

# The Overseas Expatriates of Human Resource Development Practices: A Study of Thai Expatriate Managers in Multinational Corporations (MNCs)

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***Abstract.** This study is using a qualitative approach as the objective is to search into the experiences of the participants who are Thais as the result of this study means to be useful specifically to Thais who are in the position of Mid-Level manager and have been assigned or still being assigned in Multinational Corporations located in overseas. Therefore the up close information is the data that beneficial in this study. And the case study has been used in order to search for the richness of the information which received from the participants. For data collection process, the semi-structure question has been used for this study. The face-to-face interview process for this study was included the Skype, Face time and Line video interviews as the participants are mostly still on their assignments in overseas while being interviewed and the telephone interview was used also for the participants who are unable to conduct a face-to-face interview because of a busy schedule. The setting of this study was with 11 Thai participants with seven males and four females and are or have been working in Multinational Corporations and located in China, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. All of them are in the Mid-Level management. The results of this study offered the firsthand knowledge for Thais who will be assigned from the corporate to perform effectively while working in overseas. The findings were being presented by manual coding into categories to answer the research questions. The qualifications to be an expatriate, the work activities, the factors that affect from being an expatriate and the knowledge and suggestions from experienced persons were presented from these findings.*

**Keywords:** Expatriation, Multinational Cooperation, Overseas, Thailand

## Introduction

As we are now in the globalization era, it is normal for human resources from one country to work in another country. Transport and movement in the borderless world of human resource is increasing every day, including the participation of Thailand in the cooperation of ASEAN countries, the ASEAN Economic Community or AEC. The movement is concerned all skilled labor and the managerial level to both middle management level and high management level. The movement of human resources at the management level is a challenge for the companies and the employee themselves.

Especially for multinational corporations or MNCs where their businesses are located in more than two countries and some MNCs can operate in up to 100 countries. An MNC significantly influence the world economy at the present time. Therefore they need appropriate staff to take care of their overseas businesses in those countries so the role of the expatriate is now becoming more and more important in global competition era.

For Thai companies which are now attempting to enter international markets due to high profits that they might gain from global marketing the chance of sending the employee for overseas assignment is obviously higher. The employee who has been sent for an overseas assignment usually get high paid, however, the chance of being successful is as great as failure if the assignee could not manage the assignment effectively. Before taking an opportunity in overseas working, they will be told that it will be a great opportunity and might lead to a promotion to a higher level if they are successful. Especially for middle management positions, most of their career objectives are almost the same as being promoted to a higher management level or top management. This is the most challenging but also the most rewarding as they reach a stage in their career progression. Working in the foreign country is much more difficult compare to working in Thailand due to many compelling factors such as organization culture, ways of life, taste and kinds of food, working environment etc. One of the key reasons that employees leave jobs is that they are uncomfortable with the working environment created by their manager (Dobbs, 2000 p.56-63). Regarding this issue, if the companies do not pay much attention to the overseas assignment then the consequence of this is an ineffective organization and work plan which leads to an ineffective job performance when they are overseas. Many firms continue to underestimate the complexities of managing human resources across borders which often results in poor performance in international operations (Dowling & Welch, 2004).

The focus of this research is to investigate the performance of middle Thai managers in multinational company who are working in overs countries. A multinational corporation is a large scale business and it requires a large number of skilled as well as unskilled employees to operate its activities. Multinational corporation (MNC) is the best setting to be used in this research. As the head office is located in Parent Country National (PCN) so they need someone to take care of their overseas branches or Host Country National (HCN) so the demand of expatriate employees to manage the operations of MNC have increased as is planned as a key role in implementing a company's global strategy. Doz, Santos, and Williamson (2001) suggested that the companies must innovate by learning from the world. It is believed that in order to develop human resources, the middle management has to function effectively, one needs to know the various factors that affect the behaviors of Thai's manager to perform at his or her best and propose the accurate path for the development.

## Significance of the Study

Results from this study are as follow.

