Karinne Poirey **n°166**
n°166
I.A.E. de Poitiers- CEREGE
20 rue Guillaume VII Le Troubadour
BP 639
F - 86022 Poitiers Cedex

Phone number	33 5 49 45 44 99
Fax number	33 5 49 45 44 90
E-mail	kpoirey@iae.univ-poitiers.fr

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN FRENCH MNCs
(Chercheur Confirmé)

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ABSTRACT

Most of the authors in IHRM characterised it as an "emerging field in its infancy" (Laurent, 1986, Welch, 1994). After reviewing the literature on Multinational Corporations and IHRM, a congruent conceptual model has been developed, including three main recurrent components namely culture, coordination mechanisms and IHRM. Empirical findings, based on a qualitative and quantitative methodology, show first that two main factors define the MNCs : national and corporate culture and geographical differentiation of IHRM policies. They show second that IHRM practices and policies then international managers may be defined as informal coordination mechanisms. Finally, the dimensions and intensity of ethnocentrism were found to vary geographically.

IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN LARGE FRENCH MNCs

The end of the eighties witnessed a significant evolution of the interest in MultiNational Corporations (MNCs) and, concurrently in International Human Resource Management (IHRM). The latter field, mainly studied by North American researchers and more recently by French researchers, is situated at the junction of two fields of research, namely organisation theory and Human Resource Management.

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the field of International Management. Two fields such as Multinational Corporations (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989, Doz & Prahalad, 1991, Hedlund, 1986, Perlmutter, 1969) and International Human Resource Management (Adler, 1983, 1992, Dowling & Schuler, 1990, Harzing & Van Ruysseveldt, 1995, Laurent, 1986, Welch, 1994) or specific elements such as selection, training and performance of expatriate managers (Brewster, 1988, 1991, Heller, 1980, Mendenhall & Oddou 1985, Miller, 1972, Tung, 1981, 1988) have been studied.

But IHRM may still be considered as an emerging field in its infancy (Laurent, 1986, Welch, 1994). The evolution of its qualification is in this way quite symptomatic, the Human Resource Management from an international point of view has been successively qualified through "international dimensions"[1], "in a global perspective"[2] and more recently "transnational"[3]. But the most used terminology seems to be International Human Resource Management (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992). As it will be shown in the first part of the paper the terminology used takes its origin in the theory of Multinational Corporations.

1. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT : A THEORETICAL FIELD AT THE CROSS-ROAD OF ORGANISATION THEORY AND HRM

In managerial literature IHRM appears firstly as a field derived from organisation theory where the authors conceive theoretical models contingent to the stages of internationalisation and the life cycle of products. Moreover, this concept is approached from a functional perspective, principally in research focusing on the study of expatriation.

1.1. Choice of Perlmutter's model as a reading-grid for IHRM

Since the end of the eighties mainly North-American researchers have conceptualised IHRM models. Nevertheless, Perlmutter's model (1969), in spite of its age, still provides the most accurate IHRM reading grid particularly because of the ease with which it can be used in relation with studies on expatriation.

1.1.1. IHRM conceptual models and MNCs complexity

Evans (1987, p. 9) assesses the state of research in the IHRM field in MNCs and makes the following statement: "A review of the research since the end of the sixties reveals that the comprehension of strategies in IHRM has progressed but little since Perlmutter's pioneering work and the significance of multinationality which led to the ethnocentric, polycentric, regiocentric and geocentric typology."

This shortage of theory seems to have been taken into account by the above mentioned North-American researchers in particular. These theoretical models (Pucik, 1984, Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989, Adler and Ghadar, 1990, Adler and Bartholomew, 1992) are based on national Human Resource Management models and, using the conceptual models of multinational organisations of Perlmutter (1969), Stopford and Wells (1972) and Vernon (1966), these authors conceive models of IHRM contingent to each phase of development of the organisation. Globally, these models characterise IHRM practices in a dynamic and congruent perspective.

