

WHO IS A SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE? ETYMOLOGY, SYNTHESIS, DEFINITION

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Summary: Self-initiated expatriation is a new trend in the area of expatriation that has emerged in recent years. This requires a deeper understanding because of the growing interest of international actors in this specific group of workers and the difference in their management. The interest in the topic of the SIE by both prominent academics, entrepreneurs and decision makers proves that SIEs are a valuable asset in international human resources management (IHRM). They are a measurable advantage for both the organization itself and the economies of the host countries.

Keywords: self-initiated expatriates, international worker, international human resource management, assigned expatriate.

1. Introduction

International corporations report more and more demand for international professionals who are able to effectively cooperate in various countries and cooperation with them may be conducted in the form of assigned expatriation (AE), in which the plan of the foreign mission for certain employees is prepared by their organization. However, most international employee transfers are performed in the form of self-initiated expatriation [Przytuła 2016a] which means that the decision to go abroad is made individually by the person looking for a job in the global market on their own (without being a member of an organization).

Self-initiated expatriation is a new trend which has appeared recently [Przytuła 2017]. The theoretical works of the last years have provided multiple definitions [Andresen, Al Ariss, Walther 2013; McNulty, Selmer 2017]. However, there is no one scientific position, so there is still a lot to research. Recent publications to a large degree addressed the exploration of SIE from the Western developed countries. The interest in the phenomenon of SIE has recently increased significantly, and so the geographical area for exploration has also expanded. The theoretical contribution of P. Tharenou [2013] takes into account the usefulness of SIEs for staying in the given place. The researcher suggests that for certain fields, such as technical/specialist or lower and middle management

positions, SIEs are the best choice, while in others, such as inspection, coordination or passing specific knowledge – they do not work.

The objective of this article is to critically review the world literature and to attempt to arrange certain approaches to defining that new trend of expatriation, and to use that background for presenting further directions of exploration. The article analyzes the publications available in English and Polish. The presented definitions were comprehensively analyzed on the basis of the criteria typical for various definitions. The authors also attempted to define the epistemic gap in the researched field.

2. Self-initiated expatriates. Etymology and attempts at a new definition

The phenomenon of self-initiated expatriation was already observed in the Middle Ages, when French craftsmen or German-speaking laborers from other countries travelled around the world to teach their trade. The famous book by Goethe, entitled “Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre”, telling the stories of a journeyman, should be mentioned here. The foreign travels of the main protagonist, Journeyman, was not necessarily voluntary and today the motivations of SIE might also result from need or coercion [Vaiman et al. 2015].

In their publications regarding self-initiated expatriation, numerous researchers look at the whole phenomenon/process from the activity point of view, but also from the subjective/individual point of view – the researched area is then a person with his/her attributes. Such a theory will now be theoretically explored by the authors.

Concerning the professional profile and the profession criterion, SIEs comprise a diverse group of international employees looking for foreign experiences [Inkson, Myers 2003, Myers 2011], young graduates [Tharenou 2003], teachers of English [Fu, Shaffer, Harrison 2005], scientists [Isakovic, Whitman 2013; Richardson 2006; Richardson, Mallon 2005; Richardson, McKenna 2003], volunteers [Hudson, Inkson 2006], nurses [Bozionelos 2009], physicians [Nolan, Morley 2014] and business specialists [Fitzgerald, Howe-Walsh 2008; Jokinen, Brewster, Suutari 2008; Lee 2005; Scurry, Rodriguez, Bailouni 2013; Suutari, Brewster 2000]. So far, no fundamental definition of the term “self-initiated expatriate” has been introduced. Numerous comments presented by the researchers exploring that phenomenon emphasize the need to standardize the terminology used [Doherty 2013; Doherty, Dickmann 2013a].

The first attempts at defining “self-initiated expatriates” were made in 1997 by Inkson et al., by introducing the term “self-initiated foreign work experience” in literature which, in 2000, was expanded and supplemented by V. Suutari and C. Brewster. Such terms as self-designed apprenticeship, self-selecting expatriates, free travelers, self-directed expatriates, independent internationally mobile professionals, self-initiated movers appeared in other studies, but the above names no longer apply, and the publications now commonly use the term self-initiated expatriate [Przytuła 2016].