1. It provides firsthand knowledge about the factors that relate to the operation of working overseas either efficiently or inefficiently including things such as language skills, culture, beliefs, values, work environment, adaptability, social environment, international experience, family matters, global leadership skills, patternof life for managers who will be assigned for overseas work.

2. It may help the oversea expatriates perform effectively, first they need to build a strong managerial role by gaining the knowledge and skills not only in managerial knowledge or business issues but also the knowledge and skills in surviving from living in the host country

in order to enable them to carry out their role effectively. This study will help in terms of planning, designing and delivering effective training programs also to find the preferred method of training that is suitable for them. And to ensure that the managers will deliver the best performance for the organization while dealing with a new job, new country, new culture and new life.

3 Finally this is also most valuable for other Thai managers who will be assigned to work abroad in the future.

### Definition of Terms

**1. Expatriate:** refers to the employee with high efficiency who takes up work abroad or work overseas branch offices of their company for several months or years.

**2. Mid – Level Manager:** refers to an employee of business who manages at least one subordinate level of managers, and reports to a higher level of management in the company.

**3. Multinational Corporation:** refers to a business which has activities and operations in two or more countries.

**4. Performance:** refers to the action or process of performing a task or function.

**5. Problem:** refers to a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome.

**6. Obstacle:** refers to a thing that blocks one's way or prevents or hinders progress.

**7. Overseas:** refers to a foreign country outside Thailand.

### Research Questions

What are the work activities performances of Thai expatriate manager while working in the overseas?

What are the problems and obstacles that affect an overseas expatriation of Thai expatriate manager while working in the overseas?

### Literature Review

#### The Overseas Expatriates in Human Resource Development and Management

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are considerably different from domestic organizations. They operate in cross-border conditions resulting in external environments that are additionally complex, diverse, fragmented, and nonmonolithic (Kostova&Zaheer, 1999). They manifest differences in areas, such as language barriers, inconsistencies, and conflicts in values, practices, and culture and variations in human resource management (HRM) practices (Peterson & Thomas, 2007) and likewise HRD practices. In the MNC context HRD often needs to be part of the strategic planning and implementation process. Many activities in MNCs cannot be implemented effectively without consideration of HRD issues (Ulrich, Younger, & Brockbank, 2008).

The competitive environmental circumstances and recognition of the value of knowledge and learning for organizational competitive advantage are argued to increase the status and power of the HRD function and provide significant opportunities for HRD professionals (Carter, Hirsh, & Aston, 2002).

Short and Callahan (2005) argue that as organizations look to go global or remain global, they are likely to look to HRD. They also summarize the additional elements to the global HRD professional's role which include understanding other cultures, increasing employees' cultural competence, preparing employees for periods of expatriation, developing managers

who can think, lead, and act from a global perspective, with global skills and a global mindset (Kim, 1999).

### **Who is Expatriate?**

Expatriate employees generally play a key role in implementing a multinational company's global strategy (Scullion &Collings, 2006a). An expatriate is an employee sent by his or her employer to work in a foreign country. Expatriates provide a number of benefits for companies and expatriate is likely to make more progress at the overseas location if he or she has effective managerial skills and administrative competencies. Strong relationships with the host country and headquarters' operations also make the expatriate's assignment more productive (Waggoner, 2014).

The main purposes of sending the assignees overseas are to achieve an important strategic objectives (Bonache, Brewster, &Suutari, 2001) and enhancing global integration (Evans, Pucik, &Barsoux, 2002). Scullion (1991) indicates that the advantages of utilizing expatriates are that they have knowledge of the corporate culture and can teach the locals how to relate the headquarters, including transmitting organizational culture, transferring knowledge, improving coordination and functional needs of control, and developing global skills (Bennett, Aston, & Colquhoun, 2000; Bolino, 2007; Tung, 1982). Evans et al. (2002) suggest that an objective of expatriate assignment is to maintain control over the subsidiaries and to transfer know-how to international branches of the parent company. Oddou and Mendenhall (1991) suggest that an overseas assignment can be presented as a career opportunity that will increase global perspective, and facilitate short-term career progress for expatriates. Harzing's (2001) identified three specific roles of expatriates: (1) Managers can act as a means of replacing the centralization of decision making in MNC and provide a direct means of surveillance over subsidiary operations, (2) Expatriates can be used to control subsidiaries through socialization of host employees and the development of informal communication networks, and (3) Control through the weaving of informal communication networks within the MNC.

