

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

An assessment of culture shock experienced by international employees at  
the University of KwaZulu-Natal

By

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## ABSTRACT

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The study was conducted to investigate the culture shock experienced by international employees when adjusting to the work environment of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The qualitative study used in-depth interviews to collect data. A thematic analysis pointed to the following as key learning points from the study:

- The importance of providing accommodation to expatriates.
- Ensuring consistency in the application of policies.
- The importance of an induction programme.
- The importance of family involvement when employing expatriates.

In light of this study, it is therefore recommended that the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) consider the following programmes to assist foreign employees to adjust easily to the new environment:

- UKZN to provide a central office to assist expatriates.
- The central office will act as caretaker of all expatriates, ensuring that they are taken care of prior arrival, on arrival and throughout their stay within the institution.
- The central office to act as an agent between the expatriates and prospective landlords.
- The central office to work closely with the Human resources department in facilitating ensuring the family involvement.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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Globalisation: The process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale (Oxford, 2015).

University of KwaZulu-Natal: UKZN

South Africa: SA

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## 1.1 Introduction

International recruitment is becoming common due to globalization. The world has become globalized and more people migrate to different countries for either economic, political or environmental reasons (Sebola, 2015). More companies are engaging international markets and entering into partnerships with international business enterprises, as the environment in which they compete is quickly becoming globalized. The main feature of a globalized society is the ability of employees to move between countries. That calls for the increasing need for cultural interaction (Noe, 2013).

Globalization has created a market that is increasingly dynamic and competitive, including the search for talent. The workforce in most companies is increasingly diverse in terms of nationality, gender and race. This trend is fuelled by skills shortages resulting in the need to widen their talent pool to find the right people.

South Africa is facing a scarce skills challenge and employs foreign employees. In South African academia, there is a pre-condition of employment in which the Human Resources Departments have to convince the Department of Home Affairs that the employee's skills will make a significant contribution to the efficient functioning of the university (Sebola, 2015). The Immigration Act 13 of 2002 regulates the employment of foreigners in South Africa. The Labour Department places the onus on the employer to comply with the relevant legislation and holds the employer liable for non-compliance (Government Gazette, 2002)

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), like many other South African academic institutions, employs foreign employees due to skill shortages.

## 1.2 Background

The shortage of critical skills has been part of the skills development debate in South Africa, while huge numbers of graduates are produced in different fields yearly. Within the South African context, the following skills are considered scarce, Artisans, Nurses, Doctors, and Teachers (Mateus et al., 2014).

While scarce skills is a concern in South Africa, a number of highly qualified South Africans choose to leave the country to find employment in other countries. In the last decade, South Africa (SA) lost over 4600 professionals every year, which represents 0.3 percent of its national stock (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2000). A common international challenge of skill shortages is also the flow from academia to industry. This could be due to better salaries in the industry. This is of concern any shortage of academics undermines the consistent supply of suitably qualified graduates (Pearson, 1986).

According to Mattes et al. (2005), the emigration of South Africa's potential skill-based (that is young adults in tertiary institutions) showed that SA's graduates become restless and are generally pessimistic about the country's future. As students near graduating, they make important decisions about employment prospects, with some students leaving the country after completing their studies.

These students leaving negatively influence the future economic outlook of South Africa. There is a need for the government and the private sector to consider strategies to discourage brain drain.

As people move to foreign countries for work opportunities, the new environment requires many quick adjustments to it. Most people experience a shock reaction to new cultural experiences. The shock may cause psychological disorientation because they misunderstand or are not aware of important cues (Dowling et al., 2013). To address this challenge, companies

should provide enough preparation, training and support not only to expatriates but to their partners and families (Vogel et al., 2008).

### **1.3 Justification of the study**

This study was critical to understand the experiences of foreign employees at UKZN, as no study has been conducted on the problem under focus. If this study was not conducted, the employer will not have any knowledge of what foreign employees experience while adjusting to the new environment. In addition, there will always be a gap in the knowledge and improvements on culture shock experienced by foreign employees at UKZN.

### **1.4 Significance/importance/contribution of the study**

This was the first investigation to consider the culture shock experiences of foreign employees at UKZN. The study will contribute toward a better understanding by both UKZN and all its employees of the experiences of foreign employees adjusting to the new environment. The study aimed to establish best practices related to expatriate adjustment, while recommending new policy content. The study may lead to improvements of the Human Resources Practices in general.

### **1.5 Research Problem**

There is a lack of cross-cultural skills for expatriates to make sense of, understand and adjust to the cultures of the new environment. Amongst other authors, Abdullah et al. (2015), Okpara and Kabongo (2017), Li and Zizzi (2017), Stilianos et al., (2017) and Chen (2019), have investigated cross-cultural skills for expatriates. These authors recommend that culture shock should be discussed with expatriates and dependants to reduce the levels of discomfort in the first few months of the new assignment. If they expect it and understand why it happens, they can overcome the worst effects of it.

Some of the aspects that foreigners should be assisted with include practical assistance in the areas of pre-departure support, such as preparing travelling documents, shipping additional baggage by air; cultural awareness, language skills, security briefings, finding suitable accommodation and schools; as well as assisting spouses in finding employment.

The UKZN employs a significant number of foreigners in a variety of positions. These employees are expected not only to adjust to the South African culture but also to find their feet in a foreign organizational culture, which is unique. Some organizations fail to create a working environment that would cater for workers that come from various countries around the globe and this is a problem. This study sought to research on this problem using UKZN as a case.

## **1.6 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

### Main objective

- (i) To determine the challenges encountered by international employees when joining UKZN

### Sub-objectives

- (ii) To identify the process of international employees adjusting to UKZN
- (iii) To determine the length of time to adapt to the new environment
- (iv) To propose best practice options to be used by UKZN in dealing with newly appointed foreign members of staff

## **1.7 Research Questions**

Emerging from the above-listed objectives, the following research questions were drawn up to help find possible solutions or serve as a guide to this study:

### Main research question:

- (i) What are the specific challenges encountered by foreigners appointed at the UKZN?

### Sub-research questions:

- (ii) How do foreigners adapt to employment at UKZN?
- (iii) What is the length of time to adapt to the new environment?

- (iv) What could be done by the UKZN to facilitate the transition of foreign members of staff?

The answers to these questions, the research respondents managed to provide data to achieve the objectives set out for this study.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

This study had a single limitation. There were no preceding studies on culture shock experiences in UKZN. Reference to previous studies helps in underpinning and understanding the research problem being conducted. To address this limitation, the researcher conducted a descriptive and exploratory research design.

### **1.9 Summary**

This study was of importance to UKZN, as the results of the study will benefit the employer in the areas of policy and practice. The study will also be a source to check the satisfaction of foreign employees. The next chapter centres on the literature relevant to this study.

## **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter indicated the overall purpose of this study. It outlined the justification of the study, key research questions and the objectives of this study. This chapter covers the literature on culture shock and related features are reviewed. The perspective of various authors relevant to this study were tabled.

