Knowledge Transfer by Repatriates

- a Case Study of Electrolux -

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ABSTRACT

Expatriates’ roles as knowledge senders are well known, but apart from this, expatriates can also acquire knowledge abroad. The repatriation process offers an opportunity to transfer and apply this knowledge back into the organization. However, few studies have been conducted with the purpose of mapping out how repatriates could contribute to the organization. This paper will explore how organizations can capture repatriates’ knowledge and the research will be carried out by a case study on the well-known company Electrolux. The expected contributions of this paper are to create an increased awareness of the neglected repatriation process and to broaden the current repatriation research base by investigating a Swedish multinational company. An effective repatriation process based on theory will be discussed and a model for knowledge transfer by repatriates will be presented and extended by conducting interviews with a HR manager and repatriates. We argue that an effective repatriation process will serve to reduce repatriates’ uncertainty and anxiety. In our case study the repatriates will transfer knowledge whether they are aware of it or not and independent of the organization’s receptivity, since they are still able to transfer knowledge on an on-going basis trough their daily work.

Keywords: Repatriation process, knowledge transfer, Electrolux
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1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the problem background will be presented in order to give the readers a better insight into the topic, which is followed by the paper’s aim and problem statement.

1.1 Problem background

International experience has become a critical asset for organizations (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001), and in order to stay competitive, a company must strive towards global knowledge (Paik, Segaud & Malinowski, 2002), such as; knowledge about global operations, business and cultural climates (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). One possibility to obtain this knowledge is to send employees, called expatriates, on international assignments (Paik et al., 2002). This means that the quality of a company’s human resources and how effectively they are being managed and developed is crucial for the success of international business (Linehan & Scullion, 2002).

Expatriates are considered as key components for organizations seeking global knowledge (Paik et al., 2002). However, little is actually known about what happens to the expatriates after their international assignment, when they return home and become repatriates (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Research shows that many employees experience more difficulties in readjusting to their home culture, than in adjusting to the foreign culture where they have been assigned (Black, 1991). Approximately 60 percent of the expatriates express concerns about the repatriation process (Tung, 1998), and between 20 to 50 percent of the repatriates resign within a year after coming home (Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 1998).

The role of expatriates as knowledge senders is well known, but expatriates can also acquire knowledge abroad. The repatriation process offers an opportunity to transfer and apply this knowledge back into the organization (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Therefore, it becomes necessary for an international organization to have a working repatriation process; otherwise, valuable knowledge and skills will not be properly utilized (Kamoche, 1997; Paik et al., 2002). Despite this acknowledged possibility to use expatriates as
“reverse” knowledge senders during repatriation, the repatriation process is still both under-researched (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Riusala & Suutari, 2004), and the most overlooked phase of international assignments (Jassawalla, Connolly & Slojkowski, 2004; Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Macdonald & Arthur, 2005; Paik et al., 2002). A possible explanation for this is that repatriation is not expected to be a problem and therefore the challenges of returning home are often underestimated (Linehan & Scullion, 2002).

Only a few studies have been conducted with the purpose of mapping out how repatriates could contribute to an organization. Even though some researchers acknowledge their knowledge, only a small amount of research has been conducted in order to determine how this knowledge can be captured by the organization. According to Lazarova and Tarique (2005), additional case studies are needed, which purpose is to explore organizational practices that effectively capture repatriate knowledge. Their study is the only one, to us known, that combines knowledge transfer and repatriation, although it is only on a theoretical level and needs further testing in order to be clarified.

Considering the gap, this paper will explore how organizations can capture repatriates’ knowledge and the research will be conducted by doing a case study. The expected contributions of this paper are to create an increased awareness of the neglected repatriation process and to broaden the current research base by investigating a Swedish multinational company. This is important since the international research main focus, so far, has been on American companies and their perception of repatriation (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Stroh et al., 1998; Sussman, 2001; Harvey 1989).

1.2 Problem statement

How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter we will introduce the theory that is the base for our case study. We will start by giving the reader general information about repatriation and its problems. A model for effective repatriation will be presented. The chapter is concluded with theory on knowledge transfer and a model that describes knowledge transfer by repatriates.

2.1 Repatriation

Repatriation is the last step in the expatriation cycle, (Paik et al., 2002; Riusala & Suutari, 2004) and it involves readjustment and re-entry of international managers and their families back to their home country (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). Expatriation and repatriation are not two separated processes, rather the former is a beginning and the latter the closure of the same process (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001). Hurn (1999) adds to this view by stating that the repatriation process should not be seen in isolation, but should be perceived as an ongoing process of career and personal development for the employee, as well as for the organization.

According to Harvey (1982) there are two main reasons for why an organization should be interested in implementing a repatriation process. First, an organization invests time and money in an expatriate and the risk of losing the expatriate when he or she returns home is much higher without a repatriation process. Moreover, valuable experience and knowledge will be lost if the employee decides to leave. The second reason is that if the organization is not dealing with the problems that might occur, the optimistic view of international assignments may decline and other employees may be unwilling to go abroad.

2.2 Problems associated with repatriation

The nature of repatriation problems varies from repatriate to repatriate and from organization to organization (Harvey, 1982). When reviewing the literature we discovered various
repatriation problems (Black, 1991; Bonache, Brewster & Suutari, 2001; Harvey, 1989) that could be divided into two main groups, cultural issues and career related problems, which will be presented below.

### 2.2.1 Cultural issues

When leaving for an international assignment it is highly likely that an expatriate will come across different religions, customs and cultures that differ from the ones in the home country, and therefore, the new environment can become a shock. However, the return home can just as well be a shock and the literature has identified this phenomenon as; reverse culture shock. This is in general unanticipated by both the employee and the organization (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Gregersen, 1991; Hurn, 1999; Riusala & Suutari, 2004). A reverse culture shock includes employees feeling like foreigners in their home country, (Hurn, 1999) as well as having difficulty in co-operating with people from the same culture (Bonache & Brewster, 2001). The transition home can also involve “unlearning” (Macdonald & Arthur, 2005), for instance new habits might not be accepted in the home country. Additionally, Macdonald and Arthur (2005) state that the repatriates also could gain knowledge about the home culture from a new perspective. Riusala & Suutari (2004: 82) have defined reverse culture shock as a mismatch between “peoples’ expectation prior to their repatriation and what they actually encounter after the return home”. Therefore, expectations have a huge impact on the repatriates’ satisfaction (Macdonald & Arthur, 2005). The gap between an expatriate’s expectations and the actual experiences upon return may have either a negative (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Paik et al., 2002; Riusala & Suutari, 2004) or positive (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Tung, 1998; Paik et al., 2002) effect on the repatriates’ satisfaction, career and personal development. Repatriates that had their expectations met had the highest levels of repatriation adjustment and job performance (Black, 1991).

### 2.2.2 Career related problems

Repatriation has often been associated with loss of status and autonomy, non-challenging jobs, lack of promotion opportunities, lack of career planning and counseling, lack of
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support from managers and colleagues and slow career advancement. According to Harvey (1982), there are often no positions open upon return for the repatriates. Due to these career problems, many repatriates resign shortly after returning home (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).

New evidence indicates that international assignments may improve career prospects for repatriates and a more optimistic view of the career impact of assignments has emerged in recent years (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Riusala & Suutari (2004) state that between 20 to 30 percent of their respondents, believed that an international assignment would have a positive impact on their career, since repatriates are attractive for and often become recruited by competing organizations (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). This means that the organization might loose the repatriate and his or her knowledge to competing companies. Considering this it seems essential for companies to develop a systematic career planning for expatriates, in order to keep them upon return, since they are important for organizational learning and the organization’s social capital (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).