An expatriate has historically been thought of as an employee of relatively high hierarchical organizational status, normally in a managerial role, acting as the link between a foreign subsidiary and HQ (Bonache&Zarraga-Oberty, 2008). As expatriate managers, their aim is to establish a management framework for the subsidiaries of their companies and act as the intermediary that is responsible for communicating with the home company (Chung & Chen, 2012). Expatriate managers who are able to drive organizational and cultural change, train the local workforce and make quality improvements in production, straighten out the finances and so on (Backman& Butler, 2007).

From HSBC's Expat Explorer (2013), ranking of the Best Countries for Expats in 2013: the findings from 7,000 Expats on overall expatriate economies, among Asian countries, China came in at number one. For worldwide ranking from the same survey, China was in number 2, Indonesia in number 6, Singapore in number 9, Malaysia in number 14, and Vietnam in number 21. The Expat Economics looks at a range of factors including expat earning levels, spending, saving and investing patterns, and the impact of the current global financial climate to paint and informed picture of expats' economic situation around the world. Or in other words, The Forum for Expatriate Management (2014) explained that expats in these destinations are more likely to notice an improvement in their financial status upon moving as well as being satisfied with the present state of the economy in their host country.

## Research Design

The case study methodology is employed in this research as it claims to offer a richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods (Hancock, 2002). And the case study is appropriate when investigators desire to define topics broadly and not narrowly (Yin, 1993). The Case study is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009) and it is the study of a 'bounded system' which is often bounded by time and place with the focus being either on the case or on an issue. It might be an event, a process, a program, or several people (Stake, 1995). As the study took place in the unspecific Multinational Corporations but within the Asian country so the researcher used the 'bounded system' of Stake.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Regarding to the interview the researcher used semi-structured questions as the experience of the participant is the most wanted information required in this study, and semi-structured interviews are most often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into the topic and to understand thoroughly the answer provided (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The interview guide where the researcher has prepared the questions beforehand were developed from the interview guide of Patton (2002), a list of questions or issues that are to be explored and prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from all the interviewees by converting similar material. The researcher also employed other means for interview such as Skype, telephone interview to supplement the semi-structure interview.

There were 11 participants with seven male and four female who were selected according to the criteria set by the researcher. The participants were introduced through the researcher's family, friends, and colleagues. Regarding to the interview the researcher used semi-structured questions as the experience of the participants is the most wanted information required in this study. In each interview, the researcher used a voice recorder to record the interview however the participants were asked for their permission before using the voice recorder in every interview. As most of the participants are still on the assignment in the overseas and fortunately due to the internet explosion these days therefore the researcher was able to conduct the interviews via the internet applications like Skype, Face Time or Line and they are free systems. And the telephone interview was used also for the participants who are unable to conduct the face-to-face interview because of a busy schedule. One of the advantages of telephone interviewing is the extended access to participants. Mann and Stewart (2000 cited in Opdennakkar, 2006) stated on wide geographical access about people from all over the globe can be interviewed if they have access to telephone or computer. Face-to-Face interviewing can be very expensive and takes too much time.

### Quality of this Study

The researcher used triangulation with different data sources as the data were from multiple sources of data. The researcher has sent back the interview data to the participant in order for them to check the accuracy of the interview. Peer debriefing was also used during the process of transcripts, analysis for final report in order to enhance the accuracy of the account also an external auditor to review the entire project was used in this study. Furthermore this study also provided the reflexive notes and progress report for more credibility.

### Data management and analysis

Once the researcher had finished the interview from one participant, the audio recording file was transcribed and the researcher reread the data 'to get to know all information and to see the big picture' (Creswell, 2009). For the coding process, the researcher did the manual coding from each interview instead of coding by computer software program. And selected the wordings that seemed to relate together and putting them into the same categories. Finding the most descriptive wording for the topic and turning these words into categories (Creswell, 2009). As a final step, the researcher put the categories which relate to each other and created the themes.