## **2.2 Culture shock**

Oberg (1960) was amongst the first to observe the presence of culture shock, which he defined as the encounter of losing all our close signs and characters of social connections. Harvery and Park (2012) describe it in a more negative manner as a disorder that occurs in response to transition from one cultural setting to another.

There are four stages of culture shock namely; honeymoon phase, culture shock phase, recovery phase and adjustment phase (Naeem et al., 2015).

The honeymoon phase happens at the arrival in a new country. The individual is excited and fascinated by sights, tastes of the new culture. Everything is new, interesting and different from the home country. Differences are reduced and the individual ignores negative happenings due to excitement. This phase lasts for a few days or weeks.

The second phase is the culture shock phase. During this phase, the individual begins to experience reality, where negative incidences are highlighted compared to the honeymoon phase. The individual starts to feel out of the loop and has difficulty managing daily activities. Consequently, the individual begins to withdraw from the host culture. The duration of the second phase

depends on the ability and motivation to start adjusting into the host culture (Naeem et al., 2015).

During the third phase the expatriate experiences 'fight or flight' symptoms, either complaining about the local culture or withdrawing into cultural ghetto. According to Naeem et al. 2015, the continuing development of psychological adjustment, leads to the 'turning point'.

The final stage is the adjustment phase, during which the individual welcomes the new culture and accept differences. The individual feels at home and interacts freely with people in the host country. This phase brings some satisfaction of having overcome culture shock (Naeem et al., 2015). The attitude of the individual towards differences in culture plays a very important role in adjusting to a new environment and overcoming the culture shock as quickly as possible.

Several authors have investigated culture shock internationally, these include, Pyvis and Chapman (2005), Zhou et al., (2008), Xia (2009), Kocak (2014), Rajasekar and Renand (2013), Frazier and Kasten (2015) and Presbitero (2016). Amongst other authors, Belford (2017), Yale (2017) and Furnham (2019) have recently investigated culture shock globally. In their research, the authors found that expatriates who originated from various countries were personally affected by culture shock in a wide range of host countries.

In their research, the authors, Ward et al., (2015) argue that the misery that newcomers experience is largely due to their lacking of social and behavioural skills of the new environment. This create obstacles to effective communication between the newcomer and the hosts and create misunderstanding, friction and unkindness.

To minimise the level of shock it is therefore important that expatriates be provided with information regarding the host country prior departure. One of the reasons leading to expatriation is of scarce skills.

### **2.3 Scarce skills**

Scarce skills is a topic worth researching as UKZN continues to employ foreign employees. The main reason of these appointments is scarce skills in South Africa. The concept of scarce skills is explained as those positions in which there is a limit of qualified and experienced people, now and expected in the future, because such skilled people are not available or they are there but do not meet employments requirements. In South Africa, the scarce skill issue is viewed to be linked to the past education system that was driven by apartheid. It is argued that it is the injustice of the past education system that hinders the current education from playing the meaningful role in the economic growth of the country (Sebola, 2015).

According to Sebola (2015), South Africa is further experiencing major challenges in terms of the recruitment, selection and retention of academic professionals. There is, therefore, a need to employ expatriates to fill the gap due to skill category shortage in the country. Reasons for expatriate academics from other African countries to seek employment in South Africa are influenced by economic conditions, better offers, and on the other hand, some might want to simply explore (Sebola, 2015).

Dowling et al. (2013), indicated that the primary reasons for using foreign appointments include creating opportunities for developing future leaders, organizational development and lack of skills. The forms of foreign appointment include:

- a) Ethnocentric staffing, which relies primarily on expatriates.
- b) Polycentric staffing, which centres attention on making use of local employees to staff a company's foreign subsidiaries.

- c) Geocentric staffing, where the foremost employees are appointed regardless of their countries origin
- d) Regiocentric staffing, which groups foreign subsidiaries by region

## **2.4 Causes of skills shortages**

South Africa's skills shortages are widely regarded as key factors preventing the achievement of the country's targeted six per cent growth rate. The shortages of professionals and artisans in particular, need to be seen in relation to a number of issues that arise from the country's apartheid history as well as post-apartheid attempts to correct historical imbalances (Erasmus, 2009).

Unemployed young people, who have completed courses in technical fields, struggle to find jobs as employers do not view them to have the requisite skills required. The presence of the pool of unemployed points to the disconnect between higher education and the workplace, but also to the quality of higher education programmes at some institutions.

Factors such as poor quality of the school system in general and of mathematics and science at school levels are challenges of the current engineering skill shortages. When SA was preparing to host the FIFA World cup while facing a shortage of engineering capacity particularly in the public sector has been described as one of the worst capacity and scarce skills crisis in years.

As a result of scarcity, employing foreign employees have to be considered. On appointing them international human resources, aspects must be followed.

## **2.5 Methods of orientation, socialization in new employees**

Once an employee has been selected to an expatriate position, it is important that the company offer them support to cope with unexpected events in a new culture. Adjusting to a new organization is not easy, even more

challenging if the new environment is in a foreign country. Expatriates require a lot of support in adjusting to a new country. There are a number of HR practices that can support effective expatriation. These include recruitment and selection processes which not only concentrate on the skills suitability of candidate but further focus on the candidate's spouse and family (Dowling et al., 2013). It is also important that training happen before the international assignment i.e. cross-cultural and language training.

Some companies send expatriates and their families on an information trip before taking up the new position. This gives them an opportunity to experience the new environment before taking up said position. Training has to continue even during the assignment to ensure that the expatriate is coping in a new environment. Some companies appoint mentors to support their expatriates with direction and guidance. Mentors also help the expatriates' families settle in a new culture. Some companies organize support groups for new employees, assist the spouse in finding employment in a new country and finding educational facilities for dependent children (Mead and Andrews, 2009).

It is also important for companies to develop a set of skills to successfully manage a diverse workplace (Noe, 2013). These could include:

- a) Communicating effectively with employees from different cultural backgrounds
- b) Develop and guide employees of different backgrounds, race ethnicity
- c) Create a work environment that make it comfortable for employees of all backgrounds to use their own ideas
- d) Recognising and responding to general issues

Another support method a company may offer is through socialisation. Communication helps in the transition process, where the expatriate receives information and is made aware of the changes in the home country while

away. The closer the individual is with the happenings of the home country the more prepared the individual will be upon return.

Further training is required when the expatriate goes back home as re-entry is not simple. When the candidate returns to home country, a lot would have change in the home country. The individual would have changed; the culture in the home country would have changed while the individual was abroad. Culture shock takes place in reverse (Noe, 2013).

Validation that refers to the amount of recognition the individual receives upon return to home country helps in the transition process. Individuals who receive recognition from friends and their superiors for their foreign work and their future potential contribution have less trouble re-adjusting to the home country to those who are treated as “out of the loop” (Noe, 2013).

