

“Connecting international employees' motivations, job crafting strategies and talent management implications. Toward the development of a conceptual framework”

Abstract: International career paths are rarely ‘linear’. Particularly in the case of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) and migrant professionals, individual agency is deployed to ‘carve’ an international career to suit their particular motivations and interests, in response to their micro/meso/macro contextual influences. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the potential connections between the deployment of career crafting strategies throughout expatriates’ (both assigned and self-initiated) and skilled migrants’ international careers, at the micro/individual level, with the design/application of Talent Management (TM) and Global Talent Management (GTM) policies at the meso/organisational level.

We highlight the fact that motivations for an international career move are not static – they tend to change over time and in reaction or anticipation of life/career changes. Individual-level motivations are also influenced by – and in turn affect – macro and organisational contexts. In navigating these contextual influences while managing their careers, we propose that one of the strategies applied by international professionals to carve their individual career paths is career crafting.

The job and career crafting literature does not generally distinguish between local and international employees. We draw upon recent research to highlight how career crafting strategies can be used to manage internationally-focused careers. This paper illustrates how a ‘bottom-up’ approach to TM can make use of different international professionals’ career crafting motives and modes in order to shape TM policies and practices, which to date have been considered in the literature as top-down organisational strategies.

Keywords: Expatriates – motivations – career crafting – talent management

Introduction

The ageing of the population in different regions world-wide, amongst other demographic factors, has led (and it is continuing to lead) to an overall shortage of qualified workers and professionals (Chopin, 2013; Eurostat, 2020). Automation technologies are also continuing to change the international employment landscape, prompting individuals to acquire new skills that will support in-demand occupations (Smit *et al.*, 2020). These demographic and skill gaps can be alleviated by an internationally-mobile labour force (Kerr *et al.*, 2016; Eurostat, 2020), promoting and supporting a global market for internationally-mobile professionals (Khilji *et al.*, 2015; Kerr *et al.*, 2016; Tung, 2016).

Work connects individuals to society (Andresen *et al.*, 2020). For instance, the mobility of workers (labour, in economic/political terms) is linked to European social policy and European competitiveness (Eurofound, 2010). In Europe, the freedom of movement – the right for European citizens to live and work anywhere within the European Union (EU) – is at the cornerstone of the EU (European Commission, 2017). Work-related mobility within Europe – and indeed worldwide – is, of course, influenced by these regulatory and socio-economic factors. From an economic (macro) perspective, the motivations and drivers for international mobility are generally portrayed as ‘investment’ (cost and avoidance of cost) decisions that have a ‘push’ or ‘pull’ effect – or a combination of both – depending on the home and host country socio-economic and regulatory contexts (Lee, 1966; Portes & Böröcz, 1989; Eurostat, 2000).

However, individuals might perceive and process these ‘external’ conditions/influences differently. For example, an individual with 3rd level education might have better opportunities in both their home and host countries than a person with no education or a technical skill (Smit *et al.*, 2020) – and they might be ‘received’ differently in the host country. The socio-economic

position of the individual, their personal/family ‘history’ of migration/expatriation and their membership (or not) of home/host country networks can also influence their motivations for international mobility (Clemens, 2016).

The aim of this study is to construct a conceptual framework linking, through the career crafting literature, the motivations for international career moves of expatriates and migrant professionals (before and during the international move) with career crafting strategies during their international assignments. From an organisational perspective, the insights from this motivations/career crafting relationship could be used to inform a bottom up approach to talent management (TM) and global talent management (GTM).

Consistent with life course theory, which takes into account the influence of individual circumstances in the different roles they play in life (Elder, 1998), motivations for international mobility are not static – they tend to change over time (Hemming *et al.*, 2018) and in reaction or anticipation of life/career changes. These life/career changes also have an effect on the particular career crafting strategies expatriates deploy and the desired outcomes of the same. Career crafting refers to “an individual’s proactive behaviors aimed at optimizing career outcomes through improving person-career fit” (De Vos *et al.*, 2020, p. 129) and requires adaptability and career competencies (De Vos *et al.*, 2020). This fit perspective suggests that career crafting is affected by both individual needs and contextual demands.

