

EXPATRIATION AND REPATRIATION OF EMPLOYEES AT GROUP TECHNOLOGY

by

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A field study

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Declaration

I declare that the field study hereby submitted for the Magister in Business Administration at the UFS Business School, University of the Free State, is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted this work, either as a whole or in part, for a qualification at another university or at another faculty at this university.

I also hereby cede copyright of this work to the University of the Free State.

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Abstract

The primary objective of the research is to determine the preparedness of Group Technology's employees for expatriation and repatriation. This is in response to the fact that there is a view that the employees at Group Technology are not adequately prepared for expatriation to and repatriation from long-term international assignments, leading to delays; cross-cultural tension; career uncertainty issues; decrease in productivity; and ultimately, resignations.

This study falls within the Human Resources Management (HRM) sphere. The population of this research was all Group Technology employees that are expatriates and repatriates. A sample of 52 employees was drawn from the population of 79 employees that were on the expatriate database. A comprehensive sampling method was used. The criteria used to take the sample from the population were that an employee had to be a permanent employee, had to be on a long-term assignment (six months or longer) and the employee had to be on an international project.

A quantitative research method and a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used to gather responses on the levels of satisfaction of the expatriates with the expatriate process at Group Technology. Descriptive statistics were applied in the analysis of the data gathered and a software tool called SPSS was used to analyse the data.

The model – identified as a model of choice for the research – is a four-stage expatriate cycle. The stages of the expatriate cycle are: selection, preparation, support and repatriation.

The expatriates and repatriates rated Group Technology's expatriate process as being fair for all four of the expatriate cycle stages. As a new entrant into the international market (compared to peers), Group Technology still has a long way to go in improving its process. However, it has been proven that the fair rating received from its employees is comparable with multi-national companies in all regions.

Keywords: *Expatriate, repatriate, expatriate preparation, cross-culture training, international human resources management, expatriate cycle*

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Chapter 1: Orientation

1.1 Background

The business world is continually increasing in interdependence and experiencing significant international expansion. Making decisions that reflect a sophisticated understanding of an increasingly complex world will be absolutely critical to success in many industries. In others, it will determine whether the organisation survives. Strategically developing individuals with important international exposure will be the most critical element in realising future success (Oddou 2002).

Today, managers are transferred to and from the parent company to learn about affiliated operations in other countries; to fill a skills gap; to transfer knowledge and technology; to launch projects; to facilitate interaction of the global value chain; to transfer corporate culture; and for management development (Lane, Maznevski, DiStefano & Dietz 2009). When host country nationals lack the required technical skills to fulfil the position, expatriation assignments become mandatory, but they come at a high cost and have a significant failure rate (Els 2008).

Els (2008) also states that companies should know that the selection of a manager with the correct attributes and skills – including cultural awareness and toughness – is vital for success. To further improve their chances of success, the candidate should undergo a broad spectrum of cultural and skills training, and should embark on an effective planning cycle. All of this must happen before the expatriate even enters the host country.

When underlining the complex nature of culture, even as international organisations try to equip employees mentally, it is not easy to develop the appropriate mental frame of reference for dealing with different cultures world-wide, according to Pillay (2006).

The training that a person undergoes before expatriation should be a function of the degree of cultural interaction which they will experience. Lane et al (2009) identifies these two dimensions of cultural exposure as being the degree of integration and the duration of stay. The integration dimension represents the intensity of the exposure.

Saeed (2005) has found that there is evidence to suggest that the lack of adaptability to foreign culture causes expatriates to fail in their international assignments, which can be an enormous cost to the employers if they have to be repatriated. Saeed continues to state that “expatriate failure rates also represent a failure of the firm’s selection policies to identify individuals who will not thrive abroad.”

Borici (2010) states that expatriates are a costly staffing alternative: companies should be careful in choosing the right criteria for expatriate selection and in developing the right training programmes to prepare them for overseas assignments.

1.1.1 About Sasol LTD

Sasol is an integrated energy and chemicals company, driven by innovation. They add value to coal, natural oil and gas reserves, using these feed-stocks produce liquid fuels, fuel components and chemicals through their proprietary processes. They mine coal in South Africa and produce natural gas and condensate in Mozambique, oil in Gabon and shale gas in Canada (Sasol Technology 2013:2).

According to Sasol Technology (2013), Sasol has been a global frontrunner in technology innovation and excellence since its inception in the 1950s. Today, it produces more than 120 different products and is listed on the Johannesburg and New York Stock Exchanges in South Africa and the United States of America respectively, and it has operations in more than 35 countries and employs about 34 000 people.

Sasol Technology (2008) is a subsidiary company and a strategic business partner to other business units with the Sasol Group of companies. Its main role is to manage their research and development; technology innovation and management; engineering services; and project management portfolios. It helps the fuel and chemical businesses to maintain growth and competitive advantage through appropriate technology solutions and services.

Sasol Technology (2008), which was renamed Group Technology from 1 July 2014, has a mandate of ensuring that Sasol’s technology advantages are optimised and

maximised for the benefit of all its businesses; it manages Sasol's research and development; technology management and innovation; engineering services; and project management portfolios. Group Technology plays a vital role in enabling Sasol's growth and sustainability as it directs, acquires, commercialises, installs and optimises technology for the group.

In order for companies to succeed in today's demanding global economy, they require a greater degree of international and cross-cultural communication, collaboration and cooperation than ever before. Companies must think in global terms, as national and even regional companies are increasingly becoming a thing of the past (Steers, Sanchez-Runde & Nardon 2010).

Sasol has also come to the realisation that globalising their business is essential to the long-term sustainability of the organisation and, as a result, they've embarked on a few projects. These projects span across five continents, thereby making it essential that the preparation that each employee undergoes is specifically tailored for the host country.

Sasol places its employees on international duties via two types of placements or assignments: a short-term placement and a long-term placement. A short-term assignment is for a continuous period of longer than one month, but less than six months. A long-term assignment is defined as an assignment to an international location for a period of longer than six months (183 days) and typically up to three years (Sasol 2011).

These assignments are typically for employees who have been identified as the successful candidates for a vacant position at one of the company's international operations, and have been evaluated together with their families for suitability to go on an international assignment. These employees typically relocate to a host country together with their families for the duration of the assignment (Sasol 2011).

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem is that Group Technology's employees are not adequately prepared for expatriation to and repatriation from long-term international assignments, leading to delays; cross-cultural tension; career uncertainty issues; decrease in productivity; and ultimately, resignations.

The above problem then raises the following research questions:

- What are possible models on expatriation and repatriation?
- Are Group Technology employees adequately prepared for expatriation and repatriation?
- How does the process executed at Group Technology influence the levels of satisfaction of employees on international assignment?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The primary objective of the research is to determine Group Technology employees' preparedness for expatriation and repatriation.

The secondary objectives are to:

- Analyse models on expatriation and repatriation.
- Identify key variables contributing to expatriate and repatriate preparation at Group Technology.
- Explore which variables contribute to the levels of satisfaction among expatriates and repatriates at Group Technology.

1.4 Preliminary Literature Review

This literature review seeks to highlight the school of thought around the preparation for international assignment of the employees in various sectors and industries.

Expatriates are normally overseas personnel – an employee relocated from one country to work in another country (Kelly 2009). Organisations have often preferred to use expatriate managers for a number of reasons, especially when it needed parent company representation and control in a distant location, wanted to provide developmental opportunities for parent company managers, or needed to fill a skills gap where locals do not have the skills to do the job themselves (Steers et al. 2010). Often expatriates are middle- or upper-level management who have to be encouraged to take international assignment (Cullen & Parboteeah 2010).

According to McGraw Hill Higher Education (MHHE 2007), repatriation should be seen as the final link in an integrated, circular process that connects good selection and cross-cultural training of expatriate managers with completion of their term abroad and reintegration into their national organisation.

Literature on expatriate management narrowly defines success in the placement of an expatriate in terms of the preparation to move the employee to the host country; however, not much is researched around the support the expatriates require whilst on assignment (Els 2008). In essence, it is hoped that the preparation before departure will somehow take care of all issues that will be encountered. The same is true for the repatriates – it is assumed that the repatriate will cope as it is, after all, the repatriate's home country.

According to Chew (2005), in addition to the host country preparation, a well-managed and proactive response to an expatriate's crisis is necessary in the host country. Chew (2005) went on to identify three phases: the Preparedness Phase, the Responsiveness and the Recovery Phase.

To help a company retain experienced international employees and reduce the likelihood of public relations and legal problems in host country, host country support is vital. In a comparative study of Australian managers working in Korea, and Korean managers working in Australia, Chang (2008) found that there is room for further

improvement in terms of the amount of preparation the expatriates received. The required training will also help with significant factors related to producing better performance and more efficient cross-cultural adaptability.

There is a school of thought that focuses on the classical definition of an expatriate only – i.e. home country to host country. However, as is the case at Sasol, expatriates can be of different types. Cullen and Parboteeah (2010) state that some expatriate employees coming from the parent organisation's home country are called home country nationals. Others who come from neither the host nor the home countries are called third country nationals. Finally, local workers may also be hired in the host country where the unit or plant is located. These employees are called host country nationals.

Representative studies on the failure of expatriates consider expatriate failure to occur when the expatriate decides to return to their home country before the international assignment is over (Cullen & Parboteeah 2010). This total excludes the cases where the expatriate performed below expected levels due to the unavailability of support from the home country.

The handling of expatriates falls within the Human Resources Management (HRM) discipline. Human Resource Management deals with issues, functions and policies, and practices that result from the strategic activities of multinational enterprises and that impact upon the international concerns and goals of those enterprises (Kelly 2009). Expatriate management only truly came under the spotlight towards the end of the 1980s (Gunter, Stahl, Mendenhall & Addou 2012).

Human Resources Managers provide the specialised services needed by other management team members to make the most effective use of the human resources within an organisation (Lourens 2014). The scope of the service is not limited to the host country only; Singh (2013) states that HRM must address some of the pertinent questions with regard to human resources from a global perspective also.

1.4.1 Expatriation

In research done by Long (2010) the spouses expressed how organisations could play a pivotal role in assisting families in finding their feet in the new country; providing social support, information and guidance; and preventing feelings of being abandoned in a foreign country.

Pillay (2006) found that expatriates should receive the same preparation, support and training regardless of the age of the expatriate, or the location or duration of the international assignment. She also found that expatriates indicated that they did not receive the preparation, support and training they required for the international assignment.

In his research Ntshona (2008) found that expatriates should be thoroughly prepared prior to departure and supported while overseas. Ntshona (2008:72) also found that “while repatriation may not always be traumatic, there are nonetheless significant issues which returning personnel and their families have to face, thus, Human Resources personnel should be alert to provide relevant support, as needed.”

1.4.2 Repatriation

After completing the international assignment, the expatriates return home and then the process of repatriation begins (Nikolaeva 2010).

Because of the experience gained on an international assignment, repatriates have certain expectations. These include being put on a repatriation programme, salary and level increases. Organisation-encouraged individual proactive strategies, along with organisation-sponsored programmes, can help minimise inaccurate and unmet expectations that seem to be a key to the problems of repatriation adjustment (Andreason & Kinneer 2005). It is found that these unmet expectations are a contributing factor to repatriates resigning from companies. With the cost of each overseas assignment typically ranging from two to five times the annual salary of employees placed abroad, companies lose a potentially large developmental investment as well as a high-potential employee each time a repatriate leaves. Repatriates need to prepare for re-entry as extensively as they had prepared for the foreign assignment (Andreason & Kinneer 2005).

1.4.3 Selection

The first challenge that the HRM managers are faced with is selecting the right employee for the international assignment (Nikolaeva 2010). Selection should emphasise corporate knowledge, skills, flexibility, and adaptability, but the key to success is preparation.

1.4.4 Training

By preparing and increasing the cultural competence before departure, one can reduce the shock and hasten the acquisition of cultural skills (Bijedic & Goransson 2010). Cross-cultural training has not provided practitioners and multinational companies with a great quantity of new recommendations for expatriate preparation (Littrell et al 2006). However, this does not mean that companies should not develop cultural awareness training programmes.

1.4.5 Expatriate/Repatriate Models

Most of the models encountered have a three-step process to expatriate and repatriate preparation, namely selection, training and support.

Hutchings (2005) proposes that organisations should still need to develop strategic expatriation processes, including correct selection, comprehensive pre-departure and post-arrival training and in situ support for expatriates and their families.

Below is a summary of the phases of an assignment as identified by De Leon in Reynolds (2000:567-588).

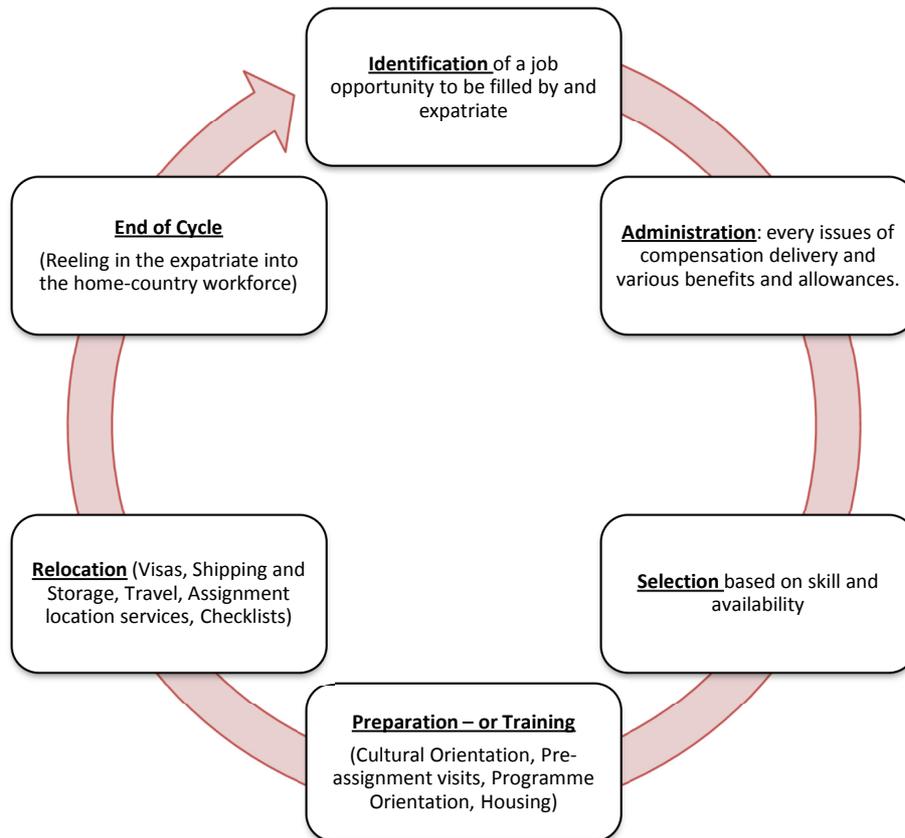


Figure 1.1: Phases of an Expatriate Assignment

Source: Reynolds, 2000

De Leon in Reynolds (2000) identified six phases of expatriate preparation, starting with the identification of the expatriate and ending with reeling the expatriate into the home-country workforce (Figure 1.1).

The last step that secures successful completion of the international assignment is the preparation and training of the employees (Nikolaeva 2010).

Quite a few models have been developed to identify the effect of cross-cultural adjustment on expatriates. However, the most cited is the U-Curve framework (Lysgaard 1995) for cross-cultural adjustment (Figure 1.2)

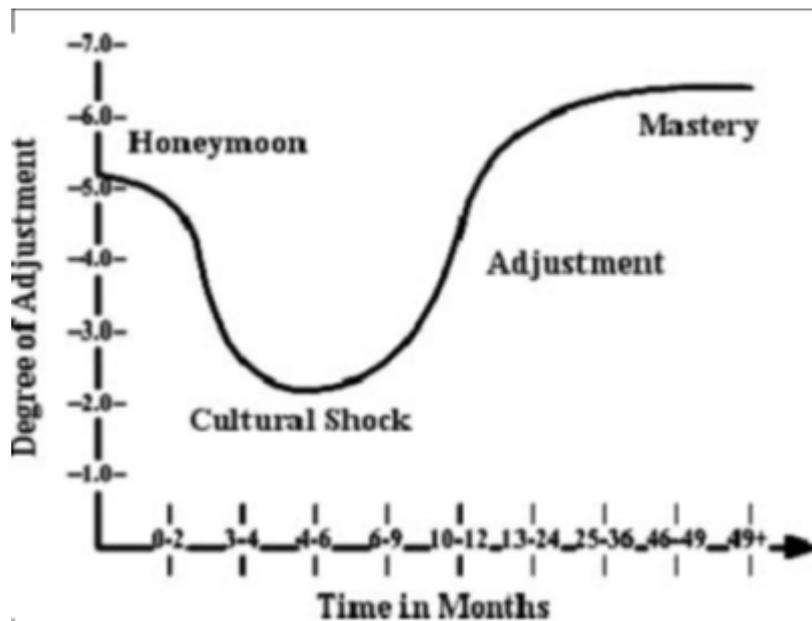


Figure 1.2: U-Curve Framework of Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Source: Lysgaard, 1995

The U-Curve has four stages that can be summarised as follows: honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment and mastery stages (Lysgaard 1995). These stages are experienced by the expatriate's degree of adjustment and the time in months that the expatriate is on assignment (Figure 1.2).

The above model or framework has undergone a number of adaptations, but the major theme stays the same (Kelly 2009). Expatriates often report on an acculturation curve, which is as a result of first-hand contact between individuals of differing cultural origins (Kelly 2009).

The researcher will make use of these types of models and frameworks to compile a similar model for Group Technology.

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Research design

This research is part of a two-stage design research method, which consists of an exploratory research, followed by a formal research. This is an exploratory research that seeks to develop clear concepts, operational definitions, and improve the final research design.

1.5.2 Research Type

Business research can either be qualitative or quantitative. The quantitative method will be used for this research. Cooper and Schindler (2011) define a quantitative research as attempting to determine the precise measurement of something. They go on to state that in business research, quantitative methodologies usually measure consumer behaviour, knowledge, opinions, or attitudes. This is a method that is in line with objectives of this research that seeks to establish socially related aspects.

1.5.3 Data Analysis Approach

The relation between theory and empirical data can be explained via either one of two methods, namely deductive or inductive. The researcher has stated that the research type that will be followed is the quantitative method and, as a result, this research will follow a deductive approach. A quantitative research method usually results in a deductive approach to testing theory, often using number or fact (Greener 2008). Greener went on to conclude that a positivist – or natural science model – and an objectivist view are studied with quantitative research.

