

## Guest Commentary: A Review and Framework for Studying the Repatriation Experiences of Malaysian Faculty

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### ABSTRACT

*The repatriation process often is assumed to be an easy one when in fact it is not. The literature on repatriation is predominantly Western; therefore, this issue needs further examination as it pertains to people of all nationalities. A framework for further systematic study of developing nation expatriates is presented together with some preliminary results of an exploratory nature, based on extensive interviews and questionnaire data gathered on seven Malaysian faculty. We present these results in the form of a composite case to protect confidentiality of our small sample of subjects. Our focus is on reverse culture shock upon repatriation. We conclude with a reminder that this is exploratory research, and as such has several limitations, and with some suggestions for a more systematic approach to future research on repatriation.*

### ABSTRAK

*Proses repatriasi sering diandaikan sebagai proses yang mudah sedangkan ia tidak. Kebanyakan kajian tentang repatriasi dijalankan di Barat; oleh itu, isu ini perlu dikaji dengan lebih mendalam lagi kerana ia melibatkan orang dari negara-negara Timur juga. Satu rangka bagi kajian sistematik tentang ekspatriat dari negara-negara membangun dikemukakan bersama-sama dapatan awal kajian rintisan ini. Data diperoleh daripada tujuh ahli akademik di Malaysia melalui temu bual terperinci dan soal selidik. Hasil kajian dikemukakan dalam bentuk kes komposit bagi menjamin kerahsiaan subjek, memandangkan saiz sampel adalah kecil. Fokus kajian kami ialah isu kejutan budaya songsangan sewaktu repatriasi. Oleh sebab kajian ini hanya kajian rintisan, kami telah menyatakan beberapa kelemahannya. Kami juga mengemukakan beberapa cadangan bagi menjalankan kajian repatriasi yang lebih bersistematik pada masa akan datang.*

### INTRODUCTION: THE REPATRIATION ISSUE

The focus of this manuscript is on what is often thought of as the last element or phase of an expatriate experience, repatriation or re-entry to their

homeland after an extended stay abroad for graduate study or research and teaching experience. Unfortunately for many universities and for individual faculty careers, this repatriation phase is often taken for granted. After all, who could possibly have difficulties 'coming home'? Previous literature, largely Western, addressing this issue of the 'reverse culture shock' experiences of overseas employees, has generally failed to consider the importance of properly planning for repatriation. And, this literature makes no mention of the cases of university faculty studying or doing research and teaching abroad. If a university values these internationally experienced faculty members and hopes to avoid costly turnover and the loss of these talented human resources to competitor universities at home and abroad, then repatriation can best be managed by not putting off planning for repatriation until the last moment before 'coming home'. Despite the recent financial setbacks resulting from the '1997 Asian Financial Crisis', the developing nations of Asia and elsewhere around the world are rapidly changing the face of regional and global business, competing successfully with their own or joint-venture multinational enterprises (MNE's) in hi-tech industries, services and manufacturing sectors.

Malaysian organizations that seek to expand or prepare their human resources with regional and global know-how are facing all the challenges of selecting, training, and developing people to fulfill their international objectives. One example involves Malaysian public universities whose faculty careers, their pay and benefits, development and promotion are predicated on a seniority-based civil service system.

Internationally experienced faculty are valuable resources and need to be recognized as valued by their employers for purposes of regional and global growth, having begun the process of developing technical, language and intercultural skills during their experiences abroad. Universities around the world are globalizing their studies and programs in order to graduate students who are more skilled and able to work in an ever increasingly global and regional business environment. And, it takes internationally experienced home country faculty to realistically teach these global and international skills to Malaysian students.

The supply of internationally experienced faculty is far short of demand in universities as well as in other sectors of the economies of developing and developed nations. However, Malaysian faculty who spend extended time abroad are often lured away by universities and other organizations from other nations (Foreign Students Fill Niche for Firms 1998). One reason many are lost to companies and universities in other countries is of course the lure of higher pay and benefits, another involves getting accustomed to a different standard of living while studying abroad, and yet another involves reverse culture shock upon repatriation to their homeland. The case of a Malaysian academic, based on preliminary and exploratory findings, will be

