

Experiences of the spouses of South African diplomats during posting in a foreign country.

By

Given Rosina Mashigo

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER IN SOCIAL WORK: EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Department of Social Work and Criminology
Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. LS. Terblanche

AUGUST 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the people who contributed immensely in my study. Without their support, I would have not completed the study:

First and foremost, I would like to thank Almighty God for giving me the strength and courage to undertake the study. When I grew weary and wanted to give up, He gave me the strength to go on until completion.

My supervisor, Professor. Dr. Lourie Terblanche for his guidance, support and patience throughout this study, without his support, love and passion for the Employee Assistance Programme, I would not have completed the study.

The colleagues in the Department of International Relations and Cooperation for their support, encouragement and going that extra mile to assist me. Without their practical support, this would have been an impossible task.

The Participants in the study for their willingness to share their experiences in foreign countries. Their passion, commitment and willingness to contribute towards an enhanced spousal support programme for the spouses of DIRCO transferred officials is highly appreciated. Without them this study would have not been possible. Many believed that this is a much needed study.

My family, particularly my husband, Lucky Mashigo for his unwavering support and understanding when I had to sacrifice our time together to work on the study. He has always been my pillar of strength.

ABSTRACT / SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of the spouses of South African diplomats on a posting in a foreign country. The study focused on the factors that enabled or hindered effective adjustment during posting. Research conducted showed that one of the greatest challenges facing international assignments is that organisations do not only deal with an employee but the whole family, their needs and expectations in the relocation process. The adjustment constraints in this study referred to pre-departure preparation, support provided by the Department, religion and cultural differences or similarities, foreign language, environmental factors and personal health.

A qualitative research approach was applied. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview schedule. The study was conducted among nine (9) spouses who returned from posting between 2009 and 2011. Some of the spouses completed the posting whilst others returned prematurely due to adjustment problems.

The findings indicated inconsistencies on how the Department prepares and supports spouses before and during posting; and that cultural and religious differences, foreign language competence and environmental factors have a considerable impact on the adjustment of spouses in a foreign country. Social support network, particularly the Embassy staff and diplomatic spouses' associations play a crucial role in helping spouses to adjust. The study also found that spouses' inability to adjust can result in early termination of posting. The recommendations are that the Department should review the training curriculum and provide support to spouses during the posting. The study will benefit the department, the diplomats and spouses in future postings.

Key terms

Diplomat, posting, adjustment, acculturation, expatriate

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Masters in Employee Assistance Programme, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Given Rosina Mashigo

Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of tables	viii
List of Acronyms.....	viii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Background information	1
1.2 Problem statement.....	2
1.3 Rationale for the study	4
1.4 Research question	4
1.5 Goal and Objectives of the study	5
1.6 Theoretical Framework	6
1.6.1 Systems theory	6
1.6.2 Ecological Systems Theory.....	7
1.7 Definition of key concepts	8
1.8 Layout of the research report.....	10
1.9 Limitations of the study	11
CHAPTER 2	13
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY.....	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 The role of DIRCO in diplomacy	14
2.2.1 Diplomatic Missions	15
2.2.2 Classification of diplomatic missions.....	16
2.2.3 Functions of Diplomatic Missions.....	18
2.2.4 Functions of Consulates	19
2.2.5 Understanding diplomacy	21
2.3 Profile of a Diplomat.....	23
2.3.1 The functions of a diplomat.....	24
2.3.2 Selection and appointments of diplomats	26
2.3.3 Capacity building for diplomats	30
2.3.4 Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities	33
2.4 Conclusion	33

CHAPTER 3	34
THE EXPERIENCES OF SPOUSES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES:	34
A GENERAL OVERVIEW	34
3.1 Introduction	34
3.2 Relocation	34
3.3 Challenges facing families in overseas posting	35
3.4 Reasons for expatriate failure	36
3.4.1 Non-work issue – Family	37
3.4.2. Dual career couples	40
3.4.3. Work related issues	43
3.5 Selection of candidates for posting	43
3.6 Implications of a failed assignment	46
3.7 Conclusion	46
CHAPTER 4	47
ADJUSTING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY	47
4.1. Defining adjustment.....	47
4.1.1 Anticipatory adjustment.....	47
4.1.2 In-country adjustment	48
4.2 Psychological and socio-cultural adjustment	49
4.3 Culture shock and transitional adjustment	50
4.3.1 Honeymoon stage.....	52
4.3.2 Culture shock stage	53
4.3.3 Adjustment phase	53
4.3.4 Mastery	54
4.4 Strategies for living successfully abroad	55
4.4.1 Anticipating national culture shock.....	55
4.4.2 Minimising cultural toughness and culture distance	55
4.4.3 Assessing and developing your own cultural intelligence	57
4.4.4 Assessing and developing the cultural intelligence of spouse and children.....	57
4.4.5 Foreign Language.....	58
4.4.6 Social support during posting.....	59
4.4.7 Adjusting in Hardship Missions	60
4.5 Conclusion	61

CHAPTER 5	62
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	62
5.1 Introduction	62
5.2 Research design	62
5.2.1 Collective case study	63
5.2.2 Research methodology	63
5.2.3 Pilot study	68
5.3 Data analysis	69
5.3.1 Planning for recording of data	70
5.3.2 Data collection and preliminary analyses	70
5.4 Assessing the quality of qualitative research	72
5.5 Ethical considerations	73
5.5.1 Avoidance of harm	73
5.5.2 Informed consent	73
5.5.3 Deception of subjects	74
5.5.4 Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality	75
5.5.5 Actions and competence of the researcher	75
5.5.6 Release of publication of finding	75
5.5.7 Debriefing of respondents/participants	76
5.5.8 Storage of data	76
5.6 Conclusion	76
CHAPTER 6	77
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	77
6.1 Introduction	77
6.2 Profile of participants	77
6.3 Organising data	78
6.3.1 Pre-posting preparation	79
6.3.2 Arrival in the host country	83
6.3.3 Adjustment in the host country	88
6.3.4 Post posting - Return to South Africa	117
6.3.5 Recommendations made by participants	121
6.4 Conclusion	124

CHAPTER 7	125
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	125
7.1 Introduction	125
7.2 Summary of key findings.....	126
7.2.1 Pre-posting preparation	126
7.2.2 Arrival in the host country	127
7.2.3 Adjustment in the host country.....	128
7.2.4 Support provided by the Department.	131
7.2.5 Post posting – Return to South Africa	131
7.3 Main conclusions of the study	132
7.3.1 Pre-posting preparation	132
7.3.2 Arrival at the host country	132
7.3.3 Adjustment in the host country.....	132
7.4 Suggestions for application of research	134
7.5 Achievement of the objectives of the study	137
7.6 Recommendations for further study	137
8. References	139
9. List of addenda:	148

List of tables

Table 1: Layout of Research report	10
Table 2: Reasons for expatriate failure (in descending order of importance)	38
Table 3: Black and Mendenhall's (1991) U-shaped curve of adjustment	52
Table 4: Mission category and level of adjustment	72
Table 5: Profile of Participants	79

List of Figures

Figure 1: Posting Cycle	66
-------------------------	----

List of Acronyms

CCT	-	Cross - Cultural Training
DIRCO	-	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DTRD	-	Directorate: Training, Research and Development.
DSA	-	Diplomatic Spouses Association
EAP	-	Employee Assistance Practitioner
EWC	-	Employee Wellness Centre
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
MFA	-	Ministries of Foreign Affairs
UN	-	United Nations
UNAMA	-	United Nations Mothers for Africa
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background information

Since the turn of the 21st century, organisations in the private and public sector continuously expand their operations so as to access global markets. Governments all over the world also strive to build and strengthen international relations with countries which they regard as strategic for political and economic growth. In this regard bilateral and multilateral relations are formed. In the past few years, economic and trade development have gained more prominence in international relations. This is evidenced by the number of employees from private organisations and government departments relocating to work in different countries for a particular period.

In South Africa (SA), the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, hereunder referred to as the Department, is mandated to formulate, promote and execute SA's foreign policy and to conduct SA's international relations on a daily basis. In order to carry out this mandate, the Department has to ensure successful posting of its employees in different countries to achieve its foreign policy objectives.

Like many other Multinational Co-operations, the Department continually posts SA diplomats to various countries abroad. The Department's Placement Policy (2011: 13) stipulates that SA diplomats are posted for a minimum period of four years. The policy allows the diplomats to be accompanied by their families on posting. However, the decision on whether to take their family or not is left to the diplomat's own discretion.

The Department provides pre-departure preparations such as diplomatic skills training and psychological counselling in order to prepare diplomats for successful posting. The Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2008-2010 (Department of International Relations and Cooperation) stipulates that accompanying spouses should also receive some training, emotional preparation and transition counselling.

When posted abroad, some diplomats adjust with ease whilst others find it difficult to adjust to changed environment. Similarly, the spouses and children of diplomats vary in terms of their ability to adjust in foreign countries, resulting in some spouses experiencing physical and mental health problems. These challenges sometimes lead to premature return of the spouse or the whole family including the diplomat. When postings fail Vogel (2005:118) and Mead (1998:400) concede that the expatriate or diplomat suffers loss of self-esteem and prestige, impaired relationships, interrupted career path development and possible opportunities for promotion.

1.2 Problem statement

“Family-related problems, particularly the inability of the spouse to adapt to the new culture, have emerged as the major reason for poor performance of international assignments in European multinationals” (Brewster, 1991; Scullion and Brewster, 2001) as cited in Scullion and Collings (2006: 61). According to Copeland and Norell (2002) as cited by Swarts (2008: 27) expatriation can be especially stressful for the accompanying spouse due to the competing family responsibilities, social isolation, socio-political constraints and changes in their social and or work status.

According to Motshale (2007: 90) one of the greatest challenges facing international assignments is that organisations do not only deal with an employee but the whole family and their needs and expectations in the relocation process. This therefore means that organisations need to invest time and resources to understand the needs, feelings and experiences of the family, particularly the spouse.

In a study conducted by Tung (1982:67) and Hill (2003: 612-613) as cited by Vogel (2005:5) the inability of the spouse to adjust was cited as the main reason for failed international assignments in American and European managers. Scullion and Collings (2006: 122) quote Linehan and Scullion (2001) who state that “an international assignment undertaken as a family unit usually requires the spouse/partner to forfeit the accustomed structure and continuity of his/her life, which can be problematic for the

expatriate family”. It is coupled with the fact that the spouse often faces an unstructured arrival in the host location and as opposed to the expatriate or diplomat who may have received language training; the spouses are rarely offered this training.

Gooderham and Nordhaug (2003: 308) state that assignments are likely to fail due to partner dissatisfaction, family concerns or inability to adapt. They further caution that giving up a career to accompany a spouse on a posting is not just about losing a salary but it affects status, self-esteem and the balance of power in a relationship.

During the group and individual spousal debriefing sessions conducted by the Department’s Employee Wellness Centre, spouses shared mixed feelings about posting. Some spouses reported that they have had a difficult time abroad, whilst others expressed that they are grateful for what they call a “*life time opportunity*” which they would treasure forever.

Mokgohlwa (2010) who accompanied her husband on a posting abroad had a positive experience even though it was not easy in the beginning. She mentioned that what was most important to her was the support she got from her husband (diplomat) as it made adjustment easy for her. She also attributes her easy adjustment to social networks that she built whilst in posting. However, the fact that she had to depend on her husband financially, posed some challenges for her as she was used to financial independence before going abroad.

Although Mokgohlwa had a positive experience, this is not always the case with other spouses who consulted the Employee Assistance Practitioners for counselling and support. Some of the problems presented were, loneliness, concerns about health, cultural differences, lack of support and understanding from the spouse (diplomat), lack of financial independence and lack of support from the Department. All these, left the spouses feeling very resentful and unable to adjust in the foreign country. One can deduce from the discussion above that spouses have many challenges to overcome during posting.

Against this background, the study aims to explore and gain understanding of the experiences of the spouses of South African (SA) diplomats during posting in a foreign country. The study will explore what factors helped or hindered them to adjust in foreign countries. The study will also determine the level of support provided by the Department to the spouses.

1.3 Rationale for the study

With the above information in mind, the study is necessary in order to understand what spouses of diplomats go through during a posting abroad. Therefore this research will provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the spouses of SA diplomats during a posting in foreign countries and to explore what factors hinder or enable them to adjust in foreign countries.

The study will benefit the Department, the diplomats and their spouses with regard to future postings. The study will contribute towards the development of a programme that will assist spouses to integrate easier and quicker in the foreign country. This will in return have a positive impact on the overall job performance of the diplomat who would otherwise be burdened or stressed by the “struggling” spouse. It is also envisaged that the ultimate benefit for the Department would be cost saving from premature returns as result of the inability of spouses to adjust.

1.4 Research question

A research question seemed appropriate in this study since the researcher was interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the spouses of SA diplomats through face-to-face interaction. Punch (2005:46) states that the research questions must be clear, specific, answerable, interconnected and substantially relevant. However, Bick and Rog (1998: 81) argue that research questions in a qualitative study should not be formulated in detail until the purposes and context of the design are clarified. This, according to the authors does not necessarily mean going to

the field with an open mind not knowing what he/she wants to find out. However, the researcher may have a general question which can be refined further in the process.

The questions raised in the study are:

- How did the spouses of SA diplomats experience their posting abroad?
- What factors do the spouses attribute their ability or inability to adjust to?
- How did the spouses experience the support provided by the Department?

1.5 Goal and Objectives of the study

The goal of the research is to explore the experiences of the spouses of South African diplomats during posting abroad.

Oosthuizen (2007: 45) defines an objective as a narrowly defined performance that is desired over the short term. He further states that objectives result in qualitative and quantitative standards of performance. The objectives should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.

The objectives of the research were to:

- Explore the experiences of the spouses of SA diplomats during posting in foreign countries, from theoretical and empirical perspectives.
- Identify the factors that enhanced or inhibited their ability to adjust during posting.
- Determine the level of support provided by the Department to the spouses before and during posting.
- Make recommendations to enhance the Department's existing spouses support programme.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on two theories namely, General systems theory and Ecological theory. According to Nash, Munford and O'Donoghue (2005:36) this theory emerged through adding ecological theory to systems theory. This was brought about by the strong believe that despite their separate histories and distinctive features, they have enough commonalities to be used together. The researcher found this combination relevant because the study focuses on how the various environmental factors impact on the spouse as a member of a social system, namely family. However, the basic assumptions and characteristics of each theory will be discussed individually in order to create an understanding of each one of them.

1.6.1 Systems theory

General systems theory is relevant in this study which focuses on the family and how it adapts and adjusts in foreign environments. Brandell (1997: 6) describes adaptation as the dynamic process in which a given system responds to the demand and pressures of external forces and conditions. It involves the reciprocal interaction and exchanges between the system and its environment which ultimately results in both being changed. This interaction can lead to a normal tension known as life stress.

Greene (2008: 171) defines a family as “a social system consisting of individuals who are related to each other by reasons of strong reciprocal affection and loyalties, comprising a permanent household that persist over time”. Similarly, Walker (2012: 4) argues that families are systems involving rules of communication and the regulatory functions of feedback that influenced patterns of behavior within them.

Some of the basic assumptions of systems theory as outlined by Greene (2008: 166) are:

- All social systems comprise interrelated members who constitute a unit or a whole.
- There is a high degree of interdependence and internal organization among members of a social system.
- All systems are subsystems of other (larger) systems.
- A social system is adaptive or goal oriented and purposive
- Change within or from without the social system that moves the system to an imbalance in structure will result in an attempt by the system to reestablish the balance.

Therefore according to Greene (2008: 167) general systems theory provides a conceptual scheme for understanding the interactions among a number of variables rather than reducing explanations of behavior to one simple cause. It takes into consideration the multiple systems in which people function.

1.6.2 Ecological Systems Theory

The ecological systems theory focuses on the person-environment-fit, taking into consideration that both the person and the environment place mutual demands on each other. Nash et al. (2005:39) describes ecology as concerned with the interrelationship and adaptation of organisms with each other and with the surroundings be they organic or inorganic.

Various systems that can impact on the individual and the family.

- The micro-system - This is the smallest and most direct system that a person directly experiences e.g. individual or household
- The meso-system - This refers to the link between two or more microsystems e.g. home and work - It includes groups, support networks and extended family.

- The exo-system - These are forces external to the developing but have an influence on a person e.g. spouses workplace
- The macro-system– This encapsulate the wider social policy and sociocultural setting and includes the ideological, customary and legal norms. This may include organisations and larger systems. It influences all the other levels of the environment.

Throughout the study it will be demonstrated how being in a foreign country (macro system) impacts on the ability or the inability of the spouses to adjust. The study will also show how other systems such as the workplace and social groups (meso and exo systems) influence the adjustment process of the spouse; and how the family handles the demand and pressures exerted by these systems. The study will also demonstrate the interdependence and interrelatedness of members of the family as a social system and how they affect each other. Greene (2008: 168) states that from a social system's point on view, behavior is also understood as an outcome of the total situation in which an individual subsystem, group subsystem or other social unit finds itself.

1.7 Definition of key concepts

Adjustment

Yavas (2001: 61) defines adjustment as a subjective or psychological state that refers to the changes which individuals actively or passively accept in order to achieve or maintain satisfactory states within themselves.

The researcher defines adjustment as accepting and being comfortable with changes in an individual's environment or circumstances.

Diplomat

Littrel, Salas, Hess, Paley and Ridel (2006: 5) define a diplomat as “a person appointed by national government to conduct official negotiations and maintain political, economical and social relations with another country or countries”.

The researcher defines a diplomat as a person who works outside his/her country of origin to form relations with the host country on behalf of his government.

Expatriate

“A citizen of one country, working in another country” (Vogel: 2005: 4).

Tarantal (2005:3) defines an expatriate as a person who lives outside his/her home country, either on a permanent or temporary basis.

Posting

“To send to a place to take up a job or duty” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, (1981: 429).

Posting can also be described as a process of sending employees to foreign countries to conduct diplomatic duties.

Acculturation

“The process of adjusting to a new culture” (Andreason: 2003:50).

1.8 Layout of the research report

The research report comprises of six chapters divided as follows:

Table 1: Layout of the research report

Chapter	Chapter Title	Overview
1	Introduction	This chapter provides a general introduction to the study. The chapter discusses the aim of the study, the rationale, objectives and limitations of the study. It also provides an outline of the research report.
2.	Literature review: International Relations and Diplomacy	The chapter sets the context to help the reader understand the intricacy of international relations and diplomacy; and how diplomats are prepared and equipped to operate in this environment.
3.	Literature review: Experiences of spouses in foreign countries	The chapter contains a review of books and journals related to the experiences of spouses in foreign countries.
4.	Literature review: Adjustment in foreign countries	The chapter contains a review of books and journals related to the adjustment in a foreign country. Various factors such as adjustment, culture shock, coping in hardship missions are discussed.
5.	Methodology and research	The chapter gives a full description on research approach, the research design, the population, sampling, the ethical considerations, method of data collection and analysis.
6.	Results and discussion	The chapter presents data collected from participants. Summaries and verbal quotations of participants are presented.
7	Findings, conclusions and recommendations	The chapter presents findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

1.9 Limitations of the study

The following are the main limitations of the study:

The sample size is too small - It was envisaged that twelve (12) spouses of diplomats will be interviewed. However, only nine (9) spouses eventually participated in the study. This is due to the unavailability of spouses who were willing to share their experiences. The researcher initiated contact with the spouses through the diplomats as she did not have spouses' contact details. This meant that she first had to explain the purpose and goals of the study to the diplomats who would then pass on the message to their spouses. Those who showed willingness to participate were provided with consent letters and detailed information about the study. Some spouses agreed to participate but did not avail themselves for the interview. Numerous follow-up calls and emails were made to set appointments, to no avail. However even though the number of participants was less than what the researcher had planned for, adequate information was gathered. After nine (9) interviews the data became saturated.

Lack of gender balance – It was envisaged that of the twelve spouses that would participate in the study, six will be women and six will be male. The researcher realised that there was reluctance from the male spouses to participate in the study. Requests and follow-ups were made with no success. The researcher had to continue with female spouses only.

Lack of balanced views and experiences - The researcher wanted to get the experiences of the spouses whose posting was successful and those whose posting was not successful and therefore resulted in premature termination. However, only two spouses whose posting was not successful were willing to share their experiences. Some spouses that were approached to participate in the study mentioned that the experiences that led to their early return were too painful and would rather not talk about them. As a result, the researcher did not get adequate views on the unsuccessful postings.

The scope of the study – The study was intentionally narrowed to focus only on the spouses of South African diplomats. It is not the intention of the study to explore the experiences of diplomats, children of diplomats or to draw comparisons with private sector or other regional and international organisations. Whilst all of these are critical in order to gain a broader perspective of how families in general cope in foreign countries, they fall outside the scope of this study.

Lack of literature – The researcher could not find literature on the role of the Employee Assistance Practitioner in similar studies.

CHAPTER 2

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research will provide the reader with the theoretical background and broader context of diplomacy and international relations. The researcher will outline the origin and legislative mandate of diplomacy and international relations. It is envisaged that this background will provide an understanding of the conditions under which the diplomats function and how all of these impact on the diplomats and to some extent on the spouses.

“The evolving post-Cold War has radically reshaped international relations with new challenges as well as new areas of cooperation emerging in the field of diplomacy. Throughout the history of sovereign nations, diplomats have enjoyed a special status. Their function to negotiate agreements between states demands certain special privileges. An envoy from another nation is traditionally treated as a guest, their communications with their home nation treated as confidential, and their freedom from coercion and subjugation by the host nation treated as essential” (Sharp 1996: 1). According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations the establishment of diplomatic relations between states; and of permanent diplomatic missions, takes place by mutual consent.

Diplomatic relations and Consular relations are governed by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) and the Vienna Convention on Consular Services (1963), respectively. These conventions were ratified by all the countries that are members of the United Nations. South Africa as a party to the United Nations has also signed and ratified the Conventions. These Conventions were later incorporated into the South African law through the Diplomatic Immunity and Privileges Act, No. 37 of 2001. This

Act is being overseen and managed by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation.

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 is an international treaty that defines a framework for diplomatic relations between independent countries. It specifies the privileges of a diplomatic mission that enable diplomats to perform their function without fear of coercion or harassment by the host country. This forms the legal basis for diplomatic immunity. Its articles are considered a cornerstone of modern international relations. In the field of diplomacy and international relations, the Vienna Convention is referred to as the “bible” of diplomatic relations.

2.2 The role of DIRCO in diplomacy

Gore-Booth (1979: 12, 14) states that the minister of foreign affairs is the regular intermediary between the state and foreign countries; and that governments of other countries address themselves to the minister of foreign affairs either through their own accredited diplomatic agents, or through the diplomatic agent who represents his sovereign or government at their own capital.

Similarly, in South Africa, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), formally known as the Department of Foreign Affairs, in accordance with her Cabinet portfolio responsibilities, is entrusted with the formulation, promotion and execution of South Africa’s foreign policy. The Minister assumes overall responsibility for all aspects of South Africa’s international relations in consultation with the President. More specifically, DIRCO’s primary mandate is to assist the Minister in carrying out her Cabinet and Ministerial responsibilities. DIRCO conducts its mandate by:

- Coordinating and aligning South Africa’s foreign policy abroad;
- Monitoring developments in the international environment;
- Communicating government’s foreign policy positions;

- Developing and advising government on foreign policy options and creating mechanisms and avenues for achieving objectives;
- Protecting South Africa's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Contributing to the creation of an enabling international environment for South African business;
- Sourcing of developmental assistance; and
- Assisting South African citizens abroad. (DIRCO Strategic Plan: 2011-2014).

Kent-Brown (2002: 18) confirms that the primary role of the Department of Foreign Affairs is to promote South Africa's foreign interests. It also serves as the official link between the South African government and the governments of foreign states, and as such, performs an important coordinating role.

Gore-Booth (1979: 16) mentions that in every country, the foreign minister is assisted by trained staff that under his or her guidance constitutes the foreign office or ministry for foreign affairs. In order to effectively execute South Africa's foreign policy, the Department employs staff at both its headquarters and diplomatic missions abroad. According to the Departmental Placement policy (2011: 13) diplomats shall be posted or placed in missions abroad for a fixed term of four years unless specific exceptions are created under this policy or extraordinary circumstances prevail. The policy further mentions that the management of the department has the prerogative to recall back diplomats on the basis of misconduct, performance or incapacity. On the other side, the diplomat may also request to be transferred back earlier as a result of changes in his or her medical situation, family situation or conditions in the host country.

2.2.1 Diplomatic Missions

According to the Vienna Convention (1961: 3) the "premises of the mission" are the buildings or parts of buildings and the land ancillary thereto, irrespective of ownership, used for the purposes of the mission including the residence of the head of the mission.

