

THE ROLE OF EXPATRIATE MANAGERS WITHIN FOREIGN SUBSIDIARIES: A MICRO-LEVEL EXAMINATION

The last forty years has seen the development of significant literature and research examining the role of expatriate staff within the multinational context. Since Edstrom and Galbraith (1977) identified the three main purposes of expatriates as knowledge transfer, management development and coordination and control, subsequent research has confirmed that these functions continue to be the main reasons for assigning staff to foreign subsidiaries (e.g. Hocking et al., 2004). What remains under-investigated, however, is how the functions for which expatriate managers are assigned are fulfilled at a micro- or individual-level. Among the reasons given for this is the distinct and path-dependent nature of individual expatriate assignments (Torbiorn, 1994; Hocking et al., 2004). Nonetheless, research within the boundary-spanning literature (Johnson and Duxbury, 2010), and even more recent expatriate literature (Haynes and Almond, 2015) have indicated that a combination of various individual-level activities commonly undertaken by international assignees can indeed be identified. Using a multiple case-study approach, which included 60 semi-structured interviews across firms from eight different countries of origin (US, Spain, France, Japan, Germany, UK, India, and Denmark), this paper has identified several micro-level activities which contribute to the fulfilment of expatriate functions within foreign subsidiaries. These activities included translation, mentorship, apprenticeship, coordinator, investigator, internal negotiator, fire-fighter, ambassador, and networker. These individual-level roles bare significant implications for talent management, and the development, preparation and success of current and potential international assignees within multinational companies (MNCs).

Introduction

Reduced geographic restrictions has also helped to ease the ability of international assignees to commute between countries, and hence resulted in an increase of international assignments within MNCs (GMAC/SHRM, 2006; Harvey and Moeller, 2009). Studies have demonstrated that the expatriate managers are key to disseminating knowledge, developing global managers, and maintaining subsidiary control across the globe (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977; Harzing, 2001, Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004). As a result, they hold significant implications for the overall performance of subsidiaries. This paper focuses on the long-term assigned expatriate (AE) manager (interchanged with international assignee), defined here as *'Any MNC employee who holds or has been assigned to a managerial position within a foreign subsidiary of that company for a period lasting more than one year'* (Haynes and Almond, 2015, p.5). The HRM and International Business literatures are filled with several studies which focus on expatriate assignments in foreign subsidiaries (e.g. Harzing, 2001a, 2001b, Paik and Sohn, 2004; Hocking et al., 2004). Yet, since the Edstrom and Galbraith's (1977) seminal framework, there have been few studies which explicitly examine how these objectives are fulfilled within foreign subsidiaries. To contribute to the theoretical advancement in this area, this paper will examine the micro-level activities that expatriate managers perform, and how these activities contribute to the achievement of their assignment objectives.

Reviewing Edstrom and Galbraith's framework on expatriate functions

Edstrom and Galbraith's (1977) typology remains the most quoted in the examination of expatriate functions and purposes (Harzing, 2001; Hocking et al., 2004). Indeed, it was the first

empirical study which offered a comprehensive categorisation of the purposes of individual international transfers between multinational companies (MNCs). The three expatriate purposes identified in this study (position-filling, management development, and organisational development/control) have been also confirmed in subsequent research (Torbiorn, 1994; Delios and Bjorkman, 2000; Bonache and Brewster, 2001; Harzing, 2001a, 2001b; Paik and Sohn, 2004), or adapted through variations on a similar theme (e.g. Adlar and Ghadar, 1990; Hocking, 1999; Hocking et al., 2004). This led Cerdin and Brewster (2014) to declare that the 1977 seminal study remained robust with regards to identifying the key reasons for the utilisation of international assignments by MNCs (p.246). In saying this, however, this framework is not without its shortcomings, with some commenting on the lack of clarity and understanding of this categorisation, regarding the inter-relatedness of expatriates' various assignment purposes.

