managers, only bring them back to the country but what kind of trainings they need for the new job, is all aligned with the HR business partners, anyhow I don't think it's a scheduled training, it is depending on the situation for example if the line manager is doing a totally different job as abroad then I am sure that they will get an training.

I: Ok, focusing a little bit more on the expectations, do the HR department settle any agreements with the expat before coming home?

P: I mean, before they come, they will know which job they will cover upon return, it's not like they are coming back and then we are going to see what to do with you, so, and we also have a sort of development and reintegration plan, that is set with the sponsor, everyone who is send out has a sponsor, so they sit together and discuss what kind of job the person could come back to after this period and you know that is sort of updated, so if person will come back in a certain time, we have this and this open positions and then it is discussed with the person in the other country this is a job we are able to offer you and this is the salary and then the person can say alright I like that or I like to extend the period abroad, and all this is done before the person comes back.

I: And this is all, which is included in this development and reintegration plan or is there something more?

P: The development and reintegration plan is general, which means organizing when someone goes abroad or comes back in, potential positions, but that could happen after three years what is in the plan will not be actual anymore and the returned person will undertake another job then, so it is really only a guideline.

I: Ok, do the company support the expat in non-work related issues for example finding kindergartens for the children something like this?

P: They do, we do, for an apartment, so they don't have to stay in a hotel, so we find a intermediate apartment and a long term apartment, but for an expat, so a German person returning back to Germany, they will have to look for that themselves but if we have an inpat, so a person coming from Africa to Germany for example, we help them finding an international school and kindergarten due to the language barrier. So with expats they are supported when coming to the new country but from the colleagues within this country because here in Germany I can't find a kindergarten for someone in India. Everywhere, where we send them we have an HR Specialist, who look after them and organize such things.

I: And can you describe the general situation, when an expat is coming back to the home office, what do they tell you for example emotions etc?

P: Not a structured process, it's just as they wish to do, you know you get to know them after the years, you get to know them for three years and when they come back, they schedule a meeting with me or come by and you know then they tell me how it was to arrive in another country, the culture, the work, how they have experienced there, but it is not scheduled. So, what they tell is that I can't recall, that they come and say I am so glad that I am back home, in overall they often report positive things, for sure it took some time to settle in but you know its three years ago and its always when you think in the past its is not that bad, they just come you know saying goodbye to a lifestyle they were used to, its more just that they miss being there, more than that, it's not like thank god I am home, generally they have a good experience, I think they are quiet open and honest because it's not a scheduled meeting, I think they are quiet trustful when they come and talk about it.

I: And do they tell you about the reintegration, that they struggle back in Germany?

P: No, after three years it's not the case that they struggle a lot when coming back. One came back from Bulgaria, he complained that life got more expensive here in

Germany or in the supermarket in Germany you have more choices but in general they don't report about any cultural struggles.

I: And can you think of certain challenges expats might experience upon return?

P: I could imagine, especially when they have a family, the reintegration, like the children, that they need to find new friends, and also integrating back into a German school, even those they probably speak German at home, that is something I could imagine, then also for the partner it might be difficult to find a new job again, but that are only speculations I don't know any specific cases of this. With a single person, I don't see any challenges, as a German coming back to Germany.

I: Ok, one last question, can you think of any improvement actions your company could undertake to improve the reintegration process?

P: I am thinking in terms, again I don't know how it is done with a new team, I don't know if they meet the team beforehand, not sure if that would be the case, I mean if someone goes to another country, that they can go there with the family that they can make the decision, but that's more for the preparation phase, thinking about reintegration I can't imagine as I have never heard about someone coming back that they are lost, as they are familiar with the language and the culture and then the relocation agency helps them. Culturally vice might be beneficial that you give them more training before send them out, but that is costly, but I personally don't think if you come back to your home country you need to prepare culturally or more than we do now. Work related, they will receive a similar position, or position level, where we would maintain the same level of responsibility or autonomy, you know, then there is no big change when coming back, probably it can be that in some countries they might have more decision power in foreign offices as it is smaller and in Germany it is bigger because more people are involved or policies.