South Africa maintains diplomatic relations with other countries and international organisations and agencies through 125 missions in 105 countries abroad, and through the accreditation of more than 160 countries and embassies resident in South Africa. (Annual report, 2008-09: 11). All South African missions fall under the ambit of the Department. The main aim of these missions is primarily to act as a channel of communication between the South African government and the government of the particular country.

2.2.2 Classification of diplomatic missions

Diplomatic missions are divided into Embassies and Consulates. Shaw (2001:6) describes them as follows:

- Embassies – These are missions with full ambassadorial status.
- Consulates – These are missions headed by a Consul-General.

These missions are further classified into four categories as mentioned below.

The Department uses the following factors that are used internationally to classify countries according to hardship:

- Climate
- Pollution levels
- Health risks and services
- Language and culture
- Goods and services
- Isolation
- Social network and leisure
- Housing (utilities)
- Education
- Personal security; and

- Socio-political tensions

Assisted by a company called ECA, the department rates countries based on these factors. The ratings range from one to ten. For example, a score of one on a rating scale would indicate no hardship in the country, whereas a score of ten would indicate severe hardship.

Category 1 & 2: Missions in these categories rate very low in the continuum scale. These missions are located in First World countries e.g. New York, London, Paris, Germany, to name a few. Shaw (2001:7) states that in such missions generally all amenities are of a similar or higher standard than in South Africa. In these missions diplomats and their families may not find it too difficult to adjust to day to-day living as goods, services, food, health care, etc., are easily accessible. Diplomats and families posted in these missions are entitled to travel at state cost to South Africa or any destination of choice after two years of their tour of duty.

Category 3: Missions in this category are classified as mild hardship. Examples of missions classified as mild hardship would be Botswana, Lesotho and Kuwait City amongst others. Although not very difficult; the standard of living in these countries is regarded lower than in South Africa. Diplomats and families posted to these missions are entitled special travel privileges to South Africa or any destination of their choice, every eighteen months.

Category 4: Missions falling under this category rate very high on the rating scale and are classified as severe hardship. Most of these missions are found in third world countries e.g. Mali, Chad, and Guinea Conakry, to name a few. Shaw (2001: 6) describes hardship as those adjustment factors which affect the day-to-day lifestyle of an expatriate's family posted to a new location and which is different

from what is available in their home country. For instance, goods and services might not be easily available. There might be socio-political tensions, identified health risks. Schools and health facilities might not be of a good standard. Due to these factors, diplomats and their families are granted special travel privileges to South Africa or any destination of their choice every six months. In addition, diplomats posted to these missions receive hardship mission financial incentives and are assisted with food concessions. These are extra incentives that are not afforded to missions that fall in the one to three categories.

(Extract from: Human Resources records).

2.2.3 Functions of Diplomatic Missions

The functions of a diplomatic mission as stated in the Vienna Convention (1961:3) consist, inter alia, of:

- Representing the sending State in the receiving State;
- Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law;
- Negotiating with the Government of the receiving State;
- Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State;
- Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations.

Nothing in the present Convention shall be construed as preventing the performance of consular functions by a diplomatic mission.

2.2.4 Functions of Consulates

Functions of Consulates as stipulated in the Vienna Convention Consular Relations (1963:4-5) are:

- Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, both individuals and bodies corporate, within the limits permitted by international law;
- Furthering the development of commercial, economic, cultural and scientific relations between the sending State and the receiving State and otherwise promoting friendly relations between them in accordance with the provisions of the present Convention;
- Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the commercial, economic, cultural and scientific life of the receiving State, reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State and giving information to persons interested;
- Issuing passports and travel documents to nationals of the sending State, and visas or appropriate documents to persons wishing to travel to the sending State;
- Helping and assisting nationals, both individuals and bodies corporate, of the sending State;
- Acting as notary and civil registrar and in capacities of a similar kind, and performing certain functions of an administrative nature, provided that there is nothing contrary thereto in the laws and regulations of the receiving State;
- Safeguarding the interests of nationals, both individuals and bodies corporate, of the sending States in cases of succession mortis causa in the territory of the receiving State, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the receiving State;
- Safeguarding, within the limits imposed by the laws and regulations of the receiving State, the interests of minors and other persons lacking full capacity who are nationals of the sending State, particularly where any guardianship or trusteeship is required with respect to such persons;

- Subject to the practices and procedures obtaining in the receiving State, representing or arranging appropriate representation for nationals of the sending State before the tribunals and other authorities of the receiving State, for the purpose of obtaining, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the receiving State, provisional measures for the preservation of the rights and interests of these nationals, where, because of absence or any other reason, such nationals are unable at the proper time to assume the defence of their rights and interests;
- Transmitting judicial and extrajudicial documents or executing letters rogatory or commissions to take evidence for the courts of the sending State in accordance with international agreements in force or, in the absence of such international agreements, in any other manner compatible with the laws and regulations of the receiving State;
- Exercising rights of supervision and inspection provided for in the laws and regulations of the sending State in respect of vessels having the nationality of the sending State, and of aircraft registered in that State, and in respect of their crews;
- Extending assistance to vessels and aircraft mentioned in subparagraph (k) of this article, and to their crews, taking statements regarding the voyage of a vessel, examining and stamping the ship's papers, and, without prejudice to the powers of the authorities of the receiving State, conducting investigations into any incidents which occurred during the voyage, and settling disputes of any kind between the master, the officers and the seamen insofar as this may be authorized by the laws and regulations of the sending State;
- Performing any other functions entrusted to a consular post by the sending State which are not prohibited by the laws and regulations of the receiving State or to which no objection is taken by the receiving State or which are referred to in the international agreements in force between the sending State and the receiving State.

The difference between the Diplomatic Missions and Consulates is that the former are full missions headed by an Ambassador who is accredited to an entire country with the aim of promoting relations between home country and host country. Consulates on the other hand are smaller in terms of staff component and are headed by Consuls-General. One may say they are subsidiaries of Diplomatic Missions. It is common that a particular country might have more than one Consulate spread in different parts of a country with each one being headed by its own Consul-General.

These Consuls-General have no total autonomy but work under the jurisdiction of the Ambassador and deal to a large extent with consular matters in their area of accreditation. The researcher's understanding is that Consulates are not expected to perform work pertaining to political relations but should confine themselves more to economy, trade and cultural activities. However, in some instances the roles are not clearly understood by the staff of both Missions and lead to turf squabbles. It is therefore important that there should be on-going communication and effective management of relations between the two entities. Failure to do this might result in serious tension between the Diplomatic Mission and the Consulate.

2.2.5 Understanding diplomacy

“Diplomacy is the art and practice of conducting negotiations between representatives of groups or states. It usually refers to international diplomacy - the conduct of international relations through the intercession of professional diplomats with regard to issues of peace-making, trade, war, economics, culture, environment and human rights.” (Wikipedia).

According to Sharp (1996: 3) diplomacy should be regarded as an institution of the international system or society, but beyond this, and as is the case with most other concepts in international relations, the idea of diplomacy signifies different things to different people. Some regard it merely as a synonym of foreign policy. Some simplify it to mean a particular way in which people behave or ought to behave in relation with

each other. It is also identified as the means by which governments seek to advance its foreign policies.

Gore-Booth (1979: 3) defines diplomacy as “the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, extending sometimes also to their relations with vassal states; or, more briefly still, the conduct of the business between states by peaceful means”.

According to Barston (2006: 1) diplomacy is concerned with the management of relations between states and between states and other actors. From a state perspective, diplomacy is concerned with advising, shaping and implementing foreign policy. The author further states that diplomacy is often thought of as being concerned with peaceful activities, although it may occur within a war or armed conflict or be used in the orchestration of particular acts of violence, such as seeking over-flight clearance for an air strike.

Spies (2005: 266) and Barston (2006:1) however caution that diplomacy shouldn't be seen narrowly or only as a domain of foreign ministries or political diplomats. There is a range of non-state actors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), non-governmental organisations (NGO), United Nations, individuals, and many others that conduct diplomatic practices. This has prompted Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) all over the world to redefine their relationships with own and foreign publics and the wider foreign policy “community” in every state. However, Roberts (2009: 3) cautions that the word diplomacy has suffered from misuse and confusion. The researcher supports Robert's views in that the term diplomacy is used in informal and formal settings.

Sharp (1996) concedes that it is difficult to define diplomacy with precision. This view was later supported by Spies (2005: 23) who argues that finding an apt definition of diplomacy is surprisingly elusive. She however contends that often diplomacy is simplistically equated with the art of international negotiations or even more vaguely with the conduct of international relations. Bringing diplomacy to an individual level,

Neumann (2005: 88) asserts that the substantial point is that diplomacy is about easing communication by turning yourself into an optimally functioning membrane.

From the above definitions, one can deduce that the definition of diplomacy is very broad and can mean different things to different people. The central theme however, is about relationship between states or between states and non-state organisations. Diplomacy is also a term that is usually “loosely” used by individuals. For example you hear one saying: “he was very diplomatic in his/her response”. The researcher concludes the discussion on diplomacy with an extract from the Ambassador’s Diary (2011: 1) which states that “the practice of diplomacy is as complex as the dynamic global arena in which it plays out”.

However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher will confine herself to diplomacy as interaction between states or governments; and in the context of the execution of foreign policy.

2.3 Profile of a Diplomat

A diplomat is defined as a person appointed by a state to conduct diplomacy with another state or international organisation. Shaw (2001: 6) defines a diplomat as a well-balanced, self-fulfilled individual with a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the dynamics of his/her country of origin and the accredited country, with the capability of applying this understanding and knowledge in the best interest of the Republic of South Africa.

Sofer (2001:1) cautions that to the uninformed spectator, the diplomat looks as a performer in a classical ballet or colourful opera choreographed to the sound of hard rock or rap music, or if we wish, against the background of post-modernist deconstructions. From these assertions one can conclude that there is generally no common understanding of what a diplomat is and more so what they do.

On a more positive note, Sharp (1996: 7) mentions that nearly all diplomats regard themselves as essentially practical men and women who take the world for what it is, rather than what it might be and who let reason rather than emotion govern their actions. In the process they make sober assessments of what best serves the interest of the country and the requirements of peace and international order. In terms of work, diplomats fall in different ranks and categories. Some perform political functions and some administrative functions.

2.3.1 The functions of a diplomat

Spies (2005: 264) states that “globalisation has multiplied the opportunities and methods for international cooperation, which diplomats, more than any other public servants are tasked to facilitate”. The main functions of diplomats revolve around the representation and protection of the interest and nationals of the sending state, as well as promotion of information and friendly relations.

One of the central tasks of diplomacy as cited by Barston (2006: 360) is the management of relations using a variety of formal and informal means. The former includes the use of diplomatic correspondence, statements, visits and negotiations. The latter refers to activities such as telephonic or email contacts, unofficial or semi-private visits. There are also other covert or secret means that includes formal or informal representatives and agents.

Sofer (2001: 6) states that up to a certain point, the professional diplomat is a messenger in chains with a strict definition of his terms of reference. In performing his or her role, the diplomat must see to it that the words and impressions conveyed by him are compatible and consistent with his or her government’s intentions and diplomatic objectives. In other words, a diplomat must promote the views and positions of his or her country and not his or hers. Neumann (2005: 88) asserts that as trained diplomats, part of their work is to simulate the positions of the Ministry and the state that they and their Ministries represent, mediating between that state and some other political entity.

This clearly indicates that a diplomat must constantly keep contact with his or her country to ensure alignment.

Neumann (2005: 87) concedes that of all the functions of a diplomat, negotiation carries more weight and although the meaning of negotiations seems to be changing over time, for a diplomat the mediating function of negotiations seems to be of an increasing importance. Barston (2006: 49) defines negotiation as an attempt to explore and reconcile conflicting positions in order to reach an acceptable outcome. Negotiation can be conducted through around the table discussions, or at a distance, through formal or informal diplomatic correspondence, telephone, email or fax. With technological advances, the diplomats are required to be technological savvy in order to keep with the speed of information.

The Department also considers negotiation as one of the most important skills that the diplomats should possess. In the researcher's view being involved in negotiations is not easy and can be quite stressful especially for new diplomats. The researcher believes that it is a skill that it honed over time.

Neumann (2005) further states that being a diplomat requires one to be on duty 24 hours a day. He cautions that if statesmen do not get advice from diplomats when they feel they need it, their response may be to bypass them in favour of some other advisor. It is obvious that with the advent of social networks such as wiki-leaks, twitter, face books, internet and 24 hour news breaks, diplomats face a challenge of providing "fresh" news to their ministers and statesmen. This therefore means diplomats cannot "rest on their laurels", lest they become irrelevant sources of information for their ministers and governments. In addition, diplomats should accept that their work will continuously encroach their private lives.

From the discussion above, one can deduce that diplomats have to be alert at all times. They have to be mentally sharp, have their "ears on the ground" and be able to analyse events and inform their Head Office of events in the host country and what implications they may have on their country. As clearly stated, diplomats are literally at work 24

hours a day. Their work is characterised by long hours' work, travelling and constant contact with their Head Office. This encroaches on family time and has the potential to cause marital conflicts. It may also lead to work stress which if unmanaged can impact negatively on job performance.

2.3.2 Selection and appointments of diplomats

The Vienna Convention (1961: 4) stipulates that members of the diplomatic staff of the mission should in principle be of the nationality of the sending State. In this regard, South African diplomats are South African citizens.

2.3.2.1 Heads of Mission

There are different categories of heads of mission, namely;

- Ambassadors or High Commissioners - Those that head embassies
- Consuls-General / Consuls / Vice-Consuls / Consular Agents – According to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963:6), these are “diplomats charged with the duty of acting in that capacity”. The Convention further states that in a case where the sending state that does not have a diplomatic mission and is not represented by the diplomatic mission of a third State, a consular officer may with consent of a receiving state, and without affecting his or her consular status, be authorized to perform diplomatic activities.
- Charge d' Affaires – They act in the absence of heads of mission.

“From its early history, modern diplomatic practice has employed Ambassadors – the highest ranking diplomats who represent a nation to deal with a host of problems that occur within our international systems” (Ambassador’s Diary 2011:1).

The Vienna Convention (1961:2) stipulates that the head of the mission is the person charged by the sending State with the duty of acting in that capacity. The sending State must ensure that the *agreement* of the receiving State has been given for the person it proposes to accredit as head of the mission to that State.

For the Consuls-General, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963) stipulates that the head of a consular post is admitted to the exercise of his or her function by an authorisation from the receiving State termed an *exequatur*. Lee and Quigley (2008: 78) add that a person is recognized as a Consul-General only after receiving both a commission from the sending State and an *exequatur* or other authorization from the receiving State. However, the receiving State may refuse to grant the *agreement* or *exequatur*, whichever is applicable, and is not obliged to give reasons for the refusal. Roberts (2009: 84) states that rejection or delay in granting the *agreement* to the proposed appointment may relate to the previous postings, conduct or personal characteristics of the individual, it may also be a sign of a strained relationship between the two states; or it could be a combination of both.

Roberts (2009: 83) states that ambassadors and other heads of mission are in many states selected not only as being the best qualified on personal grounds for appointment to a particular diplomatic post but also for political reasons. In many countries, including South Africa, heads of missions are appointed by the President. Roberts (2009) confirms this assertion and gives an example of the United State's Constitution which clearly provides that the President, "by and with the advice of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls".

South Africa, like many other countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom has two categories of heads of missions, namely, the political appointees and the career diplomats. The former are usually not from within the Department. Roberts (2009) states that there is a long tradition of appointing political supporters of the ruling party to serve as Ambassadors. However, in South Africa, over the last few years we have seen appointments of members of other political or opposition parties to serve as ambassadors. Political appointees are selected from a broad spectrum of disciplines e.g. politicians, lawyers, academics, just to name a few.

The second category is that of career diplomats. These are senior managers from within the department. They are nominated by the Minister of International Relations and

Cooperation to serve as heads of missions. Once nominated, the normal procedure as outlined above is followed i.e. they need to get an *agreement* or *exequatur* from the receiving state and finally be appointed by the President.

2.3.2.2 Members of the staff of the Mission

Each diplomatic mission comprise of diplomats who are citizens of the sending state and the locals who are citizens of the receiving state or other nationalities. The former are referred to in the department as transferred officials and the latter as Locally Recruited Personnel (LRP).

2.3.2.3 Transferred officials (Diplomats)

Transferred officials are appointed to different positions such as minister plenipotentiary, minister, counsellor, political and administration secretaries and attaches, depending on the size and location of the mission. Selection of the staff of the diplomatic mission is guided by the Department's Placement policy and guidelines. Transferred officials are mostly from the department and a few are from other government departments such as Home Affairs, Defence, Health, Agriculture and so on, depending on the size of the mission. Transferred officials from other government departments are referred to as Attaches. Roberts (2009: 85) adds that unlike with the position of the head of mission, the general rule is that no advance approval from the receiving state is required for members of the staff of the mission of whatever rank.

The Departmental Placement Policy (2011:8) stipulates that a combination of criteria will be used to select suitable diplomats. The criteria shall be applied in terms of a balance of considerations, i.e. no single criterion seen in isolation shall result in one candidate being preferred over the other. Criteria include, relevant experience, successful completion of the foreign service training, interview performance, subsequent postings, personal profile *vis-a-vis* post profile, performance appraisal outcome, contract and briefing by the desk. Suitable candidates are then appointed to serve as members of

staff of the diplomatic mission in various capacities e.g. political, administration or technical support.

The Vienna Convention (1961:2) states that members of the staff of the mission are the members of the diplomatic staff, of the administrative and technical staff and of the service staff of the mission. The Vienna Convention further states that the members of the diplomatic staff are the members of the staff of the mission having diplomatic rank. Spies (2005: 68) asserts that from a legal procedural perspective, the term diplomat (hence, diplomatic staff in the context of diplomatic missions) is applied to those officials who are accorded legal diplomatic status when working abroad and who in hierarchical professional ascent in their MFA, are in line to attain the eventual rank of an ambassador. This definition excludes other members of the mission who performs administration, technical and service staff. However, Dembinski (1988) as quoted by Spies (2005: 69) disputes the exclusion of the administrative, technical and service staff and argues that the professional origin and career paths of such individuals is irrelevant – their designation as diplomats is merely dependant on their *locus standi*. Their legal standing as diplomats derives from the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

The researcher aligns herself with Dembinski's view that the title of a diplomat should apply to all officials that have been sent by their governments to work in missions abroad. It should be noted that all staff members in diplomatic missions, sent by their respective countries are afforded diplomatic privileges and immunities as outlined in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Therefore one can conclude that the administration staff are full diplomats.

It should also be noted that the administration staff also perform some negotiations in their line of work. For example, they negotiate contracts for the Mission and its staff. They participate in Mission events and interact with the public. They are not confined to the offices as one may think. Therefore, to regard the administration staff as not or less of a diplomat is not justified.

2.3.2.4 Locally Recruited Personnel (LRP)

The LRP could be nationals of the receiving state or nationals of other countries who have acquired citizenship of the receiving country. Whilst there is a fixed term for diplomats as stated above, there is no specific term for the LRP to serve in a mission. In many instances, the locals have a very long service in the mission and form a larger component of the mission. The LRP are recruited through a normal recruitment process as stipulated in the Foreign Service Code (FSC)¹. Some LRP perform administrative duties, whilst others serve as secretaries and others are employed as service staff e.g. chauffeur, messenger driver, gardener, etc.

2.3.3 Capacity building for diplomats

DIRCO like many other foreign ministries around the world have established a Diplomatic Academy located at its Head Quarters in Pretoria. The purpose of the Academy is to ensure that all diplomats are capacitated to execute their duties in missions abroad. The Academy also extends its training to the spouses of diplomats.

Spies (2005: 200) states that MFA all over the world are recognising the advantages of diplomatic training and are formalising and expanding their efforts to enhance training programmes. Spies further mentions that both developing and developed countries are widening and deepening the career specific diplomatic training. They are formalising the professional training and have extended the diplomatic training to non-diplomats who are active in the field of diplomacy as well as foreign diplomats.

2.3.3.1 Training for diplomats

Prior to posting to a mission abroad, all diplomats undergo foreign service training offered by the Diplomatic Academy of the Department. The Diplomatic Academy is an accredited training provider. It is tasked with providing internationally benchmarked training programmes for the preparation of South African diplomats to function optimally

¹ FSC is guiding manual on the management and administration of foreign service in the Mission.

on the global stage. These diplomats are moulded and equipped to address the challenges of building peace and security, reducing poverty and establishing good governance. (DIRCO: DTRD Brochure 2009).

There are two main categories of training programmes offered to diplomats. These are diplomatic training and administration training. Spies (2005: 206) explains that the former is aimed at career diplomats and the latter includes training for clerical, technical or administrative staff of MFAs. These two programmes are offered separately but participants may share attendance of certain generic courses such as protocol, etiquette, cultural studies, language and consular functions.

Career diplomats who will be performing political work at the missions are required to attain a national diploma in diplomacy before posting. The primary aim of all training interventions is to produce diplomats that not only represent South Africa but also the aspirations of the African Continent. The training includes South Africa's foreign policy, technical skills such as negotiations and conflict management, management practices, language and behavioural competencies (DIRCO: DTRD Brochure, 2009).

For those who perform administrative duties, the course consists of an in-depth focus on consular, financial, foreign property management, expenditure, revenue, human resources, supply chain and general administrative management. Lee and Quigley (2008: 114) mention that because of the complexity of consular functions, many States provide training programmes to teach on how to determine the national status of any applicant applying for consular service, resolve simple nationality problems, issue passports, register births and deaths, and conduct marriages and issue certificates of no impediment, just to name a few.

One of the generic courses offered, is the Cross Cultural Training (CCT). Scullion and Collings (2006: 118) define CCT as any formalised intervention designed to increase the knowledge and skill of international assignees to live and work effectively in an unfamiliar environment. The main aim of CCT in simple terms is to prepare people for what lies ahead, to help them have realistic expectations, help them realise the

symptoms of culture shock when it happens and equip them with problem solving and adjustment skills.

In order to enhance learning, various training methods such as practical training, research projects, talks, simulation exercises, debates, meetings, interactive lectures and presentations, team work, peer review, mentoring and coaching are utilised.

2.3.3.2 Training for spouses and families

Diplomats have a choice of whether to relocate with their families or not. Some of these spouses participate in various fora such as the Diplomatic Spouses Association and charity organisations abroad and are therefore regarded as “representatives” of South Africa in their own right. Spies (2005: 206) states that spouses of families who accompany diplomats abroad are regarded as part of a representational “package” i.e. their conduct, appearance and utterances while abroad reflect the image of their sending state as those of serving diplomats. It is for this reason that the Department extends training to them. To this end, spouses undergo a week-long training offered by the Diplomatic Academy. The training includes amongst others, language, cross-cultural adaptation, etiquette and protocol.

In order to further support the spouses of diplomats, the Department has created the Employee Wellness Centre (EWC). This is a section dedicated to support employees of the Department and their families. The section is capacitated with Employee Assistance Practitioners (EAPs) and Clinical psychologists. The role of these professionals is to provide counselling, therapy and support.

2.3.3.3 Pre-posting counselling

Before departure, diplomats and their families are encouraged to attend a voluntary pre-posting preparation counselling offered by the EWC. The main focus of the counselling session is to deal with the psychological and emotional preparedness of the diplomat and the family for posting. The counselling sessions range from one session to a few

sessions based on the need and the state of readiness of the individual. However, the Employee Wellness Centre's statistics indicate that despite the pre-posting counselling and training, some diplomats and their families find it very difficult to adjust in a foreign country. This inability to adjust sometimes results in premature returns from postings. The next chapter gives a broader and detailed discussion on adjustment challenges experienced by the spouses of South African diplomats and spouses of expatriates in general.

2.3.4 Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities

As stated in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963) all members of a diplomatic mission and their families enjoy certain privileges and immunities. For example, they are regarded as inviolable i.e. they may not be arrested or detained. Their private residence shall enjoy the same inviolability and protection as that of the residence of the head of mission. They may also be exempted from certain taxes. These privileges and immunities start when the diplomat or member of his/her family arrives in the receiving country and cease when the term of duty comes to an end. However, the responsibility to respect the laws of the host country is paramount to the diplomats and their families. Diplomats and family member can be expelled from a country should they contravene certain laws as defined by the country. It is therefore very important for diplomats and their families to be cautioned not to be "careless" because of these privileges.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of the field of international relations and diplomacy. This chapter provides context for the entire study. The aim of the chapter is to provide the reader with an understanding of how Missions work, how diplomats are selected, what is expected of the diplomats and the role of the spouse in the posting process. The chapter also outlined the training and support provided to diplomats and spouses in preparing them for posting.