Another criticism of the 1977 framework was with regard to the need to identify individual- and organisational-level drivers of international assignments (Hocking et al., 2004). In response to this, some researchers have sought to offer alternative frameworks which make the distinction between various strategic levels (Pucik, 1992; Evans, 2011). Though applied and examined individually within the literature, significant overlap across the three roles have been observed. For example, Hocking et al. (2004, p.566), in adopting a strategic perspective (Torbiorn, 1994), highlighted the fact that the transfer of 'know-how' (p.566) was not distinctive to the position filling (or knowledge transfer) role, but rather was inherent in control and the common objective of all strategic expatriate assignments. These researchers developed an assignment purposes relationship matrix founded on two knowledge transfer dimensions. The researchers went further, also seeking to explore the relationship between strategic assignment purposes and their path dependent outcomes. This study offered a more comprehensive framework for understanding the assignment purposes outlined by Edstrom and

Galbraith (1977), identifying three main strategic categories, including business applications, organisational applications, and expatriate learning. In creating these the authors distinguished between those roles that contributed to expatriates' business related role activities, and those that enhanced or maintained organisational growth. This offered a range of role objectives for each category which, through the use of a knowledge perspective lens, and helped to explain how particular expatriate behaviour contributes to the strategic objectives of the firm

While lending further understanding of Edstrom and Galbraith's (1977), Hocking et al's (2004) study was limited to specific conditions, it being conducted within one Swedish telecommunications firm (Ericsson). Though granting the authors more empirical control and analytical focus, they also recognised the need for a multiple-case study design within a more heterogeneous study (Hocking et al., 2004). Also, these researchers alluded to but chose not to focus on expatriate roles processes, leaving the gap for further investigation into how expatriates' various purposes and role objectives are actually achieved. Indeed, there has been recent calls for the examination of the various expatriate functions at a micro-level (Bonache and Zarraga, 2008; Cook, 2009; Rupidara and McGraw, 2011). In their examination of HRM knowledge as an influencing variable in the successful transfer of HRM practices, Chang and Smale, (2013) observed that many studies on knowledge transfer opted to focus on macro- and meso-level factors, at the expense of micro-level factors (p.1). Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) among others observed the important role that individual employees play for several organisational level outcomes (also see Felin et al., 2012; Devinney, 2013). Yet still very little is known about what enables knowledge transfer across boundaries. The lack of analysis at this level extended to the rich body of literature on expatriate purposes and functions, where several studies focused on the various functions of expatriates, but very little exploring how these functions were fulfilled and operationalised on a daily basis within foreign subsidiaries (e.g. see Johnson and Duxbury, 2010). To advance the current research's aims of assessing whether

Edstrom and Galbraith's (1977), more theoretical development and examination on how the various expatriate purposes and fulfilled simultaneously is required. It is here that this present study aims to contribute, through the exploration of not only the reasons for AE managers' use, but also how these roles are inter-related and fulfilled at individual- or micro-level with MNC subsidiaries.

Methodology

This idea for this paper emerged out of a larger study, which focused on how changing external and organisational conditions within the MNC context helped to shape the nature of expatriate functions performed within foreign subsidiaries. A qualitative research design was deemed appropriate in order to facilitate the exploration of individual experiences, perspectives, and motivations behind specific organisational behaviours and decisions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It also provided a greater amount of flexibility (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, 52), which was particularly necessary as difficulties with research access into multinational firms were anticipated. Using a case study, a multiple case study approach allowed for comparisons to be made within unique organisational contexts and circumstances, and between companies based in diverse settings (Schofield, 2000; Verschuhén, 2003; Easton, 2010). With regard to choosing firms, the researcher sought after MNCs with wholly-owned subsidiaries within the United Kingdom, and where a global mobility program was present. It was also important to choose firms from internationally-integrated sectors and where a high number of more highly-skilled professionals could be found (e.g I.T., Communications, Financial, Manufacturing). Two MNCs from the US and two MNCs from Spain, where full research access was gained, were used as major case-study firms however several minor case-study firms were also included in this study. The use of major and minor case-study firms was also adopted by Almond and Ferner (2006), where variable research access across firms was experienced, and was adopted within this study for similar reasons. Hence in addition to the four major case-study firms, six

minor case study firms, where less than five interviews were gained, were also included (See table 2). In each case an interview was gained with the global mobility coordinator and at least one expatriate manager.

