Third Culture Kids in the midst of Organizational Change and Performance

A literature review on Third Culture Kids, Organizational Change and Performance Management

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07 June 2011
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1. Introduction

The world we live in today is characterized by the mobility and globalization of people. This is strongly connected to the globalization of the economic market. Outsourcing is one result and the reason why organizations send expats into, for example, third world countries. Business profits aside, organizational members forget that the most valuable outcome is the children of the expats. Moving with their parents to a completely new culture and sending them, in most cases, to private schools teaches these children a completely new way to look at life and social dynamics. Moreover, they attain a set of certain characteristics that can be especially beneficial in organizational change settings. These children are called “third culture kids” or “TCKs” and my thesis focuses on the relationship between these kids and organizational change.

My research is aimed to be an interdisciplinary approach between social sciences and organization studies. Whenever we speak about people and organizations it is important to keep in mind that we are talking about dynamic processes that are constantly undergoing change. To support this point, Arthur D. Little surveyed 350 business executives across all major industries in the US and found that each of them is in a major change process and 80 percent even expect to go through another major change within the next few years (Maira & Scott-Morgan, 1997, p. 1). Three major trends are shaping change processes in organizations: globalization, information technology, and managerial innovation (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 4). A major change in the past decade was the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which caused organizations to adapt and change drastically. Moreover, with the growing trend of globalization and outsourcing they will have to face many new challenges. One of the biggest challenges for firms is to find enough qualified people for foreign assignments (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998, p. 394) that can handle not only the challenges of technological, but also cultural changes.

Changes in an organization occur because of external environmental factors as well as internal issues. External as well as internal developments can affect an organization's need to change. The external macroeconomic factors that play a role in this research
are the political, environmental, socio-cultural, technological, and legal issues. All of these factors are interconnected when talking about organizational change. They influence mixing of cultures and globalization, which have a large effect on an organization’s workforce and hence the organization’s overall performance. Vice versa, the workforce is an internal factor that has an effect on organizational change. Employees and managers can show resistance to change, as well as promote it and help the organization to reach a competitive advantage in the market place.

New management theory is founded on the idea that processes are no longer the key factor of successful change, but people are the ones that learn and cause processes to improve. Thus, only people are the ones that seek change and make it happen (Maira & Scott-Morgan, 1997, p. 4) and are hence the key variable in looking at successful change implementation. It is vital to take this into consideration, because a successful change will again have a positive influence on organizational performance. Furthermore, there is increasing interdependence between people, organizations, and communities. Without doubt contemporary work in organization development is becoming more and more multifaceted, multidimensional, and multi-focused. Current research suggests that good employees and managers are a key factor in obtaining a global competitive advantage (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999; Selmer & Lam, 2003).

The emerging management tool to reach the desired outcomes is performance management (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). It refers to the effective management of teams and individuals in contributing to organizational success and high performance (Armstrong & Baron, 2005, p. 2). Hence, it is interesting to look at how performance management ensures that people are adding value to the organization and conversely adding business value (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2009, p. 3). Additionally, Lam (2003) suggests, “people are key to obtaining a global competitive advantage for any business firm and that expatriation is an important step toward becoming a global leader”. This is why it is vital to analyze what has changed for organizations and what the ideal worker would look like. I suggest that the ideal worker is a “Third Culture Kid” and I will thus analyze the typical characteristics of a Third
Culture Kid and how they can adapt to the organization and ultimately lead to a successful outcome. Therefore I ask:

_What is the role of employees and, in particular, TCKs in organizational performance?_

A great deal of research focuses on the distinct characteristics of TCKs due to their unique cultural and educational background. Pollock and Killham (1990) explain that “TCKs, because of their broad international perspective, have much to contribute to a future global society. ‘We have to recognize that part of the role of third-cultured people of today is to be the culture bridge and culture brokers for the whole generation. The Global Nomad of today is the prototype of the citizen of the 21st century’” (Hayden & Thompson, 1998, p. 30). The reason for this is that TCKs are open, understanding of cultural behaviors, cultural bridges, multilingual, and able to think outside of the box (Ho, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). These characteristics are mainly developed through experience, but also the private international schools many children attend, have a large impact on the skill development and facilitation.

TCKs were only recognized as a distinct group of young adults when Ruth Hill Useem coined the term in the 1960s when spending time in India with her three kids. The term “third culture” refers to learning how to relate to another culture. Often people underestimate the difficulties TCKs have growing up in another culture and then returning home, but also the rich experiences they carry with them. But, this is exactly the bundle of experiences that separates TCKs from their peers in their home countries and a valuable source of knowledge for companies. Consequently, my research will answer the following question:

_What is known in the literature about the role of employees and, in particular, TCKs in organizational change and performance?_
1.1 Relevance

Due to the ability of TCKs to blend in, which is why they are often compared to a cultural “chameleon” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 100, 102), they have been almost invisible to the public eye in the last years. Although, they are becoming more prominent now, such as Managers or politicians, they still constitute a small proportion of society. They make up about two percent of the American population, but are assumed to have been a rich resource (Useem and Cottrell, 1993). By relating Americans to the rest of the world and interpret the outside world to the immediate world in which they live, TCKs play an important role in society as “cultural bridges” (Killham, 1990; Hayden & Thompson, 1998) and significant proportions of them actually do this for a living (Useem and Cottrell, 1993). The most famous American TCK is President Barack Obama, who spent a significant part of his childhood growing up in Indonesia, and who raised awareness in the world aware that this type of childhood exists (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 5). Part of the discussion by TV pundits throughout the 2008 presidential campaign in the United States centered on how President Obama’s background reflected a change happening around the world.