Job crafting is a component of career crafting, and involves managing job demands and resources (De Vos *et al.*, 2020). Job crafting has been applied in studies analysing purpose and meaning in work (Crom & Rothmann, 2018), proactive behaviours in organisational settings (Vermooten *et al.*, 2019), job performance/engagement/embeddedness (Arasli *et al.*, 2019) and well-being (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2020) amongst other career-related topics. However, to our knowledge, this literature hasn’t been explicitly linked to research on the careers of expatriates

at either individual or organisational level of analysis (see Arasli *et al.*, 2019 for an exception in the economics discipline).

In the next section we note the influencing factors for international mobility at different levels of analysis. Then, we share the extant literature on career crafting and talent management and connect the motivations for international mobility at individual and organisational level through these literatures. Finally, the findings, limitations and contribution of the study are reported and discussed, with suggestions for further research highlighted in the conclusions section.

Motivations for international mobility

Individuals who actively craft their careers need to reflect on and be mindful about their career aspirations and motivation (De Vos *et al.*, 2020). Thus, individuals' decision for an international career move entails a reflection on the motives that make them move abroad. The factors influencing international mobility motivation have been considered from a variety of disciplinary lenses, such as economics (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011), sociology (Fischer-Souan, 2019) and organisational/cultural psychology (Farcas & Gonçalves, 2017) amongst others.

In the international business (IB) and management fields, studies have focused on diverse factors contributing to the motivation to live and continue/develop a career (Froese *et al.*, 2013) in a different country, such as (macro) socio-economic and demographic influences (Carr *et al.*, 2005; Clemens, 2016) for international mobility, (meso) organisational and international human resource management (IHRM) issues (such as the attraction/retention/development of expatriates (Ceric & Crawford, 2016; Collings & Isichei, 2018; Crowley-Henry & Al Ariss, 2018) – and/or personality/biographical and other individual factors (Andresen & Margenfeld, 2015). Expatriation scholars have also concluded that the

willingness to make an international career move and the degree of control individuals exert on said willingness, to a large extent, determines their mobile behaviour (Otto & Dalbert, 2010, 2012; Thorn *et al.*, 2013; Remhof *et al.*, 2014; Andresen & Margenfeld, 2015).

Motivations then, rather than being ‘static’, are part of an active process (Kanfer *et al.*, 2017). In the following we explain that the motivation for an international career move is determined by individual level factors, conditions related to the ‘type’ of internationally-mobile professional, and external factors. At an *individual level of analysis*, the factors influencing international mobility can be (1) socio-demographic, (2) related to personality, attitudes, values, and competences and (3) related to individual ‘exposure’ to international mobility. These factors relate to intrinsic/extrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and are not mutually exclusive.

First, amongst the socio-demographic factors influencing international mobility are ethnicity (Vijayakumar & Cunningham, 2016), gender (Shortland, 2016, 2018), civil/family status (Tharenou, 2008), age (Myers *et al.*, 2017) and education level – including languages spoken (Clemens, 2016). Second, personality traits, such as openness to experience and tolerance of uncertainty (Otto & Dalbert, 2010, 2012), together with attitudinal factors such as a boundary-less mindset (Andresen & Margenfeld, 2015) and receptiveness to other cultures (Froese *et al.*, 2013) have also been found to be positively related to international mobility intention and behaviour. The agency or control displayed in exercising this mobility – as well as the existence (or absence) of organisational support for the international move – are also factors to consider (Andresen *et al.*, 2015). Personal values and interests, aside from determining career choices, also influence mobility tendencies and openness to opportunity (McNulty *et al.*, 2017) as well as directing the action – or the motivational ‘how’ (Kanfer *et al.*, 2017) of international mobility. Third, socialization processes, such as studying abroad, equally contribute to expatriation intentions (Baluku *et al.*, 2019). When considering individual

exposure to international mobility, previous experience abroad is a significant predictor for international mobility readiness (Thorn *et al.*, 2013).

