

A career in the view of repatriates: A case study in a Brazilian mining multinational

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ABSTRACT

Internationalization has become a reality for many organizations that recurrently send their employees to live and work abroad. On their return, repatriates may not have their expectations fulfilled in terms of career accession, resulting in demotivation and possible evasion, which characterizes the failure of expatriation. This article aims to analyze repatriates' expectations and perceptions of career growth and recognition in a mining company. The case study was performed in a Brazilian multinational, with eleven semi-structured interviews with returnees and a member of the area of global mobility and documental research. The data were processed through the technique of content analysis, where it is noted that only four repatriated obtained growth in their career after returning, contrary to expectations. However, when it comes to the perception of recognition, seven stated feeling recognized. It is concluded that although a career plan for the repatriates is explicitly missing, the feeling of recognition denotes confidence in the organization. Hopes and expectations about their future development and career fulfillment were also noted, be it at some point after the economic crisis.

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1. Introduction

The growing internationalization of organizations is a consequence of globalization. Implementation of new businesses in international markets are examples of strategic actions for organizations to expand and globalize. The expatriation of employees – sending employees to work in a country abroad for a period of time – is a practice for this expansion (Dutra, 2002). This practice is widely used by organizations for a variety of reasons, such as to fill technical positions, to develop leadership, and promote organizational development (Bonache et al., 2010; Tungli et al., 2009).

The implementation of strategic international operations requires international human resource management (IHRM), which is recognized as crucial to the success or failure of expatriation (Deresky, 2004). In addition to acquiring experience and personal and professional growth, what motivates the employee to accept the international assignment

is the expectation of career development (Martins, 2013). At the time of repatriation there can be disappointment when expectations are not realized, often because of a lack of alignment with the organization's planning of the process, generating problems such as dissatisfaction, a reduced commitment, and unproductivity (Tanure et al., 2007). The aim of this study is to analysis expectations and perceptions of expatriate career growth, in addition to the company's recognition of their achievements.

The theme of repatriation is still emerging in national studies and is often overlooked by multinationals (Gallon, 2011; Spohr, 2011). In addition to expatriation and its stages, this study explores the preparation process for expatriates' return, their cultural and professional rehabilitation, as well as the causes of failure of repatriation and their consequences. According to Gallon (2011), expatriates are sent abroad with a mission and ample

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activities but when they return to the country of origin they often execute the same or similar activities prior to expatriation. In some cases there is a lack of specific activities for the qualified employee for work abroad. This fact confirms the need to deepen the theme of repatriation and thus contribute to the literature focusing on the career of returnees. This article assumes that repatriation is still poorly planned by organizations. There is also still an absence of effective career planning, which entails dissonances in returnees' expectations of growth in careers and recognition by the organization.

To assess this, a case study was performed in a Brazilian multinational, with eleven interviews being held with returnees along with a member from the area of global mobility and documental research. The data were analyzed based on the technique of content analysis.

The article starts with an introduction, later there is a theoretical framework addressing the management of expatriation, which is followed by a chapter on repatriation and career. The methodology is then presented with a characterization of the organization and the analysis of the results. Finally, we present the study's conclusions and contributions as well as its limitations and suggestions for future research and practice.

2. Management of expatriation

The capital accumulation of the golden age of capitalism, the opening of markets, and the possibility of high profits has made the world into a place that is conducive to the internationalization of capital. With this, shares of capital were allocated in countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa through multinational companies, promoting a rapid process of economic globalization and modifications in labor relations. Competing with global competitors and dedication to internationalization is a necessity for purchasing inputs and expanding operations. In Brazil, national organizations exposed to foreign competition have been internationalizing since the 1990s (Orsi, 2010).

The importance of IWRM is growing, considering the greater complexity of international operations and the need to ensure quality management. Such complexity is due to legal and cultural diversities in various countries where expatriates are sent (Champoux, 2011). IWRM is considered a key element of global strategy for the implementation of business and is recognized as a determining factor of

success or failure in international operations. This is due to the responsibility of managing the steps of expatriation, such as selection, training, and employee support (Deresky, 2004).

In an ever-changing scenario, IWRM acts as a strategic partner, facilitates the achievement of organizational objectives, and has an important role of attracting, keeping, and developing expatriates. The complexity of business in multinational contexts requires greater sensitivity from IWRM in order to deal with diversity and cooperation that is necessary for success in the expatriation process (Sousa, 2014).