CHAPTER 3

THE EXPERIENCES OF SPOUSES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

3.1 Introduction

“One of the essential preliminary tasks when you undertake research is to go through the existing literature in order to acquaint yourself with the available body of knowledge in your area of interest” (Kumar, 2005: 31). In this chapter, the researcher conducted an in-depth literature study on the experiences of accompanying spouses of South African diplomats in foreign countries and spouses of expatriates, in general. In this literature study, factors that enhance or inhibit successful adjustment of families, particularly spouses, were reviewed. In order to gain a broad understanding, books, journals and internet sources were used. Knowledge was drawn from literature on spouses of expatriates in general. In conclusion, a summary of the literature study has been provided.

3.2 Relocation

Relocation is the beginning of a journey of posting or simply described as “taking off”. It can be literally defined as a move from one area of residence to the other or from one job to the other. It is normally characterised by mixed emotions of excitement, uncertainty, anxiety and fear. Shaw (2001:19) cautions that domestic and international relocation offer different challenges. The author stresses that whilst domestic relocation might just require moving around within one’s country, international relocation requires one to learn a new language and learn to interact with a new culture. In her view, “international relocation represents an unfolding, complex experience that affects every aspect of every family member’s life, individually and as a system, in the process of coming to terms with a different set of circumstances in various environments for a specific number of years”. The researcher concurs with Shaw that relocating to a foreign

country is far more complex, challenging and requires a lot from the family. This is what the diplomats go through with the families. As a result, the impact of posting can have positive or negative outcomes.

“Job relocation refers to situations where an employee simultaneously changes job and home location” (Martin. 1995: 49). The author stresses that moving house and changing a job each figure highly as stressful life events, so it is not surprising that when they coincide, individuals can experience high levels of stress. (Raviv, Keinan, Abazon & Raviv, 1990: 130) stress that “moving house is not the most traumatic event of one’s life. It would be difficult to compare to the death of a family member or to a war. However, it is a frequent event that is often experienced as stressful, even when chosen voluntarily by some of the individuals involved”. The authors further assert that the stresses associated with moving are numerous and varied. Some of the difficulties aroused during transition periods relate to loss of control due to a reduction in mastery over one’s psychosocial environment. This is a life of a diplomat because posting means changing a job and home location at the same time.

Various authors assert that relocation is particularly difficult on the spouses. This is illustrated by Van Aswegen (2008: 111) who emphasises that the spouse is often required to give up some of the closest and most important parts of their lives, including their careers, their social support networks, such as friends, family and relatives. Raviv et al. (1990: 130) state that although moving is perceived as stressful by all age groups, it appears to be especially difficult for children and adolescents.

3.3 Challenges facing families in overseas posting

Scullion and Collings (2006:122) state that an international assignment taken as a family unit usually requires the spouse or partner to forfeit the accustomed structure and continuity of his or her life, which can be problematic for the expatriate couple. It also disrupts children’s education and stability. Posting causes dissatisfaction about leaving extended family and loved ones behind. Shaw (2001:2) describes diplomatic life as “a

lifestyle that has an enriching and harmful potential, one that leaves no-one untouched. It is a life of difference and complexity, with unexpected richness interspersed with periods of ennui. But above all it is a life of change and discontinuity". Shaw contends that although no conclusive research was made, diplomats are perceived to have a higher divorce rate. The children are considered "spoilt brats" as they have been exposed to so much and yet find it hard to settle and adjust. Marx's (1999: 108) observation is that international assignments can make or break a relationship. Marx cautions that there are many cases where relationships drift apart, especially in cases where the relationship was already "on the rocks" before posting.

Alison Maitland in Gooderham and Nordhaug (2003: 303) adds that many employees are unwilling to take up a posting overseas because of their partner's career or family concerns. Scullion and Collings (2006: 186) state that international assignments cause work-family conflicts. This conflict is experienced when pressures from work and family roles are mutually incompatible. This is further emphasized by Earley, Ang and Tan (2006: 137) who cite that unlike domestic work assignments, global work assignment is particularly vulnerable to spill overs of family life to work life. These challenges may lead to failure in posting.

3.4 Reasons for expatriate failure

The researcher believes that the success or failure of a posting or international assignment are very complex issues with many variables. Tung (1987: 117) defines expatriate failure as "the inability of an expatriate to perform effectively in a foreign country and hence the need for the employee to be fired or recalled home". Similarly, Van Aswegen (2008: 46) and Briscoe and Schuler (2004: 242) refer to expatriate failure as the premature return or recall of an expatriate to the home-country before the period of assignment is completed.

Mendenhall, Punnett and Ricks (1995: 419-420) mention that expatriate failure can be caused by both work and non-work issues. According to these authors, non-work factors refer to the spouse and family adjustment, as well as culture novelty. It is also

important to note that personal health or that of family members can also contribute to premature return. Work and non-work issues are discussed in detail below.

3.4.1 Non-work issue – Family

Tung's (1982: 67-68) survey of US, European and Japanese nationals highlighted that the inability of the manager's spouse to adjust to a different physical or cultural environment is the number one cause of expatriates' failure overseas. This is illustrated in table 2 in the next page.

Table 2: Reasons for expatriate failure (in descending order of importance)

American	Japanese	Europe
The inability of the spouses to adjust to a different physical or cultural environment	Inability of the manager to cope with larger responsibilities posed by overseas work	The inability of the spouses to adjust to a different physical or cultural environment
Manager's inability to adapt to a different physical or cultural environment	Manager's inability to adapt to a different physical or cultural environment	Other family problems
Other family problems	Manager's personality or emotional maturity	Concerns over re-entry
Manager's personality or emotional maturity	Manager's lack of technical competence for the job assignment	
Manager's inability to cope with larger responsibilities posed by the overseas work	Inability of the manager's spouse to adjust	
Manager's lack of technical competence for the job assignment	Lack of motivation to work overseas	
Lack of motivation to work overseas.	Other family related problems	

Source: Tung, R.L. 1982. Selection and Training of US, European and Japanese Multinationals. *California Management Review*, 25(1):57-71.

Tung's findings were later supported by Gooderham and Nordhaug (2003: 303) and various authors as cited in Scullion and Collings (2006: 61). These authors state that partner dissatisfaction, family concerns or inability to adapt in a foreign country or new culture have emerged as the major reason for poor performance of international assignments.

The findings by Marx (1999: 119) also indicate that successful international adaptation depends on whether the accompanying partner is willing to move, can find an equivalent job or will accept the fact that they will not be working while overseas. This view is supported by Scullion and Linehan (2005: 187) who stress that “one of the most important factors in determining the success of an overseas posting is the willingness of the spouse or partner to leave home and possibly a career to live abroad”. Most of the time, the spouse, usually the wife, has to give up a job, a house, friends and family to accompany her husband on a foreign posting. Whilst it can be argued that the husband also leaves his house, friends and family members, the impact is not the same as he has a job to go to and can establish new relationships at work.

Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall (1992: 130) found that whilst the expatriate is often excited about the career potential and international assignments, spouses may not be because for him or her this may simply represent a disruption of their own careers and long-term relationships. Lane, DiStefano and Mazvenski (2000: 277) argue that although the single most common reason for male expatriates’ failure and early return from international assignments is the dissatisfaction of their wives, this doesn’t mean women cannot cope in foreign environments. The only thing is that the role of a spouse (female or male) is much more ambiguous and therefore makes adjustment more demanding than that of an employee.

In support of Marx (1999), Miller (2008: 20) asserts that the Committee of the Diplomatic Service Wives’ Association has for some time been concerned about the emotional strains on wives abroad. Miller further cites that the incidence of more obvious symptoms of stress i.e. broken marriages, alcoholism, psychological disturbance, is not documented but is certainly increasing. However, on a more positive note, Marx (1999) believes that the thrill of a new environment and the opportunity to see each other in a different context can bring couples much closer together. She argues that accompanying partners often develop new interests abroad, particularly if they have more time or are not working and enjoy what the host country can offer. The different views cited above present a clear indication that people are different, have different

stress threshold, different interests and different goals. Another point illustrated here is that relocation can result in emotional distress and can enhance or break a relationship.

The researcher believes that even though early returns of diplomats due to spouses' inability to adjust in a foreign country are not a widespread phenomenon in the Department, there have been spouses that have requested to be transferred back prematurely, leaving diplomats and sometimes children abroad (Employee Wellness Centre Statistics). On the contrary, there are spouses that adjust and adapt well in foreign countries. At the end of the posting period they report pleasant experiences and good memories. These contradictions make this study relevant and necessary.

3.4.2. Dual career couples

This section is included due to the unique challenges posed by posting in dual-career² couples. Briscoe et al. (2009: 182) argue that dual career-couples are among the top five challenges faced by organisations. “Historically used in a management control role, expatriates for decades went abroad for a duration of usually two to three years, very often accompanied by a trailing spouse who did not have a career or expect to work” (Lane et al., 2009: 216). However from the assertion made by Briscoe et al. (2009: 185) there appears to be acknowledgement that this scenario is changing. According to these authors, probably the most important challenges facing organisations today revolve around the dual career couple and problems with relocating non-married partners.

Punnett (1997: 247) cautioned that there is an increased participation of women in the workforce and this therefore makes spouses reluctant to leave their careers and follow their spouses on international assignments. Punnett (1997) caution that the dual career couples is not going to go away. Instead, dual-career couples have become common in many families. “Unlike in the past, working spouses are a rule rather than an exception” Marx (1999:19).

² Dual career refers to families where both spouses are/or were working before posting.

The dual-career couples according to Mendenhall et al. (1995: 518) see their work as not simply providing financial remuneration but they see their work as representing an important occupation which they wish to pursue for personal achievement and advancement. This was supported by Alison Maitland (The other half of the jobs equation) in Gooderham and Nordhaug (2003: 303) who caution that giving up a career to follow your partner overseas is not just about losing a salary but it affects status, self-esteem and the balance of power in a relationship. This therefore makes many spouses, both men and women reluctant to give up their careers and follow their husbands or wives in foreign postings. This is evidenced by a survey conducted by GMAC in 2008, as cited by Lane et al. (2009: 216) which reported that the second most common reason (at 62%) for refusing an international assignment was spouse/partner career concerns.

Earley et al. (2006: 138) stress that work is the “central life interest” or the core of the identity in the spouse’s life. Therefore such disruptions can have adverse effects on his or her self-worth and self-identity. They caution that identity is complex, multifaceted, dynamic and adjusts to changes in one’s social situation. Earley et al. (2006: 63) state that in many instances the spouse has to leave a desirable job and take a less suitable one to accommodate the partner or perhaps give up work completely for a time. On top of this, the spouse is more likely to feel isolated than the employee because of the job changes and also because the employee has a work setting to go into, with built-in social networks and the like.

Gooderham and Nordhaug (2003: 302) state that the reluctant spouse has been found in most cases to be a woman with a career, as most expatriates have mostly been men. According to Briscoe and Schuler (2004: 249) this picture is changing since the percentage of women in international assignments in 2004 increased from 5-6% to 16%.

A study on trailing spouses (2004) indicates that one of the assumptions made by many people is that the issues facing male and female trailing spouses are similar. For

example both sexes expressed concern for work in a foreign country. However, upon closer examination, they found that whilst there are some similarities, there are also significant differences in how males and females manage and adjust to the trailing spouse life.

It appears additional stress is experienced when the accompanying spouse is a male. This is clear in Mendenhall et al. (1995: 521) assertion that the current social system makes it difficult for men to adjust to the role of secondary breadwinner or homemaker if they do not work in foreign countries. This is because men are judged by their careers more than women. In the researcher's views, these societal expectations and pressures contribute to men resisting to accompany their wives on overseas assignments, thereby sacrificing the female partner's advancement.

Mendenhall et al. (1995: 518) state that despite the apparent importance, many companies are not yet addressing the issues related to dual-career couples and international assignments directly. Companies believe that problems associated with the relocation of the spouse are a family matter and therefore organisations should not get involved.

However, some organisations may have progressed substantially in how they handle spouses in international assignments. Scullion and Linehan (2005: 187) argue that "a growing number of international transfers combined with an increasing percentage of dual-career couples in the workplace have made organisations realise that they must address dual-career issues in order to increase the success of their international assignments". This view is supported by Briscoe et al. (2009: 182) and Hodgetts and Luthans (1997: 396) who state that dual career-couples led to a number of companies offering both formal and informal (proactive or reactive) assistance and support to the spouses. In an attempt to deal with these concerns, some organisations have introduced a spouse assistance programme to help spouses gain work permits, career advice, business start-up grants or financial assistance for education. Briscoe et al. (2009) neatly categorises support programmes in three categories, namely, personal adjustment, career maintenance and offset of loss of income.

3.4.3. Work related issues

Whilst the discussion above stress that family issues, particularly the inability of the spouse to adjust in a foreign country are regarded as the number one cause for expatriate failure, Tung (1987: 117) cautions that failure of overseas assignments cannot be attributed to family issues only. Tung stresses that work related factors, as cited below, also contribute to the failure of overseas posting:

- Short duration of assignments, which are normally two to three years. This is not conducive to high performance.
- Overemphasis on technical competence criterion to the disregard of other important attributes such as relational abilities.
- Inadequate training for overseas assignments.

To support Tung's argument, the researcher adds that job demands such as unclear roles, long hours, political situation and other related matters can lead to stress and health problems that can eventually lead to failed postings.

3.5 Selection of candidates for posting

In any workplace, the recruitment and selection process plays a critical role in determining whether the right people are employed in the right places. This also holds true for the selection of candidates for posting or overseas assignments. The discussion below points to an urgent need for organisations to review the criteria for selecting suitable candidates for overseas assignments. The discussion aims to prove that although technical competence is crucial for job performance, it cannot be regarded as the single selection criterion.

Hodgetts and Luthans (1997: 396) stress that in addition to technical competence, spouses and dependents are an important consideration when a person is to be chosen or selected for an overseas assignment. This view is further supported by Briscoe and

Schuler (2004: 242) who state that “the firm must select managers who, with their families, will be most able to adapt overseas and who also possess the necessary expertise to get the job done in that foreign environment”. Hodgetts and Luthans (1997) add that if the family is not happy, the expatriate often performs poorly.

Tung (1982: 65) states that in management positions which involve more extensive contact with the local community, as opposed to technically-oriented positions, the adaptability of the spouse was perceived crucial for successful performance abroad. This therefore points out to the importance of assessing or interviewing the spouse to determine the candidate’s suitability for overseas posting. Punnett (1997:243) state that in spite of this revelation, relatively few companies pay particular attention to the spouse when making decisions. Punnett (1997) further mentions that the importance of the spouse complicates the expatriation decision for both the organisation and the expatriate because including spouses in the selection process, training and support adds time and costs to the expatriation process. Notwithstanding that, the benefits outweigh the cost.

Briscoe et al. (2009: 182) outline some of the mistakes that organisations make in selecting international assignees:

- Decision to relocate people made with too little lead time;
- Spouses or partners not included in the decision to relocate;
- Spouses or partners and kids not included on pre-assignment visits;
- Spouses or partners and kids not included in language lessons;
- Spouses or partners and kids not included in cultural training;
- Spouses or partners do not receive counselling in jobs and other opportunities;
- Spouses have no home office contact.

From her observation as an employee of the Department, the researcher concurs with Briscoe et al. (2009) in that spouses are not included in the selection process. However, Hodgetts and Luthans (1997: 396) offer a positive outlook and state that some

organisations have started including the spouse in the selection and interview process before the assignment can be approved. The authors further state that another popular approach in appraising the family's suitability for an overseas assignment is called *adaptability screening*. This screening evaluates various factors within the family, for an example, how well can the family stand up to the rigors and stress of overseas life and how well can they adjust to a new culture and climate.

These positive developments have also been observed by Marx (1999: 108) who mentions that due to increased acknowledgement of the importance of the spouse in international assignments, organisations have come to realise that they need to take a much more holistic view of international assignments and may have realised that the happiness of a spouse contributes to the success of an international assignment. Such organisations would then include families in their selection process. Lane et al. (2009: 218) add that having a family that is willing, able and probably excited to take the assignment is crucial for a successful posting abroad.

According to ECA International Newswire (2010: 2) "addressing concerns of the assignee's family has become integral to successfully sourcing talent. Thirty-five per cent (35%) of companies now apply a uniform policy for partner support, while 16% give assistance on a case by case basis. As far back as in 2001, 26% of companies had a uniform policy."

In her study, Shaw (2001: 153) also commented that the Department of Foreign Affairs' policy provides for diplomats and spouses to get time to prepare and attend language training and preparatory courses during the pre-transfer stage but in practice this period is often too short. In essence, families do not have adequate time to prepare for posting.

The Department follows a clearly set selection process as determined by its Placement Policy (2011). Like many organisations, the Department also puts emphasis on technical skills and knowledge. This is evidenced by the intense training that the diplomats are subjected to for a period of six to ten months in preparation for posting. This is followed by an interview process which plays a larger part in determining the

suitability of the candidate. It is during the interview that the candidate has to prove their knowledge and competence of working as a diplomat. At no stage is the suitability of the spouse assessed. Adaptability screening for the spouse or family is not conducted. This poses a serious limitation to the selection process of diplomats.

3.6 Implications of a failed assignment

Various authors (Early, Ang and Tan, 2006; Hodgetts & Luthans, 1997; Mead, 1998; Tung, 1982 and 1987) caution that the cost of any failed global work assignment is enormous and heavy for both the organization and the individual. The authors assert that when a posting fails, the organisation stands to lose a great deal of money and reputation. On the other hand, the employee who is recalled back to home country suffers loss of self-esteem and self-confidence. The employee also gets stigmatised. Swarts (2008: 6) supports and adds that sending and maintaining expatriates abroad is a costly and complicated process and if the expatriate fails it is even more costly for all involved.

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter explored various reasons that lead to failed posting for diplomats. Many authors cited that the inability of the spouse to adjust in a foreign posting is the most common reason for failed assignments. The importance of including the spouse in the selection of diplomats was shown to be important in the successful posting of international assignees.

CHAPTER 4

ADJUSTING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

4.1. Defining adjustment

Adjustment is “a subjective or psychological state and refers to the changes which the individuals actively engender or passively accept in order to achieve or maintain satisfactory states with themselves” (Yavas, 2001: 61). Adjustment can also be defined as accepting and being comfortable with changes in an individual’s environment or circumstances.

Mendenhall et al. (1995: 409) cite that international adjustment is the degree to which an expatriate feels comfortable living and working in the host culture. The authors further state that “international adjustment begins when expatriates leave their familiar environment and their country. Overnight they find themselves in a new world, where people think, believe and behave differently from them”. Hodgetts and Luthans (1997: 399) supports Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) as cited in Scullion and Collings (2006: 66) that there are two major types of adjustment that an expatriate must make when going on an overseas assignment. One is anticipatory adjustment and the other is in-country adjustment which takes place on-site. Shaw (2001:1) states that diplomatic families have to adjust to a lifestyle of change and discontinuity and an unknown environment.

4.1.1 Anticipatory adjustment

According to Hodgetts and Luthans (1997: 399) anticipatory adjustment takes place in home country before departure and is influenced by a number of factors such as willingness and motivation for relocation, training offered by an organisation, this may include technical, language and cross-cultural training. Other important factors affecting anticipatory adjustment are, information provided and pre-assignment visits. Previous

experience that the expatriate may have also plays a crucial role, more so if it was in the country with the same culture. Scullion and Collings (2006: 66) concede that anticipatory adjustment can have a positive impact on in-country adjustment.

4.1.2 In-country adjustment

This takes place once the expatriate is in the host country. Various factors also influence the in-country adjustment. These factors include the expatriate's ability to maintain a positive outlook in the face of high pressure situations, to interact with host nationals and to perceive and evaluate the host country's cultural values and norms correctly; and the degree of cultural toughness. Equally important, is the ease with which the spouse and children adjust to the new culture. In her study with spouses of diplomats, Shaw (2001:1) found that the greater the difference between a home environment and a foreign environment, the harder the adjustment process. Scullion and Collings (2006: 66) stress that organisational support and inclusion of the spouse in any training or development programmes designed to make the expatriate adjustment more effective, enhances the in-country adjustment.

Mendenhall et al. (1995: 422) cite a study conducted by Gregersen (1991) that found that the following factors predict positive spouse adjustment:

- The spouse was in favour of accepting the assignment from the start;
- The spouse engaged in self-initiated, cross-cultural training;
- The spouse had a social support network;
- The standard of living in the overseas assignment was acceptable to the spouse;
- The firm sought the spouse's opinion regarding the international assignment from the beginning of the selection process;
- The spouse could adjust to the degree culture novelty (the higher the culture novelty the less likely the spouse would adjust to the new culture).

4.2 Psychological and socio-cultural adjustment

The fact that the expatriate doesn't know all the social rules or norms that dictate what is and is not acceptable behaviour at work and in society, he or she will experience psychological uncertainty. Ward and Kennedy (1993: 131) maintain that adjustment or adaptation during cross-cultural transitions can be broadly divided into two categories, namely, psychological and socio-cultural adjustment. Psychological adjustment according to these authors deals with the subjective wellbeing and satisfaction. It is defined by more global mood disturbances e.g. depression, anxiety, tension, fatigue. It is also affected by personality, life changes and social support. The authors further describe socio-cultural adjustment as the ability to "fit in" or to negotiate interactive aspects of the host culture as measured by the amount of difficulty experienced in the management of everyday situations in the host culture. However, the magnitude of the relationship between the two is dependent on the context.

In support of this view, Scullion and Linehan (2005: 238-239) add that psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adjustment have been identified as at least the two aspects of international adjustment and that an individual's need, capacity or opportunity for integration with the host culture may determine the association between socio-cultural and psychological adjustment. Scullion and Linehan (2005) continue to stress that the greater the reliance on the host culture as the principal context of interaction, the stronger the relationship between these two aspects of international adjustment.

Ward and Kennedy (1993: 132) further indicate that general knowledge, length of residence in the host culture and amount of contact with host nationals affect socio-cultural adaptation. However, a strong cultural identity and cultural segregation impedes socio-cultural adaptation in host country.

According to Briscoe and Schuler (2004: 274) the wife has more difficulty adapting to the foreign environment due to the factors mentioned below:

- Routines

Established routines have to change. This includes amongst others eating habits, favourite food and relationships. Changes in routine impact on everyday life activities and decisions. Briscoe and Schuler (2004) stress that as this disrupts one's life, they take a lot of time and energy to combat and can be emotionally draining leaving one feeling angry, frustrated and/or depressed.

- Lifestyle management:

People may experience different social activities from what they are used to, for example, in some countries, women are not allowed to sit in restaurants with their husbands or to relax together at the beaches as there are private beaches for women only. The public social conduct is clearly defined. For example there are different behaviour patterns and gestures for men and women. This includes the way women are expected to dress, to walk and some restrictions on 'normal' activities, i.e. not allowed to drive cars.

4.3 Culture shock and transitional adjustment

Gooderham and Nordhaug (2003: 309) define culture shock as a product of lacking an interpretation system on the new culture. At this stage other people's behaviour is confusing and even nonsensical, for example, harmless jokes give offence. Many authors stress that culture shock is what one may experience when entering a different country. Almost everything is different from what one is used to.