With TCKs emerging in valuable positions in society it is vital to understand their unique characteristics and how to best make use of them. Thus, this topic is relevant on a societal, economic, cultural and political level and has not received enough attention in research yet. International as well as local organizations, TCKs, Adult TCKs (ATCKs), organization development practitioners, Human Resources, Managers and the Global Market will benefit from this information and help them to make more informed decisions in the future. Also, this paper is an integrative literature review that addresses new and emerging topics that benefit from a holistic conceptualization and synthesis of recent literature. I will synthesize the social and cultural aspects with organization theory, and more specifically performance management. Therefore, from a business perspective it should help to raise awareness of the importance of choosing the right worker that can help the company to succeed in the market.
The next section of this paper contains a review of the literature and theory on organization development, organizational change, performance management, and third culture kids. I start with presenting definitions, manifestations, and causes of change as they are generally described. Then, I introduce my own model that synthesizes all three concepts. In the following section, I present the method that was used in this study. Results are presented in the subsequent section where I investigate whether my model is supported by empirical and theoretical material. Two sub-questions guide this investigation. The questions function as a guiding line throughout the entire paper and highlight the connection between the concepts. I start the last with conclusions and explanations of the results. Here, I also discuss implications for practitioners and future research.

2. Theory

2.1 Organization Development

The framework of this research is organization development (OD) within which organizational change and performance management will be discussed as a way to prove that TCKs are a good fit for an organization. OD provides a valuable reference point, because it applies to changes in structure, strategy, or processes of an entire organization (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 2). Cummings and Worley (2009) identified the importance of OD, because it focuses “on how the organization relates to a wider environment and on how those relationships can be improved. It might include changes both in the grouping of people to perform tasks (structure) and in methods of communicating and solving problems (process) to support changes in strategy.” Organization development is an effort that is; “(1) planned, (2) organization-wide, and (3) managed from the top, to (4) increase organization effectiveness and health through (5) planned interventions in the organization’s ‘processes’, using behavioral science knowledge” (Beckhard, 1969, p. 9). This definition emphasizes the close connection between organization theory and social sciences.
All in all, Cummings and Worley (2009) believe that the field is highly influenced by globalization and information technology trends, which is generating a whole new set of OD practices. In addition, OD must adapt its methods to the technology being used in organizations. As a result, OD needs to manage change processes in cyberspace as well as face-to-face in multicultural settings.

2.2 Organizational Change

Organizational change involves, by definition, a transformation of an organization between two points in time. For most analysts, the key aspect of change comes from comparing the organization before and after the transformation. Making such a comparison constitutes an analysis of the content of organizational change. It assesses what actually differs in the organization at the second point in time. On the basis of content, major changes consist of transformations that involve many elements of structure or those that entail radical shifts in a single element of structure.

Smith (1998) described organization development as "[...] a system wide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organizational effectiveness" (Smith, 1998, p. 261). Change in this paper also refers to societal and cultural change that inevitably affects organizations, together with cultural mixing, education, and travelling and the importance of developing a certain skill set. Because change can refer to a wide variety of processes in an organization, I mainly refer to planned change and only focus on its impact within the organization.

Kurt Lewin developed one of the earliest models of planned change (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 23). He perceived change as modification of those forces keeping a system’s behavior stable. He describes three steps that make up the change process: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Generally, they refer to moving the organization from point one to point two. Lewin’s model provides a general framework for understanding organizational change.
Burke and Litman (1992) developed a content model (Figure 1) of organizational change and performance that predicts individual and organization performance and deals with organizational conditions, that is to say the internal and external factors as mentioned before, as well as the resultant effects (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999, p. 296). The arrows in the model specify which organizational variable influences more directly which other variables and distinguishes between transformational and transactional dynamics in the change process (Burke & Litman, 1992, p. 6).

The model shows the transformational process from an external pressure to the organization’s performance. The external environment in this case causes the organization to change. Consequently, the management practice, performance management, influences the work unit climate, motivation and ultimately the overall performance of the organization. Cummings and Worley (2009) said that, “[an]
organization’s performance responds to the needs of external groups, such as stockholders, customers, suppliers, and government agencies, which provide the organization with resources and legitimacy”.

For organizations it is vital to analyze the change in their environment and find solutions for it, meaning: finding a way to explore, manage, and implement it. OD and change management addresses the effective implementation of planned change respectively (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p.3). A new idea is that of performance management where people are key factors in successful change processes in organizations.

In conclusion, this model serves as a starting point for my own model and helps validate the relationship between organizational change, performance management, and TCKs.

2.3 Performance Management

Change is necessary and inevitable, but can only be successful when people throughout the organization are ready for it. A common OD practice is performance management. It has emerged as a managerial innovation as a response to globalization and information technology trends and has then accelerated their impact on organizations (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 5).