presented later to demonstrate the importance of effectively repatriating and retaining these valuable academic internationalists and to illustrate the framework we have developed for more systematically studying repatriation. After providing an overview of the literature on repatriation, we will present a framework designed to both illustrate and to provide a more systematic approach to future research and human resource practices with regard to the importance of continuous repatriation planning during all phases of the overseas assignment and to individual career progress. A combined planning effort (e.g., involving both the university human resource department and the faculty member and family) is emphasized as the most critical element impacting the success of faculty repatriation efforts. 'Coming home' should not be assumed by the university nor by the repatriating faculty and his/her family to be easy for the expatriate faculty member, spouse or accompanying children, and therefore left unplanned. While we focus in this manuscript on first time overseas assignments, we have also illustrated our framework with a case that includes a second overseas experience. Whether a first time or multi-time expatriate, the five essential phases of our framework come into play for each overseas experience. These five phases (pre-assignment, entry, the overseas assignment, reentry, and maintenance) of the overseas assignment are discussed as they relate to repatriation. Several sub-categories of elements are considered in each phase starting with the process of selection for overseas assignment or study, which is followed by psychological and physical preparation and adjustment, career planning (our main focus), communication, and financial planning. The framework and its five phases and their sub-categories are based on our review of the literature on repatriation.

## OVERVIEW OF THE EXPATRIATE EXPERIENCE

Most theories and conceptualizations of the expatriate experience as well as the vast majority of academic and pragmatic writings and research has to date dealt only with business sector expatriates from European, North American, South Korean, and Japanese multinational enterprises. These expatriates are citizens of their parent company's home nation, assigned to overseas subsidiaries as managers and technicians with the skills thought to be necessary to bridge the local skill gaps in developing nations. Or, as Daniels and Radebaugh (1995) define expatriates, they are simply non citizens of the country in which they are working. On the average, these foreigners usually serve four years in their overseas assignment and then return home. Some serve for less than a year and are returned home because they have not succeeded in adjusting to another culture. Still other expatriates, employer policies permitting, homestead for twenty or more years, even for entire careers. Our focus is on the returning faculty expatriate who has successfully completed his or her studies abroad, not the homesteader nor the failure case.

To date there is almost nothing in the literature on faculty repatriation for expatriates of any nation. Therefore much of our review has to borrow heavily from the literature on business expatriates. During their time abroad, business expatriates are often viewed as temporary because local laws and contracts frequently require them to train and develop local nationals to replace them within a few years. During faculty study time abroad will they also be viewed as temporary (e.g., just like Western business expatriates), earning their degrees, then returning home, or will they become candidates for postings at universities in the countries where they are learning and studying? Brain drain or loss of these internationalized faculty is often curtailed by means of a 're-entry contract'. Faculty going abroad who are supported by a salary and tuition and books allowance from a Malaysian public university, by whom they are employed before going abroad, are frequently guaranteed a re-entry faculty position after completing their studies and returning home.

The actual number of Malaysian faculty who are enhancing their careers by studying abroad is not clearly recorded. However, according to the International Institute of Education based in the USA (1998), as of 1996 and 1997 there were over 14,000 Malaysian students studying in USA universities, mostly in business administration, engineering, communications and other hi-tech fields of study. Globally, according to a report by the British Council and Asian Association of Open Universities, in 1997 there were over 50,000 Malaysian students studying abroad in England, Europe, Australia, the USA, and other countries (Meek, Sclater & White 1998). In a recent, December, 1997, speech given by The Honorable John R. Mallot, US Ambassador to Malaysia, he praised the work of US universities in developing twinning programs that allowed Malaysian students to complete much of their undergraduate work at home before transferring to the United States. Ambassador Mallot further stated that these "programs are playing an important role in helping Malaysia develop the human resources needed to continue on its path of social and economic development. The greatest transfer of technology and know-how has been 100,000 Malaysian graduates of American universities. These programs are not a luxury item, but are a lifetime investment that will have importance to students, to Malaysia, and US relations in the 21st century" (Mallott 1997). In sum, there are a significant number of Malaysian faculty within these numbers to warrant further research into repatriation and career planning for these valuable internationalists.

Given this brief introduction to the concept of expatriates and repatriation, it probably comes as no surprise that the term expatriate may seem to some to be inappropriate when applied to Malaysians or others who have grown accustomed to thinking of themselves as local nationals. However, the reader's view of this inappropriateness may change when we pause to reflect on the original meaning of the word a resident abroad or exile (Oxford Dictionary 1995). Clearly, in this study, we are making a case for the more

general use of the word expatriate that encompasses citizens, especially faculty, of developing nations who are serving their national universities by studying and learning abroad in order to enhance their careers and develop the skills necessary for teaching and research in an ever globalizing world.