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[1] **DOWLING P.J., SCHULER R.S**. (1990), "International Dimensions of Human Resource Management", Boston (Ma.), PWS-Kent

[2] **ADLER N., GHADAR F.,** (1990), "Strategic Human Resource Management : a global perspective", in : Pieper, R. (Eds.), Human resource Management : an international comparison. Berlin : De Gruyter, pp. 235-260

[3] **ADLER N.J., BARTHOLOMEW S.**(1992), "Managing globally Competent People", Academy of Management Executive, 6, 3, pp. 52-65 who base their research on the work of **BARTLETT CA., GHOSHAL S.** (1987), "Managing across Borders : new organizational responses", Vol. 29, 1, pp. 43-53, Sloan Management Review

In this sense they remain eminently theoretical models largely marked by organisation theory. Consequently, it is difficult relate them to expatriation which constitutes the most studied IHRM field (Brewster, 1991, Black and al., 1993, Dowling and al., 1994, Hendry, 1994). Other authors insist on the inherent complexity of the multinational corporation. For Adler (1983), from an organisational point of view, this complexity is the result of two factors: "multiculturalism" i.e. the presence of more than two nationalities in the company and "geographic dispersion". These two elements which refer to national culture and organisational design are implicitly or explicitly included by authors who conceptualise IHRM models congruent to the four stages of internationalisation (Perlmutter, 1969, Hedlund, 1986, Pucik, 1984, Adler & Ghadar, 1990).

The evolution of the research on IHRM may be related to the evolution of the studies on MNCs. Indeed, the IHRM models have been conceptualised from the models of internationalisation of the MNCs (Perlmutter, 1969, Stopford & Wells, 1972, Vernon, 1966). For others (Doz & Prahalad, 1986, Adler & Bartholomew, 1992) IHRM is specific to the ideal model of the MNC, the "transnational" defined by Bartlett & Ghoshal (1989).

Pucik (1984) conceptualises a model in four stages based on the contingent model of organisation (Stopford & Wells, 1972). For him, when the MNC is not very internationalised the IHRM is national and ethnocentric. But when it is fully internationalised the IHRM is geocentric and global. Hedlund (1986) by reintegrating the strategy and structure concepts has sharpened the geocentric company and has defined the ideal global company where the "reality is organised non hierarchically" and names "the Heterarchy". After Bartlett & Ghoshal's (1989) strategic work on the transnational company that correspond to both the geocentric and heterarchic company, Adler & Ghadar (1990) built a four stage model of International Human Resource Management which includes factors such as internal cultural dimensions that influence policies and practices.

Despite the fact that Perlmutter's IHRM model is one of the oldest compared to the latter, it appears as the most valuable reading-grid for the IHRM. Perlmutter's model for IHRM (1969) gives prominence to expatriation by establishing a relationship between the objectives of the organisation and its policy of expatriation and moreover integrates the condition of complexity. Lastly it can be defined as a seminal model since it led to several conceptual and empirical studies (Evans and Lorange, 1989, Hall and Gudykunst, 1989, Besseyre des Horts, 1991, Edström and Galbraith, 1984, Kobrin, 1994, Mayrhofer and Brewster, 1996).

1.1.2. Perlmutter's EPRG model

The empirical work of Perlmutter (1969) which has given rise to the EPRG model of IHRM is based on the international top managers' attitudes towards the filling of foreign positions. By analysing the talks, determined by the attitudes of headquarters' top managers who have different management styles Perlmutter has given a taxonomy of MNCs which are classified according to the way executives are managed in foreign subsidiaries.

Perlmutter (1969) and later Heenan and Perlmutter (1974) show that the allocation, evaluation and promotion of executives are conditioned by the state of mind of directors and the phase of internationalisation. In other terms, each phase of internationalisation and the subsidiary's degree of autonomy determine different types of allocation, evaluation and promotion policy.

In an ethnocentric orientation, the foreign subsidiaries depend on the headquarters and executives of the headquarters occupy the key positions for domestic and foreign operations which are defined according to the headquarters' standards. The foreign subsidiaries are managed by expatriates of the country where the headquarters are based. MNCs with a polycentric orientation consider each subsidiary as a relatively autonomous, distinct national entity managed by local staff who are rarely promoted to the headquarters and who are evaluated in a local context.

In a regiocentric orientation, there are more executives of a different nationality. Nonetheless, their posting place is limited in space since they can be appointed abroad but only within a particular geographic zone. Regional executives may not be promoted to the headquarters but enjoy a degree of regional autonomy in decision making. Lastly, corporations with a geocentric orientation ignore nationality and favour competence since the appointing of executives is done without regards to nationality. As for these last two orientations, evaluation and promotion policies operate on regional and international levels.