The fact that this research relates specifically to Group Technology employees, who were not part of the initial researches, lends itself to no prior framework nor knowledge around the expected responses from the expatriates.

1.5.4 Data-Gathering Method

The data-gathering method involves surveying and recording responses from expatriates and repatriates for analysis, according to Cooper & Schindler (2011). Since this is a quantitative research, a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale will be used. The approach that will be used in this research will be self-administered surveys via the internet. All communications to expatriates and former-expatriates who have left Group Technology will be via email containing a link to the satisfaction questionnaire. By using this method, respondents will have a sense of anonymity Cooper & Schindler (2011), which is a key requirement for this type of research.

1.5.5 Sampling

Cooper and Schindler (2011) state that the basic concept of sampling is that by selecting some of the elements in a population, we may draw conclusions about the entire population.

The research focus is on Group Technology employees who are on international assignment; those employees who are about to return from international assignment; and those who have already returned from international assignment.

Of the entire list of employees in the expatriate/repatriate database, there is 52 employees who fit this definition within Group Technology. This is the sample that will be used in the research.

A quantitative questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale will be used and all the above identified 52 employees will be included in the research. This is a small group and thus they will all be included in the study. This method is called the comprehensive sampling method (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2010), which will be followed in the research.

1.6 Ethical Considerations

According to Cooper and Schindler (2011:32), ethics are norms or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about behaviour and relationships with others. They went on to say that “the goal of ethics in research is to ensure that no-one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities.”

It is against this background that the researcher will take the following ethical considerations into account during the research:

- **Confidentiality and respect:** The researcher will ensure the confidentiality of respondents and their responses as well as respecting the autonomy of respondents.
- **Responsibility:** The researcher is responsible for maintaining the dignity and welfare of all respondents.
- **Inducement to participate:** The researcher will make full disclosure in the event the researcher offers financial or other inducement to respondents in order to obtain respondents for the project.
- **Institutional approval:** The researcher will seek approval from the institution that is the subject of the research, namely Group Technology.
- **Voluntary participation:** Participation in the research will be on a voluntary basis. Measures will be taken to ensure that respondents are not misled or coerced into participation.
- **Informed consent:** All respondents will be fully informed as to the purpose, process, rights and benefits of the research and will be required to sign a consent form indicating their understanding and acceptance of the process.
- **Reporting results and plagiarism:** The researcher will not fabricate or falsify data in the publication nor will the researcher present the work of others as his own, or will not fail to give appropriate credit for the work of others (Schindler 2011).

- The researcher designed the research as such that the respondents will not suffer physical harm, discomfort, pain, embarrassment, or loss of privacy. In order to ensure this, the researcher has compiled a covering letter that was delivered with each survey. The letter explained the benefits of the study, the respondents' rights and protections, and obtained informed consent.

1.7 Demarcation of the Field Study

This research objective is to study the preparation for expatriates and repatriates of Group Technology's employees for international deployment.

This study falls within the Human Resources Management (HRM) sphere, as identified by Singh (2013), who states that HRM must address some of the pertinent questions with regard to human resources from a global perspective.

There is also increased evidence to suggest that the management of international human resources is increasingly being acknowledged as a major determinant of success or failure in international business. This also highlights the fact that the management of international business activities within an organisation is the Human Resources Management department's responsibility.

- Employees' feedback on how they were identified and prepared for international deployment, and supported afterwards, will be elicited from a random sample of employees. Once the feedback has been obtained, the Group Technology's strategy for placing employees internationally will be evaluated against the feedback. This will help with the analysis of the employee expectations/experiences and Group Technology's international deployment policy.
- The study will be conducted in the entire organisation, including the local and international sites.
- All employees of the organisation will be targeted, excluding executive management.
- The classification of time periods will not be considered.

1.8 Chapter Layout of Study

Chapter 1: An introduction to the study including the problem statement.
Chapter 2: A literature review of the preparation of employees for expatriation and repatriation, focusing on the selection, preparation and training, the support aspects in general and the ultimate return to the home country of the employee.
Chapter 3: A quantitative investigation into the preparation of Group Technology employees for expatriation and repatriation.
Chapter 4: Synthesis of findings and recommendations.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations based on the study.

1.9 Conclusion

As a company that was established by the South African government to specifically address national needs, Sasol has never had the need to look at international “best practices” with regard to human resources. However, since it has turned into a private company, Sasol has had to start expanding its operations to other countries. This strategic change has placed Sasol in a position where the company had to ensure it conforms to international Human Resources practices – one of which is to place employees on international assignment.

Because this is an aspect that they only recently started, it is expected that there will be teething problems. This research will explore whether Group Technology (Sasol subsidiary) expatriates are prepared adequately for these international assignment.

As illustrated in the preliminary literature review, much has been written regarding expatriates and the training they are supposed to be given. However, not much has been written on the support the expatriates require whilst on international assignment. Hence, this research will also look at the level of support repatriates are receiving whilst on international assignment as well as after they have returned.

A number of models has been developed, some of which will be used in this research. By using these best practices the researcher hopes to highlight the critical expatriate issues the Group Technology Human Resources practitioners have to address.

In order to answer the research question; *How does the expatriate process executed at Group Technology influence the levels of satisfaction of employees on international assignment?* Key variables must be identified that contribute to expatriate and repatriate preparation at Group Technology. This has to done by means of a grounded theory investigation. What follows is the grounded theory investigation in this regard.

2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review examines recent and historically significant research studies and industry reports that act as a basis for the research into the expatriation and repatriation of employees.

The main objective of the research is to identify key variables contributing to expatriate and repatriate preparation at Group Technology. This research will focus on the employee for international assignment and the preparation that goes into ensuring a successful return of the employee to the home country. The need for expatriation of employees and the organisational strategy that necessitated the international work assignment will not be looked at.

2.2 Expatriation

Globalisation has created a situation where organisations are operating in an increasingly international environment and, as a result of this, caused the practice and study of international Human Resources Management to evolve alongside globalisation (Common 2010). International assignments are important tools in the coordination and integration of organisational resources, which are essential activities for successful strategy implementation in geographically disperse companies embedded in differing cultural environments (Lane et al 2009). A global organisation must put qualified individuals in specific places and time in order to achieve its goal (Mondy & Noe 2005). This is called global staffing and it is the responsibility of the Human Resources Management (HRM) department (Mondy & Noe 2005). An organisation's employees who are transferred out of their home base into another other area of the organisation's international operations are referred to as expatriates (Dowling et al 2004:4).

This is the reason why international assignments, which can potentially stimulate employees to develop global leadership skills, are being used more and more (Collings et al. in Budhwar, Schuler, & Sparrow 2009; Tungli & Peiperl 2009). According to Hemmasi, Downes and Varner (2010), there is considerable doubt as to why these expatriates return early from their assignments. They further state that expatriate success depends on whose perspective success is being viewed from.

2.2.1 Expatriate Success

The company obviously benefits most from these assignments if (1) these employees work efficiently and achieve the best possible outcomes both during and after the assignment; and (2) they use their acquired international experience and expertise upon their return in the home company (Ardelean 2010). The training and support of the expatriate is critically important to the success of international organisations (Beitler 2005). However, studies of international assignment have shown that these international assignments do not all turn out as planned – they do fail.

2.2.2 Expatriate Failure

Studies related to expatriate failure, in particular those that deal with cross-cultural training and adjustment, unanimously agree that expatriate failure rates – measured as the premature return of the expatriate – are very high (Harzing & Pinnington 2011:211). They went on to state that figures are in the region of 16-50% for developing countries.

When host country nationals lack the required technical skills to fulfil the position, expatriation assignments become mandatory, but they come at a high cost and have a significant failure rate (Els 2008). In a pioneering study Tung (1981) found that expatriate failure is often due to the inability of the expatriate or the expatriate's spouse to adjust or the expatriate's inability to cope with larger international responsibility. In a follow-up study, Tung in Budhwar, Schuler and Sparrow

(2009:150) attributes expatriate failure or premature assignment disruption to poor job performance of the expatriate abroad.

Harzing and Christensen (2004) argue that a premature end to an international assignment is not necessarily an expatriate failure and that it is important to realise that both the organisation and expatriate perspectives play a crucial role in expatriate failure. Despite the exact numbers on failure rate, it is important to get the expatriate cycle right (Lane et al. 2009:224).

2.3 Expatriate Cycle

In a study done by Hurlock (2013), the findings were based on the expatriate’s experiences during the selection, preparation, arrival, adaptation and repatriation phases. Deon’s cycle (2001) contains identification, administration, selection preparation or training, relocation, and end-of-cycle or repatriation – in this order. An expatriate preparation and development programme (Figure 2.1) should include pre-move orientation and development, continual development once in the host country, and repatriation orientation and training (Mondy & Noe 2005).

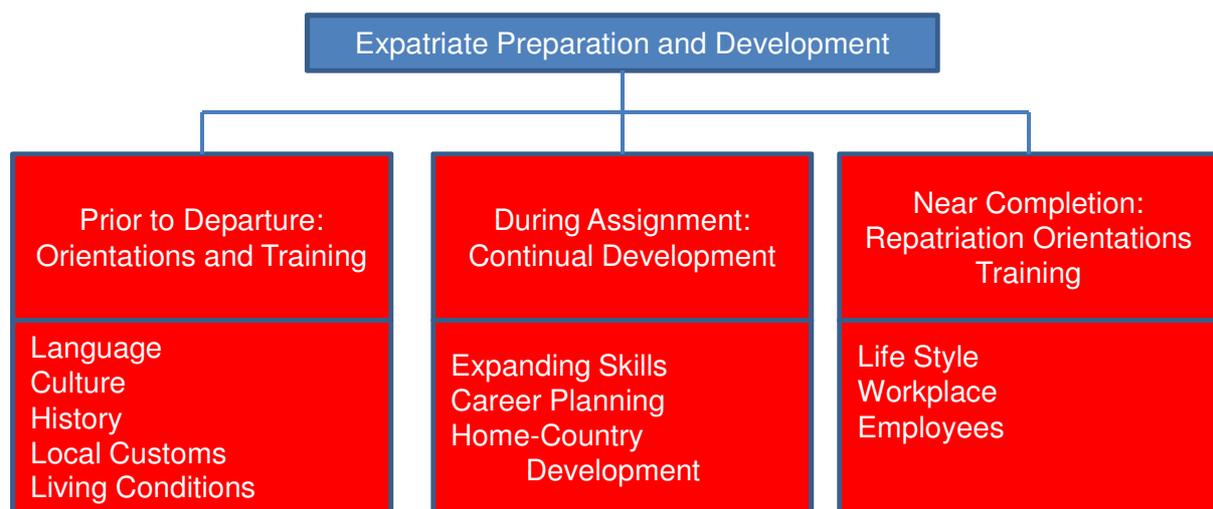


Figure 2.1: Expatriate Preparation and Development

Source: Mondy & Noe (2005:487)

Mondy and Noe (2005) describe these stages of their cycle as follows: firstly, pre-move orientation and training is about training and familiarising the expatriate and his/her family in the host language, culture, living conditions, history and local customs and peculiarities. During the second stage, the continual employee development stage, the employee's global skills are put into career planning and organisational development programmes, thereby making the transition to the new home country less disruptive. This stage involves expanding both the professional and operational skills when appropriate, comprehensive career planning, and involvement in home-country development programmes. The last stage is when the assignment is near completion; it is during this stage that preparation for repatriation happens. Repatriation orientation and training are needed to prepare the employee and his/her family for returning to the home country culture and prepare the expatriate's new subordinates and supervisor for the return.

The expatriation process comprises a pre-assignment, early-assignment, late-assignment and post-assignment stage (Herbolzheimer 2009). Figure 2.2 explains what happens at each of the four stages.



Figure 2.2: Expatriate Assignment Life Cycle

Source: Herbolzheimer (2009:32)

In the pre-assignment stage, a mentor can already be appointed to support a mentee. It is during this stage that the expectations around working and living abroad

may receive special attention. In the early-assignment stage preliminary coaching, combined with early-assignment coaching sessions, is expected to literally accelerate the effectiveness of expatriates. The impact of accumulated challenges experienced by the expatriate is usually noticed much later in the assignment stages. Training should mainly be offered in the early-assignment phase to deal with these issues, and not in the pre-departure stage, of their assignment, prior to experiencing the abundance and profundity of cultural differences first-hand. This kind of service is done in mid- or late-assignment stages as a last resort before premature return is considered.

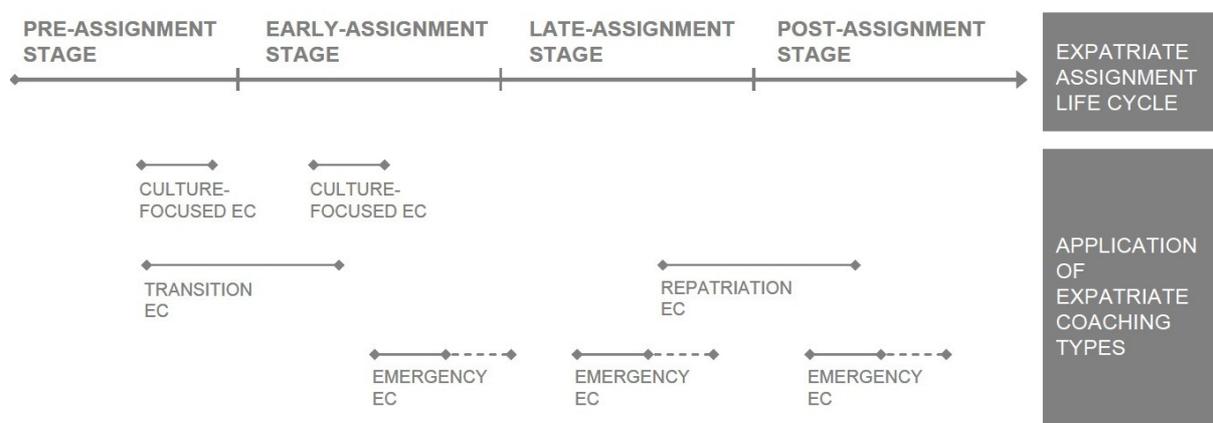


Figure 2.3: Types of Expatriate Coaching Application

Source: Herbolzheimer (2009:227)

Transition coaching is intended to guarantee a smoother transfer to the out-of-country job; emergency coaching (EC) is the most frequently requested type, which aims at helping expatriates deal with challenges while abroad. As can be seen from Figure 2.3, EC can be requested during any stage of the expatriate life cycle. Repatriate coaching is one of the least asked for kinds, but is viewed essential by coaches who have developed it to support expatriates as their assignment comes to an end. Culture-focused coaching is a “luxury” expatriate coaching, limited to culture-related topics. The selection of an expatriate must be supported by a set of HR policies throughout the expatriate cycle. This begins with appropriate selection criteria and techniques (Gunter et al. 2012: 230).

2.3.1 Selection

According to Briscoe and Schuler (2004) errors in the selection process can have a negative impact on the success of an organisation's overseas operations and therefore it is crucial to select the right person for the assignment. Organisations should know that the selection of a candidate with the correct attributes and skills, including cultural awareness and toughness, is vital for success (Els 2008). Claus, Lungu and Bhattacharjee (2011) identify additional screening practices, which include the examining of the candidate's suitability in terms of personality characteristics; the candidate's language abilities; previous international experience; family status; suitability and interest of the spouse or family dependant; and the candidate's social networks. Dowling and Welch (2004) have identified six criteria that a manager can utilise when selecting an employee for an international assignment. They are: technical ability; cross-cultural suitability; family requirements; country/cultural requirements; multi-national enterprises requirements; and language. To help a company retain experienced international employees and reduce the likelihood of public relations and legal problems in the host country, host country support is vital. In order to ensure that the correct candidate (expatriate) has been placed on the international assignment, a well-defined process needs to be followed. The process should be able to determine the suitability or lack thereof of the candidate.

A number of expatriate selection processes are followed. Figure 2.4 is a flowchart of the selection-decision process, developed by Budhwar, Schuler and Sparrow (2009). This model assists management in the making of key decisions around the selection of the expatriate. Decisions such as the candidate's willingness to go on assignment, the candidate's suitability, the candidate's fit with the host environment and when to start or stop orientation are made using this model.

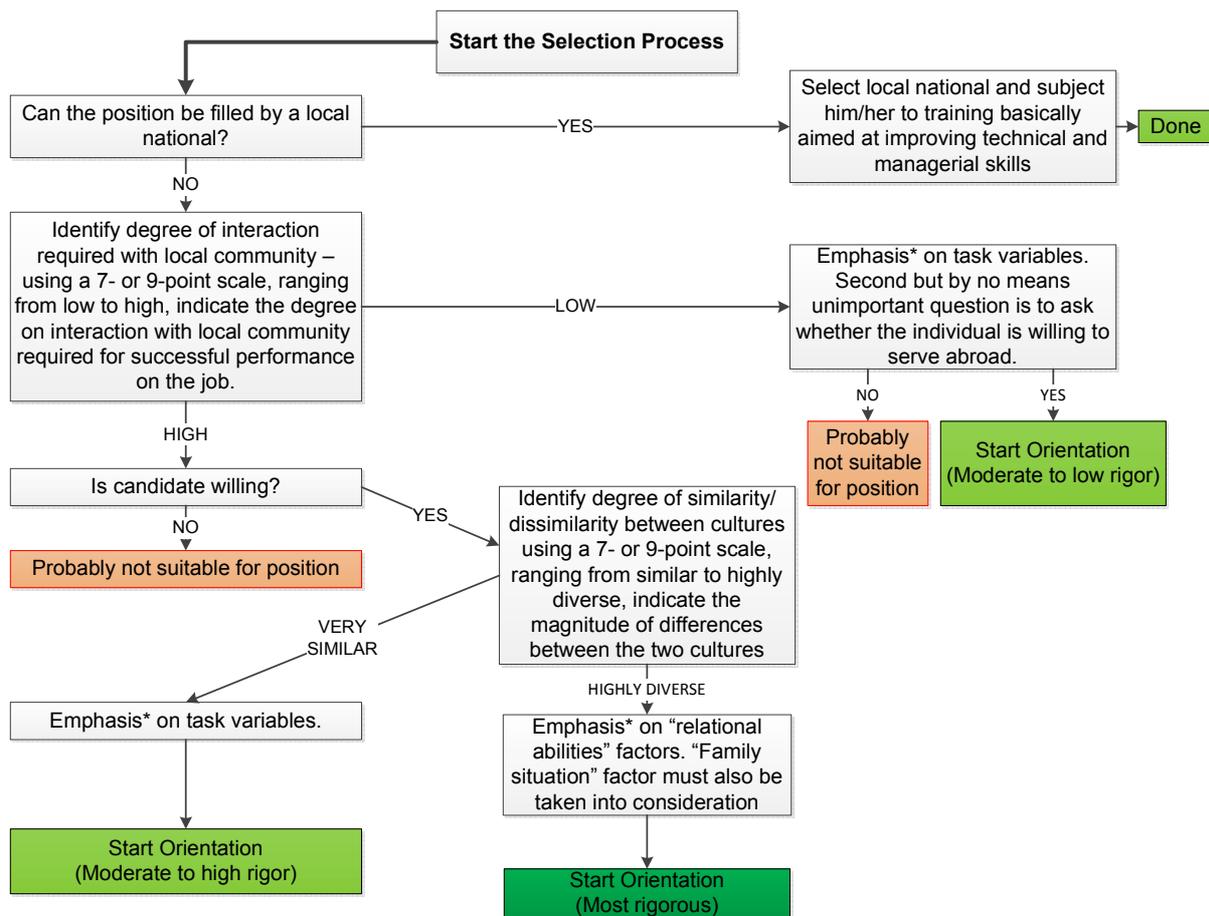


Figure 2.4: Flow Chart of the Selection-Decision Process

Source (re-drawn): Budhwar et al. (2009:147)

* “Emphasis” does not mean ignoring the other factors; it means that it should be the dominant factors.