In total, twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted within the four major case study firms, and thirteen interviews were conducted across the six minor case study firms (parent countries: France, Japan, Germany). Two separate interview guides, one for GMMs and one for expatriate managers, were created. While GMMs were asked about the volume and direction of expatriate flows, the policies which govern international assignments, and possible changes in the use of international assignments, AE managers were asked about the nature and the purpose of their assignment in the UK and what activities they engaged in to accomplish these objectives. The use of interviews was supplemented with documentary analysis, which included company reports and data files provided by respondents. All interviews were recorded and note-taking during interviews was undertaken. The information gained from the GMMs regarding AE managers' purposes and objectives was triangulated with information gained from the AE managers interviewed, who provided more detailed information about their individual roles and objectives. Such responses were further corroborated through secondary data files, and follow-up interviews. To analyse the data, template analysis (King, 1998), within-case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ghauri, 2004), and cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) were applied, in order to develop and adapt codes, create detailed narratives of each major case study firm, and to identify patterns or commonalities across the cases, after several observations.

Findings and discussion

All thirty-two respondents across the major and minor case study firms identified knowledge transfer, management development, and coordination and control as the three purposes for which expatriate managers were sent, confirming the 'robustness' of Edstrom and Galbraith's

(1977) framework, and subsequent studies (e.g. Harzing, 2001; Hocking et al., 2004). In identifying these functions, however, many interviewees emphasized that expatriate managers are typically sent for not one but a combination of these reasons. Below are the comments from some of the GMMs across the firms interviewed, regarding the use of international management assignments:

“They are here to predominantly because of the skills that they possess. ManCo’s approach to the IA programme is that it needs to be something that is going to be of benefit both to the individual and the company so from an individual’s point of view personally, how are they going to benefit from the experience”

- HRD (ManCo, US)

“It depends on the particular business need, if there is a particular need for use developing a new site or new product or strategy. It depends very much on what’s happening at the time, although we try and match that with the development needs for the individual as well... with people knowing the group and the business people could get up to speed a lot quicker than hiring an external person.”

- HRD (RedCo, France)

“There has to be a clear strategic need for the home country and the host country; for the host country to obtain knowledge, have support with a project, to implement something and for the home country to have an employee who comes back with enhanced and developed skills and will fit back into the organisation”

The majority of interviews echoed similar sentiments stating that expatriate managers were typically engaged in the more than once function at once, and that these functions helped to achieve several individual and organisational objectives at once. An examination of how these functions were fulfilled offered further insight into the simultaneous achievement organisational objectives. The table below identifies the various activities that the AE managers interviewed stated that they undertook on a daily basis in order to fulfil their individual and organisational objectives:

| Expat Micro-functions | Description | Assignment Purposes | Example from data |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Translator | interpreting different forms of MNC knowledge, policies, language and values within the local setting | KT, CC | “Whatever the strategy is or the big brand that comes out of corporate, my role is to make sure that that gets translated. And sometimes that’s very strategic work that I have to do because I have to think about well does eco-friendly mean...So what I had to do was go back and work with corporate to say of the thousands of products that we have it doesn’t make sense for a handful of those” |
| Mentor | Install/implement key firm processes and systems; Teach and advise local employees on use of new processes | KT, MD, CC | “I began involving him in areas that were outside his immediate area of responsibility. Very specifically, we were going through some contractual changes with one of our major suppliers of product so I got him involved in that and in other areas as part of the developmental aspect” |
| Apprentice | On-the-job managerial training, learning by observation, trial-and- | KT, MD | “There wasn’t specifically any formal training except the evolution and the maturity you get through the management of |

