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Mageswari Kunasegaran Maimunah Ismail Roziah Mohd Rasdi Ismi Arif Ismail T. Ramayah

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Talent development environment and workplace adaptation

The mediating effects of organisational support

Mageswari Kunasegaran, Maimunah Ismail,
Roziyah Mohd Rasdi and Ismi Arif Ismail
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia, and
T. Ramayah
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the relationship between talent development environment (TDE) variables of job focus and long-term development with the and workplace adaptation (WA) of Malaysian professional returnees as mediated by the organisational support.

Design/methodology/approach – A total of 130 respondents who are Malaysian professional returnees participated in this study. The hypotheses formulated for this study were tested using partial least square-structural equation modelling version 3.

Findings – The mediation analysis has revealed a significant relationship between job focus and long-term development on WA via organisational support. Six out of seven hypotheses were accepted. The finding also indicates that the long-term development construct has a strong impact on the WA of Malaysian professional returnees.

Research limitations/implications – This study focused only on professional returnees from selected sectors of the National Key Economic Areas in Malaysia.

Practical implications – Organisational support mediating WA should be capitalised on by human resource development practitioners in public and private sectors to assist professional returnees in their WA through the talent development approach specifically on job focus and long-term development.

Originality/value – The findings from this study extend the knowledge of WA in the context of professional returnees in a developing country, Malaysia. The integration between the selected TDE variables and WA with the mediating function of organisational support adds new insights into the process of WA.

Keywords Workplace, Adaptation, Talent, Development, Environment, Returnees

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Returned managerial talent is very much in demand in a developing nation such as Malaysia. One of the ways in which the professional returnees can be retained in the home country is by addressing the adaptation process at the workplace (Siddiqui and Tejada, 2014). This paper aims to analyse the relationship between the talent



development environment (TDE) variables (job focus and long-term development) with workplace adaptation (WA) of professional returnees, as mediated by organisational support. Garavan *et al.* (2012) have conceptually mapped the direction of talent development with organisational competence. Further, the study on “war for talent” by McKinsey and Companies (1997) had switched many organisations’ vision towards talent development in human resource development (HRD) (Rothwell, 2015). It would be misleading to assume that talented professionals who return to their homeland have no difficulty adjusting to a new workplace. Moreover, a well-established repatriation literature indicates that returnees often face many challenges to adapt (Osman-Gani and Hyder, 2008; Stahl *et al.*, 2007). However, less attention is given to returnees’ WA (Siddiqui and Tejada, 2014). Hence, WA throughout the transition period, between returning and remaining in the home country, needs to be investigated (Stahl *et al.*, 2007). Adjustment and adaptation are frequently used terms in the returnees literature; yet, the term adaptation goes beyond “reasonable adjustments” (Black *et al.*, 1991) at the workplace. Iles *et al.* (2010) added that the survival of returnees in the home country was dependent upon organisational support, which is one of the components in organisational culture. This shows the importance of organisational support in the investigation of factors influencing the WA of returnees.

In the context of Malaysia, during the past five years, Talent Corporation, an organisation formed by the government to handle talent development and management initiatives, has developed several transformation programmes to encourage Malaysian experts abroad to return (Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012). From 1995 to 2013, more than 1 million skilled workers have migrated from Malaysia, despite the Malaysian Government’s spending millions of dollars on diaspora’s activity abroad (Lim *et al.*, 2014). However, statistics indicated that the number of returned professional is rather small (3,750) in comparison to those who have left the country (Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012). Most of the Malaysian returnees joined well-established business entities, such as government-linked companies (GLCs), multinational corporations (MNCs) and international business, which are classified as among the National Key Economic Areas of the country’s policies (Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012).

Studies on factors influencing returnees’ WA focus mainly on cross-cultural adjustment (Talib *et al.*, 2012), job modification (Bercovitz *et al.*, 2013) and long-term development (Osman-Gani and Hyder, 2008), to understand the unique needs of returnees. In addition, long-term development has been found to have a direct impact on returnee’s retention in the home country workplace (Osman-Gani and Hyder, 2008). Other potential influencing factors include job focus, communication, support network and long-term development (Martindale *et al.*, 2005). According to Kurtessis *et al.* (2015), the above-mentioned variables might be indirectly related to WA through organisational support. However, there is not much literature that looks into the relationship between these variables, specifically job focus and long-term development factors, through the indirect effect of organisational support on WA among returnees. Therefore, this study intends to understand Malaysian professional returnees through WA so that their skills and expertise could be harnessed for better nation building. Theoretically, the article would provide new insight through an integration of the selected TDE variables (Martindale *et al.*, 2005) such as job focus and long-term development, the person–environment (P-E) fit theory (French *et al.*, 1982) and the organisational support theory (OST) (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) on understanding WA.

The next section continues with the meaning of WA, followed by literature on the relationships between the selected TDE variables of job focus and long-term development and WA of returnees as mediated by the organisational support. The methodological procedures undertaken are explained next, followed by the research findings and discussion. We conclude the paper by outlining the practical implications of the study to HRD as well as the direction for future studies.