THE RELEVANCE OF REPATRIATION TO MALAYSIA AS  
WELL AS TO OTHER DEVELOPING NATIONS?

Expatriation and repatriation have much to do with Malaysians living and studying abroad for extended periods of time. In particular we focus here on Malaysian faculty studying abroad (e.g., in the USA Australia, U.K and many other countries) as they complete many courses of study including MBA and Ph.D. in business administration, and graduate level studies in engineering, communications, and other hi-tech career disciplines, consistent with Malaysia's Vision 2020. Research on Malaysian faculty with overseas/international experience will become even more critical and selection of faculty for overseas study more selective as Malaysia cuts back government support for study abroad in favor of distance learning (Meek et al. 1998).

MALAYSIAN ACADEMICS AND STUDENTS GAINING EXPATRIATE EXPERIENCE

Although there are over fifty thousand Malaysians gaining significant international experience while studying overseas, there are still an insufficient supply of truly internationalized academics who must learn to adjust to different cultures and readjust when returning home, often to jobs with universities. They have completed or are working on their formal education abroad, completing Masters or Doctoral degrees at universities while overseas and in the process developed an international perspective in their fields of study. Some are seeking career advancement, studying global business management in order to enhance their career opportunities with international skills. These thousands of expatriate Malaysians often spend two or more years abroad studying and attaining degrees and qualifications in many fields of study, several fields of study are of particular value to Malaysia's universities as has been previously noted, providing a pool of internationalized faculty. Subsequently these repatriated faculty become mentors for future generations as well as educators of the skills needed by Malaysia's international ventures.

When the 'Asian Financial Crisis' subsides, the number of US, European, South Korean, and Japanese businesses will extend their operations to developing nations. The recent trend toward establishing technical colleges and training universities will be complemented by distance learning programs, and this will create more opportunities for academics with overseas experience. Honda Inc. of Japan and Motorola Inc. of the US are but two examples of companies that have set up training universities in SE Asia to develop the talent needed to operate their interests in the region. Malaysia has recently started a joint ministries program aimed at cooperating with foreign enterprises

in identifying industry requirements, developing courses of study and matching graduates with foreign investors (Minehan 1996).

## A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON REPATRIATION

What can Malaysian universities learn about developing the international skills of their faculty from the expatriate practices of large global MNE's like Mitsui, Bata, ABB, Toshiba, Unilever, Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, Samsung, and Coca-Cola to name a few. These globally focused giants of international business have learned from experience what many of their multi-domestic or relatively smaller, emerging counterparts have yet to learn. The central lesson being, that it is crucial to international and global operations that they value and support their expatriate managers and specialists both during and after their overseas assignments. While the literature on repatriation is largely based on anecdotal Western cases and examples, we are able to gain some insights from this literature into the development of a repatriation framework and model useful for further research and study into Malaysian faculty expatriation experiences. Once we have systematically studied Malaysian cases, not just relied on Western cases which may be culturally misleading, we can next draw some conclusions about how to best plan for and manage the repatriation of Malaysians faculty and avoid costly turnover and brain drain.

Like these global giants who have learned to value expatriate experiences and skills for their relevance to their global expansion goals, many Asian universities have begun to recognize this valuing process and specifically the criticality of sound planning for repatriation of overseas personnel. As stated earlier, this recognition is evidenced by the use of expatriate "re-entry contracts" and other support practices exercised by Malaysian universities. However, there still remains an apparent expectation that returning home must be easy. These institutions seem to fail to fully understand that repatriation planning process is a complex one and involves a combined effort by the human resource department of the university as well as the employee and his/her family.

It is also critical that this combined effort begins well before the employee and family depart for an extended overseas assignment (Clague & Krupp 1978). These oversights or failures to recognize and plan adequately for repatriation are compounded by the fact that during actual reentry the employee and family come home to an environment that has dramatically changed yet one that others presume he or she is familiar with (Pasco 1992). Expatriates, and their accompanying families in some cases, who have studied and lived abroad for extended periods of time have often lost touch not only with the university in Malaysia but the home culture as well. One contributing factor may well be that these universities need to more fully promote global sensitivity throughout their staff and faculties, meaning that

when faculty expatriates contact the human resource or accounting offices at the Malaysian university where they are employed after returning home, they are sometimes met by personnel who haven't a clue about time zone differences, foreign exchange conversions, and other aspects of cultural differences and life abroad (Fitzgerald-Turner 1997).