Performance management (PM) is led by the desire to develop individuals, pay rewards to outcome performance, as well as aligning behavior and values (CIPD, 2009, p. 2). It is used whenever people come together to reach a desired outcome. More specifically, Armstrong and Baron (1998) defined it as a “strategic and integrated approach to increasing the effectiveness of organizations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors”.

It is important to view this as a tool for managers to direct skill and effort and how organizations can compile a number of elements that create a performance management process that is adaptable to change and appropriate for their talent pool
In particular, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) defines performance management as “[a] strategy which related to every activity of the organization set in the context of its human resources policies, culture, style and communications systems. The nature of the strategy depends on the organizational context and can vary from organization to organization”. What is stressed is the alignment of what the individual does and what the organization needs (CIPD, 2009, p. 2), which consequently directs personal and organizational goals in the same direction leading to increased performance and profitability (Armstrong & Baron, 2005).

Although, it is not yet possible to prove statistically that PM has a positive impact on organizational effectiveness, it is a legitimate approach to strategic management, because the strength of opinions among managers and the examples of practice collected by other means do indicate that it is felt to play a positive role in the majority of organizations. What is more, this approach reconciles the widespread belief of the importance of people in the organization with management tactics, which show that there is a strong link between investing in employees and stock market performance (Blimes, Wetzker & Xhonneux, 1997).

2.4 Third Culture Kids

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are raised in a completely different way than their peers from their home countries. Pollock (1989) developed the following definition: “A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCKs life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 13).

The traditional TCKs (Figure 3) all have different origins, distinctive styles and stratification systems yet share some fundamentals that transcended those differences (Useem, 1973, p. 122). Common fundamentals are a cross-cultural lifestyle, high
mobility, expected repatriation, and a “system identity”, meaning a sponsoring organization or business (Van Reken & Bethel, 2007, p. 2). Also, they live a significant amount of time in their most critical developmental years abroad and develop a new way of looking at culture (Van Reken & Bethel, 2007, p.2). Moreover, they form their identity as a third culture kid and citizen of the world which endows them with a set of unique characteristics.

Some of these characteristics will be extremely useful in an organizational setting later on, but it is important to mention here that I assume differences among the traditional TCKs in sight of job preferences.

2.5 Developed Model

Furthermore, I will analyze the set of characteristics of TCKs in relationship to organizational change and performance management. My model (Figure 2) will thus take this shape:
Performance management theory is the intervening variable that explains the relationship between organizational change and TCKs. The arrow between organizational change and TCKs point both ways, because one of the reasons why TCKs exist in the first place is because of the organizational changes that have been taking place for a while and with the growing demand of expats organizations have overlooked the most valuable outcome of sending their managers abroad: the manager’s children. Hence, the arrow pointing from TCKs towards organizational change points to the idea that they are a valuable source of success. Naturally, this is all measured in relevance to organizational performance; although this will not be tested empirically it is discussed at length in this paper.

3. Methods Section

This study is an integrative literature review that explores literature in the field of organization development, organizational change, and social sciences. Not many studies have been conducted in the field of TCKs and even less in TCKs and their position in an organizational setting. The topics discussed are relatively new and would benefit from a holistic conceptualization. Thus, after reviewing the representative literature I will synthesize the concepts to come to a new conclusion.
In my research, the keywords I was looking for were: Organizational change, Performance Management, Prototype worker, and Third Culture Kids. I retrieved my information from some key books related to the concepts under discussion, but mostly articles from Jstor, Sage, Emerald, and Get It!\(^1\). Additionally, I could also find some information on websites of Management Institutions, such as CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development), that were publishing articles about the discussed concepts and therefore broadened my search in order to find as much information on the topic as possible. Lastly, I took a thesis related subject called “Organization Development” at Tilburg University that helped me gain more in-depth knowledge about the implementation of organizational change practices.

There is no literature that combines all three concepts which is why I had to choose articles addressing current environmental changes and focusing on new management theory, assuming that people are a key variable in organizational processes. Accordingly, the main criterion for selecting articles was the relation to the three concepts of organizational change, performance management, and TCKs. Appendix A offers an overview of all articles I used and what their main findings were.

I also entered all articles in a concept matrix in alphabetical order. Table 1 shows the results and illustrates the interconnectedness of the three main concepts:

\(^{1}\) Tilburg University Library Search Engine
### Table 1 Concept Matrix Augmented with Units of Analysis

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Cummings and Worley (2009) noted that organizations could be diagnosed at three levels of analysis: organizational, group, and individual. Firstly, the organizational level examines the design of the company’s strategy, structure, and processes. Next, the group level tries to explain structural features and social processes that characterize the design and devices for structuring interactions among members, subdivisions or analytical components, such as specialization, communication networks, and hierarchy. Third, on the individual level, the impact on the individual, his or her job and position as well as the personal characteristics and the individual’s impact on the environment is investigated.

The background of the crosses is shaded in order to show graphically that I was not able to find any literature connecting all three concepts. Instead, it is possible to see that all three concepts are interconnected and there is literature talking about OC and PM, as well as literature referring to OC and TCKs. But, the table also shows that there is no literature connecting PM and TCKs.