Several authors have investigated the cultural socialization, these include, Baron and Miller (2000), van de Vijver and Tanzer (2004), Karter et al., (2010) and Bashir (2012). Amongst others, Sorrells (2015), Stilianos (2017), Torrens and Kartner (2017), have recently investigated the cultural socialization. In their investigation, the authors found that when expatriates adjusted their attitudes towards the host culture, it resulted in more satisfaction. The findings also state that the more socialization support, the greater the job satisfaction and commitment.

A well-designed training program is therefore beneficial. It assists the expatriate not only to appreciate the host country's culture, but it also helps to develop appropriate coping patterns. Confusion about the host country's culture, results in the expatriates facing difficulty during the international assignment (Dowling, 2013).

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter has defined culture shock as well as some related aspects. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical framework of this study.

The previous chapter presented the literature relevant to this study. In this chapter, the theoretical framework is discussed.

A theoretical framework gives a general description of relationships between things in a given phenomenon (Regoniel, 2010 cited by Ndiokubwayo, 2018). The theoretical framework applicable to this study have been unfolded by relevant authors and presented in respect to the relationship between the individual and the new environment. Ultimately, the aim then was to determine the interplay between the various variables as enveloped by this research.

### **3.1 Systems Theory as a Fundamental Base**

It is Boulding (1956) who argues that Originating in biology, systems theory was developed in the 1950s against the backdrop of a need to have a set of systematical theoretical constructs to discuss the empirical world. General systems theory is the skeleton of science in the sense that it aims to provide a framework or structure of systems on which to hang the flesh and blood of particular disciplines and particular subject matters in an orderly and coherent corpus of knowledge.

Gibson (2007), states that this theory, is also regarded as social systems theory, in social science, is the study of society as a complicated arrangement of elements, alongside with humans and their beliefs, as they relate to a complete (e.g., a municipality). The study of society as a social system has an extended data in the social sciences. The theory itself takes into consideration all viable sources of the problem and examines each individually and what role they play in the system. A system, Gibson (2007) further explains, is fine described as a set of related matters or parts forming a complex whole. This definition gives a basic understanding of what a general system is.

The view of organisations as open social structures that have to interact with their environments in order to survive is known as the systems theory approach. Here, organisations depend on their very own environments for countless imperative resources: clients who buy the product or service, suppliers who provide materials, employees who grant labour or management, shareholders who invest, and governments that regulate.

Akin to this study, Gibson concludes as follows in his extended definition of the theory: Systems theory is also associated with discovering how society and communities adjust to its surroundings through adaptation in its structure. The intent and purpose thereto is for the grasp of social order. The theory shows the challenges of social evolution and locations emphasis on the limited chance in guiding society. Considering that society is commonly complex, social scientists can still have an interest of a wider range of adaptive chances for the social system.

Landolo, et. al (2018), define the systems approach is an outside standard that measures viability based on long-term development or sustainability. Viable frameworks are characterised by unfaltering state that framework theorists identify homeostasis in order to move away from unbalanced meanings in order to bring about broad, process-focused aspects that acknowledge where potential systems are rather considered unstable.

In the event where an organisation is able to preserve homeostasis, which incorporates not fair survival but moreover development, at that point is viable. This viewpoint is broader and the goal-attainment approach since it is not limited to measuring adequacy as meeting goals decided by capable internal coalitions that may or may not be propitious for the entire organization. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), defined effectiveness as how well an organization is fulfilling the needs of diverse categories and organizations that are included in its exercises.

### **3.2 Cross-Cultural Formations and Institutional Priorities**

Palthe (2004), notes that Cross-cultural adjustment reflects the degree to which a person has become mentally comfortable with different viewpoints of a new setting, such as living and working in a foreign culture. When expatriate managers are exchanged abroad, they must decide what is anticipated of them in their new role and fulfil those expectations. To do this, managers must learn how to adjust to new living and working conditions and interact with unfamiliar people.

Palthe(2004), further concedes that Often-times, when expatriates have great cross-cultural adjustment, they can focus more attention on noticing broken highlights of the environment or hurdles to set up new routines. Having great cross-cultural adjustment enables managers to more easily gain the trust of the organisation's members or collaborative associates to easily recombine resources, reconfigure modern collaborative forces for new coordinating routines, and finally achieve the new targets of their multiunit.

Research of institutional preferences are therefore self-examinations that allow institutions to measure their efficacy in meeting the expectations of their students. Taking a *sounding* of *all* campus components, which include students, staff and council members, allow the institution to identify promptly those areas where refinement in campus programs and services can affect the degree of student satisfaction.

When anticipating the strength of affiliation of societal knowledge with positive angles of advancement (social skills, friendships with prosocial peers, good academic performance), one might anticipate a more grounded affiliation in high-resource environments.

### **3.3 Summary**

Highlighting both systems theories, this study (through its five key objectives) suggests a need of a closer relationship between the expatriates and the new environment. The next chapter will discuss methodology that was followed to direct the study to achieve the research objectives.

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced the theoretical framework. The two systems theories applicable to this study were presented. This chapter explains the methodology that was used in carrying out the research in order to reach the goal of the study.

### **4.2 Research design**

The research design for this study was a case study. A case study design was selected because of its efficacy in bringing the researcher to an interpretation of a complex research issue. Its ability to extend the body of knowledge of what is known about a phenomenon through existing research. The case study method allows a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. It selects a small geographical area or a limited number of individuals as subjects of the study (Zainal, 2007).

In this study, the researcher selected this research design because it assists to explain the complexities of real-life situations, which, may not be captured through experimental or survey research.

### **4.3 Research Approach**

There are two categories of research methodologies namely quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research answers the questions of how much and considers the idea of magnitude. It could be the how much of the incidence occurs, or how much relationship or association exist (Nicholson, 2011).

Qualitative research helps unpack and understand the nature or quality of phenomenon. In answering research questions, a researcher may observe, do in-depth interviews, conduct focus group discussions or surveys (Nicholson, 2011).

This study used a qualitative methodology because of its way to describe and produce detailed explanations with respect to the research questions of the study. Qualitative research focuses on the events that happen and on the outcomes of those events from the point of view of those involved. Using qualitative methodology allow study participants to focus on the events that transpired and on the outcomes of those events (Teherani, 2015). Using qualitative methodology, this research discussed, outlined and produced broad explanations about experiences of culture shock and consequences of these experiences.

#### **4.4 Study site**

The research site is the physical place where the researcher conducts the study. This study was conducted at the UKZN, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The University was formed on 01 January 2004 due to the merger of Durban Westville University and the University of Natal. It has four campuses geographically based in Pietermaritzburg and Durban. In this study, the study site was the Pietermaritzburg campus.

#### **4.5 Target population**

The target population of the study refers to an entire group of individuals with specified elements which the researcher is interested in to make a conclusion (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The target population for this study was foreign employees at the UKZN.

#### **4.6 Sample**

A sample is explained as a presentative group of individuals chosen among a bigger population for the motive of the survey (Mugo, 2002). UKZN has foreign employees on its four Campuses. The sample for this study was selected foreign employees in Pietermaritzburg Campus.