When the company launches the expatriate program, the preparation of the expatriates for their new environment is necessary so they must know who is an expatriate, why they are important and why are they being selected for this position. So this phase called the 'Pre-Departure' phase which also included the knowledge preparation from the company that comes in the form of coaching, training or mentoring.

The knowledge of law and regulation, culture of the host country especially in the workplace were received while working in the Host country and the advantage of being Thai will not be known unless the expatriates encounter it themselves. So the categories that emerged from these knowledges are being formed into 'During Assignment in the Host Country' theme.

The expectation from future perspective, career development of the expatriate and the suggestion from experienced expatriate are also in the attention of the expatriates to be appointed overseas. These categories are created the theme 'Post-Departure and Repatriation'.

### Finding and discussion

The findings were extracted from 11 participants by using the manual coding and initially used open codes and then classified them into 18 categories which emerged from interviews. And Pre-Departure, During Assignment in the Host Country and Post-Departure are the main themes of this study.

#### Response to Research Question One:

*"What are the work activities performances of Thai expatriate manager while working in the overseas?"*

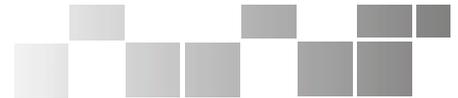
Findings for the work activities performances of Thai expatriate manager while working in the overseas from the participants may be divided into three interrelated parts: 1) Pre-Departure, 2) During Assignment in the Host Country, and 3) Post-Departure.

#### 1. Pre-Departure

To prepare an expatriate for his or her new position in new environment is always been necessary. The outcomes from the expatriates' experiences are important in preparation of working in the foreign countries for them and having a prior notice would be beneficial and will affect to their productivities when entering the real situation.

#### Character of Expatriates

From the findings, even though the participants have been assigned in a different country but they all think the same that ability to adjust is important when they are being an expatriate. An expatriate manager needs to have a skill to lead and manage because



there are local within the team so he/ she needs to show the skill that will let the local team has confident in them. Attitude is one of the characteristics. If the attitude of expatriate is not open or not accepting the new person then this is not going to work out for being an expatriate. And if the expatriate come with a good attitude then it is easy to cope with work life or private life. The good qualification of expatriate is the one that can accept the challenge, for example like the challenge job and not afraid of hard working job. Open mind and Being compromise – as the environment is diverse so some words, some body language can cause a sensitive issue. As for expatriate manager who is a middle man between top management and subordinate so the expatriate needs to know how to be a good intermediary person.

### **Expatriate Investment / Support from Management**

When the companies make the decision to send people on international assignments they must be aware of the effectiveness of the assignee's performance whether he or she can and must perform at his or her best in order to reach the organization's goals which are worth for this high investment. One of participant said that "The companies considered their expatriate as one of their investment so they need to make sure that this investment will be worth it". Another participant said "It's like knowledge and experience exchange in working. For example, each country will have their own culture in working, customers or markets so being an expatriate, we can bring knowledge from one country to develop another. On the other hand, we absorb knowledge from another country to develop ourselves".

### **Expatriate Motivation**

Currently used in the expatriate selection decision include technical competence; motivation; previous job performance, managerial talent, and independence of mind; language fluency; interpersonal skills; family issues; and previous overseas experience (Franke& Nicholson, 2002; Welch, 2003). One very important aspect is expatriate motivation. From the findings of this study, one of important motivations is to have a good work experience to move forward in working and also to have experiences possibly with higher compensation.

### **Becoming an Expatriate**

To become an expatriate is not an easy task, she or he needs to have several training programs, especially, language training and cultural adjustment. The findings found that the work performance is the main factor that will point out who is likely to be the most suitable. One of participants said as for her case, her boss will always assign the mission to her when she was in Thailand. Next, is the qualifications to meet their needs. One participant graduated in Agricultural and the company was in need of the person with an Agricultural background so they chose him. Also the same with another participant who got the position from her background experience. Readiness of working abroad is also the one factor why the company chooses someone to be an expatriate.