2.3 Effective repatriation

In their paper, Lazarova & Caligiuri (2001) suggest that organizations should have a pro-active repatriation program, which means that the process should start managing and detailing the expatriates’ expectations already prior to departure, as well as during and after the assignment. MacDonald and Arthur (2005) state that organizations with a well functioning repatriation process only have a five percent resignation rate of expatriates, compared to between 20 to 50 percent in other organizations (Stroh et al., 1998), which do not have such a process. Jassawalla et al. (2004) agree and state that pre-planning is important since the expatriation process is associated with high levels of uncertainty and later on, frustration during repatriation. They have created a model for effective repatriation, but from a rather small sample, with the purpose of encouraging further research. We believe this model to be comprehensive and adequate. It is also a good summary of what the literature in general suggests.
2.3.1 A model for effective repatriation

Jassawalla et al. (2004) start by mentioning that it is important to have a clear task and job description prior to departure, since it decreases uncertainty and anxiety when the expatriates return home. They continue by suggesting that prior to departure it is important to formalize policies for repatriation and to make the expatriates aware of them. Harvey (1982) agrees, and emphasizes the importance of informing expatriates about repatriation problems that might occur. The literature agrees (Jassawalla et al., 2004; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; MacDonald & Arthur, 2005) that career planning is extremely important for expatriates, in order to make them aware of what to expect upon return. MacDonald and Arthur (2005) state that career planning can include goal setting and action steps. Planning help employees achieve goals and increase personal satisfaction and motivation. The turnover rate will also be decreased, since career planning creates an opportunity for repatriates to utilize their international experience within the organization. Successfully implemented, career planning will lead to organizational commitment and a more effective repatriation adjustment (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005).

While abroad, the expatriates are often “out of sight and out of mind” from the home office perspective (Stroh et al., 1998). This can lead to isolation and a sense of being ignored by the home office. Therefore, communication with the home office is important, and according to Harvey (1982), there should be a periodic review of expatriates’ performance. Jassawalla et al. (2004) agree that communication is important, since it increases the expatriates’ loyalty towards the organization. Furthermore, mentors could be used as a communication tool and serve as a support before, during and after the assignment (Harvey, 1982; MacDonald & Arthur, 2005). More specifically, a mentor can help with networking, provide information, contacts, training, advice, career direction, repatriation assistance and could either be a colleague, manager or human resource (HR) personnel (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005).

When the expatriate has completed the assignment, he or she returns home to an often changed organization and therefore it becomes important for the organization to make the repatriate feel appreciated. In order to keep the repatriate satisfied, the organization should
put a value on employees with international experience. This can be achieved by offering the repatriate a suitable position (Jassawalla et al., 2004). MacDonald and Arthur (2005) even suggest that repatriates should be promoted. Harvey (1982) states that support should be offered not only to the repatriates but also to their family. One possibility to help repatriates and their families readapting to their home culture is to offer a training program, which could include the effects of reverse culture shock (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005).

Jassawalla et al. (2004) suggest that effective repatriation process outcomes include that the skills developed abroad can be effectively utilized within the organization, which in turn enhances the human and intellectual capital of the organization. There could also be an improved return on investment in skills and talents. A good repatriation process can lead to a higher loyalty towards the organization and this in turn can give the organization a good reputation among employees for valuing them. Employees will probably also feel less anxious and uncertain when coming home, and therefore greater career satisfaction could be expected.

![Effective repatriation model by Jassawalla et al., 2004: 40.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to departure</th>
<th>During their stay</th>
<th>After the return</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task clarity</td>
<td>Perception of support while on assignment</td>
<td>Quality of interaction with mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career counseling</td>
<td>Nature and frequency of communication</td>
<td>Perceptions of support upon return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal policies for repatriation</td>
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Outcomes
For the firm: Improved retention, return on investment in human capital
For the employee: Lower uncertainty and anxiety, greater satisfaction, greater feeling of belonging

Figure 1: Effective repatriation model by Jassawalla et al., 2004: 40.
2.4 Knowledge transfer

Knowledge has emerged as one of the most important sources of competitive advantage for organizations (Birkinshaw, 2001; Grant, 1996; Nonaka, 1991; Watson & Hewett, 2006). Money and time are spent on developing effective systems, the purpose of which is to improve management of knowledge resources by handling the transfer and reuse of existing knowledge (Watson & Hewett, 2006). The knowledge transfer can take any direction and take place at any level within the organization and leads to “economies of knowledge” (Persson, 2006).

2.4.1 Knowledge gained abroad and transfer tools

MacDonald and Arthur (2005) point out that if an organization can harness and integrate repatriates’ knowledge and experience, it could be used to improve the company’s competitive advantage in the global market. The repatriates’ knowledge gained abroad includes decision-making skills, negotiation skills, international networks, management of diverse teams and knowledge of different cultures, overseas subsidiaries and international markets. Grant (1996) refers to the division of knowledge into two types: explicit and tacit. The first can be codified, whereas the second is difficult to write down, since this type of knowledge is associated with “know how” and skills.

Repatriates’ knowledge is multifaceted and includes many different types of tacit and explicit knowledge, therefore a set of diverse transfer tools is necessary if an organization wants to capture all the knowledge repatriates have gained. Lazarova and Tarique (2005) suggest that there are knowledge transfer tools characterized by high, medium and low intensity, for extracting repatriates’ knowledge. The high intensity transfer tools focus on team approaches and are suitable for extracting tacit knowledge, since this knowledge is hard to capture. Examples of such high intensity transfer tools are team meetings, cross-national projects or using repatriates as mentors for international assignments. Lazarova and Tarique (2005) add that these high intensity transfer tools are characterized by a high level of communication and that knowledge is being thoroughly processed. Medium intensity transfer tools focus on individuals and examples of these medium transfer tools
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can be case study discussions and action learning (repatriates describe situations and problems). Unlike the long-term high intensity transfer tools, the medium ones are accomplished within a short time period. Low intensity transfer tools that extract explicit and generic knowledge are lectures, presentations, articles in newsletters and various intranet tools that present and focus on codified knowledge (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).

2.4.2 Knowledge transfer by repatriates: a model

As mentioned before, expatriation offers the opportunity to acquire knowledge from international assignments, whereas, repatriation offers the opportunity to transfer this knowledge and utilize it in the organization (Kamoche, 1997, Paik et al., 2002). Lazarova and Tarique (2005) propose a theoretical and untested framework that describes conditions under which repatriates’ transfer results in successful “reverse” knowledge transfer back to the home office. We intend to describe their framework and use it in our case study to see if we can find any empirical support for it and later on, develop it further in the analysis.

The core proposition of Lazarova and Tariques’ (2005) model is that there needs to be a fit between the individuals’ readiness to transfer knowledge and the organization’s receptivity to knowledge. This fit will in turn lead to effective knowledge transfer by repatriates. The variables that affect the organizational receptivity to international knowledge are the organization’s repatriation support and what kind of knowledge transfer tools they use. The variables that affect the individual readiness to transfer knowledge are type of knowledge, which includes the nature and value of knowledge that the repatriate has gained abroad, and also by career considerations. Offering correct career opportunities helps to satisfy the repatriates’ career aspirations and will motivate repatriates to share their knowledge.
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The individual knowledge transfer is based on free will, and not all individuals are willing to share their knowledge, since sharing means a risk of losing power. The possession of knowledge is an advantage and sharing knowledge means a risk of decreased bargaining power and status. There is also a risk of persons that only take knowledge and do not develop or share it (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004). Due to these risks, trust is important between the repatriates and the organization. With a lack of trust, the repatriate will more likely keep the obtained knowledge without sharing it (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). It is also important for individuals to sense an interest from others in order to be motivated to share their knowledge (Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004). Yet another way for organizations to make individuals more willing and motivated to share their knowledge is by using different monetary and recognition incentives (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).
3. METHOD

In the coming chapter we will present our approach and how we conducted our empirical research. We will also explain how the interview guide was constructed and conclude with a critical discussion concerning the paper’s validity and reliability.