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| | error, critical incidents, cultural immersion | | a team, being in a completely different environment with a completely different culture, the experience is the key lever to boost your maturity in your professional career.” |
| Investigator | Identify issues, opportunities and best practices within assigned unit; monitor the activities of local employees | KT, MD, CC | “You have to come here and come find it, which is part of the reason that I wanted to come over here because you get closer and now you see what’s going on. My role hasn’t changed but the only thing is now I am closer to the problem” |
| Fire-fighter | Address internal issues which threaten the operations and reputation of the firm | KT, CC | “If it continues and gets to the point where it's negatively impacting our team’s productivity, then we'll work with HR to start a disciplinary process and make sure that that person understands what's needed and what we need from them and what we need from them to improve and that we want them to improve and to be successful |
| Coordinator | Facilitate team-working across global units; integrate global and local policies | KT, MD, CC | We’re trying to get more people going both ways so we get the teams to work together as opposed to working as two separate product groups...there are three of us right now that all really came over on a relatively short time span to merge the product groups together” |
| Ambassador | Promote and represent the interest of the firm within the local environment; model organisation culture for local employees | KT, CC | ... typically these things tend to come up when we have a difficult conversation around certain topics and when we go through it and I always bring up the fact that well we're a values-based company so you know we're gonna do the right thing here and the right thing is this and that aligns with our value of this” |

| | | | |
|---------------------|---|------------|--|
| Internal Negotiator | Confer with various internal stakeholders on areas of concern; identify acceptable solution and gain buy-in | KT, MD, CC | “we spend allot of time internally selling things. Meaning well [employees saying]’I don’t want to give up my little dinky system because...So you have to do allot of internal pitch work and negotiation even with my peers to say ok China I know you are really fond of what you are doing but they are doing it so much better than you guys over in Japan” |
| Networker | Engage (formally and informally) and build relationships with various internal and external firm stakeholders | KT, MD, CC | “So you go there you do a course and maybe a week and you meet people from different countries, from HQ and you get to see into different culture so every year every senior employee has to spend two or three weeks of training in HQ where he meets with other peoples.” |

Table 3. AE Managers’ role processes within foreign subsidiaries

The above table identifies AE managers’ role processes as translator, mentor, coordinator, investigator, fire-fighter, ambassador, internal negotiator, and networker. It is a significant departure from existing frameworks on expatriate purposes (e.g. Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977; Hocking et al. 2004), in that it not only outlines the purposes and objectives of AE managers, but also the day-to-day activities that contribute to the achievement of their roles. Similar Johnson and Duxbury’s (2010) study, offer a categorisation of the processes involved in the fulfilment of the various expatriate roles, into several ‘conceptual bins’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The table also indicates the various functions to which the performance of the particular activity contributed. While AE managers may not be limited to the activities listed, these were the processes mentioned by interviewees across the collection of firms within this specific study. While several of these functions were found across the various companies interviewed, the combination of processes performed and how these processes are operationalised varied

from expatriate to expatriate, reiterating the view that role processes are, 'unique to the individual' and 'characteristically path dependent' (Torbiorn, 1985; Barney, 1991; Hocking et al., 2004, p.566). It is also important to emphasize that the fulfilment of expatriate functions required the performance of not one but several of these activities during the course of any one assignment. The various role processes are briefly described below.

Translators:

AE managers' translation role involved the re-articulation, and in some cases alteration, of firm policies and work processes, as well as interpretation of local and parent-country language and cultural constructs (Tsui-Auch, 2001; Saka, 2004; Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014). Indeed, it was found that AE managers were engaged in the translation of language, their company's policies and strategy, and cultural values. Such translation related to several expatriate role objectives, including knowledge facilitation, knowledge diffusion, knowledge acquisition, standardisation of organisational processes, and increased coordination in global teams, and hence aided in the fulfilment of all three assignment purposes.