Also the ‘*type*’ of *internationally-mobile professional* plays a role. The motivations of traditional assigned expatriates (AEs) – who move abroad with organisational support – differ to those of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) (Thorn *et al.*, 2013; Andresen *et al.*, 2015) and skilled migrants (Ryan & Mulholland, 2014). The intention to remain permanently in the host country is sometimes used to differentiate migrants and (assigned or self-initiated) expatriates (Andresen *et al.*, 2014; McNulty & Brewster, 2017). However, this distinction is not as clear-cut in terms of motivations for expatriation/migration, as the initial intention could be to stay for a fixed period of time, but this period can be extended as the individual’s life/career develops (O’Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2020). Therefore, in this conceptual study we will focus on the motives for international mobility of both expatriates (AEs & SIEs) and skilled migrants or migrant professionals. By including these two main categories (expatriates and migrants) of international professionals we also intend to capture inter-disciplinary insights regarding international mobility, as in disciplines such as economics, sociology and migration studies in general, the term ‘migrant’ is more widely used to describe internationally mobile professionals.

Finally, decisions/behaviours regarding international mobility are not uniquely determined by individual-level factors and individual agency – or the ‘*type*’ of internationally-mobile professional the individual might be – but are also conditioned by *external factors*, such as the availability of resources or opportunities (De Haas, 2010). For example, a nurse can only continue his/her career in a foreign country if his/her qualifications are recognised in that country, if there is a need/demand for his/her specific skills and if the host country regulations (i.e. visa requirements) permit him/her to live and work there. Actually, macro-level attraction strategies (‘pull’ factors), such as facilitating visas for qualified foreigners, are implemented by

certain countries in order to ease demographic/skill gaps (Khilji *et al.*, 2015; Davda *et al.*, 2018). Of course, home-country-related ‘push’ factors also influence motivations for international mobility – with both push and pull factors including, but not limited to, economic considerations (Andresen *et al.*, 2015; Fischer-Souan, 2019).

In fact, motivations for international mobility are rarely framed purely in economic terms (Fischer-Souan, 2019). For example, quality of life considerations – such as the desire for ‘cleaner’ or safer environments – as well as perceived better social/political/regulatory systems influence both the motivations for international mobility and the choice of destination or ‘host’ country (Hendriks & Bartram, 2016; Emilsson & Adolfsson, 2020). Culture – or how ‘close’ or similar social systems and traditions are between home and host countries (Almeida *et al.*, 2015) – and the existence (or not) of expat/migrant networks (Cao *et al.*, 2014) can equally influence the preference of a specific host country over others. Family-related considerations – such as dual-career-couple issues (Vance & McNulty, 2014) – also affect motivations for international mobility, as decisions made by/for others influence expatriates’ career development and well-being (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012).

Host-country-dependent elements have an impact on expatriate adjustment (or lack of) (McNulty *et al.*, 2019), in turn affecting expatriates’ motivation to continue to build their career in the chosen host country, move to a different host country or eventually return ‘home’ if they are so inclined (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011). Expatriates global career progression, however, is not a homogeneous construct, as the individual’s micro and macro contexts – and their motivations for pursuing and continuing an international career – determine their global professional experience (Froese *et al.*, 2013; Ceric & Crawford, 2016; Andresen *et al.*, 2020; O’Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2020).

These multi-level contextual elements influencing international mobility also play a part in the way internationally mobile professionals fashion their careers, and the strategies these

individuals employ to enable/support career capital development (Arthur *et al.*, 1995; Zikic, 2015). The motivations of international professionals also contribute to the acquisition and deployment of other types of capital – such as cultural capital (beliefs, attitudes and customs) and social capital (relationships and networks) (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986) aiding their career advancement. These career-related and personal capitals contribute to the development of career competencies leading to (both objective and subjective) career success (Akkermans & Tims, 2017).

In the following sections, we detail the construct of job crafting, which, together with the development of career competencies, enables career crafting (Akkermans & Tims, 2017). We propose job crafting is a strategy deployed – at greater or lesser degree – by expatriates in carving an international career; suggesting the types of job crafting strategies employed are influenced by their individual motivations for international mobility. We then analyse the organisational benefit of understanding the motivations of an internationally mobile workforce from a TM/GTM perspective and explore possible connections between job crafting strategies at the individual level and TM at the organisational level.