#### 4.7 Sampling method

As the study used qualitative research methodology, non-probability sampling was used to assist select employees for inclusion in the sample. In non-probability sampling, units or people are selected based on the researcher's judgement. Selection is therefore by choice. This study used purposive sampling method. In this sampling method, the researcher selects people who understand the phenomenon and whom the researcher believes to respond to research questions to achieve the purpose of the investigation (Mugo, 2002).

The table below indicates the UKZN staff head counts by year (2019 and 2020), including the country group.

| <b>Country Group</b> | <b>2019</b> | <b>2020</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Intl                 | 91          | 88          |
| Other African        | 80          | 76          |
| SA                   | 4209        | 4218        |
| SADC                 | 70          | 64          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>4450</b> | <b>4446</b> |

Table 1: Staff Head Counts by Year (UKZN, webpage)

In this study, the researcher selected foreign employees purposively to answer research questions to achieve the study purpose.

#### 4.8 Sample size

Sampling is a procedure of choosing a representative group from target population of the study while a sample size is an act of selecting the number of people in a sample. The objective of the qualitative research is to acknowledge from within, the individual experiences of the study participants. The researcher also targets to reach out to people within the study who can share their experiences, so that their input clarifies the wide range of versions within the study area. Accurate sampling, careful data collection methods, a

small number of interviews, and focus groups or narratives can give data to answer the research question (Elmusharaf, 2012).

Saturation is defined as data satisfaction. Non-success to reach data saturation has an effect on the standard of the research being conducted. It is when the researcher get to a point where no new information is obtained from further data. Saturation point direct the sample size in qualitative research as it shows that adequate data has been collected for a detailed analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In this study, the aim of the researcher was to reach out to foreign employees at UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus who were willing to share their experiences with the objective of answering the research questions. Data saturation resulted in a sample size of ten research participants.

#### 4.8.1 Research participant's profile

The table below outline the profile of research participants. African male research participants, with one African female participant, dominated the sample.

| <b>Research participant</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Race</b> | <b>Level in organisation</b> | <b>Marital status</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Number 1                    | Male          | African     | Professor                    | Married               |
| Number 2                    | Male          | African     | Professor                    | Married               |
| Number 3                    | Male          | African     | Professor                    | Married               |
| Number 4                    | Male          | African     | Lecturer                     | Married               |
| Number 5                    | Male          | African     | Lecturer                     | Married               |
| Number 6                    | Male          | African     | Senior Lecturer              | Married               |
| Number 7                    | Male          | African     | Associate Professor          | Married               |
| Number 8                    | Male          | African     | Associate Professor          | Married               |
| Number 9                    | Male          | African     | Professor                    | Married               |
| Number 10                   | Female        | African     | Senior Lecturer              | Married               |

**Table 2: Biographics of Research participants**

#### **4.9 Data collection instruments**

Data collection plays a very important role in the study. Inaccuracy during data collection has a huge impact on the results of the study. This study used in-depth interviews to collect data.

The reason for choosing this research instrument was that it fitted the research methodology and designs selected for the study. Furthermore, this effectively allowed the researcher to have access to study participants' experiences of the research problem.

#### **4.10 Interviews**

Interviews are effective for obtaining the story beyond the participant's experiences and the interviewer has the opportunity to ask follow up questions. The advantage of using interviews is that they allow respondents to share their experiences of the topic using their own words. To realise the objectives of this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to benefit from the advantages of using structured interviews (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

#### **4.11 Semi-structured in-depth interviews**

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used and specifically designed to collect data on the experiences of foreign employees while adjusting to UKZN. The primary reason of selecting semi-structured in-depth interviews was to allow the collection of both focused and rich data (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

Respondents were interviewed to share their experiences of the phenomenon under study. The researcher asked the following questions:

1. What do you do at UKZN?
2. How long have you been at UKZN?
3. What do you remember about joining UKZN for the first time as a foreigner?
4. How was UKZN/SA different from where you worked before?

5. What did UKZN do to your adjustment to a foreign country?
6. What do you think UKZN could have done?
7. What more do you think they should have done?
8. What were some of the challenges experienced?

#### **4.12 Data quality control**

Researchers consistently received questions about issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research. There are four aspects of trustworthiness that qualitative research must establish; credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Cope, 2014). Dependability is an evaluation of the quality of the data collection, data analysis and theory generation. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Cope, 2014). Confirmability in this study was promoted by clearly defining the objective of the study, the methods of data collection, evidence of interpretation and the analysis techniques used.

Credibility is viewed as the most important aspects in establishing trustworthiness. The researcher has to link the findings of the study with reality to indicate the truth of the research findings. Credibility highlights two important techniques (triangulation and member checking). Member checking is a technique in which the data, interpretations and findings are shared with study participants. This process allows participants to correct any errors and further provide additional information if required (Tobin and Begley, 2014). This research used in depth interviews to assess the themes established. The process continued until the researcher was satisfied that the interpretations were accurate.

Triangulation is the technique by which validity and reliability of the study is secured (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This study used interviews to collect data. The interviews records was shared with the study supervisor to assist in verifying data interpretation.

### **4.13 Data analysis**

Data analysis is the most important part of any research, which summarizes and interprets collected data. The qualitative method requires more thought and explanation to indicate to readers how data was analysed. Data collected through in-depth interviews was analysed using the **thematic analysis** method. It highlights identifying, assessing and noting patterns or themes within the data. Themes are patterns over data sets that are important to describe the phenomenon and are related to particular research questions (Miles et al., 2014).

Thematic analysis was viewed as suitable to analyse data collected in this study because the technique concisely organises data collected and then describes the data sets in detail.

### **4.14 Ethical considerations**

In this study, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the UKZN Ethics Committee and the gatekeepers' letter from the Office of the Registrar at UKZN. To maintain confidentiality, study participants signed informed consent forms to allow them to make a choice of participating in the study and will remain anonymous, as their names were not used in the study (**Annexure A**).

### **4.15 Summary**

This chapter explains the methodology that was used in carrying out the research in order to reach the goal of the study.

The previous chapter introduced the research methodology and the adopted research approach and design. Target population, sampling size and method, data collection methods, in a qualitative context and ethical considerations were discussed.

This chapter contains the discussion of the information gathered through in depth interviews. Analysis of the data was performed as mentioned in the research methodology chapter. Data collected through in-depth interviews was analysed using the **thematic analysis** method.

The in-depth interviews were recorded, transcribed and thereafter coded. Coding is a process of identifying concepts, which are related. The researcher went through the data line by line to code as much as possible (Gibbs, 2007). Subsequent to coding, the researcher was able to identify the themes using a manual approach. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to describing the phenomenon and are related to particular research questions (Miles et al., 2014).