Mentors:

AE managers' 'mentor' role process primarily refers to the assignee's efforts to identify and train local employees, and particular his/her successor, while on assignment. As a mentor, the assignee's objective is to pass on his technical and managerial skills to the chosen local employee (s). This was achieved through formal and informal instruction, including one-to-one and or group meetings and instruction, demonstration of work tasks, and shadowing. These processes typically occurred alongside each other, during daily interactions and performance of job roles, and also at set times for more formal training. This assignment activity, as observed by other researchers, influenced the assignment length (Tobiorn, 1982; Janssen, 1995; Hocking et al., 2004), with the achievement of assignment outcomes being cumulative and based on the length of time that the expatriate spent on assignment.

Apprentices

This particular role process pertained particularly to the management development function, as it describes how expatriate managers learned and were developed while on assignment. In addition to their more strategic roles, AE managers were also engaged in learning and development, which was ongoing in the daily performance of their job tasks, interpersonal interaction with local employees and stakeholders, and attendance at formal training workshops and events. With regard to their daily activities, the local subsidiary acted as a testing ground in which managers could sharpen their leadership and management skills, and gain experience of managing within a different cross-cultural setting. Indeed, international assignments have previously been identified as one of the most efficient ways of achieving such developmental goals (Caligiuri and Di Santo, 2001; Carpenter et al., 2001). The international assignment context offered managers an environment where they were given increased organisational autonomy, and exposed to novel situations on a daily basis (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004; Jokinen et al., 2008). The term apprentice has been chosen because the assignee's daily development is supported and supplement through the use of other organisational mechanisms, including dedicated mentorship and leadership workshops. The use of these varied from company to company, and was often influenced by the existence of a developed talent management structure, supporting Cerdin and Brewster's (2014) position.

Coordinators:

The 'coordinator' role process describes AE managers' role in creating knowledge partnerships, promoting increased knowledge exchange across different organisational units. This was done primarily by connecting individuals across subsidiary units and establishing specified organisational systems that would allow for better cross-unit teamwork. There were AE managers involved in such processes across almost all the firms interviewed, as such activities were particularly central to expatriate's knowledge transfer and coordination and

control functions (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977; Harzing, 2001; Hocking et al., 2004). A good illustration of this was provided in the Spanish firm ComCo where several expatriate managers interviewed was charged with creating guidance templates which outlined how team members within different subsidiary units might undertake cross-unit projects, and interactions with service providers, in order to enhance various Pan-European knowledge-exchange projects being pursued. This role process contributed primarily at the organisational level, and mainly facilitated the fulfilment of AE managers' KT and CC functions

Investigators:

As investigators, AE managers scanned subsidiary units and their local environment for sources of best practices and new knowledge. This role was similar to what Ancona and Caldwell (1992) described as the 'scout', where assignees scoured the external environment for new information and ideas related to local competition, the market or new technology. Assignees also sought to identify potential problems that existed within the local subsidiary and threatened to disrupt process efficiency. It also reflected Johnson and Duxbury's (2010) 'information gathering' and 'intelligence gathering' boundary spanning roles, where expatriate managers sought after information and new ideas (from external agents), that were needed in order to complete specific task demands. In the example used in table 3, the manager from ManCo (US major case-study) explained how being assigned to the particular UK head office provided him with a better understanding of problems encountered by his globally dispersed team. He was able to identify the specific problem through interpersonal interaction with local employees and local dealers.

Internal Negotiator:

Where local employees were hesitant to abandon familiar practices and take up new practices, AE managers undertook the process of gaining buy-in from local employees in order to implement these. AE managers' roles as internal negotiators referred to where assignees entered a discourse with individuals who were unclear about the need to abandon or amend existing subsidiary processes. While this process went hand-in-hand with assignees' translator role process, it is distinct in that it was also necessary where there was understanding around the new process, accompanied by outright resistance towards its uptake. During discussions, managers sought to convince these employees of the rationale behind the proposed systems as well as the benefits of their implementation. This process occurred both formally, through organised workshops on the specific system, or informally, through one-to-one meetings and daily interactions. Often, to convince employees of the merits of new processes, assigned managers selected and provide best practice examples from other global subsidiaries. This was seen within the major case-study US firm, MedCo, where the marketing executive, an AE manager, often used best practices examples from a well-performing subsidiary in China, to illustrate the merits of new process to local UK employees. Unlike the negotiation role identified by Johnson and Duxbury (2010, p.35), which primarily described expatriates' discourse with external agents, internal negotiation required AE managers to engage to ongoing exchanges with various subsidiary-based groups and individuals to explore the preferences and potential areas of agreement. The negotiation role process of AE managers primarily facilitated knowledge transfer, and coordination and control purposes. With regard to the former, it helped to smoothen the dissemination of headquarter practices.