One participant explained that the participant's capability has been established in the company by the assignments and tests so the performance is very important for earning their trust. Expatriates should have the knowledge and experience transfer in the operation and also, transfer corporate culture, systems and tools from HQ to the local firm, be highly responsible and an energetic person.

### **Knowledge from being an Expatriate**

One participant said that when working in Thailand with expatriates from headquarters as other colleagues are also Thai so it does not make any difference but when working abroad the colleagues are foreigner and the working style is different from in Thailand so that experience from working in an international environment is one of the main knowledge areas to gain more experience such as leaning the disparities of human, cultural and working environments. Indeed, the main purpose of sending the assignees overseas to foreign branches or subsidiaries is to achieve important strategic objectives (Bonache et al., 2001) and enhancing global integration (Evans et al., 2002).

### **Coaching, Training, and Mentoring for New Expatriate**

As expatriate managers, their aim is to establish a management framework for the subsidiaries of their companies and act as the intermediary who is responsible for communicating with the home company (Chung & Chen, 2012). Expatriate managers who are able to drive organizational and cultural change, train the local workforce and make quality improvements in production, straighten out the finances and so on (Backman & Butler, 2007). As from the findings in this study some participants said “Mostly, the company will provide the training about language, culture and how to adjust themselves to the culture for staffs. There are two trainings for both culture diversity and specific culture of each country. The cross cultural training for us is simple because we will not send the expatriate to Europe or United States but focus only in ASEAN. Then the local language training which the expatriate can choose the language that they are going to be assigned to that country. And they are also preparing the staff who has not yet an expatriate but has a potential to be an expatriate as well.”

## **2. During Assignment in the Host Country**

Eventhough the expatriate has knowledge from pre-departure but once they are facing the real environment they had learnt through their own eyes and experiences. Some knowledge will occur with some expatriate but some are not as depends on their situation.

### **Culture of Host Countries and Culture Diversities in the Work Place**

Working in a culturally different environment is always a challenge, so it is not surprising that the lack of cultural knowledge and language ability, as well as a difficulty adjusting to the local culture, are major factors contributing to expatriate failure (Briscoe & Schuler; 2004; Dowling & Welch, 2005). Here are some findings in this study:

**In China:** In general, the Chinese are a collective society with a need for group affiliation. Within the work concept, colours have special meanings and if you are not careful, your colour choice could work against you such as the visual aids which are useful in large meetings and should only be done with black type on white background (Kwintessential, 2014).

**In Malaysia:** One of the concerns in this study is about religion as one participant expressed that “In terms of culture and religion, one needs to be careful because it is quite clear on the subject of Islam where we need to study the background”. Malaysia is a multi-cultural society, the family is considered the centre of the social structure. As a result there is a great emphasis on unity, loyalty and respect for the elderly. Malays may hint at a point rather than making a direct statement, since that might cause the other person to lose face (Kwinessential, 2014).

**In Vietnam:** as from the findings in this study some participants said “Other thing about life after work, the Vietnamese will go home, cook and eat at home. Therefore, you will have to live Monday through Friday evening alone. Sunday, you will be alone for the rest of your holiday. Assuming that you do not know any other Thais there, it will be very difficult”. Within the work concept, the Vietnamese believe that their supervisors have been chosen because they have more experience and greater knowledge than those they manage, and it is, therefore, unnecessary, and even inappropriate for them to consult with lower-ranking individuals when decision-making (Kwintessential, 2014).

**In Singapore:** as from the finding in this study some participants said “Singapore is a global, multi-agency level MNC. Many companies have opened their regional offices in Singapore because of the lack of natural disasters and it is easy to communicate in English as everyone can speak English in all age. Although their mother tongue is not English, they can understand and communicate easily. It is another reason why foreigners like to invest in Singapore because communication is easy, no natural disasters, the economy is relatively stable swinging up and down, and so they are confident that the business would perform well. The concepts of group, harmony, and mutual security are more important than that of the individual. The group (company or department) is viewed as more important than the individual (Kwintessential, 2014).