One can thus realize the importance of IWRM for expatriation, since qualified employees with technical skills and cultural understanding to properly support the organization's internationalization strategy are essential.

2.1 Expatriation

The expatriate is someone who will act for a specified period or permanently in a country other than that in which they were hired to work (Dutra, 2002). Organizations opt for expatriation for various strategic reasons, such as: to fill positions that are not supplied by local workers due to a lack of technical or managerial skills; to develop leaders; and when opening a unit to promote organizational development and enable greater control and coordination with its headquarters, through the interaction of its processes and socialization of its members (Bonache et al., 2010; Tungli et al., 2009).

It is expected that expatriates, in addition to solving problems, generate new knowledge for organizations and/or develop leadership skills. Leaving an old restricted vision of the organizational and business world in favor of a more global vision enables a greater understanding of the complexities and specificities of each country, helping to develop leadership skills and adapting more effectively to the business of the organization. It is worth noting that not every employee sent abroad has abundant knowledge to share or characteristics to become a future leader in the organization. Thus, it is important prior knowledge of professionals about why are expatriates and the expectation of the company in relation to their work and their career in the organization (Black & Gregersen, 1999).

According to Tanure et al. (2007), it is important that expatriation is seen as a process with

interrelated steps for its success. The first step of the expatriation process corresponds to the identification of the organization's internationalization strategy in order for expatriation to be conducted properly by IWRM.

The clarity of expatriation objectives makes up the second stage. The transparency of the procedures of human resources when dealing with possible differences between the expectations of the organization and of the future expatriate with regards to the expatriation process is crucial to the whole process. That is, the motives and objectives of the mission need to be clearly agreed upon by both parties. Such objectivity aids good results for the selection of professionals to be expatriated and minimizes potential problems in the process of repatriation.

The third step deals with the selection of candidates for expatriation. Among their criteria, technical knowledge and good performance in the domestic operation are cited. Confidence deposited by the company in the employee is also taken as a criterion among Brazilian organizations. In addition to technical skills, according to Freitas and Dantas (2011), the expatriate should possess an ability and ease in adapting to different cultures and unfamiliar situations. However, many times the selection processes cease to cherish such criterion. Other characteristics of expatriates are also associated with the success of the process: the ability to communicate, a high-level of sociability, facility with languages, a cosmopolitan nature, and behavioral flexibility. The family is also seen as instrumental in the selection of an expatriate as well as their evaluated opinion. A lack of support from a spouse or partner can be a factor of failure since family tensions cause (in many cases) a lack of concentration at work – such is its pressure (Ivancevich, 2008).

According to Camara (2008), it is important that the potential expatriate is sent to the potential country of destination in order to know and visit the place of work and the new environment. This would minimize future pitfalls, depending on the interaction between the candidate and the organizational culture and place, if the decision is in favor of the transfer. The non-acceptance by candidates of proposed international transfers can generate doubts about the possibility of refusal represent future stagnation or even regression in their careers (Martins, 2013).

The main factors that motivate future expats to accept the mission include the financial benefits, the knowledge of new cultures, and the personal and professional challenges that they will have to face. The expectation that future expatriates have in terms of career development and its recognition by the organization also stands out. Many problems generated in repatriation are the result of unfulfilled expectations, especially those relating to organizational career development (Tanure et al, 2007; Martins, 2013).

The fourth step, preparation and guidance of candidates, is seen as very important for happily situating them in the new country of work. However, training is neglected by many organizations, highlighting a possible factor for mission failure (Teixeira, Silva & Lessa, 2011). The focus of training is usually on cultural and environmental issues, for which books, videos, and even visits to the country of destination are provided. In the new daily life of an expatriate, they will have to develop and maintain relationships with various actors in their new country. It is therefore important to analyze, locate, and recognize potential problems that will arise due to difficulties or unforeseen events, such as relationships (Deresky, 2004).

Proper adjustment and expatriate preparation to live in a new culture is needed to reduce culture shock. This shock can be seen as a state of confusion, frustration, and anxiety resulting in not knowing how to act in an unfamiliar culture (Finuras, 2011). Family stress, hostility with locals, and a lack of productivity at work can be results of the shock. This could cause the expatriate to return early, which would be viewed as a mission failure, as well as cost the organization (Gallon et al., 2013; Kubo & Braga, 2013). When an executive is transferred abroad, the organization expects to benefit from their new experiences and capabilities, such as the improvement of managerial skills, world vision, interpersonal skills, and command (Deresky, 2004).

