

Back to the roots:

**Career Development and Success of ‘Bicultural
Skilled Self-Initiated Expatriates’ from Developed
Countries to Emerging Markets:
The Case of Turkey**

Paper Submission for the 8th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International
Conference

Type: Long abstract

Conference Theme: Dealing with diverse identities

Submission stream: Conference General Stream

Stream chair: Mustafa Özbilgin

Author: Anonymous

Introduction

Emerging markets face talent shortage. While gaining on economic and political strength, emerging markets are more than ever in need to build a skilled and highly qualified workforce to secure long-term growth on an international level. With increased economic strength, a new phenomenon in emerging markets is crystalizing: A wave of self-initiated expatriation from children of former immigrants from developing countries to developed countries (e.g. Germany, France), also referred to as second or third generation, to their parents' country of origin is taking place. These self-initiated expatriates (SIE) are highly skilled and educated abroad and are mainly bicultural individuals. This phenomenon has especially been noticed in the case of Turkey¹, which is classified by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as an emerging market. Thus, institutions in these markets need not only to stop the, although reduced, ongoing brain drain; but also learn to effectively target, integrate and maintain a new arriving diverse workforce. The careers of these highly skilled bicultural SIEs in the context of Turkey are the focus of this research.

Bicultural and skilled SIEs recently entering the Turkish labor market could be of enormous advantage for both, multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Turkey and local organization wanting to expand internationally or already operating globally. In order to compete with organizations from developed countries, which are experiencing a continuous growth of bicultural and multicultural employees (Brannen and Thomas, 2010) and thus can maximize the benefits of a diverse workforce, corporations in emerging markets wanting to play on the grounds of global markets need to reconsider their talent management and be open to the fact, that a diverse workforce might be of advantage for their long term success. Individuals with a cross-cultural skillset and competencies are sought after (Brannen and Thomas, 2010; Lakshman, 2013). From a resource-based view (Barney, 1991), to enhance organizational learning and gain competitive advantage, it is crucial for the emerging market organization to build a foundation of people with a diverse mindset in their attempts to be internationally and globally competitive. Thus, one could argue that Turkey already has an available source of multicultural employees.

Biculturals are individuals who are able to simultaneously hold and refer to two distinct cultural identities (Brannen and Thomas, 2010; Hong et al, 2000) by engaging

¹ Statistics and literature, as well as current discussion in media (especially German media about this phenomenon) are available

in cultural frame switching (CFS). Empirical studies showed that CFS allows biculturals to operate fluidly within and between two cultural meaning systems (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005; Hong et al, 2000). Studies have shown that biculturals possess certain skills such as intellectual flexibility (Tadmor et al, 2009), exhibit better creative performance (Leung and Chiu, 2010) and show high intercultural effectiveness (Lee, 2010). Due to these skills, these individuals are increasingly receiving a fair deal of attention in the literature in business and management and it has been advocated that biculturals would be ideal boundary spanners, excel in cross-cultural negotiations and have an ideal predisposition for global leadership positions (Fitzsimmons et al, 2011).

Aim of the study

Yet, nescience about biculturals' potential in organizations might hinder their career development and success in general (Brannen and Thomas, 2010), but especially in emerging markets, which were not aware of the presence of skilled biculturals who were born outside the country until recently. International mobility has become an important topic in the management literature, however many essential questions remain unanswered. Not only do we know very little of effective management of diversity in organizations, but it is now crucial to understand the careers of skilled international mobile employees "in order for organizations to use their cultural, social, economic, and symbolic resources properly." (Al Ariss et al, 2012, p.93). Especially in the case of Turkey, albeit an increase SIE of biculturals, there is limited transparency about their career situation.

While research on self-initiated expatriation is rising exponentially (Al-Ariss et al, 2012; Cao et al, 2012) there is an existing research gap about the career success of SIE's (Cao et al, 2012). Further, scarce knowledge exists about the experiences of SIEs to and between developing countries (Doherty et al, 2012). At the same time, the literature on biculturals and multiculturals needs more profound knowledge about how organizations can attract, retain and manage these types of individuals (Bonebright, 2010) and empirical studies are needed in the field. Not only does the paper aim to tackle these questions, but the novelty of the present study is also characterized by its multidisciplinary nature by combining the research areas of self-initiated expatriation and biculturals in the context of emerging markets. Both research areas are not only nascent but also would benefit from empirical research.