Assignees as Firefighters:

The role process of firefighting often occurred after significant organisational change and referred to when managers were forced to respond to situations that threaten to disrupt the work process within the subsidiary. AE managers often acted in a reactive capacity to address

specific behavioural problems at a subsidiary level. This role process helped managers to fulfil the knowledge transfer and coordination and control objectives of their assignment, for those who were sent for this purpose. Assignees who were sent to fire-fight were typically trusted senior-level managers, who had been with the firm for a significant amount of time, and were typically ‘ambassadors’ of the MNC (Ancona and Caldwell, 1992). In circumstances where this role process was required, AE managers were sent in order to allay the fears of various internal groups, directly addressing those at the centre of the conflict, and communicating the rationale behind the new system and practices to be implemented. Where this is not effective, then it is up to these managers to determine the best course to action that would facilitate the change-over and integration process. This might involve one-to-one meetings with ‘agitators’ to address the presentation of dysfunctional behaviour, and where such meetings are unsuccessful, disciplinary action was also an alternative.

Ambassadors:

This is a micro-level activity that was also identified by Johnson and Duxbury (2010), though at the boundary where assignees represented the interests of the organisation to customers, procuring additional resources and protecting teams from external threats. These activities were identified by several AE managers, primarily within the four major case study firms, where several assignees were actively representing the organisation and increasing its local exposure. This was achieved through attendance at various organised external events, for example guest lectures, and building partnerships with local educational and or professional institutions. Such external activities provided AE managers with opportunities to represent the company’s interest to local customers

Networkers:

AE managers’ role as ‘networker’ in some ways is similar to their ambassador role, in that assignees are also involved in the cultivation of relationships, and increasing of key contacts

across the organisation. In this present study, however, the term networker is used to draw attention to AE managers' efforts to increase their internal and external managerial and or professional contacts while on assignment. Where the separation lies is that as a networker, the assignees concentrates on extending his career contacts through attendance at internally organised events such as leadership development workshops, special networking events, and short-term training courses, and engagement with professional bodies. Roberts et al. (1998) described the latter as 'communities of practice', and agreed that interaction with these extended across global boundaries. While in some companies this was explicitly communicated objective, other AE middle-level managers indicated that it was unspoken yet expected by their organisations. Internal networking often required managers to travel to their home office or another selected organisational unit, to participate in the specified learning activity, and to mingle with peers from other units who worked within the same or similar professional roles. In many cases, these two things went hand-in-hand.

Conclusion and future research

This research study has sought to explore the fulfilment of expatriate functions within MNCs' foreign subsidiaries by exploring the micro-level activities that AE managers engage in while on assignment. In examining AE managers' in foreign subsidiaries, a number of micro-level role processes which contributed to the fulfilment of their functions were identified in this study. These role processes (outlined in table 3) depicted the expatriate manager as a translator, mentor, apprentice, coordinator, investigator, internal negotiator, fire-fighter, ambassador, and networker. AE managers performed a number of these processes at once, and the combination of role processes that were performed were determined by the purposes of the assignment, along with its particular role objectives. As a translator, the AE manager adapted, interpreted and re-articulated organisational policies, processes and values in a way that made these more understandable to colleagues within his home office and within the local subsidiary. They were

also involved in the interpretation of organisational jargon and cultural concepts and language at a local level, by acting as a mediator during conversations, phone-calls or other forms of communication within and between the home and host country units. As a mentor, assignees primarily engaged in knowledge transfer through passing on their functional and managerial expertise to local employees. This was done through one-on-one instruction, group meetings and training workshops, demonstration of work tasks, and shadowing. Some of these processes occurred side-by-side, during daily interactions and performance of job roles, and also at set times for more formal training.