According to Ivancevich (2008), the selection process is a complex, critical step that should be capable of finding a successful expatriate, decreasing the chances of failure of the expatriation. In other words, it is essential to choose the right executive for the given function – a person who is appropriate for cultural and technical improvement. However, for Deresky (2004), training must be given not only to the future expatriate, but also the accompanying family.

Such preparation is requested due to the fact that family are more exposed to local culture than the expatriate, who is more within the routine of work in the organization. The family is a powerful influencing element in decisions about employee expatriation, as well as on the possible early return from the mission and, thus, their adaptation is to be recognized by the organization as a subject of concern and planned action (Andreason, 2008; Martins, 2013).

In the fifth step, the adjustment of expatriates' future role in the organization is addressed. The sixth and seventh stages comprise the performance management of expatriates and their remuneration, where incentives and benefits offered by the organization are adjusted to the needs and performance of the expatriate. An appropriate remuneration policy is essential when there is a need to attract, retain, and motivate expatriate professionals, as one of the motivations for the expats to accept the mission are the financial gains (Deresky, 2004; Martins, 2013).

The last stage corresponds to the repatriation, which is often neglected (Spohr, 2011). However, this complex process of return and rehabilitation has a high degree of importance to the organization and to the repatriate.

3. Repatriation and Career

The repatriated professional can be understood as someone who returns from a mission to their country of origin (Gallon et al., 2013). This phase of readaption to old work environments is considered to be as important and critical as the phase of training and adaptation to the new culture performed in the first moments of expatriation. A career can be understood as a result of work performed and positions held during the life of a person, which are full of expectations, necessities, individual aspirations, and constraints from an organization and society. It is the result of the relationship between the individual and the organization, an element of dynamic reconciliation between both parties (Dutra, 2011).

Repatriation, if not designed properly, can put at risk a made investment that had the goal of returning the expatriate with experience and expertise. It is worth noting that not many organizations have repatriation programs. The alleged reasons are the lack of specialized professionals in programs of this type, their high costs, and the lack of knowledge

about the importance of programs of these programs. The amount of consultancy specializing in international career management is scarce, causing organizations to assume such responsibility (Deresky, 2004; Domingues, 2011).

According to Black and Gregersen (1999), the failure of international assignments can be characterized by the lack of importance given to the return of the expatriate, who believes the success of their mission deserves recognition. Returnees wish to apply their new skills and knowledge in positions requiring their experiences acquired during expatriation, but are often disappointed by the indifference of the organization in relation to their return and new assignments. It is still common to find repatriates who fall into temporary assignments or take on old functions and so do not adapt to their new positions. They generally occupy lower positions than that found prior to expatriation and is different from the role played abroad, which has greater independence (Freitas, 2006; Gallon, 2011). With this, such employees face difficulties, such as motivation, feelings of abandonment, and uncertainty about their career and continuity in the organization.

The reverse culture shock is something common in cases of failure when employees are repatriated. It can be understood as the disorientation and difficulty of assimilating and reinserting themselves in the organization. However, it is not just the returnee that feels displaced; the family, and more specifically the spouse, can also present difficulties when it comes to reestablishment, both professionally and in social relations. Other consequences of an inadequate repatriation practice include employees' expectations about careers (after repatriation) not matching reality, generating a negative image of expatriation that can be a disincentive for future candidates (Deresky, 2004; Gallon et al., 2013).

A repatriation program suitable to reach the expected results is one that begins before the start of the mission. Policy development and planning consistent with expatriation is essential. It is important that employees perceive that the organization considers such missions as part of career development and that it properly values the qualifications and new skills of the repatriate. The organization should have goals that reflect long-term plans, commitments, and rewards for the benefit of the expatriate (Deresky, 2004).

In order to avoid a loss of knowledge, experience, and skills developed overseas by expatriates – and to best take advantage of them – organizations should adopt important practices related to repatriation. A formal repatriation program is an investment that offers mentoring, intercultural training, and structuring of a career plan for the repatriated in order to optimize the chances of the organization retaining these professionals. However, lacking elements in such a program could harm the readaptation of the family, have financial consequences for the organization, increase staff turnover, and reduce productivity. To question the cost of such measures, organizations that see repatriation as critical to the success of a mission consider such expenses as insignificant in relations to the benefits of retaining professionals with global experience and vision. Organizations that have been in foreign markets for more than ten years already value and include repatriation in their international career policies (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Domingues, 2011; Spohr, 2011).