Once it has been established that the international position needs to be filled by a home-country employee, the first step in the decision process would be to identify the degree of interaction with the local community that is required by the job.

Where extensive contact with the local culture and an understanding of the local value system are required, “relational abilities” and “environmental variables” become critical and should become dominant factors in the selection decision.

The next step would be to examine the degree to which the foreign environment differs from the home environment. “Relational abilities” and “family situation” factors

are distinct categories and, as a result, each situation needs to be treated separately – for some, the “family situation” factor would have little bearing.

In addition to these environmental variables, there are also organisational and personal variables.

Figure 2.5 maps out some key variables that may influence the outcome of a successful expatriate assignment, from the initial personal inputs of a particular desire for an international career, along with capabilities which may influence eventual personal success, and the corporate inputs of the strategies of internationalisation and international operations (Jackson, 2004).

Once selected, and as a result of corporate factors, the nature of integration into the management development process of expatriation may be continuous and progressive; it may be ad hoc; or a foreign assignment may simply be a one-off decision which may have more to do with immediate corporate needs rather than management development (Jackson, 2004).

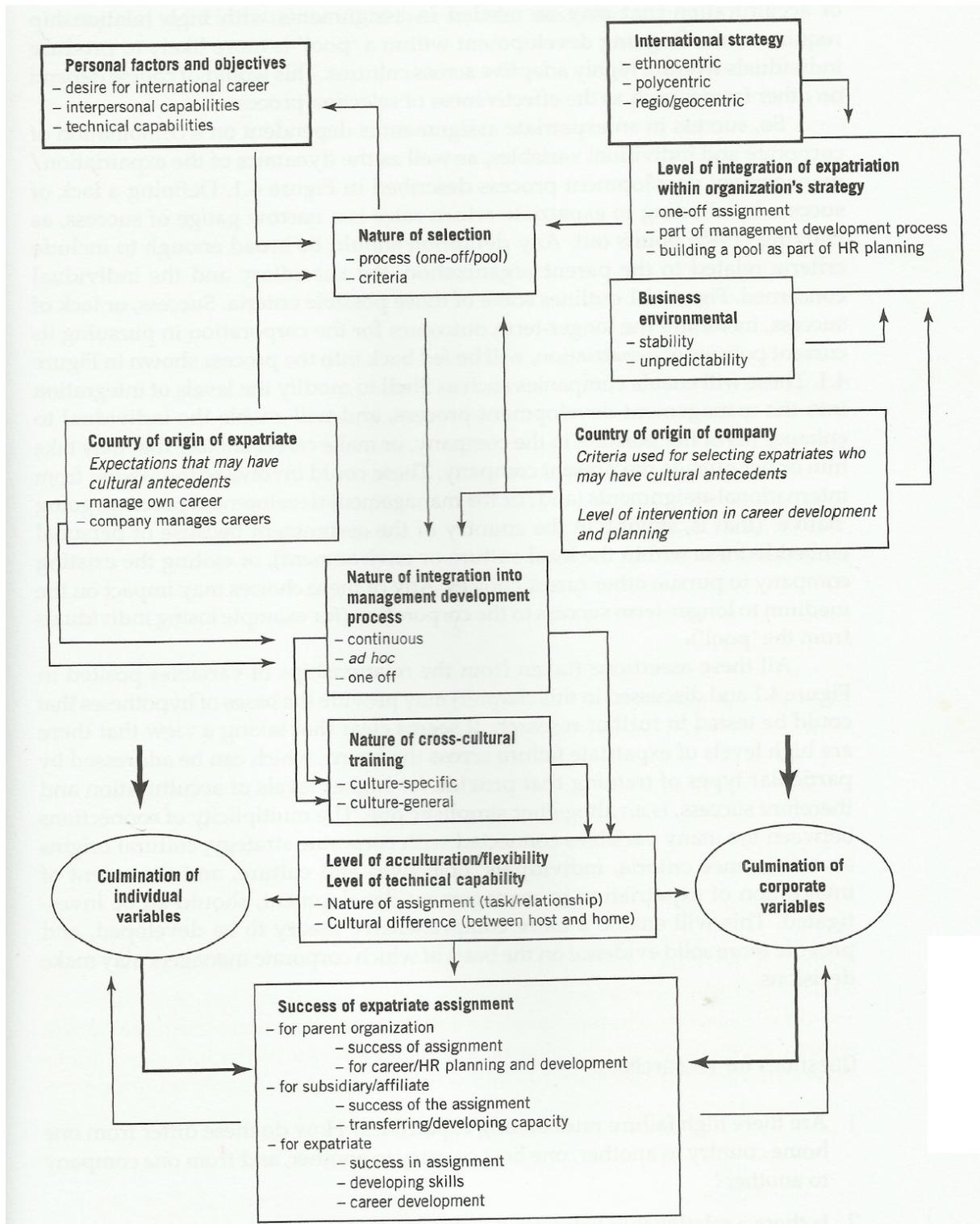


Figure 2.5: Illustrative variables involved in expatriate assignment success

Source: Jackson (2004:103)

In Figure 2.5, Jackson (2004) defines the success of an expatriate more broadly than merely the success to the expatriate, and includes the parent organisation (at-home location) and the subsidiary/affiliate (at the host location). The figure depicts the success of the expatriate's assignment as being the culmination of individual variables and corporate variables, re-emphasising the fact that expatriate's personal interest needs to be considered during the selection process. Lee and Sukoco (2008) are in agreement with Jackson (2004) that the more positive the personality and the better social support, the higher the expatriation of performance.

Harzing and Ruysseveldt (2004: 268) list four groups of variables that need to be considered in selection of the expatriate candidate. They highlight these as contributing factors to expatriate success or failure. These variables are: technical competence on the job; personal traits; the ability to cope with environmental variables; and the family situation.

According to Sims and Schraeder (2004), expatriates can be equipped with practical initiatives such as pre-departure visits; assistance with arranging foreign currency; assisting with finding housing and schooling for children; taking the expatriate on post-arrival orientation; host country social support and general counselling.

This effectively means that the HR department must ensure that all factors of an expatriate assignment are implemented in order to secure a successful international deployment. In essence, there are a number of staffing checks and balances that have to be considered by the HR department, and there are differing schools of thought around what needs to be included and what not.

2.3.1.1 School of thought on selection

Harvey and Novicevic (2001) argue that a competency-based view of the relationship between human resource management and expatriate staffing suggests that input, managerial and transformation-based competencies operate interdependently, creating organisation-specific competencies that can produce a sustained competitive advantage (Lado & Wilson, 1994). A competency-based perspective explicitly addresses the dynamic nature of the global environment by

acknowledging that the initial set of competencies (i.e. organisational and individual) should be renewed by the development of new competencies through orchestrated selection of better/more qualified expatriate managers. Research has focused on developing criteria for HR departments to select the right candidates for international assignments. However, it has been proven that the selection may actually follow more informal mechanisms, because line managers usually select candidates similar to themselves whom they feel confident about (Bonache, Brewster & Suutari 2001). Regardless of the staffing approach adopted, once an expatriate candidate has been selected, that candidate will have to be prepared for deployment in the host location. A number of activities goes into the preparation of an expatriate.

2.3.2 Preparation

In research done by Smith, Caver, Saslow and Thomas (2011) for the Development Dimensions International, it was found that 62% of the multinational executives described their preparation for their global roles as fair or poor, and 47% of the executives in this study described both the quality of the content and effectiveness of the execution of their global executive development programs as low or very low.

Pillay (2006) found that expatriates should receive the same preparation, support and training regardless of the age of the expatriate, or the location or duration of the international assignment. She also found that expatriates indicated that they did not receive the preparation, support and training they required for the international assignment. In his research, Ntshona (2008) found that expatriates should be thoroughly prepared prior to departure and supported while overseas. In a comparative study of Australian managers working in Korea and Korean managers working in Australia, Chang (2008) found that there is room for further improvement in terms of the amount of preparation the expatriates received.

The term cross-cultural training is broad enough to include differences in areas such as language abilities; business etiquettes; beliefs and values; social system; and negotiating styles of any culture (Gopalakrishnan et al 2009). Expatriates should receive cross-cultural training focusing on subjective characteristics of the host

culture, such as customs, values and beliefs (Vogel & Van Vuuren 2008). Language training is the aspect of the cross cultural training the organisation most commonly offers, and it is vital for survival in the new country (Kangas 2012). Language training is a frequently provided and often approved pre-assignment measure which is increasingly offered also to spouses and accompanying children (GMAC 2006: 14). The effects and the impact of culture shock may vary from one to another (Cornes 2004). The U-Curve model of cultural adjustment was developed by Lysgaard in 1955 and quite a number updates to it has been made to date. The U-Curve has four stages that can be summarised as follows: honeymoon; culture shock; adjustment; and the mastery stage (Lysgaard 1995). These stages are experienced by the expatriate's degree of adjustment and the time in months that the expatriate is on assignment.

Figure 2.6 is an explanation of the U-Curve of cultural adjustment by Gautam and Vishwakarma (2012);

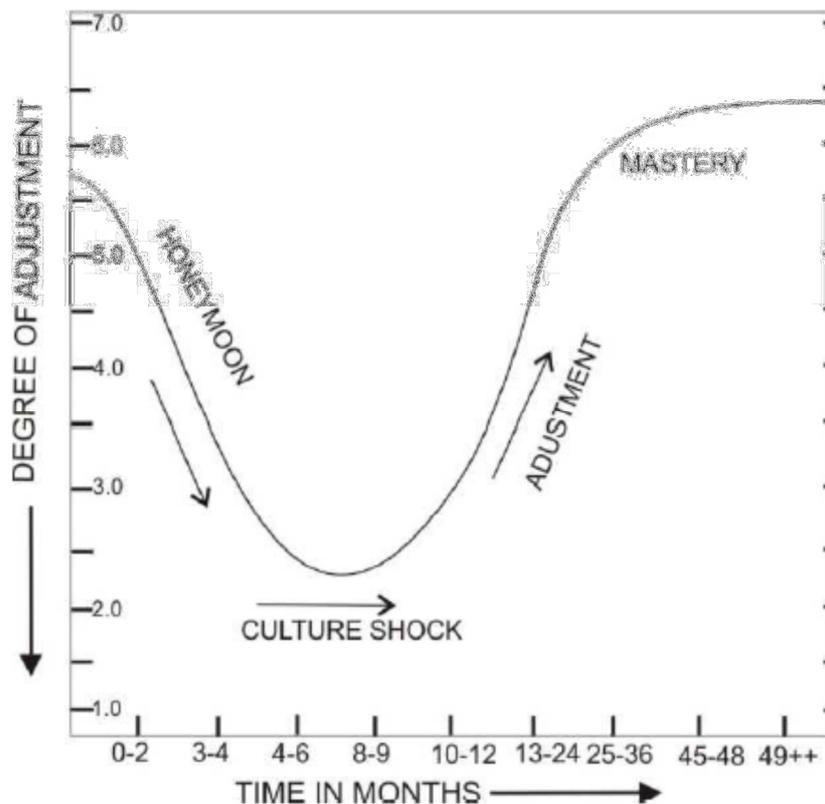


Figure 2.6: U-Curve of cultural adjustment

Source: Gautam & Vishwakarma (2012:4)

The first stage, which is also known as the honeymoon stage, is the earlier stage of expatriation, when expatriates are very excited about the new environment and culture. They have just entered the new environment full of hope and enthusiasm. This stage is also known as the euphoria stage, and takes place in the first week in the host country.

The second stage is also known as culture shock. This stage starts when people become confused in the new culture and environment, and they try to cope and adjust to situations. This stage is filled with frustration, sadness, loneliness, anxiousness and homesickness.

The third stage is known as the adjustment stage – during this stage people start to understand the culture and environment and try to adapt to the host country's culture, norms, values and start communicating with local people.

The fourth and final stage is the mastery stage. During this stage, people become masters in the culture and stable in the new environment.

Bolten in Stahl, Mayrhofer and Kuhlmann (2005: 307-324) states that the most practiced support measure in terms of international assignments is intercultural training, which is also known as cross-cultural training. Intercultural training has three dimensions: a cognitive dimension, which is training that focuses on developing culture-general and culture-specific knowledge and thus cultural awareness; a behavioural dimension that fosters intercultural experiential learning situations; and an affective dimension which fosters on enhancing cultural sensitivity, interest and respect.

Table 2.1: Intercultural Training Topology

Training Type	Content	Learning Effects vs. Disadvantages
Culture-General- Informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture-General Assimilator ▪ Seminar Topics: Intercultural Communication Theory, Cultural Anthropology, Cross-Cultural Psychology ▪ Training-Videos ▪ Discourse-Analysis-Based Trainings ▪ Case Studies 	<p>Learning Effects: In regard to the understanding of intercultural communication processes, high cognitive learning effects are given.</p> <p>Disadvantages: This training type pursues a rather academic approach which leaders tend to perceive as too abstract. No culture-specific input; little opportunity for self-awareness due to prevalent 'chalk and talk' training style.</p>
Culture-General Interaction-Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intercultural Workshops (Multicultural Group) ▪ Simulations, Role Plays for Intercultural Sensitization ▪ Self-Assessment Questionnaires 	<p>Learning Effects: Given that the group of participants is multicultural, interculturality can be experienced.</p> <p>Disadvantages: Lacking connection to everyday (business) life in a foreign country, simulations are often fictitious and hence are not taken seriously by participants. Minimal theory and culture-specific input.</p>
Culture-Specific- Informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture-Specific Assimilator ▪ Foreign Language Trainings ▪ Culture-Specific Seminar Topics: (Everyday) History, and Value Change within a Cultural Area ▪ Case Studies 	<p>Learning Effects: Given that explanations (rather than descriptions only) are provided, participants can develop a deep understanding of a culture-specific system.</p> <p>Disadvantages: Due to its descriptive and fact-based historical character, this training type runs the risk of overemphasizing dos and don'ts and developing stereotypes. Tends to lack an experiential, self-reflective character.</p>
Culture-Specific- Interaction-Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bi-Cultural Communication Workshops ▪ Culture-Specific Simulations ▪ Negotiation Role Plays ▪ Sensitivity Trainings 	<p>Learning Effects: If bi-culturality is given, intercultural, management-related action can be experienced in a semi-authentic way.</p> <p>Disadvantages: Usually, culture-specific and culture-general knowledge is not imparted theoretically.</p>

Source: Stahl et al. (2005:315)

To further improve their chances of success the candidate should undergo a broad spectrum of cultural and skills training, and should embark on an effective planning cycle (Els 2008). Cullen and Parboteeah (2010) identified four types of interventions for culture training: low-rigor cultural training programmes, which require minimal effort and mental involvement; high-rigor training methods that are more involved; simulations training programmes that offer the candidates an opportunity to

experience a foreign culture by role-playing and other forms of instructions; and lastly, field experience, which is a cultural training programme that offers the candidate the opportunity to learn by experiencing the new culture.

Ko and Yang (2011) found that post-arrival cross-cultural training (CCT) focused on learning local norms and regulations and, in order to shorten the expatriates' period of cross-cultural adjustment and to maximise their productivity, the MNCs should include this kind of training in their pre-departure CCT programmes. Ko and Yang (2011:170) went on to state that this training will make the expatriates more aware of the issues they will be facing, will motivate them to learn and to acquire the necessary skills, and will familiarise them with what to expect, thus minimising potential stress, shortening the adjustment time, and helping them develop cross-cultural competence as early as possible.

2.3.2.1 Adjustment

Once selected, the intensity of the acculturation activities in the foreign assignment may well determine the level of success of expatriates (Jackson 2004).

The adjustment process is the initial stage after the expatriate arrived at the host country. The expatriate learns to understand the environment to which they become exposed to (Onosu 2012). Adjustment to a new culture is a slow and step-by-step process that can be facilitated by cross-cultural training (Hånberg & Österdahl (2009).

2.3.3 Support

Once the expatriate is in the host country, continual development has to be offered (Mondy & Noe 2005). In addition to developmental assistance, the expatriate needs continued support from the individual's own organisation (Moulik 2012). Support given to international employees may lead to job adjustment and job satisfaction on international assignment, and support from expatriates and the host community also helps to facilitate the new expatriate's general adjustment (Onosu 2012).

According to Chew (2005), in addition to the host country preparation, a well-managed and proactive response to an expatriate's crisis in the host country is vital.

Chew (2005) went on to identify three phases – the preparedness phase, the responsiveness phase and the recovery phase – that must be followed in support of the expatriate in crisis.

- Preparedness the period of preparing plans and procedures for addressing a crisis.
- Responsiveness is the actual dealing with the crisis.
- Recovery is the period during which the organisation returns to normal operations as quickly as possible.