The following were the themes highlighted in the study:

### **5.1 Assistance with accommodation**

In short, accommodation is defined as making room. It can suggest a room, an area where you will stay, or an agreement about sharing something. When you are accommodating a person, you are making room for them or unique situation for them (Oxford online, 2015).

It is about making someone feel comfortable and welcomed. People value the warm welcome in places they visit. In a home environment, how one welcomes visitors' plays a significant role as it says a lot about the homeowner. In a hospitality environment how visitors are welcomed and treated has a

direct bearing on the success of the business. If one is received warmly, they will want to come back again, if not, they might want to think twice about revisiting the place.

For expatriates, arriving in a different country is exhausting enough, and providing accommodation to an expatriate is one of the approaches of showing good gesture, (Dowling et al., 2013).

This summary is supported by the following responses from the research participants in respect to accommodation.

**Research participant 1 & 9:** *"I had a challenge with accommodation"*.

**Research participants, 3, 6, 8 & 9:** *"I was assisted with temporal accommodation but the period was too short to find my own accommodation"*.

**Research participant 3 & 6:** *"There is a need to provide house quarters or guest houses for new staff"*.

**Research participant 9:** *"Staff housing for at least one year could help"*.

**Research participant 6:** *"I had to move to shared accommodation after temporal accommodation had expired"*.

**Research participant 7:** *"The on campus accommodation was full on arrival, I was told to find my own accommodation"*.

**Research participant 7:** *"I was assisted by friends to find accommodation"*.

**Research participant 7:** *"I was informed that the on campus accommodation was available, four months later"*.

**Research participants 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9** *"I did not receive assistance in finding accommodation after temporal accommodation had expired"*

Several authors including Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010), confirm that providing accommodation to a new employee is a non-work related aspect, which requires Human resources support. Human resources assistance on non-

work related issues limit the pressure the expatriate has to waste on these issues, to carry out duties at the required standard as early as possible. Assisting expatriates with accommodation is one of those aspects that require organizational support.

In Baruch's et al. (2002) study, accommodation was one of the four main motives for single expatriates for expatriation. Whereas accommodation may not help as a drive for all expatriates, finding a place to stay can be rather exhausting, especially when the expatriate does not speak the local language or is not familiar with the local rules and laws. Importantly, when an expatriate migrates for an employment, HR can (in this case) make it easy by finding accommodation and assisting with the legal issues involved.

The importance of providing support to expatriates is also confirmed by findings from the study done by Cole and Nesbeth (2014), which found that one of the reasons of failed international assignment is insufficient support from the organization. The kind of organizational support given to expatriates and their households includes, visits to the host location prior assignment, accommodation, assistance with moving furniture, cultural diversity training and immigration paperwork, (Dowling et al., 2013).

In this study, there is clear evidence from the research participants that there was not enough support provided to expatriates in terms of accommodation on arrival.

## **5.2 Inconsistent application of settling in policies**

Lobo et al. (1999), describes a policy as a set of general instructions that define the organization's plan for addressing an issue. Policies convey the connection between the organization's vision and values and its daily operations. Using policies and procedures together gives employees a well-rounded view of their workplace. Kokemuller (2018), confirms that policies provide the construction and structure for an organization.

This summary is supported by the following responses from the research participants that UKZN has a policy in place in terms of settling in of new employees.

**Research participant 2:** *"I was provided with relocation allowance"*

**Research participant 5:** *"UKZN assisted with moving expenses and flights"*

Another motive of policies in an organization is to make some level of conformity in employee rights and responsibilities. Kokemuler (2018), confirms that the implementation of policy on its own is irrelevant if it is not consistent.

This statement is supported by responses outlined below from research participants, which highlight inconsistent treatment on arrival.

**Research participant 3:** *"I had a challenge with relocation re-imburement"*

**Research participant 5:** *"There is a need for uniform policy for all new staff"*

**Research participant 5:** *"I was introduced to staff immediately", where some indicated they were not introduced.*

**Research participant 5:** *"I was assisted with flying family", where some indicated they were not asked about their family and or received any assistance with moving family members.*

**Research participant 1:** *"I was not assisted with accommodation on arrival"* where some indicated they were assisted with temporal accommodation on arrival.

Several authors including (Khan, 2016) confirm that it is important once policies are designed they are implemented. The prosperity of a supported policy is influenced by how well it is implemented. An excellent policy is of worthless if it is not applied properly. One of the difficulty in application of a successful policy is that it has no proper guidance or directive on how to implement it.

Authors including, Baron and Kreps(1999) confirm that an employer is required to show consistency in the application of policies. Consistency among

different aspects of human resources policies is vital. Collins dictionary describes inconsistent as not behaving in the same way every time a similar situation occurs. Something that is inconsistent does not stay the same, being sometimes good and sometimes bad. Oxford dictionary describes inconsistency as “a story lacking agreement, lacking harmony between the different parts” (Oxford, 2015).

When consistently enforced, policies contribute to the fully development of the company culture. If an organization has rich policies on ethics, for example, it can help in presenting the importance of honesty and ethical behaviours in employees. Policies also display a way management can communicate conduct expectations to employees (Kokemuller, 2018).

Notwithstanding the organization's best intents, one can go extreme with workplace policies if they contravene on employee rights and lead to low self-esteem. Policies that are too limiting can stop creative thinking and can be irritable to employees and result in lower in productivity. Best ensuring that policies are fair, an organization can prevent this type of negative result that could harm its long-term success, (Kokemuller, 2018).

The results of the study by Whitener (2001), indicate that employees' trust and commitment are stronger when they consider that the organization is dedicated and sympathetic to them.

Focusing on a factor contributing to inconsistent application of policies, McCarthy et al. (2010), state that delegation of HR decision to supervisors bring both advantages and obstacles. Dynamic managers' involvement in HR related matters allows them to take more responsibility and have independence on how they supervise staff. However, the problems suggested are notable and research stipulate that inconsistencies become apparent in how policies are implemented.

Pursuant to the above, organizational focal points should also find expression in strategy. This strategy should not only position an organization at a competitive advantage, but equally at a comparative advantage.

In his *Strategic Management*, Miller (1998) states that corresponding norms of competitive advantage (are) differentiation, cost leadership, and quick response. These are bound to provide critical impetus to an organization's financial performance. Differentiation point out to the level to which a shopper finds an organization's stock or services exclusive in some way that makes them more inviting and therefore deserving an expensive price.

Resourcing systems must also consider human resourcing and information resourcing. In this study, there is clear evidence from the research participants that there was inconsistency in the application of settling policies.

### **5.3 Uncertain of expectations**

In a normal home environment, when you have friends visiting your home for the first time you would provide some tour guide. You would not only be responsible for their itinerary, but you will inform them in advance of the weather in your host country, cultural etiquette, essential documents and your other commitments during their stay. This kind of information gives your guests an idea of what to expect. It also provides a platform for their expectations during their visit.

In a working environment, it is important for new employees to know what the organization expects from them and what they should expect from the organization. This is done through an induction programme (Salau et al., 2014).

