

The ability to communicate in the host country's language: A universal skill requirement for enhancing confidence among expatriate academics

ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the association of language use skills with self-confidence as a contributing factor to the determination of expatriate self adaptability in a foreign cultural environment. The objective of this study was to examine whether the skills of using the local language of the host country are considered as a universal skill requirement for improvisation and self-skills among expatriate academics in Malaysian Public Universities. Utilisation of qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews on 35 lecturers with international staff status in four Malaysian Public Universities which were subsequently processed by inductive analysis for dominant and subdominant thematic classifications. The findings prove that the informants utilised language proficiency as a backup to recognise their ability to respond to external stimuli, thus producing positive value to themselves. The proactive process is done by trying to find answers to change and self-transformation while in a foreign country. Studies linking the elements of confidence and self-identity skills among expatriates are often highlighted, but the approach taken is to put the advantage to be utilised on the part of the organisation and not expatriates as the subject of the study. Therefore, the results of this study fulfil the search for answers regarding their identity as an expatriate, including exploring foreign cultures, releasing the culture of the country of origin, developing a network of contacts and assessing their potential and ability to deal with the challenges of life abroad. The direction of future research refers to the addition of value in the expatriate management literature by making basic concepts of interaction such as language proficiency as an element capable of increasing self-confidence and sketching the career development of self-initiated expatriates.