**In Indonesia:** as from the finding, some participants said “Indonesians are like Thais, we do not talk much, be in a group, and focus on the seniority system so be patient to them and give them time to think”. Due to the diverse nature of Indonesian society there exists a strong pull towards the group, whether family, village or island. Consequently, people are very careful how they interact and speak. Indonesians are indirect communicators. This means they do not always say what they mean. Indonesians do not make hasty decisions because they might be viewed as not having given the matter sufficient consideration (Kwintessential, 2014).

### **Law and Regulation of the Host Country**

From data emerging in this study one participant said that “According to my position’s title, in Thailand it would be called Answering HR Manager. However, this Answering HR manager cannot be used in Indonesia; I have to change to Indonesia-Business Support Coordinator. According to the Indonesia’s law, HR is reserved for the Indonesians only. These are some small details about the Indonesian’s labor’s law”.

### **Thai Characters**

Being Thai is one of the qualifications that participants are all agree that it helps a lot while working in a diversity environment. The first Thai characteristic is that Thais can get along well with other nationalities with smiles and compromising where one participant said that ‘this makes a good impression and it can get work done easier, not being aggressive but being polite when encountering an argument’ and another participant thinks that Thais can adjust with unfamiliar environments better than other nationalities. Because of our respect and honour to others are the characteristics and helps to avoid the opposition from the locals.

Thai culture is very unique and different from other cultures, especially Western culture, in many ways. It should be noted that Buddhist philosophies and principles play a very important role in the daily life of Thai people (Joungtrakul, 2008; Komin, 1991 cited in Sakulkoo, 2009).

### 3. Post-Departure and Repatriation

An expatriate will take the position or not could depend on their career path when they come back. If they cannot see the future from taking the position probably no one will take it or if they take it then it might caused a problem on turnover rate when repatriation.

#### Future Perspective of Expatriate

From the interviews, some participants said “I’ve learnt and developed myself more and more, to be modern and also review past experience to move forward to be a professional executive”. Another said “In terms of the company, this is to respond to the company mission to expand the business to ASEAN. In terms of myself, it’s an opportunity to see new social, environmental and economy activity that is different from Thailand. However there are many expatriates who leave their companies on return, which is usually seen as a loss of investment and expertise (Adler, 1986; Suutari& Brewster, 2001). Although it is widely accepted that the costs of expatriate turnover are considerable, only a small number of firms have effective repatriation programs (Forster, 2000; Scullion, 2001).

#### Career Development of Expatriate

One of the main important of career development (CD) aspects is Career Planning (CP); it is another reason for multinational companies to send an individual for an international assignment (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004). From the findings, some participants said “Personally, being an expatriate I think about the challenge and the progress in my career. Therefore, the motivation will be the challenges followed by the career advancement”. And another said “Promotion here is needed to apply. If not apply you will not be considered. So if there is a vacancy job open, we need to apply in order to be considered for a job advancement. However, some may not want to apply as they are worried or afraid that they would not get the job so, they decided not to apply.”

#### Suggestions from Expatriates

All of the participants are concerning the relationship between the expatriate and locals as if the expatriate cannot get along with locals, the problems do not occur only at work but with lifestyle also. Because there will be no one helping and it will put the pressure to them while in the foreign country. As suggested by some participants that ‘do not make yourself as an enemy to the locals as if this happens then it will affect your work.’, ‘Learn their culture including their food in order to get to know each other for the better in personal relationships and in business’ and ‘try to get to know your colleague then it will help in more understanding of their cultural and you will learn a lot about the host country’.

In summary, Pre-Departure, During Assignment in the Host Country, and Post-Departure are the main themes of this study as Štrach (2009) stated that companies in many developing countries fumble with poorly prepared and unqualified staff that are unable to conduct foreign operations effectively. More importantly Rodrigues (2008) stated that expatriates do not only transfer knowledge, skills and experience, but they are a monitoring tool and also transfer corporate culture, philosophy, values and corporate objectives to foreign subsidiaries.