Considering that PM is interested in developing skills and finding talents, it seems that TCKs have not yet caught the attention of PM developers and this paper could function as a starting point for future research. What may be the problem here is that TCKs and PM are relatively new concepts that have not yet received much attention in research.
yet. Appendix B gives a more detailed overview of the publishing years and supports the fact that PM is the newest concept and still requires a great deal of research. Although, TCKs have been studied for a while, the early publications merely provide definitions and individual examples, whereas the later articles compile more scientific knowledge and research.

Table 1 also shows that PM often illustrates the benefits of the organization as well as the individual, but disregards the influence on groups. The results will demonstrate that organizations are turning toward more team-based structures to adapt quicker to changes and profit from people’s knowledge more effectively.

4. Results

I will now present the results of the literature review with the help of sub-questions. The results explain the synthesis between the three concepts and systematically answer the question: What is known in the literature about the role of employees and, in particular, TCKs in organizational change and performance?

This question is more principally a combination of two sub-questions: First, the results will focus on answering the relationship between employees, and in particular TCKs, and their role in organizational change processes. Results will show that because of the TCKs skills it is easier for them to adapt to change. Second, the focus will shift to the organization’s performance and how PM and TCKs help increase the overall performance as well as give the company a competitive edge. The model that I developed will guide the argumentation and attention of this study.

4.1 The Role of Employees in Organizational Change

Resistance to change is not a new concept and is found in many organizations due to the fact that change interrupts normal patterns of an organization and calls for participants to enact new patterns, involving interplay of deliberate and emergent
processes that can be highly ambiguous (Ford, Ford & D’Amelio, 2008, p. 363). Thus, participants must be ready for the upcoming challenges and adapt to the new situation. Again, it is important that the employees and the organization are a good match, meaning not resisting, but moving forward together. This leads to the first question:

**What is the role of employees and, in particular, TCKs in organizations change projects?**

In order to answer this question it is important to look at the relationship between organizational change and TCKs and more specifically focus on how employees can adapt to change. Next, I look at the impact of organizational change on PM and more specifically which characteristics are necessary for a worker’s profile today. Finally, I study the connection between PM and TCKs and answer the question why TCKs are a good fit for the work place.

**4.1.1 Organizational Change and TCKs**

Employees are the vital change agents that need to be ready for change. Change-readiness requires five basic criteria where people must feel that (Maira & Scott-Morgan, 1997, p. 45):

- Change is necessary
- The proposed change is appropriate
- As individuals, they have been acknowledged
- They have the skills to achieve the goals
- The “system” supports the required behavior

Only when all five criteria are met it is possible for the organization to achieve the transformation (Maira & Scott-Morgan, 1997, p. 45). As mentioned before, the role of the employees is to initiate change and/or implement and support it accordingly. More specifically, changes in an organization are steered by change agents. Organizational
members make changes, assess the results, and make necessary adjustments as they move the organization toward the new vision (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 29).

Change agents are usually managers, as most changes are decided on the top level and are not in the hands of the employees. Organizations that must adopt frequent management changes tend to use a top-down approach and mechanistic structure (Daft, 2009, pp. 429). This is true particularly when there are changes related to decentralization, downsizing, and restructuring (Daft, 2009, pp. 429). This approach is more likely to meet with resistance from employees, because in a top-down approach employees are not involved in the decision making process. Thus, it is vital to make sure that they are ready for change and even promote it among co-workers.

The main idea of the five basic criteria is that employees understand the necessity of change and support it. Adapting to change is difficult for most people due to the fact that humans are creatures of habit. So, a good employee would be someone who is either used to change or has characteristics that make him less resistant. This means that an organization needs to hire selectively and needs to know exactly which characteristics to look for in their future employees. The important characteristics are subsequently those that add to the skills to achieve the goal and adapt to the changes. This is why it is critical to think about the next question: How can employees adapt to changes?

An adaptive individual is one who is able to refocus the mind in new directions. This proves to be difficult for many people, because of the five fears of change as identified by psychologist Dr. O’Grady (1993)². These worries are also known as the fears of the unknown, failure, commitment, disapproval, and success. Fear of the unknown is the unspoken message from society that says when change occurs, you will lose control. Connected to this is the fear of failure which tells us that if we commit to goals for change, there is a chance for failure. Next is the fear of commitment which forces an answer to tough personal questions, such as personal goals. Consequently, commitment to one option feels like eliminating other options. Fear of disapproval bears

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² Dr. Dennis O’Grady is a practicing psychologist, professional speaker, trainer, newspaper columnist, and family psychotherapist who provides business consultations and keynotes in the US. He is an example of a successful OD practitioner.
a risk in the sense that change could be undesirable and that your own change also forces others to change in relationship to you. Lastly, people may be afraid of success, because it may require higher demands of oneself and will it be possible to sustain this success. It is possible to conquer your fears through intensive training³ and refocus your mind in new directions.

To conclude, people need to learn how to conquer their fears in order to be able to understand the necessity of change as well as adapt to it. While it is possible to train this, TCKs already grow up with this skill. Due to their highly mobile lifestyle and constant changing of people around them, schools they visit, or countries they live in, they learn to adapt rather quickly. Thus, TCKs do not view organizational change as an obstacle, but rather as a part of life and necessity to move forward.