3.1 Our approach

In this paper, we have decided to use a qualitative research method by doing a case study. When the aim is to get a deeper understanding of certain phenomenon, which in this paper is knowledge transfer by repatriates and possible effects of a repatriation process, a case study becomes appropriate (Jacobsen, 2002). We consider our paper to be a pilot study, since the knowledge transfer model has not yet been empirically tested. Moreover, Eisenhardt (1989) states that case studies can be used to accomplish various aims: for description, to test theory or to generate it. In our study we are going to test theory, but also generate it, since the proposed knowledge transfer model will be extended. We will conduct our case study by doing interviews with both the HR department and repatriates. According to Yin (2003), interviews are the most important source of information for case studies, especially when they concern human affairs.

3.2 Collection and analysis of primary data

Our case study is conducted on the well-known company Electrolux, which is positioned as third on the Fortune 500\(^1\) list for Swedish multinational companies (http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2006/countries/S.html). As one of Sweden’s largest multinational companies and due to their long use and experience of expatriates, Electrolux is well suited for our case study\(^2\).

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\(^1\) Fortune magazine is an American business journal, which does an annual ranking of the worlds largest companies, this is the so called, Fortune 500 list.

\(^2\) For more information about Electrolux and their use and cost of expatriates and repatriates see appendix 1 and 2.
We have interviewed four repatriates: (1) Daniel Hanngren, User Manual Manager, has worked for Electrolux during the past ten years. Hanngren has spent four years as an expatriate in Brussels (1999-2003), three years in Italy (2003-2006) and came back to Sweden in August 2006. (2) Tomas Dahlman, Global Coordinator of Energy and Standards, has worked for Electrolux during six years. Dahlman has spent three years in Brussels and came home in January 2006. (3) Ingrid Skoglund, Senior Development Manager, has worked for Electrolux during the last eighteen years. She has spent two years in Hungary (1991-1993) and two years in Thailand (1996-1998), working as HR director. (4) Mauri Ståhl, Head of Global Council, has worked for Electrolux during the last twenty years. He has spent one year in England (1997-1998), two years in Spain (1998-2000) and three years in Italy (2000-2003). The HR manager of international assignments in Stockholm, Torild Melki, was also interviewed. She has worked for Electrolux during the last ten years. We had no control of the selection of repatriates that were interviewed, since Melki chose them. However, she located them by looking at different criteria such as; age, gender, number of assignments and time since return, which means to that the respondent group is very diverse.

The interviews were conducted at Electrolux headquarters in Stockholm. An interview agenda\(^3\) based on the theory was sent to the respondents one week before the interviews, in order to prepare them for the topics of discussion. Open questions were chosen to enable the respondents to speak freely, evolve their answers and in order to avoid misinterpretation of questions. If anything was unclear follow-up questions were asked. Not all questions were asked, since some of them were included in prior answers. The interviews were between 45 to 60 minutes long and were conducted in Swedish. They were taped and notes were taken. During the interviews one of the interviewers took notes and the other asked the questions.

After the data collection the recorded material was typed out and divided into four boxes, which will be explained in more detail in 3.3. The transcripts were combined and revisited several times in order to find patterns and themes from the answers. The data will be

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\(^3\) It is attached in appendix 6.
presented in the empirical results and later analyzed in the paper’s ending chapter. In order to reduce the risk of subjectivity, the triangulation method was used, more specifically researcher triangulation. This meant that we could discuss our interpretation of the data with each other and reduce the risk of a biased view (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, it helped increasing the reliability of the results.

3.3 Operationalizations

The interview guide was based on the aim and theory presented in this paper, especially on the four concepts in Lazarova and Tariques’ (2005) model. The specific questions were designed in a suitable way and divided into four boxes: (1) expatriation and repatriation experiences, which was related to the concept “Repatriation Support”, (2) career considerations, which was related to the concept “Career Considerations”, (3) lessons learned, which was related to the concept “Type of Knowledge” and (4) knowledge transfer, which was related to the concept “Transfer Tools”. The level of expatriation and repatriation support was measured by asking respondents how they were received and managed by the organization prior to departure, during the assignment and upon return. By asking the respondents if they had any contracts and if they got career counseling, we were able to map the career consideration. We asked what the repatriates felt that they had learned during the assignment in order to measure the value of his or her knowledge. Furthermore, the intensity of the company’s transfer tools was measured by asking the repatriates if and how their knowledge was utilized within the company upon return. The HR manager was asked similar questions to get her perspective on these four boxes.

3.4 Validity and reliability

According to Jacobsen (2002), a study can be evaluated and questioned by three different concepts: internal validity, external validity and reliability. To ensure validity in our research the results were compared to similar studies and persons with relevant experience reviewed both the paper and the interview guide, as Yin (2003) suggests, since
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this is useful for evaluation and propositions to changes. Using recorded material increased the validity, since it helped decrease the loss of important information and the primary data was also sent to the respondents for confirmation.

External validity, transferability, means that the paper’s ability to be generalized can be tested. Our choice of approach has resulted in a low level of transferability, since our research was specific and related to certain phenomenon with few units. Instead, the theory presented will be valid for our case study, Knowledge Transfer by Repatriates. The relevance of this paper is high, since the information was not separated from its context; rather it had depth and high richness of details (Jacobsen, 2002).

Another problem to take into consideration when doing a qualitative study is the researcher effect. According to Jacobsen (2002) the researcher effect concerns the reliability of a paper and can give both misleading and biased results. In our study, the main researcher effect that arose was a possible intimacy between interviewers and the interviewees. To prevent this intimacy no excessive facial expressions were used and we tried to act as discreet as possible. In order to make the interviewees feel comfortable they had the choice of time and place for the interview and were also offered confidentiality, as suggested by Jacobsen (2002).
4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In this chapter we present our empirical findings and its structure is based on the interview guide. The chapter starts by introducing the view of the HR manager and ends with the gathered view of the four repatriates.

4.1 The HR manager’s view: expatriation and repatriation

According to Melki there are four reasons for Electrolux to send people on international assignments: (1) Personal development, (2) Competence demands, (3) To spread the spirit of Electrolux and (4) As a control function.

“Our CEO has said that it is important that we have people who are international and therefore we need to increase the mobility. To send people around the world is an investment and we send people who we believe will do a good job and who we want to stay within the company.”

Today it is the managers and the local HR departments that decide how well the expatriation and repatriation processes are conducted and how much time should be spent on them. Unfortunately, the main focus has been on expatriation and therefore repatriation is not prioritized. Melki stresses the importance of starting to plan repatriates’ careers and their repatriation already prior to departure, and not six months before the international assignment is over. However, there are obstacles to overcome before an effective repatriation process can be implemented. The first obstacle is that both HR departments and managers do not always see the need and are unaware of possible outcomes of effective expatriation and repatriation. Furthermore, some repatriates are also unaware of the benefits of discussing their careers and repatriation prior to departure. The last obstacle is that Electrolux’s organizational structure is very mobile, which makes planning difficult. The company is decentralized and people do not always have coherent views, and therefore it is difficult to create unity among the different HR departments around the world.
Apart from the contracts, the company’s Global Expatriate Policy (GEP 2000), language courses and intercultural training, most of the expatriation and repatriation processes are outsourced to Ernst & Young in London. The repatriates’ contact with Ernst & Young is mainly handled via phone calls. Electrolux is currently working on a new expatriation policy, which will be implemented in 2007. The new policy states that effort should be put on career planning, mentorship and on supporting spouses. Furthermore, a manual for the HR personnel about how this should be conducted in practice will be constructed. This is very important since they are often reluctant to take long-term responsibility for expatriates and repatriates or see any need for it. Today the expatriates have to take a lot of responsibilities on their own. This is partly because it is the host country that steers the international assignment and after departure it is common that the home office forgets about the expatriate. This creates problems, since the host country is interested in the expatriate only during the contract period. With the new policy, more responsibility will be placed upon the home offices and the managers and also more interest in expatriates and repatriates must be shown. It will be impossible to say that expatriates are important for the organization and then not care for them. Melki states that the HR department, in Stockholm, is trying to implement the viewpoint that Electrolux is one company, that is doing the expatriate investment together and that it is irrelevant which unit benefits the most.