Appendix D Codebook

Code Label	Code Type	Code	Description	Anchor Example	Guideline
A1	Deductive	Family issues	Apply codes to any family or partner issues upon the return	"(...) for my wife it took 2 to 3 months, maybe more, so to reconnect and also start all their earlier activities (...)" (T4)	
A2	Deductive	Support & Trainings	Support received from companies upon return (incl. trainings, relocation services)	"I don't remember that something was offered but as I remember there weren't trainings offered (...)" (T1)	Only support and trainings offered upon return by the company
A3	Deductive	Agreements	Agreements set between the expatriate and the company	"No, there wasn't a plan." (T3)	
A4	Deductive	Expectations	Set of expectations, expatriate might possess for the situation when returning home	"More disappointing, because I really was looking for my career path in the company (...)" (T3)	Mainly job-related, anyhow can also serve for expectations upon private issues
A5	Deductive	Satisfaction	Satisfaction in the new job taken upon return	"(...) nobody had history with me, a reputation, so it took quiet, at least 6-12 months to gain back trust (...)" (T4)	
A6	Deductive	Knowledge & Skills	Knowledge & Skills that could have been implemented in the new job upon return	"I think the work knowledge I have learned in Hungary didn't helped me in the new position." (T1)	Knowledge and skills, either relevant for the job, but also soft skills
A7	Deductive	Improvement options	Improvement options companies could implement to guarantee a better reintegration	"Providing a better environment for the people coming back, in return of describing a more clear path (...)" (T3)	
B1	Deductive	Support in non-work related issues	How companies support expatriates in non-work related issue (e.g. movement, kindergarten)	"(...) it have been nice to receive more information (...)" (T3)	
C1	Inductive	Culture & Environment	Aspects of host/home-culture that influence the re-entry process	"It was really easy to get in touch with the people over there." (T1) "It was the easiest part, so we came back to our old environment (...)" (T4)	
C2	Inductive	Communication	All aspects in keeping contact to home-country	"Anyhow in Hungary I still had regular contact with the colleagues from Germany." (T1)	
C3	Inductive	Importance for reintegration measures	Need and willingness, for reintegration support incl.	"I don't see any need for any trainings." (T4)	

			trainings, communication, possible underestimation etc.		
C4	Inductive	Job-related issues	Any job-related issues upon return e.g. the atmosphere in the new team, challenges in the new team	"I was struggling at the beginning to get used to the new job challenges in Germany." (T1)	This code is separated from the code career perspectives, as those are issues already occurring in the new job, as career perspectives can be categorized before choosing the new job
C5	Inductive	Emotions/ Feelings upon return	Related emotions upon return	"It was a relief to come back to Germany (...)" (T3)	
C6	Inductive	Career perspective	The career perspectives an delegated faces upon return, either suggested by the company or self-searched	"More disappointing, because I really was looking for my career path in that company, when I came back home." (T3)	
C8	Inductive	Utilization of reintegration tools	Tools the company implement in order to foster the reintegration process	"(..) and we also have sort of a development and reintegration plan (...)" (T6)	
D1	Inductive	Costs	Costs in relation of reintegration programs	"It's like we offer you an reintegration but we are happy if you will not use it because it's costly." (T2)	
D2	Inductive	Kingping phenomen	Change of responsibility and autonomy in their new positions	"So they need to be aware to be back to this just being a number in a big system." (T5)	
D3	Inductive	Management of companies/ HR	The management how companies handle the reintegration process	"I have observed, no systematic approach." (T2)	
D4	Inductive	Self-Management of Expatriates	What expatriates themselves undertake to establish a good reintegration e.g. sharing experiences etc.	"They feel that they need to save the world (...)" (T2)	

