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# Guest editorial

## Global HRM: aspects of a research agenda

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper introduces this special issue.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper examines some of the key themes in global human resource management.

**Findings** – By reviewing, briefly, the existing literature in these areas, the paper outlines a limited but crucial research agenda and sets the papers in this special issue in context.

**Originality/value** – This paper presents some new empirically-based work on human resource development.

**Keywords** Human resource management, Globalization, Careers, Knowledge management, Expatriates

**Paper type** Literature review

### Introduction

According to Black and Ulrich (1999), the role of the human resources (HR) professional in delivering global strategy is to:

- raise, define, and clarify the capabilities required to win globally; and
- invest, design, and deliver HR-practices that ensure these capabilities.

It is also asserted that, given the critical role of a company's global talent asset base, the role of HR must become more proactive and strategic – HR must become a fully-integrated global business partner (Brake, 1999). A study among HR managers (Roberts *et al.*, 1998) identified three major challenges concerning global human resource management (HRM): getting the right skills to where they are needed easily, spreading up-to-date knowledge and practices throughout the organisation regardless of where they originate, and identifying and developing talent on a global basis.

One special issue of a journal cannot attempt to address all the relevant issues involved here – and even less can an introductory article sensibly attempt to do so. What we have tried instead in this special issue is to bring together some of the latest empirically based research in two of the areas identified by Roberts *et al.*: developing talent and knowledge transfer, focusing on the experience of expatriation[1].

What we will attempt to cover in this introduction are some of the key areas of global HRM linked to these themes and starting from the international strategic HRM perspective on globalisation. The key question here is the extent to which companies aim to integrate their HRM practices across countries in order to support the global strategies. From this strategic background, we move on to discuss the development of global leaders, global career management, and global knowledge management and

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transfers as key areas of further research on global HRM. Finally, the articles in this special issue are introduced and connected to this research framework.

### **Strategic global HRM: standardisation versus localisation**

The key debates in the literature concerning HRM in internationally operating organisations have concerned four issues. First, the strategy-structure – configurations of international organisations have been explored by authors such as Doz and Prahalad (1986), Ghoshal and Nohria (1993), Hedlund (1986), and Perlmutter (1969). In general, these typologies denote a move away from hierarchical structures (Birkinshaw and Morrison, 1995) towards network or heterarchical structures (Hedlund, 1986; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989).

Second, authors have explored the differences between domestic and international HRM (Adler and Bartholomew, 1992; Dowling, 1988; Morgan, 1986; Sparrow *et al.*, 2004; Sundaram and Black, 1992). These texts generally indicate the greater complexity and strategic importance of the international role.

A third stream of research has explored the extent of internal consistency versus local isomorphism. These include the degree to which an affiliate is embedded in the local environment; the strength of the flow of resources such as capital, information and people between the parent and the affiliate; and the characteristics of the parent, such as the culture of the home country (Brewster *et al.*, 2004; Evans *et al.*, 2002; Schuler *et al.*, 1993). Typically, multinational corporations (MNCs) are seen as important disseminators of HRM practices and innovations in work organisations (Walsh, 2001).

Interest in a standardisation approach has been increasing recently due to the globalisation of the business. Global integration is becoming a competitive necessity in a number of markets in which decentralised strategies were dominant in the past (Evans *et al.*, 2002). Johansson (2000) states that there are four groups of variables that propel companies towards globalisation: markets, competition, cost and government (e.g. trade policies, technical standards). The literature tends to imply, in its use of terms such as global strategy a focus on similarities, standardisation, homogenisation, concentration, and coordination on a worldwide basis (Brake, 1999; Sparrow *et al.*, 2004; Svensson, 2001). There are strong pressures to adapt global strategies in many fields of industries. The realisation of such strategies in turn typically requires higher levels of global integration of key HRM processes.

Empirically, the HRM practices that are found in MNC subsidiaries have been analysed in a number of studies (e.g. Beechler and Yang, 1994; Björkman and Ehrnrooth, 1999; Dickmann 2003; Ervasti and Suutari, forthcoming; Ferencikova, 2000; Namazie, 2003; Rosenzweig and Nohria, 1994; Scullion, 1999; Sparrow *et al.*, 2004; Tayeb, 1998; Walsh, 2001). It appears clear that, of all the management domains, HRM is the most sensitive to local context (Rosenzweig and Nohria, 1994).

