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Title	Repatriation adjustment among foreign assignees at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland – Implications for repatriation training		
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Abstract

Mainstream expatriation research has largely been dominated by research on business expatriates, who, despite of the enormous scholarly attention, represent only a fraction of the experience imported from abroad. Using business sector literature as a stepping stone this study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the experiences of public sector expatriates. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland provided a fruitful soil for deeper exploration of the subject since its assignees' rotational form of international service represents in many respects unique type of expatriation experience.

Since both the Ministry and the earlier scholars perceived the repatriation adjustment of the expatriates as a topical concern, the purpose of this study was to *analyze the repatriation adjustment of the assignees of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland to derive implications for developing a repatriation training program at the Ministry*. The purpose of the study was approached by formulating the following three sub-objectives: to identify critical dimensions of the repatriate adjustment process of the foreign assignees at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, to find out how the repatriation adjustment process of the foreign assignees can be facilitated by a post-return repatriation training programme, and finally, to explore how the adjustment back home is reflected upon the assignees' willingness to be relocated abroad in the future.

Due to the novelty of the organization as a research target a qualitative research approach was applied in this study. Specifically, seven (7) semi-structured interviews were conducted among the diplomatic officials and chancery secretaries of the MFA.

Research findings suggest that partly different or novel issues surface as critical for the repatriation adjustment of the officials. Firstly, the career and skill utilization issues were not far as critical as non-work factors for the officials' adjustment. Not previously found facilitating elements were co-worker support and previous repatriation and expatriation experiences. Further, financial issues seem to be a major source of dissatisfaction during the re-adjustment for this sub-group. As for the repatriation training, MFA should pay more attention to communicating the available support for the repatriates. Informational support should be provided already prior to return. By providing necessary information, officials should be given the possibility to incrementally adjust to the new financial reality. Whilst discussing the psychological challenges of repatriation the assignees could particularly benefit from peer support sessions. The concerns of the children and the foreign spouses should be particularly addressed within the training. Finally, an up-to-date overview of the organizational structure and processes should be included in the program.

Key words	adjustment, expatriate, Finnish, training, public sector
Further information	