4.1.2 Organizational Change and Performance Management

Changes in an organization are especially challenging for PM. They can cause fear in employees and managers are expected to eliminate possible areas of uncertainty. PM is a tool to build confidence and self-esteem of employees in order to reach their full potential and as a result increase organizational performance. The main purpose of PM should then be to prepare employees for changes and make sure that they are ready for them. For instance, one of the criteria for change readiness was individual acknowledgement. This is a manager’s and change agent’s task and should not be underestimated. So, organizational change impacts the way managers treat their workers and especially how they prepare them for change.

³ Dr. Dennis O'Grady delivers TALK2ME© communication workshops that provide a Communication Toolbox full of positive communication tools, to executive, managerial, and supervisory groups.
Change readiness also depends from worker to worker and their personal experiences. Above, I elucidated that TCKs grow up with constant changes and are thus more likely to have the ability to change. This can save time and costs and as a cultural bridge TCKs could even have a positive impact on the people around them and their fears. As a result, PM recognizes the ability to adapt to change of employees and direct it in the most productive manner.

Additionally, O’Grady also believes that the ability to change is one of the most important skills to have today. The ability to change is especially important today, because the 21st century is characterized as globalized, multicultural, ambiguous, highly complex, and dynamic (Mendenhall, 2008). In such a world it is no longer possible to rely on the simple mechanics before the introduction of ICT and it is generally agreed upon that the driving force of the 21st century is the intellectual capital of citizens (Metiri Group). Besides having the ability to change the Metiri Group compiled a list of 21st century worker skills from the many excellent works from the last 20 years, as well as from contemporary literature, emerging research and the voice of representatives from education, business and industry. It is intended to serve as a bridge across public, business, industry, and education sectors through common definitions and contexts for the skills most needed by students and, more importantly, workers in the emerging digital age. Thus, the skills needed are:

- Basic, scientific and technological literacies
- Visual and information literacy
- Cultural literacy and global awareness
- Adaptability/Managing complexity and self-direction
- Curiosity, creativity and risk-taking
- Higher order thinking and sound reasoning
- Teaming and collaboration
- Personal and social responsibility
- Interactive communication

Moreover, the 21st century worker will need to (20smoney, 2009):
• work for many companies throughout his career
• have a wide range of skills and perform a wide range of duties
• know that job security is not guaranteed, nor is it expected

These skills refer to higher educated workers and exclude working practices that do not change often. So, on the bottom line, a fit worker needs to be highly educated and TCKs are four times more likely to earn a Bachelor’s degree (Useem & Cottrell, 1999). In conclusion, PM is an answer to organizational change and the problem connected to it and helps to fully utilize the skills and characteristics inherited in employees, and more specifically TCKs.

4.1.3 TCKs and Performance Management

Performance management is a tool to help managers prepare their employees for change and help them in the transformational phase. Investing in employees does not only refer to training and rewarding existing employees, but what is more, PM pays special attention to employee’s talents and their further development. The problem with investing time and money in employees is that nowadays we see that there is less to almost no job security and it may happen that you will lose the worker after extensive training. TCKs need less training in a lot of areas, such as cross-cultural communication, mobility, and adaptability, which are often consequences of change. So, particularly TCKs have a lot of talents inherited which means that they require less training.

Thus, it is important to match an employee’s profile with the job profile. Selective hiring is identified as a core practice of a successful organization (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999, p. 40). The organization needs to know exactly what are the most critical skills and
attributes for applicants in order to select the appropriate match (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999, p. 41). Most importantly, organizations should screen for attributes that are more difficult to change through training and should emphasize qualities that actually differentiate among those in the applicant pool (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999, p. 41). To narrow this down I ask: \textit{Why are TCKs a good fit for the workplace?}

One quality that Pfeffer and Veiga (1999) also defined is self-managed teams. Organizations today change towards team-based structures, which are largely successful because all of the people in the firm feel accountable and responsible. More importantly, by substituting peer for hierarchical control, teams allow the removal of layers of hierarchy and absorption of administrative task, which consequently increases savings in management overhead. Teams are at the basis of course a pool of ideas, which can, when managed accordingly, come up with better and more creative solutions to problems (Pfeffer and Veiga, 1999, p. 42).

There are four dimensions of group design: task structure, group composition, team functioning, and performance norms (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 109). Team structure is concerned with how the group’s work is designed, while group composition concerns the membership of groups. Group members can differ on various dimensions, such as age, education, experience, skills, and abilities. These dimensions influence the way people behave and relate to each other. Team functioning is the underlying basis of a group life. Group composition and performance norms have an impact on the quality of task performance. Performance norms are thus the beliefs of members how the group should perform the task to reach a certain outcome (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 109).

Naturally, high performance teams require a set of skills and knowledge that can be acquired through training (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999, p. 43). Training can be a source of competitive advantage in a large number of industries for companies that have the wisdom to use it (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999, p. 43). But, skill training and talent development need to be repeated and can be costly, which is why it is important to hire selectively.
Cummings and Worley (2009) note that, “job design must fit job inputs to produce effective job outputs”. They draw from past research that “job design should fit the personal characteristics of the jobholders if they are to perform effectively and derive satisfaction from work”.