Evans and Doz (1992) and Evans and Genardy (1999) have pointed to the importance of balancing these two perspectives. Thus, many MNCs aim toward higher level of integration of HRM practices, while attempting to gain the benefits of responsiveness to the local culture, legislation and traditions (Sparrow *et al.*, 2004). Black and Ulrich (1999) state that the first critical capability that enables firms to integrate global activities appropriately while also separating and adapting local activities effectively is being able to determine what belongs to the core of the organisation and what does not. Issues that belong to the core of a business generally relate to principles that give the firm its identity and issues, which are important to customers. This core should be integrated

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and standardised throughout worldwide operations. According to Evans *et al.* (2002), global integration does not mean centralisation of all aspects of a company's operations, but may be limited to a particular product, function, or value chain segment.

Finally, a fourth, and for our purposes very relevant, approach to research in this area has examined how MNCs approach the staffing and management of their subsidiaries. Thus, Perlmutter (1969) and Heenan and Perlmutter (1979) developed a typology of organisations based on the dominance of headquarters thinking. These classifications have been criticised (see e.g. Mayrhofer and Brewster, 1996; Myloni, 2002; Rosenzweig and Nohria, 1994; Scholz, 1993), but they have provided valuable indicators for defining the predominant approach to international HRM (IHRM) within an international organisation and have been reflected in other typologies (see e.g. Adler and Ghadar, 1990).

There have been attempts to offer integrative frameworks for the study and understanding of strategic IHRM (SIHRM), which include both exogenous and endogenous factors (Schuler *et al.*, 1993). The exogenous factors cover such factors as industry characteristics and technology, the nature of competitors and the extent of change; and country/regional characteristics such as political, economic and socio-cultural conditions and legal requirements. Endogenous factors concern the structure of international operations, the international orientation of the organisation's headquarters, the competitive strategy being used and the MNC's experience in managing international operations. Taylor *et al.* (1996) applied the resource-based theory of the firm to SIHRM and identified three international HRM orientations – the adaptive, exportive and integrative – to corporate, affiliate and employee group level HR issues, functions, policies and practices. These models demonstrate the complexity of HR decisions in the international sphere and the broad scope of its remit.

Even these integrative models, however, do not fully answer some of the criticisms that have been levelled against the fields of IHRM and SIHRM. These include the following. In much of this literature the political, social, economic, cultural and institutional contexts are treated as simple contingency factors. Models tend to confuse cross-national with cross-cultural differences, which risks confusing what will remain stable and is hard for firms to influence with what firms might be able to standardise with judicious management. The issue of cultural relativity has tempted researchers to focus on the “hard” or “core” HR functional processes. Researchers invoke idealist HRM systems – such as the view of HRM which emphasises what has become known as high performance work systems (HPWS) as a basis of comparison (see e.g. Pfeffer, 1998; Huselid, 1995). The field tends to ignore the subtle ways in which cultural/national difference influence the experienced reality of HRM (Earley and Singh, 2000). The wider convergence-divergence debate tends to assume that the HRM system as a whole converges or remains divergent, rather than considering whether some parts of the overall HR system might be converging, in some regions or geographies, while other parts might be diverging. Moreover, even within a single HR function there might be convergence at one level but divergence at another. An HR function operates at multiple levels including philosophy, policy, programme, practice and process (Schuler, 1992). By contrast, an over-emphasis on comparative factors risks freezing the discourse in terms of national differences. Any analysis of IHRM must consider the range of distinctive national and local solutions to HRM issues with which the firm has to deal and the strategic pressures that make and the firm-level processes through which change and development in IHRM practice is delivered.

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**Global leader development: competencies and development methods**

As an outcome of the adaptation of global strategies, the urgent need to develop leaders with global competencies and perspectives has been widely recognised in the literature (Allredge and Nilan, 2000; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1992; Brake, 1997; Csoka and Hackett, 1998; Conner, 2000; Crotty and Soule, 1997; Gregersen *et al.*, 2000; Neary and O'Grady, 2000; Morrison, 2000; Oddou *et al.*, 2000; Petrick *et al.*, 1999; Rhinesmith, 1996; Roberts *et al.*, 1998; Suutari, 2002). It has been concluded that it is this limitation in HR, not unreliable or inadequate sources of capital, that has become the biggest constraint in most globalisation efforts (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1992). Many companies have a shortage of competent global managers and it has been argued that in future there will even be intensified competition for competent top management talent in international operations in future (Harvey *et al.*, 1999) as well as in top management positions in global organisations (Brake 1997; Gregersen *et al.*, 1998). Equally, a 1998 conference board study among senior managers and HR executives identified developing leaders as the most important HR goal for global business success (Csoka and Hackett, 1998; Conner, 2000).