What is typical for SIEs is the fact that the self-initiated decision is not supported by any organization [e.g. Al Ariss, Ozbilgin 2010; Doherty, Dickmann 2013a; Tharenou 2013]. SIEs go abroad independently of any organization located in their home country. That is why they are responsible for every stage of their international work, so they need to make the decision on going abroad, on their country of destination, length of stay and repatriation.

Apart from the relatively new term “self-initiated expatriation” [Peltokorpi, Froese 2009, Selmer, Lauring 2010; Tharenou, Caulfield 2010], the subject literature also uses a number of other terms. The early literature sources contain such terms as “overseas experience” (OE) [Inkson et al. 1997], “self-initiated foreign (work) experience” (SFE) [Suutari, Brewster 2000; Myers, Pringle 2005], “self-selecting expatriates”

[Richardson, McKenna 2003] as well as “self-initiated international work opportunities” [Tharenou 2003].

SIEs may be described as professionals who undertake expatriation on their own without being delegated by their employers. They themselves make the decision to move to the country in which they are planning to look for a job [Harrison et al. 2004]. SIEs are people who find a workplace outside of their home country without being delegated by their organization, and thus without being bound by any organization. The independence of SIEs differentiates that autonomous group from the “traditional” expatriates who are delegated by their corporations to work abroad (see: [Przytuła 2017]).

SIEs are specialists who make the expatriation decision without being transferred by their organization to the host country. Relocation is their independent decision aimed at job-searching and entrepreneurial challenges [Jokinen et al. 2008; Saxenian 2005]. Self-initiated expatriates are highly-qualified specialists looking for jobs outside of borders [Adams, Van de Vijver 2015].

However the lack of cohesion between the early and current research is not the only discrepancy in the SIE literature. For example in their scientific publications, researchers use various terms to talk of SIEs even within a single article [Tharenou, Caulfield 2010], e.g. “self-expatriates” and “self-made expatriates”, and Thorn [2009]: “(international) self-initiated mobility”, “self-initiated foreign experiences” and “self-initiated movers”. Other authors use the term self-initiated expatriates and its customary abbreviation: SE [Biemann, Andresen 2010; Cerdin, Le Pargneux 2010].

SIEs, like most expatriates, have the option of repatriation, the date of which can be determined by them on an individual basis [Dorsch et al. 2012]. Naturally, exceptions may occur and the period of staying abroad may extend. As indicated by Dorsch et al. [2012], many SIEs never go back home, therefore we should consider whether in such cases, SIEs remain SIEs.

The terminology of the SIE literature is far from uniform. Although it is understandable in the relatively new area of research, it may not only hinder the further development of the concept itself, but also take the research activities in the direction of phenomena not actually related to SIEs. Empirical research may be based on wrong conceptualizations, and the obtained imprecise operational criteria may have a negative impact on the research. P. Tharenou [2015] called for more rigorous research designs which need to be implemented in the research methods in relation to SIEs.

The definitions of SIEs presented by various authors refer to various definition criteria. Many foreign researchers concentrated on formulating the category or typology of SIEs on the basis of their initiative and motivation. Due to the repetitiveness of the definitions included in publications, the authors conducted a critical literature review for the purpose of aggregating the following definitions.

3. Definition of SIEs from the point of view of the initiative and motivation of foreign transfers

In their publication, Andresen et al. [2014] indicate four various types of international employees. They include: Inter-SIEs (Inter-Self-Initiated Expatriate), Intra-SIEs (Intra-Self-Initiated Expatriate), AEs (Assigned Expatriate) and the new category of DEs (Drawn Expatriate) (Figure 1).