Repatriation should be recognized as part of the development process of the expatriate. However, for many returnees, this is a moment of professional and personal disorder. There is a lack of effective planning for repatriation, which is not seen as critical, contrary to what occurs at the moment of the employee trip abroad. Organizations that recognize the importance of this moment assist the returnees by providing career guidance and put have work that puts into practice their international experiences. Career planning of returnees in advance becomes important, since its failure can corroborate with employees' motivation and their subsequent departure from the organization. (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Domingues, 2011; Gallon et al., 2013, 2014)

It turns out that the whole process of expatriation encompasses practices that reinforce themselves at every stage, and their proper management becomes critical to the success of both the international mission and the career development of the returnee.

4. Methodology

The research sought to analyze expectations and perceptions that returnees have about what is done in relation to their career development and about their feeling of recognition. The qualitative character adopted for this research allows the understanding of beliefs, attitudes, and motivations related to the

behavior of respondents in specific social contexts (Gaskel, 2002).

In July 2013, eleven semi-structured interviews were held with returnees and a member from the area of global mobility and documental research. Open interviews had a list of questions arranged in a chronological way, organized by concepts of pre-expatriation, expatriation, and repatriation. The selection for conducting the interviews was made through the networking of researchers and referrals from other returnees. Being Brazilian; being a repatriate of the studied multinational; remaining on the mission for at least six months; and being repatriated for a maximum of four years, were all criteria for participation in this study. Content analysis was used in this study, which allows interpretation through data analysis techniques and systematic procedures (Bardin, 2009).

5. Characterization of the organization

Research was done on a Brazilian multinational organization in the mining business, which is recognized as the largest producer of iron ore, being present in more than 30 countries. After 60 years of experience and a history of highlights in terms of production and profit, the studied organization started to have problems. In the years 2008 and 2012, there was necessity to decrease investments and reduce costs due to the slowdown of the global economy, lower global demand, and the fall in the price of iron ore.

Its expatriation program is aligned to organizational strategies. Some of the reasons for international placements include: filling strategic positions; addressing the lack of technical expertise and management; and developing employees with potential. They seek in potential expatriates appropriate technical knowledge for the job profile, global vision, and mobility. The selected employee undergoes a process consisting of three phases. The first stage is the pre-assignment, which comprises of preparation, assistance, and guidance for future expatriates; the second stage concerns allocation in the destination country; and, with the end of the assignment, the employee returns to the home country, i.e., repatriation.

In terms of careers, the information obtained demonstrates that "the company will make its best efforts to find a suitable job in the country of origin" (Instrução De Mobilidade Global, 2011, p. 15).

Provisions of rehabilitation training for the returnees were not found and their existence was also denied by the interviewee of the area of global mobility.

6. Presentation and analysis of results

In order to analyze the results obtained, the technique based on Bardin (2009) allowed the organization of the content of the interviews in eight categories with respective codes, as shown in Table 1. Such categories were defined based on the literature that related to the purpose of the research and features a closed grade of analysis. The division of categories is arranged chronologically, facilitating analysis. Through the categories formulated it is possible to define the profile of respondents, as well as understand the process of expatriation, which are essential to explore repatriation and its relationship with careers.

married couples, with the exception of E8, were accompanied by their wives, who were in favor of expatriation.

The more common destination countries were Malaysia and Oman followed by China, South Africa, and Australia. Respondents had been in the organization from anywhere between four months to nine years. The duration of expatriation ranged between six months and five years, and the time since the return to the organization varied between three weeks to three and a half years.

6.2 Pre-expatriation

The first point to be addressed is the way candidates were chosen and how the opportunity arose. Electing the right people is necessary to increase the chances of success (Ivancevich, 2008). Nine expatriates had

Tab. 1
Categories and codes

1) Profile of the interviewees	3) Adaptation	6) Readaptation
Gender	Cultural adaptation	Readaptation training
Age	Professional adaptation	Cultural readaptation
Marital status	Possible anticipation of return	Professional readaptation
Children		
Country of destination	4) Perspective of the work	7) Career
Time in organization	Mission objective	Function before vs function after
Time of expatriation	Communication with origin unit	Perception about career
Time of return	remuneration and benefits	Recognition
	Monitoring by the organization	
2) Pre-expatriation	5) Pre-repatriation	8) Pros and cons
Selection	Reason for return	Positive aspects
Reason for acceptance	Planning future position	Negative aspects
Expectations in terms of career	Concerns before the return	
Possibility of refusal		
Clarity of mission objective		
Cultural training		
Sense of preparation		

Source: Authors

6.1 Profile of interviewees

From the data obtained from the survey, it is possible to establish a profile of returnees, as shown in the table 2.