Although globalisation is not a new phenomenon, global leadership is a nascent field of endeavour and has received much less attention than domestic leadership (Morrison, 2000; Suutari, 2002). In line with this Spreitzer *et al.* (1997) state that the academic research on the predictors of executive success in a global context is scarce, although we have recently seen a rapid increase of literature on global leaders. Much more work needs to be done on essentially every aspect of global leadership, including substantial research needed to understand the link between global leadership competencies and the process for developing global leaders (Morrison, 2000). No consensus exists about what tools to use in this process (Roberts *et al.*, 1998) or how effective such tools are in practice.

The literature on global leadership can be divided into two related tracks:

- (1) that which aims to develop global leader competency frameworks; and
- (2) that which aims to identify development methods which could be used in the development of such competencies.

Several authors have proposed global competency frameworks (for a review see Suutari 2002). These aims became more common in the middle of the 1990s when authors such as Moran and Riesenberger (1994), Rhinesmith (1996), and Brake (1997) proposed their competency frameworks. At that point there was little empirical research evidence presented to support the frameworks. Later more empirically build frameworks have also been suggested by authors such as Gregersen *et al.* (1998), Conner (2000) and Mendenhall and Osland (2002).

As far as the existing competency frameworks are concerned, detailed integrative analysis would be useful in order to form frameworks that fulfil the necessary criteria (Suutari, 2002). Furthermore, the existing competency frameworks need further empirical validation. The fact that the definitions and perceptions of leadership differ among leaders across countries (see, e.g. Bass, 1990; Suutari, 1996) points to the difficulty of attempting to develop generic, global management competencies (McKenna, 1998). McKenna points out that establishing global leadership behaviours based on just North American perceptions will not work. Thus, more research would be necessary among global leaders representing for example European and Asian countries. Through such studies the understanding of the proportion of

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context-specific competencies in contrast to general global competencies could be extended (see Gregersen *et al.* (2000) and see the new tome by House (2004)).

Although the process of developing global leader competencies needs further clarification (Morrison, 2000) and no consensus exists about what tools to use in such a process (Roberts *et al.*, 1998), several development methods are suggested. Typically, these include international assignments, short-term development assignments, international teams, action learning groups/projects/task forces, international training and development programmes, international meetings and forums, and international travel (Suutari, 2002). Still, the research on the developmental aspect is scarce in these areas.

One traditional form of management training, applied in global leader development also, is training and development programmes (Brake *et al.*, 1995; Brake, 1997; Dowling *et al.*, 1999; Gregersen *et al.*, 1998). In order to promote integration, cross-cultural interaction and networking, training groups should include participants of different nationalities and teaching staff from different countries (Leblanc, 1994). It has been recommended that, in order to ensure that the training encourages people to rearrange and stretch their minds, training should be combined with action learning components such as a field-based business projects (Gregersen *et al.*, 1998).

International assignments are typically seen as an even more efficient method than training programmes because of the reality and the length of the experience (Derr, 1993; Gregersen *et al.*, 1998; Oddou *et al.*, 2000; Pucik, 1992; Seibert *et al.*, 1995). If managers address key strategic business issues abroad, the assignments' simultaneous intents are to implement global strategy and to provide learning opportunities for developing a sound understanding of worldwide operations and capabilities (Carpenter *et al.*, 2000; Seibert *et al.*, 1995). Research has focused on the ethnocentric transfer of parent country nationals to foreign locations. Other options, such as the transfer of host-country managers to headquarters for training purposes, and the use of third country nationals, have been studied less (e.g. Harvey *et al.*, 1999; Kets de Vries and Mead, 1992; Roberts *et al.*, 1998). The use of shorter-term development assignments has also been suggested (Dowling *et al.*, 1999; Moynihan, 1993; Pucik, 1992; Roberts *et al.*, 1998) but, again, empirical research has been scarce.