Putting Human Resources policies and procedures in place will lead an organisation to both be efficient in managing its human resources globally and encourage more employees to accept foreign transfers. An organisation that does this can be clearly identified as an organisation that supports its expatriates and is one that attempts to contribute to the employee's success on international assignments. This is the preparedness phase (Chew 2005). A well-managed and proactive response (recovery and preparedness phases) to an expatriate management crisis may help a company retain experienced international employees and reduce the likelihood of public relations and legal problems in the host country (Chew 2005).

In research done by Long (2010) the spouses expressed how organisations could play a pivotal role in assisting families to find their feet in the new country by providing social support, information, guidance, and preventing feelings of being abandoned in a foreign country.

With support, an organisation helps the expatriate and any dependents succeed by supporting them to work and live in the new culture, and to successfully return to headquarters (Mead & Andrews 2011). They went on to identify seven aspects that have to be considered by the organisation as a support structure for expatriates and, later, repatriates. These are: support for working; mentoring; support for living; defining culture shock; recognising and coping with culture shock; reverse culture shock; and lastly debriefing. These support activities that need to be executed by the organisation should not be developed in isolation. As described earlier, the expatriate process is defined as inter-linked stages that need to be executed one

after the other. In this case, support will be followed by activities that will prepare the expatriate for repatriation back to the home country – the repatriation process. Here follows a discussion of these repatriation activities.

2.3.4 Repatriation

Even though repatriation may not always be traumatic, there are significant issues which returning personnel and their families have to face. As a result of this, HR personnel should ensure that relevant support for the expatriate is provided as needed (Ntshona 2008). Repatriation should be seen as the final link in an integrated, circular process that connects good selection and cross-cultural training of expatriate managers with completion of their term abroad and reintegration into their national organisation (MHHE 2007). Literature on expatriate management narrowly defines success in the placement of an expatriate in terms of the preparation to move the employee to the host country; not much is researched around the support the expatriates require whilst on assignment (Els 2008).

Research to date has always focused on why the transition back to the home country organisation and socio-cultural environment has been difficult for the expatriates and their families (Gunter et al. 2012). They went on to categorise the repatriate issues into three categories, namely pre-expatriation, expatriation and repatriation, which they further mapped on a repatriate cycle with three stages of expatriation, namely work issues, individual/family issues and socio-cultural issues (see Table 2.2).

The last two stages of Mead and Andrews' (2011) seven stages of expatriation are reverse culture shock and debriefing. Reverse culture shock happens when the expatriates return back to headquarters after a long-term international assignment abroad. Mead and Andrews went on to list the following differences the expatriate will experience: financial benefits; cost of living expenses; suppliers of domestic help; social life; less power and excitement; job alienation; and a sense of being out of touch with changes at headquarters. Debriefing, on the other hand, involves the debriefing of the expatriate and their family by head office staff, especially HR staff. They become sources of expert knowledge on the expatriate's post; its opportunities and constraints; the subsidiary; the business environment; the political and economic

environment; cultural context; and opportunities and difficulties of living in the host country.

Table 2.2: Multifaceted issues evolving during the expatriation/repatriation cycle

	Pre-expatriation (before)	Expatriation (during)	Repatriation (after)
Work issues	Lack of adequate training	Lack of communication/contact	Increased tension/conflict
	Lack of knowledge relative to what to expect during expatriation	Out of sight out of mind	Higher repatriation turnover
	Lack of career plan and role of training	Inadequate career development	Holding pattern upon return
	Assignment to career path	Loss of social capital domestically	
	Inability to identify position upon repatriation	Reduced work motivation/performance	Lack of decision-making autonomy
Individual/family issues	Resistance to expatriate	Educational problems with children	Potential reduction in standard of living
	Lack of training/preparation for family members	Lack career opportunities for trailing spouse	Reverse culture shock
	Lack of support for family	Dysfunctional behaviour of spouse/children affecting performance	Increased marital disharmony
	Inability to address dual career issues		Job difficulties for trailing spouse
Social/cultural issues	Lack of knowledge of emerging &/or transition economies	Lack of acceptance of local culture	Difficulty of re-engaging
	Lack of insights into external constituents in country of assignment	Isolation and continuing culture shock	Lack of acceptance in home country
	Lack of language/cultural training	Fear and hazards of the local environment (health, safety and the like)	Lack of identity in home country/culture

Source: Gunter et al (2012:328)

2.4 Conclusion

In order to protect their intellectual property and impart knowledge to host country employees, global organisations must put qualified individuals on international assignment. These employees, called expatriates, are managed as part of global staffing, which is the responsibility of the Human Resources Management (HRM) department.

The management of these expatriates can be described in a cycle which involves selection, expatriation, support in the host country and the eventual repatriation of the expatriate back to the home. It is the efficiency with which these stages referred to as the expatriate cycle, is executed that determines the success or failure of expatriates.

The first stage is the selection of the expatriate. There are six criteria that can be used in the selection of an expatriate: technical ability; cross-cultural suitability; family requirements; country/cultural requirements; multi-national enterprises requirements; and language. It is important to include cross-cultural training in the preparation of the expatriates. The U-Curve of cultural adjustment highlights the degrees of adjustment an expatriate will go through against four phases: honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment and mastery.

The third stage of the expatriate cycle is the support phase. In addition to developmental assistance such as of cultural and skills training, the expatriate needs continued support from the organisation. This support has to extend to the expatriate's spouse/partner and any children on international assignment with the expatriate. The last stage of the expatriate cycle should be seen as the final link in an integrated, circular process that connects the selection, preparation and support of the expatriate with completion of their term abroad and reintegration into their national organisation.

Certain variables need to be considered in the process of filling an international vacancy by the HR department. These variables affect the entire expatriate cycle and should be identified during the selection stage of the candidate. For the organisation, these variables need to be identified when the organisation decides to

deploy employees on international assignment. Policy changes need to be made to ensure that the employee, organisation and environment are protected.

The personal variables are those that relate to the candidate's needs. These include the desire for an international career; interpersonal capabilities; the candidate's language abilities; previous international experience; country/cultural requirements; family status; suitability and interest of the spouse or family dependant; cross-cultural suitability; and technical ability.

Organisational variables are the HR department's responsibility, which has to ensure that all aspects of an expatriate assignment are implemented in order to secure a successful international deployment.

Environmental variables refer to the socio-cultural environment in the host country. Things such the language, food, schooling systems, etc. can be listed under this variable. This research seeks to understand whether these variables influence the levels of satisfaction of expatriates and repatriates at Group Technology.

The following research design and the methodology were developed to address the stated research question.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Without a design and the appropriate use of research methods, one is unlikely to gather quality information and as a result will create an inappropriate basis from which to draw conclusions (MacDonald & Headlam 2011). The research design and methodology outlined below was specifically developed to answer the research question and to address the objectives of this research. The research question seeks to understand variables that influence the levels of satisfaction of expatriates and repatriates at Group Technology and, as a result, is fairly precise.

3.2 Research Design

Cooper and Schindler (2011:139) list the essentials of research design as follows:

- An activity – and time-based plan.
- A plan always based on the research question.
- A guide for selecting sources and types of information.
- A framework for specifying the relationships among the study's variables.
- Procedural outline for every research activity.

In line with this list of essentials, the researcher highlights the critical aspects implemented and the method followed in this research in order to fulfil the objectives of the research.

In order to answer the research question, data need to be collected from the expatriates and repatriates. Unfortunately, these employees were located at various sites across the world and, as a result, personal interviews were not possible. The data could be collected only by using questionnaires, whose results were quantitatively analysed to draw inferences from the identified population.

3.3 Research Type

Business research can be either qualitative or quantitative or a combination of both (Bernard 2006). Quite a lot has been written about research methods – when to apply which method and, more frequently, the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods. The researcher used the research question and definitions of the research methods to arrive at the method to be used. The research design for this study was a quantitative method. According to the Effective Learning Service centre at Bradford University (2007), the quantitative research method is harder to design initially. They go on to state that this research type is usually highly detailed and structured and the results can be easily collated and presented statistically.

Cooper and Schindler (2011) state that in business research, quantitative methodologies usually measure consumer behaviour, knowledge, opinions, or attitudes. This is a method that is in line with the objectives of this research, which seeks to establish socially related aspects. This method was found to be the optimal method to use as the objective is to test the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of expatriates and repatriates on a variety of factors.

No attempts by the researcher have been made to change the variables. In fact, the researcher had no control over the variables and only a report on what had happened was produced. This is called an ex post facto design approach and not an experimental design approach (Cooper & Schindler 2011:141).

3.4 Data Analysis Approach

The relationship between theory and empirical data can be explained via either one of two methods, namely deductive or inductive. The researcher has stated that the research type that will be followed is the quantitative method and as a result this research will follow a deductive approach. A quantitative research method usually results in a deductive approach to testing theory, often using numbers or facts (Greener 2008). Greener went on to conclude that a positivist or natural science

model and an objectivist view are usually studied with quantitative research. This research also followed these approaches.

A number of problem areas were identified (see literature review) in the placing of employees in, and returning them from, international assignment – expatriation and repatriation. Based on these identified areas, the researcher tested these on a number of employees using a questionnaire. The data gathered were collated and the results analysed. This approach offered the researcher a relatively easy and systematic way of testing established ideas on a range of employees. This information resulted in a substantial amount of numbers and facts – hence the deduction method of data analysis was used to convert the data into meaningful information.

Descriptive statistics were applied in the analysis of the data gathered and a software tool from International Business Machines (IBM) called SPSS was used to perform analysis of the data. According to IBM (2014) the “IBM SPSS Statistics is an integrated family of products that addresses the entire analytical process, from planning to data collection to analysis, reporting and deployment.”

3.5 Sampling

Cooper and Schindler (2011) state that the basic premise of sampling is that by selecting some of the elements in a population, we may draw conclusions about the entire population. Below is the complete sampling strategy that the researcher followed in determining which elements (employees) to sample in order to draw conclusion about the expatriate population at Group Technology.

Group Technology’s head-count currently sits at approximately 2 000 employees. According to Sasol Technology (2013), the Business Development and Implementation Department of Group Technology currently runs the following international capital projects for Sasol:

- USA Lake Charles Cracker Complex
- USA Lake Charles Gas to Liquid

- Canada Gas to Liquid
- Uzbekistan Gas to Liquid
- Oryx Gas to Liquid
- India Gas to Liquid

The population of this research was all Group Technology employees that are expatriates and repatriates. Because all employees that are on international travel are placed on the expatriate database, the researcher received a list of 79 individuals. This list includes short-term assignment (STA) employees, employees who are on training, and employees who have been localised (permanently deployed). This list of 79 employees represents the population for the research and the sample needed to be taken from this list. The criteria used to take the sample from the population are as follows:

- Employees must be permanent.
- Employees must be on a long-term assignment – an assignment to an international location for a period of longer than six months (183 days) and typically up to three years (Sasol 2011).
- Employees who are on international assignment and those employees who are about to return from international assignment.
- Employees who have joined or is joining a project – not in training.

There were 52 Group Technology employees who fit these criteria at various host locations (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Group Technology Expatriates per Host Location

Host Location	City
Italy	Rome
Japan	Omuta, Fukuoka
Mozambique	Vilanculos
South Korea	Seoul
United States of America	Boston
	Lake Charles
	Tulsa
	Houston
Qatar	Doha

The identified 52 expatriates include seven employees who have recently returned from international assignment and are in the home country. For those currently employed on international assignment, the sample will be as follows:

The average expatriates per site is five and with a total of 10 sites, the total number of expatriates that will form part of the research is 52 employees. Therefore, the sample will consist of 52 employees, who will be segmented as follows:

- 45 expatriates: These are employees on international assignment.
- 7 repatriates: Currently at the home location.

It needs to be noted that some of these expatriate employees were repatriates at some point. This is the reason why more than seven responses were received for the repatriation-related questions.

3.5.1 Sample Type

Cooper and Schindler (2011:369) identified two types of samples, namely nonprobability and probability sampling. They went on to define these sampling types as follows:

Nonprobability sampling is arbitrary and subjectively, we normally do so with a pattern or scheme in mind. Each member of the population does not have a known chance of being included. Probability sampling is based on the concept of random selection – a controlled procedure that assures that each population element is given a known nonzero chance of selection.

The chances of each expatriate being included in the sample was not known. The process of classifying the expatriates for sampling purposes is a complex process. It is against this background that this research can be classified as one that follows the nonprobability sampling approach, as the number of expatriates and repatriates was known and all of them were included in the sample. This method is called the comprehensive sampling method (Ary et al. 2010), and is the sampling strategy that was followed in this research.

3.6 Data-gathering method

The data-gathering method employed in this research involved surveying and recording responses from expatriates and repatriates for analysis (Cooper & Schindler 2011). Data gathered in this manner are called primary data. Primary data are data collected specifically to address the research problem and are collected by the researcher (Curtis 2007). Unlike secondary data, primary data cannot be found elsewhere and have to be collected at the time of the research. Primary data are collected either from surveys, questionnaires, observations or interviews. The primary data-gathering method used was via a structured online questionnaire and were subsequently exported into a format that ensured compatibility with different data analysis software (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009: 419).

3.6.1 Questionnaire Development

The quantitative data will be collected by using a self-administered survey in the form of a structured self-administered questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (Cooper & Schindler 2011:250). A variation of the summated rating Likert Scale Method was used to measure satisfaction/dissatisfaction, which required that the respondents indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with a number of statements put to them. Scores are summed to give a composite measure of satisfaction levels. The reason for using the five-point Likert scale was to avoid any uncertainty by the respondents, and it will provide more definite answers (Krafft, 2011).

Discovering ways to capture the participants' interest; discovering question content; the wording; sequencing problems; and increasing the likelihood of respondents remaining engaged to the completion of the survey are some points to consider, which is why Cooper and Schindler (2011:347) list reasons why pretesting is important. The researcher made hard copies available to HR staff for pretesting purposes to ensure the relevance and structure of the questionnaire are acceptable. The questionnaire was tested on two senior HR staff members and one senior manager with extensive expatriation experience. The testing underwent a number of iterations. Constructive feedback was received and the questionnaire was updated accordingly.

3.6.2 Communication Approach

The communication approach involved surveying or interviewing people and recording their responses for analysis (Cooper & Schindler 2011:242). The type of communication approach that was adopted for the research was the self-administered survey that was computer-delivered via the internet. An online software package called SurveyMonkey® was used for this purpose. The format of the questionnaire was done according to the software's settings. The number of questions and time it would take to complete the survey questions were discussed with Group Technology's HR department.

In essence, all communication to expatriates, repatriates and former-expatriates who had left Group Technology was done via an email with a link to the satisfaction questionnaire directing participants to SurveyMonkey®. By using this method, respondents will have a sense of anonymity (Cooper & Schindler 2011). Among other things, the fact that expanded geographic coverage is possible without an increase in costs, rapid data collection, and that respondents who cannot be reached by phone are easily accessible are some of the other advantages of using this approach. There are also convenience factors:

- Respondents could answer the surveys at a time convenient to them and they could take time to answer the survey questions. This also did away with time-zone related restrictions.
- Different types of questions can be managed via this approach. Subsequently this meant that the researcher was not restricted on the type of questionnaires to use for the survey.
- Once a survey had been submitted by a respondent, the results (data) were immediately available to the researcher.

3.7 Conclusion

The research is quantitative, using self-administered surveys that are delivered via the internet. A structured questionnaire that had been pretested was used for collecting responses from the expatriates/repatriates. In line with the quantitative research methodology, a deductive, positivist approach with an objectivist view was followed. A comprehensive sampling method was used with a nonprobability approach.

This chapter gave an overview of the research methodology that was applied to enable the researcher to draw conclusions on the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the expatriates/repatriates at Group Technology. The following chapter discusses the results of the investigation.

4. Research Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The primary objective of the research is to determine Group Technology employees' preparedness for expatriation and repatriation. The data in the form of responses received to a questionnaire sent to the expatriates via email will be presented in this chapter. The research findings are presented in graphs and tables. The findings have been divided according to the two sections of the questionnaire. The findings on the expatriates' biographical information will be analysed first. This will give an understanding of the expatriates' personal details (gender, marital status, age, etc.); role within the organisation (title); the assignment; and where the expatriates are deployed. The second section deals with the level of satisfaction of the expatriates.

4.2 Response rate

The response rate is the number of responses received divided by the number of eligible units in the sample (Fan & Yan, 2010:132). The researcher received a list of 79 employees from Group Technology's Human Resources department. After verifying the list of employees, only 52 candidates fulfilled the criteria of an expatriate. These expatriates are on assignment for Group Technology at various locations across the world. The questionnaire was sent to these 52 candidates and 27 responses were received. This is equivalent to a 52% response rate.

This is a very good response rate, considering that Group Technology is undergoing a restructuring process and that most of the expatriates are affected by this restructuring. Research also supports this fact. The response rate for e-mail-based surveys in the early 1990s was as low as 6% (Tse et al. 1995) and increased to between 25 and 30% with follow-up reminders (Kittleson 1997) in the late 1990s. In a comparative study done by Kaplowitz, Hadlock, and Levine (2004), it was found that the response rate for e-mail-based surveys is 31.5%. In a similar comparative study Nulty (2008) found the response rate for online surveys to be 33%. It is against this background that the 52% response rate achieved for the electronic questionnaire sent via email is considered good.

4.3 Organisational and Biographical information

For the questions relating to the home and host locations (questions 6 and 7), no choices were provided and, as a result, the expatriates had to specify their host locations manually. This created a situation where some expatriates chose their host location as being a country and others chose a city. This happened despite the supplied example of a city such Johannesburg and Houston. The responses were allocated to the correct city (not country).

Question 1: What is your current title?