Based on the data in table 2, it appears that respondents were between 25 and 49 years old. For the most part, they are male, married, and without children. Such data approach the idea of Ferraz (2011) that associates the profile of the expatriate with males, married, without children, and with an average of 35 years. It is worth mentioning that all

been selected by invitations by superiors such as managers and directors. There were two cases in which expatriates participated in the selection process through their own initiative.

In relation to the reason for accepting the assignment, the opportunity to face a personal and professional challenge was the most addressed reason by the interviewees (observed in seven reports), demonstrating that they are professionals concerned with living complex experiences that aid their personal develop. As pointed out in four cases, expectations in terms of career advancement was a

Tab. 2
Profile of respondents

Interviewed	Country of destination	Gender	Age	Marital status	Children	Time in the Organization	Duration of expatriation	Period since return
E1	Oman	F	31	Single	No	4 years	1 year and 6 months	1 year and 5 months
E2	Australia	M	25	Single	No	4 years and 10 months	6 months	3 months
E3	China	M	29	Single	No	5 years	2 years	3.5 years
E4	China	M	49	Married	No	9 years	3.5 years	6 months
E5	South Africa	M	29	Single	No	3 years and 4 months	1 year and 8 months	9 months
E6	Oman	M	40	Married	Yes	8 years	5 years	3 weeks
E7	Oman and Malaysia	F	32	Single	No	4 years	2.5 years	4 months
E8	Malaysia	M	32	Married	No	8 years	2 years	7 months
E9	Malaysia	M	30	Married	No	3 years	6 months	1 year and 10 months
E10	Oman	M	40	Married	Yes	4 years	5 years	3 weeks
E11	Malaysia	F	31	Married	No	4 months	8 months	1 year and 7 months

Source: Prepared by the authors

motivator for taking the placement. The opportunity to broaden horizons and gain language fluency were also reasons indicated three times. In two instances, the acceptance came through the opportunity for the family to live abroad, and for two other returnees, they saw a "unique opportunity", having no children or being single. Curricular enrichment was also registered in two reports.

When asked about career expectations as a result of their assignment, it was observed that seven returnees expected accession. This highlights the fact that many employees accept the mission and wait for career advancement (Martins, 2013).

Refusing expatriation – depending on organizational culture – can represent a step backwards in the careers of employees, because some organizations do not welcome such denial (Martins, 2013). However, according to those interviewed, the possibility of removal through non-acceptance was not apparent.

Regarding knowledge of the purpose of expatriation, nine respondents stated they were clear about the purpose of the mission. Such clarity, according Tanure et al. (2007), is an important factor for the success of international assignments. However, two reports show that although receiving clarification of the plan before the mission, when expats arrived in the target destination they still felt

uncertain about the details of the objective and its real application, with the possibility of the planned not turning out as expected.

Cultural training enables the professional to better acclimatize to the country of destination. If neglected, it becomes a factor of mission failure (Teixeira, Silva & Lessa, 2011). In this case, cultural training was made available to all, including for the companions of the married expatriates. This supports the idea of Deresky (2004) that advocates training for family members, as they are more exposed to daily life in the country of destination and have considerable influence on expats. For nine respondents, such training was useful as preparation for expatriation. However, in two cases the cultural training was not seen as effective. According to respondents, the classes were considered weak and could even be disregarded since its content was read from a book, which could be done by the expatriate. Although these two cases demonstrate a failure, it was found that in most cases the training was well rated by employees. This step is considered to be of fundamental importance in helping to reduce culture shock (Deresky, 2004).

When asked about the sense of preparation for expatriation, six respondents stated they felt prepared. Two respondents, however, denied such a sensation and three returnees claimed that there were challenges that would only be known in the

country of destination. This can be explained by Tanure et al. (2007), who argue that cultural training must be done prior to expatriation as well as after the start of the mission, given new insights and experiences.

6.3 Adaptation

The adaptation to the new culture is an important factor, since it too can cause mission failures, according to Black and Gregersen (1999). However, this can be avoided with effective preparation. Seven respondents felt no difficulties of adapting to the destination country, demonstrating that cultural adaptation was not a problem for them. However, three respondents made mention of the local language, such as Australian English and Mandarin, and one respondent mentioned cultural differences, which represent adversity.