The use of international teams in global leader development appears in the literature also (e.g. Dowling *et al.*, 1999; Gregersen *et al.*, 1998; Roberts *et al.*, 1998; Seibert *et al.*, 1995). Because of the extent of information and integration needs within global organisations, global teams are making and implementing more and more decisions in companies (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1992; Bonache and Cervino, 1997; Brake, 1997; Davison, 1994; Maznevski and DiStefano, 2000; Roberts *et al.*, 1998). From the development point of view, managers gain international experience and learn cross-cultural interaction skills while working in global teams. Similarly, the use of other types of formats such action learning groups/projects/task forces (Brake *et al.*, 1995; Gregersen *et al.*, 1998; Lobel, 1990; Neary and O'Grady, 2000; Odenwald, 1993; Seibert *et al.*, 1995) has also been widely recommended. The aim is to form a multi-cultural team which has a specified set of objectives to be completed in a given time frame, which would have an impact on the total business (Tichy *et al.*, 1992). The intent of such projects is to challenge the participants to think beyond their present jobs and to focus on challenges facing their business (Neary and O'Grady, 2000).

International meetings and forums can also be used in the development of global competencies (Brake, 1997; Dowling *et al.*, 1999; Roberts *et al.*, 1998). For example, Brake (1997) states that one easy way to facilitate cross-cultural interaction and learning is to

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establish networks through setting up such meetings bringing people together. This may mean global forums on up-to-date subjects where people talk about what they are doing and those who are interested can share their experiences or ask for further information.

International travel can also be used for training purposes (Gregersen *et al.*, 1998; Lobel, 1990; Oddou *et al.*, 2000). Foreign travel that puts potential global leaders in the middle of the country environment without too much company guidance and support can be valuable. Two ways to enhance the development potential of international travels are to take detours in the local environment and to dive into the local homes, schools and shops to find out what local life is really like (Gregersen *et al.*, 1998). Before a trip, it should be made clear that the purpose of the trip is for development purposes, not just for task accomplishment (Oddou *et al.*, 2000) and some sort of monitoring or reporting process to formalise the learning may be required.

On the whole, the literature on the development of global managers seems to emphasise experimental management development methods in contrast to a didactic approach (see, e.g. Srinivas, 1995). (This may, of course, be a trend in all kinds of executive development.) Experience-based learning focuses on understanding and exploring the natural sources of learning and development that occur on the job. Thus, the use of active assignment management (including project and task force assignments in addition to long-term assignments) is a key element of firms' executive development strategy (e.g. Crotty and Soule, 1997; Seibert *et al.*, 1995).

Experience-based learning is not the same as a "sink-or-swim" training approach. Whether through structured relationships such as sponsors, or periodic visits to the classroom, deliberate mechanism should be provided to support managers' learning (Seibert *et al.*, 1995). Through such mechanism managers should be helped to articulate lessons learned on the job, share those lessons with other managers, and integrate the lessons into the existing knowledge base of both themselves and the organisation. This would help them to develop the growth of meta-skills, the skills for acquiring new skills. It should be noted, by contrast, that other authors (Mendenhall, 2001) refer to many of the support systems provided for expatriates by MNCs as "buffers" which prevent them from fully experiencing and learning from the situations that they find themselves in. Mendenhall advocates a kind of "tutored sink-or-swim".

From the future research point of view, the process and methods of developing global leader competencies require further attention (Suutari, 2002). The effectiveness of different development practices should still be assessed through controlled, longitudinal studies with a variety of initial skill levels identified and re-evaluated after training and assignments (Lobel, 1990). For example, we should understand what people actually learn during their international work experiences and how we can facilitate this learning (Bonache *et al.*, 2001). The strength and weaknesses of each method should be empirically explored and the results analysed.

### **Global careers**

The research on international careers has focused on analysing the effect of one separate international assignment on an individual's career after repatriation to the home country, i.e. international assignment is treated as "once in a life time experience" (Suutari, 2003). Still, even in this limited context it has generally been argued that further research is needed before the connection between international assignments and future career is understood (Fish and Wood, 1997; Stahl *et al.*, 2002; Suutari and

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Brewster, 2003; Tung, 1998). Research concerning the careers of global managers, who typically have careers including various international positions and assignments, remains scarce. However, some insights into global careers can be gained through studies of international assignments as a career step.

From the career point of view, it has been reported that repatriates often find themselves in a “holding pattern” with no sufficiently challenging job, with unexpectedly low levels of authority and few possibilities of utilising their developed competencies (Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1987; Gregersen and Black, 1996; Harvey, 1989; Stahl *et al.*, 2002; Stroh *et al.*, 1998; Selmer, 1999). This is in striking contrast to their typically over-optimistic expectations concerning their future career. Thus, the importance of discussing the career impacts of international assignments with the expatriates in good time before the assignment has been stressed. Similarly the repatriation process should be started early enough. From a global career point of view, these findings indicate that in global career management much more emphasis should be given to international career transition.