To sum, the phenomenon under study is the career development and success of skilled bicultural SIEs in emerging markets. The research is guided by following question: *How do highly skilled, bicultural, self-initiated expatriates from developed countries perceive their career development and success in developing countries?* This question will be researched in the context of Turkey.

Conceptual framework

The research will be carried out considering two guiding theoretical frameworks from the area of self-initiated expatriation. First, this study is oriented on the research map provided by Al Ariss et al (2012) and Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013) and includes considerations, which the authors claim to be lacking in current SIE research. Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013) call for a diversity-informed research. Diversity in this context is examined through the lens of biculturals, since their two different cultural identities add to the heterogeneity and diversity of a workforce. Further, there is a need for contextualization in SIE research and Al Ariss et al (2012) specifically claim for a context-specific approach as a framework to study international mobility. The migrant career is thus regarded as a multi-layer and multi-faceted phenomenon. Especially the historical context (history of the migration of the countries of origin/destination) and the individual level (work-life experiences, link between experiences in the home/destination country) will be considered in this research. Thus, the awareness that careers proceed in situated and specific settings “can help us gain a more contextual and nuanced understanding of careers in their relevant historical and institutional contexts” (Al Ariss et al, 2012, p. 96).

Second, the theoretical framework explaining self-expatriation by Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) will be considered in this research as it might enhance our understanding of factors that interplay in the career development and possible repatriation among biculturals. The first unofficial interviews show a trend towards unexpected challenges biculturals encounter in Turkey and a return is therefore likely. This then is from disadvantage for the emerging country, which is in need of qualified and skilled labor. The reason why this theoretical framework is important is outlined in short²: Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) offer an integrated framework that explains why and how SIE repatriate to their country of departure. The authors name pull

² Will be elaborated upon in more detail in the final paper

factors for both, the home and host country. Pull factors to repatriate (leave the host country) are a) career instrumentality, b) lifestyle instrumentality, c) family encouragement and d) national identity.

The first unofficial and official interviews in this study however indicate, that three out of the four factors (b-d) are the pull factors of the host country and the reason for the self-initiated expatriation. Thus, the host country pull factors operate oppositional among bicultural SIEs. This then could lead to the assumption that the *career instrumentality* (the expected likelihood of gaining career opportunities) among biculturals could be the critical factor in their career development and success in the emerging market. If opportunity to a) make use of their bicultural skillset or b) advance in the homogeneous workforce (by not being accepted or being considered an outsider) is scarce in the emerging country, the likelihood to return could be higher among bicultural SIEs. This then again is another argument in favor of this research in order to raise awareness among organizations about the possible potential lost for their workforce.

Methodological approach

To address this question, a phenomenological qualitative research approach will be applied. Qualitative research is most adequate for exploratory research (Meyers, 2009) and in-depth exploration of the phenomenon. In-depth interviews allow to get an understanding of experiences others made and the meaning they made out of these experiences (Seidman, 1991). Qualitative in-depth interviews allow to provide situated insights and rich and thick description (Van Mannen, 1990). Richness is achieved by focusing both on context and process (Cope, 2011). This approach therefore allows to capture the relational and context-specific framework to study international mobility which has been advocated by Al-Ariss et al (2012). The aim is to provide a phenomenological hermeneutical conceptualization of the lived experiences of self-initiated expatriates into developing countries. By applying the Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) the research moves beyond descriptions and allows for interpretation of the events taking place in international mobility. IPA was chosen as the ideal research methodology as it is “a commitment to producing a fine-grained interpretative account that is grounded in, and does justice to, each participant's unique lived experience” (Cole, 2012, p.608).

This paper will be based on interpretive phenomenological research with 8-10 skilled bicultural self-initiated expatriates, which is within the recommended sample size in IPA research (6-10). Purposive sampling is applied in this research by selecting participants who exhibit features (being bicultural) or experiences (international mobility, self-initiated expatriation) that allow a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied. By selecting ‘information-rich’ cases ‘one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry’ (Patton, 2002, p.230). Purpose sampling also justifies the use of small samples with the aim to get in-depth understanding of lived experiences.