4.2 The HR manager’s view: career considerations

The career possibilities for expatriates depend upon which countries they have worked in and which field they are operating in. However, a higher managerial position does in fact require international experience. Melki believes that often a repatriate has outgrown the job opportunities at the home office, and therefore the repatriate might have to move on to other expatriate assignments. At the end of the contract period, the repatriate has the right

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4 The policy states how international assignments should be managed and is given to the expatriates. The chapter in the policy that concerns repatriation is attached in appendix 3.
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to a job, but no specific position can be held open. If no job is found before repatriation, the employee has the right to return to employment in the home office and continue searching for a job for three months.

Melki states that it is easier to handle the concrete issues (contracts, conditions and benefits) than the “soft” parts (taking care of expatriates and to handle their careers). Lack of time also makes it harder to cover these parts. According to Melki, the internal labor market on the Intranet “Open Labor Market”, where available jobs within Electrolux are posted, is a step towards improvement.

4.3 The HR manager’s view: lessons learned and knowledge transfer

According to Melki, repatriates contribute to the organization with their experience, knowledge and international relations. Melki states that most repatriates probably believe that the company does not properly extract or use their experience and knowledge. However, Melki believes that the company has more use of the repatriates’ experience than what the repatriates themselves are aware of.

Melki is of the opinion that it is important to show interest in and listen to the repatriates. One step in this direction could be that someone sits down with them, makes a proper debriefing and ask what they have learned and observed. This is something that the HR department could handle, but Melki believes that the repatriates would appreciate it more if their managers did it, since the HR department cannot make use of the information.

“Many repatriates will feel disappointment, since no one asks them about their time abroad, or because they have no direct use of what they have learned abroad in their daily work.”
4.4 The repatriates’ view: expatriation experiences

Three repatriates received expatriation support prior to and during the assignment, some more than others. They have had access to GEP 2000, cultural training and language courses, study tours and also received help from a manager responsible for expatriates at the local office. Unlike these repatriates one did not see a need for expatriation support and finds such training superficial. Two of the repatriates had irregular contact with Stockholm during their assignments and they felt “out of sight and out of mind” and stated that an expatriate is only temporarily in the host country and generally there is no one who feels responsible for expatriates on a long-term basis.

“When there is this void one feels, you are here but there is no one who sees or hears you, and then you sit there and feel miserable.”

“When you are abroad, you are more alone than you ever could imagine”

Contradictory, the other two repatriates did not feel neglected by the home office. One reason for this is that especially one of them reported back regularly to Stockholm during the assignments.

There is no mentor program at Electrolux, something that three of the repatriates requested. The fourth repatriate however, does not believe that mentorship will add much. One repatriate had, on his or her own initiative, a mentor that helped with placement issues during some assignments. Two of them suggest that former expatriates should be involved in the mentor program, since they have the experience and can add a lot of useful knowledge.

*I believe that help to help oneself is important and that is what a mentor does.*
4.5 The repatriates’ view: repatriation experiences

When the company started its outsourcing of the expatriation and repatriation processes, around 2000, one repatriate noticed a decisive change for the worse. During the repatriate’s first assignments there were many HR personnel available, but they decreased over time and today the repatriate states that there is only one HR person available in Stockholm that is responsible for the management of international assignments. The repatriate states that outsourcing itself is not negative, but it makes it more difficult to get the support needed. In order to receive support it is necessary to ask clear and precise questions, which requires a lot from the expatriates. Another repatriate feels that the outsourcing is unsatisfying and suggests that the company should deal with the entire repatriation process itself and give continuous feedback on how the repatriates are progressing.

One repatriate states that the help you receive very much depends on the repatriate’s manager and on which HR policy the home office has. Another specifically mentions that it is the manager’s responsibility to see to that career planning is implemented. Additionally, one repatriate states that the expatriation and repatriation processes are not a part of the daily routines of the HR departments and that unfortunately the processes are different depending on the repatriate’s nationality and the location of the international assignment.

Three of the repatriates received help with housing upon return, although it was on their own initiative. Two of them experienced that during the transfer home the company was active, but after the transfer home silence followed. Both of them believe that there is a need for family support both during the assignment and upon return. One repatriate and his family had high hopes on the return. The first month at home was very nice, but after that a lot of anxiety followed. Some issues were social, where friends were not as present as expected and the climate in Sweden was also causing problems. Another repatriate felt that the biggest problems upon return were career related; it was hard to find a job. He or she believes it to be important to highlight problems that might occur upon return already prior to departure, in order to keep expatriates aware of what to expect.
How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?

“It is very sad now that you have returned, because there is no one who is really interested. Instead you hear; well, great you have been abroad, but what are we going to eat today?”

Two of the repatriates did not experience any repatriation problems and they felt that it was uncomplicated to return to Stockholm. One of them did not have any expectations on the return, whereas the other thought it would feel good both personally and professionally. One of these repatriates believes that repatriation problems are overrated and mainly depend on peoples’ attitude and personality, but also on the length of time spent abroad. Important to note is that they were both offered jobs in Stockholm prior to return, in contrast to those who experienced repatriation problems.

4.6 The repatriates’ view: career considerations

Three of the expatriates had time-limited contracts during their assignments, whereas one was locally employed. It is written in the company policy what should happen when the expatriates’ contract period has expired, but one repatriate believes, that the policy is seldom followed. Two of the repatriates feel that they have had too much responsibility in promoting their own careers and believe that the company should be more involved, interested and active in their employees’ careers.

"I try to be active and plan to see where I can go and all along I had the thought of coming back home."

Furthermore, one of the repatriates expresses that often a company offers the repatriate what they think is a good job, but from the repatriates point of view it is a poor offer, since he or she has developed a great deal during the time abroad. Two of the repatriates think that career support should be offered to expatriates and repatriates, in order to keep them up to date and the other two had never reflected upon it and do not see the need. Three of the repatriates have received job offers from other companies upon return, but they enjoy
How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?

working for Electrolux and have never considered leaving. One of them believes that it is more likely for a repatriate to leave the company if no career support is being offered and one put the job offers in direct relation to the international experience gained.

4.7 The repatriates’ view: lessons learned and knowledge transfer

All of the repatriates feel that they have gone through personal development, gained new insights and learned new ways of working and thinking during their assignments. Especially one repatriate believes that without the assignments and lessons learned abroad it would not have been possible to acquire the position that he or she has today. Moreover, all repatriates agree that cultural knowledge is important and especially three emphasize the impact of cultural lessons learned in their daily work.

The repatriates are of the opinion that the more global a company is, the more people with a global way of thinking are needed and three of them are of the opinion that the company is supportive concerning employees accepting international assignments. All of the repatriates are of the opinion that no effort has been made in order to capture their knowledge. Two of the repatriates emphasize that it is very expensive to send out expatriates and that it is remarkable that Electrolux does not try to acknowledge and extract the expatriates’ experience and knowledge. It seems as if the company does not realize the value of these experiences or they simply do not care.

In order to capture the repatriates’ knowledge one of the repatriates suggested that there should be seminars not only for expatriates prior to departure but also for managers in order to enlighten them about expatriation and repatriation issues. Three of the repatriates believe it to be a good idea to interview repatriates upon return. Furthermore, one of them thinks that it would be a good idea to reintroduce the project “people on the move” that Electrolux had a few years ago. People who have had international assignments were interviewed and their experiences were summarized and published on the Intranet.
How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?

One repatriate states that sharing knowledge is something that happens continuously and that no special tools are needed to capture it. Therefore he or she is not actively trying to share the gained knowledge, but answers questions when asked. The knowledge transfer takes place in an ad hoc manner, for instance by sharing stories. Moreover, he or she feels that the knowledge gained abroad can be used in the daily work. Additionally, another repatriate states that the knowledge gained abroad is used whenever needed and believes that knowledge transfer takes place increasingly during projects. To these projects people with the right knowledge are being located in order to establish a task force.
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the concluding chapter of the paper, the empirical results will be analyzed and compared with the paper’s aim and theoretical framework. This leads us to the conclusion, where the papers most important findings are being clarified. Additionally, limitations of the paper are stated, as well as suggestions for future research and repatriation recommendations.