		Organisational mobility	
Initiator (initiator of key binding activity)	Individual	Internal mobility (within organisation)	External mobility (within organisation)
		Intra-Self Initiated Expatriate	Inter-Self-Initiated Expatriate
	Organisation	(Assigned Expatriate)	Drawn Expatriate (DEs)

Current work contract partner New work contract partner

Fig. 1. Types of international workers. Selected model according to the initiative and motives of their displacements

Source: own elaboration on the basis of [Andresen et al. 2014].

The analysis of Figure 1 indicates three criteria that differentiate a traditional expatriate from an expatriate that undertakes to work at his/her own initiative. These determinants include 1) the initiator of key binding activity, 2) change of the work contract partner, and 3) internal versus external organizational mobility.

The mobility criterion determines the decision on the direction of moving/cooperation between SIEs and an international organization “into” or “from outside” of their home country. This is the main premise characterizing an international employee that initiates expatriation on his/her own.

Moreover, that criterion is closely connected to the next two, i.e. change of the work contract partner and the initiator of key binding activity. In the case of AE, the employee receives a formalized job offer in the target country, dependent on the current work

contract partner. The employee verifies the offer and then accepts or rejects it. Therefore, the first key binding activity is undertaken by the organization. In turn, in the case of SIE, the initiative to work abroad is undertaken on one’s own. Surprisingly the most obvious and accepted criterion-relocating internationally on one’s own initiative is not present in all definitions of SIEs, for example where it is sometimes related to ‘freedom of choice’ [Cao 2013] – this variable may not be specific to SIEs. In some organizations assigned expatriates (AEs) may also have the freedom to choose the location of their assignment or at least to decline an offered host location for another [Selmer, Andresen, Cerdin 2017].

By analyzing the available definitions, Andresen et al. [2014], divided SIEs into two types of employees which had not been described in literature before: Inter-SIEs (internal self-initiated expatriation) and Intra-SIEs (external self-initiated expatriation). Intra-SIEs continue to cooperate with their current organization, while Inter-SIEs establish contacts with a completely new organization. Both alternative forms lead to the execution of the objective, i.e. the conclusion of an agreement on performing a specific task. But this criterion also raises questions of as to what degree different groups of SIEs show initiative. Following the psychological concept defined by Friese et al. [Friese, Fay 2001], showing personal initiative means that SIEs have a 1) *self-starting* and 2) *proactive* approach to their international career and are 3) *persistent* in overcoming barriers and setbacks to achieve their goal to work abroad. Table 1 presents several indicators of ‘high versus low initiative’ in the expatriation context.

Thus, the SIE personal initiative could be high or low depending on the context and SIEs are likely to show inconsistent levels of personal initiative across different life domains and situations. This means for example that self-initiated explorers who move abroad predominantly for personal reasons, such as the attraction of the foreign country or climate, do not necessarily show personal initiative on the job market [Selmer, Andresen, Cerdin 2017].

Moreover, as presented in Figure 1, the authors also undertook to coin a completely new definition of an international employee described as a Drawn Expatriate (DE). The characteristics of the profile of such an expatriate refers to two features: passivity in initiation of the search for and possibility of cooperation with an enterprise, and independence of an organization in making the decision on cooperating with DEs in the host country (new work contract partner). The definition typology based on the motivation of SIEs undertaking foreign missions is commonly described in literature [Cerdin 2013].

Table 1. Characteristics of 'personal initiative' in the SIE context

Psychological concept defined	High personal initiative	Low personal initiative
Self-starting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual personality sets the goal to the expatriate without being explicitly told to do so. Large psychological distance, that is, expatriation is an unexpected, unconventional career step and goes beyond what is formally required in their job and career. Expatriates take it upon themselves to collect information, plan and manage the entire expatriation process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The goal to expatriate is assigned or the individual gets an explicit instruction to expatriate from their organization. Small psychological distance, that is, expatriation is an explicit role requirement and part of a normal or prescribed career path. Expatriate uses prescribed standard procedures, including organizational support, throughout the expatriation process.
Proactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual has a long term focus on career, anticipates things to come and prepares for the new situations. Individual challenges the status quo of employment in order to improve their current personal circumstances or to create new ones, and develops personal prerequisites for meeting future work demands. Individual has the competencies to effectively execute initiative to leverage the behavior to achieve goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual is oriented towards the present and waits until he/she must respond to a new situation. Individual reacts to the environment without shaping the career conditions. Individual lacks specific competencies demanded for acting in a specific situation.
Persistent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual gets past technical barriers, setbacks and failure and overcomes resistance and inertia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual stops in view of setback and failure.