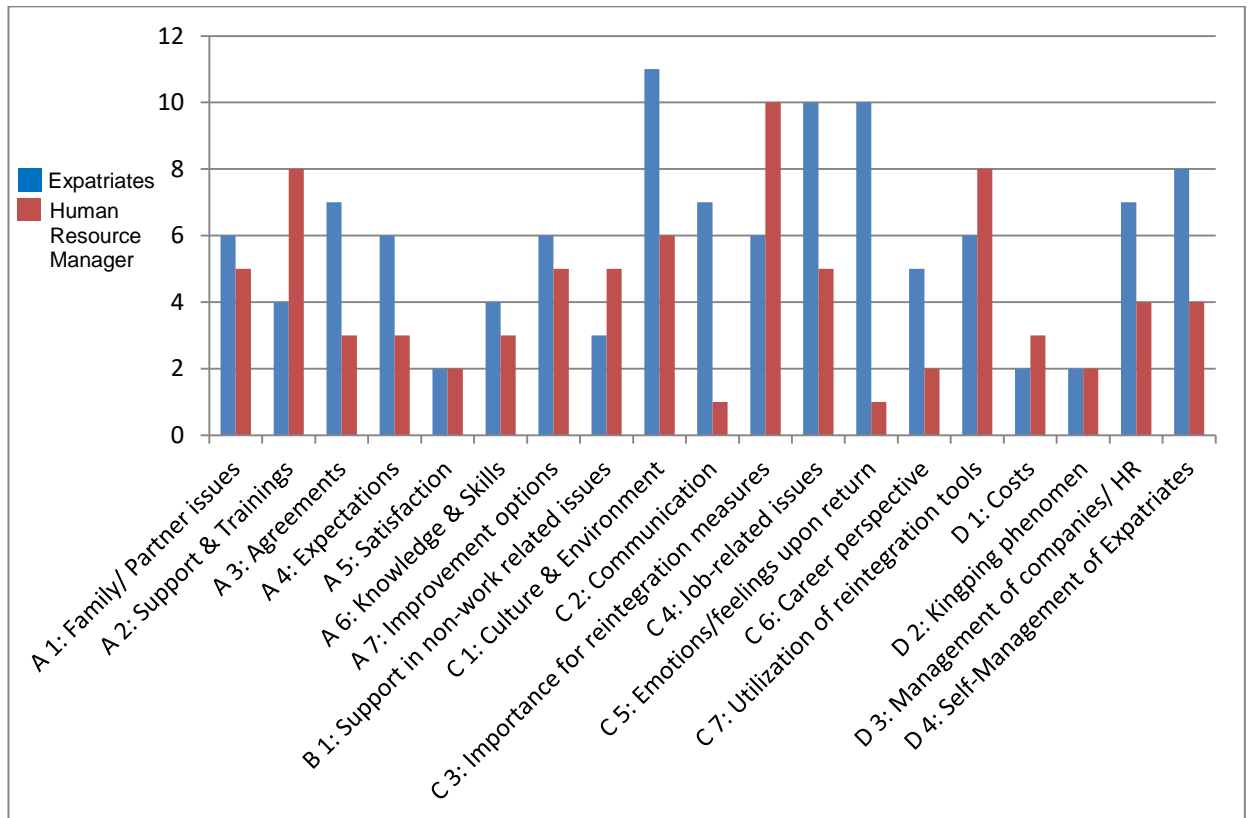
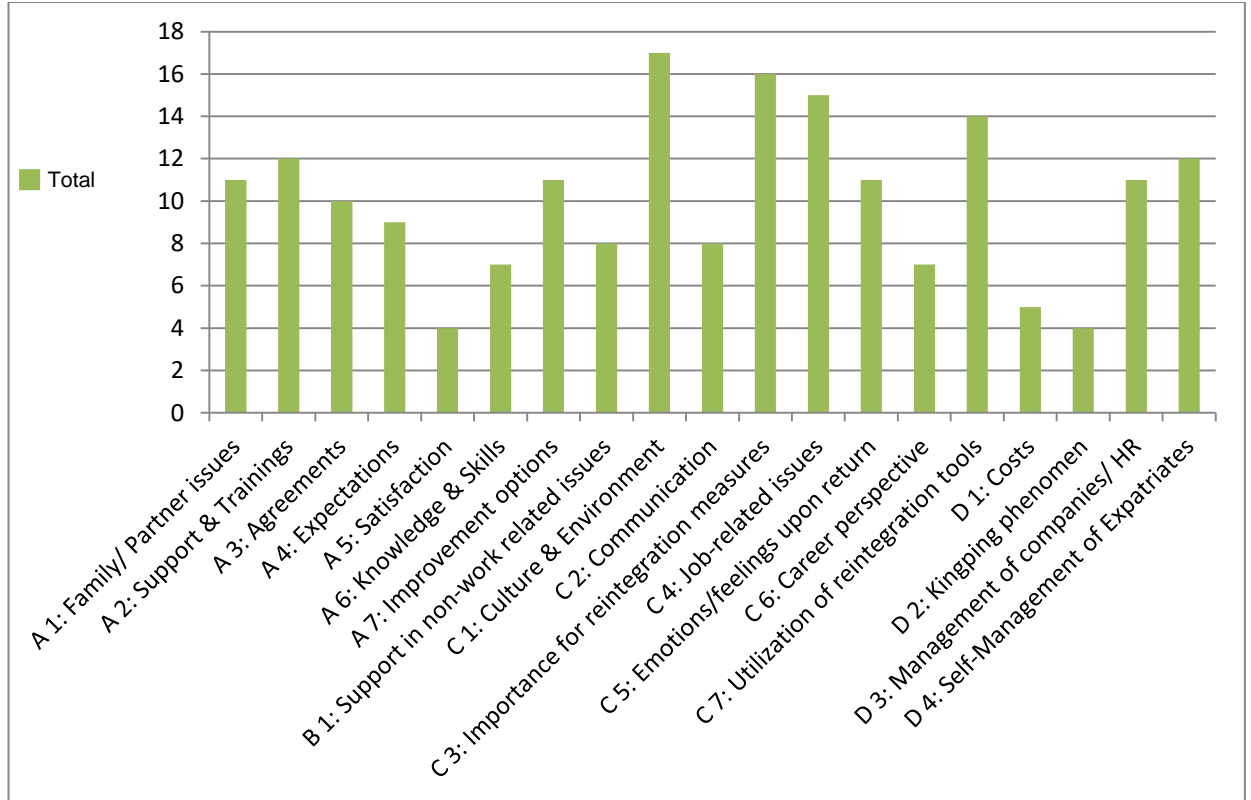
A = deductive, from expatriates perspective

B = deductive, from HR-Managers perspective

C = inductive, from expatriates perspective

D = inductive, from HR-Managers perspective

Appendix E Code Frequency Analysis



Declaration of Authenticity

I, Jamila Becker, hereby declare that the work presented herein is my own work completed without the use of any aids other than those listed. Any material from other sources or works done by others has been given due acknowledgement and listed in the reference section. Sentences or parts of sentences quoted literally are marked as quotations; identification of other references with regard to the statement and scope of the work is quoted. The work presented herein has not been published or submitted elsewhere for assessment in the same or a similar form. I will retain a copy of this assignment until after the Board of Examiners has published the results, which I will make available on request.