5.1 Expatriation and repatriation experiences

Electrolux does not have an effective repatriation process, and despite their long use of expatriates, the company has not yet reached a deeper understanding of what repatriates are, how their knowledge can be acknowledged and how it can be spread effectively within the organization. Instead, we are of the opinion that Electrolux has only fragments, (one chapter in GEP 2000 and some outsourcing assistance), of what an effective repatriation process, suggested by Jassawalla et al. (2004), should contain.

We believe that Electrolux would benefit if they started viewing expatriation and repatriation not as two separated processes but as one ongoing process, as the literature (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001) suggests. We argue that this will lead to a more comprehensive view on repatriates and their role in the company. Electrolux is investing large amounts and a lot of time in their expatriates and we argue that an effective repatriation process will, as also suggested by Paik et al. (2002), contribute to help Electrolux to better utilize the repatriates’ knowledge and skills. We are of the opinion that the uncertainty and anxiety that especially two of the repatriates expressed upon return, would have been reduced if Electrolux had had an effective repatriation process, as suggested by Jassawalla et al. (2004). We believe that it also would have made them feel more valuable, appreciated and supported by the organization. This view, of expatriation and repatriation as one process, and a better use of repatriates, we argue, can lead to that the repatriates’ professional and the organization’s goals being united.
Jassawalla et al. (2004) and our respondents stress and are aware of the importance of planning for repatriation already prior to departure, but agreement on this matter is not enough; a repatriation process has to be implemented. Our empirical results indicate that it is difficult to implement effective repatriation, something that the literature in general has not focused on, although it is evident that barriers exist. The three main barriers at Electrolux are, according to the HR manager, a lack of understanding for why repatriation is needed, both from the HR side and from some of the repatriates. However, it does not mean that such a process would be unappreciated if implemented. The second barrier is that neither the home nor the host countries are willing to take long-term responsibility for the expatriates and repatriates. The last barrier is that Electrolux’s organizational structure is very mobile, which makes long-term planning difficult. We are of the opinion that this last barrier is not as significant as the others and we believe it to be easier to overcome, since changes does not exclude planning.

Our findings indicate that the perceived repatriation problems and satisfaction depend upon the repatriates’ expectations prior to return, but also on other factors such as the repatriates’ personality, age (different generations), family, job offers, function area, number of and time since the assignment. These factors contribute to explain why two of the repatriates experienced problems upon return and why two did not. Youth, families with small children, an enthusiastic personality, no job offers and short time since return characterize the former group in contrast to the latter. It does not seem as if the time spent abroad affects the repatriates problems and satisfaction upon return, because two repatriates had the same repatriation experiences, although their time spent abroad differed. Electrolux places high responsibility on the expatriation and repatriation process in the hands of the repatriates, this requires a lot from the repatriates and affects their satisfaction and repatriation experience. The last factor, according to us, that affects the repatriates’ satisfaction and their experienced problems is the outsourcing, since it creates a geographical and psychological distance between the repatriate and the home office. The distance created by the outsourcing helps to explain why two of the repatriates experienced the “out of sight and out of mind” phenomenon, stated by Stroh et al. (1998).
Moreover, it has also contributed to repatriates feeling neglected. We argue that mentors could help to decrease repatriates’ feeling of being “out of sight and out of mind”, since we, in accordance with the literature (Harvey, 1982; MacDonald and Arthur, 2005), and the empirical findings, state that mentors could serve as a communication tool and as a link between the home office and the expatriate.

5.2 Career considerations

Most of the repatriates have received job offers from other organizations after their assignments, which indicates that repatriates have good career possibilities. With this in mind, it is remarkable that Electrolux is not actively supporting the repatriates, since there is a risk of them resigning, although, the HR manager is positive towards career planning. However, during the past two years Electrolux have had low resignation rates (appendix 1). We can only speculate about these numbers, but possible explanations might be that Electrolux’s employees are loyal or that the year 2005 was a deviation from the standard resignation rate.

The repatriates did experience some of the career related problems, suggested by Lazarova and Tarique (2005), such as; lack of promotional opportunities, career planning and counseling, and lack of support from managers and colleagues. In order to overcome these difficulties, two of the repatriates had to be very pro-active and engaged in job searching activities. They were therefore very eager to see career support and planning implemented, suggested by Jassawalla et al. (2004), whereas the other two had never reflected upon it. An explanation for this is that they already had job offers from Electrolux prior to return, and did therefore neither need nor miss support. We believe that career planning will lead to a better utilization of the repatriates’ skills and knowledge, as also suggested by MacDonald and Arthur (2005), since it helps getting the right person for the right job.
5.3 Lessons learned and knowledge transfer

The strongest coherence between the HR manager and the repatriates seems to concern learning and knowledge transfer. For instance, both the HR manager and the repatriates agree that an international assignment is very good for the personal and professional development, and that the company should be more receptive regarding the experience and knowledge gained abroad by expatriates. However, they are unaware of this coherence, since there is a low level of communication between the HR department and the repatriates. This will have to change if Electrolux is going to succeed with their new expatriate policy. The lack of communication will lead to that the HR department is unaware of the repatriates’ expectations and problems. This increases the risk of misunderstandings, dissatisfaction and unawareness from both sides.

In accordance with the literature (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005), the repatriates and the HR manager state that repatriates gain useful knowledge abroad, but Electrolux has no specific knowledge transfer tools for repatriates. However, some of the repatriates feel that they transfer knowledge through their daily work, for instance, through project groups, recognized by Lazarova and Tarique (2005), as an example of a high intensive knowledge transfer tool.

Jassawalla et al.s’ (2004) model for effective repatriation suggests that support upon return is important and the empirical result indicates that debriefing could be a part of this support. Debriefing is a way to extract repatriates’ knowledge and is a part of the variable “Repatriation Support” in Lazarova and Tarique’s (2005) knowledge transfer model. We believe that a proper debriefing by a manager or a meeting with a group of repatriates could be a first step towards well functioning repatriation and knowledge transfer processes. Debriefing can cover areas of concern, lead to improvements and knowledge recycling and sharing. Additionally, debriefing can be a part of the repatriates’ reintegration and give them an opportunity to help each other.
How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?

5.4 The knowledge transfer model: revisited

Kamoche (1997) and Paik et al., (2002) suggest that expatriates can transfer knowledge back to the home office, something that Electrolux does not take advantage of. Instead, the expatriates serve as knowledge senders and as a control function. However, it is important for Electrolux to widen their perception of expatriates, since both the HR manager and the repatriates are certain that repatriates have gained valuable knowledge abroad. The international assignment has also changed the repatriates and they have learned new ways of working and thinking.

Electrolux does not offer career planning, which indicates that the variable (“Career Considerations”) does not affect the individuals’ readiness to transfer knowledge, in this case study. Instead, the repatriates transfer knowledge on their own initiative and personal motivation, and through their daily work. We oppose Lazarova and Tariques’ (2005) suggestion that there needs to be a fit between the individuals’ readiness to transfer knowledge and the organization’s receptivity to knowledge. Instead, in line with the empirical findings, we argue that repatriates will transfer knowledge whether they are aware of it or not and independent of the organization’s receptivity.

As mentioned by Lazarova and Tarique (2005) and Jassawalla et al. (2004), trust and loyalty are important if knowledge transfer should take place. We have found no clear evidence that these factors are important for knowledge transfer, but we believe that if a repatriate is not loyal or does not trust the organization, he or she would likely be unmotivated or unwilling to share experiences and knowledge or simply resign. Concerning fear of losing power, as Minbaeva and Michailova (2004) mentions, we have found no evidence that power is a factor that affects the individual readiness to transfer knowledge within the organization. As stated above, all of the repatriates had valuable knowledge to transfer and the nature of the knowledge did not affect their knowledge transfer, since we believe that both tacit and explicit knowledge can be transferred through their daily work. Therefore, the variable “Type of Knowledge” is excessive in the model.
How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?