Lastly, it is important to mention that only participants who identify with two cultures and are bicultural are considered in this research³. This will be examined. Interviews take place over the period of March and April 2015. Participants have been contacted (via snowball system) and email exchanges taken place. Eight participants are confirmed. Two unofficial and one official interview have taken place, which have helped to define the research. An exemplary case of a participant is described:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
Canan ⁴ , female, 31 years old Born: The Netherlands Passport: Dutch and Turkish Identification: Bicultural	Canan graduated with a Masters from Netherland’s most prestigious business school. After working for a while in consulting in Amsterdam, she expatriated (organizational) to Paris where she worked as a highly successful business consultant. Having the urge to explore the Turkish market, she decided to move to Istanbul (self-initiated expatriation), although most of her relatives and parents are living in the Netherlands. She worked for a while at her first company, but then decided to quit her job in which she found herself not challenged enough and started looking for a new one. She was searching for it for more than six months, when she finally decided due to the growing disappointment to return back to the Netherlands. Even before returning she had already more than five interviews scheduled in the Netherlands, more than she could score in the previous months in Istanbul. Immediately on return she started a new job.

³ The literature on biculturals (e.g. Berry, 1997; Brannen and Thomas, 2010) has shown, that there are different types of biculturals depending on the degree of identification. A detailed literature review will be provided.

⁴ Names are changed with typical Turkish first names to guarantee anonymity for the participants

References

- Al Ariss, A., Crowley-Henry, M. (2013). Self-initiated expatriation and migration in the management literature. *Career Development International*, 18(1), 78-96
- Al Ariss, A., Koall, I., Özbilgin, M., & Suutari, V. (2012). Careers of skilled migrants: towards a theoretical and methodological expansion. *Journal of Management Development*, 31(2), 92-101.
- Barney, J. B. (2001). Resource-based theories of competitive advantage: A ten-year retrospective on the resource-based view. *Journal of management*, 27(6), 643-650.
- Benet-Martinez, V., & Haritatos, J. (2005). Bicultural identity integration (BII): components and psychosocial antecedents. *Journal of Personality*, 73(4): 1015-1049.
- Bonebright, D. (2010). Adult third culture kids: HRD challenges and opportunities. *Human Resource Development International*, 13(3): 351-359.
- Brannen, M. Y., & Thomas, D. C. (2010). Bicultural Individuals in Organizations: Implications and Opportunity. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 10(1): 5-16.
- Cao, L., Hirschi, A. and Deller, J. (2012). Self-initiated expatriates and their career success. *Journal of Management Development*, 31(2), 159-172.
- Cope, J. (2013). Entrepreneurial learning from failure: An interpretive phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(6), 604-623
- Doherty, N., Richardson, J. and Thorn, K. (2013). Self-initiated expatriation. *Career Development International*, 18(1), 6-11
- Fitzsimmons, S., Miska, C., & Stahl, G. (2011). Multicultural employees. *Organizational Dynamics*, 40(3): 199-206.
- Hong, Y.-Y., Morris, M., Chiu, C.-Y., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2000). Multicultural minds: A dynamic constructivist approach to culture and cognition. *American Psychologist*, 55(7): 709-720.
- Meyers, M. (2009). *Qualitative Research in Business and Management*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd
- Lakshman, C. (2013). Biculturalism and attributional complexity: Cross-cultural leadership effectiveness. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 44(9): 922-940.
- Leung, A. & Chiu, C. (2010). Multicultural Experience, Idea Receptiveness, and Creativity. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 41(5-6): 723-741.
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks:

SAGE Publications

Seidman, I. E. (1991). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for research in education and social sciences. New York: Teacher's College Press

Tadmor, C., Tetlock, P., & Kaiping, P. (2009). Acculturation Strategies and Integrative Complexity: The Cognitive Implications of Biculturalism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 40(1): 105-139.

Tharenou, P. and Caulfield, N. (2010). Will I stay or will I go? Explaining repatriation by self-initiated expatriates. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(5), 1009-1028.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. Suny Press.