#### Response to Research Question Two:

*“What are the problems and obstacles that affect an overseas expatriation of Thai expatriate manager while working in the overseas?”*



One of the major challenges faced by the international organizations according to Grove (1990) and Fish (2005) who suggest that expatriates need to possess the ability to deal effectively with frustration, stress, different political systems, interaction with strangers, intercultural and business dimensions. From the findings, the researcher has divided the problems and obstacles as follows: 1) Problems at work; 2) Personal problems; and 3) Problem from external factors.

### **Problems at work**

#### **Communication**

This is a problem in many countries such as Indonesia, where there is an opinion needed, Indonesians will not share their opinion instantly but they will take some times before speaking out therefore the inquirer needs to be very patient if they need a quick response then they may not get it at once. While in Vietnam, they mostly use dialect in government offices. The problem is that the participant must use an interpreter to communicate. It is difficult to know if the messages are well communicated because the participant just does not understand their language. Therefore, if the interpreter has missed some words or has a misunderstanding of the communication then it definitely causes problems and affects the operation.

#### **Generation Gap and Comfort Zone**

The age difference is also a problem as most of Asians have a similar culture such as cultural respect and honor adults or older people. This happens to both in the family and in the workplace. This causes difficulty for some young people as they have a problem in socializing with older people especially when the expatriate is the only young person in the office. Thai people are accustomed to working conditions in Thailand. They feel good and safe when they worked with Thai themselves. But when the employee is required to work with people of different races, it requires more patience and effort. This makes it uncomfortable compare to the feeling when working with Thai or in Thailand.

#### **Problems in Evaluation for Being Promoted and the Job Termination**

Initially, some companies are not strictly in terms of educational qualifications if the company thinks that the persons are able to receive consideration for employment. But these days, a degree is one variable that is important in considering for promotion. This problem can leads to career blockage as according to Chiotis-Leskowich (2009) who has identified 12 reasons for expatriate failure, including career blockage; culture shock; lack of pre-departure cross-cultural training; over emphasis on technical qualifications; family problems; spouse dissatisfaction; inability to adapt; and poor job performance; among others.

Although the organization is an international organization but the staffs who are fawned on their boss will get attention before others. The problem is that people who approach the boss well are likely to be considered to rank ahead of others. Also the job termination process is a part that caused stress because some companies use the sudden dismissal such as when the staff cannot log in to their computer when they come to the office and then they got a notice of termination of employment on that day.

#### **Personal Problems**

According to Ravasi, Salamin, and Davoine, (2013) regarding the adjustment, which has been defined as an individual's degree of comfort, familiarity and ease with several aspects of a new cultural environment, is considered to play a central role in expatriation success.

### **Accommodation and Transportation**

Having to live in a foreign country, one begins to have trouble adjusting to the housing and residential care. Some participants who used to live in a house with large space when they are in Thailand but when living in a foreign country, one must rent a serviced apartment, although comfortable but they are not used to having strangers live in the next room. It may cause anxiety and sleeplessness. As driving themselves is a regular travel in Thailand, when living abroad where there is no mass transportation. It caused difficult and they are often tired of having to travel to work or walk to work if the work is close to the residence.

Being roommate in some countries such as Singapore which is a country with not much space, the sharing of an apartment is common. There may be three bedrooms in one apartment where tenants will stay together and shared a bathroom, kitchen, living room, it is hard to cope with. Cohabitation may cause a problem, as some apartments have tenants who come from different cultural backgrounds. Many expatriates have a problem with the landlord and some of them have to leave a deposit in advance and find a new place.

### **Lifestyle and Family Matters**

To socialize together, there is limitation relating to the income for some people to do so. So some people who cannot afford to spend money they do not want to join the group or society and this could cause isolation and loneliness. This is the problem that affects the expatriates' performance significantly especially, those who are married and have children. Their families are living in Thailand and do not follow the expatriates to the foreign assignment. As one participant stated that there is a problem about his kids such as sickness or not doing homework then it caused him a concern. Therefore he had to fly back to Thailand to take care of his family.