In this case study the repatriates are willing and are trying to transfer knowledge, whereas the organization is not very receptive. We argue that if the organization had effective repatriation support, would actively use knowledge transfer tools and most importantly if they acknowledged that repatriates have valuable knowledge to transfer, the organization would likely be more receptive to international knowledge. Hence, it is the organizational side that is “under-developed” in our case study, therefore the variables “Intensity of Transfer Tools” and “Repatriation Support” are important to highlight in the revisited knowledge transfer model.

In an organization with an implemented effective repatriation process it would be valuable to explore factors that make repatriates even more ready to transfer knowledge than at Electrolux. Considering that Electrolux is not particularly receptive to international knowledge there will be a knowledge loss, since the repatriates cannot fully make use of all their knowledge and experience gained abroad. We argue that the more receptive the organization is, the lower the knowledge loss will be. This knowledge loss is important to acknowledge and is therefore included in the revisited knowledge transfer model.

![Knowledge Transfer Model](image-url)

Figure 3: The knowledge transfer by repatriates model, applicable on Electrolux. Modified by the authors.
5.5 Conclusions

Part of our aim was to create an increased awareness of the neglected repatriation process and this case study has helped Electrolux form a better understanding of repatriation. This paper can be useful for the company when creating new expatriation and repatriation policies and is therefore a contribution to practice.

Our findings indicate, in accordance with the literature, that effective repatriation reduces repatriates’ feeling of uncertainty and anxiety. We argue that the effect an implemented repatriation process has on the repatriates is that it will make them feel more valuable, appreciated and supported by the company. However, not all four repatriates feel the need for a repatriation process and this depends on the various factors stated in 5.1, but previous research has shown that approximately 60 percent of the expatriates express concerns about repatriation (Tung, 1998).

During our research we found some barriers for the implementation of a repatriation process that, we believe, is the strongest reason for why Electrolux does not have such a process. The reasons for this are, according to us, that there is a lack of understanding for why repatriation is needed, both from the HR side and from some of the repatriates. Furthermore, both the home and host countries are unwilling to take long-term responsibility for the expatriates and repatriates. It seems as if both the HR manager and the repatriates are aware of and agree to these problems. The strongest coherence concerns knowledge transfer and lessons learned and they agree that there is a lack of knowledge transfer tools, but due to the implementation problems this area remains under-developed and leads to knowledge loss.

Two variables were removed from the revisited knowledge transfer model, since we did not find any support for them in our case study. At Electrolux the repatriates transfer knowledge on their own initiative through their daily work. We do not agree with Lazarova and Tarique (2005) when stating that there needs to be a fit between individuals’ readiness to transfer knowledge and the organization’s receptivity towards knowledge in
order for knowledge transfer to take place. Instead, we argue that repatriates will transfer knowledge whether they are aware of it or not and independent of the organization’s receptivity. The repatriates are still able to transfer knowledge on an on-going basis through their daily work.

5.6 Repatriation recommendations

We suggest that an organization that wishes to implement a repatriation process should start by investigating the need for such a process, by for instance, doing debriefing with the repatriates. Our case study shows that important elements of a repatriation process are mentorship, career planning and training programs. It is also important to inform expatriates prior to departure about the organization’s expectations, policies and the problems that might occur both during and after the assignment. Furthermore, we are of the opinion that it is important to hold seminars not only for repatriates but also for managers to inform them about expatriation and repatriation issues. The importance of direct communication with the organization must not be forgotten, since a lack of communication leads to misunderstandings, dissatisfaction and unawareness from both sides. Finally, to fully utilize and transfer repatriates’ knowledge and skills and in order to increase the organization’s competitive advantage, tools such as: having repatriates as mentors, cross-national projects, case study discussions, lectures, presentations and articles can be used.

5.7 Limitations and directions for future research

A limitation of this study is that our revisited knowledge transfer model is only valid for our case study. However, it can also be valid for companies that do not have an effective repatriation process, as Electrolux. More research is needed to verify it in a broader context, especially quantitative studies, which can test and further develop the model. Another limitation to consider is that we were not able to distinguish all factors that affect the repatriates’ readiness to transfer knowledge, since Electrolux did not have an effective repatriation process.
How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?

In order to get a broader perspective on repatriation at Electrolux we might have gained on interviewing the repatriates who resigned after their assignment, however, these people are hard to locate. It would be interesting to further investigate whether a fear of loosing power has an effect on knowledge transfer, since previous research has shown this to be important, whereas we did not find any support for it. Our last suggestion for future research is that more cross-cultural research about repatriation is needed, in order to establish how nationality and host country affect the repatriates’ problems and satisfaction.
How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?

6. REFERENCES


How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?


How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?


How do repatriates transfer knowledge back to the home office and how can an organization’s repatriation process affect this?


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APPENDIX 1

Electrolux

Electrolux mission is “to be the world leader in profitably marketing innovative product and service solutions to real problems, thereby making the personal and professional lives of our customers easier and more enjoyable.” (http://www.electrolux.com/node190.aspx).

Electrolux founder Axel Wenner-Gren, a Swedish businessman, was visiting Vienna in 1908 and when looking in a shop window on Kärntnerstrasse he saw an extraordinary machine and got the idea, which later gave birth to the modern vacuum cleaner. In 1912 he started collaboration with the Swedish company AB Lux that was already selling vacuum cleaners in Sweden and in the same year the first modern vacuum cleaner, Lux 1, was produced. During 1915 to 1917 Wenner-Gren started the sales company Svenska Elektron and purchased all the shares of the motor producing Elektronmekaniska. Two years later an agreement between AB Lux and Svenska Elektron AB was settled and the name Electrolux was born. (http://www.electrolux.com/node10.aspx).

Electrolux has become a world-leading producer of appliances and equipment for kitchen and cleaning. Electrolux sells more than 40 million products in 150 countries every year. Today, they are producing refrigerators, vacuum cleaner, dishwasher and washing machines and examples of brand names are Electrolux, AEG-Electrolux, Zanussi, Eureka and Frigidaire. In 2005 the company had sales of 100 billion SEK and 57 000 employees. (http://www.electrolux.com/node10.aspx).

Electrolux has been using expatriates for around thirty years and today there are about 180 expatriates throughout the world. Between the years 2004 and 2005, 44 expatriates have returned home. At the end of expatriation eight percent of the repatriates resigned and 14 percent were discharged. This means that the total loss of repatriates were 22 percent. Furthermore, four percent of the expatriates left the company within a year after starting their international assignment. (Torild Melki).
APPENDIX 2

Expatriate statistics

COST COMPARISON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From-to</th>
<th>Cost at home</th>
<th>Cost on assignment</th>
<th>Cost of local hire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE – CN (family)</td>
<td>EUR 110,000</td>
<td>EUR 174,000</td>
<td>EUR 60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US – CN (family)</td>
<td>EUR 164,250</td>
<td>EUR 340,000</td>
<td>EUR 90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE – SE</td>
<td>EUR 80,000</td>
<td>EUR 118,000</td>
<td>EUR 75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK – SG</td>
<td>EUR 228,000</td>
<td>EUR 275,200</td>
<td>EUR 113,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics from 2005, received by Torild Melki, 2006
APPENDIX 3

8 POST CONTRACT POLICY

Electrolux applies the rules set forth in this section with regard to return to work in the Home Country following termination of the Service Contract.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

It is a main objective of Electrolux that the Expatriate is to be offered re-employment in the Home Country on repatriation from the International Assignment. This Post Contract Policy defines the prerequisites of such re-employment, and the responsibilities of Electrolux and the Expatriate in the process of finding a new job at home.

At the same time, it has to be recognized that, owing to changes in the Group’s composition and organizational structure from time to time, it may be difficult to find a new job at home in connection with the repatriation.

Therefore, this Policy also addresses the Group’s responsibilities towards the Expatriate in such an event and, even, on such occasions when a new job would not be available in the Home Country after a reasonable period of time following the repatriation.

In the following sections 8.2 – 8.8, the word Employee replaces the word Expatriate.