What is important now is to match the identified characteristics for a fit worker today with the skills of a TCK. This will show whether TCKs actually have a similar set of skills and argue for the fact that they are a fit worker. The following table (Figure 4, next page) summarizes the skills I have identified as the important worker skills and the TCKs characteristics derived from the literature.
PM can be used to match the job description with a fitting future employee by analyzing the most important aspects that are more difficult to train. But, characteristics and skills alone are not the decisive factor. The most important factor of choosing an employee is how he or she will help increase organizational performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills needed</th>
<th>Skill description</th>
<th>TCKs characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural literacy and global awareness</td>
<td>there is a greater necessity for knowing, understanding and appreciating other cultures</td>
<td>Cultural bridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability/Managing complexity and self-direction</td>
<td>Globalization and the Web are inherently complex, accelerating the pace of change in today's world. Interaction in such an environment requires individuals to be able to identify and react to changing conditions independently</td>
<td>Cultural chameleons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity, creativity and risk-taking</td>
<td>Curiosity fuels lifelong learning as it contributes to the quality of life, and to the intellectual capital of the country. Equally as important is risk taking—without which there would be few quantum leaps in discoveries, inventions, and learning.</td>
<td>Willingness to learn and think outside of the box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher order thinking and sound reasoning</td>
<td>Thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn and reasoning as well as plan, design, execute, and evaluate solutions.</td>
<td>Think outside of the box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaming and collaboration</td>
<td>need for teaming of specialists to accomplish complex tasks in ways that are efficient, effective and timely</td>
<td>Cultural bridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and social responsibility</td>
<td>society needs to advance ethics and values to guide the application of science and technology in society and thus it is important grasp this responsibility and contribute as informed citizens at all levels</td>
<td>Prototype citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive communication</td>
<td>new dimensions introduced through global communication include scheduling over time zones, cultural diversity, and language issues</td>
<td>Multilingual, cultural bridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Job security is no longer guaranteed, nor is it expected, so people will need to work for many companies throughout their career.</td>
<td>Mobility, rootlessness and restlessness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 The Role of Employees in Performance

I have analyzed the characteristics of a fit worker for an organization undergoing change. PM is a good tool to select the right person for a job, to maintain their level of motivation, and further develop their skills. Ultimately, this management tool will increase organizational performance through the help of the employees. Thus:

What is the role of employees and, in particular, TCKs in organizational performance?

Organizational performance is dependent upon maximizing profit, limiting costs, and having a work force that is adaptable to change. Change adaptability saves costs and time, because it is easier to implement change from a top-down approach.

Although all traditional TCKs share some fundamentals, I argue that especially the corporate kids have a higher affluence to work in organizations later on due to their experience abroad. This is due to the fact that the “sponsor” made a difference in the type of family life and schooling that the corporate kids experienced abroad (Useem & Cottrell, 1999). Selmer and Lam (2003) also note the fact that “[a]s [the TCKs] overseas experience grows and enriches them, [they] may want to continue that inspiring
experience by preferring a future internationally mobile career, avoiding to settle down in any one place” and found a positive correlation between TCKs, international career preferences, and lower settling down preferences. The study was limited to British expatriate children living in Hong Kong, and it is one of the only empirical studies testing TCKs as future business expatriates. To generalize this among all TCKs and all jobs is simple exaggeration, but it points towards the right direction. This also does not mean that a TCK with, for example, a missionary background, do not want to pursue a career in an international organization. Selmer and Lam (2003) also confirm the third-cultureness of these kids and the development of the common characteristics. The most desirable characteristics are cross-cultural communication skills, mobility, and adaptability (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 112).

4.2.1 Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication skills refer to three different concepts: effective cross-cultural communication, multilingualism, and cultural bridging. Firstly, TCKs have learned to communicate effectively with other cultures and are sensitive towards other customs and traditions (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 111). They have learned that particularly in cross-cultural situations it is vital to be a careful observer and then try to comprehend where other people are coming from and what are the underlying reasons for their acting (Pollock & Van Reken, p. 115). Living in other countries means often to not understand why other people are doing things differently, and that you can learn to relate to this (Pollock & Van Reken, p. 115). Hence, TCKs develop high sensitivity towards cultural cues and body language as well as high listening skills (Ho, 2009). Consequently, this helps them to adept to out of the box thinking (Ho, 2009).

Secondly, cross-cultural communication simply means speaking different languages. Many TCKs are fluent in more than one language and know more than two (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 118; Zilber, 2004, p. 17). Ho (2009) elaborates that; “over 50% of TCKs speak a second language with many of these boasting fluency in several”.

Lastly, the most desirable skill is that of the cultural bridges which is most effective in teamwork. Culturally diverse teams are believed to bring about the most creative
solutions to problems, but also to have the most difficulties in understanding one another. TCKs can be added to a culturally diverse team in order to “bridge” cultural gaps (Ho, 2009; Zilber, 2004, p. 18). Furthermore, Pollock and Van Reken (2009) remark that “this ability to be a bridge between different groups of people can be useful in helping their company or organization speak with a more human voice in the local community and be more sensitive to the dynamics of potentially stressful situations in the international work environment”. This gives them a highly competitive advantage in nowadays job market where it is also asked of employees to have a sense of mobility.