AE managers' role as apprentice particularly highlighted their management development through the expatriate experience. Learning and development was on-going and took place during the daily performance of their job tasks, interpersonal interaction with local employees and stakeholders, and in many cases alongside more formal arrangements such as training workshops and events. The local subsidiary typically acted as a testing ground where managers developed their leadership and management skills, and acquired experience of managing within a different cross-cultural setting. The coordinator role, on the other hand, was more centred on their knowledge transfer and coordination and control role objectives, as assignees' efforts were focused on connecting individuals across different subsidiary units establishing organisational systems that would facilitate better cross-unit teamwork. This role also involved setting up key HQ systems that would allow for better monitoring of subsidiaries' performance, as well as meeting with their team and other employees within their departments to review existing systems, in order to identify and eliminate duplicated processes.

As an investigator, AE managers scanned the local subsidiary and its context for sources of best practices and new knowledge. Assignees would search the external environment for new information and ideas related to local competition, the market or new technology. Within the subsidiary itself, assignees sought to detect potential problems that threatened to

disrupt performance or efficiency. To do this, they often sought information from both internal and external organisational stakeholders at a local level. As an internal negotiator, AE managers sought to gaining buy-in from local employees who were apprehensive about the uptake of newly implemented processes. This required a discourse with individuals who were unclear about the need to abandon or amend existing subsidiary processes. It is closely linked with assignees' translator function, but distinct in that it was also required where there was understanding of the new process, but subtle or outright resistance to its uptake.

Where translation and internal negotiation was unsuccessful, AE managers were also required to act as firefighters. Here, managers acted in a reactive capacity to address distinct behavioural issues within the local subsidiary. A key part of managers' knowledge-transfer and control functions, firefighting often followed changes in organisational structure, where attempts were being made to replace local procedures with more central processes. This role process involved one-to-one meetings with local agitators to address dysfunctional behaviour, and where these meetings are unsuccessful, assignees might also seek disciplinary action using local HR support. Another key role process that carried by AE managers was the ambassador, where they represented their company's brand, mission and values to those within the subsidiary and its local environment, in order to increase local exposure and enhance the firm's access to additional resources and opportunities. The ambassador role involved expatriate managers attending various organised external events (e.g. guest lectures), and building partnerships with local educational and or professional institutions. This role process was also identified in the boundary-spanning literature with past writers indicated that these endeavours granted assignees opportunities to represent the company's interest to local customers (Ancona and Caldwell, 2002; Johnson and Duxbury, 2010).

The final role process identified was that of the networker, which was similar to assignees' ambassador role. However, while the ambassador role was concentrated on building

internal and external relationships primarily for organisational development purposes, the networker role process highlight managers' efforts in establishing professional contacts across the organisation. The creation of such contacts, while also serving organisational purposes, aided in increasing assignees' organisational exposure and thus extending their career opportunities. This involved managers not only interacting with local colleagues, but also attending internally organised events (e.g. leadership development workshops, networking events, training courses), and engaging with professional bodies in their respective disciplines. The second major contribution of this study is that it is among the few that have drawn attention to how expatriate managers' functions are performed in practice at the micro-level. This present study has identified the individual-level activities that AE managers perform within the subsidiary and its local environment, in order to fulfil the purpose for which they were sent. More specifically, it is the first study to create a framework on the use of international assignments which has included expatriates' micro-level activities and indicated how these activities contribute to the fulfilment of the assignment functions and role objectives. Future research might aim to acquire a larger body of interviews and explore the implication for talent managers in preparing expatriate managers for the role processes that they are expected to engage in.

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