Many repatriates say that adjustment to the overseas culture was easier than the readjustment upon return home (Adler 1981; Gregerson 1992; Howard 1974). This difficulty in readjustment can lead to costly problems for the university and the faculty repatriate/family. It also sets a bad example to future expatriate faculty regarding their perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of overseas assignments. Younger faculty may become reluctant to go overseas if they see their senior counterparts, repatriates, as being mistreated or career defeated (Moynihan 1993). It is estimated in Western literature that between 25-40% of repatriated employees leave their organizations within one year of re-entry (McDonald 1993; Schilling 1993).

#### KEY ELEMENTS OF THE REPATRIATION ISSUE

There are some major categorical areas in which institutions, expatriates, and their families experience repatriation problems: financial, career/professional, and family/psychological (Harvey 1982). Financial problems include returning to the domestic compensation level, loss of benefits, and changes in inflation at home, all of which are of course affected by the length of time spent abroad.

Career/professional problems repatriates experience are lack of a position upon return, loss of power/seniority, turnover, and reduced productivity (Oddou & Mendenhall 1991). These repatriation career issues need to be examined within the context of company policies with regard to the nature of their overseas assignments. For example, these assignments may be for a fixed period of time, say three years, in order to allow as many employees as possible to gain overseas experience. Or, international experience may be viewed by the enterprise as essential to development and career progress.

Family/psychological problems experienced by the repatriate family include reduction in lifestyle, disorientation to the culture, loss of social contact with family and friends while away, and the children's problems adjusting to school (Harvey 1982; Richardson & Rullo 1992; Welds 1991). Although these problems have been presented through anecdotal evidence, very little empirical research has been conducted to examine the issues in depth.

The repatriate's level of re-adjustment is influenced by many factors including length of overseas tour, role clarity and discretion, expectations, support by mentors and others, and demographic characteristics (Black & Gregerson 1991; Black 1992; Feldman & Tompson 1993; Hunt 1998).

Much of the repatriation literature discusses the impact of the overseas assignment on career development. Many repatriates report reductions in

pay, status, and autonomy upon return (Oddou & Mendenhall 1991). Some expatriates return to no job at all or their careers are derailed (Grant 1997; Smith 1975). The majority of repatriates view the expatriation experience as helpful to their personal development (i.e., communication skills, global view, planning skills, etc.) but detrimental to career development (Grant 1997; Napier & Peterson 1991; Oddou & Mendenhall 1991). While personal development is a benefit to the employee, by failing to capitalize on the professional skills and experiences gained overseas, organizations do not take advantage of the full benefit that they may experience.

Another main area found in the literature on international human resource practices focuses on the characteristics of formal programs that exist to assist repatriates and the reasons some MNE's give for not offering such programs (Brewster 1991). There is nothing in the literature on universities having formal programs and no evidence that if there were such programs they would be extended to other family members (Harvey 1989). Prohibitive cost, and lack of a perceived need probably curtail the use of these programs by universities and other organizations (Harvey 1989).

While Malaysian expatriate faculty are serving globally, in public and private universities, research studies into the concepts and philosophies of Malaysian universities with regard to selection, development & preparation, supporting and evaluating, and repatriating their internationally experienced faculty remains for the most part as a future goal. Reliance solely on Western models may not be of great assistance in practice nor in future research on Malaysian expatriates. Therefore, one primary purpose of the framework and the figure to be presented next in this report is to help conceptualize and systematize future research, borrowing the best elements and experiences from a Western perspective but also retaining a flexible and adaptable model that can be tailored to fit Malaysian repatriates needs and experiences, as well as those of expatriates of other developing nations.

## TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER STUDY OF REPATRIATION & ITS RELEVANCE TO FACULTY CAREERS

The issues associated with repatriation have often been discussed and rarely researched. The research that has been undertaken has looked at repatriation as a static event rather than an integral piece of the career puzzle. It is a goal here, to describe the repatriation process as it fits into the overall career process.

A framework (see Figure 1) of key phases and issues in the repatriation process is presented next. The five phases in the framework represent the events within the expatriate experience that are subject to better repatriation planning. The issues discussed within each phase are those necessary to insure successful repatriation efforts. The repatriate's movement through the phases, the passage of time, and the impact of the overseas experience on the



employee, on his or her career, family members, and the employing institution are highlighted in the framework.