In instances where the respondents specified their title in the “other” field, the appropriate title was added. Only three such cases were encountered:

- “SPL” was added to the Specialists
- “Lead Process Engineer” was added to the Lead Specialists
- “Process Engineer” was added Specialist

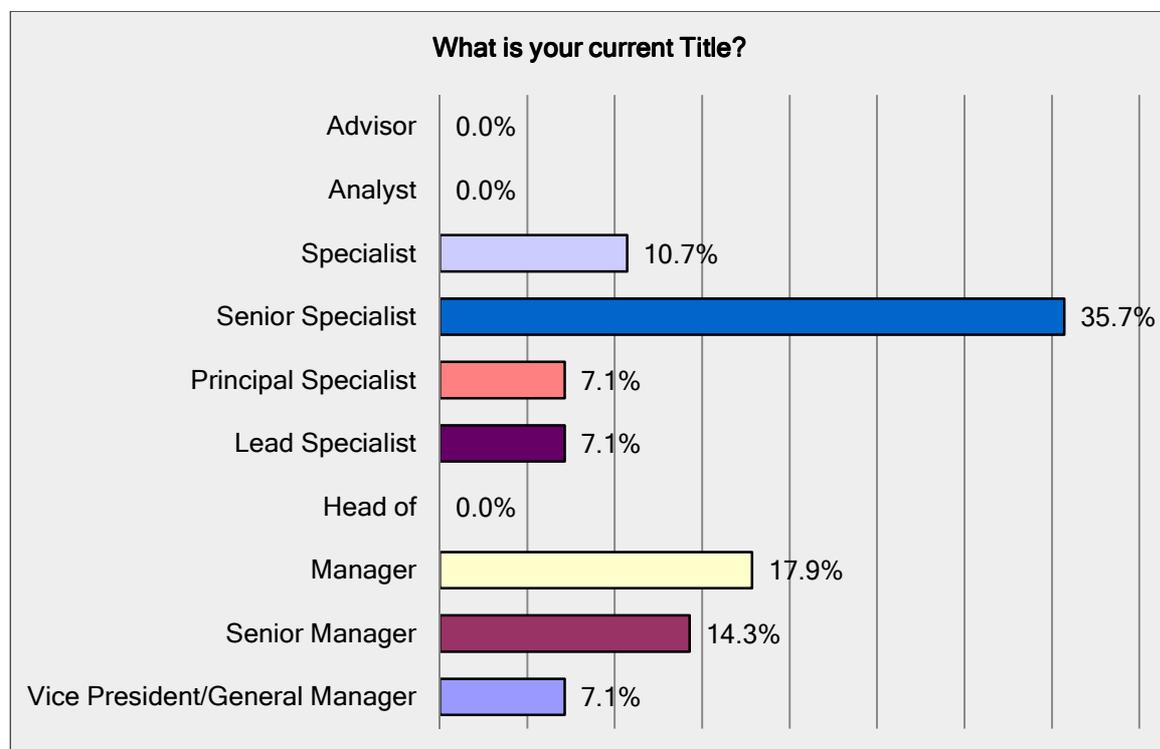


Figure 4.1: Expatriate Title Results

As depicted in Figure 4.1, the results of the question on Title of the Expatriates show that none of the expatriates have the title of Advisor, Analyst or Head Of. These had zero responses. The Vice President/General Manager, Lead Specialist and Principal Specialist titles make up 7.1% each of the respondents. The Specialist title makes up 10.7% of the respondents, followed by the Senior Manager and Manager titles which are 14.3% and 17.9% respectively.

The fact that no Advisor or Analyst was on expatriation is expected, as most of the administrative tasks are performed at head office. This is also true for the Senior Manager and Vice President/General Manager titles which altogether had a response rate of 21.4%. The employees in these titles are usually in the home country, working on strategic issues and monitoring projects from the home base. These are also the employees who decide when an expatriate intervention is needed or no longer needed. The second-most responses were received from the Manager title: 17.9% of the respondents. This indicates that management interventions at host location are crucial and have been catered for. Researchers have even coined the term Expatriate Manager (see literature review) to emphasise this point. The Specialist (Specialist, Senior Specialist, Principal Specialist and Lead Specialist) titles form 60.6% of the respondents. This is an indication that most of Group Technology's international projects are executed by specialists. This makes sense as Sasol's international projects involve Sasol's proprietary technology. Thus, the role types (titles) of the expatriates at Group Technology are perfectly represented.

In a study done by Vogel and Van Vuuren (2008), most of the respondents (30 respondents, or 46.2% held top management positions, 27 (41.5%) held middle management positions, five (7.7%) were in a supervisory position and only three (4.6%) were in non-managerial positions. Because of the seniority of these expatriates on Group Technology assignments it can be concluded that their levels of satisfaction would decrease because of the responsibility placed on them. A study conducted among Korean expatriates indicated that those at a higher level job designation tended to be less satisfied (Hyeong-Deug & Tung 2012).

Question 2: Gender

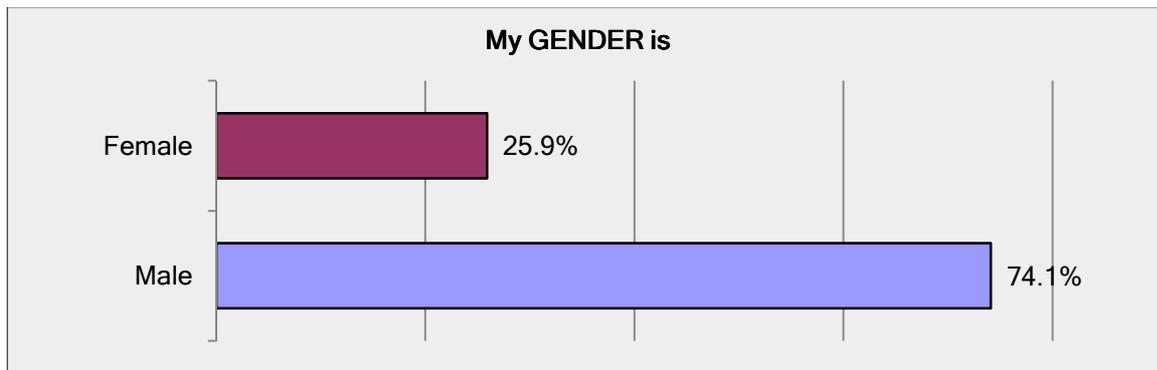


Figure 4.2: Expatriate Gender Results

Figure 4.2 shows the results for the responses received for gender as follows: 74.1% of the respondents were male and only 25.9% female.

This result conclusively indicates the gender disparity among male and female employees that end up on international assignment.

With such a big margin, it would seem that women expatriates will always be in the minority on international assignments.

The number of women being employed in the workforce all over the world is increasing and, as a result, the number of women expatriates is increasing (Joshua-Gojer 2012). In the early 1980s women represented only 3% of the total number of expatriate managers among Western European multinational companies. This figure grew to 5% in the late 1980s and to about 14% in the late 1990s (Vance, Paik & White 2006). By 2008, the figure was at 88.89% of expatriates being male (Vogel & van Vuuren 2008). Female expatriates represent between 10% and 15% of expatriates in North and Latin America, Asia-Pacific and Europe, and each region has noted an increase from 3% to 5% in recent years (Harrison & Michailova 2012).

These figures are far higher than the 3:1 ratio. However, the finding by these researchers are consistent with regard to the fact that there are more male expatriates than female expatriates on international assignment. This then confirms the fact that the male/female representation of Group Technology's expatriates is in line with the current international trends.

Viewed in isolation, the 75% male composition of Group Technology’s expatriate community is negative. But the 3:1 male/female ratio at Group Technology is, in fact, better than the current international trends, which are worse than this ratio.

However, we have to explore if gender as a variable has an impact on expatriate adjustment and, as a result, could affect the expatriate’s level satisfaction. This should be especially true for women who are in the minority. A study conducted by Haslberger (2007) contributes to the growing evidence that shows that women tend to be better adapted on international assignment than men. Cole and McNulty (2007) found that a personal value called self-transcendence is perceived more strongly by females, and affects work adjustment more strongly for female expatriates. However they could not explain why their research couldn’t find reasons why the adjustment of female expatriates is not lower than of males. Female expatriates mentioned that they benefited from the perception held that they are extremely capable and talented, since they have been able to overcome the gender barriers in the selection process (Andersson, Johansson & Pettersson 2005).

Question 3: Marital Status

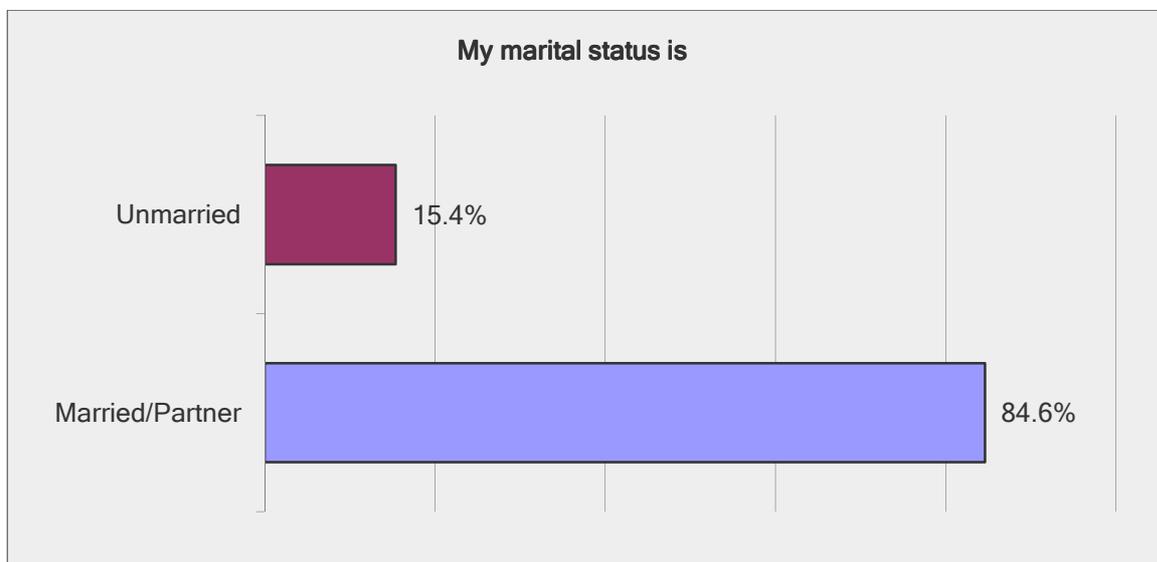


Figure 4.3: Expatriate Marital Status Results

Figure 4.3 shows the results of the responses received in response to the question on marital status. Most of the respondents (84.6%) are either married or have a partner. Only 15.4% of the respondents are unmarried or don’t have a partner.

The results received show that most of the expatriates are either married or have partners. This effectively means that expatriate preparation has to include the spouse/partner. This is an indication of the stability of the expatriates and can be used to the organisation's advantage. Expatriate success and continuity is crucial for international projects and married expatriates or those with partners offer this stability. This will be true as long as the appropriate support is given to them. It can then be assumed that most employees who accept international assignments are married. Employees who are not married put more focus on opportunities for career advancement compared to their married counterparts (Selmer & Luring 2011). At a personal level, expatriates' reasons for accepting an assignment differ in terms of marital status, nationality, previous expatriate experience and seniority (Selmer & Luring 2011). The largest percentage of expatriates (78%) are married (Vogel & van Vuuren 2008) – this figure was exactly the same (78%) 13 years prior (Vogel & van Vuuren 2008). In research done by Ardelean (2010) it was found that the majority of expatriates (79%) were married, 80% of those accompanied by their partner during the foreign assignment. Thus it can be said that international assignments affect the family as a whole and, as result, marital status becomes particularly important (Brown 2008).

Question 4: Age Range

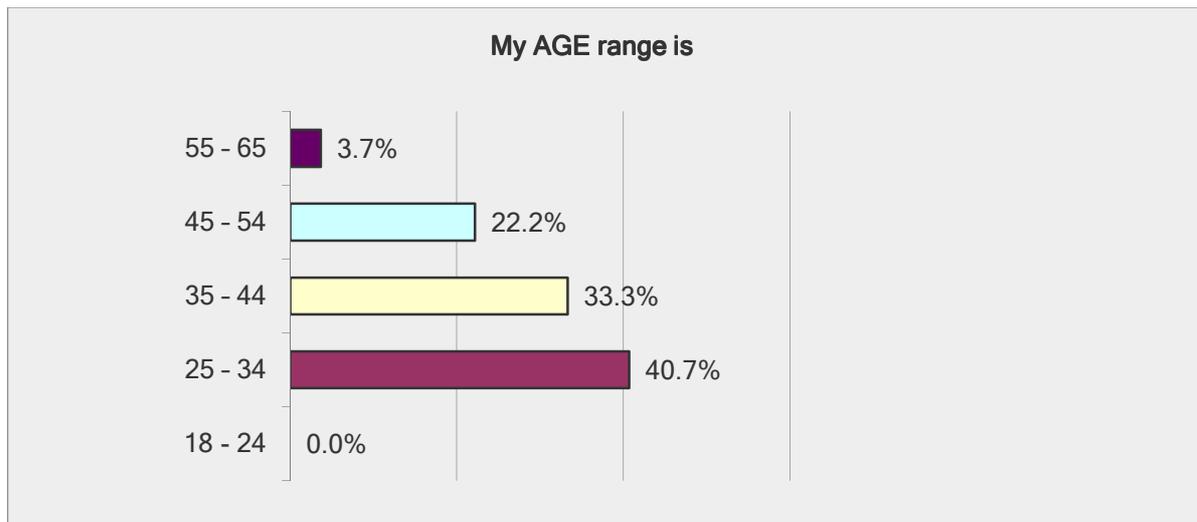


Figure 4.4: Expatriate Age Range Results

As can be seen from Figure 4.4, the first and last age ranges both had the least number of respondents: 0% of the respondents fall within the 18-24 range, and only 3.7% in the 55-65 age range. The 25-34 age range comprises 40.7% of the respondents, which is also the age range with the most respondents. The 35-44 age range made up of 33.3% of the respondents and the 45-54 age range has 22.2% of the respondents.

Most employees who are on international assignments are between the ages of 25 and 34. A sample of expatriates between the ages of 25 and 35 years old can represent a population (Roos, 2013). The majority of the expatriates (96.2%) are between ages 25 and 54. This indicates that well-matured (experienced) employees are in charge of Sasol's proprietary technology. The results also show that there is a higher number of expatriates in the lower age ranges, and the number decreases as the age ranges increase. This also confirms the fact that most of the expatriates are specialists (see Title results above), as most specialists are in the 24-34 age range. This also shows that there are senior member among the expatriates. This is primarily to offer support to the other expatriates.

Question 5: Number of Children on Assignment

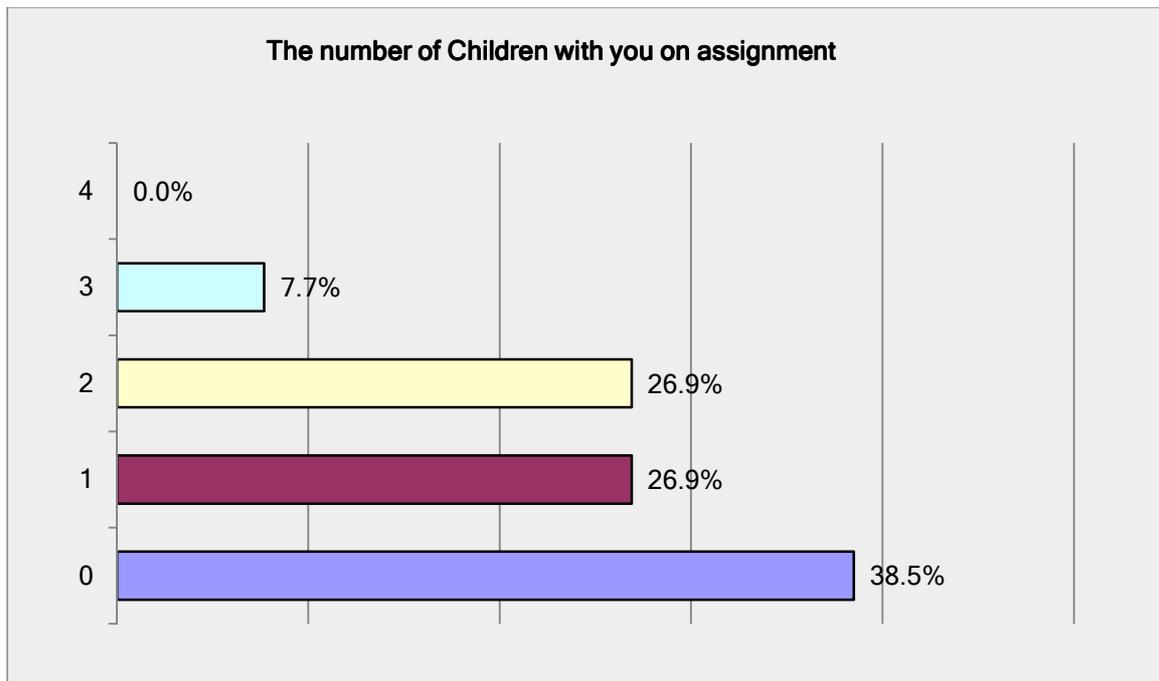


Figure 4.5: Number of Children on Assignment Results

The results in Figure 4.5 show that the respondents with one or two children with them on assignment each form 26.9% of the respondents, 7.7% of the respondents have three children with them, and 38.5% have no children with them.

The expatriates with children with them on assignment make up 61.5% of the expatriates; 7.7% of them have as many as three children with them. There is also an inherent question here: Are there any children with you on assignment?

By virtue of their age and marital status (see above analyses), most expatriates have children and they take their children with them on assignment.

In 72% of the cases, children also accompanied the international assignees (Ardelean 2010). As many as 68% expatriates (25 respondents, 17 had children) have children with them on assignment (Roos, 2013).

Question 6: Home Location

All the expatriates from the home country or head office are tallied under Johannesburg. Thus, Johannesburg, Secunda, Sasolburg, Pretoria, Vanderbijlpark etc. are all classified under Johannesburg.