Literature review

Workplace adaptation

Scholars believed that the term “adaptation” originated from expatriation and repatriation studies of cross-cultural adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1991) explored in HRD through organisation socialisation research (Reio, 1997). WA is a process of adjusting from interpersonal action and interaction in an unfamiliar working environment (Maideen and Aminun, 2015). It is also understood as an assimilation process for newcomers at the workplace (Reio and Sutton, 2006). WA is a mutual adjustment learning process that fits both newly joined employees and the organisation (Reio, 1997). In addition, WA measures the ability of a person to match his or her job needs with the working environment, known as a coping strategy (Chung-Yan, 2005; Fadel, 2012). It has been found that organisational support has shortened the adaptation period in the workplace (Wang *et al.*, 2011a). Further, technological advancements in the working environment have facilitated WA among newcomers (Fadel, 2012). Wang *et al.* (2011a) categorise three adaptability behavioural patterns as follows:

- (1) individual disposition shapes newcomers’ behaviour through cognitive tendencies (i.e. reframing) and behavioural tendencies (i.e. socialising) in the new working environment;
- (2) initiative behavior of oneself, which was not influenced by the new working environment; and
- (3) self-starting behaviour (early preparation).

All these three categories have different outcomes at the workplace, and the behavioural patterns depend on newcomers’ “proactive personality” and “openness to experience” (Wang *et al.*, 2011a, p. 165). WA has a strong impact on organisational performance and work competence (Reio and Sutton, 2006) compared to other forms of adaptation. It is evident that each returned talent:

- experiences an adaptation process regardless of the duration;
- adapts to the current communication process (Siddiqui and Tejada, 2014); and
- adjusts to current work environment (Reio and Sutton, 2006).

Studies have shown that lack of organisational support has led to dissatisfaction among IT professional returnees, which has been found among the returnees in India (Kenny *et al.*, 2012), and the ignorance of cross-cultural adjustment among Malaysian returnees has weakened the communication process in the working environment (Talib *et al.*, 2012). It is, therefore, clear that the concept of WA of professional returnees includes a wide spectrum of talent development and organisational support.

Professional returnees and workplace adaptation

According to Garavan *et al.* (2012), the term “talent” means an individual who possesses unique managerial competence. Talented employees are defined as individuals who possess cognitive ability and are individuals with potential (Tansley, 2011). Talent is recognised as “high-potential” and “high-performing” employees in an organisation (Rothwell, 2015). Iles *et al.* (2010) view talent as:

- exclusive-elitist people who perform excellently in the workplace;
- exclusive-elitist position means they are important to the organisation by role or position; and
- inclusively refers to the general perception that all the employees are talented.

In this study, we defined professional returnee as an individual who has migrated, worked abroad and returned homeland (Ismail *et al.*, 2014a). In addition, returnee’s literature has recognised professional returnees as individuals who are exposed to the international working experience upon their graduation or have worked abroad (Ismail *et al.*, 2014a). They have superior knowledge about know-how technologies, are highly skilled in their respective fields and valuable human capital resources (Siddiqui and Tejada, 2014) and they are opportunity creators in their homeland (Kenny *et al.*, 2012). In the HRD perspective, the talent development for returnees is known as professional development or employee development which is aligned with an organisational mission to retain a quality talent pool (Iles *et al.*, 2010). Talent development helps facilitate an individual development as well as raises the organisation competence (Rothwell, 2015).

Theorizing workplace adaptation

We adopted the notion of TDE variables of job focus and long-term development (Martindale *et al.*, 2005) as supported by the P-E fit theory (French *et al.*, 1982) and the OST (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) to explain the relationship between the two predictors through indirect effect of organisational support.

Talent development environment model in HRD

TDE has been advocated as one of the effective models in sports science management (Martindale *et al.*, 2005; Martindale *et al.*, 2010) including young athletes (Wang *et al.*, 2011b) and senior athletes (Martindale *et al.*, 2010). This model emphasised four important concepts:

- (1) systematic planning;
- (2) long-term development;
- (3) on-going opportunity; and
- (4) supporting elements.

They are all equally stressed in the repatriation literature (Stahl *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, the model has a holistic view (organisation, leader, employees and customer) and integrated with supporting elements (Martindale *et al.*, 2005). In fact, the model originated from Bloom’s (1985) model of talent development, which focused on young talent development in academia, sports and arts.

In the HRD context, talent development is an important component of talent management strategy, which determines talent competence and organisation performance (Rothwell,

2015; Garavan *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, HRD scholars have also recommended further study on WA that links individual, organisation and workplace (Reio, 1997) with talent development (Rothwell, 2015) to survive in the dynamic environment. Although the TDE model narrowly focused on sports science management, the formulation of the model was based on Bloom's talent development, which means that it is commonly adaptable to other contexts, including HRD. Owing to lack of pertinent research, we decided to adapt TDE variables to this WA research with the following justifications:

- TDE is a coaching model, as it is aligned with the talent development model in HRD context (Rothwell, 2015; Iles *et al.*, 2010);
- it integrates the individual needs, supporting elements and the environment changes (Martindale *et al.*, 2010); and
- its long-established line of research in talent development model and previous researchers have recommended the exploration of these variables to other talent development contexts such as professional returnees (Wang *et al.*, 2011a).

Job focus and long-term development have been found to be frequently debated constructs in HRD research in terms of their importance in employees' professional and organisational development (Iles *et al.*, 2010).

Person-environment fit theory

We chose P-E fit theory to support the theoretical framework of this study. The P-E fit theory was developed by French *et al.* (1982) to investigate employees' stress level at the workplace. The P-E fit theory is a well-established theory and well-tested in the context of psychological behaviour, job satisfaction, motivation, work stress, turnover, organisation socialisation, work adjustment and cross-culture behaviour (Caplan and Harrison, 1993; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Reio and Sutton, 2006; Abdul Wahat, 2008). A meta-analysis of the P-E fit theory by Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005) leads to two important findings:

- (1) it compares and matches the individual and working environment; and
- (2) it emphasises the integration between organisational behaviour and individual experiences.

For instance, Chung-Yan (2005) used the P-E fit theory to analyse employee's adaptability on job function and work stress. Wang *et al.* (2011b) explored person-job and person-group fit among newcomers in China on adaptation with work stress, opportunity, development, job satisfaction and turnover. The quicker their ability to "fit in" with the new working environment, the higher their satisfaction at the workplace. Meanwhile, Abdul Wahat (2008) applied the person-job fit to investigate the relationship between job perception and work adjustment among new academics in Malaysia. Out of many sub-dimensions in the P-E fit theory (i.e. person-job, person-culture, person-group, person-supervisor), we selected person-job fit and person-organisation fit to be used to study WA of returnees (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). Person-job (P-J) fit was defined as the matching process between person characteristics and the job. Person-organisation (P-O) fit was used to analyse the compatibility between an individual and the organisation. We adopted the P-J fit to support the job focus construct. Meanwhile, the P-O fit was used to describe the long-term development construct (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005).

Organisational support theory

OST is another psychological theory proposed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986), which in this study underpinned the use of organisational support. The primary role of OST is to meet social-emotional needs of employees as well as to develop a good relationship between employer–employees through championing mutual concerns, cares and well-being. Furthermore, it also increases the employees' obligation to the organisation via affective commitment (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002), where it resulted in a positive mood and increased job satisfaction. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) empirically have shown a positive correlation between organisational support and employee perceptions in term of fairness, reward, job satisfaction, expectation and recognition. Additionally, Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) have proven that returnees with a high level of organisational support have doubled up their commitment in the organisation, whereby it encouraged them to perform beyond expectations. With this, OST helped to shift the returnee's perception in the organisation and speeds up WA.

However, the evolution of OST and organisational support does not purely depend on organisational contribution and participation, instead it was also dominated by returnee's attributions, such as favourable or unfavorable towards organisational activities (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2015). For instance, Korean returnees prefer joining an organisation that offers high-risk job and good compensation (Cho *et al.*, 2013). In this study, we conceptualised organisational support through OST as a mediator between two TDE variables and WA. As a conclusion, although numerous repatriation studies have investigated organisational support towards returnees, there is still a significant gap on the lack of evidences on job stability, development planning and detailed supports from the top management (Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007; Kraimer *et al.*, 2009; Cho *et al.*, 2013), due to different working environment in the home countries.

Predictors of workplace adaptation

Job focus and workplace adaptation

Job focus means the long-term job formulation, which includes job flexibility, job expectation, on-going opportunities, career development, job continuity and job modification (Gill, 2012; Martindale *et al.*, 2010; Talib *et al.*, 2012; Bercovitz *et al.*, 2013). Returnees were more likely to adapt to the working environment that had job persistence with job modification and long-term job direction (Martindale *et al.*, 2005). Past studies have acknowledged that job scope in the home country is the key control for WA (Bercovitz *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, returnees have different expectation and need from the local talents (Gill, 2012). With their vast experience, knowledge and ability, a new career path needs to be established to understand the returned job focus in the local organisation. Furthermore, organisation concern on employees' job-related matter has created a positive mood and encouraged employees to remain in the organisation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Moreover, scholars also have agreed that job modification affects WA and matching requirement for the new working environment of employees (Chung-Yan, 2005; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). For instance, Wang *et al.* (2011b) revealed a significant relationship between job focus, adjustment and job performance ($\beta = 0.261, p < 0.001$) among junior talented employees in Singapore. Gill's (2012) study on postgraduate returnees in China resulted in mixed findings. First, returnees had an easy adaptation at the workplace due to government support and pressure on the local organisation to pay attention to the returnee's career development.

Second, it had a negative result of adaptation due to communication conflict between returnee's job expectation and the management concerns. Hence, the first set of hypotheses we arrived at are as follows:

H1a. Job focus has a positive effect on WA of professional returnees.

H1b. Job focus has a positive effect on organisational support.

Long-term development and workplace adaptation

Long-term development refers to one's continual professional development, such as on-going development, training and motivation (Martindale *et al.*, 2010). Training programmes and organisational support are essential to overcome problems related to repatriation adjustment process (Wang *et al.*, 2011b; Osman-Gani and Hyder, 2008). Further, Lazarova and Cerdin (2007) argued that direct participation of the organisation has influenced returnees' WA through long-term development planning and direction, such as mentoring and coaching, where returnees are able to enhance their spirit of belongingness in the new working environment (Rothwell, 2015). The long-term development construct was coherent with returnees' career development, which has given a new added value to talent development (Kraimer *et al.*, 2009). In addition, the on-going development is a collective effort between the returnees, the organisation and P-O fit (Wang *et al.*, 2011a). As a result, the empirical evidence has shown a significant relationship between cultural adaptation, learning opportunity and job satisfaction through P-O fit ($t = 0.21, p < 0.01$) (Wang *et al.*, 2011a). Rothwell (2015) added that succession planning, mentoring and coaching are other forms of long-term professional development that create strong values for returnees' WA. Therefore, the next set of hypotheses we arrived at are:

H2a. Long-term development has a positive effect on WA of professional returnees.

H2b. Long-term development has a positive effect on organisational support.

The mediation effect of organisational support

Organisational support enhanced newly joined employee's satisfaction, commitment and motivation (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). The supporting role has a positive impact on returnees in the home country (Agrawal and Perrin, 2008). Organisational support is divided into three categories:

- (1) public institution support consists of assistance from local agencies and local governments;
- (2) private institution support refers to help from private businesses; and
- (3) civil institution support comprises help and the general interest of the organisation and cooperatives or partnership (Agrawal and Perrin, 2008).

This study focused on organisational support from public and private institutions in Malaysia (i.e. GLCs, MNCs, international companies and Malaysian holding companies).

Considering the large investment spent by the Malaysian Government through the Talent Corporation, losing the returned talent is costly and can affect the performance of Malaysian organisations (Talib *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, many home country organisations are not clear about their role of helping returnees to adapt based on HRD context (Iles *et al.*, 2010). For instance, a local study indicated that Malaysian returnees

re-migrated silently due to lack of support from the local organisation and the Malaysian Government (Lim *et al.*, 2014). Further, the empirical evidence in India demonstrates that a lack of organisation support has suppressed returnees' talent knowledge sharing and prolonged the adaptation process (Siddiqui and Tejada, 2014). When the returnees were unhappy with the organisation support, they were likely to resign (Stahl *et al.*, 2007). Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) firmly believe that organisational support would change the returnee's perception of the organisational consideration on well-being, concerns and preferences. For instance, the empirical finding from Lazarova and Caligiuri's (2001) study has shown that organisational support positively correlates with returnees' decision to remain or leave in the local organisation. A longitudinal study by Kraimer *et al.* (2009) adds that the "borderless organisation" and "borderless career" have speeded up returnees' adaptation process in the home country. Another study by Cho *et al.* (2013) has confirmed that a lack of organisational support and poor adaptation lead to job withdrawal as well as an increased struggling period to fit in the local working environment.

Although many repatriation studies have discussed on job focus, less attention is given to organisational support as a mediator in WA study. For instance, a study by Talib *et al.* (2012) has revealed a significant relationship between job flexibility and cross-cultural adjustment among Malaysian returnees. The empirical findings based on a study conducted among Mexican returnees show a positive correlation between job continuity and returnees' opportunities ($\beta = 0.225, p < 0.005$) in the local organisation (Bercovitz *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, comparison analyses among repatriates from the UK, the USA, Japan, Singapore and Germany have shown a positive correlation between long-term development and work adjustment and organisational support ($f = 7.624, p < 0.01$) (Osman-Ghani and Hyder, 2008). Based on the above reviews, we conclude that organisational support does indeed influence WA of the returnees. Based on the literature review above, we arrived at the following hypotheses:

H1c. Organisational support mediates the relationship between job focus and WA of professional returnees.

H2c. Organisational support mediates the relationship between long-term development and WA of professional returnees.

H3. Organisational support has a positive effect on WA of professional returnees.

Figure 1 shows the research framework incorporating the direct and indirect effects.

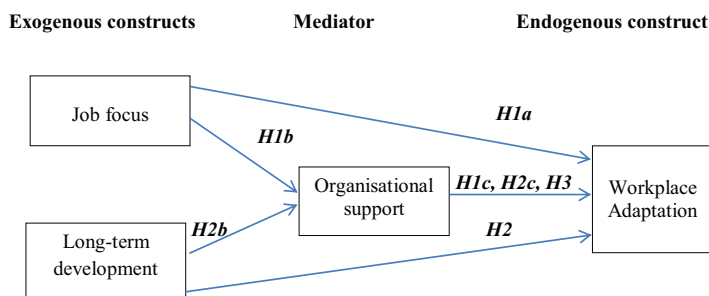


Figure 1.
The workplace
adaptation model

Method*Sample and procedure*

The sample size for this study was estimated through G-power analysis at 80 per cent with effect size 0.15 (Cohen, 1998). As there was a total of three predictors, the minimum sample size was estimated at 77. However, data were collected beyond the minimum sample size, 130 respondents. The respondents were from GLCs (Petronas, Shell Malaysia, Toyota Motor, PROTON, HONDA Malaysia), MNCs (Samsung, IBM, HCL-Axon, HSBC bank, OCBC bank, Maybank, Sunway Medical Centre, KPJ Healthcare) and institutions of higher learning (Taylor's University, Sunway University, UPM, UKM, Monash University). Specifically, the study covered 7 out of 12 sectors of the National Key Economic Areas in Malaysia (oil, gas and energy; financial service; education; communication and infrastructure; electrical and electronic; health care; business service) (Talent Roadmap, 2020, 2012). We contacted the HR specialists of the respective organisations to facilitate the data collection.

Measures

The type II reflective-formative measurement model questionnaires are presented in two categories; one for reflective variables (predictors and mediator) and the other for formative variables (dependent variable) (Hair *et al.*, 2016).

Workplace adaptation

WA as the dependent variable was measured using the Workplace Adaptation Questionnaire (Reio and Sutton, 2006). It comprises three dimensions: job knowledge (0.94), acculturation (0.88) and establishing a relationship (0.91). The questionnaires were developed based on a previous adaptation study on formative variables (Fadel, 2012). An example is the item "Knows cultural values in the organisation". The composite reliability (CR) is not available due to the formative measurement structure as reported in Table I, the factor loading, the average variance extracted (AVE) and CR.

Job focus

The Talent Development Environment Questionnaire (TDEQ) scale (Martindale *et al.*, 2010) with $\alpha = 0.98$ was used to measure job focus. Six items were selected based on highest rating in Wang *et al.*'s (2011a) study, such as expectation, flexibility and constant support, to mention a few. An example of the item is "My international experience matches with current job". The CR for this study was 0.897.

Long-term development

We measured long-term development based on the TDEQ (Martindale *et al.*, 2010), with $\alpha = 0.87$. Six items of the long-term development construct were tested. The CR value was 0.924. An example of the item is "My training and development are a good fit with talent development programme".

Organisational support

Organisational support was measured using perceived organisational support by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) and Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), with a reliability score of 0.80. Five items were selected for this study. An example of an item is "My organisation cares about the well-being". The CR value for the construct in this study was 0.883.

Variables	Dimensions	Scale	Loading factors/Weights	CR	AVE	R ²	VIF	Organisational support	
Workplace adaptation	Easy to adapt	Formative	0.279	NA	NA	0.422	2.500		
	Positive working environment		0.396						2.468
	Easy to accept changes		0.272						
Organisational support	Well-being	Reflective	0.877	0.882	0.715	0.507			
	Interest my preference		0.842						
	Consider goals and values		0.816						
Job focus	Job matching	Reflective	0.742	0.897	0.686				
	Encouragement		0.860						
	Job flexibility		0.827						
	Understanding the job strength		0.843						
Long-term development	Job modification	Reflective	0.861	0.924	0.752				
	Training and development		0.847						
	Development programmes fit		0.909						
	Added values		0.864						
	Succession planning		0.842						
	Lifelong development	0.869							

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Table I.

Measurement model

Note: NA = not available for formative construct

Description of the sample

The respondents' age ranged from 24 to 67 years ($M = 40$ years, $SD = 8.7$). They had been working abroad between 1 to 35 years ($M = 6$ years, $SD = 6.22$). Male professionals constituted 59 per cent of the respondent group. This group of returnees consisted of top management personnel, senior managers/managing directors (22 per cent), engineers (17 per cent), IT consultants (16 per cent), information technologists (13 per cent) and academics (7 per cent). The respondents who had returned from the UK, the USA, Middle Eastern countries and Singapore were 17 per cent, 17 per cent, 14 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. Most of the returnees had a tertiary education qualification: basic degree (37 per cent), master's degree (39 per cent), doctorate degree (18 per cent), professional certificates (6 per cent) and others (2 per cent).

Results

Hypotheses testing

Assessment of the measurement model. Inferential data analysis was conducted using partial least square (PLS) version 3 (Hair *et al.*, 2016). PLS is a structural equation modelling (SEM) technique that allows for the simultaneous analysis of both the measurement model (relationships between latent constructs and their measurement items) and the structural model (relationships between latent constructs). PLS-SEM was chosen for the following reasons:

- firstly, this study focused on predictive relationships of the independent variables on a dependent variable;
- secondly, the conceptual model in this study was derived from previous studies that added new measures and structural paths;
- thirdly, this study used a type II reflective-formative measurement model for measuring the dependent variable of WA, which is a condition for using PLS-SEM; and
- fourthly, the professional returnees in this study were considered elite human resources and our accessibility to this group was constrained by the limited information about their referrals, as they were widely dispersed in terms of their employment.

To evaluate the measurement model, we examined outer loading, convergent validity, CR, AVE and discriminant validity. To assess convergent validity, the factor loadings and the AVE were assessed (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The individual measurement items were the loading factors where the cut-off value was 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2016). As shown in Table I, all the loading factors for reflective constructs (independent variables and mediator) were above 0.70 (0.742 to 0.909) and AVE values were above 0.5 (0.686 to 0.752), while the CR ranged from 0.882 to 0.924, above 0.7. For the formative construct (WA), there were no values of CR and AVE. It was measured by weights and variance inflation factor (VIF). The VIF values in this study ranged from 2.04 to 2.5, above 2.00 and below the cut-off point of 5 (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Thus, the measurement used for each of the variables in this study was valid and no collinearity issue arose. Based on these model measurement results, the data met the requirements of the analysis.

Two types of discriminant validity were assessed in this analysis. The discriminant validity was measured by using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion, while the correlation was measured using the square root of the AVE. As shown in Table II (discriminant validity), the correlations between the measures were lower than the square root of the AVEs. The AVE values are significant above the cut-off point 0.5, suggesting adequate convergent validity. However, Henseler *et al.* (2015) have proposed a detailed discriminant analysis via the *Heterotrait-Monotrait* (HTMT). As can be viewed in Table III (discriminant validity-HTMT), the correlation analysis between the tested constructs was below the cut-off point of 0.90 (Gold *et al.*, 2001) which means all the italic. The analysis also includes the lower (less than 5 per cent) and the higher (higher than 95 per cent) ratio of the confidence interval. For instance, the confidence level at 90 per cent bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for constructs ranged from 0.623 to 0.842. It means that the discriminant validity of the measurements as well as the mediation relationship used in this study was verified and established. Henseler

	Job focus	Long-term development	Organisational support
Job focus	<i>0.828</i>		
Long-term development	0.624	<i>0.867</i>	
Organisational support	0.591	0.680	<i>0.845</i>
Discriminant validity	Workplace adaptation	0.615	0.549
			<i>0.542</i>

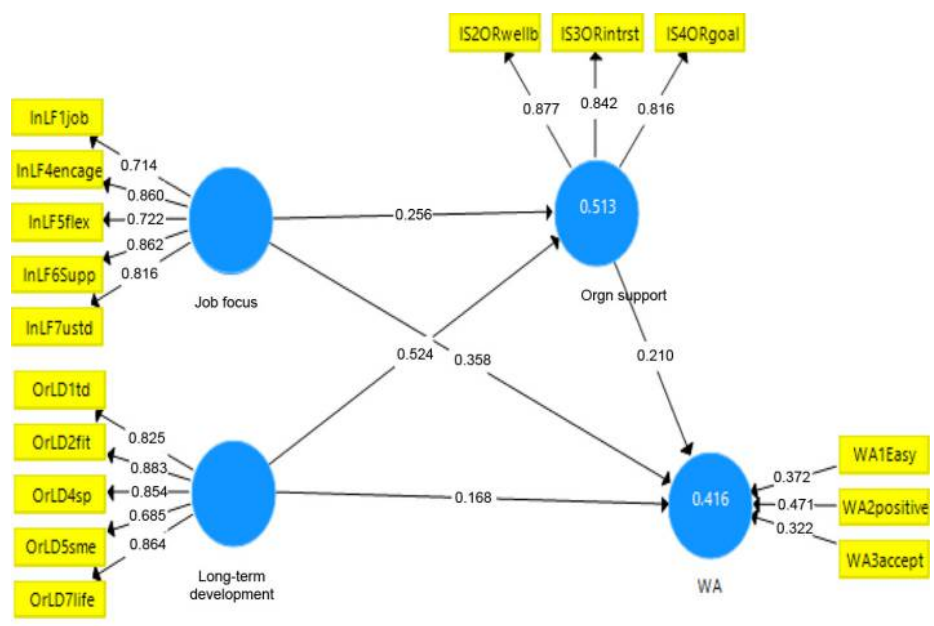
Table II.
Discriminant validity

et al. (2016) have recommended reporting the index of standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) as a global model fit for mediation analyses. The SRMR value of this study is 0.042, which was lower than the cut-off point of 0.08 (Hair *et al.*, 2016).

Assessment of the structural model. A structural model was used to assess the collinearity, path coefficients (β), the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size and predictive relevance. Bootstrapping was performed with 500 resamples by PLS3 to obtain the standard path coefficients, standard errors and *t*-value to assess the significance of each hypothesis relationship (Hair *et al.*, 2016). The mediation test was established based on Hayes and Preacher's (2014) concept that represents the indirect effect of job focus and long-term development on WA. It explains by the path coefficient for each of the paths in the mediation chain. Figure 2 and Table IV present that the direct path coefficients for job focus construct show a positive relationship with WA and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.412, p = 0.000$) (** $p < 0.01$). The second hypothesis also

	Job focus	Long-term development
<i>Job focus</i>		
Long-term development	0.723 CI 0.90 (0.623, 0.842)	
Organisational support	0.710 CI 0.90 (0.576, 0.829)	0.802 CI 0.90 (0.711, 0.901)

Table III. Discriminant validity (HTMT)



Note: Exogenous constructs (Job focus; long-term development) mediator (Orgn support = organisation support) and endogenous construct (WA = workplace adaptation)

Figure 2. Mediation path between organisational support and TDE variables on WA

Table IV.
Hypotheses testing
structural model

Hypotheses	Beta values	SD	T statistics	P-values	f effect size	Decision	Mediation
<i>H1a</i> : Job focus → Workplace adaptation	0.412	0.103	3.987**	0.000	0.114	Supported	
<i>H1b</i> : Job focus → Organisational support	0.256	0.076	3.392**	0.001	0.092	Supported	
<i>H1c</i> : Job focus → Organisational support → Workplace adaptation	0.052	0.029	1.789	0.074	0.003	Not supported	No
<i>H2a</i> : Long-term development → Workplace adaptation	0.278	0.112	2.487**	0.013	0.035	Supported	
<i>H2b</i> : Long-term development → Organisational support	0.524	0.073	7.214**	0.000	0.332	Supported	
<i>H2c</i> : Long-term development → Organisational support → Workplace adaptation	0.110	0.051	2.143*	0.032	0.011	Supported	Yes
<i>H3</i> : Organisational support → Workplace adaptation	0.210	0.094	2.243*	0.025	0.033	Supported	

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

indicates a positive relationship between the job focus and organisational support ($\beta = 0.256, p = 0.001$). However, the mediation between job focus, organisational support and WA was insignificant ($\beta = 0.052, p = 0.074$). Thus, *H1a* and *H1b* were supported, but *H1c* was not supported. There is no mediation effect between job focus and WA via organisational support.

The long-term development construct had a strong impact and significant relationship with WA ($\beta = 0.278, p = 0.004$), and thus, *H2a* was accepted. The direct relationship gained a positive correlation between long-term development and organisational support ($\beta = 0.524, p = 0.000$), and thus, *H2b* was accepted. The association with mediation had a medium impact on long-term development construct via positive correlation and significantly supported the relationship ($\beta = 0.110, p = 0.032$), and thus, *H2c* was supported. The mediation effect exists between long-term development, organisational support and WA. Finally, there was a positive relationship in organisation support and WA ($\beta = 0.210, p = 0.049$). With these analyses, the tested *H2a*, *H2b*, *H2c* and *H3* were supported.

The coefficients of determination (R^2) were 0.412 for WA and 0.513 for organisational support. It means the organisational support value towards WA was 51 per cent (0.51). This was way above the 0.26 value as suggested by Cohen (1998), indicating a substantial model where the R^2 was 0.67, moderate model where $R^2 = 0.33$ and weak model where $R^2 = 0.19$. In this study, the finding indicates the value of R^2 as 0.412, which is higher than 0.33, suggesting a moderate model. In summary, the TDE variables and organisational support explained 44 per cent of the variance in WA. This means that 56 per cent of the variance in WA was explained by the other unknown factors which were not covered in this study. Next, we also assessed the effect size (f^2). The highest effect size was for the mediation effect between long-term development and organisational support (0.322) (refer to Table IV).

According to Hair *et al.* (2016), besides reporting R^2 , the Q^2 value should be included together in explaining the predictive relevance. The Q^2 value is obtained by using the blindfolding procedures. The blindfolding procedure is only applied to a reflective measurement model (Hair *et al.*, 2016). As WA was measured using a formative structure, there is no value recorded for WA. In this study, the Q^2 value of the organisational support was 0.348, more than zero value, as well as validated the predictive of WA as shown in Table V, the predictive values of organisational support.

	SSO	SSE	SSE/SSO
Job focus	628.000	628.000	
Long-term development	628.000	628.000	
Organisational support	471.000	307.246	0.348
Workplace adaptation	785.000	586.485	NA

Notes: Blindfolding procedure only conducted for reflective constructs; NA= not available for formative construct

Table V.
The result of the prediction values

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the mediating role of organisational support between two TDE variables of job focus and long-term development with WA. The mediating relationship was tested through PLS bootstrapping and it indicates a medium effect size on WA. Furthermore, the empirical finding of the study revealed several important insights that can add further value to the body of knowledge in WA literature. The study shows that mediation effects only exist between long-term development construct and WA via organisational support.

A direct correlation relationship exists between job focus and WA ($\beta = 0.395, p = 0.000$), and it was consistent with [Stahl et al.'s \(2007\)](#) and [Talib et al.'s \(2012\)](#) findings. The perceived job scope has enhanced the adaptability among Malaysian professional returnees. These are similar to findings from [Talib et al.'s \(2012\)](#) study that indicate a high correlation between job flexibility and job expectation with work adjustment among Malaysian diaspora. The results revealed that returnees selected a particular organisation to join upon their arrival ([Stahl et al., 2007](#)). The second hypothesis (*H1b*) resulted in a positive correlation between job focus and organisational support ($\beta = 0.273, p = 0.001$), and the finding was similar to [Bercovitz et al.'s \(2013\)](#) study. The more the support received from the organisation, the more likely the returnees feel a moral obligation to work for the organisation. This implies it may have shortened the WA process and increased the retention rate of returnees ([Lazarova and Caligiuri, 2001](#); [Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002](#)).

However, there is no mediation between job focus, organisational support and WA (*H1c*) ($\beta = 0.052, p = 0.074$) through the indirect effect. The empirical evidence clearly highlights that Malaysian business entities need to pay extra attention to Malaysian returned professionals on their job focus (i.e. job flexibility, job modification and job matching) ([Martindale et al., 2010](#)). Returnees perceived the organisation concern as their role in arranging a job scope that fits their expectation ([Kurtessis et al., 2015](#)). In contrast, the ignorance of the organisation has resulted in disability of Malaysian returned professionals to adapt. As highly demanded talent in the global market, losing them due to the dissatisfaction has led to re-migration ([Maideen and Aminun, 2015](#)), which means a negative cash flow and a serious alarm to the Talent Corporation in the effort to bring back Malaysia's talent. Eventually, it could be considered as a learning curve in the process of understanding returnees in the Malaysian working environment. The less the "fitting in" process between the returnees and the job focus (P-J fit) ([Wang et al., 2011b](#)), the more likely they will face difficulties to adapt to the new workplace ([Kristof-Brown et al., 2005](#)). On the other hand, the present study was in agreement with the findings of [Cho et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Gill \(2012\)](#). [Cho et al. \(2013\)](#) have claimed that the lack of organisation support has led to job withdrawal among returnees. Similarly, [Gill's \(2012\)](#) study found that returnees in China have a negative perception towards job expectation in the local organisation if they fail to provide an equal and fair treatment ([Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002](#)).

The fourth hypothesis (*H2a*), long-term development positivity associates to WA ($\beta = 0.308, p = 0.004$), was consistent with previous studies ([Kraimer et al., 2009](#); [Martindale et al., 2010](#)). Long-term development such as training diversification and learning programmes has encouraged Malaysian returnees to adapt well to the new working environment, like Singaporean repatriates ([Osman-Gani and Hyder, 2008](#)). A similar study by [Kraimer et al. \(2009\)](#) supported this that on-going development and

training have improved returnees' adaptation in the organisation (Martindale *et al.*, 2010).

As expected, the next hypothesis on long-term development construct was a stronger factor than job focus in influencing organisational support (*H2b*) ($\beta = 0.524, p = 0.000$), and is also consistent with previous studies (Osman-Gani and Hyder, 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2011a; Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). Past studies have supported that long-term development through mentoring, coaching and succession planning was supportive towards returnees in explaining WA (Rothwell, 2015; Lavarova and Cerdin, 2007). Similarly, Osman-Gani and Hyder (2008) reported findings that organisation's effort to conduct continuous development programmes for new repatriates has increased employee motivation, job satisfaction and job performance. The present study aligned with Lim *et al.*'s (2014) study that returnees re-migrated due to the lack of suitable talent development programmes.

The positive correlation and significant results in *H2a* and *H2b* have contributed a mediation interaction between the long-term development and WA with organisational support (*H2c*) ($\beta = 0.110, p = 0.032$). This finding associated with Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analyses outcomes, that development and recognition have increased returnees' trust and smoothed the process of WA. An organisation's concern for long-term development has pushed up returnees' confidence for WA (Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). Thus, long-term development for returnees should be embedded as part of the talent management programmes. The last hypothesis (*H3*), the organisational support has a positive correlation on WA ($\beta = 0.210, p = 0.025$) with low effect size ($f^2 = 0.033$), indicates that organisational support has medium influences on WA through OST (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). These findings are consistent with the studies of Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) and Osman-Gani and Hyder (2008) that organisational efforts change returnees' WA process. Concurrently, Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) agreed that organisational support influenced returnees in making a mutual decision, which has been proven by this study. A high level of perceived organisational support has helped returnees to restore a positive working environment that creates mutual benefits between returnees and the organisation (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

Implications for HRD theory and practice

This study has a number of theoretical and practical implications for HRD. Firstly, this study enhances the application of the TDE model from sports science management using the P-E fit theory and OST in explaining WA. It has verified that the extension of the TDE variables is applicable to HRD context specifically in analysing the professional returnees' need to adapt to the Malaysian working environment. Secondly, building on the TDE variable, the empirical analysis showed that professional returnees' research was dominated by talent development approach that emphasises long-term development, via organisational support. It was a new insight into returnees' and WA literature and relating it to HRD issues. Thirdly, the independent variables chosen based on P-J fit (job focus) and P-O fit (long-term development) are believed to add to talent development values using the P-E fit theory. Further, it also contributes to P-J fit that adaptability distinguished through "fitting in" concept on job focus construct. This study has extended OST through the organisational support in determining the right job focus and a continuous on-going development in the organisation.

Methodologically, this study contributes to the literature on returnees and the WA using the quantitative method, as well as approaching the new version of PLS in testing the hypotheses. In contrast, a number of previous studies focused on the qualitative approach.

From a practical perspective, our findings also revealed that the integration of organisational support and WA had a medium effect on one another. Organisational support as a mediator in this WA study among Malaysian professional returnees has given new insights to HRD practitioners to prepare changes in international employment. Policy makers and HRD practitioners in the government and private organisations must be concerned with developing and implementing strategies for returnees. This study implies that business entities such as GLCs and MNCs should put emphases on lifelong professional development, as well as succession planning for talent development. Further, another important aspect to be considered is to match or “fitting in” (P-J fit) programmes that would enrich individual talent development and job-related matter. Aligned with that, HRD practitioners should classify the returned talent in the spirit of assisting WA, as well as to maximise their performance. The study has proven that long-term development was a factor that strongly influenced WA by incorporating ideas such as succession planning, mentoring, training development and research development. Therefore, organisational support has helped to reintegrate returnees in the organisation by identifying the two importance constructs job focus and long-term development in WA. As a conclusion, the business entities in Malaysia through their professional bodies and associations should enhance their initiatives in supporting the adjustment efforts of the returnees. In this regard, Malaysia should emulate the efforts made by countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, China and India in developing their returnees (Ismail *et al.*, 2014b).

Conclusion and future research

It has been empirically shown that the long-term development construct has produced a positive result in affecting WA with organisational support as the mediator. This is consistent with recent studies that posit that long-term development has a strong impact on WA (Cho *et al.*, 2013; Rothwell *et al.*, 2015). Organisational support shows a strong impact on WA via its mediating role using the P-E fit theory and OST.

This study, nevertheless, has a number of limitations. The sample size is the major limitation in this study due to difficulties in tracing Malaysian professional returnees. Next, the current analysis was limited to organisational support as a mediator. Moreover, our study only focused on two predictor constructs of TDE variables that limit the significant explanation on predictive influences of other TDE variables on WA. We, therefore, recommend other TDE constructs for future research, such as organisational culture and technology advancement of the organisations where they are employed. Other future research should also cover international networking as a mediator because returnees have connections with previous employers abroad, as this aspect of social capital should be capitalised on in their professions. An in-depth study should be conducted on the role of government and networking hubs on WA involving key personnel of the organisations who manage the professional returnees.

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Corresponding author

Mageswari Kunasegaran can be contacted at: mag8515@yahoo.com

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