As previously noted, research on repatriation has treated the re-entry experience as an isolated event and not as part of an employee's career path. We propose a "loop", similar to Adler's model (1981, 1997), on the career path to illustrate how a repatriation experience fits into a first expatriate experience. A career path of an international academic would be depicted as a series of these loops. An overseas assignment loop consists of five phases of repatriation and may result in differing outcomes (turnover, loss of advancement, or maintenance and career advancement) for the individual and institution depending on how well they have handled and planned for the repatriation experience and issues already discussed (Adler 1981).

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Pre-Assignment: Phase 1

- anticipate physical /psychological adjustments to cultural differences
- career planning (include re-entry & support)
- communication & financial planning — how to stay in touch

Entry: Phase 2

- actual physical & psychological adjustments to cultural differences
- continue career plan/support
- communication (language, non-verbal & other)
- financial adjustments

Overseas Assignment: Phase 3

- physical /psychological adjustment continues
- career plan & support (revise pre-assignment re-entry plan well before departure date)
- communication (avoid 'out of sight is out of mind')
- financial (prepare for unexpected costs of re-entry)

Re-entry: Phase 4

- physical /psychological readjustment
- career planning (some difficult decisions) & counseling (include family)
- communication (readjustment to colleagues, family, friends)
- financial (costs have gone up since you left home, overseas items may not be available)

Maintenanc: Phase 5

- debriefing /physical & psychological adjustment does not end in a few days or weeks
  - are you ready to join the pool of career internationalists?
  - Communication (consider mentoring & supporting the next generation of expatriates)
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FIGURE 1. A framework of the repatriation process

The domestic career progress of a faculty member stops during the overseas assignment and the faculty member returns to the domestic career after studying or teaching abroad. However, future overseas assignments remain a possibility and the first overseas experience may well serve to better prepare for such postings. The overseas assignment allows the faculty member to career advance themselves in such things as international skills, academic credentials, income, and prestige. However, when the faculty member re-enters their home country, s/he may lose any newly-found power associated with the overseas position and find that other faculty have moved ahead in their careers, leaving him/her behind at least temporarily until a promotion can be reviewed. We clearly do not want this to become a problem. As we shall see in the case of our repatriating academic, whom we will turn to shortly, Malaysian universities' emphasis on seniority for promotion as well as their use of 're-entry contracts' obviates some of the fear of not being promoted.

If there is generally insufficient or poor planning for the re-entry of an expatriate, the 'loop' often results in turnover. Here the employee reenters the home country university that has not planned well for repatriation and the employee cannot adjust to the changes s/he experiences. The costs associated with turnover, can be considerable according to Western business literature as previously stated, however a reentry contract has prevented this problem in our case study. Sending the faculty member on an overseas assignment to obtain a graduate degree or international experience can result in a very expensive loss for both the company and the employee. A faculty member may return but due to poor reentry planning, they may be placed in a position below or equal to the post s/he had before going overseas. If going abroad to earn graduate qualifications does not enhance one's career within a reasonable time, delays in contracted or unplanned promotions may result in a demoralized faculty member and their career path can take a downward plunge or decline.

Repatriates may feel isolated and devalued. His or her newly acquired international skills, such as cultural and language skills, are not truly valued back at the home university and the overseas posting now appears to have been largely a career path hindrance more than a help (Grant 1997). Perhaps being assigned upon repatriation to teach classes only in the Malay language and not in English is one such case. Another might involve a policy of senior faculty getting first preference to teach graduate and elective classes which could be perceived to be the classes that make better use of recently acquired research and other skills learned abroad.

One of the most important aspects of successful repatriation is early planning in each of the phases of the model. Pre-assignment planning should occur well before the actual overseas assignment starts. As noted earlier, the pre-assignment phase involves crucial career path planning in order to

ensure the successful reentry of a faculty member. Reentry planning should begin before the overseas assignment or at least one year before the actual repatriation is to occur to avoid situations where repatriates are re-assigned to their old job, or other cases where a repatriate has to wait for an appropriate home position to come open.

In addition to planning, debriefing or collecting information from the faculty member upon reentry is essential. Frequently university personnel departments fail to gather information from the faculty member about how the expatriation and repatriation experiences could be improved and how his/her skills could be better utilized by the university. If Malaysian universities pursue planned cutbacks in study abroad programs in favor of distance learning, perhaps selectivity will be more rigorous for those few faculty still chosen for study in the USA and elsewhere. This will make such data even more critical to the process of selection. When the gathering of this important data is done, the loop will result in the best candidates being chosen for overseas study and a positive and upward career advancement or maintenance of career outcome is more likely.