Authors note, lastly, that complexity in MNCs is determined by national cultures and more specifically by the complexity of cultural societies, national pride and language barriers. Moreover, they add a geographic dimension to ethnocentrism which seems more serious in Developing Countries than in Developed Countries.

All the former models find their roots in Organisation Theory and more specifically the MNCs' theoretical models and are situating at the junction of two fields, namely Organisation Theory and Human Resource Management. But since the 70s,

North-American authors both in the Organisation Theory and IHRM have limited their investigations to the study of expatriation and expatriate managers. These studies may be categorised as belonging to one of the three dimensions of the IHRM, the type of employees, from an operational viewpoint when defining the IHRM as "the interplay of three dimensions - human resource functions (procure, allocate, utilise), type of employees (local nationals, expatriates, third country nationals) and countries of operation (host country, home country, other country)"[4].

1.2. IHRM seen through expatriation and a theoretical model of IHRM

In the Organisation Theory field mostly but less frequently in the HRM's, authors give particular interest to individual and organisational roles of expatriates in MNCs. Three elements : culture, coordination mechanisms and HRM, recurrent in all the international studies, have allowed to build an IHRM conceptual model.

1.2.1. IHRM seen through one of its dimensions : expatriation

From an organisational point of view, executives are mainly expatriated during the first phase of internationalisation (Perlmutter, 1969, Hedlund, 1986, Pucik, 1984, Adler and Ghadar, 1990, Evans and Lorange, 1989) in order to control operations in the subsidiaries (Perlmutter, 1969, Hedlund, 1986, Doz and Prahalad, 1986, Brewster, 1988). Nonetheless, some research on the role of expatriates specify that they are situated in-between control mechanism and strategy, and Human Resource Management policy.

Edström and Galbraith (1977) give three principal reasons for expatriation : "filling the posts, socialisation and organisation development". In a later article Edström and Galbraith (1994) integrate the three reasons for transferring executives in a perspective contingent to the degree of ethnocentrism.

"Filling the posts" consists in transferring expatriates abroad so that they occupy specific positions which cannot be filled by locals. In general terms, these transfers are temporary since the expatriate's career is to be made at the headquarters. Edström and Galbraith (1977, 1994) believe that transfers of executives are frequent in ethnocentric MNCs. The second reason motivating transfers concerns the executives' personal evolution, aiming at offering young executives occasions for experiencing new situations and developing new skills. Lastly, in an organisation's development perspective executives are transferred so as to "socialise" the different units of the multinational. These transfers allow for creating and developing contacts and international networks through international executives. In that case, they are no longer expatriates but executives of any nationality. This last point refers to Perlmutter's geocentric dimension (1969).

Brewster (1988) adds that executives are sent abroad to play a role of national representation and Scullion (1992) notes moreover that expatriation also takes place in order to control operations reliably and to start programmes abroad. Thus, within Europe, executives are expatriated for short periods so as to pass on skills and common values whereas outside Europe, executives are sent abroad for longer periods in order to pass on skills.

Globally, the reasons why multinationals expatriate their executives can be synthesised by individual and organisational development objectives for Edström and Galbraith (1977, 1994) and only for organisational objectives for Brewster (1988) and Scullion (1992). These objectives are superposed by the expatriates' technical competence in an ethnocentric orientation and by their role as international executives based on managerial competence in a geocentric orientation.

The review of the literature in international management in the Organisation Theory and IHRM research fields have led to the development of an IHRM congruent theoretical model.

1.2.2. IHRM congruent theoretical model

From an operational point of view Morgan (1986, p. 43) defines IHRM as an interaction of three dimensions : "The Human Resource function, the types of employees and the country of operation." Each of these work according to three variables. The first one is defined by the three important functions of HRM : recruitment, allocation and development of Human Resources. The second dimension refers to the three categories of countries engaged in the corporation's operations : the host country, the parent country and other countries, third countries which provide for finance or labour-force. Lastly, the third dimension concerns three types of employees and, by extension, three types of executives : locals, expatriates and third country nationals.

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[4] **MORGAN P.V.** (1986), "International Human Resource Management : fact or fiction", 31, 9, Personnel Administrator, p. 43

But for all the authors building IHRM conceptual models, IHRM is mainly expressed through HRM activities, selection, training, development and appraisal. Moreover, the IHRM models are congruent with the MNCs models of internationalisation and integrate three recurrent concepts, cultures both national and organisational and coordination mechanisms. But the latter concepts are also specific to studies on Multinational Corporations (Perlmutter, 1969, Leontiades, 1985, Doz & Prahalad, 1986, 1991, Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1991).