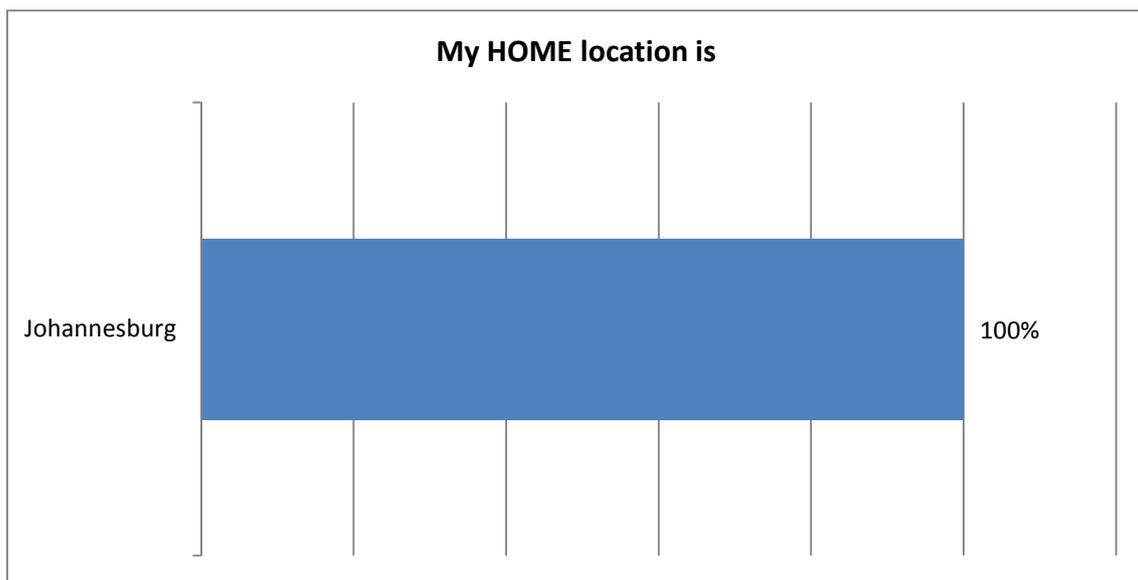


Figure 4.6: Expatriate Home Location Results

Figure 4.6 shows that 100% of the respondents are from Johannesburg. Not much can be analysed from this result, as it is expected that most, if not all, of Sasol's employees are from South Africa with their home location as Johannesburg. Sasol only recently entered the international market and, as a result, the maturity of the international sites is at a very low level. This will change as Sasol's international projects are completed and there is a need for employees to move to other locations. This movement will in some cases involve employees from the host location – only then will there be an increase in the number of expatriates with home locations that are not the head office location.

Question 7: Host Location

The host location of the expatriate was not prepopulated and, as result, the expatriate had to specify their host location manually. This created a situation where some expatriates chose their host location as being a country and some a city. This happened despite the supplied example of a city such Johannesburg and Houston. The researcher presented the results as per the responses received.

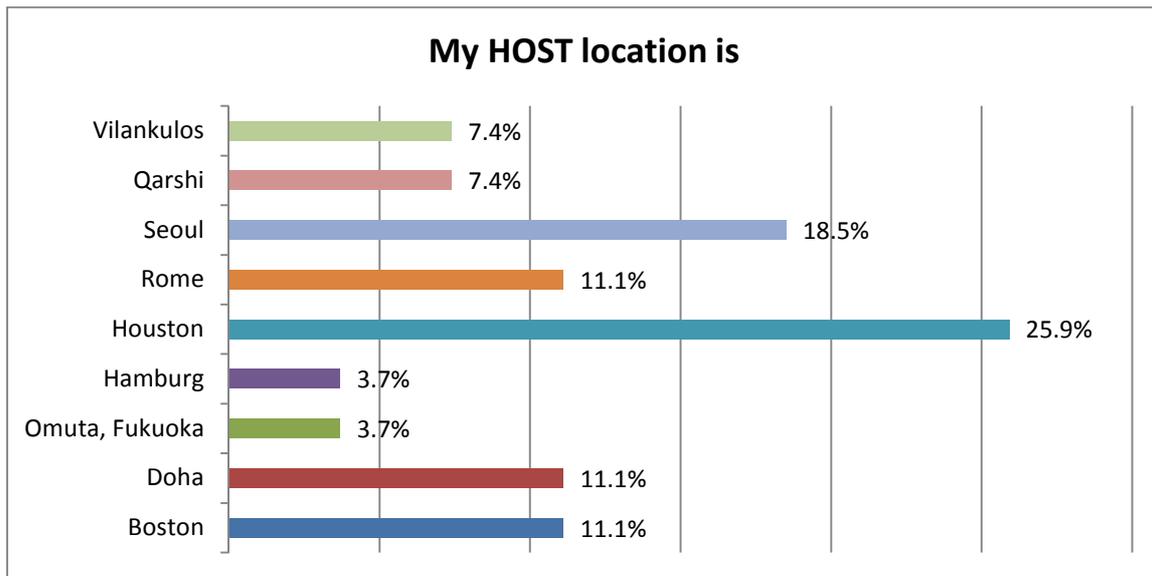


Figure 4.7: Expatriate Host Location Results

Figure 4.7 shows that the least respondents are from Hamburg and Omuta (Fukuoka district), with 3.7% from each of these countries; 7.4% respondents are from Mozambique and Uzbekistan; 11.1% are from Rome (Italy), Doha (Qatar) and Boston (United States of America); with 18.5% from Seoul (South Korea) and 25.9% from Houston (United States of America) which is where the most respondents are based.

From the above we can deduce that Seoul and Houston (18.5% and 25.9% respectively) are by far the two sites where the bulk of the expatriates are found. In fact, 73% of the overall expatriates find themselves in these two sites, and the response rate from these two areas is 37%. This is exactly the response rate received from the Unites States of America (USA) operations only. The USA operations are found in Houston and Boston. This means that the USA operations have the most responses, followed by the operations in Seoul in South Korea. This

deployment spread makes sense as the USA is a gas-dependent society and there is still an abundance of gas. Note that gas in this case refers to gas in its gaseous form and not the liquid form (petrol). Besides this, the responses received from the host locations are fairly in line with the expatriate distribution.

Question 8: What is the Length of your Assignment in Years

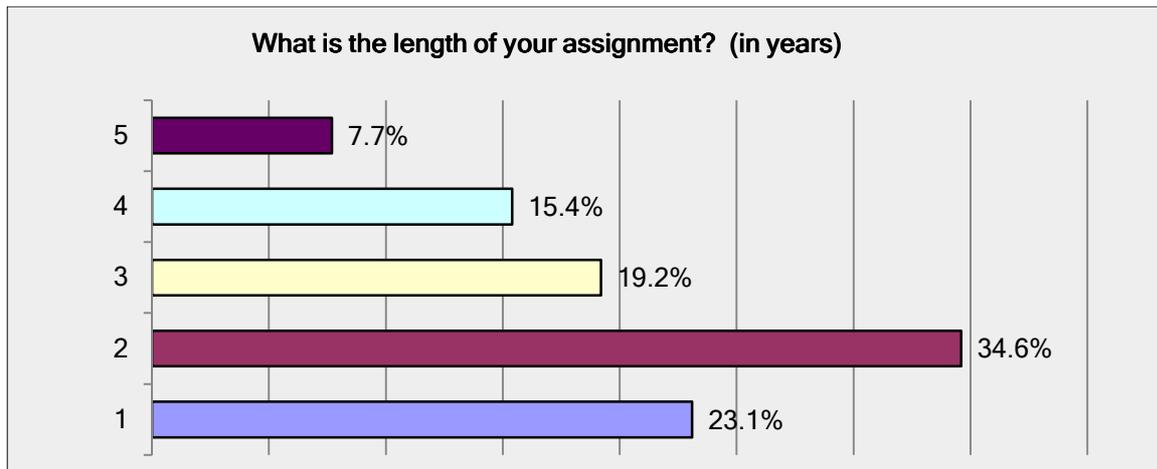


Figure 4.8: Length of Assignment Results

The results from Figure 4.8 show that 7.7% of the respondents have five-year contracts; 15.4% for four years; 19.2% for three years; 23.1% have one-year contracts; and most of the respondents have two-year contracts, making up 34.6% of the respondents.

This should give a good indication of the length of the period the current projects have been running. The number of expatriates on longer term assignment (four to five years) is much lower than those on shorter contracts. This is because senior managers and lead specialist are normally the first to go on assignment. The team is then built as and once the project goes live, the resource requirements increase. The same applies when there are deliverables that require a specialist to implement them in a short space of time. This is supported by the fact that 34.6% of the expatriates who responded have two-year contracts. The inference is thus that the average expatriate assignment is two years.

The majority (87%) of firms provide an average of three years' length of stay for their expatriates (Chew, 2005). Research done by McNulty (2009), put the average length of time in the host country of two years as being represented by 45%, with 35% representing assignment lengths of only one year, and 8% representing being in the host country for more than five years. Recent figures show the length of stay in a host-country for one year or less being 32%, with 55% between two and four years, and 13% for five or more years (McNulty, De Cieri & Hutchings 2013). These figures show that the two-year assignments are more frequently occurring than the rest. It is against this background that the most occurring two-year assignment length contracts at Group Technology can be associated with a general trend.

Question 9: What is the Length of your Assignment Already Completed

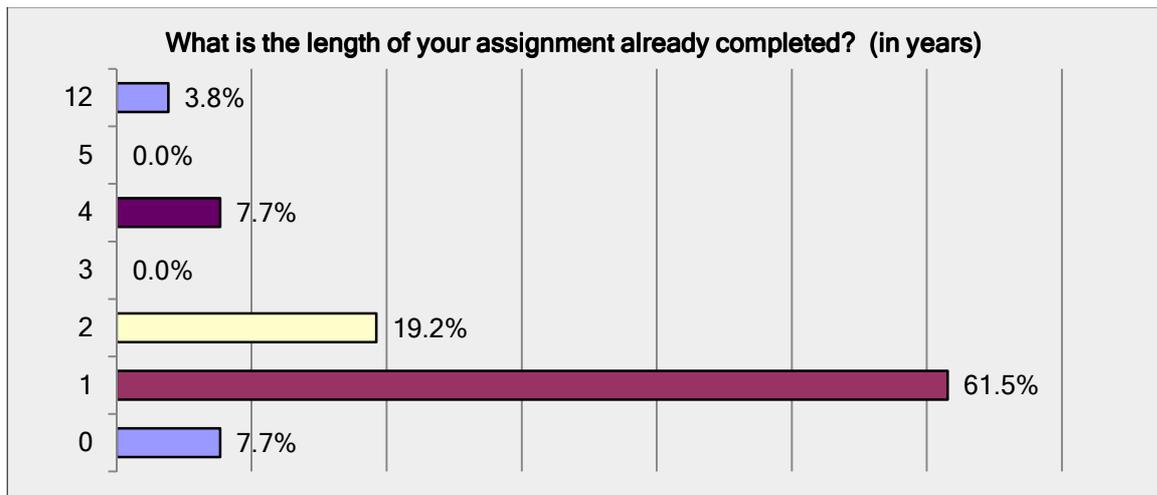


Figure 4.9: Length of Period Already Completed Results

The results for the question on the length of period already completed as depicted above in Figure 4.9 show that none of the respondents completed five or three years and as results, as 0% responses were received for these categories. Some 3.8% of the respondents completed 12 years; 7.7% completed four years; 19.2% completed two years and those yet to complete a year also totalled 7.7%. Most of the respondents completed one year. This is 61.5% of the respondents.

The length of the assignment already completed is in line with the length of the expatriate assignment, as most of the expatriates completed one year and only 7.7% of the expatriates are still to complete a year on assignment. From Figure 4.9, it can be seen that 61.5% of the expatriates have completed one year on assignment. As we saw from the title and the age range analysis above, these expatriates are fairly experienced.

It is on this basis that it can be concluded that the length of stay should contribute to the expatriates' level of satisfaction on international assignment. That is, the longer the stay, the higher the levels of satisfaction. Adjustment is a time-dependent process and it is assumed that the more amount of time one spends in the host country, the easier it will be to get adjusted and be productive (Joshua-Gojer 2012). This also backed up by Lee (2006) who concluded that the length of stay results in

the expatriate becoming familiar the job and work conditions and as a result the better their performance will come.

4.3.1 Summary of Organisational and Biographical Information

Most of Group Technology's employees on international assignment are specialists. They are responsible for executing international projects on behalf of Sasol and are responsible for the safeguard of Sasol's proprietary technology. Quite a large number of these expatriates are males and Group Technology will have to address this disparity. Regardless of the figures, gender as a variable does contribute to the expatriate's levels of satisfaction on the international assignment. The fact that one gender is more prominent than the other on assignment does also not contribute towards the expatriate's level of satisfaction. However, women do get preferential treatment and, as a result, should have increased levels of satisfaction.

Most of the expatriates are married or have a partner, and are with their children in the host country. The number of children that are with the expatriates on assignment ranges from one to three. The age range of the respondents indicates that well-matured (experienced) employees are in charge of Sasol's proprietary technology. Johannesburg, South Africa, is the home location and the host locations are found all over the world, with Houston, USA, being the city with the most responses received. The international assignments range from one to five years, with most of the expatriates having two-year contracts. The responses received indicate that most of the expatriates completed one year of assignment. There are, however, expatriates who have completed varying lengths of assignments.

4.4 Satisfaction Levels of Expatriates

4.4.1 Introduction

In order to test the level of satisfaction among expatriates, the questionnaire was designed to give options against a five-point Likert scale, which the respondents can use to rate each aspect in question. The options were: Very Poor, Poor, Fair, Good and Very Good. The options were weighted according to Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Rating Table

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Rating (weighting)	1	2	3	4	5

The previous subsections summarised the data received from the questionnaire, presented the results and analysed the expatriates' biographical information. This subsection summarises, presents and analyses the responses received from the expatriates on the levels of satisfaction with Group Technology's HR department expatriate process. The literature review identified four stages of the expatriate cycle. These are the selection, preparation, support and repatriation stages. The data presentation and interpretation of the responses will be done according to these stages, which were covered in section two of the questionnaire. The primary objective of the research is to determine Group Technology employees' preparedness for expatriation and repatriation. One of the secondary objectives to this primary research objective is to use quantitative research methods to explore which variables contribute to decreased levels of satisfaction among expatriates and repatriates. Histograms were extracted from SPSS to further analyse the results using descriptive statistics. The histograms give the percentage response and the mean and standard deviation. In order to completely analyse the results, the mean is used in conjunction with the standard deviation.

4.4.2 Selection Process

Table 4.2: Selection Process Results

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the selection process of expatriates.						
	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Rating Average
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	3.56
Response Rate	0.0%	3.7%	44.4%	44.4%	7.4%	51.9%
Responses	0	1	12	12	2	27

Table 4.2 shows that a total of 27 out of 52 respondents responded to the questionnaire. This is equal to a 51.9% response rate as depicted in Table 4.2 above, which shows the results of the responses received to the question posed to indicate the level of satisfaction with the selection process of expatriates. The Very Poor rating received a response rate of 0%; the Poor rating received 3.7%; the Fair and Good ratings each received 44.4% and Very Good received a 7.4% rating.

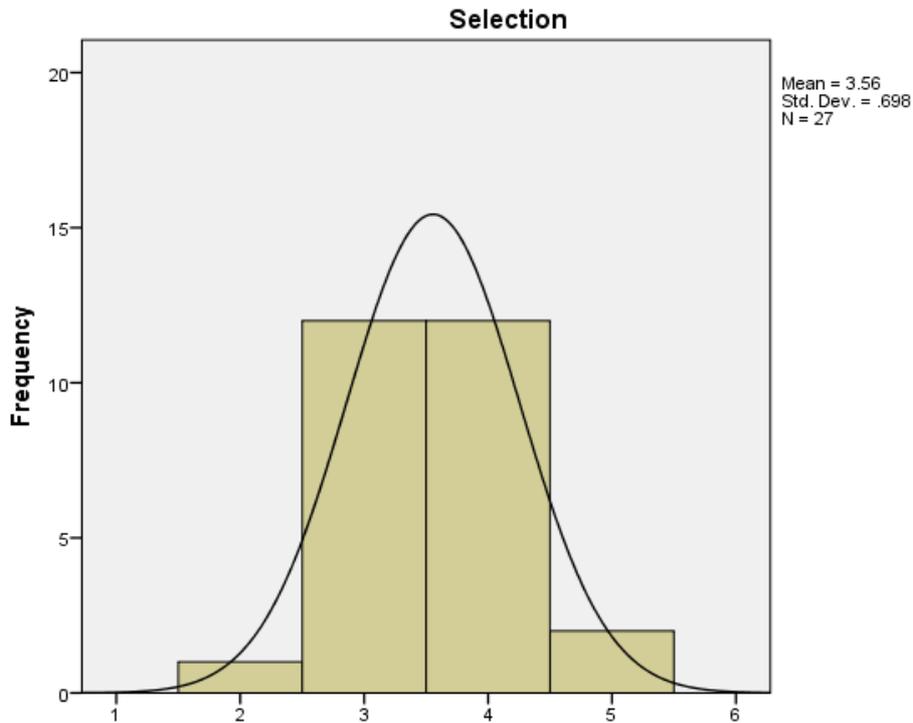


Figure 4.10: Selection Histogram

As can be seen from the selection histogram (Figure 4.10), none of the expatriates rated the selection process as being Very Poor and only 3.7% rated the service as being Poor. This should not be raising concerns, as the majority of the expatriates think that the selection process is either Fair or Good. In fact, the 7.4% of the expatriates that think the process is Very Good actually caused the graph to be slightly skewed towards the Good rating. This is supported by the fact that the average (mean) rating received is 3.56, which is between Good and Very Good (but more towards the Very Good side by 0.06). The standard deviation of about 0.7 indicates that the spread of the responses received from the expatriates is fairly constant around the mean; in other words, the expatriates rated the selection process as being Fair.

Based on the literature review, the HR department is responsible for executing the selection process. This effectively means that the organisational variables are informing the selection process and, as a result, the expatriate's levels of satisfaction should not be affected during the selection process. However, we also saw from the

literature review that the selection of a candidate with the correct attributes and skills, including cultural awareness and toughness, is vital for success (Els 2008). These are personal variables. This then means that the expatriate’s personal variables contribute towards their level of satisfaction with the selection process. In fact, the flowchart of Budhwar et al (2009:147) of the selection-decision process (Figure 2.4), makes it clear that the candidate’s willingness to go on expatriation needs to be confirmed. If the candidate is not willing to go, the candidate is probably not suitable for the position.

4.4.3 Expatriate Preparation Process

Table 4.3: Expatriate Preparation Process Results

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the practice for preparing expatriates for their assignment.						
	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Rating Average
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	3.46
Response Rate	0.0%	11.5%	42.3%	34.6%	11.5%	50%
Responses	0	3	11	9	3	26

Table 4.3 is a summary of the results received to the question to indicate the level of satisfaction with the practice for preparing expatriates for their assignment. A total of 26 of 52 respondents responded to the question. This is equal to a 50% response rate. The following results were received: 0% rated the service Very Poor; 11.5% rated service Poor; 42.3% rated service Fair; 34.6% rated service Good; and 11.5% rated the service Very Good. The average rating is 3.46.