On the adjustment to the new working environment, no one felt it difficult to adapt, both in relation to their mission as well as their co-workers. There are reports that demonstrate the receptivity of local employees and, also, of expatriates who were already there.

In relation to the possible anticipation of the return to the country of origin, the interruption of expatriation can be a consequence of a misguided adaptation of the expatriate to the place of destination, according Kubo and Braga (2013), either because of language, cultural issues, or through adaptation to the new working environment. However, seven respondents did not think of returning before the allotted time. This idea only came up twice, and in two cases they returned due to personal issues.

6.4 Perspective of the work

When verifying the goals of assignments, eight of the eleven interviewees had as their mission the development and structuring of a new project or business, illustrating a placement of importance and of a strategic nature. This highlights the idea of Gallon (2011), where an expatriate during their assignment often acts in important and strategic activities or projects for the organization, with needed proper authority.

An important factor for expatriation is the interaction between the organization and employee, even at a distance. Seven respondents did not feel

isolated and participated in discussions with employees from Brazil, demonstrating some interface with the origin unit. Only four respondents claimed to have not participated in discussions, because they were more focused on the project. However, it is interesting that the organization is attentive to such a distancing as it could possibly cause social reintegration difficulties during repatriation.

When asked about remuneration and benefits and if these were compensating for the difficulties of being away from home, eight respondents stated yes. This shows that a policy of good pay and good benefits is crucial to attract, retain, and motivate the expatriate on the mission, since the financial benefits are one of the main reasons for employees accepting expatriation (Deresky, 2004; Martins, 2013). Three returnees, however, stated that the remuneration and benefits received during repatriation were not critical factors for them and showed indifference.

In regards to the attention given by the organization to adapt the expatriates, ten returnees claimed not to have received a monitoring from the origin unit, with local employees compensating for this absence. It is worth mentioning that there was division of opinions regarding this lack of monitoring. While six respondents reported omission of the origin unit in supporting and monitoring, four claimed to believe that, if needed, the people from global mobility would meet expatriates. A lack of proactivity of IWRM as to the monitoring of expatriates was observed.

6.5 Pre-repatriation

The decision to return to the origin unit was also addressed in this research in order to better understand the reasons why employees returned. Seven cases were observed in which the return had been previously defined and the expatriates returned on schedule. On the other hand, two cases were observed in which, due to the crisis that affected the organization, some projects were stopped and two respondents returned to Brazil unexpectedly. Already in two cases, personal issues motivated the expatriates to interrupt the expected duration of their placement, demonstrating the influence of personal life in professional life. It is also worth noting that eight of the respondents demonstrated a willingness to remain abroad for more time. With three having denied this desire, it is interesting to

note a report that expresses the relationship between the personal and the professional. According to interviewee E5, the great challenge of expatriation is to find the balance between professional and personal situations. In this case, personal life was being jeopardized and then the decision was made to return to the origin unit, although there was the desire to keep the interviewee on the mission by the organization.

Before returning expatriates to the origin unit, it is important to plan the position to be occupied by them, aligning their career expectations with the development policies of the organization, and demonstrating a concern with taking advantage of the obtained experience (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Domingues, 2011; Gallon et al., 2013, 2014). Through the reports it can be seen that prior to expatriation, there was no planning in regards to the career of the employees after the mission. However, shortly before their return, in eight cases, conversations about their future positions were held. However, it is important to note that the quality of the discussions were questionable and disassociated from previous planning. Furthermore, the results in many cases were influenced by economic conditions.

After having lived abroad and having distanced themselves from the origin unit, the moment of return often represents great concern for repatriates. Seven returnees confirmed such a feeling, motivated by the concern of readaptation, being cultural, personal, or professional in nature, the latter being in the context of the international crisis that influenced the organization.

6.6 Readaptation

The moment of expatriates' return may not be happy if the repatriation is not viewed as an important part of the process of expatriation. Being professional, personal or cultural, readaptation failure can cause various problems for returnees (Gallon et al., 2013). The reverse culture shock, which is a possible consequence of the lack of attention to the readaptation of repatriates can be cited and demonstrates that practices, such as training or retraining program, could avoid such a problem (Deresky, 2004). However, it is possible to observe that readaptation training was not available for repatriates. Still, ten respondents did not report any significant problems in readapting back to Brazilian culture. There was only one case in which the

interviewed showed resistance to cultural re-adaptation.