Perlmutter (1969), Leontiades (1985), Hedlund (1986), Bartlett & Ghoshal (1991) as well as Doz & Prahalad (1991) who have an integrative view of the MNCs agree on its complexity. But for Doz & Prahalad (1991) the MNCs must be defined in terms of "complexity, heterogeneity and multidimensionality"[5]. In this way, they say that the management of executives is a tool for contributing to the control of cultural and geographical diversity. For Bartlett & Ghoshal (1991), it is the whole HRM system that is intervening in the control.

For the authors from the Organisation Theory research field whose works may be included in a dyadic approach (headquarters/subsidiaries relations), the international mobility (Youssef, 1973, 1975, Gates & Egelhoff, 1984, Edström & Galbraith, 1977, 1994) or the corporate culture (Ouchi & Jaeger, 1978, Deal & Kennedy, 1982, Baliga & Jaeger, 1984, Jaeger, 1985) are "informal coordination mechanisms" (Martinez & Jarillo, 1989).

Two other elements are recurrent in the studies of the IHRM and the MNCs, national and corporate cultures. Authors from the field of IHRM reach three kinds of conclusions : (1) HRM practices homogenise the two levels of culture (Laurent, 1986, Schneider, 1988, Horowitz, 1990, Meschi, 1994), (2) corporate culture is an homogenisation tool of the different national cultures (Adler & Jelinek, 1986) and, lastly (3) both HRM practices and corporate culture are homogenisation factors of cultural diversity (Peretti, Cazal, Quiquandon, 1991, Peretti, 1993).

The following conceptual model (figure 1) summarises the international literature in three main elements: culture, informal coordination mechanisms, and the operational IHRM definition. It also shows the relations between all the three elements.
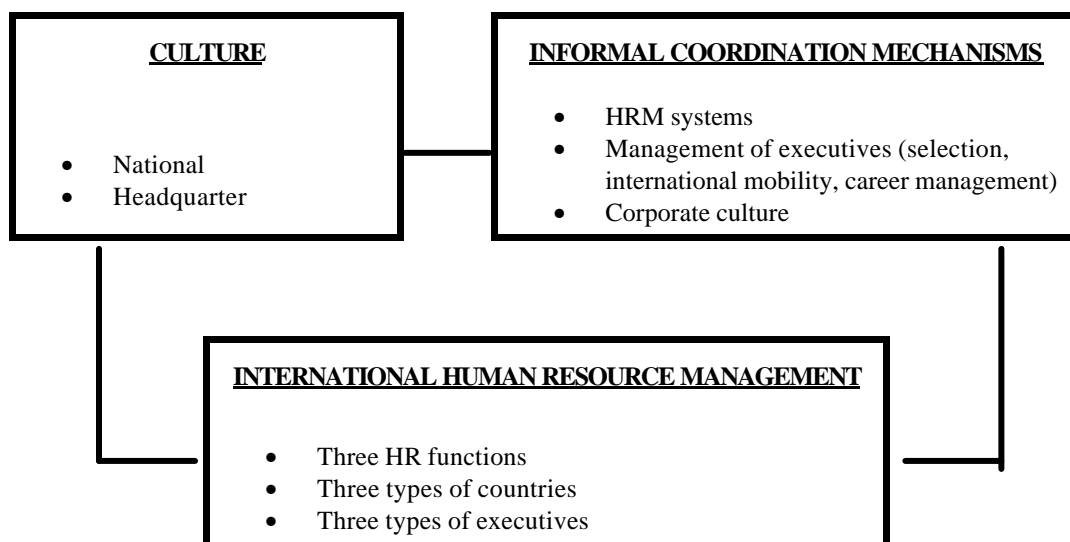
Figure 1 : IHRM congruent theoretical model[6]

Despite the fact that this model was developed, IHRM still remains an emerging field and very few empirical studies have been carried out (Laurent, 1989, Adler & Bartholomew, 1992, Welch, 1994). As a consequence we've chosen a methodological approach both inductive, using a qualitative method based on non directive opened interviews and deductive,

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[5] **DOZ Y.L., PRAHALAD C.K.** (1991) "Managing DMNCs : a search for a new paradigm", 12, pp. 145-164, Strategic Management Journal, p. 146

[6] **POIREY K** (1997) "Management of Expatriates in French Multinational Corporations : Element of International Human Resource Management", unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, IAE de l'Université de Poitiers, p. 11

using a quantitative method by questionnaires. The purpose of the two studies is to define the three elements but not to test the relations between them.