Oberg (1960) as cited in Scullion and Linehan (2005: 244) states that culture shock is the distress experienced by sojourners as a result of losing all the familiar signs and symbols of interaction. Oberg mentions that there are six aspects of culture shock:

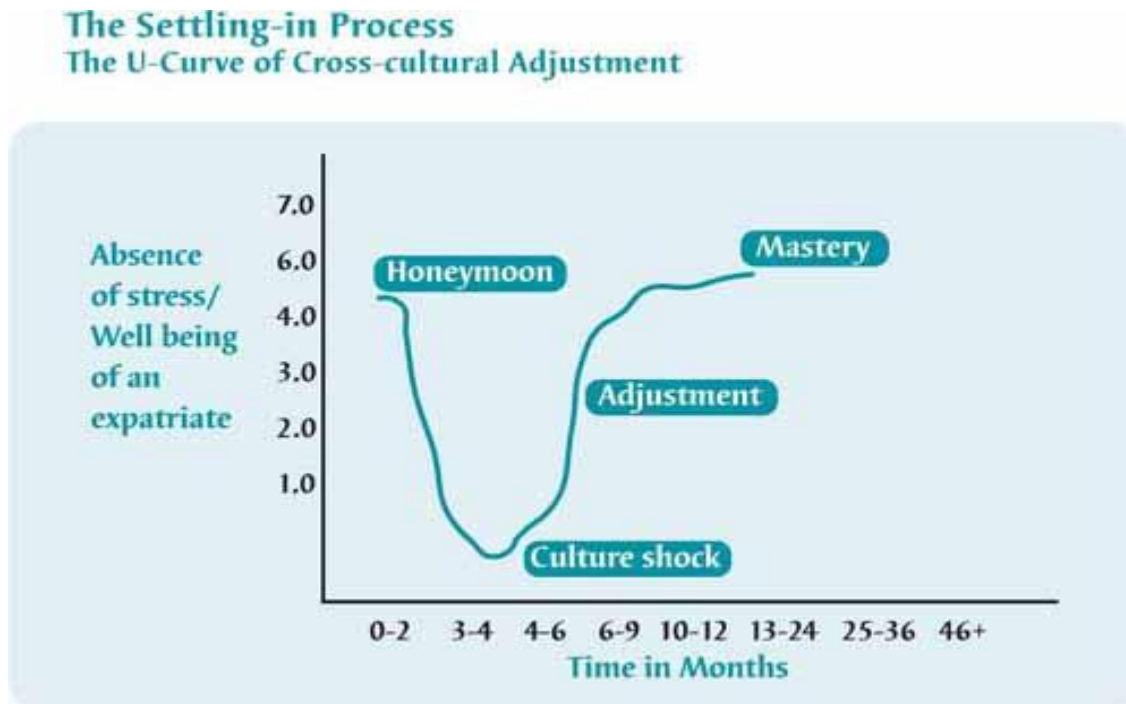
- Strain due to the effort required to make necessary psychological adjustments;

- A sense of loss of feelings of deprivation in friends, status, professions and possession;
- Being rejected by and/or rejecting members of the new culture;
- Confusion in role, role expectations, values, feelings, and self-identity;
- Surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation after becoming aware of the cultural differences;
- Feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment.

Lane, Mazneski, DiStefano and Dietz (2009: 220) stress that almost everyone experiences disorientation when entering another culture. According to the authors, the phenomenon of culture shock also referred to as “acculturative stress” is rooted in our psychological processes. It is not easy to avoid it. Although some may try to avoid it, it is not advisable as it provides one with the opportunity to become self-aware and to learn about themselves and others. Lane et al. (2009: 221) refer to culture shock as the stress and behavioural patterns associated with a loss of control and a loss of sense of mastery in a situation. However, people experience and deal with culture shock differently.

There are generally stages of transition that expatriates go through. Some folks go through these rapidly, some take a while and some people stop at one point without reaching the end. Whilst many authors (Lane et al. 2009; Mendenhall et al. 1995; Pascoe, 1992: 63) agree that adjustment is a process with many stages, they differ on the number of stages that one goes through and the length of adjustment. For example, Black and Mendenhall (1991) contends that there are four stages whilst Lane et al. (2009) cite three stages. Pascoe (1992: 63) cites that culture shock has a life cycle of its own, usually lasting about six months. These are also very distinct stages and one needs to be prepared by knowing how to identify them. This view was later supported by Mendenhall et al. (1995: 410) who confirmed that many researchers have investigated the dynamics of culture shock and have found that to a large degree culture shock follows the general pattern of a U-shaped curve with four stages as illustrated in table 3.

Table 3: Black and Mendenhall's (1991) U-shaped curve of adjustment.



Source: Black, J.S & Mendenhall 1991. The U-Curve adjustment hypothesis revisited: review and theoretical framework. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22 (2): 225-247.

Black and Mendenhall (1991) state that expatriates go through four main stages in adjusting in the host country. The curve above clearly indicates the relationship between culture shock and the length of time stayed in a host country.

4.3.1 Honeymoon stage

The stage occurs as soon as the expatriate arrives in a host country. The family is still living in a hotel. In this stage, the expatriate and the family are still fascinated by the host culture. Everything is new and exciting; the family is also receiving assistance and support from the company with transport, enrolling children in schools and so forth. Marx (1999: 7) adds that in this stage judgement is reserved and even minor irritations are suppressed in favour of concentrating on the nice things. This stage can last up to three months. However, Lane et al. (2009: 221) believe that this stage, which they refer

to as the phase of elation of anticipating a new environment can last up to nine months depending on previous experience, the degree of cultural differences being experienced and the individual personality.

4.3.2 Culture shock stage

During this stage, the expatriate changes from being infatuated with the host culture to being disillusioned, confused or unhappy living and working overseas. This phase according to Marx (1999: 8) is characterized by a general unease that can involve being uncomfortable with the new situation but can border on hating everything foreign. Expatriates can become angry, anxious, excessively concerned about their health and in extreme cases become depressed or resort to excessive use of drugs or alcohol.

In this stage, the support from the company fades, the family is now left to fend for themselves and often the spouse must figure out where to shop, where to find doctors and how to build social networks. Mendenhall et al. (1991: 412) caution that some people never go beyond this stage and either request to be sent back to home country or “gut it out” throughout the tour of duty with unhappiness.

4.3.3 Adjustment phase

This phase occurs as the expatriate or the spouse starts to accept the new culture and begins to learn the norms and the ways of getting things done in the new culture. This stage doesn't occur naturally, it requires mind shift and deliberate effort on the side of the expatriate and spouse. In this stage expatriates use different techniques to adjust. However for the spouse who is left with no social support system, adjustment can be difficult. As mentioned earlier, some never get to adjust. They either request to be sent back home or will stay and feel miserable.

Scullion and Linehan (2005:247) however cite that there is not much conclusive or generalized empirical support for the culture shock experience as indicated by the

U-curve process of adjustment. They argue that not all expatriates starts with a honeymoon phase or with a period of euphoria and optimism, and although depression occurs with some frequency, it is far from universal. Tarantal (2005: 101) also argues that expatriates' experiences are complex and do not fit neatly onto a graph.

Scullion and Linehan (2005: 246) suggest that to get through the culture shock phase may be painful for so long that some sojourners (expatriates) never get through. In order to cope, some develop psychological symptoms such as rationalisation, projection, withdrawal, over-identifying and other defensive mechanisms. The authors state that these should not be regarded as harmful. Although they distort reality, they may be functional to the newcomer, enabling him or her to cope. Scullion and Linehan (2005) further state that the culture shock process is viewed as fundamental in that the sojourner must somehow confront the social, psychological and philosophical differences found between his or her own cultural perceptions and that of the environment.

4.3.4 Mastery

Mastery is regarded as the last phase of adjustment. This stage is reached after deliberate effort and desire by the expatriate to understand the host culture. It requires a high level of cross-cultural maturity where the expatriate can function effectively in a different culture and enjoy the nuances of the norms and traditions of the host culture. At this stage, although they may not like and enjoy some aspect of the host culture but they start to respect and understand why these practices exist.

In summary, culture shock can leave people feeling shocked and angered by certain behaviours of the host culture; and uncertain about what is acceptable and what is not. Black et al. (1992: 128) allude that the non-work factors of global assignments also play a critical role in successful adjustment of families abroad. According to the authors, these factors increase uncertainty on what is behaviourally accepted in the host country, therefore hindering interaction. In addition, Mendenhall et al. (1995: 413) stress that expatriates who possess superior skills in self-efficacy, willingness to communicate,

willingness to establish relationships with host nationals and tolerance for ambiguity adjust better and more quickly than those who possess fewer of these skills.

4.4 Strategies for living successfully abroad

Earley et al. (2006: 129-138) share four (4) strategies for living successfully in a foreign country.

4.4.1 Anticipating national culture shock

Earley et al. (2006) concur with the views of Briscoe and Schuler (2004) that expatriates experience stress and suffer from somatic complaints and anxiety attacks due to culture shock. Therefore culture shock does not only impact on the person's social activities but also on their health and is one of the main factors that impact on the expatriates' ability to adjust successfully in foreign countries. Earley et al. (2006) emphasise that it is important to anticipate and evaluate the symptoms that may contribute to culture shock and deal with those that need special attention.

4.4.2 Minimising cultural toughness and culture distance

Black et al. (1992) state that culture toughness, culture novelty and culture distance play a critical role in the adjustment process and should therefore be minimised for effective adjustment. This depends on the degree of similarities or differences in cultural norms, values and beliefs between the expatriate's host nation and the home country. Briscoe et al. (2009: 181) state that too often, expatriates bring with, stereotypes and prejudices against the foreign culture and strongly felt biases in favour of their own culture's way of doing things and unfortunately this keeps them away from feeling comfortable in their new foreign assignments.

Marx (1999: 18) suggests ten steps for minimising culture shock:

- Don't let culture shock take you by surprise. Allow time to learn about culture shock before you leave for your assignment. Learn to recognize the symptoms and their potential impact.
- Expect culture shock to happen irrespective of location. Some authors also believe that culture shock happens even to those that have had posting before.
- As soon as you arrive in your new location, identify all the opportunities for building support networks with other expatriates and with local people.
- As with any stressful situation, fight it, don't give in to it.
- Ask from other international managers or expatriates for guidance on issues and problems to look out for. Learn from their experiences
- Give yourself time to adapt and don't rush into too many work-related projects at the start of the assignment.
- Don't hesitate to seek professional help if symptoms persist despite your coping efforts.
- Expect the same symptoms to re-occur when you come home. Reverse culture shock is normal. One might not anticipate reverse culture shock. More especially because people take for granted that they are going back to what they are used to, to their friends and family and yet they don't realise that a lot might have changed when they were abroad.
- Think about the positive aspects of culture shock.
- Retain a sense of humour. In other words, instead of getting angry or stressed by some practices of the host culture, the author suggests that you laugh them off and don't let the small things get in your everyday life.

The researcher supports the views of Marx but would also like to add that people develop their own coping mechanisms. A sense of hardiness³ and mental preparedness of each person are crucial in minimising culture shock.

³Power of endurance which is crucial in helping one to cope with difficult situations.

4.4.3 Assessing and developing your own cultural intelligence

Earley et al. (2006) stress that for people to adjust effectively they need to possess a high cultural intelligence (CQ). The authors suggest that people should also confront their own levels of cultural intelligence. They emphasise three factors of culture intelligence, namely, a person's capability of adapting effectively across cultures, cultural strategic thinking, motivation and behaviour. A number of authors emphasise the importance of cross-cultural training in this regard. According to Tung (1987: 120) these cultural awareness programmes expose trainees to factual information about the historical, political, religious, and economic factors that shape the mentality of the people in a given region, and how these factors differ from those in Western Europe.

4.4.4 Assessing and developing the cultural intelligence of spouse and children

It is important for the entire family to possess a high level of cultural intelligence as a unit in order to adjust effectively. Tung (1987) advises that organisations should extend cross-cultural training (CCT) to spouses in order to develop their cultural intelligence. In support of this view, Scullion and Collings (2006: 121) mention that although cross cultural training cannot completely overcome the effects of culture shock, it can provide the expatriate with resources to recognize the symptoms of culture shock and deal with the effects of it when it arises.

Furthermore, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991: 260) cite that people living abroad need to possess the following cross-cultural adaptation skills:

- **Personal skills:** These are techniques and attributes that facilitate the expatriate's mental and emotional well-being e.g. prayer, meditation, stress management and physical exercise routines.

- **People skills:** These refer to the effective interaction with others, particularly foreigners. It includes the willingness to speak the foreign language and learn about the foreign culture.
- **Perception skills:** These are cognitive processes that help to understand why foreigners behave in a certain manner. It relates to one's consciousness of social cues and behaviours, one's attentiveness to them, and one's ability to imitate what he or she perceives.

4.4.5 Foreign Language

Knowledge of the host country's language is one of the crucial elements of successful adjustment abroad. Language capability has been attributed by Tung (1987: 119) as one of the reasons for lower failure rates for European and Japanese multinationals. "The ability to speak the language of the host country is still quite important for the expatriate to deal with local nationals, local customers and suppliers, as well as to adapt to host culture (and be accepted into that culture) both of which are major keys to successful expatriate experience" (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004: 247). This was further supported by Scullion and Collings (2006: 65) who stated that willingness to communicate is a key factor that includes the expatriates' desire to use the host national language and a willingness to understand and work with host country nationals.

Usunier (1998: 31) states that language is a significant component of culture as it conveys meanings which may be unique to a community. In support of this view, Earley et al. (2006: 86) adds that culture and language are very much linked. They stress that languages in themselves are culture carriers and therefore allows one to access the body of cultural knowledge, beliefs and values beyond those expressed in the native language. In some countries the inability to speak the language is interpreted as arrogance and demonstrates lack of interest. Scullion and Collings (2006: 65) state that the number of previous assignments and language fluency had a significant positive direct effect on interaction and adjustment.

Learning a foreign language will not only enable one to communicate better but helps one to appreciate the cultures with which one is interacting with. It also helps one to gain rapport, respect and appreciation from the people of the foreign culture. These factors strengthen Briscoe and Schuler's (2004) assertion that language training should be included in the pre-posting preparation for spouses. Scullion and Collings (2006: 123) state that spouses who mastered the foreign language, at least at rudimentary level, were more likely to have had a positive experience whilst abroad.

4.4.6 Social support during posting

According to Black et al. (1992: 134) there is consistent evidence that social support can facilitate cross-cultural adjustment for both the employer and the spouse. Black et al. (1992: 130) found that both family and host country nationals helped spouses' interaction adjustment. Host country nationals' support helped primarily because host country nationals provide both emotional support and information about the culture, as well as feedback about how the spouse is doing and what changes can bring about more effective functioning in the culture. The authors also found that culture novelty i.e. the perceived distance between the host and parent country cultures hindered spouses' general non-work adjustment. It was found that the more the home culture and the host culture differed, the more difficult it was to figure out the cultural maps and rules, and the more difficult to operate effectively even after figuring them out.

According to Shaw (2001:214) spouses of diplomats not only relied on the mission (Embassy) support system but found that the international community provides a ready-made, albeit transient, support base. She further highlights the mission as either a buffer between the person and his foreign environment or as an impediment. She cautions that a supportive mission in a difficult country goes a long way in helping spouse to adjust better.

Without emotional support from extended family or a network of intimate friends and community, adjustment may be especially difficult for spouses. In coping with an alien

culture and unfamiliar environment, spouses may find “expatriate ghettos” where they can hang out. However, Scullion and Linehan (2005: 238) caution that people who prefer the seclusion of “expatriate ghettos” have minimum exposure and interaction with the host country nationals and are unlikely to exhibit a strong relationship between psychological well-being and culture specific competence. It is therefore advisable for spouses to avoid social isolation and establish social networks such as membership of a Diplomatic Spouses Associations; which is exclusive to spouses of diplomats from various countries of the world. In addition, spouses are also encouraged to interact with other South Africans and volunteer their services in Embassy events or local charity.

4.4.7 Adjusting in Hardship Missions

Hardship missions pose more adjustment problems to spouses. Hardship missions can be simply described as places where life is considered more difficult than in the home country. Refer to section 2.2.2 for a description of hardship missions.

Earley et al. (2006: 63) suggest that one of the strategies to adjust successfully in a foreign country is cultural toughness. This refers to the expatriate’s ability to endure radically different environments. Earley et al. (2006) emphasise that the larger the difference between one’s home and the host nation, the more cultural toughness is required. For example a spouse who comes from a first world country might have serious difficulties adjusting in a third or less developed country. Scullion and Collings (2006: 65) also stress that culturally tough countries are countries with a culture that is different from home country.

Shaw (2001: 288) further state that whilst in some countries regulations may have changed to allow for spouses to work, in the third world, which are mostly classified as hardship missions, it seems not so simple, thus adding to the difficulty in adjusting for spouses that would have liked to work.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher discussed adjustment in a foreign country. Psychological and socio-cultural adjustments were discussed. The researcher discussed culture shock which is described by some authors as the acculturative stress that is rooted in our psychological processes and therefore making it difficult to avoid it. Although people deal with culture shock in different ways, means and ways of minimising culture were outlined in the chapter. The researcher discussed the importance of a foreign language in the adjustment process. Added difficulties of adjusting in a hardship mission were also discussed.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will describe the method and the research design used in this study. The methods of data collection and analysis, sampling methods and the ethical consideration will also be discussed.

The goal of the research is to explore the experiences of the spouses of South African diplomats during posting abroad.

The study aimed at unearthing the factors that enabled or hindered the spouses to adjust in a foreign country.

5.2 Research design

The researcher used a qualitative research design. The choice of the research design is determined largely by the research question. Mouton (2001: 55) defines a research design as a plan or blue print of how you intend conducting your research. On the other hand, Creswell (1998) as quoted by Fouché (2005: 268) defines qualitative design as the entire process from conceptualizing a problem, to writing the narrative. It is groups of small, worked out formulas from which prospective (qualitative researchers) can select and develop one or more that may be suitable for their specific research goal. There are various designs that the researcher could select from e.g. case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, just to name a few. Of all these, the collective case study research design proved to be the most appropriate for this study. The researcher chose this as she intended to interview participants using an interview schedule in order to explore the uniqueness of different 'cases'.

5.2.1 Collective case study

Kumar (2005: 113) refers to the collective case study method as an approach to study a social phenomenon through a thorough analysis of an individual case. The case can be a person, group, episode, process, community, society or any other unit of social life. Similarly, Punch (2005: 144) states that the case can be extended to cover several cases to learn more about a phenomenon, population and or general condition. The researcher found the collective case study applicable in this study because it helped her gain understanding of the experiences of the spouses of SA diplomats. The researcher's interest was more on a collection of cases than an individual case.

5.2.2 Research methodology

5.2.2.1 Qualitative research approach

Unlike the quantitative research approach that focuses on numbers, the qualitative research focuses on information expressed in words, the feelings, and perceptions of people on a social issue. Yates (2004: 139) states that qualitative data provides a "richer" and "more valid" basis for social research than simply dealing with numbers. It aims to understand the meaning that people attribute to everyday life occurrences. It basically gives the people a voice.

It is against this background that the researcher found the qualitative approach appropriate for this study as it enabled her to have face-to-face interaction with the spouses of South African diplomats to listen to their views expressed in words.

According to Fortune and Reid as quoted in Fouché and Delport (2005: 74), in qualitative research the procedures are not strictly formalised as in the quantitative research approach. Secondly, the scope is more likely to be undefined. Lastly, a more philosophical mode of operation is adopted.

Advantages of a qualitative approach

- It helps the researcher gain first hand, holistic understanding of a phenomenon being study.
- It helps the researcher gain in-depth knowledge by means of interviews or participant observation. Thus providing the researcher with an understanding of how and why the people act in a certain way.
- It allows for flexibility because as more knowledge is gained, the researcher is able to adjust the data collection method, to make it more appropriate. However, this flexibility and adjustment of the data collection method could also make it difficult for the researcher to analyse the data at the end of the data gathering process.

Disadvantages of a qualitative research

- The flexibility and the undefined scope allowed by the approach can give skewed results.
- Qualitative research can be laborious and time-consuming.
- It is easy for the researcher to influence the outcome i.e. the researcher's bias come into play.

Despite the disadvantages spelt above, the researcher believes that qualitative research approach offers more. It allows researchers to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied through direct interaction with participants, probing and checking understanding, observation of body and facial expressions and listening to the unsaid words and emotions. It basically provides more than what quantitative approach would.

5.2.2.2 Research population, sample and sampling method

Arkava and Lane (1983) as quoted in Strydom (2005a: 193) refer to the universe as all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested. The authors define population as a term that sets boundaries on the study units. Population refers to individuals in the universe that possess specific characteristics. In this particular study, the population was all spouses of SA diplomats that have returned to South Africa in the period 01 July 2009 to 31 December 2011.

Arkava and Lane (1993) as quoted in Strydom (2005a: 193) further state that a sample comprises elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or it can be viewed as a subset of measurement drawn from a population in which we are interested. However there are no rules for sample size in qualitative research, other than reaching a point of data saturation. Sample depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the enquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful and credible; and what can be done with available time and resources.

5.2.2.3 Non-probability sampling method

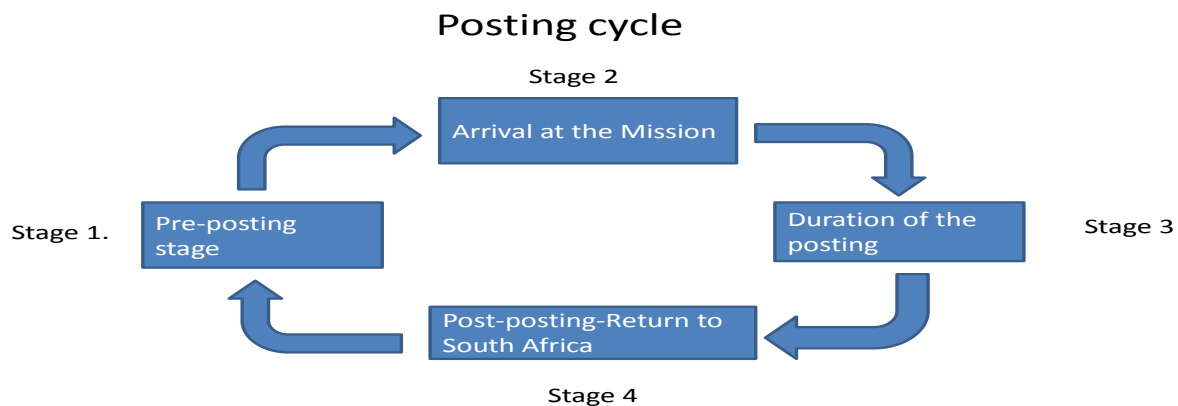
As the researcher did not know the population size or the members of the population, the non-probability sampling method became the preferred method to get the spouses who could be selected for the study. To this end, the researcher used the purposive sampling. This method helped the researcher to carefully select the participants to get a good mix of experiences and ensure gender balance. Twelve (12) spouses were selected from the population of spouses that have returned to SA in the period 01 July 2009 to 31 December 2011. A list was obtained from the Human Resource Section of the relevant department. The sample consisted of six spouses whose posting was successfully completed and six spouses whose posting was not successfully completed. Only spouses that reside in Gauteng and have never been seen in a therapeutic session by the researcher were selected.

5.2.2.4 Method of data collection

The purpose and type of research conducted serve as a guide to choose the most appropriate method of data collection. Whilst there are various methods of data collection, interview method was the most preferred for this study. Interviews can either be unstructured or semi structured. According to Mouton (2001: 99) interviews, which he classifies under self-reporting, are the most common methods of data collection. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999: 108) qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing. Yates (2004: 156) states that an interview literally means to develop a shared perspective and understanding (a view) between (inter) two or more people. Yates (2004: 156) further argues that to find information about people – the best way is to ask them.

5.2.2.5 Data collection instrument

An interview schedule was used to collect data in one-to-one, face-to-face interviews. According to Yates (2002: 156) and Greeff (2005: 296) an interview schedule uses a set of predetermined questions to define the flow of the interview. In this study the questions were arranged in a way that captures the logical flow of the posting cycle as depicted in Figure1: Posting Cycle - below.



In the researcher's opinion all these stages are significant and mark different challenges in the adjustment process of families and particularly spouses. The extent of preparation done before posting can contribute positively towards in-country adjustment. Similarly, the reception at the Mission as well as the support provided by the Mission staff contributes immensely to positive adjustment. Conversely, the lack thereof can make adjustment very difficult.

The questions were neutral, unambiguous, non-leading and non-judgmental nor biased. They were open-ended to allow the participants to express themselves freely.

Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

The main advantage of an interview is that it helps the researcher to get a "rich" and detailed account of the subject's understanding, feelings and knowledge about the research topic. Greef (2005: 287) summarises this by stating that "every word that people use telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness". Babbie (2007: 265) states that one of the advantages of the interview is the interaction between the researcher and the respondent.

The disadvantages of interviews amongst others are that they are time consuming, expensive in that one has to travel to a particular venue and are prone to distraction and disruption. It is also easy for people to avoid questions that can evoke emotions.

5.2.2.6 Data collection process

In this study, the researcher interviewed the spouses of SA diplomats to gain an understanding of their experiences during posting in a foreign country. Only nine (9) female participants were interviewed. The deviation from the original number (12) was due to the reluctance that the researcher experienced from potential participants. Firstly, some spouses that returned prematurely from their posting were unwilling to talk about their experiences. For example, one spouse described her experience as a very painful experience that she wouldn't like to talk about. She stated that she closed the chapter and would rather not open the wounds. Secondly, the researcher found male spouses

reluctant to talk about their experiences. Despite numerous reminders and follow-up calls from the researcher, male spouse never turned up for interviews. Although the researcher collected data from a limited number, she found the data sufficient to draw reasonable and reliable conclusions about the experiences of spouses of SA diplomats in a foreign country.

The spouses were given an opportunity to choose the time and location of the interview. They had to indicate whether they prefer the interview to take place at their homes or at the researcher's workplace. Three interviews were conducted at the participants' houses and six were conducted at the researcher's workplace. In a quiet place that allowed for privacy.

When conducting the interviews, the researcher started with the non-threatening questions to put the participant at ease. She used non-leading questions and made follow-up questions where necessary. In addition, the researcher asked permission to use a digital recorder so that she does not miss any information shared. She also took notes so that she may capture all the salient points. The lengths of the interviews ranged between 30 minutes to an hour.

5.2.3 Pilot study

Strydom (2005b: 205) states that a pilot study is an integral part of a research process. It is a prerequisite for a successful execution of a research project. It allows the researcher to evaluate the research instrument and make sure that it is reliable, valid, suitable, effective and free from problems and errors. This assists in increasing precision of the study. Strydom (2005b: 2005) further emphasises that the pilot study must take all heterogeneous factors into consideration.

5.2.3.1 Pilot-testing of the interview schedule

Strydom (2005b: 209) states that it is important for the researcher to test the data collection instrument. Rubin (1983) as cited in Strydom (2005b: 209) states that the

researcher should “try the item” with the actual subjects from the target population. This provides with an opportunity to revise and re-write the items that cause confusion, annoyance, boredom, fear and worry. This increases precision and reliability of the instrument. The researcher tested the interview schedule with two spouses that have returned to SA in the period of 01 July 2009 to 31 December 2011. The two spouses are not included in the main study. The testing was done before the formal data gathering process starts. Following this, the researcher was able to revise the questions and modify the interview schedule. The researcher believes that the piloting and subsequent modification of the interview schedule increased its reliability.

5.3 Data analysis

All fieldwork culminates in the analysis and interpretation of some set of data. Analysis of data involves “breaking up” the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships (Mouton 2001: 108). This view is supported by Greeff (2005: 311) who cautions that analysis and interpretation of data can be complex as it involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008: 96) describe qualitative data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the masses of data collected. Broadly speaking, qualitative data is an attempt by the researcher to summarise all the collected data in a dependable and accurate manner. Basically, the goal of data analysis is for the researcher to summarise what she has heard, seen or read.

In analysing the data, the researcher followed the following steps as outlined in De Vos (2005a: 403-418).

5.3.1 Planning for recording of data

As the primary objective of the researcher was to hear stories told by spouses on their experiences in a foreign country, the researcher had to plan carefully how she intends recording the data. To this end, the researcher planned to use a digital tape recorder. Consent was sought before the tape recorder was used. The location of the interviews was also of paramount importance so that there would be no disturbance to the recording. In addition, the researcher took notes during the interview. However, only essential points were noted so as to minimise disruptions.

5.3.2 Data collection and preliminary analyses

During the data collection process, the researcher continuously conducted a preliminary analysis. After every interview the researcher went through the notes and listened to the tape to listen to the voices and check what patterns are emerging and where the information is leading to. There was no need to adjust the instrument or the method.

Managing (organising) data

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and data organised according to the themes that emerged. Organising the data provides a good basis for understanding and interpretation of the data. The researcher had to ensure that the data is complete for further processing.

Reading and writing memos

The researcher took time to read through the transcripts and listened over and over to the recorder to ensure that the transcripts are accurate. Although time consuming, this is critical for the researcher to immerse in the detail and make sense of the data.

Generating categories and coding the data

Emerging themes were identified and categories created. For example there were spouses that felt that the Department didn't prepare them before posting, whilst others felt that it was their responsibility to prepare themselves by getting information about the host country.

Testing the emergent understandings and searching for alternative explanations

As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, the experiences of the male spouses were not heard. The researcher believes that the male spouses would have experienced different challenges to the female spouses. The lack of the voice of the male deprives significant information that could enrich the study and its recommendations. It is assumed that men generally do not feel comfortable sharing their feelings and emotions.

Interpreting and developing typologies

Interpretation involves making sense of the data and the "lessons learned". In this study, one of the glaring lessons learned is that personality, positive and open mind, resilience, sense of hardiness and willingness to take a role as a spouse had immense contribution to successful posting abroad.

Visualising, representing and displaying the data

The table below shows category of countries and the level of adjustment. Categories of Missions were discussed in 2.4.

Table 4: Mission category and level of adjustment

Categories of Mission	Level of adjustment during posting.
Categories1 (1 st world countries)	Fairly easy.
Category 3 (mild hardship)	Somewhat difficult.
Category 4 (severe hardship)	Very difficult. Resulted in two failed postings i.e. premature return to home country.

5.4 Assessing the quality of qualitative research

Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011: 419) outline the following criteria to assess the quality of qualitative research. The authors outline the following constructs:

- **Credibility/authenticity** - According to the authors, credibility is an alternative to internal validity. The results of the qualitative study need to have credibility. They need to demonstrate that the study was conducted in a way that ensures that the subject has been accurately identified and described.
- **Transferability** - Refers to the extent that the findings of the research can be transferred from a specific situation or case to another and can therefore be generalised. The researcher believes that the findings of this study can be transferred to other spouses who went on posting in foreign countries. Joubert (2010: 81) states transferability increases trustworthiness of the study.
- **Dependability** – The authors refer to whether or not the findings of the study are dependable. From the data gathered, the findings can be relied on. Therefore dependability talks about the reliability of the findings. In this study, the change that occurred was the anticipated number of participants. Thus making the study smaller in size.
- **Confirmability** - This refers to the ability of the results of the study to be confirmed by another. The question is whether the researcher provides evidence that corroborates the findings and interpretation by means of auditing. In this study, notes of interviews and tape recorded interviews have been kept and can be provided for audit.

5.5 Ethical considerations

Yates (2004: 159) mentions that the debate centres around: What is more important: the protection of research participants' rights or value of the research?

Hoyle et al. (2002: 46) mention that what makes social sciences unique from the physical sciences is that the subject matter of social science is people - living, sentient beings with feelings and thoughts of their own; and because of this, we have a special obligation as researchers to safeguard their rights and dignity. In support of this view, Bulmer (1982) as cited by Yates (2004) argues that "the rights of subjects override the rights of research. Therefore, in conducting her research, the researcher had to consider the following ethical issues and devise ways of dealing with them.

5.5.1 Avoidance of harm

Strydom (2005a: 58) states that subjects can be harmed in a physical and /or emotional manner. However, in social science research, harm is more on an emotional than physical level. It is therefore incumbent of the researcher to anticipate and protect the subjects from any harm, be it physical or emotional. The authors further stress that subjects should be thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the investigation so that they can withdraw their participation if they so wish.

Considering the possible negative impact that an unsuccessful posting could have on a spouse, it could be possible that those spouses whose posting was not successful may experience emotional distress when being interviewed. The researcher therefore made arrangements with the Departmental psychologists to provide counselling and support to any respondent who might have experienced an emotional breakdown.

5.5.2 Informed consent

It is critical to obtain informed consent from participants before the study commences. Hakim (2000) as quoted in Strydom (2005a: 59) states that "informed consent becomes

a necessary condition rather than a luxury or an impediment”. The author emphasises that accurate and complete information, such as the goal of the study, the procedure that will be followed, possible advantages and disadvantages, credibility of the researcher and dangers that the respondents might be exposed to, must be given to the subjects so that they can comprehend the investigation and consequently be able to make a voluntary, thoroughly reasoned decision about their possible participation. In this study, written consent was obtained from all the participants before the interview. All participants signed the consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. See addenda C and D.

5.5.3 Deception of subjects

Hoyle et al. (2002: 56) caution of different forms of deception known as deception by omission and active deception. According to the authors, the former is where participants are not told any outright untruths; rather detail is left out about relevant experimental details. The latter is a more serious ethical problem. In this case, the participants are actively misled about aspects of the experiment. The authors also caution about the double deception or second order deception. This refers to when the researcher tells the participant that the experiment is over but goes on to collect additional data.

The researcher in this study ensured that no relevant information was withheld. The participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and clarify issues before data collection. The researcher provided the participants with full details of the research, e.g. the goals of the study, the use of a digital recorder, procedures to be followed and time frames. The participants were also informed that they may withdraw their participation before data collection, if they so wish.

5.5.4 Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality

Sieber (1982) as cited in Strydom (2005a: 61) defines privacy as that which normally is not intended for others to observe or analyse. On the other hand, confidentiality refers to the handling of information in a confidential manner. To this end, the researcher ensured that no actual names are mentioned in the tape recordings and written notes. Participants' numbers were used to protect them from being easily identifiable. Privacy was also ensured in that the interviews that were conducted in DIRCO offices were conducted in a closed office that is situated away from the public spaces e.g. cafeteria or training rooms. Alternatively, the interviews were conducted in the participants' homes.

5.5.5 Actions and competence of the researcher

Strydom (2005a: 63) mentions that the researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation. The researcher needs to be objective and refrain from making value judgments. The researcher in this study demonstrated sensitivity for cultural differences. She reported accurately on the data collected and did not come up with new information that was not previously included in the research. The researcher focused only on the spouses that she has not seen in a therapeutic session in order to avoid influencing their responses. Throughout the research project, the researcher received on-going supervision and guidance from her supervisor who is a professional researcher.

5.5.6 Release of publication of finding

Strydom (2005a: 65) states that the findings of the study must be introduced to the public in written format. The author further stresses that the results are conveyed clearly and unambiguously to avoid or minimize misappropriation by subjects, the general public and even colleagues. In other words, the report has to be professional with an understanding that it is produced for the world to read. To this end, the researcher

compiled the report accurately and objectively. She did not manipulate the findings to deceive the reader. The report contains all the information necessary and highlights shortcomings and limitations of the research.

5.5.7 Debriefing of respondents/participants

According to Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991: 517) the researcher can detect and deal with any negative after-effects of the experience. This assists in minimising harm. The researcher debriefed respondents by allowing them to talk about their feelings regarding the study. None of the participants experienced an emotional breakdown during the interviews. They all welcomed the opportunity to talk about their experiences. Therefore there was no need for counselling.

5.5.8 Storage of data

The researcher used a digital recorder to record all interviews. These will be transcribed verbatim and be made available only to the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria, according to policy stipulation.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a full description of how the study was conducted. The research design and methodology were discussed. The method of data collection and analysis were also described. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the ethical considerations of the research. The next chapter will focus on the results of the study.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will present the results of a qualitative study on the experiences of spouses of SA diplomats during posting in a foreign country. The results are presented in the form of summary and verbatim quotations of what the participants said. Shaw (2001: 151) indicates that verbatim quotations allow for voices to be heard, giving the reader an opportunity to add his own interpretation.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008: 107) state that qualitative reports are typically reported in a narrative manner. In other words the researcher is a story-teller and need to take great care in ensuring that the story is vivid and interesting while also accurate and credible.

The results are derived from the interviews conducted with nine (9) spouses of SA diplomats who returned from postings in the period July 2009 to December 2011. The spouses were selected through a non-probability, purposive sampling method.

6.2 Profile of participants

Sections I and II of the interview schedule were used to gather personal data of the participants and to give the reader an understanding of the background of each participant. The answers to these questions resulted in the profile of participants as outlined in table 5 on the next page.

Table 5: Profile of Participants.

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Recent posting	Years spent in recent posting	Number of previous postings
1	51 and up	Female	White	Cat 1	4	0
2	31 – 40	Female	Black	Cat 3	4	0
3	41 – 50	Female	Black	Cat 4	2	1
4	31 – 40	Female	Black	Cat 3	4	0
5	31 – 40	Female	Black	Cat 1	4	0
6	41 – 50	Female	White	Cat 1	2	1
7	51 and up	Female	White	Cat 4	4	4
8	31 – 40	Female	Indian	Cat 1	4	0
9	31 - 40	Female	White	Cat 4	15 mths	0

Participant 3 was transferred straight from one full posting to another. The Department calls this inter-Mission transfer. Therefore she had been away from South Africa for a period of eight consecutive years. However, for the purpose of this research, the interview focused only on the recent posting.

Participants 2, 4 and 8 were working for the Department before their posting. They took unpaid leave for the duration of the posting. They were not regarded as employees and therefore not working in the Mission. Participant 6 had a prior posting which was terminated midterm. The same occurred for her subsequent posting. For the purpose of this research, the interview will focus only on the recent posting.

6.3 Organising data

The data gathered from the interviews has been organised under the following main headings.

- Pre-posting preparation
- Arrival in the host country
- Adjustment in the host country
- Post posting - Return to South Africa
- Recommendations.

The data presented in this report is a summarized version of interviews. Verbatim quotes have also been used for illustration and emphasis.

6.3.1 Pre-posting preparation

Pre-posting preparation refers to the preparation that diplomats and their families do before going on a posting in a foreign country. This refers but not limited to, training, counselling, and learning about the foreign country and what it offers. Preparation normally starts as soon as the employee is informed of the posting.

Question 1: What preparations did you personally do before posting to educate yourself about the foreign country's culture, language and general environment?

Participant 1: "Who doesn't know America? The language was not a problem because it is English, the most common language and the environment. I was googling to see how (city) actually looks like and that's about it....so there was no need for that and also DIRCO from their side had spouses' course; and that was great"

Participant 2: "I did not do much preparation because I just took that this is just our neighbouring country and I was aware that they have two languages, Shona and Ndebele; and Ndebele is closer to Zulu whereas Shona is closer to Venda and Tsonga. So I did not need lots of information because I wouldn't struggle with the language. I also knew that they communicated mostly in English". The other thing I didn't prepare

that much is because I have family in Zimbabwe as well, so it wasn't that much I will have a culture shock or anything because I am used to their culture as well"

Participants 3: *"The bulk of the information that I got was from the internet. Coupled with the fact that when my husband left, he left a year ahead of me, so he was there before I came and there was information that he already got there before I personally went to the country"*.

Participant 4: *"Well I went to the websites...checking the language, the area we would be living in, the schools, the difference between schools, the area we wanted to stay in and the distance from the Mission. You know just all those details. Obviously the climate in terms of weather"*

Participant 5: *"I went through the internet search.....and just thinking about seeing the Queen was one of the exciting things"*.

Participant 6: *"Well we went to the local store and bought some books on (country) and were able to read and familiarize ourselves with the language that is spoken in (country), the tuition sites and yes basically the city, what the city and the country offered". My husband also contacted the Mission there to find out about schooling, kindergarten for our children"*

Participant 7: *"Nothing, I just expected it was the first world country and I expected more of the country than what I found it was, it was not a bad experience but it was an eye opener."*

Participant 8: *"My first point of reference was the country post report that is posted in the department's website. It was not updated. I went into the internet and gathered as much information as possible. Thereafter I interacted with colleagues of my husband whose wives were on posting in (country) previously and I spoke to them. I also spoke to friends who were in (country) to learn about the country and I did a lot of reading"*

Participant 9: *“Personally I just looked on the internet and just looked at images of (country) and read about the (city).....and I kind of thought I would just find out about the place when I get there, so I didn’t do very much”.*

Discussion

This question focused on the initiatives that the spouses took to prepare themselves for posting. The question is relevant in that the level of preparation done before posting may influence the adjustment abroad. From the interviews one can deduce that many spouses took effort in educating themselves about the foreign country. Although they all consulted multiple sources for information, internet served as the main source of information about the foreign country. It appears that factors such as familiarity with the language and culture; perceptions about the foreign country e.g. First World and previous experience in posting influenced the level of preparation that spouses did.

Question 2: Please describe how the Department prepared you for posting as a spouse.

Participant 1 describes it as: *“They were telling us most of the things about (country), the shopping, what to expect, the traffic, the people, the way to represent South Africa and that was about it. I would say they did a great job”*

Participant 2 reported that she attended the spousal orientation course and had this to say *“I was fortunate because I was with the department before my posting so I was familiar with the challenges that I might face as a spouse in terms of the official working hours of my husband, so the preparation was actually effective in a way for those who had no idea of what we do as a department, but it was very informative”.*

Participant 3: *“Not at all. I am not sure why. I was told that there is some kind of preparation for the spouses or partners that go with that’s all I know.....I was never contacted by anybody to say there is such a thing, none of that happened”*

Similarly, Participant 4 didn't attend the spouses' training. This is what she had to say *"Prior to us flying to (country) we heard that there was a spousal programme that was planned. It was planned and cancelled, planned and cancel and eventually never took place. So there isn't much that I can say about the department helping me except for maybe the language classes that I attended"*.

Participant 5 also didn't attend the training and mentioned that *"I never had any interaction with department before I went there...My husband mentioned something about it but by the time we had to leave there was none available"*

Participant 6 also didn't attend the training. She said, *"Well actually I don't think there was a need. I went on a course for spouses in my first posting. Having done that, I didn't think it was going to be necessary again"*

Similarly Participant 7 didn't attend the training and said this: *"Not at all. No assistance. There was nothing from the department. We got the letter to say we were going and we went.This was my fifth posting so I expect that they expect me to know what to do"*

Participant 8 attended the spouses' training and these are her views about the preparation *"Sad to say not much, the only programme we attended was the spouse orientation programme. But it was not an intensive programme because it was a broad programme that covered what you would do. Not too basicbut they did not do an individual intervention for each spouse, to say okay, you will be going to a specific country, these are the risks, these are the pros and cons. You are going to either a developed or third world country or anything like that. No one was given country specific information"* She also added that after the course there is no contact from the department with you, you just pack your things and leave.

Participant 9 attended the spouses' course and was very impressed. This is how she expressed, *"I think they really did a good job with the spouses' course. I was pleased that they actually did one. I don't know whether it is common with other foreign services but I thought that was nice because it shows that they took us seriously and they kind of*

appreciated that we will also be making a big change in our lives. It was kind of nice that they took the effort to spend a whole week on it really ...it was nice to meet other spouses who are going. I really enjoyed the course.” She continued to express mixed feelings about the content and relevance of certain modules. She feels that though the course prepared her adequately, it didn't really prepare her for how difficult Africa would be.

Discussion

From the discussion above it appears that not all spouses were adequately prepared by the by the Department. Not all spouses attended the spouses' training course. Those that attended expressed mixed feelings about the value they derived from the course. There was also a level of frustration on the number of times that the training was planned only to be cancelled again, resulting in spouses leaving without any preparation from the Department. The result supports Hodgetts and Luthans' (1997:399) view as indicated in (section 4.1.1.) that anticipatory adjustment takes place in home country before departure and is influenced by a number of factors, which amongst others are training and information provided and pre-assignment visits. Foreign language training was also provided to some. This is in line with Briscoe and Schuler (2004) as cited in (section 4.4.5) that language training should be included in the pre-posting preparation for spouses.

6.3.2 Arrival in the host country

Question 3: What kind of support or assistance did you receive from the Mission staff on arrival?

The aim of this question was to assess whether or not the spouses received any support on arrival at the Mission.

Participant 1: *“I met Mrs. K and that was the best day of my life. She was the Ambassador’s wife and she was like a mother to me and that was about it”*.

Participants 2’s husband left six months earlier than her and this is what she said: *“My husband was in administration. So he was the one who is supposed to welcome me. It wasn’t necessary for the Mission staff because he was there as the assistant to the spouse”*.

Just like Participant 2, Participant 3’s husband was in administration and also left for posting a year ahead of her. She describes the reception like this, *“it was a basic welcome at the airport, just to begin with, also to arrange for us all the paperwork, permits and everything that we needed to be in the country and obviously as I already said my husband was already there so it was a matter of moving into a residence because that was already in place....I think it was good”*

For Participant 4, this is what happened: *“On arrival I got a call from the spouse of the High Commissioner, she the other spouse came to the hotel and we spent the whole afternoon together. So it was more from the spouses... While I was at the Embassy my husband took me around and introduced me to the people around and the outgoing corporate services manager drove us around”*. She added that the corporate service manager orientated them, served as link and personally showed them where they can find things.

Participant 5 also expressed satisfaction with the support that she received. This is what she said: *“My husband’s boss was very helpful, including his wife. They picked us at the airport and also assisted with finding accommodation, setting us in the hotel. They also assisted with the kids’ school. They were wonderful...They used to go with us to look around for houses...The wife also introduced me to the family association so she took me around to see the place and to settle”*

Participant 6: *“We had a formal welcome as a family by the personnel of the Mission which was very nice. Being introduced to everybody. What was also very kind is one of*

the spouses came to the hotel which we were living in and fetched me personally to attend a function for women. It was August 9". She further mentioned that they were assisted with house hunting and searching for schools. She found the support and assistance quite helpful.

Participant 7: *"None from the South Africans, only from the local staff...they came around and they showed us where to go for shopping and where to go for groceries and where to buy furniture and the normal kind of stuff, showing us where the schools are, well the only school there was"*

Similar to Participant 7, Participant 8 reported that there was no support and assistance offered to her. This is how she expressed her experience, *"Not much, given the fact that it is a very busy Mission. Mission staff are often wrapped up in their work so whatever information they can pass on to you, they would. But there is no specific intervention from the mission side....You know there is no real orientation. I found that I had to do most of the things on my own. I had to find out about the city on my own. Thankfully my husband had the knowledge of (country) so he was able to guide me and orientate me".* For her, there was no assistance even from the other spouses. There was no social cohesion of spouses initially when she got there. She mentioned that the spouses are left to their own devices and wrapped up in their 'own worlds' doing their own things. As a result it took her one year to settle.

Participant 9: *"The Head of Administration was very helpful so he was out first point of call and he basically really looked after us. His wife gave us some things. So with that couple I really couldn't ask for more. They took us out and showed us around (city). So they were very helpful. He got the local staff to help us look for a house. He introduced us to friends. But I think we were just lucky with that particular couple."*

Discussion

The participants received differing levels of support from various sources. To this end, others felt supported particularly by the Mission staff, whilst others reported that they

received no support from the Mission staff or other spouses. The results support the assertion by Scullion and Collings (2006: 122) in (section 1.2.) that spouses often face an unstructured arrival in the host country. The results further support the views by Shaw (2001: 214) in (section 4.5) that spouses not only relied on the Mission support system but found that the international community provides a ready-made, albeit transient, support base.

Despite the lack of guidelines for Missions on how to receive and support newly arriving spouses, it appears other spouses, local staff and other diplomats voluntarily offer assistance and orientate families to the host country, showing where schools are, assisting with house hunting and many other things.

Question 4: How did this support or assistance from the Mission staff help you adjust in the host country?

Participant 1 described herself as an outgoing person and this helped to reach out to other spouses. This is what she said, *“I started getting lonely and realized, if I feel like this and I'm an extrovert how must other people feel, and I made an effort to keep us all together. If you want to go out and leave your children with me, or I want to go out, I invite you. So yes, I think that on that stage, the mission don't really have the time to do anything like that...Otherwise from the mission side, I mean they are busy. The people are working and they are really working long hours so the women must keep themselves busy”*.

Participant 2 had small children and arrived in the host country just before the elections and there was political conflict. This is what she said, *“It was a bit tense in the country and the movement was very limited in terms of you can go to the shops or you can be out of the house. We were actually housebound for that period.... So I adjusted more at home but it wasn't really that easy”*. Being a mother with small children, this didn't affect that her that much. However it took her about six to eight months before she felt safe to go out.

Participant 3: *“...It made it easier. I didn’t feel inconvenienced...There was a house. We didn’t even stay in a hotel. We went from the airport to the house”*

Participant 4 mentioned that the assistance provided to her helped her in many ways. Especially the other spouses who were there and the spouse of the Head of Mission. She also attended meetings and joined Spouses’ groups. In addition she said, *“There were classes. There was a psychologist, she was also a spouse but she would run classes or lessons on how to adjust in the country. So you know these groups really helped me....No I had a real joy”*

This is what Participant 5 said *“I felt like I have brothers and sisters there and I felt it could be the same for everyone because some people that came after were feeling like they were not welcomed. So after speaking to a couple of people we took the initiative as the Family Association to see what we can do and how we could assist to make sure that they were welcomed.”*

Participant 6: *The lady who came to invite me to the women’s function and she was basically the one who reached out to me...She went and showed me the local grocery shop and basically invited me to two diplomatic groups”*

Participant 7 received support from the locals and had this to say *“Actually quite good because I had the confidence of just, you don’t need to wear a veil and to be dressed like Arabic people. So I had the confidence of to go around in the streets and walk wherever I wanted and nobody ever hassled me...Yes I just went and explored immediate surroundings of where I was living”.*

The researcher probed and asked how she felt about not receiving support from fellow South Africans. In her response she mentioned that she expected it because when people are abroad they look after themselves and she wasn’t disappointed by it. She said, *“No, not being the fifth mission. The first one maybe, but not after the fifth one. Not at all”*

Participant 8 mentioned earlier that she didn't receive any support. She developed her own survival mechanisms. She unfortunately had to rely on strangers, learn by trial and error, and learn from spouses of diplomats of other countries. The impact of all this is that it took her a full year to settle in her host country.

Participant 9 *"It was helpful. Very helpful. We didn't feel like we were left on our own. Not at all"*.

Discussion

The manner in which spouses are welcomed in a host country plays a significant role in how they adjust in the country. From the discussion above, the spouses that were welcomed, introduced to fellow diplomats and spouses and orientated to the country felt recognised and welcomed. The results supports the views of Black *et al.* (1992:134) in (section 4.5) that social support can facilitate cross-cultural adjustment for both the employee and the spouse; and that host country nationals' support helped spouses' interaction adjustment. Of note, is that the spouse who had previous postings alludes that after many postings one develops own survival skills and depend less on other people.

6.3.3 Adjustment in the host country

As can be seen in the interview schedule, questions 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were directed specifically to the spouses that had successful postings, whilst questions 10, 11, 12 and 13 were specific to spouses who had unsuccessful postings that resulted in premature termination. Due to similarity in context and questions asked, the data collected from the two groups was organised in such a way that the responses are presented together to ensure logical flow of the report.

Question 5: In what way do you think the host country's cultural similarities/differences to your own culture contributed to your adjustment process?

Some participants were posted in countries where the cultural and/or religious practices are similar to theirs. For these participants the similarities contributed positively to their adjustment process. On the other hand, there were spouses that were posted to countries where the cultural and religious practices were completely different from theirs and this posed some adjustment challenges.

- *Culture*

Participants 1, 2, 5 and 8 reported that it was quite easy for them to adjust because the culture of their host countries was almost similar to theirs.

This is what Participant 1 reported, *"I am people's person. I love people, I like talking so I really didn't have a problem to adjust. It was great. I can talk to anybody, any culture. I don't have a problem with that....the language is English...I cannot say there were any differences there. No it was great...But you must get involved yourself"*

Participant 2, *"It was easy to adjust because of their culture. There is not much of a difference because it's just almost the same here"*. The language and the attire are similar to South Africans. She also the people very friendly and also this made it easy to adjust.

Participants 3 and 9 described their experiences as culture shock. Let us hear their individual stories. For Participant 3 who was posted to an Arabic country it was a real culture shock. She had to adjust to wearing a black cloak whenever she leaves the house as this is a country requirement for every woman irrespective of one's country of origin or one's religious background. This was a culture shock for her because in her culture black is worn by people who are mourning. This is how she describes it:

“When we went out the first time we had our normal clothes on and we went to a Mall. My husband didn't tell me to dress in a particular way. He just said lets go and we dressed in what we considered as acceptable for the country, and low and behold when we got into the Mall everybody was looking at us and we were looking at them, because it was like everybody was in black there, and to us and my children, it was a cultural shock because this was not a requirement, we were never exposed to that. We know people wear their cloaks, but we didn't know that everybody wears them and then it looked very strange. In terms of how they behaved culturally, it is a shock for one. The fact that women cannot drive was a shock. You know because we do everything here, but now you have to be driven to go somewhere. It is difficult to be on your own as a woman walking around because then you can be stopped and be asked questions. You cannot be in the company of somebody who is not your husband. You know these little annoyances are culturally shocking”.

Even though it was difficult for Participant 3 to adjust to the dress code and their way of doing things, she eventually got used to the dress code and it became a normal practice for her. This is how she puts it, *“that’s where you realise that your mind is a powerful thing”.*

Similarly, Participant 9 also experienced culture shock. She mentioned that the culture shock resulted in their premature return to SA as she found it hard. This is how she expressed it: *“I think that contributed a lot because I think the culture in (country) is completely different to anything I've experienced. It was a very French culture so it felt completely foreign to me...It did feel very much like culture shock, I would say I sort of, I found it hard to adjust because it was so different.”*

The main cultural difference that Participant 4 had to adjust to was the laid back culture of the people in the host country. She found the service in restaurants and hotels very slow compared to what she was used to in South Africa. She however found the people very humble and polite.

Participant 5 reported that the culture was very English and although very familiar with her home culture, she found English people not as warm as South Africans. This what she said, *“The English culture compared to us, okay we have similarities...English people are not as warm as South Africans”....They are our colonists so they understood much about SA culture, our history, so they were a bit accommodating*”. What also contributed to her adjustment is the large number of South Africans in her host country. She felt that South African culture was extended in a way. In addition, she interacted with the Batswana from the Botswana High Commission in her host country. This contributed positively to her adjustment process as the Batswana culture and language are very similar to that of South Africans.

For Participant 6 there wasn't any negative impact. She only mentioned that she found the way the host country's people entertain quite different from what she was used.

Participant 7 who was also posted to an Arabic country; the cultural difference didn't have a huge impact on her. *“You have to be open-minded. So it wasn't difficult to accept the people as they are. I respect their culture of being dressed appropriately wherever you go. Not going anywhere half naked... So for me it really wasn't difficult at all to adjust. If I had to wear a veil, then I had to wear a veil”*. Her open-mindedness, acceptance of the people as they are and respecting the culture contributed to her successful adjustment.

Participant 8 described her location as a *“melting pot of all cultures”*. This afforded her an opportunity to learn different cultures. She found people in her host country *“always stressed out and in a rush. They have no intent to say please or thank you as us South Africans but would stop and help you...they were very accommodating”*.

- *Religion.*

For Participants 2, 3, 4 and 6 the similarity of religion between the host country and theirs played a crucial role in the adjustment.

Participant 2 believes that her host country contributed tremendously to her spiritual growth. She was impressed by the faith that the people in her host country had in the midst of poverty. This what she said, *“They remained positive and always had faith that things will get better. They always believed that God will provide for them”*.

Participant 3 practices Islamic religion and this is what she said, *“In terms of Islamic point of view it was easy for us because we knew that prayers come at this time, this happens at this time, so to adjust to that part was not difficult”*

Participant 4 also found a similar church with the practices that are similar to what they are used to in Pretoria. She felt comfortable and described it as follows, *“So for me to be there, I was with my Sisters in Christ”*. She mentioned that became quite involved and active in her church group. She proudly mentioned that as time went by, she and her husband “planted” a church there and had more people attending.

Similarly, Participant 6 reported that what made it easy for her to adjust was the religious aspect and joining a church group where she felt welcomed and was familiar with faith issues. She mentioned that this is where she established friends. Unfortunately the church gradually went financially bankrupt and eventually closed down but they still kept contact with the friends.

Discussion

When asked about culture many participants started with the language, dress code, friendliness, humility of the people as well as general behaviour.

The discussion above shows that culture, religion and language play a crucial role in the adjustment process of spouses. Earley et al. (2006: 86) state that culture and language are very much linked. Responses show us that some spouses experienced culture shock and adjustment difficulty during posting. Briscoe and Schuler (2004) as cited in (section 4.4.1) state that expatriates experience stress and suffer from somatic complaints and anxiety attacks due to culture shock. From the responses, it is clear that

where there were cultural and/or religious similarities, adjustment became easier than where these were very strong and different from theirs. The results support Andreason's (2003: 50) view that some cultures are more difficult to adjust to than others and that culture novelty has been found to inhibit non-work adjustment.

One Participant expressed intra-conflict about the dress code. For example, in her culture wearing black is a sign of mourning but in her host country it is a normal dress code for all women irrespective of cultural or religious background. It also appeared that being in a country where different sexes are treated differently from what one is accustomed to has a negative and frustrating impact on the spouses. They feel that their independence is taken away. This view supports the view of Oberg (1960) as cited in (section 4.3.) that culture shock is the distress experienced by sojourners as a result of losing all the familiar signs and symbols of interaction.

Question 6: What role did the language similarity/difference play in your ability to adjust?

Participants 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8 reported that English was the most spoken language in their host countries and therefore didn't experience any difficulty in communicating. In addition, Participant 2 mentioned that she could understand the other local languages, namely, Shona and Ndebele as they are similar to other South African languages.

Participant 4 had foreign language lessons before posting and had an opportunity to continue lessons in the host country. *"I learned to say thank you, please and ask for directions. Yes. It made life easier"*.

However, not all participants who needed foreign language training had an opportunity to learn it before posting. This evidenced by Participants 3, 7 and 9's accounts.

Participants 3 and 7 indicated that the spoken languages in their respective host countries were Arabic and French, with very little English. Both reported that this made communication difficult for them. Both of them had never been exposed to any. This is

how Participant 3 explains it, *“It’s terrible, you suddenly become illiterate....It does impact on your ability to move about...for instance, I wanted to move around by myself and do things on my own. It becomes problematic because you have to get into a transport system of the country and you have to try and explain where you want to go in a language that the person who is driving will understand. It becomes a problem...”*.She mentioned that she had to rely on the locals to interpret for her. She felt uncomfortable and vulnerable.

Unlike Participant 3, Participant 7 was fortunate to undergo lessons in the host country and this made it easier for her to communicate. She could easily go to the shops on her own and communicate what she needs. She found the locals very friendly and accommodated her “broken” French. This is what she said: *“They accommodated me. They knew that I am a foreigner and I am not going to master the language in a few years that I was there”*.

Participant 9 had prior knowledge of French from her school days and she just managed to get by with a struggle. However it got better when she started with the lessons in the host country. She highlighted that not being able to communicate well in a foreign country makes one apprehensive. She described her feelings as follows, *“That makes you feel like a fish out of the water. I wasn’t quite prepared for how much that would make me feel; not very confident. You don’t feel like yourself if you cannot communicate”*

Discussion

From the responses above one can deduce that language proficiency is one of the crucial aspects in the adjustment process. Participants who went to countries with familiar languages e.g. English found it easy to communicate and find their way around. Similarly, spouses who made efforts to learn a foreign language prior and/or during posting found having basic vocabulary very helpful. It also appears that having the basics motivated them to continue with the lessons in the host country and improve their vocabulary. This helped them to adjust easily as the language proficiency level

increased. The results support Usunier's (1998: 31) view as cited in (section 4.4.5.) that language is a significant component of culture as it conveys meanings which may be unique to a community.

On the other hand, the spouses who had no training of the foreign language found it difficult to adjust. The inability to speak or understand the foreign language takes away one's independence as you have to rely on the local people to accompany you to various places and interpret for you. It also affects the levels of trust and control that one has on the local people. The results supports Briscoe and Schuler's (2004:247) views as cited in (section 4.4.5) that the ability to speak the language of the host country is still quite important for the expatriate to deal with local nationals, local customers and suppliers as well as to adapt to host culture and to be accepted into that host culture. Both of which are major keys to successful expatriate experience

Question 7: How did the environmental factors (weather, political situation, availability of food and amenities) impact on your adjustment process?

Participants experienced different impact of environmental factors such as the weather, political situation, availability of food and amenities on the adjustment process. In some countries obtaining familiar food became a challenge. The health amenities, especially in some African countries were also reported to be substandard and as a result inhibited the adjustment of some spouses.

- *Availability of food.*

Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 experienced no scarcity of food in their respective host countries. Food was always available. Participant 1 was amazed by the vast choice of food and bread in particular. Participant 3 referred to her host country as the country of abundance. For Participant 4, the food was good and very interesting. She learned and ate new food. She also enjoyed preparing and showcasing South African food for people in her host country.

For Participant 2 who was posted in a category 3 country, obtaining food became a serious challenge but the Mission assisted them. This is what she said, *“We struggled in 2008 but because we are closer to home we could come and buy in bulk and store...the Mission was helping in that so that we can buy groceries every three months or second month depending on your supplies.*

Participant 7 reported that she didn’t anticipate any difficulty with food since it is a Mediterranean country. To her surprise she found that there are no supermarkets that she was used to, but only little “spaza shops” and garage shops. Western food was not available. Even cultural food such as pap was not available at all. However, they still could find meat, vegetables and other things. So she learned to live with what they could find in the shops. The availability of food improved in the years that she spent in the host country.

Although Participant 9 experienced difficulty in obtaining food in the host county, she mentioned that she coped very well. She could get most of the things from the French supermarket but had to limit herself since she found it very expensive. She learned to be a bit flexible with what she obtained.

- *Public amenities*

Participant 4 reported that it was difficult to adjust in the beginning. She found the country very backward in terms of development. There were no parks where one could take children to play and although they had beautiful beaches they were not well maintained.

Participant 8 found the city to be highly polluted. There was lot of smoke and fumes from cars and this affected her breathing. Because of crowding, the streets and train stations were not clean and the only way to protect herself from contracting germs was to carry and use sanitisers and wet wipes all the time. Contrary to the streets and train stations, the bathrooms were clean and safe to use.

Participant 9 was appalled by the environmental conditions. When she compared to other places she had been to, she found it difficult to adjust to the environment. This is what she experienced “*The environment was really the main problem, like the housing were really pretty horrible...the bigger environment (country) it was also very difficult. Not only was it is dry and dusty and rubbish everywhere, it is also not beautiful at all ...and there was no way you could go out for a walk. It was really an unattractive city in my view*”.

- *Hospitals*

Participant 2 mentioned that even though they had good doctors, the hospitals were under resourced. Patients were required to take own medical equipment to the hospitals which couldn't even dispense medicines. They had to buy own medicines. As a result she had to come to South Africa to deliver a baby. She felt that she was lucky to be in a neighbouring country and could easily cross the border to get their necessities in South Africa. The ability to come easily to South Africa made life easy for her. She also believes that her background and growing up in a village played a role in helping her to adjust easily in a difficult country. She was able to come up with alternatives and different plans to make things work. This is what she said:

“It depends on your background. If you grew up in a background where you have struggled, where you had to go to further places to get things, you would easily adapt. But if you grew up in a place whereby everything is available...you would struggle”

However the conditions in her host country started to improve in 2010 whilst she was still there.

For Participant 8, the medical facilities were great, easily accessible and the treatment very good.

Participant 9 found the hospitals very poor and this contributed to their premature return to SA. She and her husband were in the process of starting a family and needed to start the fertility treatment but the hospitals and clinics were not impressive. Let's hear her

experience, *“I went to a couple of local clinics and I really wasn’t impressed. We did try and see somebody there, a fertility specialist, but then it turned out he gave me all the wrong advice...”*

- *Housing*

Participant 8 boasted about good accommodation. She experienced the apartments as very luxurious and very comfortable. The apartments were suited for all kinds of weather e.g. they had central heating system and air conditioners.

Contrary to Participant 8, Participant 9 found accommodation to be her main problem. She found the *“houses horrible, very un-cosy, cold, dark, and just really not habitable”*. For her the local people didn't seem to have the idea of making a house nice, cosy and attractive like in England.

Despite limited resources and facilities in their host countries, Participants 2 and 4 reported that they adjusted well.

- *Weather conditions*

Participant 1 who was posted to a country with extreme weather i.e. where the winter can go below zero degrees stressed that she loved the weather. She regards herself as one who enjoys all types of weather. This is what she said: *“I am a keen explorer so weather is no problem to me. I can play in the snow, walk in the rain. It was great.”*

For Participant 2 even though she didn't experience much winter, there were unusually long periods of rain. She mentioned that it rained from September to March. She mentioned that it was not a challenge but something that she had to adapt to.

Similarly, Participant 4 loved the weather as it was hot throughout the year.

Participants 5, 6 and 8 reported extreme cold weather. All reported that it kept them indoors for long periods as the winter is long. For instance, Participant 5 had this to say *“Oh miserable you think about home all the time”*.

It seems the weather had a great impact on Participant 6. She felt isolated and couldn't really socialise. This was a difficult time for her. She had this to say, *“(country) is very cold, it like -20°C in winter and the winters are very long and cold. So yes, that was definitely an issue for me...I was stuck at home for the first few months, like four months and not really receiving visitors and it was just me and my two kids and that was a difficult time for me.”*

On the one hand, Participant 7 had to endure the summer weather that could go up to 50°C with humidity of 200°. She experienced two extreme winters in her stay in the host country. The good thing is that the houses have air conditioners and central heating. Participant 3 also experienced very hot conditions.

Participant 8 mentioned that it was the first time she experienced the cold of that intensity. This made her dislike the country at first and therefore contributed to her taking a whole year to adjust but once she started buying and wearing appropriate clothing that is designed to mitigate the weather, her life became better. However, Spring also brought its own challenges and affected her health negatively. The pollen and allergens in the air caused her to suffer from chronic bronchitis. She had to deal with this health condition every year.

- *Public transport*

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 experienced no problems with the transport system in their host countries. For Participant 3, even though the public transport was available, the only barrier was the language. Participant 8 sounded very impressed with the public transport. She felt that it was great and highly reliable. According to her, everything in her host country worked superfast and superefficient. She experienced no disappointments.

Participant 9 experienced poor the public transport system. She had to travel in old taxis that made her uncomfortable until they could buy their own car.

- *Political situation*

Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 experienced no serious political impact on their adjustment process.

Participant 2 arrived in the host country during elections. There was political conflict and tension in the country. This had a negative impact on her ability to move around as she didn't feel safe to walk around. It was only after six to eight months that she felt comfortable to go out and move around. Being confined to the house for many months however didn't bother her too much because she had small children.

In the early stages of the posting, the political situation in the host country made Participant 3 wonder why and what she is doing in the country. *"It felt like I am in a war zone. The presence of the military with military equipment such as tanks and guns on the streets was a shocking situation"* she said. It was scary and she constantly was on high alert that the bomb could go off. Having to undergo daily searches by the military was also uncomfortable for her. She mentioned that at one stage there was a bomb blast next to her children's school and she became very scared. Throughout her stay in the host country, she had to be constantly aware of security threats. However the impact was alleviated by constant updates from the Embassy regarding the political situation.

Participant 7 mentioned that because of the rising of the Arab Spring and the government being too much in control, she was always alert of what is happening on the streets and always careful not be on the wrong side of the law but this had negative impact on her.

Discussion

Environmental factors can impact negatively on the spouses' adjustment process. As evidenced in the responses, some spouses felt miserable and thought of returning back to SA. Being in a country that looks like a war zone and always anticipating bombs and gun shots can be shocking and scary to spouses as one becomes very vigilant and constantly fears for her life and that of her family. In her professional judgment, the researcher believes that spouses and children who are posted to countries where there is war or strong military presence might develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorders.

Question 8: What factors would you say positively contributed to your ability to adjust?

Participants 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8 cited that one of the reasons for their successful posting was *redefining their roles* as spouses. Some articulated their role as to support their husbands and family. These participants realised that this is a sacrifice they made for their families and were comfortable with it. This is how Participant 2 sums it:

"I guess I went there knowing that I have to play a supportive role to my husband. On the other hand knowing that it is a compromise and a sacrifice that I make. So I kept at the back of my mind that I am here to succeed and for me to succeed, I have to stay positive and really do it wholeheartedly".

Participant 5 shared the same sentiment and said: *"sometimes you sacrifice your own for your family"*

In addition, they saw their role as contributing to the bigger picture i.e. being "Ambassadors" in their own right e.g. Participant 1 saw her role as, *"putting Africa on the map"*.

Participant 8 regards this opportunity as an honour and privilege and had this to say:

“I think when you are in a strange country and you don’t see your familiar South Africa, you realise how important you are in this entire web of being abroad. And to fly a flag high and to know it’s a great honour that the management in DIRCO and your fellow country members bestow on you. So every day you step out, you are not only stepping out as an individual but you are stepping out as a South African representative representing your government and your country”.

Participants 1, 4 and 5 felt that the support they received from the *wives of Heads of Mission* contributed to their successful adjustment. Participant 1 highlighted that the wife of the Head of Mission was like a mother to her and others and that is through her that she met other spouses and got involved with working with children.

For Participants 3 and 4, the support that they received from *fellow spouses and spouses from other countries* contributed to the success of their posting. Participant 3 added that meeting and interacting with people from other countries and seeing how they live contributed positively to her adjustment process. Participant 4 recalled a significant impact that was made by the spouse of a French diplomat. This spouse was a psychologist and offered free lessons on how to adjust in a foreign country. Participant 4 found the lessons very informative and helpful in her ability to cope and adjust. She also had interactions with spouses of fellow South Africans who were in her host country and through the Spouses’ Associations.

Participants 5, 6, 8 and 9 mentioned that the support they received from *the Head of Mission and staff* contributed immensely to the success of their posting. Participant 5 emphasised that the Head of Mission was friendly, open, and approachable. She also regularly organised family events where they could all come together.

Participants 3, 5 and 8 cited that the support they received from *their husbands* played a key role in the success adjustment. In particular, Participant 3 mentioned that her husband provided a warm environment for her. She was also humbled by the fact that her husband shouldered the financial burden and provided emotional stability for the family. She realised how much he wanted to make the posting a success. Similarly,

Participant 8 felt comfortable and well taken care of financially by her husband who also encouraged and supported her involvement in volunteer projects.

For Participant 7 it was the *previous experience* that she gained from previous postings. She was on her fifth posting and believes that the previous postings equipped her with skills to adapt. She also cited that her own ability to adjust to a lot of things in life contributed to her posting being successful.

Participants 1, 2 and 8 believe that having a *positive attitude* is one of the factors that contributed to their successful adjustment. In addition, Participant 1 considers herself a people's person and able to make friends easily. She stressed that one cannot expect to go abroad and not change or not to reach out to somebody else. For her, reaching out was very easy. This is how she describes her experience: *"I was going with the motto: I am going to have a good time. Not a long time."*

Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 believe that the *volunteer work* that they undertook gave them a huge sense of fulfilment. Participants 5 and 8 also volunteered to help in the Mission when required to. Involvement in groups and projects will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Discussion

From the interviews it became clear there is no one specific factor for a successful adjustment. Spouses attributed their successful adjustment to multiple factors which are summarised below:

- Willingness to assume a role of an accompanying spouse. This result supports Linehan (2005:187) as cited in (section 3.4.1) who stress that one of the most important factors in determining the success of an overseas posting is the willingness of the spouse or partner to leave home and possibly a career to live abroad.

- Social support network. This support Black *et al.* (1992: 134) as indicated in (section 4.5) that social support can facilitate cross cultural adjustment for both the employee and the spouse.
- Previous international posting. This result supports Andreason (2003: 54) who states that expatriates with previous posting experience should have developed relocation skills which would reduce uncertainty associated with new move, thus facilitating work and general adjustment.
- Positive attitude – Having a positive attitude and striving to make the posting a success is also crucial for the successful adjustment.
- Interaction with other spouses and getting involved in spouse’s groups - Many spouses stressed the importance of reaching out and not waiting for things to happen. Participation in projects also gave spouses a sense of purpose and helped them adjust better.

Question 9: What in your opinion was the main reason for the successful posting?

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 completed the full posting term and reiterated the factors cited in question 8 above. Therefore they will not be repeated. However, Participants 6 and 9 couldn’t adjust successfully and therefore returned prematurely from their posting.

Participant 6 had her posting terminated after two years. She cited that the main reason for her unsuccessful posting is her health condition which was well managed before posting. She was also affected by her husband’s difficulty in adjusting due to work conditions and coping with work stress. This what she said’ “*Okay, well personally I struggle with depression....I remember my husband also had stress at work... But the main reason was my own medical condition*”. After some time, they eventually requested to be returned home.

Participant 9 returned home after fifteen months at the Mission. The reason for her unsuccessful posting was family issues and lack of good medical facilities in the host country. She and her husband had been trying for about two to three years to have a child and wanted to start the necessary treatment. She mentioned that before posting they tried to explain to the Department about their plans but unfortunately this was not taken into consideration when the posting was determined. She feels that they were not given a choice. When they were already in posting they realised how poor medical facilities are and started to lose faith in the system. This resulted in them requesting to be returned home midterm.

Discussion

The discussion above highlights the difficulties that two spouses experienced and subsequently resulted in their postings being terminated prematurely. One spouse suffered depression and couldn't function well. This supports Miller's (2008: 20) view that the incidence of more obvious symptoms of stress i.e. broken marriages, alcoholism and psychological disturbances is not documented but is certainly increasing.

The other spouse also returned prematurely due to the sub-standard medical facilities in the host country. She also mentioned lack of consultation by Department about their posting. These results support Shaw's (2001:1) views in (section 4.1.2.) that the greater the difference between a home environment and foreign environment, the harder the adjustment process. Sections (4.1.2.) further cite predictors of positive adjustment, namely, that the standard of living in the overseas assignment was acceptable to the spouse; and that the firm sought the spouse's opinion regarding international assignment at the beginning of the selection process. Both factors were absent or lacking here.

Question 14: What social activities (e.g. Diplomatic Spouses Association, charity, etc.) did you engage in?

All participants stressed that spouses abroad have to keep themselves occupied by getting involved in various organisations. For example, Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 belonged to various spouses' groups and associations in their respective host countries. Although the focus for these groups differed from country to country, they had a common purpose which was to raise money for charity, entertain spouses through various activities and form friendships. Many spouses felt that these groups were valuable and kept them busy.

Participants 1, 2 and 5 occupied various key positions such as treasurer, secretary and executive member in their respective organisations. Participant 2 stated that volunteering for a portfolio was a strategic move on her part since she didn't have the spouse of the Head of Mission and would ordinarily be excluded from certain meetings and activities. So in order to stay abreast and included in the gatherings, she volunteered to be a secretary for one and treasurer for the other.

Participant 4 also belonged to a church group which required them to have regular meetings and organised social activities for families.

Participants 1 and 8 who were in the same country both belonged to an organisation called United Nations Mothers for Africa (UNAMA), of which Participant 1 became an executive member. UNAMA consisted of the African Ambassadors' spouses. Its main purpose was to raise funds for Africa to support children in need and food programmes. These organisations and associations made different impressions on the spouses. Captured in Participant 1's words, "*When I left, it felt like I was leaving family behind...I still get emails up to now of people inviting me back and congratulations, and all of that*". She also provided support to fellow spouses by taking care of their children when they had other commitments. She believed that they help each other through circumstances.

Participants 5 and 8 also provided assistance to the Mission during its events. This gave them the opportunity to promote South Africa and show case South African food, clothing and other products. In some instances, the proceeds from such events went to charity. Participant 5 felt that the work she did in helping the Embassy during an international conference boosted her confidence. This is how she puts it, *“I think the experience that I got no one can take it from me. I think my level of confidence was boosted...you know sometimes when you are in an international country you feel very withdrawn”*.

On arrival at the Mission, Participant 7 joined the African Federation Diplomatic Association. However the organisation ceased to exist after some time. She found her involvement limited because the spouse of the Head of Mission was not at the Mission. This had a negative impact on the spouses’ participation in social activities because the spouse of the Head of Mission is seen as a leader for other spouses. Another factor that impeded her participation in social activities was the language and the cultural role of women in her host country.

Discussion

The role and importance of social activities was clearly articulated by spouses. The involvement ranged from joining spouses’ associations, volunteering services at the Embassy and belonging church organisations, to name a few. These results support the findings of (Thomson:1986) as cited by Copeland and Norell (2003: 259) who stressed the benefits of joining various associations and women’s groups because the friendships formed with other expatriates and women of the same and/or different nationality helped to overcome the feelings of boredom and redundancy initially experienced. In addition, the authors state that those who attended church, synagogue, mosque or temple regularly lived significantly longer. Amongst other things religious services provides support and friendship involving the “fellowship of kindred spirits”.

Many spouses felt that these organisations and associations they belonged to not only provided them with a platform for fun and to share experiences with other spouses but

also afforded them an opportunity to promote South Africa. This involvement gave them a sense of purpose and belonging.

Question 15: Please describe your support network during posting.

This question aimed to elicit the support network of spouses during posting.

Participant 1 felt supported particularly by the spouses of the Heads of Mission. She was like a mother to her. She also received support from the next Ambassador's wife.

Participant 2 mentioned that she had relatives in (*country*) as well. Therefore the family in South Africa and in the host country, the church in South Africa and in the host country as well as the Diplomatic Spouses' Associations all formed part of her support network. She received less support from the friends in South Africa as they really didn't understand how she could leave her work to be a spouse in a foreign country.

The support network for Participant 3 was the spouses of other diplomats, her husband and children. She received very limited support from her extended family in South Africa and she attributes this to distance and expense in phone calls.

Although Participant 4 received support from various sources, her key support network was her family and the church group.

For Participant 5, it was the Head of Mission, the other spouses as well as the extended family in South Africa. She recalled how the Mission staff supported her when her father passed on. The Mission staff supported her greatly. "*They were very helpful. Even when I arrived here they called to ask how I was doing*" she cited.

For Participant 6, it was friends and family in South Africa who she contacted through internet telephone, the local church members, the one spouse and neighbours.

Participant 8 reported that her support network was other spouses. She strongly believes that the support network doesn't come naturally but it is up to a spouse to work at it. This is what she said, *"You have to build it yourself. To show them that you are reachable, that you are available, you are willing to do things because other spouses become weary like if you do not show interest and have no enthusiasm then they back off, so you also have to work a bit"*

For Participant 9 it was the other spouses and staff members of the Mission. *"I think we all sort of helped each other and we would compare notes and obviously on the friends I made. So friendships were just so important. I don't think it would have been the half posting it was without the friends and then Mr. T (Department's psychologist) was also supportive"*. She mentioned that her support network made her feel less isolated.

Contrary to the other spouses, this is Participant 7's experience, *"We had no support network whatsoever....As I said, it was the fifth posting and I thought well we will cope"*.

Discussion

Spouses established support network in their respective host countries. Many enjoyed a substantial network, when others had few or none. Many kept contact with extended families in South Africa. Church groups in foreign countries, other spouses and Mission staff also became crucial support network for many spouses. However, it became clear that one has to actively reach out and build own network as it does not come automatically. It also became evident that fellow spouses in the host country form a crucial support network as they are within easy reach and understand the dynamics of being in a foreign country more than family and friends back at home. These results support Copeland and Norell's (2003: 260) view that relationship needs are met in a variety of ways by a variety of people, known as the multiplexity of social support.

Contrary to the rest, one spouse who had been in postings before had no single network except her immediate family and she coped well. This proves the inherent strength that other people possess to adapt and adjust in different situations.

Question 16: How did working/not working during the posting impact on you?

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 had careers before posting and only one of them got a job in the host country. Participants expressed mixed feelings about their inability to work during posting.

After a few months in posting, Participant 1 actively looked for employment but soon became despondent because of the difficulty in obtaining the work permit. She was very disappointed and upset. This how she describes how she felt, *“That specific day I cried”*. She eventually got a work permit but had already given up on working.

Participant 2 made a choice not to seek employment even though she knew that she could work if she wanted to. She wanted to support her husband from the work pressures. This is how she explains it, *“It didn’t have much impact because I knew my role. I knew what I had to do and I was prepared for it”*.

Participant 3 did not work. She stated that it was not made clear to her whether it was permissible for spouses to work or not. The inability to work was a major problem for her. She felt very frustrated and depressed. The loss of financial independence and being wholly dependent on her husband added to her frustration. She felt that the sacrifice that she made to accompany her husband on a posting affected her career negatively and had long-term effect on the family, as it is not easy to pick-up from where one left after posting. This is what she said, *“Posting affects lives more than a person”*

Participant 4, *“In the beginning it was tough”* however she later settled and enjoyed the benefits of not working. She described it as follows: *“Oh the benefits were way too big. I was closer to my children because when I was working, I was travelling a lot and now I could have a closer relationship with my children, closer relationship with my husband and I also studied, which was another benefit”*

Participant 5's attempts to find a job were futile. She felt miserable at times especially because she had no income and sometimes no volunteer work. She would start thinking about her future. She tried to apply for a job in her host country but was cautioned that she would lose her diplomatic immunity if she starts working. These were the thoughts that played in her mind, *"If I was home I could be doing this, I would be at my job. I was always thinking about my career and thinking I am stagnant, I should be at this level by now but I am still here, what will happen to me when I get back to South Africa, will I get a job immediately, what is going to happen?"*

Participant 6 who was a nurse by profession, tried to get a job but the application process became cumbersome and she got discouraged. *"I volunteered at elderly homes which I went there like once a week or twice a week for an hour....that was quite lovely"*. She strongly feels that if she were able to work, it would have helped her to adjust better in her host country.

This is how Participant 7 expressed her feelings, *"Very frustrating to be at home all the time doing the normal household chores but what can you do? I had two children that attended school and that stage I was a taxi driver"*.

In the first year of posting, Participant 8 found not being able to work very difficult, *"I used to feel down and used to be very worried. Then it makes you feel like you are inadequate...It made me wonder whether I did the right thing and the right decision"* she said. This became better once she started to do volunteer work. She cautions that being unemployed is a hurdle that one has to go through. It requires a different frame of mind and acceptance of the situation. Her husband supported her and encouraged her to do volunteer work; and if that didn't work out, he was prepared to let her go back to South Africa and take up her job at Head Office. However this was not an option to consider as she thought it would not serve the family well. The one positive thing that Participant 8 held on to was the fact that her unemployment status is temporary and the assurance that her job back home is secured.

Participant 9 who is a teacher by profession felt lucky to be offered a job and got permission to work. She worked part-time as a substitute teacher in an International School. She was offered a full-time job but chose limited hours in order to avoid the reduction in Cost Of Living Allowance (COLA) received from the Department. It also allowed her the flexibility to support her husband. She said, *“It was nice to be able to work and be part of a community, the school; and it made a difference”*.

Discussion

Unemployment in a foreign country is seen as one of the major problems for dual career families. The impact of unemployment differed amongst spouses. Some spouses felt frustrated, worried and angry that they couldn't find employment. The result supports Earley et al. (2006:138) as cited in (section 3.4.2.) that work is the “central life interest” or the core of the identity in the spouses' life. Therefore such disruptions can have adverse effects on his or her self-worth and self-identity.

On the other hand, other spouses welcomed being at home as it gave them the opportunity to spend time with their children and to support their family. The result supports Copeland and Norell's (2002:257) view that most accompanying partners did not feel the loss of paid work but rather cited the importance of being there for their school-aged children, who had gradually eased into the new school and made friends.

Question 17: At what stage of posting was it most difficult for you? (Please elaborate).

Relocation to a different country can pose different difficulties to spouses. This might be at the beginning of the posting whilst they still trying to adjust to a new way of life or towards the end of the posting when they have to say goodbye to relationships that they may have formed during posting; and starting to think about life back at home.

For Participant 1, the last few months were the most difficult because their posting was extended for a further six months. It was difficult for her because psychologically she

had prepared to come back at the original return date but the date kept on being changed. This frustrated her because she was looking forward to going back to work.

For Participants 2, 4, 5 and 7, the difficulty was intermittent throughout the posting. For Participant 2 it was triggered when her husband had to work long hours and the children moaned about his absence at home. She found it difficult to explain the work situation to her children. Participant 5 felt that she couldn't wait to come home and support her mother after her father's death. She also struggled with the weather and health conditions.

Participant 7 said, *"The whole four years were quite difficult because my husband had found it difficult to adjust. So it affected the whole family. So it was quite difficult"*.

Participants 3, 4, 8 and 9 experienced difficulty during the first six months. For Participant 3, anxiety and fear of the unknown were high at the beginning. Adjusting to being financially dependent on her husband was also difficult. It became better as the children settled at school. Similarly, for Participants 4 and 8, adjustment to a foreign country and culture as well as resettling i.e. looking for a house, checking schools and understanding the environment, were the difficult parts.

Participant 6 suffered depression, couldn't sleep or perform daily chores. Her depression also took a toll on her husband who then decided after a few months in the Mission that they should rather return to South Africa midterm. This is what she said:

"I just had hoped that things would get better and when summer time comes I will be able to go out more and experience more of the country, the new city... I think with my depression, I had sleeping problems and I wasn't able to do everything that I needed to do. ...It was difficult because it was difficult on my husband when I had depression and the stress would be more on him".

Discussion

Spouses experienced difficulties at various stages. For some, the first six months proved to be the most difficult stage of the posting. This period is characterised by uncertainty, anxiety, culture shock, adjustment to a life of not working and financial dependence; to a foreign culture and different food. Whilst trying to cope with change, they experience the stress of looking for a house, schools for children and getting to know the environment. Some spouses experienced difficulty constantly throughout the posting. For these spouses the difficulty was triggered by different events such as the work demands of the partner, taking care of the children, the weather and health conditions. Most of them persevered despite the difficulty. They learned to cope under the circumstances. According to Black and Mendenhall's (1991) views in (section 4.3.) expatriates go through different stages of transition as depicted in his U-Curve Cross-Cultural adjustment. Each stage has its own challenges and expatriates will handle these stages differently. However the responses in this study contradict Black and Mendenhall's views that the first few months are regarded as honey moon stage. Many spouses reported that their most difficult stage was in the first six months or throughout the posting. The researcher agrees with these views because until the family finds a house, school and they beginning to be familiar with the place, it is difficult to feel relaxed.

Question 18: Please comment on the support you received from the Department (both Head Office and Mission) during posting.

This question aimed to check the level of support received from both Head office and Missions during posting.

- *Support from Head Office.*

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 didn't receive any support from Head Office. Participants 1, 2, 4 and 7 reported that they didn't need or expect any assistance from Head Office.

This is what Participant 2 said, *“From Head Office, I didn’t need that much support, I was just fine”*.

However, Participants 5 and 8 felt very disappointed and saddened by the lack of support from Head office. Participant 5 said *“It’s quite disappointing because we didn’t go there for our own purpose, so the expectation is that the Department should always be there for us. Just to check. Sending an email to say how are you doing there, are you coping, is there anything we can do to assist”*.

Participant 8 felt more disappointed because as an employee of the Department she expected more. This is how she expressed her feelings *“It made me feel like I do not belong to DIRCO. It made me feel classified as a spouse”*

Even though Participant 7 didn’t require any support, she would have liked to see support provided to her husband. This is what she said, *“I didn’t require any support. I think my husband required support in his job at the embassy and received very little, which was frustrating. So the frustration came from the office to the house, to the whole family and it just spreads”*.

Participants, 6 and 9 were satisfied with the level of support they received from Head Office. Participant 6 mentioned that when they came to South Africa for a holiday, they met with one of the counsellors at Head Office who counselled, encouraged and helped them to make new plans. This is what Participant 6 said, *“We got really good support...and the Department was very helpful and very patient”*.

Similarly, Participant 9 felt free to call the psychologist from the Employee Wellness Centre as well as the desk official who responded promptly to her requests. Whilst she is appreciative of the support during posting, she felt that in the beginning there wasn’t any. She would have preferred an opportunity to discuss about the suitability of their posting but didn’t know who to talk to as the decision was already made.

- *Support from the Mission.*

Participants 1, 2 were satisfied with the assistance they received from the Mission and the spouse of the Head of Mission, respectively. Participant 5 didn't receive support from the Mission but from the spouse of her husband's manager.

Participant 6 feels that the Mission was helpful and very patient to their situation. This is how she describes the support "*When we were thinking of suspending our posting there, they decided to send us back for a holiday to see whether that would not help us. They even paid for a lodge here in Pretoria. It was very good support*".

Discussion

The level of support received by spouses differed. Many spouses didn't require any support at any stage during posting. Some were happy with the support that they received from fellow spouses in the host country. Some enjoyed good support from Head Office and Missions; and are satisfied that when they required support from different units, they received it promptly. However, it appears that those who received support were proactive and initiated the contact.

On the other side, there are spouses who felt that there was no support offered to them. They expressed disappointment that there were no phone calls or emails from Head Office to check on how they are doing. One spouse expressed the spill over of work stress into family life. She would have appreciated it if support could have been provided to her husband. As the stress levels affected the entire family. This supports Earley, Ang and Tan (2006: 137) as cited in (section 3.3.) that unlike domestic work assignments, global work assignment is particularly vulnerable to spill overs of family life to work life.

6.3.4 Post posting - Return to South Africa

Multiple factors have an impact on the readjustment of spouses after posting e.g. employment, accommodation, and schooling, just to name a few. These factors will be discussed individually in the discussion below.

Question 19: Describe your experiences in readjusting back in SA

- Employment.

Participants 1, 2, 4, 8 and 9 all went back to their previous jobs as soon as possible. For them having jobs contributed positively to their ability to readjust back in South Africa. For Participants 2, 4 and 8 work was not an issue as they had taken unpaid leave from the Department and knew that they will return straight to a job. The only concern for Participant 4 was to be placed according to her wish. She needed to be placed in a post that wouldn't require her to travel. In addition, she felt overwhelmed by the thoughts of returning from work the same time with her husband, feeling tired and still have to prepare dinner for the family.

For Participants 3 and 6 finding employment was a challenge and therefore made readjustment back in South Africa difficult. Participant 3 felt very frustrated. She had no work to go to, she was worried that her peers have moved on and she hasn't. She had psychological issues to deal with. She mentioned that *"It felt like the world has moved"*. She was worried about her age and prospects of being employed. In addition, the family had to adjust to a reduced income level of the husband.

Participant 5 didn't have a job but subsequently joined the Department as an intern and was eventually employed permanently. This contributed positively to her re-adjustment process.

Similarly, Participant 6 who was a children's nurse also struggled to get a job. She felt disappointed and had to take a part-time job. She eventually resorted to a career change.

- *Schooling*

Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 had school going children and had to help their children adjust to a different life and a different educational system. For Participant 2 leaving the children at home and going back to work was the most difficult part. Despite this, she is happy that the whole family adjusted well. Participant 3 mentioned that it was a bit difficult adjusting back in South Africa, particularly with change of schooling system. For Participant 4 knowing that she is going to start work and be away from her children for the whole day was daunting. Being unable to pick the children after school and taking them to sports activities made readjustment a bit difficult. The children of Participant 5 were down-graded to lower grades due to a differing educational system. She felt it was a drawback for her children.

- *Accommodation*

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9 didn't experience any problems with accommodation. Participant 4 mentioned that they went straight to their house and didn't have to stay in a hotel as per DIRCO policy. Participants 5 and 9 had to rent places to stay temporarily. However, they didn't see it as a major problem.

Participant 6 experienced problems with accommodation due to the early return from posting. The tenants were not prepared to move out of their house citing that they made arrangements to rent the house for four years. She mentioned that this resulted in a conflict situation which still hasn't been resolved.

Participant 7 adjusted easily. She stated that *"It felt like I never went away, I don't know why. Everything was very much the same except everything went more expensive. I still have my same neighbours. Maybe it is because I moved back into the same house and the same environment. Maybe that contributed"*.

Participant 8 also didn't experience any difficulty. She attributes this to proper planning and being organised. She felt excited to be returning back home. Accommodation was

also not a problem. After the 14 days stay in a hotel as per DIRCO policy, they managed to move into their house.

Similar to Participant 6, Participant 9 returned prematurely from posting, however she didn't mind renting a temporary place for six months until the tenants agreed to move out. This is how she describes it: *"We were lucky to just rent from a friend. So we had a temporary house. I didn't mind that it took a while to get back to our house because obviously it had been a bit of chopping and changing and everything but it was basically fine"*.

- *Relationships with friends and family*

Participants 2 and 6 expressed concern about having to re-establish relationships with friends and family after posting. This is what Participant 2 said *"Adjusting back to friends is a bit difficult"*. She found that during posting they communicated through emails and phone messages but after a while you get no responses and one starts thinking *"It means I am out now"*. She also found that as a stay-at-home-mom the discussion changes from careers to children and you find that you are at different levels with your friends.

Participant 6 puts it this way *"friends and family get used to not seeing you and not really being in contact with you, so you have to go out and start again and build your own relationships"*.

Discussion

Spouses experienced different difficulties in re-adjusting back in South Africa. All spouses that were interviewed had been back in the country for at least six months and reported that they have re-adjusted well. Having a job upon return to country of origin seemed to be the number one factor that makes spouses' readjustment easier. Most spouses were already working in formal employment. Spouses that struggled to look for employment experienced difficulty, frustration and disappointment. A contributing factor

is that the family has to survive on one salary, which is no longer augmented by foreign service allowances. This makes it even harder.

Second most important, is the children's adjustment in schools. For spouses with school going children getting schools helping their children adjust to a different school system was also key and not easy. It also appears that the difference in educational system impacts negatively on the children. For example others had to be down-graded.

Moving into own house as soon as the family returns from a posting also made resettling easier. Many spouses who were interviewed didn't struggle with this. The Departmental policy allows families to stay in a hotel for a maximum of 14 days before moving into a house. This in a way helps with the last minute sorting of accommodation. Accommodation becomes a problem in cases where the posting is cut short and one has leased their house for a four year period. Many tenants resist moving out before the expiry of the lease.

Re-establishing relationships with families and friends seem to be an issue to be considered on return. The friends move on and gets used to you not being around. Spouses find that they are at different social levels with their friends when they return. This supports Copeland and Norell (2002:258) that when a family moves internationally their relationships with friends and family also change dramatically. First they become physically distant from their home country and friends. They may continue to receive support from friends through emails, telephone and letters but the nature of these friendships necessarily changes as face-to-face contact is replaced with these technological means.

In conclusion, although spouses experienced difficulties in different areas, none reported reverse culture shock and extreme difficulty in re-adjusting back in South Africa.

6.3.5 Recommendations made by participants

In this section, the researcher sought views from the participants about the support that they think the Department should provide to spouses abroad. The recommendations would cover the period from pre-posting up to and the return after posting. The recommendations are listed as follows:

Question 20: What recommendations can you make regarding the role of the Department in supporting spouses of diplomats?

Participant 1 believes that if one is not staying permanently or temporarily in a foreign country, it is difficult to provide support as a result she doesn't see how the department can provide support from Head Office. She strongly believes that the support can best be provided by the spouses and the mission staff.

Participant 2 recommended that:

- Pre-posting preparation should focus on research and gathering as much information as possible about the language, the culture and so on.
- Cost of Living Allowance must be clearly explained to spouses so that it doesn't cause conflict between them and their partners.
- The Mission should introduce spouses to the Spouses Associations and provide one staff member who can assist them when they arrive in the host country.
- The wife of the Head of Mission should play an active role as a representative of her country in the Spouses' Associations.
- There should be one person in the Mission assigned to support spouses so that they know who to talk to if there is anything they need.
- There should be frequent calls e.g. every six months or three months in hardship missions to just check on how spouses are doing.

Participant 3 recommended that:

- The Department must take cognisance that they are posting families and not individuals.
- Spouses must be prepared before posting about the foreign country, what to expect, who to talk to in cases of need as well as what is expected of them as spouses.
- Clarity on whether spouses are allowed to work or not should be given. They should be informed of places where they are allowed to go or not.
- There should be regular emails to spouses to check on how they are doing.
- There should be debriefing session at the end of the posting to allow spouses to talk about their experiences in foreign countries.

Participant 4 recommended that:

- Pre-posting preparation must be regarded as important and must highlight the financial aspect as well as what to expect in the foreign country.
- There should be check-ups on spouses.
- Also check on spouses who didn't accompany their spouses on a posting because of various circumstances.

Participant 5 recommended that:

- The Department should help spouses get employment after posting.
- The Department should provide bursaries to spouses who'd like to further their studies.
- The Department should employ spouses in Missions to do basic tasks even if they don't get paid but to keep them busy. There should be annual Special Travel Privileges (STP) for spouses and children.

Participant 6 recommended that:

- There should be house visits upon return from Missions.
- Practical support should be provided by Mission when new families arrive in the mission such as change of phone numbers.
- There should be phone calls from Missions to find out how the family is settling.

Participant 7 recommended that:

- The Department should have someone available to talk to on a 24hour basis but it should be someone who has served abroad.

Participant 8 recommended that:

- The Department should get spouses who had successful posting to talk about their experiences at the spouses' training.
- There should be a review of the modules presented at the spouses training and focus more on emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence and financial management.
- There should be regular contact to find out how spouses are coping and what assistance they require as some spouses experience so much difficulty abroad.

Participant 9 recommended that:

- The Department should formalise the induction of spouses in missions. Assign a buddy or mentor to new spouses in missions who could help them to adjust and orientate them.
- Match the official to the right post. Check the family circumstances and post to a place suitable for that family.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher outlined the responses of nine (9) participants that were interviewed. All the participants were women who had accompanied their husbands who are South African diplomats on a posting in a foreign country. The responses were indicated in both the summarised version as well as in verbatim quotes. No male spouses were interviewed as it seems they were reluctant to participate in the study and share their experiences.

Seven (7) of the participants adjusted well in a foreign country and were able to spend the entire posting period. Two (2) of the spouses could not adjust well due to various reasons and therefore had the diplomats' posting terminated midterm.

It became evident from the study that adjustment is influenced by both external⁴ and internal⁵ factors and these can contribute or inhibit adjustment in the foreign country. Therefore this shows that in the macro system there are number of variables that affect human behaviour. This supports Greene's (2008: 167) views in (section 1.6.1.) that human behavior should be understood as the interactions among a number of variables rather than reducing explanations to one simple cause. It takes into consideration the multiple systems in which people function.

⁴ External factors – culture, religion, language, environment, support from others

⁵Internal - Positive attitude, willingness, previous experience, family, medical conditions, ability to handle stress and change.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the main findings and conclusions of the research as presented in chapter 6. The chapter will also provide suggestions for application of the research as well as recommendations for future research.

The findings, conclusions and recommendations made are based on the experiences of nine spouses of SA diplomats during posting in a foreign country.

To answer the following research questions as outlined in Chapter 1,

- How did the spouses of SA diplomats experience their posting abroad?
- What factors do the spouses attribute their ability or inability to adjust to?
- How did the spouses experience the support provided by the Department?

A qualitative study was undertaken. The researcher conducted a qualitative research approach. A comprehensive literature review to gather information on the problem was undertaken. The objectives of the research as well as research questions were formulated. A collective case study research design was utilised in order to meet the objectives of the study. A non-probability purposive sampling method was employed to identify the twelve participants. However, only nine spouses participated in the study. One-on-one interviews using an interview schedule was used to gather data. The data was analysed and presented in the form of verbatim and summarised versions.

7.2 Summary of key findings

The findings will be presented under the five main headings namely, pre-posting stage, arrival at the Mission, adjustment in the host country, support provided by the Department and post-posting – return to South Africa.

7.2.1 Pre-posting preparation

The findings under this heading deal with the level of pre-posting preparation that spouses engage in as well as that conducted by the Department.

7.2.1.1. Self-preparation

The study found that many spouses take the initiative of researching and educating themselves about the country that they would be posted to. Various sources are being used with the most common one being the internet. The results show that the level of preparation is influenced by the country where one is posted and the spoken language of the country.

7.2.1.2. Preparation by the Department

Even though spouses are proactive and gather information about the prospective foreign country, many hold the view that the Department should play a prominent role in preparing, educating and sensitising them about foreign posting; and also inform them about what to expect and what their role as spouses in a foreign country is. The study reveals that not all spouses that went on posting during this period attended the spouses' training that is offered by the Department. The reasons cited were that the training was cancelled on a number of occasions, others were not even aware of it and others didn't deem it necessary due to previous experience in posting. Those who attended the training expressed mixed feelings. Whilst others found it good and educative others found it inadequate, irrelevant, and not well communicated.

The lack of training is very concerning as spouses not only leave without proper preparation of what lies ahead but also the support that they should expect from the Department.

7.2.2 Arrival in the host country

The findings under this heading relates to the degree of welcome and support that spouses received on arrival at the Mission.

7.2.2.1. Lack of standardised procedures for welcoming families/ spouses of diplomats into the host country

The study revealed that there are no standard procedures across Missions on how to receive or welcome spouses of diplomats in the host country. Some spouses felt warmly welcomed and formally introduced to the staff of the Mission. On the other hand, some were not. Some spouses were welcomed by other spouses of fellow diplomats, others by the Corporate Services Manager and others by the Head of Mission. Some were left to their own devices and learnt by trial-and-error.

7.2.2.2. Inconsistencies in providing assistance and support to newly arriving families in the foreign country

The study shows inconsistencies across Missions on how newly arriving spouses are being assisted and supported. Some spouses felt supported and were offered practical assistance on arrival. This made them feel welcomed by the staff of the Mission and had a sense of belonging.

The study found that the locally recruited personnel⁶ (LRP) play an important role in orientating the spouses of diplomats and showing them where to find essentials such as food and clothing. The local staff help bridge the language barrier and assists with the

⁶ LRP are members of staff at the Missions that have been recruited locally. They do not form part of the diplomatic staff.

cultural issues as they are familiar with all these. This was found to be a big contributor to an easy adjustment.

It was also revealed that the spouses of other diplomats who have been in a foreign country before also play a crucial role in assisting and supporting new spouses. As they had been in the host country longer, they have already established what works and what doesn't and are able to introduce new spouses to Diplomatic Spouses' Associations and various groups.

7.2.3 Adjustment in the host country

7.2.3.1. Foreign culture, religion, language and other environmental factors can inhibit adjustment in the host country.

The study showed that spouses in countries where the culture, religion and other environmental factors⁷were too different from theirs, experienced a high level of difficulty in adjusting. This finding supports Shaw's (2001: 1) view as cited in Chapter 3 that the greater the difference between a home environment and a foreign environment, the harder the adjustment process. This further supports Scullion and Collings (2006: 65) who cautions that culturally tough countries are countries with a culture that is different from home country. This placed a high level of stress on some spouses and resulted in early termination of posting.

7.2.3.2. Inability of the spouse to adjust to a foreign culture can result in early termination of the diplomat's posting.

The study confirmed Tung's (1987) study that the inability of the manager's spouse to adjust to a different physical or cultural environment was the single most common reason for expatriates' failure.

⁷ Environmental factors refer to availability of food, weather conditions, political climate and public amenities.

7.2.3.3. Knowledge of the language of the host country is crucial for a successful adjustment.

The study revealed that spouses who were in countries where a different language is spoken, found it difficult to adjust. It appeared that the inability to speak a foreign language renders spouses helpless and vulnerable. The inability to converse in a foreign culture made it difficult for spouses to interact with the locals. Some indicated that this took away their independence as they always had to be accompanied by the local people who have to translate for them.

Spouses that learned the language of the host country found that adjustment became easier as their vocabulary improved and could communicate in the host country's language.

7.2.3.4. Early departure of diplomats to Missions contributes to the successful adjustment of spouses.

The study suggests that when diplomats depart ahead of their families it contributes positively to the successful adjustment of the spouses. When the diplomats arrive earlier in the host country, they are in a position to orientate and assist their spouses to settle quicker. This was attributed to the fact that when spouses arrive, diplomats have researched and found schools, accommodation; they are familiar with the surroundings and have some level of understanding of the country's processes and procedures.

7.2.3.5. Spouses' involvement in social activities contributes positively to a successful adjustment.

The study established that when spouses get involved in social activities such as Diplomatic Spouses' Associations, charity work or church organisations they get to form relationships and networks with other spouses. This has been found to be contributing positively to a successful adjustment. The spouses get opportunities to meet with other

spouses, share information and skills and build relationships. They also feel proud that they represent their country through these social activities.

7.2.3.6. A positive attitude is critical for successful posting.

The study revealed that spouses who had a positive outlook adjusted easier in the host country. It appears that spouses have to be “comfortable” with the relocation before they leave their country of origin. Being comfortable in this context means to be at peace with the fact that you are leaving your comfort zone, your support network and probably your job; and accepting that you are going to the unknown. Having a positive attitude also include being open minded, willing to explore and try new things; and accepting that things will be different. As one spouse said during the interview, *“you can’t go to a foreign country and don’t expect to change”*.

Spouses with a positive attitude want to make a posting a success. They redefined their roles and were happy to play a supportive role to their husbands and children. They were at peace with being stay-at-home mothers and volunteered their services to charity work and other projects. These spouses formed support networks in the host country; they formed relationships with spouses of other countries and participated in fun activities.

7.2.3.7. Inability to find employment in a foreign country can hinder successful adjustment.

The study shows that spouses who sought and couldn’t find employment in the host country felt frustrated and unhappy. This had a negative effect on their adjustment process, at least at the earlier months of posting. Their attempts to get employment were soon discouraged and dampened by the cumbersome and long application processes. Research indicates that career interruptions and work prospects in the foreign country are amongst the reasons why many career spouses are reluctant to accompany their husbands or wives on a posting.

7.2.3.8. Previous experience in postings does not guarantee successful adjustment in subsequent postings.

The study established that successful adjustment in one posting does not necessarily guarantee successful adjustment in subsequent postings. This is shown by the three spouses who had postings before. One adjusted successfully in all five postings. The other one adjusted well in the first posting but struggled to adjust in the next posting due to culture shock. The third spouse couldn't adjust in the two postings that she had. This resulted in both postings being terminated prematurely. The study shows that each posting pose different challenges to the spouses.

7.2.4 Support provided by the Department.

The study found differing views about the level of support provided by the Department. Some were satisfied with the level of support received from the Department. Others felt not supported and disappointed. They expected phone calls or emails from Head Office to check on how they are coping. They felt that this is very important as problems would be picked up and be resolved as there are many spouses that experience difficulty in the host country.

7.2.5 Post posting – Return to South Africa

The study found that many spouses worry about many factors on their return to the home country. Employment prospects, education for their children, accommodation and crime featured as factors that contribute to their worries.

7.3 Main conclusions of the study

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

7.3.1 Pre-posting preparation

7.3.1.1. The spouses look up to the Department to train and sensitise them about the intricacies of posting. It appears there are inconsistencies in the Department regarding the training for spouses. It is therefore concluded that the Department does not plan and communicate the spouses' training in a manner that ensures that all spouses get the opportunity to attend the training before posting.

7.3.1.2. The study also concluded that the spouses' training does not meet the needs or expectations of the spouses. Therefore the curriculum needs to be reviewed.

7.3.2 Arrival at the host country

The study concluded that there is no uniform and systematic way of welcoming, assisting and supporting new spouses in a foreign country. This is left to the Missions to use creative ways to welcome newly arriving spouses and to determine the level of support provided to the spouses.

7.3.3 Adjustment in the host country

7.3.3.1. The study concluded that culture, religion, language and environmental factors have a major impact on the ability/inability of the spouse to adjust in a foreign country. These can result in culture shock.

- 7.3.3.2. The conclusion reached is that involvement of spouses in social activities contributes positively to their successful adjustment. Many spouses realise the role played by Diplomatic Spouses' Associations, religious groups and other organisations; and they make an effort to participate voluntarily in such organisations.
- 7.3.3.3 The researcher concludes that willingness to be an accompanying spouse and having a positive attitude are some of the crucial factors for a successful adjustment. The researcher also noted that all the spouses that highlighted the importance of a positive attitude reported less problems and difficulties during their posting. They felt less frustrated by the host country's culture. They made the posting work for them.
- 7.3.3.4 The study concludes that getting a job in a host country is crucial for successful adjustment of the spouses, especially in dual-career couples. Job security is crucial and those who were assured their jobs on return to SA felt less worried about the jobs as opposed to those who didn't have job guarantee. This supports studies that postulate that many spouses are reluctant to accompany spouses on a posting as this interrupts their careers.
- 7.3.3.5 It is concluded that every posting is unique and pose different challenges to the spouses. Therefore successful adjustment in previous posting is not a reliable indicator for successful adjustment in future postings. Some of the critical success factors for successful adjustment are adaptability, resilience and sense of hardiness.
- 7.3.3.6 The study concludes that spouses may have no knowledge of the level of support they can expect from the Department during posting. Some expressed no need for support; some had high expectations which were not met. Others were quite satisfied that they received adequate support when they requested it.

7.3.3.7 It is concluded that readjustment in SA is enhanced or inhibited by the ability or inability to get a job and finding the right school for the children.

7.4 Suggestions for application of research

From the findings and conclusion reached. It is recommended that the Department should:

- Develop a spousal support strategy

Develop and implement a comprehensive spouse's support strategy with clear communication and marketing elements. This strategy should be formulated in conjunction with other sections within the Department to ensure comprehensive support.

- Review the spouses' training curriculum

The department should involve spouses that had been to postings in the past to get their views on the curriculum. Secondly, the department can benchmark with other foreign ministries and Multinational Cooperations to learn best practices.

Equally important is the format of the training. The training should be planned in such a way that it allows group participation in generic matters of posting and also focus on the individual, taking their specific country into consideration. Both these issues are important for spouses. For an example, in a group setting the spouses share and learn from each other. From the researcher's knowledge as an employee of the Department there are spouses that have been in posting in the past and when they attend the spouses' training for the next posting they share valuable and practical insights. The researcher also realised that the group training serve a very important resource where spouses meet each other and form relationships with people who are in a similar

position as them. This recommendation is in line with Andreason (2003: 51) that such supports starts with appropriate pre-departure selection and training programmes.

Foreign Language training is a crucial aspect of pre-posting preparation. Adequate time should be allocated for the spouses to learn the basics and continue with the training in Missions abroad. This recommendation supports the assertion by Briscoe and Schuler (2004) that language training should be included in the pre-posting preparation for spouses

- Employee Wellness support

The pre-posting counselling and training should be made compulsory for all families that are being transferred to a foreign country. This is because as a professional, the researcher believes that relocation to a foreign country can be stressful for the whole family. If people are not psychologically and emotionally prepared, it can result in maladjustment, health and behavioural problems; and eventually early termination of posting. However the researcher does realise that people get consumed by euphoria and may not think that counselling is necessary. The Employee Wellness Centre should make regular contact with spouses in Missions to find out how they are coping.

- Inclusion of spouses in the selection of Diplomats

The selection of diplomats must not be based on technical knowledge only but should also include the circumstances of the spouse and family as a whole. To this end, it is recommended that spouses must be interviewed or assessed to determine their willingness for posting, their circumstances and their adaptability. This recommendation supports Hodgetts and Luthans' (1997: 396) assertion in (section 3.5.) that in addition to technical competence, spouses and dependents are an important consideration when a person is to be chosen (selected) for an overseas assignment. In addition, Scullion and Linehan (2005: 187) stress that "one of the most important factors in determining the success of an overseas posting is the willingness of the spouse or partner to leave home and possibly a career to live abroad"

- Develop Welcome Procedure Manual for Diplomats and spouses

The Department should develop and enforce implementation of a standard Welcome Procedure Manual for Missions. The support is vital in that the first few months of arrival in the host country tend to be very difficult for spouses. This is evidenced by research and reports from the interviewed spouses. Many reported that the most difficult stage of being in a foreign country was in the first six to twelve months. Support provided by the firms especially in the early months of arrival is necessary as suggested by Andreason (2003: 52) who states that that in-country support can aid the expatriate in the same way that the social support of co-workers and superiors aids the expatriates in work adjustment.

Introduce a buddy system to orientate and support newly arriving spouses. A spouse or an LRP could play this role. Some incentive must be provided to encourage the buddy. The researcher strongly believes that this will also alleviate pressure from the Mission staff who also have to content with very busy work schedules. This in the researcher's view will encourage the spouses and the local staff to carry out the task of assisting new spouses diligently and not see it as a burden.

- Establish reciprocal relationship with other countries

The Department should establish reciprocal relationship with all countries where SA is represented so that the spouses that have a need to work during posting can do so. The researcher believes that this will also encourage career spouses to accompany their spouses on a posting as they will also gain international exposure.

7.5 Achievement of the objectives of the study

All the objectives of the study as outlined below have been achieved.

The objectives of the research were to:

- Explore the experiences of the spouses of SA diplomats during posting in foreign countries, from theoretical and empirical perspectives.
- Identify the factors that enhanced or inhibited their ability to adjust during posting.
- Determine the level of support provided by the Department to the spouse before and during posting.
- Make recommendations to enhance the Department's existing spouses support programme.

7.6 Recommendations for further study

- Considering the fact that the findings of this study are based on the experiences of female spouses, this paves the way for further study that will focus on the experiences of male spouses to hear how they experience posting in a foreign country. It is important to have the voices of the male spouses in the ultimate spouses' support strategy.
- Another study that could be explored is the experiences of children of diplomats in foreign countries. Many South African studies have focused on the spouses and the expatriates and not much on hearing the experiences of children and more particularly the teenagers.

- Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest research on the spouses' training. The research will benefit the Department in that a Unit standard and a comprehensive training manual would be developed.
- Lastly, another area that could be explored through research is how the Department can support the spouses that are remaining in South Africa when the diplomats are abroad. It should be noted that in many third world countries, the environment and amenities are not conducive for families. As a result the diplomats have to leave families behind.

8. References

Andreason, A.W. 2003. Expatriate adjustment to foreign assignments. *International Journal of Commerce and Management*, 13 (1): 42-59.

Babbie, E. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th ed. USA. Thomson Wadsworth.

Barston, R.P. 2006. *Modern Diplomacy*. 3rd ed. Britain. Pearson Education Limited.

Bick, L. & Rog, D.J. 1998. *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*. USA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Black, J.S & Mendenhall 1991. The U-Curve adjustment hypothesis revisited: review and theoretical framework. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22 (2): 225-247

Black, J.S., Gregersen, H.B. & Mendenhall, M.E. 1992. *Global Assignments: Successfully expatriating and repatriating international managers*. USA: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.

Bloomberg, L.D and Volpe, M. 2008. *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*. USA. SAGE Publications.

Brandell, J.R. 1997. *Theory and practice in Clinical Social Work*, New York: The Free Press.

Briscoe, R. & Schuler, R.S., 2004. *International Human Resource Management*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Briscoe, D.R., Schuler, R.S., & Claus, L. 2009. *International Human Resource: Management. Policies and practices for multinational enterprises*. 3rd ed. USA: Replika Press Pvt, Ltd.

Copeland, A.P. & Norell, S.K. 2002. Spousal Adjustment on International Assignments: The Role of the social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26 (2002): 255-272.

Department of International Relations and Cooperation. Ambassador's Diary. Pretoria. (2); 1. July 2011.

Department of International Relations. 2009. *Annual Report.2008/9*. Pretoria.

Department of International Relations and Cooperation. 2011. *Placement Policy*.

Department of International Relations and Cooperation. 2008. *Employee Wellbeing Strategy*.

Department of International Relations. 2011. *Strategic Plan.2011-2014*. Pretoria

Department of International Relations and Cooperation.2009.*Branch: Diplomatic Training, Research and Development Brochure*. Pretoria. Department of International Relations and Cooperation

Delpport, C.S.L & Fouché, C.B. 2005. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

De Vos, A.S. 2005. Qualitative data analysis and interpretation. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Earley, P.C., Ang, S. & Tan, J. 2006. *Developing cultural intelligence at work*. California: Stanford University Press.

ECA International Newline. 2010. The Changing global mobility landscape.

Fouché, C.B. 2005a. Writing the research proposal. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Fouché, C.B. 2005b. Qualitative research designs. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Fouché, C.B & De Vos, A.S. 2005. Problem Formulation. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Greene, R.R. 2008. *Human Behaviour Theory & Social Work Practice*. 3rd ed. USA Transaction Publishers.

Gooderham, P.N. & Nordhaug, O. 2003. *International Management: Cross-Boundary Challenges*. USA. Blackwell Publishing.

Gore-Booth, L. 1979. *Satow's Guide to Diplomatic Practice*. 5th ed. New York. Longman Group Limited.

Greeff, M. 2005. Information collection: Interviewing. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Hodgetts, R.M & Luthans, F. 1997. *International Management*. 3rd ed. USA. McGraw-Hill Companies.

Hofstee, E. 2006. *Constructing a good dissertation: A practical guide to finishing a Masters, MBA or PhD on schedule*. Johannesburg: EPE

Hoyle, R.K., Harris, M.J., & Judd, C.M. 2002. *Research Methods in Social Relations*. 7th ed. USA: Thomson Learning Inc.

Joubert, Y.T. 2010. *Organisation team sport interventions to minimise diversity constraints in the workplace*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (MCom Industrial Psychology).

Judd, C.M., Smith, E.R., & Kidder, L.H. 1991. *Research Methods in Social Relations*. 6th ed. USA: Saunders College Publishing.

Kent-Brown, D. 2002. *The relationship between the Republic of South Africa and the People's Republic of China. A model for public policy analysis*. Pretoria. University of Pretoria. (D. Admin Thesis)

Kumar, R. 2005. *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Kumar, R. 2011. *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Lane, H.W., DiStefano, J.J., & Maznevski, M.L. 2000. *International Management*. 4th ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Lane, H.W., Maznevski, M.L., DiStefano, J.J. & Dietz, J. 2009. *International Management Behaviour: Leading With a Global Mindset*. 6th ed. UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Publication.

Lee, T. and Quigley, J. 2008. *Consular Law and Practice*. 3rd ed. New York. Oxford University Press.

Littrell, L.N., Salas, S.E., Hess, K.P., Paley, M. & Reidel, S. 2006. Expatriate preparation: A critical analysis of 25 years of cross-cultural training. *Human Resource Review Development*, 5 (3):355-388.

Marshall, C & Rossman, G. 1999. *Designing qualitative research*. 3rd ed. California. Sage Publications.

Martin, R. 1995. The effects of prior moves on job relocation stress. *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, 68 (1): 49-56.

Marx, E.1999. *Breaking Through Culture Shock*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

McFarlin, D.B, & Sweeney, P.D. 2003. *International Management: Strategic Opportunities and Cultural Challenges*. 2nd ed. USA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Mead, R. 1998. *International Management*. 2nd ed. UK. Blackwell Publishers.

Mendenhall, M. & Oddou, G. 1991. *International Human Resource Management*. USA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Mendenhall, M., Punnett, B.J. & Ricks, D.1995. *Global Management*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Mokgohlwa, L. 2010. [Transcript]. Interview with Ms. Mokgohlwa, a spouse of a SA diplomat. 15 September 2010. Pretoria.

Motshela, V.M. 2001. *Exploring issues and challenges of organisational culture and the Management of expatriates within regional and multinational corporations: Eskom holdings case study*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (MA Dissertation).

Mouton, J. 2001. *How to succeed in your Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African guide and resource book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Nash, M., Munford, R., & O'Donoghue. 2005. *Social work Theories in Action*. UK. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Neumann, I.R. 2005. To be a diplomat. *International Studies Perspectives* (6) 72-93.

Oosthuizen, T.F.J. 2007. *Management Tasks for Managerial success*. 3rd ed. Roodepoort: Future Vision Business Consultants (FVBC).

Oxford English Dictionary. 1981. 6th ed. United States: Oxford University Press.

Pascoe, R. 1992. *Culture Shock: Successful living abroad*. Singapore: Times Books International.

Punch, K.F. 2005. *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Punnett, B.J. 1997. Towards effective management of expatriate spouses. *Journal of World Business*, 32 (3): 243.

Raviv, A., Keinan, G., Abazon, Y., & Raviv, A. 1990. Moving as a stressful life event for adolescents. *Journal of Community Psychology*. Vol.18 (2): 130-140.

Roberts, S.I. 2009. *Satow's Diplomatic Practice*. 6th ed. New York. Oxford University Press.

Schurink, W., Fouché, C.B & De Vos, A.S. 2011. Qualitative data analysis and interpretation. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. 2011. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Scullion, H. & Collings, D.G. 2006. *Global Staffing*. New York: Routledge.

Scullion, H. & Linehan, M. 2005. *International Human Resource Management: A critical text*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sharp, P. 1996. *Diplomatic Studies Programme: Representation in a Nationalist Era*. March 1996. Issue No. 15. UK. Leicester University.

Shaw, A. 2001. *Discontinuous lives: Listening to the stories of South African Diplomatic Families in the Third World*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (DPhil Thesis).

Sofer, S. 2001. *Diplomatic Studies Programme. The Diplomatic Encounter: Conventions and rituals reappraised*. February 2001. Issue 74. UK. Leicester University.

Spies, Y.K. (2005). *Meeting the Challenge of Developing World Diplomacy in the 21st Century: An Assessment of Perspectives on Contemporary Diplomatic Training*. University of Pretoria: Pretoria. (DPhil).

Strydom, H. 2005a. The pilot study. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Strydom, H. 2005b. Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human services professions. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Swarts, I. 2008. *Organisational practices enhancing positive job attitudes of expatriates on international assignments*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (DPhil Thesis).

Tarantal, K.L. 2005. *The expatriate episode: An investigation into the cultural dimensions of relocation*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (MA Dissertation).

Tung, R.L. 1982. Selection and Training of US, European and Japanese Multinationals. *California Management Review*, 25(1):57-71.

Tung, R.L. 1987. Expatriates and assignments: Enhancing success and minimizing failure. *Academy of Management Executive*, 1(2):117-126.

Usunier, J. 1998. *International and Cross-Cultural Management Research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Van Aswegen, M. 2008. *The establishment of an adjustment model for expatriates*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (DPhil Thesis)

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. 1961. United Nations. USA

Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. 1963. United Nations. USA.

Vogel, A.J. 2005. *Guidelines for the preparation of expatriates on international assignments in South African multinational enterprises*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (DPhil Thesis).

Walker, S. 2012. *Effective Social Work with children, young people and families*. USA. SAGE

Ward, C. and Kennedy, A. 1993a. Psychological and socio-cultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions: A comparison of secondary students overseas and at home. *International Journal of psychology*, 28 (2):129-147.

Yates, S.J. 2004. *Doing social science research*. London: Sage Publications.

Yavas, U. 2001. Adaptation to international assignments: Dimensionality and strategies to facilitate adjustment of expatriates managers in Turkey. *Cross Cultural Management*, 8(2): 60-73.

Understanding a new phenomenon: The male trailing spouse. 2004. (Internet)

[O]. Available:

<http://www.expatica.com/hr/story/understanding-a-new-phenomenon-the-male-trailing-spouse-10543.html>

Accessed on 2011/10/20

Definition of a diplomat

[O]. Available:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/diplomat>

Accessed: 07/02/2012.

9. List of addenda:

- A – Approval from the Director-General of DIRCO to conduct the study
- B – Request for Human Resource list of returned Diplomats.
- C – Informed Consent Letter
- D – Declaration of consent
- E – Interview Schedule
- F- Declaration for the storage of research data and/or documents.

Addendum A

Approval from the Director-General of DIRCO to conduct the study

Addendum B

Request for Human Resource list of returned Diplomats.

Addendum C

Informed Consent Letter

Addendum D

Declaration of consent

Addendum E

Interview Schedule

Declaration F

Declaration for the storage of research data and/or documents.