Professional readjustment covers aspects related to new roles and to relationships with co-workers. Returnees have to become accustomed to their new role that is sometimes very different to the function they exercised during expatriation (Gallon, 2011). Moreover, relating to other professionals who did not go with them on the mission and have no idea what the readaptation process is like after a time outside the organization (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Eight returnees adapted to their functions and the organization without difficulties. In three cases there was discomfort due to the lack of recognition and for two others due to huge discrepancies between the origin unit and where the expatriation was held.

Only three returnees were able to apply what they learned in the mission (linguistic skills, for example), showing that the organization did not take advantage of returnees improved abilities, a novelty that the returnee is willing to use. With regard to relationships with co-workers, eight returnees claimed to have adapted well, with some receiving support and recognition.

6.7 Career

In order to analyze the career advancement of returnees, a comparative table of their posts before and after expatriation was conducted, as shown below in table 3.

Tab. 2
Profile of respondents

Interviewee	Function before the expatriation	Function after repatriation
E1	Analyst	Analyst
E2	Analyst	Analyst
E3	Analyst	Area manager
E4	General Manager	Director
E5	Analyst	Analyst
E6	Coordinator	Engineer
E7	Manager	Without position
E8	Manager	Manager
E9	Analyst	Supervisor
E10	Analyst	Specialist
E11	Lawyer	Analyst

Source: Prepared by the authors

It can be observed that progress was made in the career of only four respondents (E3, E4, E9, and E10). However, it is worth mentioning that respondent E10 claimed that during repatriation he had been promoted to a managerial position and, when

returning to Brazil, he was demoted to the role of specialist. Also for five returnees (E1, E2, E5, E8, E11) there has been no advancement in career. Respondent E6 was demoted and interviewee E7 was without a position in the organization when he returned, being assigned again for expatriation in another location. With these results, it is possible to see that only a small number of the returnees had a real growth in their careers. It is important that organizations have appropriate plans for returnees, looking not to demotivate them, and to make them realize their experience is part of their career development (Deresky, 2004; Gallon et al., 2013).

Beyond the question of a real breakthrough in the careers of the interviewees, the perception of the returnees about what was effectively done for their careers is very relevant. Such a perception is important for expectations and for creating an image of the international assignment that is not related to a career setback (Deresky, 2004; Gallon et al., 2013). Seven respondents realized that expatriation was not favorable to growth, recognizing the lack of effective policies on the part of the organization for such development, even if it had occurred because of the unfavorable situation the company was in.

The organizational recognition perceived by returnee was also a relevant factor to be highlighted in this analysis. According to Black and Gregersen (1999), the returnees believe that the success of their mission deserves recognition. Such recognition coupled with a career rise is what expats expect when they accept the mission (Tanure et al., 2007; Martins, 2013). However, the question of recognition created much divided opinions. Although most noticed that expatriation does not necessarily mean career advancement, seven of the eleven respondents said that they did feel recognized by the organization, that is, all the promoted interviewees and three others that were not. It is worth noting that most of the not promoted returnees (four of the seven) credited this to the unfavorable economic situation, felt recognized. At least, so far.

It is worth noting that most of the returnees were not promoted (four of the seven) and credited this to the unfavorable economic situation. However, they still have hope of advancing their career later. As an example, respondents E5 and E7 stated they did not notice effective actions for development in careers because of the situation of the organization at that time, and that if they had returned in another

scenario the story would be different. With regard to recognition, they considered themselves to be recognized by the organization.

The lack of recognition perceived by some returnees shows a failure in repatriation of those employees. The moment of repatriation must be managed carefully and prioritize clear information about the importance of their efforts dispensed during their mission, as well as their consequent professional value, otherwise it may cause demotivation and evasion (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Domingues, 2011; Gallon et al., 2013, 2014).

6.8 Pros and cons of the experience

After the whole experience lived by returnees, it is interesting to balance the pros and cons of their expatriation professionally and personally. The positive factors noted in the reports include: personal reasons, such as personal development; professional, such as enrichment; and family – harmonization with your loved ones. In relation to negative factors, the alleged motives were distance and disappointment by how the repatriation was treated by the organization. Despite the critical factors pointed to, it was shown by the interviewees that the pros and cons of expatriation were more positive than negative. When asked about the possibility of "going back in time", all respondents were emphatic in saying that they would accept the international mission again.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the expectations and perceptions of repatriates from a multinational in relation to the advancement of their careers as well as their feeling of recognition.

It was possible to note that during the period of expatriation, the designations are characterized considerable importance because they are strategic and have the objective of developing a new project/business in the destination country.