Source: [Selmer, Andresen, Cerdin 2017].

The motivation to go abroad may be diverse due to the individual or organizational perspective. It may be different for an individual than for an organization. However, in this article the authors concentrate on the characteristics of the individual motivations of SIEs in selecting a new place for performing their tasks. One of the motives is the willingness to leave one's home country in order to improve one's opportunities for developing an international career. However, unlike for the traditional expatriates, for SIEs this is not the main impulse determining their decision to start an international career. Howe-Walsh and Schyns [2010], indicate that a frequent motivation is the willingness to enjoy an adventure as well as new foreign experiences. It should be emphasized that what plays a very important role in making the decision on expatriation in the case of SIEs is the emotional factors associated with their psychological feelings, as well as social and economic factors. The self-initiation of one's own worth, acquiring cultural experiences, opportunity to learn, development of confidence, flexibility and international skills, result from individual expatriation.

Other factors that determine the willingness to experience multiculturalism include the intention of searching, the excitement or the positive attitude to new challenges [Richardson, Mallon 2005] are further motives. Richardson and McKenna [2006] indicate in their publication that the main motivations for self-initiating international work include the combination of or escaping from one's current lifestyle. The same researchers discovered that the motivation to combine

their current lifestyle with a new international experience has been included in four metaphors: motivation to explore, motivation to escape, financial motivation and motivation to use the experience as an inherent element of developing a career.

Jackson et al. [2005] presented a set of five factors motivating SIEs. The factors that turned out to have most impact on the decisions on international careers included lifestyle, culture of the home country and economic factors. However, the authors suggested that these motivations may differ depending on the geographical area. An important motivator is the very geographical location, the area of the world, which may become a potential place for performing tasks for a SIE.

International studies show that the most common reasons of foreign mission for traditional expatriates (AE) are issues related to career (skills development, professional challenges of working abroad), issues of personal relationships and family issues (security, benefits for the family) and financial incentives. Next, there are cognitive motives (see and explore the world, the experience of adventure, a desire to live in the host country). In the case of SIEs, the motives of the decision are somewhat different, and the most popular reasons were traveling, adventure experience, knowledge of the world, the desire to live in the host country, career (new professional challenges, new projects) [Doherty, Dickmann 2013]. This practice has been also confirmed in other studies which show that SIE are driven by a subjective inner sense of adventure, a desire to travel and to see the world, to meet career

goals or escape from current circumstances [Doherty et al. 2011; Carr, Inkson, Thorn 2005]; they want to improve their lifestyle and quality of living rather than move for economic reasons [Richardson, McKenna 2003], to learn about different cultural settings and establish new international contacts [Myers, Pringle 2005; Przytuła 2016b].

Other research showed that negative motives such as escaping problems in the home country do not bode well for employees in terms of adjustment and performance in the host country [Selmer, Luring 2013]. Thus more research is needed to understand that when organizations recruit SIEs, particular attention is required as to their motives for expatriating and what their intentions are in terms of integration within both the company and the host country itself.

Summarizing the above theoretical considerations, it should be emphasized that for SIEs the decisive motivation is the individual personal premise, such as the willingness to travel, to experience an adventure, to change one's lifestyle or to escape from the current one. The decision to undertake work abroad is a secondary factor resulting from a voluntary choice.

4. Profile of an SIE

Self-initiated expatriation, as a new trend, constitutes for various reasons, an important factor in international human resource management [Al Ariss, Crowley-Henry 2013]. SIEs may better understand the local and international markets, as well as the languages and cultures. In terms of organization, the cost-effectiveness of self-initiated expatriates is much lower in comparison to traditional expatriation, for example due to lack of costs on the part of the organization in the form of business trips, maintenance, remuneration and taxation. For these and other reasons it is important that organizations understand the nature and methods of managing SIEs.