Long relationship problems which occur with expatriates who are not married but already have a lover back in Thailand can cause loneliness and worry when they have to come and live alone in a foreign country. Bhanugopan and Fish (2004), stated that possible reasons why expatriates return before the completion of the assignment may be homesickness, or inability to adjust to housing conditions, health care facilities, leisure activities, the job, the business environment, or the broader cultural circumstances

### **Problem from External Factors**

Problem of access to information, in some countries, it is difficult to access these data due to the policy of the government in that country like China. Although the internet is widely used, but some applications such as Facebook, YouTube, and Line have been blocked by the Chinese authorities. For the reason that the Chinese government is in control of their citizens on accessing some of the programs and does not allow people to get too much of information as it will be hard to control if there is a protest etc. In these days, many countries use English to communicate, especially Singapore, which specializes in the use of English already. However, with the uniqueness of the English accent called Singlish which the people who are not familiar with the accent could have a problem in communication. Even though many expatriates have a good background in English already but it still takes time to get into their accent too. Although the host countries are also in Asia but with the various cultures especially about food but it still caused problems and when the participants have a health problem it also resulted in the stressful job because of poor health which can lead to poor productivities.

## Implications

### Implication for Practices

The findings result provides a useful guide for a new expatriate to work overseas and for the one who is interested to be an expatriate. This study also shows the potential work activities of expatriates, so this can be used as a guideline or applied to their own cases. The results show the important information and knowledge for the expatriate manager or the one who is interested to become an expatriate manager. The expatriate must thus learn how to cope with people who share other values, and who act and think differently. When doing a business in foreign country, the expatriate preparation is necessary in order to follow the strategy and mission of the parent company such as the case of SCG, to put their ASEAN leadership strategy in place, what are plans to develop the enterprise, regardless of the career path of the career plans of their expatriate managers. If the organization can train expatriate managers both formally and informally it may work more efficiently and be able to respond to the local customers' needs more effectively. The results provided that offering different types of support to choose from is one way forward that organizations should consider and that they are considered vital for the success of HR policies. Engaging in HR can positively affect organization in several domains. First, a good recruitment strategy can give them a strategic advantage over other companies in that they will be able to attract good candidates, thus, combating the growing challenge of managing talent. Second, training and mentoring as well as support in non-work issues will render organizations' international staff effective in a shorter period of time than when these issues are not taken into account. Taking into account the different motives for employees to expatriate, can help to choose HR practices that are relevant for the adjustment of the individual.

### Implications for Multinational Corporations (MNC)

It turns out that the research does not conduct in the Europe / America / South America / Africa zones, but is it in the Asian zone. So any organizations that will invest in Asian countries, especially in the zones described above is required to view culture and the host country in order to filter out anyone who is likely to be suitable for being an expatriate. Therefore in MNC level would require a whole new dimension to happen which is the expatriate who will support MNC in Asian continent, the organization has to consider the person who has a skill in Asian country especially for the position of Expatriate Manager. To send a person who is keen on Asian issue to Asian continent they will have a strong skill better than a person who is not keen on Asian issue. Therefore the adjustment to cultural, religion, beliefs and etc. will not be so difficult for them. However, if the company is sending someone who is keen on other continent like America or Europe to Asian then they need to study this research as a guideline especially for those who will be sent to Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and China.

### Recommendations for Further Research

*First*, the culture of host country as due to the limitation of participant setting selection criteria in this research, the researcher can collect the data from two to three participants from each country. So, the findings are not giving enough detailed information. The opportunity is opened up for more research to investigate more participants from each country to provide more understanding of expatriation research.

**Second**, in term of work activity as this study is done only a small group of participants. Further studies could be used in a larger study, covering more expatriates, companies, industries and countries to develop a broader understanding of work activities of expatriation.

**Third**, to make the benefits of this study, more research is needed to develop and expand study in more area. The research from Taiwan with the questionnaire can mix with this study for more understanding of expatriation.

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