8.2 PREREQUISITES OF RE-EMPLOYMENT IN THE HOME COUNTRY

The Employee is entitled to return to local employment with a Group company in the Home Country when the International Assignment ends, providing that the following criteria are met:

- That the Service Contract is terminated as per 7.1 or 7.2.1 or 7.2.2 or 7.2.3 or 7.2.4 or 7.2.6 but not according to 7.2.2.1 or 7.2.5 or 7.4; and

- That the Employee used to have a permanent open-ended local Group employment in the Home Country immediately prior to the International Assignment; and

- That the Employee following repatriation, accepts to work for any Business Sector and/or Group company and/or in another position and/or in another geographical location than he or she used to do prior to the International Assignment; and, where applicable

- In case of termination due to pregnancy/childbirth
  ...that the Employee meets the stipulations of 8.7.1 or 8.7.2; or

  In case of termination due to illness
  ...that the Employee meets the stipulations of 8.8.

Unless the Employee meets all of the relevant criteria he or she will not be eligible for re-employment in the Home Country, and Electrolux shall not have any further obligations towards him/her following termination of the Service Contract other than relocation to the Home Country as per the stipulations of 6.13.

For Expatriates that are eligible for re-employment in the Home Country, sections 8.3 – 8.9.4 are applicable. Concerning 8.3 – 8.6.2.2 see also Appendix I.
8.3 JOB FINDING RESPONSIBILITIES

The Group’s objective shall be to offer the Employee a suitable regular position, with consideration to job experience, qualifications, and prior performance. The search for a job does not have to be limited to the Business Sector from which the Employee originates.

An important tool in the job search is the Group’s Open Labor Market database, which provides easy access to information about available job opportunities, and enables the Employee to apply for new jobs in the Home Country (and abroad) regardless of his/her current job and location. In the job search, the responsibilities of the Employee and Electrolux shall be shared as follows:

- The Employee shall, well in advance of the termination of the Service Contract (ideally not less than 6 months) inform the Executive manager and HR manager of the Home Company of the wish to return to work at home;

- Said managers shall, on behalf of the Business Sector to which the Employee belongs, conduct a job search within Electrolux in the Home Country. The Business Sector management has the prime responsibility for ensuring that such job search, conducted by Electrolux, is initiated and pursued. The operational responsibility for initiating and pursuing the job search lies with the Executive manager and HR manager of the Home Company;

- On request by the Business Sector or the Home Company, other Business Sectors operating in the Home Country are obliged to participate in the search of a new job, and report job openings to the Executive manager and HR manager of the Home Company;

- The Employee shall pro-actively participate in the job search, within and outside of his/her Home Company and Business Sector.

Under normal circumstances the Employee and the Group Company, by which the Expatriate is to be employed on repatriation, shall agree on the terms and conditions of the new employment in the Home Country prior to termination of the Service Contract.

In sections 8.4 – 8.5.1 said Group company is referred to as the New Employer, irrespective of whether it is the Home Company or another Group company, and regardless of whether or not the Employee accepts employment offered by that company.

8.4 JOB OFFER

When a new regular position is found in the Home Country, the New Employer shall make an offer of employment in writing, the contents of which shall be in accordance with local practice. The New Employer shall acknowledge the Employee’s total job seniority, which is to encompass all previous jobs/employments he or she has had in the Group on a consecutive basis, unless applicable labor law and/or collective agreement should prescribe a different, prevailing definition of job seniority.

If the Employee turns down an offer of a job considered suitable with regard to his/her job experience, qualifications and prior performance in the opinion of Electrolux, due to that is situated in another job location than the one he or she transferred from on commencement of the foreign service, then he or she is entitled to a second job offer. It, too, can be situated in another location. Should the Employee turn down a second offer, then:
• Electrolux shall not have any further obligations towards the Employee in respect of re-employment, or Group employment in any other country; and

• the termination of the Service Contract shall constitute and coincide with termination of Electrolux Group employment

  *or, if the Employee has commenced Re-entry Employment (9.6.1):*

  the termination of Re-entry Employment shall constitute termination of Electrolux Group employment; and

• this Post Contract Policy shall not remain applicable in any part whatsoever.

8.5 REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

The new regular position in the Home Country shall be remunerated in line with the pay structure of the New Employer. Benefits shall be in line with the New Employer’s normal terms and conditions of employment.

The Employee’s prior Remuneration and Benefits during the International Assignment – inclusive of the Pensionable Salary – shall not constitute a basis for the Remuneration and Benefits at the New Employer. The reason is that the terms and conditions of employment for the International Assignment are specific for the Host Country the Expatriate has been assigned to, and his/her job position there. Such terms and conditions are not, therefore, transferable to employment in the Home Country.

8.5.1 Minimum wage guarantee

If the Employee’s new regular position is equal to, or less than the position he or she had prior to the International Assignment, then he or she is guaranteed the greater of the current market Remuneration for the position offered and the Remuneration he or she had in the Home Country prior to the International Assignment, adjusted for the general salary development in the New Employer during his/her foreign stay.

8.6 RE-EMPLOYMENT IF A REGULAR POSITION IS NOT FOUND PRIOR TO REPATRIATION

8.6.1 Re-entry Employment

If a regular position is not found prior to repatriation, the Employee shall be offered salaried employment in the Home Company while the job search continues (see below). This so-called Re-entry Employment does not have to entail a defined and specific job position, but the Employee shall be at the disposal of the Home Company in order to execute temporary job tasks assigned to him/her.

Re-entry Employment shall commence immediately upon termination of the Service Contract. It is to be open-ended, or fixed-term for a minimum period of three (3) months, as decided by the management of the Business Sector, observing compliance with the Home Country’s labor law and/or collective agreement.
During the first three (3) months of Re-entry Employment, the Group’s and Employee’s search for a regular position shall continue. During that time, the Home Company is not allowed to submit Notice-of-termination of an open-ended employment or terminate a fixed-term employment.

If it is not possible to find a regular position during this time, the Home Company has the right to terminate a fixed-term employment, or submit Notice-of-termination of an open-ended employment, as from the 4th month, and make a final settlement of the Employee’s Group employment in accordance with 8.6.2.2.

During Re-entry Employment, the Employee shall be guaranteed Remuneration equal to that which he or she had in the Home Country immediately prior to the International Assignment, adjusted for the general salary development in the Home Company during his/her foreign stay.

8.6.2 Termination of Re-entry Employment

8.6.2.1 Termination if a regular position is found in the Group

If a regular position is found during Re-entry Employment, it shall be replaced by regular employment with the New Employer and 8.4, 8.5 and 8.5.1 will be applicable.

8.6.2.2 Termination if a regular position is not found in the Group

After three (3) months of Re-entry Employment, the Home Company can terminate the Employee’s Group employment at any time.

Notice procedure, notice period, and severance indemnity (if any) shall comply with the Home Country’s labor law, collective agreement, and/or general practice, as is applicable.

If the salary for the Notice Period and/or severance indemnity (if any) amounts to less than one annualized Re-entry Employment Base Salary, counted from the commencement date of Re-entry Employment, then the Home Company shall pay the Employee the balance up to one annualized Base Salary. The payment is conditioned upon the Expatriate’s signing any settlement/release documents that may be required by the Home Company.

8.6.2.1.1 Allocation of severance costs

Where the Home Company and the Host Company for the International Assignment are within the same Business Sector, the management of the Business Sector shall designate the legal entity that will bear the severance costs.

Where the Home Company and the Host Company for the International Assignment are in different Business Sectors, the management of both Business Sectors shall reach a mutual agreement as to the Sector that shall bear the severance costs.

8.7 APPLICATION OF POST CONTRACT POLICY IN CASE OF REPATRIATION DUE TO CHILDBIRTH

If the Employee terminates the Service Contract due to pregnancy/childbirth, the Post Contract Policy is applicable as follows:
8.7.1 Repatriation prior to childbirth

If the repatriation coincides with termination of the Service Contract, the Employee is entitled to immediate Re-entry Employment (8.6.1) in the Home Company. Providing that the Home Company can assign job tasks to the Employee prior to the childbirth, she has the possibility to work up to the time of birth, but she can also take unpaid leave-of-absence or pre-natal maternity leave (if legally permitted). If the Employee reports to work in the Home Company immediately on conclusion of legally prescribed maternity leave, taken on a consecutive basis immediately after the Child was born, 8.3 through 8.6.2.2 are applicable.

