

CULTURAL FACTORS AND EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS' KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IN MALYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: ACADEMICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: Increasing trend in Globalization and internationalization are not just happening among in business but also education and education systems. Internationalization in higher education is capturing the interest of various research areas where a high number of higher education institutions embracing internationalization as a strategic move. This is mainly due to ranking bodies incorporating internationalization for university ranking. Recent developments in higher education in Malaysia have increased the need for the hiring of more and more international academics particularly due to skill gap, research contributions and international exposure for students however these activities required effective tacit knowledge transfer. Recently, researchers have increased their scrutiny on assigned expatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs but there is lack of studies in terms of self-initiated expatriates in the higher education. The purpose of this article is to enhance the conceptual rationality of the role of the Cultural Intelligence & Cultural Distance of expatriate academics towards effective tacit knowledge transfer in Higher Education.

Keywords: Knowledge Transfer, Tacit Knowledge Transfer, Expatriates, Self-Initiated Expatriates, Cultural intelligence, Cultural Distance, Expatriate adjustment

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality and affordability of Malaysian education attracted international student to study in Malaysian and it is the nation's target to achieve 200,000 international students by 2020 to become a preferred global education destination [1]. Latest initiatives towards Malaysian Higher Education published as Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) targets on assessing academic performance, as well as values, community service and leadership qualities [2]. According to the Malaysian Prime Minister, achieving a goal as a developed nation by 2020 increases access to and the quality of higher education in Malaysia [3]. Furthermore, international policy of higher education in Malaysia in terms staff mobility is to "Attract, recruit and engage quality foreign researchers through international networks to enhance research profile and collaborative research programmes" [4]. This study aims to highlight that international academics or better known as expatriate academics have a significant role in achieving Malaysian Higher education objectives, through effective tacit knowledge transfer. Knowledge, can boost organizations to become more adaptive, innovative, intelligent and sustainable [5];[6]; [7] stated that there are several factors influencing the knowledge transfer effectiveness, including ideal budget allocation, culture, leadership, and others moreover, there are various frameworks, models, and analytical tools that can be used to study the causal relationships between some key success factors and effectiveness of knowledge transfer. It is inevitable that organizations achieve their strategies and objectives through their people and universities are considered to be the hub of knowledge hence understanding the criterion for the effectiveness of knowledge transfer activities it is utmost crucial. According to Susanty, Handayani, and Henrawan [8] the effectiveness of knowledge transfer is subjected to various elements such as necessary allocation reserved,

culture, and leadership. In the past decade, a number of studies have sought to explore on cross border knowledge transfer where a considerable volume of literature has been published on cultural impacts on knowledge transfer in organizations, especially on assigned expatriates. Recently the self-initiated expatriates, expatriate academics, in particular, have been gaining interest in the cross-cultural discipline [9].

This paper aims to cultural factors which influence effective tacit knowledge transfer by expatriate academics in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

III. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on the above discussion, a conceptual framework has been developed on the relationship between cultural factors and tacit knowledge transfer (Figure 1)

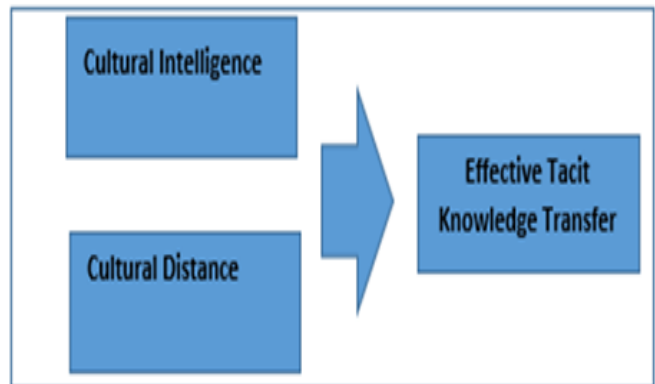


Figure 1

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, cultural factors such as cultural intelligence and cultural distance are deemed

to be affecting effective tacit knowledge transfer of expatriate academics. International Human Resource Management (IHRM) studies pointed that these independent variables are known cultural factors have a significant role in expatriate adjustments hence affecting expatriate performance, therefore, believe to be impacting the dependent variable which is effective knowledge transfer.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Managerial Implications

Through this conceptual study, both public and private higher education institutions would be able to implement strategies to improve tacit knowledge transfer via expatriate academics. This study has explored variables that impact knowledge transfer in cross-cultural settings where higher education institutions to consider in attracting and managing expatriate academics. These would enhance the quality of higher education institutions in Malaysia especially in meeting the goals and objectives stipulated in the Higher Education Blueprint and Internationalization policy of Higher Education. Moreover having quality knowledge workers in Malaysia would direct the country towards sustaining its economic development through quality human capital.

The most important factor in International Human Resource Management is the management of expatriates in cross-cultural settings and if managed effectively, may lead to effective knowledge transfer.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically knowledge transfer activities are derived from interactions between an individual to another as well as a group well. The theory which reflects these interactions, engagement, and relationships is a social capital theory. Social capital is a powerful theory enlightening how relationships is a gate to knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing [40]. Inkpen and Tsang, [41] Defined Social capital as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from, the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit".

The success of knowledge transfer at the individual level is determined by the attributes of the person's like a knowledge provider and receiver [42] since individuals differ in terms of knowledge, skills, experience personality, mental and physically alive. Due to this organization need to ensure that the individual specific factors are management accordingly in achieving the effectiveness of knowledge transfer [10].

In contrast, social capital denotes social associations such as shared values, shared vision, trust and understanding in an organization which allow employees and groups to work together via mutual social network [10]. Social capital regarded as a key resource in exploiting and optimum utilization of knowledge.

Similarly, the independent's variables such as cultural intelligence and cultural distance too require a high level of engagement between individuals. Therefore, relating social capital theory in this study's framework will be useful to understand factors constituting to effective knowledge transfer.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Internationalization of Malaysian Higher Education institutions towards achieving the status as a developed nation and the importance of meeting the Internationalization strategies emphasized at the beginning of this paper. One of the strategies towards quality education is attracting qualified international academics as their contributions towards education and research is priceless hence it is crucial to understand the factors which influence effective tacit knowledge transfer. Previous research findings were reviewed in order to validate the relationship between the proposed variables hence a framework was developed in encouraging researchers to conduct further studies. Lastly, towards the end of the paper, the managerial and theoretical implications on effective knowledge transfer acknowledged.

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