4.2.2 Mobility

TCKs are used to moving and thus have a high sense of mobility (Zilber, 2004, p. 18), but often experience feelings of rootlessness and restlessness later on (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 123). A vast majority even put their studies on hold for a while to travel more (Useem & Cottrell, 1999). They constantly seek new challenges and need a lot of variety in their daily lives in order not to feel restless. Employers may find it difficult to retain them and that rootlessness and restlessness could cause problems, which is why employers should keep in mind that TCKs are a group of individuals defined by their mobility. Thus, if they want to benefit from their contributions, they will need to engage their interests or risk losing them.

4.2.3 Adaptability

Travelling and moving to new places requires the ability to adapt. Changes are often met with resistance in employees, but TCKs need changes in order to maintain their level of enthusiasm as well as complexity. Change is one of the most constant variables in a TCKs life and results in a strong sense of inner confidence and self-reliance which helps them cope with new situations (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 116). When speaking of adaptability, I also refer to the ability to blend in with the environment. TCKs manage to do this almost seamlessly which is why they are often called cultural chameleons (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 118; Zilber, 2004, p. 17). Cultural chameleons are important in organizations today and the importance of cultural
adjustment to succeed on international assignments is widely recognized (Selmer & Lam, 2003, p. 430).

All in all, in today’s globalized market, there is an increased demand of young adults with international experience, multilingual capability, cross-cultural understanding, adaptability, and mobility. Mobility and adaptability help TCKs cope with organizational change better than most employees and they are less likely to show resistance. One could even go as far to say that TCKs need change in order to want to stay in an organization and become a better and more motivated worker.

They can furthermore help managers as change agents to steer the change process in the right direction and help other organizational members understand the importance and necessity of change. Through PM managers can identify TCKs strengths and weaknesses and find the right place for them within the organizational dimensions. So, a TCK that is especially strong in cross-cultural understanding, multilingual capability, and adaptability will function good as cultural bridges in teams or groups and help reduce biases and increase team performance. Assuming that organizations will be more and more team based it is vital to boost team performance in order to increase overall organizational performance. Last, organizations looking to change in terms of outsourcing and internationalization, TCKs can be the solution for finding a fit expat.

5. Discussion

First, it is clear that this research has a specific focus and disregards a lot of concepts that could play a role in the interactions between the variables. For example, job selection is of course not only based on a person’s skills and characteristics, but for many positions and jobs a person’s personality and social network can play a major role in the selection process. Although, one could argue that many TCKs are rather open and get along with people from various backgrounds and cultures, it is not proven whether this is also true for the work environment.
Next, I want to discuss two points concerning this research: biases and empirical studies. With biases I refer to the assumption that all TCKs gain these characteristics and that I do not discuss extensively the negative side effects of a global lifestyle.

I mention rootlessness and restlessness that can also be positive attributed, but I do not take into account the many children that suffer from depression later on. The reasons for depression are often the fact that they do not have one home to return to and often their families are scattered around the world. So, on the one hand they search for a place they call home and on the other hand they keep a feeling of wanting to move on. This can pose various difficulties at work, as they tend to switch jobs a lot and get bored rather easily. Moreover, restlessness and rootlessness make it hard to many TCKs to build long-lasting relationships. This is because TCKs experienced that all relationships end at one point or another and they often sabotage relationships in order to maintain their belief system and identity.

Next, studies on TCKs are at the beginning and thus still focus more on the basis of TCK’s lifestyle, skills, and development. There are especially some empirical studies on how their skills develop in human development theories. This is vital in assessing differences and similarities among TCKs, but there are not many studies that focus on how TCKs use their skills in a workplace environment or society.

Another problem is that TCKs have problems settling down in their home country, where they could be valuable. Many TCKs do not receive support when they have to return to their home countries. So, organizations not only have to recognize them as a valuable input, but they also have to make sure that they can transition smoothly. Thus, companies, schools, or governments should support organizations, such as tckworld.com that provide information for TCKs and help them understand their situation better and let them know that they are not alone, and that there is a place for them in this world.

TCK refers to a small amount of people in a country, although I could only find data for the US. With support organizations or facebook groups it might be possible to get a

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4 Cameron, R. (2003). The Ecology of Third Culture Kids. VDM
better idea of how many children/adolescents/adults we are talking about. There are a lot of stories, books and movies concerning this topic, mainly written from a third culture kid perspective. I will follow in these shoes with this thesis, as I am a TCK as well. I tried to eliminate any kind of bias from my side by restricting myself to academic sources of TCKs.

Next, empirical studies, should try to find ways to support OD practices, such as PM and organizational change processes. In theory many practices make sense, but it is vital to test them in reality in order to find the little details that may change the view. Moreover, researchers should try to identify OD practices in the East. This is also one argument why I think that it is so essential to study these concepts empirically. Unfortunately, I had to base my research mainly on European and North American studies. The disadvantage is that it is a one-sided argument, because all assumptions are made from a Western point of view with western values. With the assessment of a more worldly view on OD practices, PM could become more effective in the sense that biases decrease due to a larger perspective.

Another difficulty is that although PM receives positive feedback it is not possible to actually assess the performance of managers and workers. Empirical studies should try to focus on how to measure team effective and individual effectiveness. This could further contribute to successful PM due to a more sophisticated reward system.