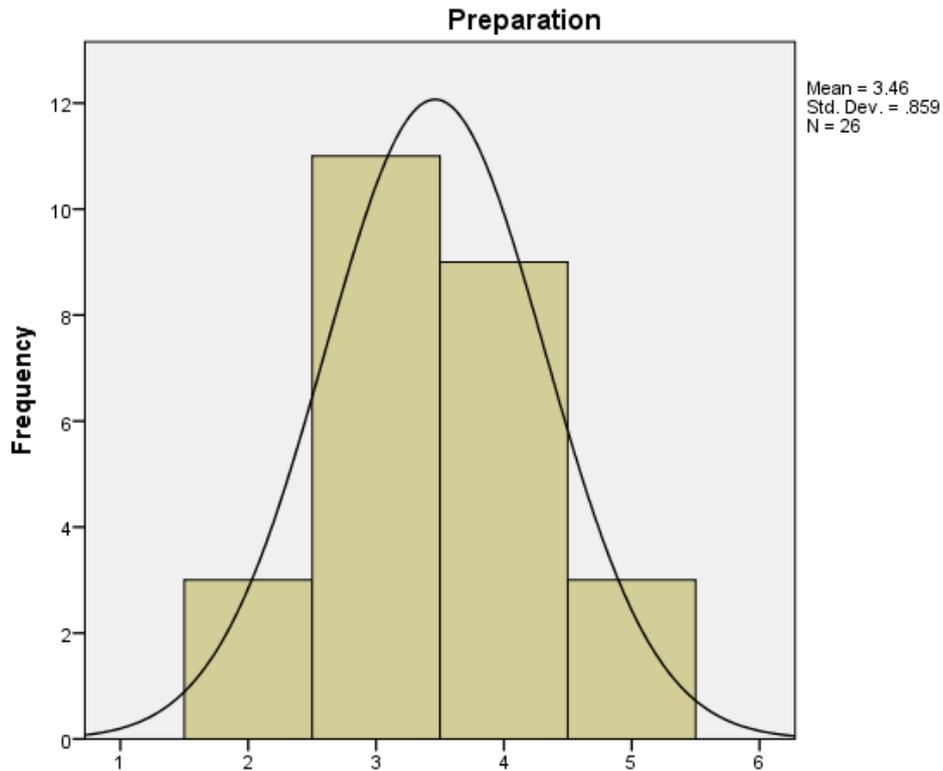


Figure 4.11: Preparation Histogram

Just as for the rating of the selection process, the rating average (mean from Figure 4.11) for the expatriate selection process is above 3 (Fair). This effectively means that the expatriates rate the expatriate selection process at Group Technology as being Fair. However, there are more expatriates who rated the preparation of the expatriates as being Very Good. Another point to note is that the rating of this service is an almost perfect bell curve, with the feet of the curve being Poor and Very Good (both 11.5%) and the middle of the curve being Fair and Good with ratings between 42 and 35%. This is supported by the mean of 3.46. The standard deviation is 0.9, which is showing a bigger spread than the selection process, but is nonetheless still around the mean. This means that the expatriates rated the preparation as being Fair. A Fair rating in general is adequate in the preparation of expatriates. This conclusion is supported by research done by Smith et al. (2011), which found that 62% of the multinational executives described their preparation for their global roles as fair.

4.4.4 Support Given to Expatriates

Table 4.4: Support Given to Expatriates Results

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the support given to expatriates whilst they are on assignment.						
	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Rating Average
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	3.19
Response Rate	7.7%	11.5%	38.5%	38.5%	3.8%	50%
Total Responses	2	3	10	10	1	26

To the request for respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with the support given to expatriates whilst they are on assignment, the expatriates responded as follows:

As can be seen from Table 4.4, a total 26 of 52 expatriates responded to the questionnaire. This is equal to a 50% response rate. The results show that 7.7% of the respondents rated the support received whilst on assignment as being Very Poor; 11.5% rated the service as Poor; and 38.5% rated the support as Fair. The support was rated as being Good by 38.5% of the respondents and 3.8% rated the support received as being Very Good.

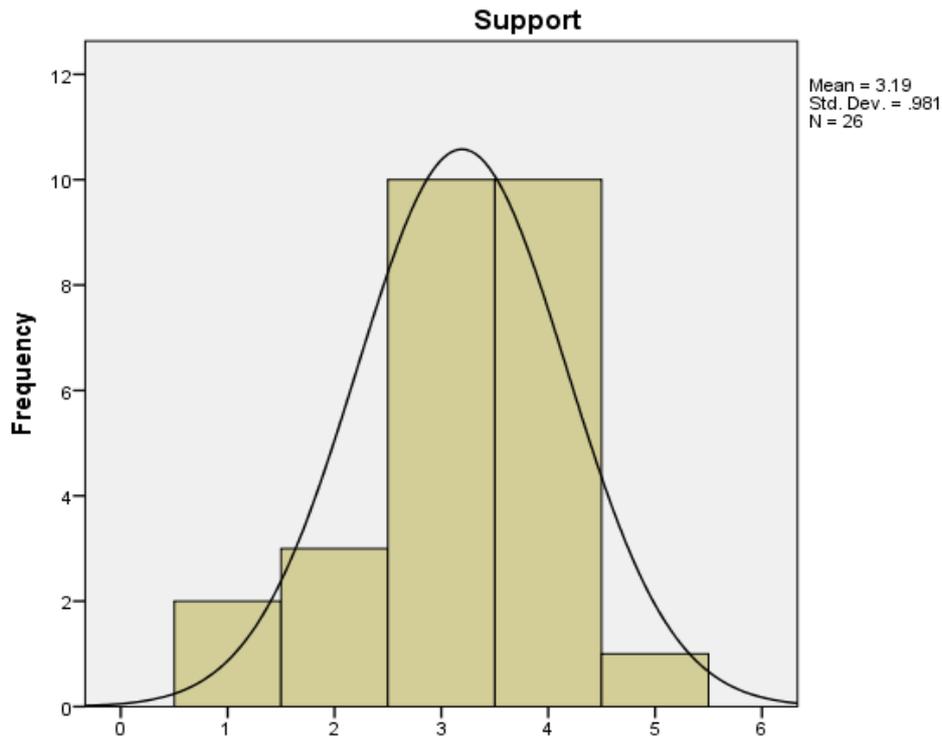


Figure 4.12: Support Histogram

Beitler (2005) states that ongoing expatriate support is necessary for success. Beitler also adds that the expatriate manager will need to acquire additional knowledge, skills and attitude training through face-to-face counselling after arriving in the host country. This suggests that support is crucial in the host country, both at work and within the social space. Close to 20% (7.7% + 11.5%) of the expatriates rated the support they received on internal assignment as being Poor to Very Poor. Due to the importance of support (the lack of which can result in expatriate failure), a Fair rating can also not be an acceptable rating. The overall number of respondents that gave negative ratings (Very Poor, Poor and Fair) is 57.7% – this is more than half the expatriate community at Group Technology. This state of affairs is further negated by the fact that only one out of 26 expatriates (3.8%) rated the service as being Very Good. The average rating (mean from Figure 4.12) is 3.19 (Fair). This is not a true reflection of the actual state of affairs; the rating has been increased by the Good rating that received 38.5%. The standard deviation of around 1 indicates a bigger spread than the selection and preparation ratings. The spread is more towards the Very Poor, Poor and Fair side of Figure 4.12.

4.4.5 Repatriation Process

Table 4.5: Repatriation Process Results

Please rate the Repatriation process at Group Technology.						
	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Rating Average
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	3.05
Response Rate	0.0%	23.8%	52.4%	19.0%	4.8%	40.4%
Total Responses	0	5	11	4	1	21

The results to the question to rate the repatriation process at Group Technology are summarised in Table 4.5. A total of 21 out of 52 responses were received to the question. This is equal to a 40.4% response rate. Some 23.8% of the respondents rated the repatriation process as being Poor; 52.4% rated the process Fair; 19% Good and 4.8% Very Good.

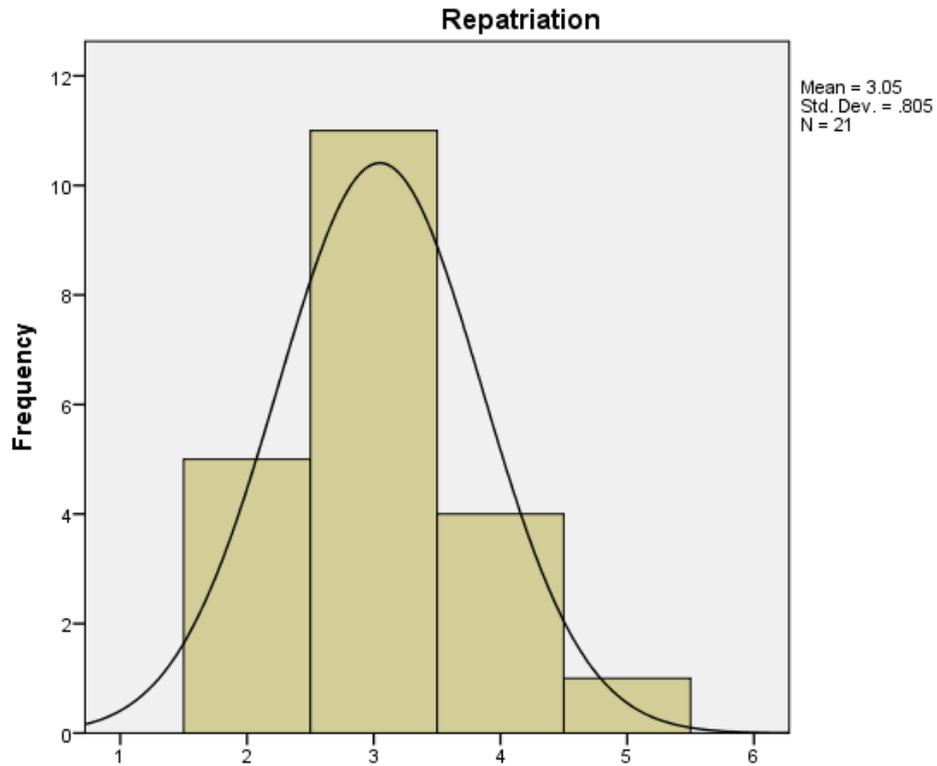


Figure 4.13: Repatriation Histogram

It is expected that the response rate will be lower for the repatriates as most employees were still on assignment by the time of the research. However, there are a number of expatriates who have gone through the repatriation process and have responded accordingly. This is the reason why 21 responses were received when there are only seven expatriates at the time of the research.

An overwhelming amount of expatriates rated their level of satisfaction with the repatriation process as being Fair. In fact, taking the responses received for the Fair rating out of the equation and adding up the responses, we get the exact same amount – 23.8% or five responses on either side. From Figure 4.13 the mean is almost exactly 3, further supporting the Fair rating of the service. The standard deviation of 0.8 also supports the Fair rating, as the spread is fairly narrow around the Fair rating.

4.4.6 Summary of the Satisfaction Levels Ratings

The expatriates rated the selection process as being Fair. The Fair and Good ratings received equal amounts of responses. The overall Fair rating is based on the average (mean) rating. The satisfaction levels of the expatriated with the preparation process are rated as being Fair. Quite a number of them also rated the process as being Good. As with the selection process, the expatriates' level of satisfaction with the support they receive from Group Technology are also rated as being Fair, even though both the Fair and Good ratings received equal responses. The same rating (Fair) was received for the repatriation process.

The levels of satisfaction were rated as being Fair for all four stages of the expatriate cycle executed at Group Technology. In order to fully understand this Fair rating, the variables affecting the expatriates' levels of satisfaction need to be evaluated and feedback received from them in this regard.

4.5 *Variables informing satisfaction ratings*

4.5.1 Introduction

Two questions were included in the questionnaire to give specifics on the ratings given by the expatriates. These specifics will help exploring which variables contribute to expatriate satisfaction among expatriates and repatriates. By identifying these key variables contributing to expatriate and repatriate preparation at Group Technology, management of the expatriate/repatriate process can be improved. As these questions relate to the expatriates, only personal variables will be identified.

The questions explore what the expatriates find most difficult about their host country, and attempts to determine what the biggest obstacles were that they and their families had experienced when settling into the foreign country. The qualitative questions were grouped together and, as a result, are reported on per expatriate cycle stage, rather than per question.

- Question 1: What did you find most difficult about your host country?
- Question 2: What were the biggest obstacles that your family experienced when settling into the foreign country?

The answers were categorised according to the four stages of the expatriate cycle, i.e. selection, preparation, support and repatriation. The responses to these questions are compiled into tables presented in Appendix B.

4.5.2 Selection

Based on the themes observed for the selection stage, 1.9% of the responses were recorded. Only one family-related issue was received from the expatriates. The issue raised was around the absence of family on assignment:

“Family and friends are in Houston (entire immediate family on both sides are in JHB, and we are a close-knit family).”

4.5.3 Preparation

The primary objective of the research is to determine Group Technology employees' preparedness for expatriation and repatriation. Appendix A lists the results and a summary of the factors the expatriates highlighted in addition to the satisfaction ratings of the preparation process. Together, these should allow for a proper evaluation of the expatriates' preparedness for placement on international assignment.

The overall response for the culture dimension is made up of culture, language and food. The overall number of expatriates that raised concerns in this regard is 49%. The language theme made up 33% of the 49% and, as result, the most concerns were raised around the language theme. This is by far the most difficult aspect for the expatriates in their host countries. Because of the language barrier, the expatriates find it difficult to gain access to basic services. Most of the responses relate to the social environment and not much has been said about the work

environment. With 10% of the 49% of the total culture concerns, food is another problem for the expatriates. The food-related problems can be summarised into two main categories: access to food (relating back to the language issue) and the types of foodstuffs available. The remaining 6% around culture-related concerns relates to racism, the lifestyle in the host country, and actual cultural differences.

The last two themes of family and weather can be combined together, as most of the expatriates raised the one in the context of the other. Family-related concerns account for 17%, and those that relate to weather account for 4%. The expatriates find the adjustment to the new weather conditions difficult to cope with. This is especially true for the families of the expatriates. Group Technology is based at the southern tip of Africa in an area that has a higher average temperature than most (if not all) of the host countries. This results in them struggling to acclimatise to the weather conditions in the host country, where the temperatures are much lower than the home country. The seasons are also a contributing factor, as different seasons are experienced between the southern and northern hemispheres. Some expatriates mentioned loneliness, missing family members and not having friend in the host country as something they find difficult to deal with.

4.5.4 Support

This is one of the stages of the expatriate cycle that received quite a number of responses. A lot of issues were raised against it. These issues can be summarised as being issues that relate to support (or the lack thereof) from HR, which accounted for 13% of the responses; orientation in the host country; and culture training (or the lack thereof) accounted for the remaining 20%.

4.5.5 Summary

As identified in the literature, the variables can be summarised under three variable types: person (or individual), organisational and environmental variables. Cross-cultural suitability in the host country is one of the person-related variables identified by the expatriates. This applies to both the social and work environments. Country-specific cultural training requirements have been identified as concerns. Language

has also been identified as a concern – it is one of the key concerns and has been identified a major adjustment driver in the host country.

Having identified the personal variables, below follows a discussion that puts the results received from the satisfaction result into perspective. This is done by using these quantitative findings (variables) and associating them with each satisfaction level result received in order to give meaning to the satisfaction results.

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 Expatriate/Repatriate Preparation

Are Group Technology's employees adequately prepared for expatriation and repatriation? This is the second research question and in order to answer this question, certain objectives have to be met. The objective of this research question was to identify key variables contributing to expatriate and repatriate preparation at Group Technology. This was done by means of a grounded theory investigation. This section uses the results obtained, the findings and the identified variables, and discusses the preparation at Group Technology.

Three types of variables were identified in the theory, namely personal (or individual), organisational and environmental variables. Only the personal and organisational variables are discussed. The environmental variables are discussed in the context of the latter two variables.

Theory identified the following variables for the selection of an expatriate: The expatriate candidate's personal variables are influenced by the desire for an international career; the expatriate's interpersonal capability; and that the expatriate must have the technical capability to deliver. These variables are in line with the organisational variables, which are mainly the need to have the right expatriate in the right position, resulting in a successful assignment. The repatriates, on the other hand, have certain expectations which are part of their personal variables. These include being put on a repatriation programme, salary and a level increase. In response to these factors, the organisation-encouraged individual proactive

strategies, along with organisation-sponsored programmes, can be instituted to meet these personal variables that influence the repatriation process. These can be listed as being the organisational repatriation variables. Both the organisational variables and personal variables inform the selection process and, as a result, the expatriate's levels of satisfaction should be affected by both during the selection process.

The personal variables are:

- Technical ability;
- Cross-cultural suitability;
- Family requirements;
- Country-specific cultural requirements;
- Multi-national enterprises requirements; and
- Language.

The organisational variables are:

- A working expatriate policy;
- The right person in the right position;
- The candidate's willingness to go on assignment;
- The candidate's suitability; and
- The candidate's fit with the host environment and when to start or stop orientation.

For the preparation of the expatriate, there is not much that the expatriate can do other than to participate in the organisation's expatriate preparation programme. So, the personal variables would be expectations that the organisation will set up a proper preparation programme that will ensure maximum success once deployed on assignment. The variables the organisation needs to consider is the establishment of an expatriate preparation programme so that the expatriates can be equipped with practical knowledge like pre-departure visits; assistance with arranging foreign currency; assisting with finding housing and schooling for children; taking the expatriate on post-arrival orientation; home country social support and general counselling.

The support given to expatriates may lead to job adjustment and job satisfaction on international assignment. The support from expatriates and the host community also helps to facilitate the new expatriate's general adjustment. The organisation has a responsibility to ensure that a proper support structure for expatriates – and later, repatriates – is in place. This includes:

- Support for work;
- Mentoring;
- Support for living;
- Defining culture shock;
- Recognising and coping with culture shock;
- Reverse culture shock; and
- Debriefing.

The personal variables mainly involve the cooperation that the expatriate and their family need to give the organisation in order to receive support. The expectation from the expatriates with regard to support is for the organisation to play a pivotal role in assisting their families to find their feet in the new country and providing social support, information and guidance. Putting in place Human Resources policies and procedures will lead an organisation to both being efficient in managing its human resources globally and encouraging more employees to accept foreign transfers. The organisation needs to be prepared to offer support whenever the expatriate calls upon the organisation to do so.

Repatriation should be seen as the final link in an integrated, circular process that connects good selection and cross-cultural training of expatriate managers with completion of their term abroad and reintegration into their national organisation. The expatriate will experience reverse culture shock and debriefing. The aspects that will affect the repatriate, and thereby contribute to the repatriate's preparedness to repatriate, are as follows:

- Financial benefits;

- Cost-of-living expenses;
- Suppliers of domestic help;
- Social life;
- Less power and excitement; and
- Job alienation and a sense of being out of touch with changes at headquarters.