This summary is supported by the following responses from the research participant in terms of uncertainty to expectations:

**Research participant 3:** *"There was no proper orientation"*

**Research participant 3, 7:** *"Introduction was not done immediately"*

**Research participant 1:** *"Orientation should be done sooner, I felt forgotten"*

**Research participant 2:** *"I was uncertain of expectations"*

**Research participant 3:** *"No information was given on what to expect in a foreign country"*

**Research participant 4,5 & 10:** *"I felt I was expected to know the local language"*

**Research participant 6:** *"No support within the department"*

**Research participant 6:** *"Induction was done months later"*

**Research participant 8:** *"I had no induction"*

**Research participant 5&7:** *"No guidance from HR in the process of renewal of permit"*

**Research participant 10:** *"I had induction 4 years later, following promotion"*

**Research participant 10:** *"Staff were not aware of my appointment and still assumed I was a student"*

The induction programme for expatriates should not only start on arrival in a foreign country, it should start prior departure. Pre-departure training is seen as an important step in ensuring the achievements of the expatriates. Such training gives the practical expectations in a foreign country. It can therefore help the expatriate to make a decision on whether to accept the international assignment (Dowling et al., 2013).

Several authors who have indicated the benefits of the induction programme. Wesson and Gogus (2005) states new employees are particularly helpless during first few weeks of employment and poor induction notably promote the risk of turnover.

Hendricks and Louw-Potgieter (2012), state that an induction programme is often used to assist new employees understand their roles within the organization.

Induction programmes not only benefit the organization, they also offer great benefits to employees. Derven (2008), states that an induction boosts the new

employee's commitment to join the organization and promote a feeling of belonging. Induction programmes assists employees to adjust faster and feel more at home in the organization (Dodds & Verest, 2002, Ragsdale and Mueller, 2005).

Adjusting to a new work environment is one biggest changes in a lifetime (Nicholson,1984). The first impression created on arrival in a new role, have the ability to affect future developments (Berlew and Hall, 1964). It is therefore important for organizations to ensure supportive induction programmes.

Data in research done by Patrick, et al. (2010), recommend that the most helpful induction process include both prescribed and casual elements. The casual elements includes collegiality, good communication and a friendly workplace environment should not be taken for granted. This statement is supported by a response from **Research participant 2** stating, *"I was not sure of what the expectations of my colleagues were, when interacting whether to be too open, comfortable or hold back"*.

Commenting further on informal elements of the induction, Pokharel, (2016) says the induction of expatriates should include the country laws, services available for both the employee and the family and any other information, which might be useful when an expatriate move to a foreign country.

In this study, there was clear evidence of uncertain of expectations experienced by the research participants, when joining UKZN.

#### **5.4 Family situation ignored/not considered**

Family involvement when employing an expatriate is important. When you select an expatriate to a position, it does not only has an effect in their lives, it affects the lives of the entire family.

This statement is supported by the responses outlined below from this study's research participants:

**Research participants 5 & 6** “Spouse had to quit her job to join the research participant in the country”

**Research participant 6:** “Spouse could not find a job in UKZN as a foreigner”

**Research participant 5:** “Spouse had to move to Pretoria with the children for employment purposes”. The spouse had quit the job in the home country to join the partner at UKZN.

**Research participant 5** “Family joined after a year”

**Research participant 6:** “Spouse was frustrated and eventually returned home”

Several authors have confirmed the importance of family consideration by organizations when employing expatriates.

More recently, the influence of the entire family has been highlighted in the literature. Their significance goes beyond the preliminary involvement in the choice making whether to expatriate or not. It extends to everyday life of an expatriate, as they are the first recipients of good and bad incidents whilst accompanying the expatriate, (Schoepp and Forstenlechner, 2010).

Lamsa et al. (2017), states that the expatriate's family should be regarded as a stakeholder of the organization during the expatriation. A stakeholder is a person who can influence the achievement of the organization's objectives (Freeman,1984). There is a great need for companies step forward and practise an overall wellbeing orientation to show stakeholder responsibility in its HRM practices (Lamsa et al., (2017).

Family involvement has an essential part in the adjusting of the expatriate. Research by Caligiuri et al. (1998), investigated the connection between family adaptation and expatriates' work adaptation found that the family support, family flexibility and family communication were linked to expatriates adjustment to working in a foreign country.

Spouse adjustment has turned up to be an important element in overall international assignment, (Cole & Nesbeth 2014). This statement is supported by my findings in this study.

Below are some responses from the research participants:

**Research participant 6:** *"Spouse could not find a job in UKZN as a foreigner"*

**Research participant 6:** *"Spouse was frustrated and eventually returned home"*

**Research participant 3** explained that, *"The type of visa obtained for my spouse did not allow for employment, it is a spousal accompanying visa. I feel the University should have explained that prior arrival that my spouse would not be allowed to work"*.

Further confirming the importance of the spouse during the expatriation, a study by Vogel et al. (2008), found that the biggest gap between what was provided to and required by spouses were the fact that MNEs' were not providing spouses with help in getting a work permit in the host country nor were they assisted in obtaining a job in the host country. This might not only result to an increase in failed international assignments but also lead to reluctance of key employees to accept international assignments. The same study found that concerning expatriates' children needs, the biggest gap was the fact that expatriates felt that MNE's were not giving enough cross-cultural training to their children. Such training would help in understanding the host country's culture, giving attention on issues such as language, (Vogel et al., 2008).

The findings of Vogel et al. (2008), confirm the researcher's findings in this study where research participants responded:

**Research participant 6:** *"I do not recall any assistance with family moving into the country"*

**Research participant 10,** *"I was not asked about family on appointment"*

**Research participant 2:** *"There is lack of family support"*

**Research participant 6:** "I was joined by family only after suitable accommodation was found"

**Research participant 4:** "I was not asked about family on my appointment. HR's first encounter about family was when I requested a visa letter"

Family factors that includes family concerns, inability of partner to adapt in a foreign country and partner unhappiness contribute to assignment failure (Cole & Nesbeth 2014).

Research shows most failed assignments are based on family issues. It is important for companies to consider family situations for expatriate retention. Most of expatriate publications emphasize the importance of family in making or breaking the expatriate experience. The convincing debate states that for both nominated expatriates and self-initiated expatriates, the household is the major cause for expatriate problems. The responsibility of family is highlighted as having great influence to performance and early return (Schoepp and Forstenlechner, 2010).

Cole and Nesbeth (2014) suggests that companies tend to pay less attention to professional and people skills mandatory for expatriates families to adapt in a foreign country. This support includes assisting partner in job search, providing career guidance, cv preparation, work permit assistance and introduction to other expatriates.