Consequently, there is still a lot to learn about current trends in organizational change processes and what characteristics make the most suited worker and how to assess these characteristics as well as train and develop them further.

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

This paper has provided a holistic approach to synthesize the literature concerning organization change, performance management, and third culture kids. The results show that with management innovations came new management practices, such as performance management. Through PM it is possible to manage change processes
effectively and successfully in order to increase overall organizational performance. Also, it functions as a tool for managers to direct their worker’s skills in the most profitable way.

Third culture kids have the characteristics a worker needs in order to steer change processes in the right direction. Due to their ability to adapt quicker they show less resistance to change and focus on what is coming next, rather than the current state. Moreover, because of globalization and information technology trends workers need to be mobile and able to communicate effectively also with other cultures. This is even more so important in the international markets today. Thus, TCKs grow up developing these characteristics and since they grow up with a sponsor, such as an organization, they have a higher affiliation to want to work in an international organization. Organizations should recognize this and support the TCKs skills development in order to achieve higher performance. This is especially true for change processes in international settings where TCKs can be a great help.

According to Cummings and Worley (2009), TCKs, OD practitioners, as well as managers and all change agents, “must develop a keen awareness of their own cultural biases, be open to seeing a variety of issues from another perspective, be fluent in the values and assumption of the host country, and understand the economic and political context of business in the host country”. Most people find it difficult to be aware of all of these aspects, but TCKs are already trained and can be even better trained at it and “help navigate the cultural, operational, and political nuances of change in that society”.

What would be interesting is to study individuals according to theories and practices already identified and assess on a case study basis whether they are good examples of this research or not.

In conclusion, the three concepts are synthesized and thus, PM can be used to match the job description with a fitting future employee by analyzing the most important aspects that are more difficult to train and by assessing an employee’s capability to cope with change. In today’s job market there is an increased demand of young adults with international experience, multilingual capability, cross-cultural understanding,
adaptability, and mobility who can fit into an international company and help increase performance. TCKs tend to show all of these characteristics and could satisfy the demand. One idea is to set up a website that matches prospective employees, TCKs, with organizational needs.

All in all, I hope to spark researcher’s interest in studying TCKs especially in relation with performance management and I wish all TCKs good luck with their future careers.
### Appendix

**Appendix A – Literature List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20smoney (2009)</td>
<td>Organizational Change</td>
<td>Characteristics of a “prototype” worker today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenakis, A. A. &amp; Bedeian, A. G. (1999)</td>
<td>Organizational Change</td>
<td>Review of Burke &amp; Litwin’s model Research related to change continues to be responsive to contemporary organizational demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blimes, L., Wetzker, K. &amp; Xhonneux, P. (1997)</td>
<td>Performance Management</td>
<td>There is a strong link between investing in employees and stock market performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caligiuri, P. M. &amp; Cascio, W. (1998)</td>
<td>Organizational Change</td>
<td>One of the biggest challenges for organizations is to find qualified people for foreign assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIPD (2009)</td>
<td>Performance Management</td>
<td>Definition of performance management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daft, R. L. (2009)</td>
<td>Organizational Change</td>
<td>Integrates the most recent thinking about organizations, classic ideas and theories, and real world practice. Top-down approach mostly used for frequent management changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayden, M. &amp; Thompson, F. (1998)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids act as cultural bridges and are the prototype citizen of the 21st century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho, J. (2009)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>TCKs are a valuable addition to a team, because of their unique characteristics (cultural bridge, chameleons, multilingual, adaptability) and will be an important advantage in the global job market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Key Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killham, N. (1990)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>TCKs are important in society as cultural bridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maira, A. &amp; Scott-Morgan, P. (1997)</td>
<td>Organizational Change</td>
<td>Organizations constantly undergo change and people are key in successfully mastering these changes Five criteria of change-readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metiri Group</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>Skills and characteristics needed to be a good worker today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfeffer, J. &amp; Veiga, J. F. (1999)</td>
<td>Performance Management</td>
<td>Identified key factors that help an organization in selecting the right worker and getting the most out of their workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock, D. C. (1989)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>Definition of TCKs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock, D. C. &amp; Killham, N. (1990)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>TCKs have a lot to contribute to a future society, because of their international perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock, D. C. &amp; Van Reken, R. E. (2009)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>Best researched book on TCKs, including their characteristics, where they came from, and how they are beneficial to organizations and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selmer, J. &amp; Lam, H. (2003)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>TCKs aspire an international, highly mobile career There is an empirically proven “third-culturedness” and common characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useem, R. (1973)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>Although all TCKs have different backgrounds they all have common characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useem, R.H. &amp; Cottrell, A.B. (1999)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>TCKs are for-times more likely to earn a Bachelor’s degree and are a valuable source to society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilber, E. (2004)</td>
<td>Third Culture Kids</td>
<td>TCKs are cultural chameleons, bridges, multilingual, cross-culturally experienced, mobile, and adaptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B – Literature Analysis

Number of Articles over Time

Number of Articles per Year
References


Useem, R.H. & Cottrell, A.B. (1999). TCKs four times more likely to earn Bachelor’s degree. *International School Services, 12.*