A Study of Expatriate Adjustment from a Multiple Stakeholder Perspective: Mainland Chinese Expatriates (MCEs) in Hong Kong

by

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this Dissertation Project is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

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Date: January 23, 2015
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SYNOPSIS

This research investigates the adjustment of Mainland Chinese Expatriates (MCEs) working in Hong Kong from a multiple-stakeholder perspective. Expatriate adjustment is defined as how well psychologically and capably an expatriate adjusts to perform their job in a foreign country. While it is well understood that successful expatriation, requires the expatriate to adjust to their new working and living environment and that personal ability, family, co-workers and home-country colleagues are instrumental in the process, few studies explore these factors in unison, despite the rational expectation that they are to some degree interdependent. Moreover, traditionally research on expatriation examines the experience of developed country or ‘Western’ expatriates so there is little known of the applicability of insights from this literature to the experience of non-traditional expatriates from developing countries. Uniquely, this study explores the experience of Mainland Chinese Expatriates (MCE) in Hong Kong. The experience of these expatriates in the special administrative zone of Hong Kong has not previously been considered in expatriate research, despite their significance as an expatriate cohort in Hong Kong and despite the unique challenges they face.

Through in-depth interviews with MCE in Hong Kong this study explores the experience of expatriate adjustment from a multiple stakeholder perspective and provides novel insights into the role of each for adjustment. This research finds that the expatriate’s personal ability is strongly related to expatriate adjustment. Job related skills, language (Cantonese and English) and culture awareness skills (consequent to a perceived cultural distance between the mainland and Hong Kong) are found to be vital for adjustment. As might be expected, supports from the expatriates families was found to be a crucial factor for successful adjustment, however, the family-support revealed in this study goes well beyond what is envisaged by extant research. Despite, perceived cultural difference (and reported tension within the general environment), information sharing, cultural-training and job skills as well as living supports from the host country co-workers were found to be widespread and very positive for MCE adjustment in Hong Kong. By contrast home-country supports from China were lacking. The implications for extant understanding of expatriate adjustment and future research are discussed and in keeping with the practical
focus of the DBA degree, practical implications for MNCs and international human resource managers are clearly articulated.