If the Employee does not report to work at the prescribed point in time, the Home Company has the right to terminate Re-entry Employment, and Electrolux will not have any further obligations towards the Employee with regard to future Group employment.

8.7.2 Repatriation after childbirth

The Post Contract Policy comes into effect when the Employee concludes legally prescribed maternity leave, taken on a consecutive basis immediately after the Child was born, if she immediately reports to work in the Home Company. At that time 8.3 through 8.6.2.2 are applicable. If the Employee does not meet this requirement, Electrolux will not have any further obligations towards her with regard to future Group employment.

8.8 APPLICATION OF POST CONTRACT POLICY IN CASE OF REPATRIATION DUE TO ILLNESS

8.3 through 8.6.2.2 are applicable if the Employee regains the ability to work, and reports to work in the Home Company, within 15 months of the first day of the absence from work due to illness commencing during the International Assignment. Otherwise, Electrolux will not have any further obligations towards him/her with regard to future Group employment.

9 GRIEVANCES

If the Expatriate and Electrolux should enter into a disagreement as to the interpretation/application of the terms and conditions of service for the International Assignment, both parties should aim to reach an understanding through negotiation. Should it not be possible to reach an agreement, the matter would be referred to settlement in accordance with prevailing legislation.
APPENDIX 4

Interview guide in Swedish

Namn?
Position och arbetsuppgifter?
Antal år i organisationen?
Antal internationella uppdrag?

Frågor till HR manager

Expatriering- och repatrieringserfarenheter
1. Vilken är er syn på expatriater och repatriater?
2. Vilken är deras roll i organisationen?
3. Har ni något mentorprogram?
4. Vilka rutiner finns för expatriater?
5. Finns det några förberedelser inför utlandsvisning?
6. Vad har ni för förväntningar på hur utlandsuppgiften sköts?
7. Hur ser kontakten ut mellan organisationen och expatriater under utlandsvisningen?
8. Vilka rutiner finns för repatriater?
9. Upplevde du vid något tillfälle att repatriaten hade problem?
10. Hur hanterades de eventuella problem av repatriaten och organisationen?

Karriärpåverkan
11. Hur ser kontrakten ut för expatriater?
12. Finns det någon karriärdigivning?
13. Hur ser repatriatens karriärmöjligheter ut efter hemkomsten?

Lärdomar
14. Vad tillför utlandsuppgiften organisationen?
15. Vad lär sig en expatriat utomlands?
16. Anser du att en repatriat kan tillföra organisationen något?
Kunskapsöverföring

18. Hanteras repatriatens läromar, i så fall på vilket sätt? (föredrag, speciella arbetsgrupper).
19. Anser du att det finns något som borde förbättras?

Frågor till repatriater

Expatriering- och repatrieringserfarenheter

1. I vilka länder har du arbetat, samt hur länge?
2. Hur upplevde du ditt utlandsuppdrag?
3. Hade du en mentor/kontaktperson?
4. Hur förberedde du dig inför uppdraget?
5. Vad hade du för förväntningar på uppdraget?
6. Fick du någon hjälp från organisationen?
7. Hur såg kontakten ut mellan dig och organisationen under utlandsvistelsen?
8. Hur var det att komma hem igen?
9. Hur såg dina förväntningar ut inför hemkomsten?
10. Hur blev du mottagen av din organisation när du kom hem?
11. Fanns det något stöd för familjen?
12. Upplevde du några problem vid hemkomsten?
13. Hur hanterades de eventuella problemen av dig och organisationen?

Karriärpåverkan

14. Vad för slags kontrakt hade du när du åkte utomlands, villkoren?
15. Fanns det en karriärplan för tiden efter utlandsvistelsen?
16. Har din utlandsvisstelse påverkat dina arbetsuppgifter?
17. Har din position eller arbetsuppgifter inom företaget förändrats?
18. Har du fått något jobberbjudande från konkurrenter efter hemkomsten?
Lärdomar
19. Lärde du dig något under utlandsvissten?
20. Har utlandsvissten förändrat ditt arbetssätt och din syn att se på saker?
21. Har du någon användning för den kunskap som du införskaffat utomlands?

Kunskapsöverföring
22. Enligt dig, har organisationen tagit till vara på denna kunskap?
24. Finns det system/verktyg/rutiner för att överföra kunskap inom organisationen?
25. Har kunskapen spridits inom organisationen?
26. Anser du att det finns något som borde förbättras?
APPENDIX 5

Interview guide

Name?
Position and task?
Years within the organization?
Number of international assignments?

Questions for the HR manager

Expatriation and repatriation experiences
1. What is your view on repatriates and expatriates?
2. What is their role within the organization?
3. Do you have a mentor program?
4. What kind of routines do you have for expatriates?
5. Is there any preparations prior the international assignment?
6. What are your expectations on how the assignment should be handled?
7. How does the contact between the organization and the expatriate look like during the assignment?
8. What routines do you have for repatriates?
9. Have you ever experienced a situation where the repatriate has had problems?
10. How were the problems handled by the repatriate and the organization?

Career considerations
11. How does the contract for an expatriate look like?
12. Do you have any career counseling?
13. What are the repatriates’ career possibilities after the return home?

Lessons learned
14. What do international assignments add to the organization?
15. What does an expatriate learn abroad?
16. Do you believe that a repatriate can add something to the organization?
Knowledge transfer

17. Do you have any systems/tools/routines for knowledge transfer?
   (Intranet, lectures).
18. Do you extract the knowledge the repatriate has acquired, if so in what way?
   (lecturer or task force).
19. Do you believe that there is anything that needs to be improved?

Questions for the repatriates

Expatriation and repatriation experiences

1. In which countries have you been working and for how long?
2. How did you experience your international assignment?
3. Did you have a mentor/contact person?
4. How did you prepare yourself before the assignment?
5. What expectations did you have on the assignment?
6. Did you get any help from the organization?
7. How did the contact between you and the home office look like during
   the assignment?
8. What was it like to come back home?
9. How did your expectations look like before the return home?
10. How were you received by the organization when you came home?
11. Did you get any family support?
12. Did you experience any problems when coming home?
13. How did you and the organization deal with the problems?

Career considerations

14. What kind of contract did you have when you went abroad, what were the terms?
15. Was there a career plan for the time after the assignment?
16. Did the assignment affect your job description?
17. Has your position or job description within the company changed?
18. Have you gotten any job offers from other organizations after the return home?
Lessons learned
19. Did you learn anything during the assignment?
20. Has the time abroad changed your way of working and way of looking at things?
21. Do you have any use of the knowledge you gained abroad?

Knowledge transfer
22. Are there any systems/tools/routines for knowledge transfer within the organization?
23. Have you transferred the knowledge learned to the organization? (lectures, task force).
24. According to you, has the organization acknowledged and received this knowledge?
25. Has it been spread throughout the organization?
26. Do you believe that there is something that could be improved?
APPENDIX 6

Agenda

Tonvikten i vår uppsats ligger på hur repatriatens lärdomar under utlandsvistelsen kan tas tillvara på av organisationen och utnyttjas på ett effektivt sätt. Vi är därför intresserade av hur organisationen skall agera för att i största möjliga mån vara mottagliga för repatriatens lärdomar och hur repatriaten blir villig att använda sina lärdomar i organisationen.

Intervjuns fyra ämnen

1. Repatriering – utlandsvistelsen, men framförallt hemkomsten, företagets roll
2. Karriär – kontrakt, rådgivning, arbetsuppgiftsutveckling
3. Lärdomar – under utlandsvistelsen
4. Kunskapsöverföring – nytan av lärdomar efter hemkomsten