It was possible to notice that during the period of expatriation, the placements were characterized as being of considerable strategic importance for the development of a new project/business in the destination country. With regard to communication with the areas of the headquarters, there were not problems featuring relevant integration. Remuneration and benefits also showed approval by

many respondents, compensating for possible difficulties. However, it was observed the lack of an effective monitoring of expatriates and expatriation process by the organization, though this lack was compensated by locals employees. Monitoring and demonstrations of support for the assignment by the organization were seen as weak.

Analyzing the preparation for the return of expatriates to the country of origin, seven respondents returned at the end of the period laid down for the placement. Two respondents returned because of personal reasons and another two respondents were ordered by the organization to return, which operated at the time of the research in a troubled scenario, generating concern about the repatriation. It was verified that prior to expatriation, there was not any plan for employees' careers after the assignment. Before returning, there were talks between the organization and the future returnees about the position that they would be allocated, however, this discussion has had its quality and results questioned by the interviewees. A lack of effective career planning for the returnees was noted, jeopardizing the repatriation stage, and should be given more attention.

The employees' readaptation was not accompanied by training. However, even in the absence of such actions, it is interesting to note that most of the returnees claimed to have adapted well, professionally and culturally.

As for career development, despite the returnees expecting some form of career breakthrough from their international experience, in most cases the organization did not provide this causing disappointment in respondents. It is worth thinking about the alignment of returnees' expectations with the organization's future actions. As seen, successful planning is important for employee's well-being and longevity in the organization, because frustration can influence the performance and motivation of repatriates, culminating in their exit from the organization and a loss of investment in the professional for the organization. However, it is possible to observe that many felt recognized with some believing that there will be an advancement in their career when the unfavorable economic climate that influenced the organization is over. Such credulity denotes trust in the organization and hope in achieving their expectations at some point on the future.

Repatriation is a subject that is being increasingly explored in the literature. However, it still needs further investigation, since it is a complex step of expatriation related to the organization's strategy. The results of this study are therefore intended to contribute to the field of administration by exploring the management of expatriation and, especially, the stage of repatriation and its relationship with careers in an important Brazilian multinational recognized for its great internationalization. Furthermore, the research offers reflections on how the careers of returnees should be managed, since it is a major factor in expectations present in the process of expatriation.

The limitations of the research include the size of the sample, as it would be desirable to have a greater number of respondents to gain a more in-depth analysis. Furthermore, there was no representation of repatriates who were no longer in contact with the organization. Future research could cover such people, register discourse components, and make progress in analysis. Practically, the existence of a career plan prepared prior to expatriation is suggested to make the organization's intention clear to returnees in terms of their function and position after repatriation in order to reduce possible frustration upon return.

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A carreira na visão de repatriados: Um estudo de caso em uma multinacional brasileira do ramo da mineração

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DETALHES DO ARTIGO	RESUMO
<p>Histórico do artigo: Recebido em 28 de abril de 2015 Aceito em 9 de outubro de 2015 Disponível online em 30 de abril de 2016 Sistema de Revisão “Double Blind Review”</p> <p>Editor científico: Eduardo Eugênio Spers</p> <hr/> <p>Palavras-chaves: Expatriação Repatriação Carreira</p>	<p>A internacionalização tornou-se realidade para muitas organizações, as quais enviam recorrentemente seus empregados para viver e trabalhar no exterior. No retorno, os repatriados podem não encontrar a concretização de suas expectativas, como a ascensão na carreira, gerando desmotivação e uma possível evasão, o que caracteriza o insucesso da expatriação. Sendo assim, este artigo objetiva analisar as expectativas e percepções dos repatriados sobre o crescimento na carreira e reconhecimento. Foi realizado estudo de caso em uma multinacional brasileira, tendo sido feitas onze entrevistas semi-estruturadas com repatriados, uma com membro da área de mobilidade global e pesquisa documental. Os dados foram tratados através da técnica de análise de conteúdo e observou-se que somente quatro repatriados obtiveram ascensão na carreira, contrariando as expectativas dos demais. Entretanto, quando se trata da percepção de reconhecimento, sete afirmaram sentir-se reconhecidos. Conclui-se que, embora esteja explícito um ausente planejamento de carreira dos repatriados, a sensação de reconhecimento denota confiança destes na organização. Nota-se, ainda, esperança de que as expectativas quanto ao futuro desenvolvimento na carreira sejam concretizadas, em algum momento, com o fim das consequências da crise econômica.</p>

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