The above statement is supported by the researcher's findings in this study. Below are some statements that confirms that not so much attention is paid to professional and people skills:

**Research participant 9:** "Partner wanted to further studies, not accepted at UKZN. Ended up studying at UNISA, the research participant paid fees"

**Research participant 6:** "Spouse could not find a job at UKZN as a foreigner"

**Research participant 6:** "Spouse was frustrated and eventually returned home"

The absence of organizational supports sends a strong message to expatriates and their households about the level to which an organization values their input and cares about their well-being. On the other hand, this has an impact on the expatriates' dedication and retention (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014)

In this study, there is clear evidence from research participants that their family situation was ignored.

## **5.5 Summary**

The cross-cultural considerations should then also take cognisance of the following key areas:

- i. What is one's motivation for engaging with cultural dimensions?
- ii. What cultural differences will most influence an international assignment?
- iii. How will one plan in light of cultural differences?
- iv. How will one need to adapt their behaviour to function effectively?

All these prescripts should eventually translate into cultural intelligence (affecting both individuals and organizations)

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations in relation to each objective of this study. Findings are first presented, followed by recommendations and a conclusion for each objective.

### **6.1 Objective one:**

To determine the challenges encountered by the employees when joining UKZN.

#### **6.1.1 Findings from Primary Research**

The first challenge found by this study was in respect of accommodation on arrival. A majority of the participants raised concerns on the limited assistance they received in respect of accommodation on arrival. Those who were assisted with accommodation said that the period of the interim accommodation was too short for them to find alternative accommodation.

**Research participants, 3,6,8&9:** *"I was assisted with temporal accommodation but the period was too short to find my own accommodation"*.

While others received assistance with temporal accommodation, others did not. **Research participant 1** explained, *"I had a challenge with accommodation"*. This research participant had gone online to find accommodation prior arrival. On arrival, the accommodation did not meet the research participant's expectations. The research participant had no choice but to settle for that accommodation in spite of unhappiness.

Apart from the short period of the interim accommodation. A majority of participants said the other challenge was that they received no assistance in finding alternate accommodation once the interim accommodation period has expired.

Another challenge arising from the accommodation aspect was that the family was unable to join the expatriate due to accommodation issues. **Research participant 6**, explained that, *"I was joined by family only after I had found suitable accommodation"*. This research participant had started in the accommodation arranged by the University. When the term expired, moved to shared accommodation while arranging for suitable accommodation for the family.

**Research participant 5**, also linked to accommodating family said, *"Family joined me after a year"*.

According to research, some human resources department activities of an organisation that employs expatriates include international relocation and orientation. It includes planning for pre-departure coaching, travel details, make provision for housing, and schooling information (Dowling et al., 2013). In this research, there is clear evidence that such activities are not provided by the UKZN Human resources department.

The second challenge found in this study is the lack of support within the departments where expatriates are placed. **Research participant 6** explained, *"I had no support within the department. I was shown an office and informed of the modules to teach. I had to figure out the rest myself, how I was going to do it. It was also a challenge finding lecture rooms, I would get lost"*.

**Research participant 3**: *"I was taken to my office and that was it"*

To overcome this challenge mentors could be appointed. Some companies appoint mentors to support their expatriates with direction and guidance. (Mead & Andrews, 2009).

Thirdly, the study found that the renewing of permits was a challenge. **Research participant 6** explained that, *"I had a very traumatic time when I wanted my permit renewed. For me as a foreigner, it would have helped for HR to have been supportive in assisting me to get a critical skills or permanent residence. My position at UKZN was still available but my permit was expiring after three years of my appointment. When I approached HR, I was informed I should have gone and applied for critical skills or permanent residence, I informed them I was not aware of that. There was no guidance. I do not know how this was missed because other colleagues informed me that they were assisted with the process. This was very traumatic because the work permit was expiring and once it expires one has to leave the country"*.

The study obtained a further challenge linked to permits. In terms of permits and visas, a participant highlighted that UKZN facilitated the process of obtaining a spousal visa, for the partner.

**Research participant 3** explained that, *"The type of visa obtained for my spouse did not allow for employment, it is a spousal accompanying visa. I feel the University should have explained that prior arrival that my spouse would not be allowed to work"*.

Research suggests that more involvement in expatriate's personal lives is one of the activities that could be provided by the Human resources department. This involvement includes ensuring that the expatriates understand the housing arrangements and the visa requirements in terms of marital status (Dowling et al., 2013).

**Research participant 10**, who had initially joined UKZN as a student commented that, *"There was no introduction to staff and most staff assumed I was a student even after my appointment, this was uncomfortable. Introduction is important*

*regardless of being local or international. I had no idea, which support staff to deal with, within my department.*

*Support staff also did not even know I was part of them”*

Another challenge raised was the lack of trust of new employees.

**Research participant 1 & 2:** *“I felt undermined and that I always had to prove myself that I can do better as I was new in the system and as a foreigner”.*

## **6.2 Objective two**

To identify the process of adjusting to UKZN

The research obtained from this study does not show any process that UKZN has in place in the adjusting of new employees. The research however, indicates that the majority expatriates adjust to UKZN mostly with assistance from friends. Some of these friends are from their home countries. The friends will assist in finding accommodation, showing the new comer the areas, shops, banks etc. This statement is supported by the following findings from the Research participants.

**Research participant 3:** *“I settled easily because of friends. Imagine someone from America who does not know anyone around, they would not have coped”.*

**Research participant 1:** *“I received more assistance from other foreign nationals I met here rather than UKZN. I feel UKZN does not practice the African way of communal, especially that the African culture expects that if someone come to your place you should look out for them as they might get lost, but I was expected to find my own feet”.*

**Research participant 3:** *"I would have not coped without my friends, who took me around different places"*

The study further highlights that once employees were placed in temporal accommodation; there was no follow up on how they were adjusting.

**Research participant 3:** *"I think there should be a more Human resources type of thing, more welcoming, being introduced to other staff on arrival. Even where you are housed, there should be a follow up on how you are settling and if you are ok"*

### **6.3 Objective three**

To determine the length of time to adapt into a new environment

The study found it difficult to verify the length of time taken to adapt into a new environment. Several factors contribute to adaptability and research participants were not able to accurately specify the length of time. In this study these factors included, assistance with accommodation, uncertain of expectations, family situations and application of settling in policies.

### **6.4 Objective four**

To propose the best practice/option to be used by UKZN

The participants were asked to comment on what they thought UKZN could have done to assist them adjust better. The following suggestions were raised.

- a. *Orientation to be done sooner, I felt forgotten.*
- b. *Some institutions provide new staff with accommodation within the University. I was provided a four-bedroom accommodation in the*

*previous institution and contributed towards rent. UKZN could do the same.*

- c. It would have worked better if UKZN had guesthouses for new staff. Other Universities have house quarters and rent them out to staff.*
- d. Staff housing for at least one year could help.*
- e. Other employers conduct pre-departure training. You visit the country with your spouse before you move into the country. You are shown the Schools and surrounding areas. You make a decision knowing what you coming to. You are not thrown into a deep end. UKZN could do the same.*
- f. HR need to do more for new staff, especially new senior staff*
- g. There is a need to have a uniform policy for all new staff.*
- h. When appointing staff who had been students at UKZN, it should not be taken for granted that they had been in country, knowing that they are foreigners and have needs.*

The above points from the respondents indicate a number of suggestions UKZN may adopt in assisting foreigners to adapt better to the new environment. These suggestions include prior arrival assistance, on arrival assistance, improvement in providing immediate orientation and a great need of assistance with accommodation.