The other key finding in career research is that the existing evidence does not promise an optimistic future career after repatriation (Black *et al.*, 1999; Forster, 1994; Derr and Oddou, 1991; Oddou and Mendenhall, 1991). Questions have been raised as to whether, indeed, an international assignment is an attractive career move (Welch, 2003). There is counter evidence indicates that it can be – although not necessarily in the company that the individual worked for while in the foreign country (Suutari and Brewster, 2003). Perhaps a quarter of US expatriates leave their company within one year after repatriation (Black and Gregersen, 1999; Solomon, 1995), and the figures have risen up to about half of the expatriate population in some companies within three years after repatriation (Black *et al.*, 1999). A good external job market situation among experienced international managers makes such career moves easy for repatriates (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2001; Suutari and Brewster, 2003). The existing empirical evidence indicates that the majority of expatriates are willing to leave their company for a better job in another firm after repatriation (Stahl *et al.*, 2002) and that a clear majority of repatriates have seriously considered such change after coming back to their home country (Suutari and Brewster, 2003). Thus, much more attention should be given both in research and practice in managing the international career moves and thus developing global career tracks within companies.

As argued earlier, far fewer studies have been carried out among managers with more long-term international careers. It has even been claimed that the existence of global managers with frequent international relocations is a myth since the requirements for individuals in such careers are so tough that hardly anyone can fulfil them (Forster, 2000). Forster points out that in his study only 13 per cent of UK expatriates reported that they would definitely accept further international assignments in the future. There is counter-evidence that the willingness to accept new international assignments and thus more global careers may not be so low. For example, it has been reported that 96.5 per cent of Japanese expatriates (The Japan Institute of Labour, 2002) and 91 per cent of Finnish expatriates (Riusala and Suutari, 2000) were ready to consider another international assignment after their repatriation. There is fairly little evidence on the actual push and pull factors concerning such careers but, at least in recent qualitative study (Suutari, 2003) it appeared that the managers’ internal motivation was a key factor. Thus, push factors, such as poor

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career prospects at home country, were not common at all. Such global managers saw the international environment as very challenging but also a very “rich” and enjoyable work environment. All in all, their experiences were very positive and they were highly committed towards global careers. Thus, as with the effect of single assignments on overall careers, the picture was more positive than might have been expected on the basis of the earlier research. Clearly more large-scale research is needed in this area in order better to understand the internal and external career characteristics of people with more permanent global careers.

It should also be remembered that there are other kinds of global careers. For example, not every employer is an MNC: there are literally thousands of international organisations such as government, non-governmental aid organisations, charities and inter-governmental bodies where profit is not a factor (Bonache *et al.*, 2001). Organisations such as the United Nations and its agencies and the European Union employ large numbers of expatriates, and many of them with more permanent international careers, but research in this area has been very limited (Brewster and Scullion, 1997).

Furthermore, global career research needs to be expanded to other types of international work experiences and their career and developmental connections. As Inkson *et al.* (1997) state: whereas the research literature on expatriate assignments is large, the research on self-initiated foreign work experiences (SFEs) is almost non-existent. This dearth of data and analysis is important: individuals’ travelling abroad to find their own work is a widespread phenomenon. Suutari and Brewster (2000) reported that one-third of Finnish university level educated people who were working abroad were on so-called SFEs, i.e. they had found the job there on their own. The research among such groups has just started.

### **International knowledge management/transfers**

The knowledge-based view of the firm focuses on knowledge as the most strategically significant resource of the firm and emphasises the capacity of the firm to integrate knowledge (Conner and Prahalad, 1996; Grant, 1996; Mowery *et al.*, 1996; Spender, 1996). According to Szulanski (1996) the identification and transfer of best practices was one of the most important and widespread practical management issues of the latter half of the 1990s. Particularly for MNCs, cross-unit transfer of business practices (i.e. intrafirm or internal transfer) that reflect their core competencies and superior knowledge is a main determinant of their competitive advantage (Conn and Yip, 1997; Kostova, 1999; Furu, 2000).