However, despite the growing interest in SIEs (e.g. [Al Ariss 2010; Cerdin, Le Pargneux, 2010; Crowley-Henry 2012; Richardson 2009]), there still exists a research gap for the research-scientific circles as well as from the practical point of view.

On the basis of literature review, the authors analyzed various definitions of an SIE on the basis of the criteria specified above and created a professional profile of the self-initiated expatriate (Table 2).

Table 2. Profile of a self-initiated expatriate (SIE)

Etymology	<i>self-selecting expatriates</i> – entity, person	Richardson, McKenna [2003]
	<i>free travelers</i> – entity, person	Myers, Pringle [2005]
	<i>self-initiated movers</i> – entity, person	Thorn [2009]
	<i>self-directed expatriates</i> – entity, person	Al Ariss,
	<i>independent internationally mobile professional</i> –entity, person	Crowley-Henry [2013]
	<i>self-initiated expatriate</i> – entity	
Duration of contract / Length of stay abroad	Unlimited. It depends on the length of the contract, but also on individual decisions or plans. Travels are frequent but short.	
Themes	L. Howe-Walsh, B. Schyns distinguish two categories of this form of expatriation. Due to individual motives such as: desire for career development and personal reasons such as the desire to live in a country, the desire to travel, discover new countries, change the lifestyle, escape, desire for adventure.	Howe-Walsh, Schyns [2010]
Organization of foreign missions	The organization of life and work lies with the SIEs. No HR support. Funding is allocated from private SIEs. Frequent short trips without family involvement.	
Age	Self-initiated expatriation, as described in the article by W. Mayerhofer, P.R., Sparrow, A. Zimmermann, is undertaken by young people wishing to work abroad immediately after the end of education or by experienced mid-career employees. A. Poczowski points out that SIEs are mostly women and independent people up to the age of 39.	Mayerhofer, Sparrow, Zimmermann [2008] Poczowski [2012]
Qualifications	Very highly qualified experts. They are higher than for the expats wanting to change corporations and the need to be mobile.	
Personality traits	Based on a review of literature, the authors have attempted to identify the personality traits that dominate self-initiated expatriates. – sociability, cosmopolitanism, knowledge of foreign languages, ability to establish business relations, multiculturalism, openness.	

Source: own elaboration on the basis of [Arthur, Inkson, Pringle 1999; Inkson et al. 1997; Richardson, McKenna 2003; Myers, Pringle 2005; Thorn 2009; Al Ariss, Crowley-Henry 2013; Harrison, Shaffer 2005; Howe-Walsh, Schyns 2010; Mayerhofer, Sparrow, Zimmermann 2008; Poczowski 2012; Przytuła 2016].

5. Types of SIEs

The subject literature shows groups and subgroups of the discussed in Table 3.

The aforementioned characteristics show that it is difficult to determine the demarcation line between the definitions of assigned and self-initiated expatriates as well as within the same category of self-initiated expatriates [Doherty, Richardson, Thorn 2013]. Therefore it is necessary to perform more detailed comparative analyses between different types of international employees.

Cerdin and Selmer [2014] specify four conditions that must be met in order to call someone an SIE:

- self-initiated international relocation takes into account both the beginning and the end of the contract, i.e. the return to the country of origin, without the financial or organizational assistance of the corporation for which it works. The criterion clearly indicates the difference between an SIE and an AE;
- regular employment – SIEs are not immigrants or short-term travelers/sojourners. They are international employees who stay outside their country of origin (in the host country) on a temporary basis. The difference between SIEs and sojourners is permanent employment;
- the intention to temporarily stay in the host country is the criterion that distinguishes SIEs from im-

migrants who go abroad with the intention of staying there for a longer period of time or permanently;

- professional qualifications – SIEs are highly-qualified specialists who can find employment in the international job market. This means that their experience supports their international professional career. Researchers emphasize that international corporations benefit from SIEs and treat them as the antidote for shortages of qualified managing staff in the host countries.