The importance of taking into account the needs of expatriates who come to UKZN as students was highlighted.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

The study found that there was lack of support given to expatriates on arrival and adjusting to the new environment. Study participants who initially joined UKZN as students said UKZN has an International student office on campus. This office looks after the needs of international students. The following statement

from Research participant 4, who had been a UKZN student, supports this summary.

*“As a student I think they did more than I was expecting. UKZN International student office gave me pre-travel information. Whenever I was not sure, I had the International student office as my contact”.*

UKZN has International Student Offices on all five campuses who provide ongoing assistance to international students. To enable new international students to settle in easily and quickly at UKZN, the International student offices provide the following support:

- Students arriving during working hours and on the designated dates at the start of each semester will be met at arrival point of entry, at specific centres where the campuses are located.
- Orientation Programmes are run at the start of each semester

The International student office provide an induction programme to ease their adaptation to a new environment coming from a foreign country. This programme includes teaching, communicating issues of all-inclusive and uniformity, while looking after the nobility of students and clearly stating the academic terms and conditions that preside over academic study. The programme starts with the arrival and welcome, accommodation, shopping, introduction programme, registration and thereafter-constant care and wellbeing,(UKZN webpage).

Part of the orientation programme provided by the International Student Office in the Pietermaritzburg Campus to international students is a tour of Pietermaritzburg and its surroundings. The trip covers some remarkable sights of Pietermaritzburg: “the Gandhi statue, the city Victorian city Hall, the Pietermaritzburg railway station where Gandhi was thrown off the train, Howick Falls and the flea market, Mpophomeni Township to enjoy some local cuisine and dancing, ending with the view of the city from World's View”. This tour helps to familiarise students with their new surroundings, (UKZN webpage).

It is therefore recommended that UKZN provide a similar office to expatriates. This office will act as caretaker of all expatriates, ensuring that they are taken care of, and prior arrival, on arrival and throughout their stay within the institution. Such assistance will minimise the challenges expatriates encounter on arrival and while adjusting to the new country. Having this office will not only be beneficial to expatriates but also to UKZN. This office could be a liaison department between expatriates and UKZN. Having this office could not only be beneficial to expatriates but to UKZN as well. UKZN has a number of employees and ensuring that the expatriates are taken care of, would be having a central office to oversee to their needs.

In this study, study participants raised that there was a need for guidance and support when they renew their permits. A central office overseeing to the expatriate's needs will be the best place to provide such support. The biggest challenge expatriates encounter was the accommodation. A central office might play a big role in overcoming this challenge by acting as agents between the expatriates and prospective property owners.

The study found that the period given for interim accommodation is too short for expatriates to find suitable accommodation. It is therefore recommended that the period be extended or expatriates be given some assistance in finding alternative accommodation on expiry of the interim accommodation. It is further recommended that the expatriates be given guidance in terms of renewal of permits.

Study participants who joined UKZN coming from other South African Institutions said that the previous institutions had provided accommodation them with their families. It is recommended that UKZN provides similar assistance and expatriates contribute towards rental fees.

In this study, research shows that family situation was ignored. A central office working closely with human resources might assist in ensuring that this important

factor is not taken for granted as it has an effect of the employee's performance.

In this study, research shows that the majority of expatriates adjust to UKZN mostly with assistance from friends. A central office, will ensure that this gap is filled by assisting expatriates adjust smoothly. This office can appoint mentors for new employees and organise some social events to help them adjust.

## **6.6 Concluding remarks**

The qualitative research study investigated the culture shock experienced by international employees at UKZN. The main objective was to determine the culture shock experienced by expatriates when joining UKZN. This study has provided a number of challenges encountered by expatriates when adjusting to the new environment. The study has shown that the UKZN fails to create a working environment that would cater for workers that come from various countries and this is a problem.

The literature in respect of the problem and the objectives was presented and a sound research plan developed. Interviews were composed based on the literature and participants were presented. With support from the literature, appropriate findings were made, and suitable conclusion was arrived at. Recommendations that could be of assistance and value to the UKZN have been made.

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**APPENDIX A**

**COVER LETTER AND INFORMED CONSENT  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND GOVERNANCE**

Dear Respondents

Research Project: Master of Commerce: Human Resource Management

Researcher: Sibongile Khuzwayo (0826207156) email:  
215054879@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr HJ Pelser email: henniep1@gmail.com

I, Sibongile Rose Khuzwayo currently a student at UKZN and studying toward achieving Masters of Commerce degree in Human Resources Management. I am undertaking a research project titled: Culture shock experienced by international employees to the work environment of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Dr HJ Pelser of the University of KwaZulu-Natal is supervising this project.

I am writing to invite you to consider participating in a research that involves the study of Culture shock. The aim and purpose of this study is to determine challenges encountered by employees when joining UKZN and to propose the best practice to overcome the challenges. Your consideration to participate on this study is purely voluntary and the researcher will protect your anonymity.

To achieve the objectives of this research the researcher requests an assistance from you to participate in an in-depth interview. Please rest assured that your responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be divulged to any other party. The researcher ensured that the information that you will provide would not be used for any other purpose except for

research investigation only. Data from the respondents cannot be linked to a specific individual. The researcher will never injure or harm the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteered to be part of the study or not. Privacy will be ensured in this study. Your participation will be highly appreciated.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact my supervisor or me

Sincerely

Investigators signature .....

.....

Date

---

**CONSENT FORM**

I ----- (Full Name) hereby understand the contents of the document and the nature of the project. I therefore CONSENT/DO NOT CONSENT to participate in the research project. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I desire.

-----  
Signature of participant

-----  
Date

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDY PURPOSE TO BE COMPLETED VOLUNTARILY**

1. What are your full names?
2. What is your marital status?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your nationality?
5. What is the country of your permanent residence?
6. What is your highest qualification?
7. What do you do at UKZN?
8. How long have you been at UKZN?
9. What do you remember about joining UKZN for the first time as a foreigner?
10. How was UKZN/SA different from where you worked before?
11. What did UKZN do to your adjustment to a foreign country?
12. What do you think UKZN could have done?
13. What more do you think they should have done?
14. What were some of the challenges experienced?

**APPENDIX C**  
**ETHICS LETTER**

02 March 2021

Mrs Sibongile Rose Khuzwayo (215054879)  
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Khuzwayo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000799/2019

Project title: Culture shock experienced by international employees to the work environment of the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Amended title: An assessment of culture shock experienced by international employees at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

### Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 24 February 2021 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

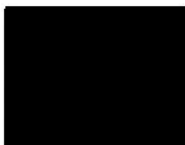
Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



.....  
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville