Academic Paper

Mobility and Mentoring: Supporting Socialisation in International Service Firms

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Abstract

Mentoring is often identified as a flexible practice that supports the socialisation of newcomers. Within international organisations high levels of managerial mobility creates specific issues in relation to expectations of serial socialisation. This article explores the forms of mentoring which Human Resource Management (HRM) executives' advocate to help socialise managers in an international industry. In-depth interviews were utilised to identify the ways in which mentoring is used formally and informally to support the socialisation of managerial resources. The results highlight the contribution mentoring can make as part of the recurrent socialisation managers face, in particular where international companies require high levels of mobility. The implications for HRM practitioners and other executives are evident in the capacity formal and informal mentoring has to abet frequent socialisation, enhance managers' professional networks and act as organisational glue. Further research is warranted on the exact mentoring experiences which managers themselves value in their international careers and the extent to which organisations can capitalise on mentoring interventions.

Keywords

mobility, socialisation, informal mentoring, formal mentoring, HRM, internationalisation,

Introduction

Careers in international organisations are frequently characterised by high levels of managerial mobility, across functions, subsidiaries, regional and head office positions (Dickmann et al., 2018; Saloma, 2015). Mobility of managerial know-how and skills facilitates corporate problem-solving, delivers control and co-ordination of international operations, fills gaps in local talent provision, supports investors, suppliers and customers and develops an international cadre of globally oriented management talent (Dickmann et al., 2018; Harvey et al., 1999; 2009). However, mobility places many demands not only on the individuals expected to frequently relocate and adapt to new settings, but also on the corporate systems and practices required to facilitate sustained changes in work and geographical environments (Simosi, 2012; 2010; Stroppa & Spieß, 2010). While the expatriation literature has examined the individual costs of serial socialisation and mobility there is

more limited understanding of senior executives' views and experiences of managing socialisation and mobility. In particular, while mentoring has been identified as a flexible and valuable mechanism for supporting international employees, the focus has tended to be on the insights and experiences of the host, third and parent country nationals, and human resource managers involved in such relationships (Cotton & Shen, 2013; Toh, DeNisi & Leonardelli, 2012). Less attention is afforded to the insights of corporate executives who can notionally instigate and foster the delivery of mentoring interventions to support managers' recurrent socialisation across their portfolios and safeguard the much-valued mobility of managerial resources; this article addresses the gap.

High levels of mobility are associated with issues of slow adjustment to new postings, poor work performance in the early phases of roles and failure to thrive in a position, so attending to the demands and stresses of frequent socialisation associated with high levels of mobility companies is relevant (Guttormsen, Francesco & Chapman, 2018; Simosi, 2010; Bauer, et al., 2007). For people considered to be 'strategic human resources' (Gannon, Roper & Doherty, 2015; Marchington et al., 2003) by their organisations, typically managers and knowledge workers, successful socialisation is particularly relevant because they are required to adjust quickly to their new subsidiary, its local culture and conventions and make positive contributions in their new positions. Practices that support socialisation are then catalysts to achieving organisational membership for newcomers, taking them from the fringes of the organisation into its heart, from being outsiders to insiders (Simosi, 2010; 2012; Stroppa & Spieß, 2010). Maladjustment to managerial relocations have been widely identified in the international management literature as creating significant personal and professional problems for expatriates, their families and their organisations (Dickmann et al., 2018; Salomaa, 2015). This paper offers an important opportunity to understand the executives' views of managerial mobility, socialisation and mentoring, and the approaches they advocate and adopt to support their managers' itinerant careers.

The interplay between socialisation and mentoring take centre stage in this investigation. Socialisation is a widely recognised concept within the human resource management (HRM) and organisational behaviour literature and is examined from a variety of angles including socialisation into professions, technical acumen and organisational socialisation (Allen et al., 2017; Cooper-Thomas, Andersen & Cash, 2011; Bauer et al., 2007). Mentoring is typically framed as a relationship between one less, one more experienced individual (though other variations are now recognised), and where learning and development takes place (Hansen & Rasmussen, 2016; Kram, 1985). Mentoring also presents an interesting focus for studies of socialisation where it can be: a formal HRM practice, created by organisations to tackle specific problems; augment existing people management approaches or achieve specific goals and targets; as well as an informal activity where individuals identify and develop suitable mentoring partners through their day to day work and leisure activities (Hansen & Rasmussen, 2016; Singh et al., 2009). These formal and informal variations of mentoring capture it as a flexible practice that can assist the socialisation of organisational recruits, as well as enhancing various other agendas (Gannon & Washington, 2019; CIPD, 2015). Yet there is a gap in the research on what forms of mentoring are encouraged and initiated by senior HRM executives in organisations, in particular where their employees face the challenge of serial socialisation. The connections between socialisation and mentoring exist where both concepts are considered as prescribed or unofficial mechanisms for supporting and integrating human resources into organisations, broader communities and societies (Allen et al., 2017). Amidst the benefits of mentoring, specific limitations and challenges are identified where concerns regarding the quality, equity and accessibility of mentoring across ethnic, gender and cultural groups arise presenting issues for human resource practitioners (Blass et al., 2007; Fagenson Eland et al., 2005; Palgi & Moore, 2004).

The aim of this article is to explore corporate HRM executives' views on socialisation and mentoring, and the extent to which mentoring is recognised and deployed as a socialisation mechanism for highly mobile managers in a competitive international sector. As such, the research question that drives this aim is expressed as: 'what forms of mentoring are seen to support the

serial socialisation of managers in international organisations?' To answer this question the broader literature on organisational socialisation and mentoring are appraised, before the research on international socialisation and mentoring is evaluated. The research design section highlights the methodological approach adopted and the concomitant issues of data collection and analysis are described. The results from eight companies operating in an international services sector are explored and analysed in relation to the literature on socialisation approaches and mentoring activities. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are developed before implications for Human Resource practitioners and researchers are identified.

The International Dimensions of Socialisation and Mentoring

Organisational socialisation is defined as "the extent to which newcomers are transformed from outsiders to participating, effective organisational members." (Feldman & Bolino, 1999 p. 58) based upon the merit of ensuring newcomers can perform effectively, capturing their commitment to the success of the organisation, eliminating casualties of induction crisis and longer-term incidents of underperformance and labour turnover (Allen et al., 2017; Simosi, 2010; 2012; Chao, 2007). However, there is a fine line for employers to tread between "integrating the new member into the social, functional and hierarchical characteristics of an organisation while retaining a balance of innovation and compliance." (Tuttle, 2002 p.87). Feldman and Bolino (1999, p.58) argue "There are several reasons why expatriates may have more trouble becoming socialised into overseas assignments.". Studies highlight the issues which align expatriate adjustment with the domestic socialisation literature. For example, the higher risks and additional complications of mentors offering different forms of support dependent upon their home country (the multinational's parent location) or host country (the location to which the expatriate is posted) status (Zhuang, Wu & Wen, 2013; Toh et al., 2012; Carraher, Sullivan & Crocitto, 2008; Jassawalla, Asgary & Sashittal, 2006). The reasons for these complications, which provide extra challenge for overseas newcomers, revolve around inclusionary boundaries (Feldman & Bolino, 1999) and additional risk and security features of expatriates (Gannon & Paraskevas, 2019). For example, host country mentors are less likely to trust and open-up to members of other cultures, and home country mentors may be seen to be out of touch with the international realities of the managers' day to day work tasks and environment (Zhuang et al., 2013; Toh et al., 2012; Crocitto, Sullivan & Carraher, 2005). Such arguments identify a corporate level of socialisation and an operational or subsidiary level of socialisation for those with international careers.

Models of Socialisation

The seminal work of Van Maanen & Schein (1979) led to a generic model that captures the socialisation in the form of six tactical dimensions that are understood as opposites on a continuum. These dimensions are defined as the aspects which shape newcomers' "role orientation" (Saks & Gruman, 2011 p.386) and comprise; collective versus individual, formal versus informal, fixed versus variable, sequential versus random, serial versus disjunctive, and investiture versus divestiture (Simosi, 2010; Saks & Gruman, 2011) and are outlined in Figure 1.

Jones (1986) suggested that the dimensions could be viewed as Institutionalised or Individualised approaches where the 'institutionalised' approach is associated with socialisation tactics comprising the "collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial and investiture" dimensions aimed at reducing uncertainty and promoting the inculcation of the existing organisational status quo (Saks & Ashforth, 1997 p.49; Jones, 1986; Simosi, 2010). The 'Individualised' version is linked to the dimensions of individual, informal, random, variable and disjunctive and divestiture and reflects organisational socialisation, which occurs by default rather than design (Filstad, 2011; Simosi, 2010) and may be appropriate where newcomers are expected to challenge the status quo, instigate creativity and innovation or make unique contributions to the organisation.

Figure 1: The Dimensions, Factors and Approaches of Socialisation Tactics

Broader aspects (Jones, 1986)	Dimensions of Socialisation (as devised by Van Maanen & Schien, 1979)		
	Institutionalised		**Individualised**
Context	*Collective*	whether newcomers go through common or personalised learning experiences	*Individual*
	Formal	whether newcomers are remote from other organisational members as part of their socialisation or introduced immediately to their work groups	*Informal*
Content	*Fixed*	whether the knowledge supplied to newcomers is in the form of a fixed detailed timetable or not	*Variable*
	Sequential	whether newcomers are given clear or vague details on the experiences and activities they will encounter	*Random*
Social	*Serial*	whether existing organisational members act as role models or expected to socialise on their own	*Disjunctive*
	Investiture	whether newcomers will experience positive social support reinforcing their self-identities from insiders or not	*Divestiture*

While there are arguments that it is the entrant's role which is paramount in effective socialisation (Filstad, 2011; Korte, 2009; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006) these dimensions and approaches highlight the roles played by other organisational members (co-workers, managers, customers), and wider organisational practices, in supporting socialisation (Korte & Lin, 2013). The intent and commitment of these other stakeholders in sharing their explicit and tacit organisational knowledge can be seen to be crucial for entrants' socialisation. As Korte & Lin (2013 p. 410) argue, "The resources afforded to newcomers by the members of the work group during socialisation are sometimes referred to as the social capital of the group." Social capital is also viewed as valuable at both the individual and organisational levels where it can be conceived as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit." (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998 p.243). The network of relationships that employees develop provides access to knowledge and people and can help with problem-solving and career development (Korte & Lin, 2013; Bozkurt & Mohr, 2011; Hezlett & Gibson, 2007). However, these relationships are also organisational assets where companies can encourage knowledge sharing and relationship building to solve work problems effectively and efficiently (Bozkurt & Mohr, 2011). As such, experienced organisational members can explicitly support newcomers' understanding of organisational norms alongside their work roles and task demands. For example, a mentor's role is to reduce uncertainty and reinforce the entrant's self-identity, highlighting the primary benefits of mentoring offering career development and/or psychosocial support (Kram, 1985; Chen, Liao & Wen, 2014).

Mentoring in Organisations

Researching mentoring as an intervention within organisations is viewed as inherently difficult (Chen et al., 2014; Carraher et al., 2008; Crocitto et al., 2005) due to its multifarious nature. Traditional variations of mentoring have evolved to include distinctions between informal or formal, reverse, peer and virtual versions (Chen et al., 2014; Harvey et al., 2009). This widening remit of mentoring is reflected in the definition that suggests mentoring is recognised as a prosocial behaviour where individuals develop relationships and social capital, which "will benefit the person, group or organisation toward which the behaviour is directed." (Allen, 2003 p.137). Later work by Allen and colleagues (2008) also identifies how mentoring research has witnessed a surfeit of quantitative studies at the expense of qualitative explorations from a range of organisational and stakeholder perspectives.

Cooper-Thomas & Anderson (2006) argued that for socialisation, informal mentors offer psychosocial support while formal workplace mentors offer an important and distinct stance compared to line managers, who typically emphasise role performance as the highest priority for newcomers. Formal mentors tend to accentuate the extra-role performance that shapes recruits' networks and organisational standing. However, Broadbridge (1999) highlighted that organisations face a predicament where being a mentor is a badge of 'honour', but some managers are very poor mentors and should not be used. In a rare study focused on the organisational perspective of

mentoring, Laiho and Brandt (2011) explored Finnish human resource managers' views of mentoring practices, the perceived barriers to mentoring as well as the benefits and drawbacks. Tacit knowledge transfer was identified as the most significant feature of mentoring by HRM and HRD specialists, however, few studies have followed the researchers' call for better understanding of the organisational viewpoint on mentoring (Laiho & Brandt, 2011; Allen et al., 2008). Other aspects of mentoring which have been studied include the issues associated with dysfunctional mentoring (Washington & Cox, 2016; Cotton & Shen, 2013) and the 'rising star' effect where those who receive mentoring already have the resources to succeed (Singh, Ragins & Tharenou, 2009).

Harvey and colleagues (1999) identified mentoring aids expatriates' (and their spouses') ability to make sense of the cultural cues they experience on new assignments, which can reduce uncertainty and ambiguity by engagement with host country knowledge. In addition, mentoring can provide expatriates and their families with on-going socialisation and enhances their chances of successful international assignments by improving their self-efficacy (Harvey et al., 1999). Several authors (Dowling, Festing & Engle, 2008; Jassawalla et al., 2006) point to inadequate acknowledgement of mentoring to encourage, support and facilitate international moves and overcome the 'out of sight, out of mind' issue in international HRM. Jassawalla and colleagues (2006) reported low levels of formal mentoring in their study of expatriates with several seeking out their own informal mentors. Likewise, when Linehan & Scullion (2008) studied mentoring across a sample of female international managers; their respondents believed that their predominantly informal mentors had supported their careers in their home firms before going abroad, maintained contact with the home organisation while posted; and assisted the repatriation experience. Reliance on informal mentoring relationships amongst international workers has been criticised, however due to its restrictive and makeshift nature and an association with 'old boys' networks. Farh and colleagues' (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro & Shin, 2010) study of expatriates argued that formal mentoring programmes would negate the need for expatriates to rely on such informal support systems. Their study indicated that rather than build self-initiated, large, weak networks expatriates would have better socialisation experiences and overall performance if a few trusted, capable and willing organisational mentoring support interventions were developed (Farh et al., 2010).

Harvey and colleagues (1999; 2009) recognised the capacity for mentoring to develop social knowledge in global firms by serving dual organisational purposes; the developmental (helping the individual acquire social capital of value to the organisation), and the preventive (providing social support and cultural guidance to enhance success). Harvey and colleagues (1999 p. 810) argued that organisations, as well as international managers themselves, benefited from the accrued global social capital derived from mentoring. In addition, they argued the social knowledge accrued through mentoring could reduce parent companies' reliance on expensive direct ownership of subsidiaries because it allows another means of social control over subsidiaries. This research suggests mentoring can act as form of 'organisational glue' allowing international managers to conserve the organisation's institutional memory and thereby improve future expatriates' contributions to their organisation's knowledge base and competency levels (Harvey, et al., 1999; 2009).

Crocitto et al., (2005) argued that different mentors are needed for international managers at different phases (pre-departure, arrival, in-situ and repatriation) of their assignments. Similarly, Carraher et al. (2008) studied the deployment of multiple mentors for international managers. Using the Mezias & Scandura (2005) mentoring theory they reviewed the impact of multiple mentors on expatriates' job satisfaction, organisational identification, organisational knowledge sharing, job related factors and teamwork across the pre-departure, on-site and repatriation phases of expatriation. Multiple mentors include home country mentors who focus on vocational and psychosocial support, and host country mentors who attend to local organisational and social aspects of the expatriate's new assignment (Carraher et al., 2008). While mentoring by a home country national had a significant positive impact on three of the eight dependent variables, mentoring by a host country national (HCN) had a positive impact on five of the eight variables. This highlights the value of multiple mentoring relationships for those simultaneously socialising

into international settings and new organisational roles (Carraher et al., 2008). Multiple socialisation experiences were usually the case for managerial resources or graduates who are recruited and socialised into a corporation but then also are expected to engage with socialisation into specific business operations or subsidiaries (Zhuang et al., 2013; Farh et al., 2010; Thomas, Willis & Davies, 2007).

Other international socialisation and mentoring research has recognised the growing diversity of international assignees and those who support their adjustment (Toh et al., 2012; Moeller, Harvey & Williams, 2010). Using reference point and psychological contract theory, as well as Van Maanen and Schein's model, they focus upon inpatriates' socialisation into corporate headquarters. They argue that inpatriates, defined as HCNs transferred to the firm's domestic operations in a permanent or temporary role, require reformulated socialisation approaches. They suggest that to retain their effectiveness in broadening the global reach of multinationals, inpatriates demand some forms of individualised socialisation tactics (Moeller et al., 2012). Toh, De Nisi and Leonardelli (2012) also focus on HCNs in their examination of socialisation and international managers, using social identity and procedural justice theories. These theoretical frameworks provide insights into understanding the inclusionary boundaries or the 'in group' and 'out group' aspects, fairness issues and opportunities for co-operation which can arise between HCNs and expatriates. The role of HCNs as socialising agents for international personnel reinforces the dilemmas corporate HRM practitioners face instigating and maintaining practices that ensure adjustment to the subsidiary, while simultaneously not completely assimilating international managers' knowledge transfer capacity. Both studies highlight the importance of socialisation to robustly examine the challenges faced, specifically in terms of the extent to which multiple sources of mentors can play a role within multinationals (Toh, et al., 2012; Moeller et al., 2010).

Finally, Holtbrugge and Ambrosius (2015) explore the relationship between mentoring and career development for expatriates highlighting that skill development is an outcome of mentoring alongside organisational commitment, and leadership and interpersonal competence. This study also identified the value of reciprocity in expatriate mentoring relationships. There are implications for HRM practitioners enabling mentoring initiatives that emphasise mutual exchange in mentoring relationships. More recently, Hansen and Rasmussen (2016) used a multi-case study approach with Danish companies operating in China to identify the value of host and home country mentoring for expatriates. Broadly, the value falls into three categories; accessing the formal and informal rules of the subsidiary, networking and handling conflicts and crises. However, there was also evidence of problems where international managers rely on informal mentors and HRM departments lack the influence, knowledge and insights to develop suitable formal mentoring schemes to offer the support required.

This evaluation of the literature identifies how different forms of mentoring are associated with different dimensions of socialisation in organisations and how internationalisation presents specific mentoring needs and challenges for individuals and their organisations. With the specific research question of what forms of mentoring are seen to support the serial socialisation of managers in international organisations, other sub questions arise based upon the literature. These questions include 'to what extent are institutionalised and individualised socialisation approaches evident and how clearly are these allied to informal and formal mentoring in international firms?' By addressing these questions this article directly tackles Allen and colleagues (2008; 2017) call for more organisational explorations of socialisation approaches and the forms of mentoring adopted.

Research Design

This investigation was informed by a social constructivist ontology paired with a position of interpretivism to facilitate an exploration of executives' insights and experiences of managing socialisation and mentoring practices with managerial human resources. The exploratory nature of

the aim aligns with the social constructivist origins of the wider investigation that set out to understand and investigate how corporate executives viewed, valued and managed their managerial resources across growing global portfolios. Mobility, serial socialisation and mentoring emerged as significant topics in the larger study of international human resource development and management where the research question was, 'what HRM policies and practices does the organisation engage in to ensure the quality and quantity of managers are available to achieve its global growth strategies and plans?'

Sampling

The international hospitality and tourism sector provided an appealing context for the exploration of the management of managerial resources, and specifically socialisation and mentoring due to the firms' priorities of trading via multiple subsidiaries of hotel resorts and properties and operating small head or regional office arrangements to manage their branches. Participating organisations were identified through purposive sampling by isolating the size and coverage of corporate brands across the globe (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As a relatively concentrated industry the resulting sample comprised of nine international companies covering approximately 90 percent of the total branded international hotel sector, where each of these firms operated across five continents, operated multiple brand names and extensive portfolios of owned, franchised, leased and managed subsidiaries. However, eight of the nine companies participated fully in the study where one organisation acted as a pilot due to imminent retirement of its senior global HRM executive, and this meant the final approximate coverage equated to 70 percent of the total branded international hotel sector.

Prior work experience and research interests in the industry helped the researcher identify relevant senior corporate HRM executives and invite them to participate in the investigation. These were typically Vice Presidents of Human Resources responsible for managing the development of managerial resources (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and the most senior executives in the HRM function. These executives were located in regional and head offices across the world; however, the interviews took place in five key European cities. The interviews took place at regional or corporate offices, and in one case a subsidiary with a follow-up meeting at a corporate office. Identifying suitable interview dates proved very challenging but once these were pinpointed access was very generous with the researcher spending up to six hours with the main interviewee and their wider HRM teams. This afforded further data collection opportunities, namely through access to, and observation of, meetings and demonstrations associated with the activities of relevant HRM administrative teams (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Table 1 identifies the companies and their details.

Table 1: Details of Firms and main Interview participants

Firms	Number of properties	Market levels of brands	Number of Countries	Main interview participants
Firm A	2500 plus	Multiple brands at luxury, mid-market, economy and budget levels	75	Vice President of Human Resources - Region
Firm H	2500 plus	Multiple brands at luxury, mid-market, economy and budget levels	70	Vice President of Human Resources - Region
Firm F	Under 1000	Multiple brands at luxury, mid-market and budget levels	55	Vice President of Human Resources – Region
Firm I	200 plus	Multiple luxury brands	40	Global Human Resources Director
Firm J	150	Luxury international and mid-market brands	50	Vice President for Human Resources
Firm S	50 plus	Luxury brand	20	Global Director for Human Resources
Firm T	500	Luxury and mid-market brands	65	Vice President of Human Resources – Region
Firm X	200 plus	Luxury and mid-market brands	45	Vice President for Human Resources

Data collection

In-depth interviews secured with senior HRM executives lasted between three and six hours, company documentation was collected, for example training manuals, performance review and other HRM documentation. The choice of in-depth interviews was to allow the interviewer to explore widely each executive's, and their company's approaches to managing and developing international managerial resources and is appropriate for deep exploratory studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Participants were asked to explain their organisation's approaches and practices to gaining the required quality and quantity of managerial resources to meet their portfolio growth plans. This approach allowed considerable flexibility in responses and the author was able to explore specific examples of practices used and abandoned, consequences of decisions and rich insights into the ways these senior executives understood the development of their managerial resources in their dynamic industry. The data for this article focuses specifically on the data that emerged around the demand for mobility amongst managers and how this was facilitated by the companies in their formal practices, informal activities and engagement. Once the researcher transcribed the interviews, they were offered back to the participants for member checking to support the trustworthiness of the data. In several cases, the executives or members of their teams offered further documentation and telephone discussions to clarify and add further examples. Other aspects of trustworthiness were pursued through discussions with other researchers in the field and feedback was offered on the thick descriptions developed by the author (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Data Analysis

Preliminary data analysis of the transcriptions, field notes and documents led to initial codes on HRM and HRD practices, managerial characteristics and company conventions. This involved using the six phases of thematic analysis phases (Braun & Clark, 2006) to achieve familiarisation with the data sources, the generation of initial descriptive codes, followed by the third phase of searching for themes. This offered the opportunity to build rich accounts of practices and approaches used to develop international managerial resources within and across the companies. These themes were reviewed and refined to depict deeper explanations of mobility, aspects of socialisation, and informal and formal mentoring as well as and the nature of the challenges of delivering formal mentoring support (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Results

For these eight global executives and their teams' mobility, socialisation and mentoring went hand in hand. The results are presented in relation to these key themes; specifically the theme of mobility is explored initially, followed by exploration of informal, and then formal mentoring to support mobility and socialisation.

Mobility

Mobility was non-negotiable for managerial career success across all the eight firms as outlined by these examples from two HRM executives. *"If they want a career with us then we say you need at least two different positions in two different countries, probably more, but at least two and two …."* (HRM executive Firm H) and

> *"Once you're in, as a graduate trainee or direct entry manager, the best training you can have for your career is international experience. That's what will work for your career. It's crucial."* (HRM executive Firm T)

As adjusting to new subsidiaries was a perennial feature of manager careers, an explicit expectation of all HRM documentation and during the interviews with the executives, managers

were seen to need to be naturally sociable people themselves capable of socialising into new international operations. Across the eight companies, the view was that successful managers survived their frequent relocations by being sociable at a personal level, to achieve organisational socialisation, as captured by this participant:

> *"You have to be very social, for example if you play bridge it helps a lot, or if you practise some sports, 'we play tennis', 'we play golf'. All those activities really help you to socialise in your new environment."* (HRM Executive Firm A)

However, there was also recognition that such mobility was demanding and that the firms could offer support to ensure sustainability for these transitions, as the Firm T HRM executive argued,

> *"It is true. It is tough for managers being mobile that is why they have their networks of support. I know most managers look out for new arrivals. They will get some induction when they arrive and someone looking out for them. Our culture is strong like that."*

Likewise, the Firm J executive commented,

> *"All potential unit managers have, within their new hotels, a senior figure, who keeps an eye on them. This mentor will often be the general manager (GM) but normally it is somebody other than the GM. It is an individual who is felt to have the right sort of experience."*

There was a consistency across the participants and the documentation viewed that while managers themselves were expected to initiate their own socialisation as they moved between units, the firms and their subsidiaries had important roles to play too. These roles included organising pre-posting visits to subsidiaries, guidelines for subsidiary induction programmes, briefings for managers ahead of postings and key contact points of managers who were in post at locations and those who had prior subsidiary experience. There was less emphasis on this being about identifying host country or home country national support and much more on maintaining company connections, and general operational and living experience in the subsidiary.

While some organisational support for socialisation was evident at the corporate level through identifying previous incumbents, adherence to good practice in managing relocations and expectations of induction sessions, the executives also acknowledged that subsidiaries deliver the real socialisation experience. The limitations of managing diverse and dispersed subsidiaries however, affected executives' confidence that manager socialisation was consistently supported, as identified by the Form X executive, *"We know some do it better than others. We provide guidance, but it is difficult to police. Part of my job in this office is to showcase the benefits of good induction and socialisation supporting mobility."* All the executives and members of their teams had experience of managing at the subsidiary level, in HRM and other functions, and they referenced their own mobility and support of new managers. Positive and negative experiences shaped their commitment to sharing good practice in socialisation, but emphasis was also on making sure managers knew there were limits to their initial honeymoon period and that contributing to their new subsidiary was imperative.

Informal Mentoring Supporting Mobility and Socialisation

Mentoring was a pervasive activity across the firms interviewed, and more broadly across the sector, but was not consistently formally instigated. The popularity of mentoring was based upon the view that to develop their careers, managers need to move internationally between regions of the world and properties. Mentoring was an activity which supported individuals to make these successive moves effectively and successful executives had been mentors and acted as mentors themselves. The executives' comments of *"Mentoring really helps in this business, I've been mentee and mentor throughout my career, across the world."* (HRM Executive Firm J), and *"Your*

moves between properties build your opportunities to be mentored and we encourage everyone to seize the opportunities to find mentors and be a mentor as they move. We've all done it, you see." (HRM Executive Firm X),

This perception of mentoring being innate within this international industry highlights the challenge facing HRM executives and their commitment and justification for developing formal HRD practices to generate the right quality and quantity of managers as their international portfolios enlarged. All eight organisations widely advocated and recognised the value of informal mentoring. This meant that during the interviews mentors and mentees were referred to across the whole sample, whether formal schemes existed or not. Even where formal schemes existed there was often blurring between these versions by participants. The Firm F executive explained his own perspective as well as the company's perspective on mentoring:

> *"Naturally mentoring happens, it happens unofficially and informally, people move around and they remember the people who they have worked with and usually at some point somebody has been given a career break, some sort of opportunity by a GM who has spotted their talent and they will tend to keep in touch with that person. We talk about the importance of supporting new managers and mentoring at our GM conferences …. If you called up all the GMs or number twos now, they would all be able to tell you who their mentor was or who gave them their real career break."* (HRM Executive Firm F)

Such a response was in keeping with the four firms who did not currently have formal schemes as part of their socialisation and development of managers. Further comments on the inescapable nature of informal and formal mentoring expand upon this issue,

> *"While managers are encouraged to develop, seize opportunities and meet new challenges the company also pledges to ensure that they are given the necessary support. The company encourages employees to develop informal support networks and coach and mentor junior employees in the expectations and opportunities available in the company. Our formal schemes are just the start and help build connections across the company as we grow."* (HRM executive Firm X)

While HRM executive (Firm T) who did not have a formal scheme commented:

> *"Senior and junior managers are expected to identify and develop suitable mentor and protégé relationships themselves rather than be assigned mentorship partners through the company. Our organic and recent acquisitive growth have meant this is more important than ever. They do it themselves, and we say it's good and offer encouragement."*

With mobility and mentoring clearly emphasised for international managers, it appeared that most individuals were expected to know to develop and use their own networks to aid their socialisation, and career prospects, regardless of their ability to do so. Where formal mentoring did occur, part of the justification for formal mentoring interventions were based upon support for particular groups, which included high potential individuals, graduate trainees, potential general managers (GMs), executive assistant managers (EAMs), women or minority groups or specific nationals (based upon developing inpatriate managers for specific geographical locations). This targeting arose due to expectations of the highest levels of mobility or identification as requiring extra support for successful career development and retention. This was outlined by *'Our newly developed graduate management scheme will include mentoring, something we started a while ago as part of our EAM programme'* (HRM Executive Firm X), and *'Mentoring is mostly used for any new management entrant or newly appointed middle managers, some talented locals also.'* (HRM Executive Firm A) and *'We've also started a couple of small pilot mentoring schemes for female managers and those with the right national profile to increase our numbers of indigenous property managers.'* (HRM Executive Firm H).

Formal Mentoring Supporting Mobility and Socialisation

At the time of the interviews only four of the firms (A, H, J and X) had developed formal mentoring schemes, one (I) was considering relaunching a scheme and the others (F, S and T) did not have mentoring schemes. Firm S stood out from the other firms where their executive advocated:

> *"We look to help people with coaches rather than mentors. A coach is better because they should be somebody who can help somebody who doesn't yet have the necessary knowledge to get on in their career. We're currently employing external coaches for those who might benefit but will develop internal coaching capacity in the group."*

This definition of coaching by the Firm S executive highlights the blurring of distinctions between coaching and mentoring and support offered to international managers. The coaching mentioned here was not part of a formal coaching initiative but offered on an ad-hoc basis.

Where formal corporate mentoring schemes were a feature of socialisation, there were also elements of individuals being encouraged to build their own mentoring networks as the executives from Firms H and J identified: *"We encourage managers to realise the importance of developing their own informal mentors and professional networks which help them progress their careers'* (HRM executive Firm H) and

> *"Mentoring occurs in two modes. Firstly, as outlined in this graduate development programme as a formal activity but it also occurs informally within the group. The company actively supports both variations by getting managers at all levels to interact across our brands and owned, managed and franchised units. More connections will mean more managers will be happy to move and help our growth."*

Those with formal mentoring schemes identified other issues associated with attempting to operate initiatives across international portfolios. Such issues included the coordination of mentoring schemes between corporate and regional offices and subsidiaries, the ability to identify suitable mentors and mentees, the provision of support and training, and evaluation; *"The current system of mentors is in total disarray, we just haven't put enough energy and thought into it recently, as we've grown it has been very challenging."* (HRM executive Firm J). The Firm H executive commented:

> *"The issue of suitable mentors is also considered when the company assigns management graduates to hotel units. Is there someone there who can guide them? Do they have the right training and background? And I can't dictate, only recommend and persuade".*

He then also reflected on the challenges of finding suitable mentors by recognising changes across the parent company of Firm H:

> *"Soon we will receive a boost within the company due to the number of senior managers who are becoming mentors for young managers across the parent company rather than within the hotel group. Building these links is important to us, for realising our corporate ambitions."*

Similarly, Firm A recognised that strategic changes in the growth, alignment of the firm's brands and remoteness between brand HRM teams and subsidiaries was leading to challenges in socialising managers through mentoring:

> *"Typically, the mentor was always part of the same brand; however, with the new market orientation … it is likely that this will not be the case anymore. I ask myself do we have enough mentors, and know who the good ones are."*

In Company X similar concerns were voiced, *"The nature of the EAM development programme identifies some GMs as clear mentors for these young managers, who will, within the next three to*

five years, step into their shoes. … However, there was caution from this executive too: *"Some GMs we should not be using at all. It just will not be appropriate for our next generation of managers. However, this is not easy to sort out."* Formal mentoring interventions did receive specific support where executives and their teams had invested in talent management systems to co-ordinate succession plans and international assignments. While each of the eight companies had versions of talent management or HRM succession planning systems only those companies with mentoring schemes in place or planned (Companies A, H, J, X and I) also used these systems to support formal mentoring, the matches made and subsequent tracking of mentors and mentees. However, the organisations with formal mentoring schemes also identified their growing internationalisation, the re-alignment of brands, dispersed nature of HRM teams and the changing nature of the hotel and resort management role itself as challenging the provision of adequate mentoring practices in support of socialisation. Specifically, concerns over securing the right number and calibre of mentors were evident as were the challenges of managing mentoring schemes across numerous, hundreds or even thousands, of subsidiaries. Three executives (Firms A, H and J) recounted they had faced pressure to eliminate their formal mentoring interventions. They had resisted such pressures using arguments and evaluations based upon their mentoring schemes' value in supporting socialisation, diversity and retention issues.

Discussion

This study reports for the first time on the corporate HRM executives' perspectives on socialisation and mentoring in an international industry. Across the executives in the sample, there was recognition of the importance of mentoring as supporting socialisation where managers are expected to be highly mobile. While most managers were presumed to be naturally capable of socialising into new environments all advocated mentoring through informal, and in some cases, augmented by formal mentoring schemes. This persistent promotion of informal mentoring suggests a partial adoption of the individualised version of the socialisation model (Van Maanen & Schien, 1979) across the industry. All the companies were committed to supporting socialisation of their managers but identified caveats in the scope and effectiveness of their corporate initiatives being adhered to by their subsidiaries and pressures to limit the number of practices enforced on properties.

In four of the eight multinationals formal mentoring schemes formed part of a more institutionalised approach to socialisation for specific groups of managerial resources (Van Maanen & Schien, 1979). These managers, targeted due to their high levels of mobility, under-representation and/or value as high profile talent, were offered mentoring to assist their socialisation into and within the companies ensuring social capital is accrued for the individuals' and the organisations' benefit (Bozkurt & Mohr, 2011; Farh et al., 2010; Harvey et al., 2009). However, where the firms do use formal mentoring interventions, they struggle to confirm their effective operation due to the challenges of enforcing practices on subsidiaries, identifying and supporting appropriate mentors, and the frequent changes within their organisations (Farh et al., 2010; Hansen & Rasmussen, 2016). As the literature identifies (Delong et al; 2008; Hezlett & Gibson, 2007; Cotton & Shen, 2013) having the right environment for mentoring and sufficient mentors are critical precursors for effective mentoring schemes and these corporate level HRM executives recognise and witness these challenges in their growing organisations (Zhuang et al., 2013).

Formal schemes are seen to augment the informal mentoring that was promoted across the whole sector and be fuelled by company norms (Gannon & Maher, 2012; Gannon et al., 2015; Eissner & Gannon, 2018). However, such formal initiatives were also recognised as supporting other HRM commitments on diversity and retention (Holtbrugge & Ambrosius, 2015; Hansen & Rasmussen, 2016). In half of the firms the executives were unable to justify the creation of mentoring schemes despite their acknowledgement of the value of mentoring as a route to socialisation and the accumulation of social capital. This presents an interesting dimension to mentoring in specific

industry settings where informal mentoring as part of established custom and practice undermines HRM executives' ability to implement formal mentoring schemes. As such, a hybrid version of the individualised and institutionalised socialisation model emerges with elements of the dimensions justified by the corporate respondents.

The promotion of informal mentoring across the whole sample and its active endorsement by the corporate level reflects the web like structure of this industry where companies have diminutive head and regional offices supporting the multitude of subsidiaries present across locations (Gannon et al., 2015; Stroppa & Spiess, 2010; Harvey et al., 2009). It also highlights the value placed on developing supportive relationships, building personal and organisational social capital and the associated network ties where mobility between subsidiaries is recurrent. It is difficult, however, to determine whether the nurturing of informal mentoring is more powerfully influenced by the frequency of transfers across subsidiaries, the networked nature of the firms in this international industry and/or the complications in developing formal mentoring in highly dispersed organisations (Jassawalla et al., 2006). All the executives mentioned growth in the number of subsidiaries and this had been achieved primarily through equity-light methods (Gannon et al., 2015). Accordingly, these companies had blurred issues of property ownership and control, or recently merged and acquired brands and other firms, and hence had limited command over many subsidiary (HRM) practices making the reinforcement of informal network ties more appropriate. However, the limitations of informal mentors were a concern to some of these corporate HRM executives where the suitability of such mentors was questioned due to their limited corporate commitment and where implementation was weak and inconsistent (Herrbach et al., 2011; Farh et al; 2010). This reinforces why some organisations felt the difficulties of formal mentoring schemes should be tackled where managerial resources of strategic significance were concerned, that is they are likely to be future general managers of subsidiaries or corporate executives.

A final key feature of the use of mentoring in this sample of international service firms is the evidence of multiple mentors (Mezias & Scandura, 2005; Crocitto et al., 2005; Carraher et al., 2008). The executives appeared to advocate multiple mentoring by managers and specifically, in relation to augmenting formal mentoring relationships, where they did exist. However, informal mentoring mixed with exhaustively encouraging multiple mentors for international assignees, based upon their phase of expatriation and career development stage, risks obfuscating the formal mentoring interventions that support managers facing serial transfers at particular hierarchical levels. In addition, where experienced general managers acted as mentors to international managers in the formal mentoring schemes developed across four of the firms there were some concerns about their suitability for these roles. There was no specific mention of host country mentors by the respondents; however, this may be due to the corporate executives' difficulty, and inability, to know the situation in every subsidiary in their organisation. It also appears to underpin the structural issues identified previously which warrant limited mandatory HRM interventions from the corporate level in such highly dispersed organisations. Other studies in this industry have identified that the majority of senior subsidiary managers come from a very limited labour pool with specific international educational and national backgrounds (Gannon et al., 2015; Eissner & Gannon, 2018) and less emphasis is placed on host country knowledge and expertise so HCN mentors may be less valuable in this context.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Drawing on models of socialisation and mentoring this article answers the research questions outlined earlier and contributes new insights on the corporate perspective of mentoring and socialisation in an industry with specific issues of mobility of human resources and growth. A vicious cycle appears where these international organisations expand through asset light market entry modes to build diverse and dispersed portfolios of subsidiaries. These portfolios place substantial demands on the organisations to develop and deploy managers who will operate these

subsidiaries. However, the expanding size and networked nature of these companies means that while corporate HRM executives highly prize mentoring, they feel relatively impotent in determining and co-ordinating the socialisation of the managers who will manage the subsidiaries and realise their firms' international ambitions. The international nature of the industry means mentoring is promoted to support what is viewed as the natural sociability of managers amidst expectations of career mobility. These elevated mobility levels encourage managers to naturally 'look out for' each other, value professional connections and informally mentor where and whenever possible. Informal mentoring is further fostered by the corporations themselves, although for a few companies augmenting informal mentoring with formal mentoring initiatives is undertaken for their most scarce, mobile and valuable managerial resources. However, these formal interventions are difficult to coordinate and enact due to the disparate nature of the companies involved and further reinforce the reinforcement of informal mentoring.

No other studies have identified the way industry growth and internationalisation shapes socialisation creating a hybrid version of the individualised and institutionalised model with mentoring at its core. Mentoring itself is viewed as a worthwhile way of developing social capital and supportive professional networks but difficult to accomplish under the growth and structural features identified. These issues allow individuals to prosper where they move frequently between subsidiaries, and as such, the capital they accrue becomes an organisational asset supporting other managerial resources. Multiple mentors across formal and informal mentoring approaches appear to play a role in this industry with complex professional networks of disparate subsidiaries and devolved ownership, however unlike other studies there appeared to be no specific harnessing of host versus home country mentors for different aspects of support for international managers (Toh et al., 2012; Zhuang et al., 2013).

The implications of these findings for senior HRM practitioners is that without developing coherency and continued communication between head offices, regional offices and subsidiaries practices which can support socialisation, it may be discarded at the expense of custom and practice informal mentoring approaches. Informal mentoring may be part of the wider industry culture; however, there are also issues regarding informal mentoring which suggest those from diverse backgrounds are less likely to benefit from informal mentoring. By evaluating and sharing the short, medium and long-term outcomes of formal mentoring schemes for specific groups of managerial resources (those identified as strategic human resources or talent), HRM executives may be able to secure support and resources for fairer formal mentoring interventions. Investing in formal mentoring schemes also appears more likely to be championed where systems are there to monitor and evaluate retention and diversity agendas and provide tracked evidence of successful mentoring, alongside the softer and intangible benefits. Encouraging executives to become champions of formal mentoring initiatives appears to be a key mechanism for more overt socialisation support through mentoring mobile managers.

This study only examined senior corporate executives' insights of socialisation and mentoring in eight international hospitality companies and therefore there are limitations to the findings in terms of a corporate perspective and size of sample. Further research is warranted on the exact techniques managers value as they develop their careers and networks in this international sector. The views and experiences of subsidiary level HRM and operational managers would also provide additional perspective and capture the intermediary level of support between managers and the corporate executive insight gained in this study of how companies can capitalise on mentoring in highly dispersed multinationals.

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