Moreover, in strategic terms, SIEs constitute valuable resources for multinational corporations, and their numbers within organizations are rising.

There are relatively more SIEs than traditional expatriates [Selmer, Lauring 2012]. The demographic data resulting from the Brookfield research indicated that SIEs are mostly single women or partners also working abroad, aged 30–49. The typical feature of these expats is the conviction that working abroad develops their competences, professional capital and improves their opportunities for employment [Jokinen et al. 2008].

In the subject literature, there exists a common opinion that expatriates follow a traditional career model, while self-initiated expatriates prefer the model of international careers [Inkson, Myers 2003; Jokinen et al. 2008; Biemann, Andresen 2010]. The traditional understanding of expatriates is that of the people who maintain relationships with their home

Table 3. Various types of SIEs

Type of SIE	Definition	Studies
FELOs: foreign executives in local organization	Foreign individuals at the executive/CEO level recruited locally, who hold local managerial positions supervising host-country nationals (HCNs) in local organizations where they have their headquarters.	Arp, Hutchings, Smith [2013]
LFHs: local foreign hires	(which existing literature currently labels as SIE) are individuals who originate from anywhere except the host country, are recruited from the local labour market in the host country and compensated on local terms and conditions; these individuals arrive in the host country either of their own volition or move to the host country with the prior employer and elect to remain there rather than repatriate when employment is terminated.	McNulty [2013]
Expatripreneurs	Individuals that work in their own business while abroad, i.e. Are self-employed by one of three means: 1) after spending a significant amount of time in a local market, 2) they give up their career and relocate abroad with their partner's employer and then start a new business there without any prior exposure in that market, 3) they relocate a business from the home country abroad without any prior exposure in that new market.	Vance, McNulty, Paik [2015]
SIEs: self-initiated corporate expatriates	Assigned expatriates (AE) that originate from the home country where the corporate headquarters is located and instigate assigned expatriation opportunities rather than waiting to be deployed; or SIEs that undertake assigned expatriation to build career capital through traditional forms of mobility and who actively seek international assignments within their corporate environment.	Altman, Baruch [2012], Andresen, Biemann [2013]
TCNs: third country nationals	Individuals that originate from neither the home country where headquarters are located, nor the host country where they are employed, but a third country where they have lived either temporarily or permanently before agreeing to move to the host country by MNC invitation.	Scullion, Collings [2006]

Source: [McNulty, DeCieri 2015].

countries during their delegation caused by planned repatriation. In turn, SIEs, when concluding a contract, are not planning immediate repatriation [Biemann, Andresen 2010].

Moreover, self-initiated expatriates declare that the employment and career opportunities, incomes, economic possibilities and terms of employment abroad usually make repatriation impossible [Tharenou 2010].

6. SIEs- practical impact of the research

Today, SIEs are a diverse group of international workers looking for foreign experiences, including young graduates, English teachers, researchers, volunteers, nurses, doctors and business professionals. Nevertheless, this still new trend for a variety of reasons is an important factor in the international management of human resources [Al Ariss, Crowley-Henry 2013].

For example, SIEs can better understand markets both locally and internationally as they understand both the language and culture. In organizational terms, the cost of self-initiated expatriates compared to traditional expatriation is mostly lower because of the absence of costs incurred by the organization in the form of travel and subsistence expenses, wages and taxation. It is important for organizations and organizations to understand the nature and manner of SIE management. However, despite the growing interest of the SIE (for example [Al Ariss 2010; Cerdin, Le Pargneux 2010; Crowley-Henry 2012; Richardson 2009]), this phenomenon remains a significant research gap for the research and scientific community as well as the practical sphere. Some authors (e.g. [Mayrhofer et al. 2008]) present the SIE as a challenge to IHRM strategy and practice. This assertion is based on the fact that SIEs, as individualists and nonconformists, and giving priority to personal motives in determining their mobility [Sullivan, Arthur 2006], may be difficult for organizations to manage. SIEs, due to the differences in expatriation motives (as opposed to AEs) can challenge the organization, for example, in recruitment, talent management and engagement levels. These variables can be traced back to two reasons: the lack of specialist knowledge of the SIE and the lack of adaptation to the corporate culture of the host country. For example, according to Peltokorpi [2008] SIEs, due to personality traits such as emotional stability or cultural empathy, turned out to be better adapted to the Japanese cultural context than traditional expatriates. In order to attract and retain SIEs in organizations, they must fully understand their motives so that the companies can