In this later case, the faculty member often gains new communication and interpersonal skills from the overseas assignment (Adler 1981). S/he returns home and is allowed some time to adjust and report to the university all that s/he has experienced overseas. Then s/he is placed in a position pre-set for them during the pre-assignment planning phase, a reentry contract of sorts. This scenario is illustrated in the repatriating academic case to be presented next. The employee's career path is on an upward trend and both university and repatriate have been enriched by the years of study and life abroad.

A more detailed look at the composite Malaysian case of academic faculty repatriation we have been referring to is now in order, to illustrate the issue of repatriation from Malaysian points of view and to further illustrate our framework.

### PRELIMINARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

An illustration of the repatriation issue is now presented, based on exploratory research and the preliminary findings from interviews with a small selection of Malaysian faculty who have recently experienced coming home to the unknown after extended stays abroad for educational and study purposes. We present these preliminary findings of our research in the form of a 'composite case' (e.g., composite in order to strictly maintain the confidentiality of the small sample of seven subjects).

As stated in the literature review, it is often assumed by both the individual going abroad and his/her company that expatriates will be able to adjust easily to their culture of origin upon return home. However, such an

assumption does not allow for the shocking changes in their homeland that may have occurred during their absence abroad nor for the career adjustments they must make when they are back home after an extended stay abroad. In order to get a general sense of the impact of repatriating from an extended stay abroad, we will present a case where the Malaysian expatriate has successfully completed her overseas studies. However, a few remarks on the importance of accompanying family are in order first. Both spouse and children are being separated from family and friends and this is not an easy adjustment. The pros and cons of single versus married faculty or students being selected for overseas studies or assignments will be left for future discussion. Our example reflects both single and married elements, when considering the two overseas experiences, the initial Masters degree and the subsequent doctoral degree overseas study experiences.

When married expatriates, students or managers, go overseas, they sometimes are accompanied by their immediate families and other times go and stay without their families, subsequently returning to their home countries after several years of overseas study or assignment separated from their spouse and/or children. Economic conditions, sheer physical growth and development, advances in technology, changes in education and schools, changes in terms of children born into the extended family while you were away, and friends whose own interests have changed so new friends are to be made and adjustments to old friendships required, these are but a few of the elements of an expatriate's home culture that may have changed dramatically while abroad for several years. Also, some cultural skills that were learned or enhanced while studying abroad, such as English language skills, may not be fully utilized in Malaysian university classrooms nor in Malaysian research publications upon return home. The *Jurnal Pengurusan* provides an example of a Malaysian publication that encourages at least one English language article in each annual issue.

The case we now present serves as a simple example of the physical, social and economic changes that have occurred back home during an expatriate faculty's absence, as well as family, career, and psychological challenges that can face a repatriate faculty member when returning home after being overseas for a number of years. The case continues with a second overseas study experience, sponsored by her employing university, and aimed at advancing the subject's academic credentials, skills and career.

#### THE CASE OF THE REPATRIATING MALAYSIAN ACADEMIC

The author was discussing the progress of her overseas education in economic studies at an American university with a Malaysian faculty member who had just recently returned to Kuala Lumpur, after nearly 5 years abroad. Ten years earlier she had had her first extended experience abroad when she spent three years in Australia earning her MBA degree. She

was single at the time and was following the example of her three brothers and one sister who had also studied abroad to advance their careers and skills. She was now returning, Ph.D. in hand, to her interrupted career as a Lecturer at a prominent Malaysian University. The University had sponsored her studies abroad and paid her Lecturer's salary to help with expenses in the USA. While the cost of textbooks were often a strain on her budget, she found the financial package as a whole to be sufficient to meet costs. Her primary concern upon return involved whether her promotion to Associate Professor would be approved, in recognition of her hard work and attainment of the Ph.D. in economics from a difficult American graduate program. While concerned about the timeliness of the promotion, she knew that she was guaranteed a promotion upon return to Malaysia in recognition for earning her Doctorate. This guarantee was in the form of a written re-entry contract. A secondary concern involved her perception that her English language skills might diminish over time if she was not assigned to lecture at least some classes in English. Since her employing university was a public Malaysian university, most classes were taught in Bahasa Melayu and there were a paucity of courses taught in English. Her real concern may have been that in order to publish research in overseas journals, publications being a critical criteria for future promotions, she would need to keep her English skills fine tuned. Furthermore, she made it clear that her faculty colleagues had been very supportive both while she was abroad studying and when she was readjusting to life and career back in Kuala Lumpur, even to the point of assisting her with temporary housing. Having just spent the greater part of five years separated by the Pacific Ocean from his wife, her husband was glad to have her back home, even if cooking and housekeeping were not her new priorities. He wanted to start a family and remain at home to educate their children in Malaysian schools. Furthermore, what about his career as an auditor with a Malaysian bank? Must he give up all his dreams to assist his wife in her career? They would need to talk about these feelings with each other and with family members, perhaps even a company career counselor might help them sort things out. In the meantime, she was discovering that the Malaysia she left five years ago had changed most impressively. When she returned from America she was immediately confronted by a magnificent change in the skyline of Kuala Lumpur. Of course she had been reading the newspapers and occasionally seen CNN progress reports on the building of the KL Tower and the 88 stories high Petronas Twin Towers, but even so she was not fully prepared for the dramatic physical changes in the skyline, buildings and roads [read: traffic] of her native capital city.

In summary, the composite case serves to illustrate several aspects of the 5-phase framework. During the pre-assignment phase (Phase 1) there was evidence of career planning in the form of a re-entry contract. The Malaysian universities use of a civil service seniority-based promotion

system may have made her promotion a bit slow to come upon her return home, but the re-entry contract removed some of the concern upon actual re-entry in Phase 4. There was also senior faculty support in the form of assistance with housing and personal matters when re-entering Malaysia (Phase 4). During Phases 1 through 3 financial problems were avoided or at least minimized for our expatriate while overseas by the provision of adequate monies for tuition, books and living costs, largely in the form of continuing to pay her regular faculty salary while abroad. There was no evidence of revision of the re-entry contract during Phase 3, no keeping in touch to prevent misunderstandings about delays in promotion upon return home. Numerous family and spousal career (dual career couple) issues as well as higher costs, foreign exchange losses, availability of certain items abroad not readily available in Malaysia, as well as many physical changes, while not fully predictable in the pre-assignment phase (Phase 1) could have been adjusted for in Phase 3 several months before re-entry as the framework suggests. Finally, in Phase 5, maintenance includes truly becoming a member of the internationally trained pool of faculty back home. This phase remains an issue as the comments in the case make note of the paucity of English usage in classes and diminishing use of language and cultural skills learned abroad. It also remains to be seen if the recently repatriated faculty that comprised our small sample will actively pursue being mentors for the next generation of junior faculty to go abroad. Cutbacks in overseas study may limit this process.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Ask yourself this futuristic question, 'if you were to go abroad now and not return until the year 2000, or 2020, what changes might you expect to find in Malaysia?' What marvelous new structures and other changes can you imagine as Malaysia moves towards Vision 2020. Technological and other developments in all forms of infrastructure are definitely well under way in Malaysia. Can you imagine these dramas which are now unfolding in their final form, yes of course you can, but how can you be better prepared for returning to this 'new' home land that you left a few years before? Also, ask yourself, what will be the impact of the Asian Financial Crisis of 97 on your perceptions of the relative cost and availability of certain goods and services in Malaysia if you were repatriating to Malaysia after being abroad in 1997 and 1998?

This Malaysian repatriation case was created from semi-structured interviews and questionnaire data gathered by the author from recently repatriated Malaysian faculty. They are not intended to reflect absolutes as the research is exploratory in nature and is thus used primarily to illustrate the repatriation framework and to stimulate more systematic future research and encourage effective planning with regard to the repatriation process in and by the human resource departments of Malaysian universities. Successful

repatriation calls for planning effectively for re-entry adjustments that involve family, careers, financial, communications, physical, psychological, and selection is part of the issue and challenge of effective repatriation, which is the focus of this manuscript. The framework developed here should provide a systematic basis for subsequent research and results should be interesting and useful to human resource directors of Malaysian universities as well as to universities in other Asian nations as well as to potential expatriate faculty in all these organizations. The framework and research findings should benefit Malaysian faculty and students who are bettering their skills and bringing those skills back to Malaysia to subsequently 'mentor' and develop the coming generations of Malaysians who will take their places in Malaysian universities and other organizations as they expand their global interests and curriculum. Retention of internationally trained faculty will become an even more critical issue for Malaysian universities when government announced cutbacks in support of overseas study are fully implemented and distance learning programs are in place.

Much of the past literature and research on repatriation is Western and has treated the repatriation experience as an isolated event. Additionally, many universities and other organizations with the exceptions of a few global giant corporations have not truly valued their expatriate talent in terms of future global growth. The literature is largely anecdotal and unsystematic, lacking conceptual frameworks upon which to base research and practice. However, the literature does provide some general categories of issues related to effective repatriation. The general categories of selection, physical and psychological adjustment, career planning, financial, and communication are presented along with the five phases of repatriation to provide a systematic framework for further research on repatriation as it pertains to Malaysian and other developing nation universities, their faculty, and their globalization aspirations.

The authors have presented a framework which serves to illustrate the impact of poor versus proper repatriation planning, during all the phases of the overseas expatriate experience, on career development, level of advancement, and ultimately, on the career path or trend of an expatriate faculty member. This framework shown in Exhibit 1 is intended to serve to demonstrate that with early planning, good communication, and necessary support, the overseas experience can lead to high career advancement and enrichment of the home university. However, without these important factors, the career path can take a downward turn or even end in turnover. The Malaysian composite case was presented to illustrate these points.

#### ISSUES IN NEED OF FURTHER STUDY

Two repatriation-related issues are suggested which appear to be somewhat unique to Malaysia and perhaps to other developing nations. First, large

numbers of academics and students from Malaysia and other developing nations are going overseas to study and are gaining valuable international experience in the process. These Malaysian repatriates are in great demand by both foreign and Malaysian universities. Further research is needed on what motivates these valuable globally experienced academics in order to better retain them and avoid costly turnover and brain drain. A second repatriation issue involves the amount and rate of change that Malaysians and other developing nations are facing. A brief look at the economic growth and development of Malaysia, represented by 8% or higher per annum GNP growth in the past few years compared to an average GNP growth of 3% or less in industrialized nations illustrates this point. Technological and infrastructure changes may well be moving faster and in greater proportion in developing nations than in developed nations. The new monorail system and sports complex for the Commonwealth Games in 1998, new shopping malls, resort complexes, hi-tech information and communication systems, development of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC; which includes the hi-tech Cyberjaya community, Putrajaya, and Kuala Lumpur International Airport or KLIA all currently being developed), new hi-tech institutions for learning including prototype 'smart schools', cell phones carried by large numbers of people in Malaysia, and many new highways. The list of dramatic and rapid changes is endless in Malaysia. If change is greater and faster in developing nations such as Malaysia, then repatriation will mean more changes and more challenges for these Malaysians to come home too, more challenges in readjusting to socio-economic issues tied to the Asian Financial Crisis of the present. Is the standard of living better or worse as a result of these changes, and how does the standard of living in Malaysia compare to that of the country the repatriate faculty member is returning from? University human resource specialists need to examine these issues carefully if they hope to value and retain internationally experienced faculty. Of particular interest here is the need for careful and thorough study of the role of planning to support repatriation back to a rapidly changing homeland.

Future research needs to study the impact that repatriation has on overall career success of an expatriate Malaysian academic's career. Comparison of faculty who have studied abroad or who do accept overseas assignments versus those who do not would be another area of interest. In addition, the human resource departments of Malaysian universities should implement and continually examine the successful versus unsuccessful parts of their repatriation programs, adjusting them wherever necessary. The more research conducted in this area, the more fine tuned to Malaysian expatriate faculty needs the repatriation programs will become and the less dependent on Western models that may not work well for expatriates from developing nations. This will lead to better use of the repatriate's new knowledge and less turnover and 'brain drain' or loss of Malaysian repatriate academics.



In conclusion, the focus here and in future research based on the framework developed in this manuscript is on the study of repatriation's relevance to developing nations. Developing nations are changing at a rapid rate and repatriates and their families are often challenged by the new socio-economic developments, which they do not remember as part of their culture when they went abroad. Malaysian expatriate faculty and their families have gained a new outlook and new skills while overseas, these new attitudes will also affect their views toward their home country, and they will have to cope with changed attitudes toward them as well. A similar scenario will bode true for expatriates from other developing nations.

We close with a reminder that the author's intent has been to present a framework of repatriation that is culturally flexible but also systematizes research on the basic phases of repatriation and can be adapted for practical use in developing nations well as for comparative research purposes. We also remind readers that developing nation expatriates, Malaysian faculty expatriates in this manuscript, and Malaysian universities must plan thoroughly and early for successful repatriation and expatriation experiences. This planning should be a combined faculty member, family, and university human resource department as well as total university effort designed to help individuals advance their careers and help ensure a future globalized faculty talent pool for universities with an interest in regionally and globally enhanced curriculum to meet the skill demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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