Job crafting and career crafting

It is through jobs/occupations that individuals find their contribution to society and the meaning in what they do (Inkson *et al.*, 2012; Andresen *et al.*, 2020). Careers can be crafted through acquiring career competencies, self-management and job crafting (Akkermans & Tims, 2017). According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), who first coined the term, through job crafting individuals align their motivation, skills, and passion to give meaning to a role or occupation thus ‘improving the job for themselves’ (Bruning & Campion, 2018, p. 500). In other words, through job crafting, individuals search for personal fulfilment in their professional occupations

(Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2013). Job crafting, of course, isn't a strategy limited to internationally mobile individuals. In fact, a recent McKinsey Global Institute report predicts that by 2030 over 90 million workers worldwide will need to alter their jobs in response to new skill demands created by automation (Smit *et al.*, 2020), thus crafting a new career. However, internationally mobile professionals tend to display protean and boundaryless career attitudes (Crowley-Henry, 2009; Andresen *et al.*, 2015), which imply resourcefulness, adaptability and self-direction (Briscoe & Hall, 2006); in other words, a facility/propensity to change, readjust and job-craft (Parker, 2014) in new geographical/cultural environments.

Job crafting is a proactive strategy (Bakker *et al.*, 2012; Petrou *et al.*, 2012) comprising of three levels or behaviours: (1) the more 'mechanical' or procedural task crafting, (2) the socially-based relationship crafting and (3) the 'internally-oriented', perception-shifting cognitive crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). These three levels do not exist in isolation and can be prompted by each other (Berg *et al.*, 2010). In this sense, job crafting relates to Mitchell and colleagues' (2001) concept of job embeddedness, comprising social links to an individual's work, their own perception of how well they fit (or not) in their roles and the choices/consequences endured by keeping or giving up a job. Job embeddedness includes non-work-related factors such as community embeddedness (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001) and influences expatriates' motivations to remain (or not) in the host country (Ren *et al.*, 2014; Yunlu *et al.*, 2018).

Task crafting entails altering certain responsibilities or components of a role task or description – essentially changing *what* individuals do at work and/or *how* they do it (Berg *et al.*, 2010). Individuals apply these changes as they negotiate the demands and resources of the job at hand, shaping their job role(s) to fit their specific needs and goals (Tims & Bakker, 2010; Tims *et al.*, 2016) or as a strategy for career development/advancement (Feldman & Shultz, 2019). The need to engage in task crafting could arise from a mismatch between individuals'

own career/social capital and their job requirements, in other words, their professional identity and their job responsibilities (Mattarelli & Tagliaventi, 2015). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) note, however, that the ability to manage job demands and resources through task crafting also depends on the degree of autonomy an employee displays and the level of power s/he exerts in his/her role. As an expatriate/migrant, being in a powerless or less powerful position, can also affect (career, social, cultural) capital development/deployment (Martinez *et al.*, 2011), thus driving the individual to pursue other modes of job crafting that are not as power dependent, or crafting in non-work-related situations (Lazazzara *et al.*, 2020).

Relationship crafting involves modifying work-related social interactions (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) – be it hierarchical relationships, such as those with superiors and subordinates, or flatter relationships like those cultivated with co-workers, suppliers or customers. An individual can implement this change in ‘social resources’ (Demerouti *et al.*, 2020) to either increase their networks/connections – in other words, increasing their career capital knowing-whom (Arthur *et al.*, 1995) or social capital (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013) – or to minimise the effect of negative/noxious work-related associations (Berg *et al.*, 2010).

Cognitive crafting refers to a change in mindset or perception regarding a specific job or what this job means to the individual (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Tims & Bakker, 2010). Cognitive crafting can see employees emphasise the positive elements of their job, focusing on those aspects that highlight its more pleasant side (Berg *et al.*, 2010). For example, a care worker can emphasise being a friend/companion to an elderly patient rather than focusing on the more mechanical tasks of helping the patient with general hygiene and feeding. This proactive change of mindset could signal a subjective career success orientation (Smale *et al.*, 2019), which is commonplace in certain types of internationally mobile individuals, such as SIEs and skilled migrants (Zikic *et al.*, 2010; Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2014; O’Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2020).

Recently, researchers have expanded on the task, relational and cognitive boundaries (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) or ‘role-based’ crafting approach (Bruning & Campion, 2018) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) approach (Tims & Bakker, 2010; Tims *et al.*, 2012; Tims *et al.*, 2016) of job crafting. A recent review by Lazazzara and colleagues (2020) notes that the JD-R approach is more predominant in quantitative research focusing on employee well-being and performance. This could be due to the fact that the JD-R approach is generally used to measure work performance and related constructs such as burnout and engagement (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019).

There have been some empirical studies following both job crafting approaches in industries with a high incidence of expatriate/migrant employees, such as the hospitality industry – including studies of job crafting amongst flight attendants (Karatepe & Eslamlou, 2017; Shin *et al.*, 2020) and hotel workers (Cheng & O-Yang, 2018; Shin *et al.*, 2020). However, although they provide some demographics on the study participants, these quantitative studies do not specify if the participants were expatriates/migrants or locals. In fact, to our knowledge, only a study by Arasli and colleagues looks specifically at migrant hotel employees, exploring the relationship between job crafting and psychological capital and its effects in work engagement and job embeddedness (Arasli *et al.*, 2019).

Building on the role based and JD-R theoretical job crafting perspectives, Zhang and Parker (2019) distinguish between the *orientation*, *form* and *content* in their job crafting model. The orientation of the job crafting activity/behaviour varies between proactive ‘approach crafting’ and the more reactive ‘avoidance crafting’ (Bruning & Campion, 2018; Zhang & Parker, 2019) at each end of the scale. The job crafting form can be behavioural or cognitive and therefore tangible or intangible; while the job crafting content refers to the actual job resources an individual possesses/can deploy or job demands that need changing (Zhang & Parker, 2019). Focusing on qualitative research in their meta-synthesis of the job crafting

literature, Lazazzara and colleagues (2020) then incorporated the personal dimension in their integrative process model by adding ‘crafting in other domains’ to the existing approach and avoidance crafting modes (Bruning & Campion, 2018; Zhang & Parker, 2019), and in doing so connected motives, context, personal factors and consequences of job crafting (Lazazzara *et al.*, 2020).

A recent study by Demerouti and colleagues (2020) supports the spill-over of the benefits of job crafting beyond work-related contexts to non-work activities. This personal dimension of job crafting fits in with recent expatriate/migration research noting both SIEs’ and migrants’ motivations for international mobility are often driven by non-work elements such as quality of life, work-life balance, family considerations and socio/cultural aspects (Froese *et al.*, 2013; Farcas & Gonçalves, 2017; Emilsson & Adolfsson, 2020). While not specifically identifying the behaviour as job crafting, Emilsson and Adolfsson (2020) note in their study that the career development/progression strategies of Latvian/Romanian migrants in Sweden include non-work activities, such as engaging in volunteer work or furthering their qualifications.

It follows, then, that the inclusion of crafting in other domains supports a whole-life perspective of career (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Litano & Major, 2016), with careers developing as individuals’ life evolve (Hall *et al.*, 2018). Dries (2011) posits that careers are “complex, dynamic social realities that can be (re)interpreted and (re)shaped in different ways” (Dries, 2011, p.365). Indeed, according to Sturges (2012), job crafting strategies can be applied from *before* an individual takes up a job – taking into account considerations such as workplace location and the degree of flexibility allowed (as perceived by the job description). These considerations are even more important when geographical mobility is required.

Careers reflect the interaction between people and the way they work, thus connecting individuals to organisations (Baruch *et al.*, 2015). To avoid underutilisation of employee skills

– along with related issues such as lack of engagement leading to high staff turnover, burnout, etc. (Petrou *et al.*, 2012) – there should be a link between work design from the organisational side and job crafting as an individual strategy leading to employees’ personal fulfilment (Kohnová *et al.*, 2020).

An understanding of expats/migrants career crafting strategies, and their motivations for doing so, could help organisations attract and retain employees beyond their local talent pool (Crowley-Henry & Al Ariss, 2018) in this era of increased global competition and occupational/geographic mismatches (Smit *et al.*, 2020). We propose organisations can take a bottom-up approach to TM/GTM by focusing on why and how individual employees – expatriates/migrants in particular – prefer/prioritise certain tasks/relationships, and the value they add to their roles (and, by extension, the organisation) by doing so.

In summary, expatriates (both assigned and self-initiated) and migrants acquire cultural, social and career capital throughout their international careers, using these capitals (in other words, their resources) to facilitate task, relationship and cognitive crafting and crafting in other domains, as required for their career development/advancement. This career crafting strategies can help ensure their skills/abilities remain current in order to adapt to new market/organisational requirements. In figure 1 below we depict this relationship graphically.

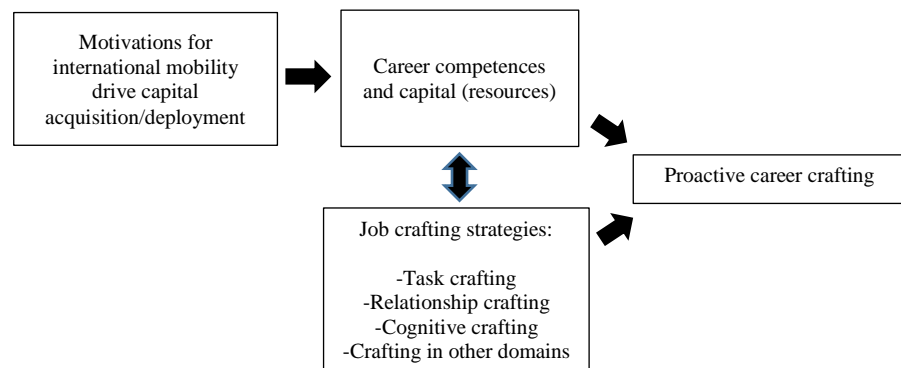


Figure 1: Graphic representation of international professionals’ proactive career crafting

In the next section, we give an overview of recent TM literature, detailing how internationally mobile professionals are a source of talent for organisations globally, suggesting ways in which these organisations can look at the motivations of their international employees (AEs, SIEs and migrants) and their job crafting strategies to build a strong international workforce that can ensure competitive advantage.

Talent Management (TM) and Global Talent Management (GTM)

International experience is deemed to be increasingly valuable in many organisational settings, from traditional multi-national corporations (MNCs) to internationally-oriented small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and non-for-profit organisations (Vaiman *et al.*, 2015; McNulty *et al.*, 2017; Collings & Isichei, 2018; Crowley-Henry, O'Connor & Suarez-Bilbao, 2021). In order to sustain competitive advantage in this era of global competition, organisations need to actively attract (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016) and retain (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017) both local and globally-sourced talent.

Conceptually, scholars differ in their interpretation of what TM is and what it isn't. These conceptual differences point to a lack of consensus in practice and academia on the definition of talent and talent management (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Scullion, 2011) and its relevance (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2019; Vaiman, 2020). McDonnell and Wiblen (2021) attribute the definitional discrepancies to the binary focus of the terms used to describe talent – either exclusive or inclusive, innate or acquired, rare or pervasive, etc. – rather than focusing on how different employees contribute to organisational strategy and success. Thunnissen and colleagues (2013) argue that there cannot be a universal definition or understanding of 'talent', as the meso and macro contexts condition the organisational talent needs and therefore its approach to TM.

For the purpose of this study, we will focus on the dichotomy of talent as object – this is, having certain characteristics or talents – and/or talent as a subject, in other words, being the talent (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). This ‘subject’ approach to talent is generally exclusive, meaning only a few individuals that are key for organisational strategy are considered talent from an organisational perspective (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). The exclusive approach – used, for example, in the sports and entertainment industries (Khilji *et al.*, 2015), where many expatriates (albeit not in the traditional sense) and SIEs are found – implies workforce differentiation, as the organisation devotes more resources to those employees deemed talent (De Boeck *et al.*, 2018). Workforce differentiation is an issue commonly discussed in the expatriation literature in relation to expatriate compensation (Tarique, 2015) and its outcome in terms of objective and subjective career success (Ramaswami *et al.*, 2016).

Classifying individuals as high-potential or star players can create perceptions of ‘exclusivity’ or unfairness, which may have an impact on employee engagement (O’Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019) and organisational performance (King, 2016). Other approaches to TM classify positions in terms of their strategic value (Sparrow & Makram, 2015) instead of classifying individuals as A/B/C players (Huselid *et al.*, 2005). In this vein, positions filled by expatriate assignments have generally been considered pivotal for organisational strategy (McDonnell *et al.*, 2010; Collings, 2014), with some studies recognising the strategic value of attracting and developing SIEs (Vaiman *et al.*, 2015), bi-culturalists (Furusawa & Brewster, 2015) and other types of internationally mobile professionals (Collings & Isichei, 2018) that can fit in a diverse number of roles.

Academic research has generally focused on the meso level of analysis of TM (McDonnell *et al.*, 2017; Sparrow, 2019) and while some scholarly attention has turned to macro-related issues (Khilji *et al.*, 2015; King & Vaiman, 2019), the individual perspective of the ‘talent’ has been notably lacking (Thunnissen, 2016; McDonnell & Wiblen, 2021). From a

micro perspective, it is important to understand how this talent status/identification affects the individual-organisation relationship, their interaction with colleagues and their own career development/success (O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019). In this regard, some studies have applied a psychological contract lens regarding outcomes of an internally-driven GTM strategy (Farndale *et al.*, 2014) or in looking at how employees might feel compelled to reciprocate when being the subject of TM policies viewed as long-term investment in their careers (Dries *et al.*, 2014). More recently, in their analysis of the TM literature, De Boeck and colleagues (2018) classified employee reactions to TM policies as being affective, cognitive and/or behavioural.

Positive affective reactions revolve around commitment, engagement and well-being, while stress and insecurity are classed as negative affective reactions; cognitive reactions relate to employees' belief in their own abilities and beliefs/attitudes in relation to psychological contract obligations/fulfilment; and behavioural reactions included issues around turnover and performance (Boeck *et al.*, 2018). As previously mentioned, job crafting strategies can also have a positive effect on job performance/engagement (Arasli *et al.*, 2019) and employee well-being (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2020).

Sparrow and Makram (2015) argue that organisations capitalise on their employee value through the systematic application of TM policies, processes and procedures – which the authors term TM architecture. This 'value' refers to the *capital* talented employees possess – their unique set of competencies, abilities, networks and knowledge, which the organisation can 'use' for continued value creation and competitive advantage (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The institutional/organisational environment – or, to borrow the term, TM architecture – can have an influence in the career path of an expatriate. For example, by facilitating international assignments or learning and development opportunities, thus contributing to their international career progression (Gunz *et al.*, 2011; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013; Zikic, 2015).

From an organisational point of view, the strategic value of international professionals includes control and coordination of subsidiaries, knowledge transfer, network expansion (Farndale *et al.*, 2014) and serving as boundary spanners (Furusawa & Brewster, 2015) in global and globally-focused organisations. In practice, the current prevalence of contingent work (freelance and project work) worldwide and the fact that some individuals are having multiple careers within one career journey has given TM a more ‘experiential’ and employee-centred focus, while enhancing its strategic role (Deloitte 2018).

Farndale and colleagues (2014) advocated a ‘mutual benefits’ approach to GTM, by striving to match individual motivations with organisational goals/strategy. As mentioned before, the motivations of different types of internationally mobile professionals (which influence their career paths) are diverse (Andresen *et al.*, 2015). This diversity does not only influence their career decisions, thus determining their career paths, but also their career crafting strategies. We believe expats’ preference/prioritisation of tasks and relationships (job crafting) in a particular role and the value add they create by doing so, can be used to inform TM/GTM strategies. This holistic individual-focused TM approach can improve organisational talent outcomes (such as performance, organisational commitment, engagement and lower turnover intentions), as depicted in figure 2. We discuss this in the section below.

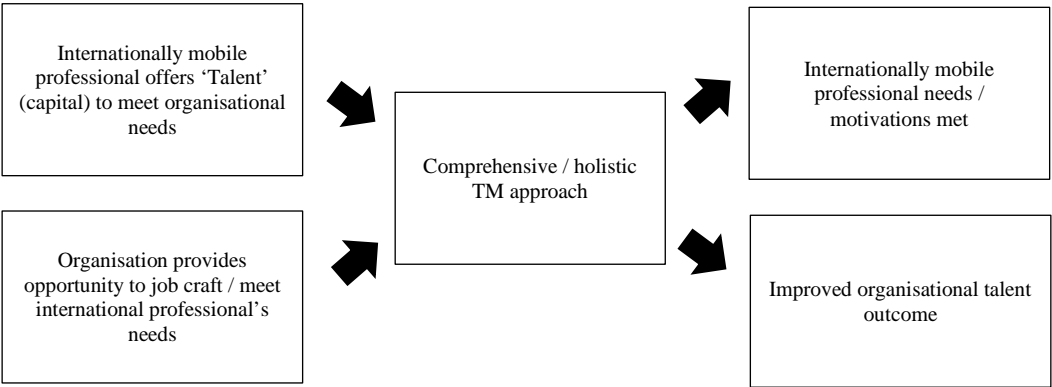


Figure 2: Unpacking the relationship between international professional's motivations, career crafting and TM

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this paper is to explore if an understanding of the career motivations and career crafting strategies of international professionals, such as expatriates (both AEs and SIEs) and migrants can contribute to the designing and implementation of a bottom-up, more holistic approach to TM and GTM. To this effect, we explored the relationship between expatriates'/migrants' motivations for pursuing an international career and the career/job crafting strategies they can deploy throughout their lives as international professionals.

Arguably, all individuals might, at some point in their careers, deploy job/career crafting strategies (albeit subconsciously). We argue that the career crafting strategies of internationally mobile professionals are linked to their motivations for international mobility. Further, we posit that, by adopting a holistic, bottom-up TM strategy designed to satisfy the motivations of internationally mobile professionals (expatriates or migrants), organisations can avail of the wider talent pool offered by migrant and expatriate workers. A holistic TM approach is needed as these motivations are complex and go beyond simply improved career and development opportunities. We have detailed how motivations evolve as the expat/migrant career progresses, in line with changes in their personal circumstances, which in turn present opportunities to develop/hone their career competencies.

Expatriates (both assigned and self-initiated) and migrants acquire cultural, social and career capital throughout their international careers. For example, AEs utilise their social capital (or knowing-whom career capital) in their interactions with both home and host country organisations; while SIEs could use these home-host country networks to prepare their return. Expatriates use these capitals (in other words, their competences and resources) to facilitate task, relationship and cognitive crafting and crafting in other domains as needed for their career

development. These career crafting strategies can help ensure their skills/abilities remain current in order to adapt to new market/organisational requirements.

World-wide talent shortages are not a new phenomenon. Despite high unemployment in some regions/countries, this talent gap remains in specific industries, driving organisations to look to internationally mobile professionals in order to fill available positions (Vaiman, 2020). Organisations that enable job/career crafting by providing the necessary antecedents, such as certain levels of autonomy, may be in a better position to attract/retain internationally mobile employees, thus benefiting of their dynamic skills/abilities.

Internationally mobile professionals' seek destinations (organisations, cities, countries) that can meet their professional (and personal) needs, such as the need for security, prosperity, recognition and career development. Some of these needs might not be met in a specific role, or for specific periods of time (according to changes in their personal circumstances/motivations), driving the expat/migrant to alter some component of their jobs (or their perceptions towards their roles) to better fit their circumstance-adjusted requirements. Through this 'improving' of their jobs, not only do international professionals augment their career capital and competences, but they can also realise organisational benefits, such as improvements in job performance and innovation.

From an organisational perspective, we propose that understanding why and how international professionals craft their jobs/careers can be useful for the design of policies and process that promote job engagement/satisfaction. This individual-focus can allow a more holistic, bottom-up approach to TM. International professionals will feel the organisation recognises their value added as employees, resulting in desired organisational outcomes such as higher performance and lower turnover intentions (De Boeck *et al*, 2018).

Limitations and recommendations for future research

This conceptual paper considers an inter-level relationship between expatriate motivations, career crafting and TM. Each of these literature and levels is complex and nuanced; therefore, tying these together is also complex. However, the conceptualisations presented (see Fig 1 and Fig 2) attempt to graphically represent how each of these phenomena impact on each other. A deeper understanding of the linkages between these phenomena is, we argue, important and relevant to progress knowledge and practice on GTM.

Future research could involve expanding and empirically testing these conceptualisations in order to quantitatively examine relationships between job crafting outcomes and TM practices. Overall, we call for more multi-level research on these topics, showing how decisions and practices at micro and meso levels, respectively, have wider reaching implications and consequences across both levels of analysis.

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