4.6.2 Satisfaction with the Expatriate/Repatriate Process

The third research question deals with the satisfaction levels of the expatriates/repatriates. How does the expatriate process executed at Group Technology influence the level of satisfaction of employees on international assignment? The answer to this question sets an objective that was, by means of quantitative research methods, to explore which variables contribute to the levels of satisfaction among expatriates and repatriates. This section discusses the exploration of the variables in relation to the levels of satisfaction of the expatriates/expatriates.

From the research conducted, the following variables were highlighted by the expatriates as those that influenced their levels of satisfaction.

The expatriates rated the selection process executed at Group Technology as being one that is fair. As this is an HR Department executed process, the personal variables identified in the third research question mostly relate to the variables that the HR Department needs to ensure are in place to secure success. One major personal variable was identified, namely the expatriate candidate's willingness to go on expatriation. Sending an expatriate who is not willing to go on assignment could result in the expatriate not being satisfied with the assignment. There were also biographical variables identified that contributed to the levels of satisfaction among expatriates and repatriates during the selection process at Group Technology. They are:

- The length of the expatriates' contracts, and

- The fact that the expatriates at Group Technology are fairly senior employees.

The expatriates at Group Technology rated the preparation process executed at Group Technology as being one that is fair. This fair rating in general is adequate in the preparation of expatriates. Based on the responses received, the expatriates raised the following variables as those that influenced their levels of satisfaction;

- Support from HR:
 - Lack of assistance in terms of financial readiness, e.g. not having currency;
 - Slow process of executing family-related approvals, e.g. family not having arrived yet; and
 - No upfront contractual certainty, e.g. uncertainty with regard to length of assignment.
- Orientation in host country:
 - Lack of preparation (assistance) with upfront securing of schooling for children; and
 - Lack of preparation with regard to aligning the start of the assignment with the start of the school calendar in the host country.
- Host country-specific cross culture training:
 - Language barrier and basic communication;
 - Cultural differences (food, etc.);
 - Social lifestyle; and
 - Culture (and racism).

The expatriates rated the support process executed at Group Technology as being one that is fair, and the following variables were raised as being those that influenced their satisfaction:

- Host country-specific cross-culture:
 - Language difference (both social and, to a lesser extent, at work);
 - Availability and access to food and domestic products;
 - Weather; and
 - Family.
- Support from HR:

- Sasol's Mobility Office;
- Lack of support systems, both in terms of settling in and (social) orientation;
- No consistent application of the expatriate policy;
- Late approvals of assignment; and
- Lack of spousal or partner support.
- Orientation in host country:
 - Lack of support systems in terms of settling in, e.g. where to get what;
 - Schools; and
 - Loneliness and time difference.

The expatriates rated the repatriate process executed at Group Technology as being one that is fair. No repatriation variables were identified that had an influence on the satisfaction levels of the repatriates. However, the listed variables identified in the literature review could have been considered by the repatriates when they rated the repatriate process.

The aspects that will affect the repatriates and thereby contribute to their preparedness to repatriate, are as follows:

- Financial benefits;
- Cost-of-living expenses;
- Suppliers of domestic help;
- Social life;
- Less power and excitement; and
- Job alienation and a sense of being out of touch with changes at headquarters.

4.6.3 Conclusion

The discussion revealed that of the three types of variables that were identified in the theory, only the personal and organisational variables are relevant to the

expatriate/repatriates at Group Technology. The variables that affect the expatriates/repatriates are in line with those identified in other literature. These are the variables the expatriates took in consideration in rating the expatriate process at Group Technology. The expatriates/repatriates rated all the expatriate processes as being fair. This fair rating that was drawn from the responses received from the expatriates is discussed in depth in the chapter below.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This section serves to bring the findings together and conclude using the primary and secondary objectives as a framework to do so. The conclusions represent inferences drawn from the findings and will be discussed here. First the conclusion drawn from the study will be presented. Based on the conclusions, recommendations will be presented followed by the opportunities identified for further research.

5.2 Conclusions

The problem stated above gave rise to the objectives of the research and the findings based thereon in order to draw conclusions for the research. According to the theory, the expatriate cycle consists of four stages, or what other researchers call phases: the selection, preparation, support (in the host country) and repatriation of the employee back to the home country. The research questions have been discussed in relation to each one of these stages. Thus, each stage's variables have been identified and discussed accordingly.

Understanding of the expatriates needs to be established in order to provide context for when the variables affecting the expatriates are discussed. From the biographical information, a huge gender disparity was observed among Group Technology's expatriate/repatriate community. There is a one in three ratio of male and female expatriates. Gender as a factor has an impact on expatriate adjustment and, as a result, could affect the expatriate's level of satisfaction. It is then expected that this should be especially true for women, who are in the minority.

Approximately 85% of the expatriate community at Group Technology is married or has a partner. One would assume that unmarried candidates would be selected, as they have career aspirations internationally and have lesser family responsibilities. This, unfortunately, is not the case, as most of the multinational companies actually select married / partnered employees for international assignment.

In Group Technology's case, proprietary technology is being implemented on international projects and, as a result, senior managers (the entire specialist career

ladder) have this responsibility. These are typically employees in the 25-34 age range. By virtue of their age and marital status (see above analysis), most expatriates who have children took their children with them on assignment.

The average expatriate assignment is two years at Group Technology. This is found to be in line with international trends. Five- to seven-year contracts were observed in rare cases. These lengthy assignments can have an impact on the expatriates' levels of satisfaction. This impact will not be negative for a short stay, as observed with the U-Curve, which identified the first few months of an assignment as being a honeymoon stage. However, a longer assignment will expose the expatriate to all the U-Curve stages, which include a culture shock, among others. It is on this basis that it can be concluded that the length of stay contributes to the expatriate's level of satisfaction. Because of the seniority of these expatriates on Group Technology assignments, it was observed that their levels of satisfaction decreased because of the responsibility placed on them.

The expatriates highlighted areas of support they find difficulty with. One of these is access to basic services, which 20% of the expatriates highlighted as a concern. The language issue is a major contributor to this problem. The South African Rand is not one of the strongest currencies in the world and, as a result, the perception of the individual when shopping is that they are paying too much for a commodity – hence some highlighted the fact that things are expensive in some host countries. Expatriates also raised logistical issues. These relate to merely moving around, going to work and “knowing where what is”. The school calendar and the compatibility (or incompatibility) of the schooling systems in the host countries with that of the home country were also raised. Boredom has also been raised as an issue the expatriates find difficulty dealing with.

A number of difficulties have been identified by the expatriates when they were asked about the biggest obstacles. The difficulties mainly revolve around the preparation and support stages of the expatriate cycle. Some of the difficulties experienced include a lack of assistance to access foreign currency; delays around getting family members to the host country; and culturally related issues such as language. All these are issues that need to be dealt with during the preparation stage

of the expatriate cycle. In terms of those difficulties which relate to the support stage of the expatriate cycle, the expatriates explicitly mentioned Sasol's mobility office; the constantly changing expatriate policy; and the lack of support for family members.

5.3 Summary of Conclusions

Based on the research findings, in summary, Group Technology expatriates:

- Are mostly within the specialist fields (senior managers);
- Are mainly males who are married/partnered;
- Normally take their family members with them on assignments;
- Have an age range between 25 and 34 years; and
- Are mostly on two-year contracts, of which most of them have completed one year already.

The expatriate's levels of satisfaction with all four expatriate/repatriate processes at Group Technology is rated fair on a five-point scale that ranges from Very Poor to Very Good.

5.4 Recommendations

The recommendations discussed here are not recommendations on how to improve future research in this regard, but are recommendations to Group Technology's senior management and the Human Resources Department. These recommendations are mainly on how to improve the management of the expatriation and repatriation process at Group Technology. The objective here was to identify possible guidelines that can be used for the inclusion in the preparation of expatriates and repatriates at Group Technology for improved expatriate and repatriate management. There is already a process in place to facilitate the placement of employees on international assignment and returning them back to the home country at Group Technology. These recommendations should be seen as

possible guidelines that can be used for the inclusion in the preparation of expatriates and repatriates.

Group Technology should assist the expatriate/repatriate in identifying, leasing or buying a residence for the expatriate/repatriate. This assistance should extend to include the arrangement of utility bills and any other local authority requirements needed. For expatriates with a partner on international assignment, Group Technology should be involved in the settling in of the partner as well. This means ensuring that any work-related issues the partner has are addressed, as well as non-work related aspects such as ensuring the partner is kept busy during the day. The same applies to expatriates with children of school-going age. Information about the schools and the schooling system in the host country should be provided to the expatriate/repatriate. This must include the facilitation of the registration process with the relevant school, club memberships, and any other aspect that requires registration. All of these must be arranged before the expatriate/repatriate relocates.

Country-specific cultural training needs to be arranged for every employee. The training must include the partner and the children – both those that will remain in the home country and those that will go on assignment. This is to cater for a situation where they will need to either join the expatriate or go on a visit at a later stage. Training should include a high-level introduction to the expatriate policy. Feedback received from some expatriates indicates that they feel they are being treated differently. Perhaps there is a valid reason why this is the case; the expatriate's understanding the policy will ensure that the expatriate is aware of their rights and possibly why they are treated differently.

A pre-visit should to be arranged for at least the expatriate. This visit must include a tour of the area where they will be working and living. This time can also be used to open bank accounts and related services.

For orientation purposes, an expatriate should to be put into contact with expatriates already in the host country. This kind of support will help the expatriate settle in.

The intelligence around the expatriate management process can be improved. The expatriate database needs to be refined to be able to give an informative snapshot

view of the expatriates. As an example, it should give details on the expatriate's biographical details; the type of assignment they are on (long-term, short-term, training, etc.); the start and end dates of the assignment; the length of the assignment already covered, etc.

It is important for the expatriates to clarify their expectations and their motives during the selection and preparation stages. By doing so, room for disappointment and dissatisfaction at a later stage will be minimised or avoided altogether.

A feedback process would be beneficial to Group Technology. Debriefing the repatriate and the capturing of lessons learned could improve the entire process tremendously. It is recommended that debriefing be instituted if it is not currently part of the expatriate process.

Lastly, the repatriates and their partner and children should attend a repatriate seminar. This will help with settling back into the home country. Those who will be expatriated to other countries and not back to the home country should be taken through the entire expatriate process again.

A process needs to be constantly updated in order to stay relevant. Hence the implementation of these recommendations should not be seen as having optimally improved the expatriate process at Group Technology. It is against this background that further research is crucial in the process of continual improvement.

5.5 Further Research

This research dealt with the satisfaction levels of the expatriates only. Further research needs to be done into reasons why there is a fair rating for all the stages of the expatriate cycle at Group Technology. Two qualitative questions were asked to the expatriates to identify the variables influencing their satisfaction with the expatriate process at Group Technology, and the responses received are not in line with the fair rating. This then warrants an in-depth research into the expatriate/repatriate process.

Research shows that women settle in more easily (higher adjustment rate) than men on international assignments. Research needs to be done as to why men are selected more often than women for international assignment. The researcher understands that Group Technology's workforce is reflective of this trend; however, such research will probably provide answers to how to reverse this trend.

The sample must include expatriates who left Group Technology's employment. Access to these ex-employees – or at least access to the exit interviews – will provide an understanding of the extent to which the personal and organisational variables influence the turnover of expatriates and identify the causes thereof.

Further research can be done into the maturity of Sasol's expatriate policies compared to its peers. Group Technology (on behalf of Sasol) only recently entered the international market and, as a result, benchmarking their expatriate policies (and processes) would be beneficial to them.

5.6 Conclusion

The main objective of the research was to investigate the expatriation and repatriation process of employees at Group Technology. This then resulted in a problem statement that Group Technology employees are not adequately prepared for expatriation to and repatriation from long-term international assignments, leading to delays; cross-cultural tension; career uncertainty issues; decrease in productivity; and ultimately, resignations. This section concluded the field study and contains recommendations to senior management and the Human Resources Department, conclusions and opportunities for further study in this regard.

In summary, the expatriates and repatriates rated Group Technology's expatriate process as being fair across the board. This fair rating has been proven to be comparable with multi-national companies in all regions. A few issues (affected variables) were raised by some expatriates. These can be seen as teething problems that can be addressed by the recommendation made in this chapter. The recommendations could further be enhanced by exploring the opportunities for further research that has also been identified in this research.

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Appendix A

Authorisation Letter



Zweli Matrose
UFS Business School
2014

To: Flam van Rooyen, VP Human Resources, Group Technology

Dear Sir

**PERMISSION TO CONTACT EXPATRIATES AND REPATRIATES
FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES**

My name is Zweli Matrose, a permanent employee of Sasol – Group Technology. I am on an MBA programme (Sasol sponsored) at the University of the Free State's Business School in Bloemfontein. I am currently busy with my field study thesis. The topic of the thesis relates to expatriation and repatriation.

The purpose of my study is to conduct the levels of satisfaction with the expatriation and repatriation process; and once in the host country, the levels of satisfaction with how challenges faced on international assignment are dealt with - this is the support given by Group Technology to the expatriate. Based on the results, I will highlight certain areas in the expatriate/repatriation process that need improvement (if any).

I developed a questionnaire that I will use as an information gathering tool. It is a simple and unstructured survey that you will be asked to complete. The questionnaire is to be completed and returned to me. Once done, I will ensure that you receive a copy of my findings.

Yours Sincerely
Zweli Matrose

The Questionnaire

1. Organisational and Biographical information

In this section, please tick the box that applies to you

1. What is your current Title?

- *Vice President/General Manager*
- *Senior Manager*
- *Manager*
- *Head of*
- *Lead Specialist*
- *Principal Specialist*
- *Senior Specialist*
- *Specialist*
- *Analyst*
- *Advisor*
- *Other – Specify your title: _____*

2. My GENDER is?

- *Male*
- *Female*

3. My marital status is?

- *Married/Partner*
- *Unmarried*

4. The number of Children

- *0*
- *1*
- *2*
- *3*
- *4*
- *Other – specify : _____*

5. My HOME country is?

- *Specify :* _____

6. My HOST country is? (Country you have been assigned to)?

- *Specify :* _____

7. What is the length of your assignment? (in years)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- *Other – specify :* _____

8. What is the length of your assignment already completed? (in years)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- *Other – specify :* _____

9. My AGE range is?

- 18 - 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44

- 45 – 54
- 55 – 65
- Other – Specify your title: _____

2. Expatriate Selection Criteria

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the Selection Process of Expatriates (1 = Very Poor, 3 = fair, 5 = Very Good)

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good

3. Family

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the practice for Preparation Expatriates for their assignment (1 = Very Poor, 3 = fair, 5 = Very Good)

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good

4. Expatriate Support systems and mechanisms

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the practice of Managing Expatriates whilst they are on assignment (1 = Very Poor, 3 = fair, 5 = Very Good)

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good

5. Repatriation

Please rate the Repatriation process at Group Technology

(1 = Very Poor, 3 = fair, 5 = Very Good)

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good

Appendix B

Quantitative Questions

- **Question 1:**

What were the biggest obstacles that your family experienced when settling into the foreign country?

- **Question 2:**

What did you find most difficult about your host country?

Results of Quantitative Questions

Answers to: ***What were the biggest obstacles that your family experienced when settling into the foreign country?***

Number	Response Text	Categorisation
1	Not much.	
2	Language Nothing happens quickly in Italy, basic services are an effort	Preparation & Support
3	language and their "late night" lifestyle	Preparation
4	Lack of luxury food stuffs and wine not serious but you miss it	Preparation
5	Language barrier and local food.	Preparation
6	No real big difficulties experienced	All
7	Very little, although family struggles with weather.	Preparation
8	Not knowing anyone	
9	Language	Preparation
10	Language difference	Preparation
11	Language	Preparation
12	Language	Preparation
13	Language	Preparation
14	1. Family and friends not there. 2. Houston is hot and flat.	Preparation
15	- Weather - Expensive - Not a lot of things to do	Preparation & Support
16	Getting to know where is what - driving - getting to know the informal rules	Support
17	nothing really.	

18	The school year is different to that of South Africa and it the school curriculum grade wise is ahead of that of South Africa. My daughter had just started grade 1 in South Africa but still could not read. In the host country kids start reading before Kinder. Worse we arrived in the USA in March which was towards of the school year so my daughter and my son had to be placed a grade back. It was nevertheless the best decision I made.	Preparation & Support
19	food and buying things	Preparation
20	Travel to work time. Working hours.	Support
21	The food was not similar to what we eat here in SA.	Preparation
22	Culture and social structures that exist due to race or nationality	Preparation
23	Language difficulty to do the basic things	Preparation
24	Availability of food	Preparation
25	The range and Availability of domestic products	Preparation

Answers to: *Answers to: What did you find most difficult about your host country?*

Number	Response Text	Categorisation
1	N/A	N/A
2	My wife found it difficult to continue her career in the host country as the requirements are different.	Support & Preparation
3	Sasol's Mobility Office Getting basic admin sorted. Utilities, where to shop, doctors, etc	Support
4	Not having Euros and language	Support & Preparation
5	We are very experienced Expats hence no issues	
6	Family is not here yet	Preparation
7	Always had to do everything ourselves, no support. Had to source accommodation, furniture. First assignment in we were not give a car, even if was so catered for in the policy. I had to buy my own car. I was granted only a very insignificant amount for transport. Other employees that came later got more than double the transport allowance than what I received	Support
8	Lack of support system, distance from family, may new things	Support
9	N/A	
10	Language	Preparation
11	language barrier immediate high work load due to late approvals of assignment uncertainty with regards to length of assignment	Support & Preparation
12	Schooling for children and the difference in the SA vs International school year	Preparation
13	expat policies always changing language barrier	Preparation
14	Language barrier and basic communication	Preparation
15	Family and friends on in Houston (entire immediate family on both sides are in JHB, and we are a close knit family).	Selection
16	Schools	Support
17	Being on single status - no support in the host country. Had to work and sort out personal life	Support

18	Loneliness	Support
19	None	N/A
20	Cultural differences, language differences and distance from home	Preparation
21	Figuring out new bureaucracy and the way systems work	Support
22	Lifestyle Food Time difference	Support
23	Culture and racism	Preparation
24	Language barrier in Seoul	Preparation
25	The Environment, The Language	Preparation
26	My wife having to adjust to long hours of being on her own during the day and having to spend nights alone in a foreign country	Support