design appropriate processes for potential risks in their management [Mayrhofer et al. 2008]. Bhuian et al. [2001], in the SIE study in Saudi Arabia, suggested that remuneration could be a significant motivator for high-paying jobs in the short term.

Bozionelos [2009], in his research conducted on a group of nurses, emphasized that support for the organization significantly influenced job satisfaction, while support for co-workers influenced both job satisfaction and interpersonal relationships. These studies indicate the potential importance of the influence of interpersonal links as mechanisms to support SIEs in the nursing profession. Hudson and Inkson [2006], focusing on New Zealand volunteers, demonstrated that research explored a higher level of openness and cultural affiliation. Their behavior turned out to be altruistic, but also an opportunity for challenge, adventure and change. Inkson et al. (1997), based on a sample of young people traveling abroad, who were taking informal roles, often below their capabilities. Subsequent studies [Suutari, Brewster 2000] have shown that the roles that were entrusted to the SIEs were perceived as significant. Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Deska [2017] in a study conducted on a group of 20 Polish self-initiated expatriates (in the field of business, health care, science) in Denmark, focusing on the acclimatization process in the target country show, despite the multicultural nature of the work environment, distinct features of Danish organizational culture. In addition, research has shown the cultivation of the Polish cultural heritage, the awareness connected with the raising of children as well as the concentration of social life in the Polish and/or intercultural environment. The above-mentioned functions of the SIE demonstrate the growing interest in this field of research. Self-initiating expatriates are an important source of human capital for business organizations around the world, as employees they have a wealth of education, desirable global competencies and strong motivation.

7. Conclusions

The terminology in the SIE literature is far from uniform. Although it is understandable in this relatively new area of research, it may not only hinder further development of the concept itself, but also take the research activities in a direction of the phenomena not actually related to SIEs.

The article presents a concept contribution to the research into SIEs. Numerous publications by global researchers concentrate on exploring SIEs in terms of organization or in terms of motivation for working abroad.

The research publications that include a comprehensive and critical analysis of the definition, aggregate the undertaken explorations only to a limited degree, especially in Polish literature. However, according to the authors, the theoretical considerations undertaken in this article help to enrich the previous research and fill the epistemic and etymological gap which had not been done previously in one publication.

Future academic research on SIEs may examine how various types of SIEs differ with respect to their personal initiative; how time impacts on SIEs adjustment and other outcome variables; factors determining SIEs international mobility readiness and how it changes over time; implications for HR management – especially by answering the following questions – would contribute to the organizational perspective of self-initiated expatriation.

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KIM JEST SIE (SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE)? ETYMOLOGIA, SYNTEZA, DEFINICJA

Streszczenie: Samoinicjowana ekspatriacja jest nowym nurtem w obszarze ekspatriacji, który wyłonił się w ostatnich latach. Wymaga ona zatem głębszego poznania ze względu na rosnące zainteresowanie podmiotów międzynarodowych tą specyficzną grupą pracowników i odmiennością w zarządzaniu nimi. Zainteresowanie tematem SIE zarówno wśród znamienitych uczonych akademickich, przedsiębiorców, jak i decydentów dowodzi, że SIE są cennym zasobem w międzynarodowym zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi (IHRM). Stanowią wymierną korzyść zarówno dla samej organizacji, jak i dla gospodarek krajów goszczących.

Słowa kluczowe: samoinicjowany ekspatriant, pracownik międzynarodowy, międzynarodowe zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi, tradycyjny ekspatriant.