Scholars have noted that such transfers are hindered less by confidentiality and legal obstacles than external transfers. Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence that these transfers are not always smooth and successful (e.g. Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1988; Kedia and Bhagat, 1988; Zander and Kogut, 1995). This difficulty of transferring knowledge within the organisation has been referred to as internal stickiness (Riusala and Suutari, forthcoming; Szulanski, 1996; Teece, 1977; von Hippel, 1994) and can be caused by various factors. There are at least four sets of factors that are likely to influence the difficulty of internal knowledge transfer and they are linked with the characteristics of the knowledge transferred, the source, the recipient and the context in which the transfer takes place (Szulanski, 1996). Such barriers to the international transfer of knowledge and on the integration of HRM practices across borders clearly require attention in future research.

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Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) state that the effectiveness of knowledge flows within MNC is determined by several factors:

- the perceived value of the source unit's knowledge stock;
- the willingness of the source to share knowledge;
- the existence and richness of transmission channels;
- the motivational disposition of the target unit; and
- the absorptive capacity of the target unit.

These factors clearly indicate that the success on knowledge transfers is closely related on the HRM issues. More research is clearly needed in order to understand better the potential role of HRM practices in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and “best practices” across borders.

For example, there is considerable scope for the development of research that is based on the notion of HR, such as expatriates, as a means of international knowledge transfer (Bonache and Brewster, 2001; Downes and Thomas, 2000; Kochan *et al.*, 1992). The role of expatriates appears to be central when decisions are made on what kind of knowledge is transferred to foreign affiliates within MNCs and how it is done (Hetrick, 2002; Riusala and Suutari, forthcoming). The knowledge flows from foreign affiliates to headquarters (see Ferner and Quintanilla, 2001; Ferner and Varul, 2000) through transfers of HR reserve future attention as well.

### Articles in this special issue

The articles in this special issue of *Personnel Review* are a further contribution to the expanding literature on global HRM – set within the context of strategic HRM and following our generic themes of international development, international careers and knowledge transfer.

Kohonen, in “Developing global leaders through international assignments: an identity construction perspective”, suggests a new theoretical perspective to personal development and growth which takes place during international assignments. In her theoretical framework, the author combines literature on global leadership, career transitions and identity construction. From these standpoints, the author opens interesting future research insights that may help us to understand better how individuals develop during their international experiences and how this influences to their future expectations.

Holopainen and Björkman in “The personal characteristics of the successful expatriate: a critical review of the literature and an empirical investigation”, also, as their title indicates, take a critical approach to previous work in the area of global leadership development. They use both pre-departure psychological assessments and reports of performance in the new country from the expatriate and their boss to develop a more nuanced version of what success means in an expatriate assignment.

Waxin and Panaccio in “Cross-cultural training to facilitate expatriate adjustment. It works!”, also add to our knowledge of leadership development, using a sample of more than 50 managers expatriated from each of four countries to India to show the interaction between expatriate adjustment and training. They demonstrate the positive effect of training, especially for those on a first assignment. They also add to our existing understanding by showing that the effects of training vary by country of origin.

Selmer, in "Cross-cultural training and expatriate adjustment in China: Western joint venture managers", presents evidence on the effect of cross-cultural training on expatriate adjustment among Western joint venture managers in China. The study presents evidence that the effectiveness of cross-cultural training of business expatriates may be contingent on the specific circumstances of the foreign assignment.

Haslberger, in "Facets and dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation – redefining the tools" uses his empirical data to go beyond the received wisdom of the Black and Stephens (1989) three-way split of a one-dimensional adjusted/unadjusted measure into work, communication and general adjustment. His evidence leads him to question that analysis and to develop a more complex measure covering emotional and cognitive adjustment.

Bonache, in "Job satisfaction among expatriates, repatriates and national employees: the perceived impact of international assignments on work-related variables" uses data from a Spanish construction company to provide perhaps the first attempt to compare job satisfaction within these three groups. As such, this is a new empirical and theoretical contribution to the growing literature on global careers.

Minbaeva, in "HRM practices and MNC knowledge transfer", examines the effect of HRM practices on knowledge transfer within MNCs. The study provides new evidence on the positive effect of certain HRM practices such as staffing, training, promotion, compensation and appraisal on the degree of knowledge transfer to the subsidiary.

It has been our intention as editors to encourage the publication of some new, empirically-based, work on international HR development. We are happy to see here a mix of younger researchers and those who may be more experienced but are obviously still developing new understandings. There remains, as we have indicated, a substantial research agenda to be covered. We are pleased with the contributions made in this special issue and look forward to many more.

#### Note

1. For details of other research requirements see Brewster and Scullion (1997); Scullion and Brewster (2001); Bonache and Brewster (2001).

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