METHODOLOGY

Methodological process

Working on MNCs was arisen the problem of its theoretical and empirical definitions' choice. Indeed most of the authors agree on the difficulty to theoretically define it (e.g. Perlmutter, 1969, Doz and Prahalad, 1991, Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1991) and consequently, it was also difficult to give it an operational definition in order to define the mother-population. These problems have been solved in using the Vernon's (1966) MNCs' definition : "a company that achieves a turn-over superior to 100 millions dollars per year and produces in at least 7 countries in the world". In other words, this company is characterised in terms of its size and internationalisation.

In order to operationalise this definition, an exploratory study on secondary data (i.e. three economic reviews and 80 annual reports) has been led. By crossing all the MNCs international information, 75 multinational companies were selected according to three data bases and using a sampling technique based on both an international criteria (turnover abroad superior to 40%) and a criteria of size (the total number of employees equal or superior to 10 000). Furthermore, because IHRM is still a young field we've made the choice to collect relevant data from a methodological framework based on both a quantitative (postal questionnaire) and a qualitative method, defined as "methodological biangulation".

In the MNCs the natural respondent are the Human Resource Directors (HRDs) who were called to be either open-questioned interviewed and / or filled the questionnaire. The 23 HRDs were given the questionnaire after personal interviews, 15 others were returned by post. Three of the 38 questionnaires were not exploitable which corresponds to an 34% answer rate. Thus a 35 MNCs sample was investigated by means of a quantitative method. The discourses of a sample of 23 HRDs belonging to these 35 companies were analysed according to a qualitative method. Table 1. shows that this sample is representative (in terms of their degree of internationalisation and size) of that of the 35 MNCs. It is therefore legitimate to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative results with those of the interviews.

Table 1. - Independent Samples T-Tests on the size and the degree of internationalisation.

	35 MNCs	23 HRDs	Significance (2-tailed)	T-Values
Number of Employees	63 060,00	52 952,17	0,43[**]	0,79
Employees abroad	25 994,66	30 635,91	0,48[**]	0,29
Turn-over abroad (%)	59,11	58,22	0,77[**]	-0,72

[**] **Non significant means difference (p<0,05)**

Investigation objectives

In order to test the IHRM theoretical model two different methodological approaches were used. The deductive approach aimed at defining ethnocentrism through a quantitative method. The inductive approach aimed at defining IHRM by interviewing HRDs.

The questionnaire destined to the 35 HRDs consists in 86 items that have been made operational thanks to the seminal work of Perlmutter (1969) and the empirical works of Zeira (1975), Hall and Gudykunst (1989), Banai (1992) and Kobrin (1994). These works allow us to postulate a differentiated ethnocentrism for three distinct regions (Europe, developed and Developing Countries) and to define its nature.

As shown in table 2. ethnocentrism is measured by three global scales : IHRM policies, subsidiaries socialisation and reasons for filling the posts. All outcome measures were assessed along 6-point Likert scales. The reliabilities and internal consistency of the multiple-item scales were assessed using Cronbach's alpha and principal components factor analysis.

Table 2.- Multi-Item Scales Reliability

Scale Definition	Items before reliability	Items after reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor
IHRM Policies				
Europe	3	3	0,82	1
Developed Countries	3	3	0,80	1
Developing Countries	3	3	0,87	1
Socialisation				
Europe	4	3	0,81	1
Developed Countries	4	3	0,89	1
Developing Countries	4	3	0,87	1
Reasons for filling the posts				
Europe	4	3	0,82	1
Developed Countries	4	2	0,73	1
Developing Countries	4	0	- 0,81	1

Once adequate internal consistency demonstrated when compared to theoretical Cronbach's alpha (Peterson, 1995) descriptive statistics were processed (means, Standard Deviation -SD- and T-Tests).

The non-directive, open-questioned interviews of the 23 HRDs followed a pattern of four questions on IHRM (internationalisation, international executives' recruitment, training and performance). Globally, 59 hours of interviews were conducted and the material treated with SPAD-T software. In the following paragraphs pieces of the 23 HRDs discourses will be produced.

2. TOWARDS AN IHRM EMPIRICAL DEFINITION

The results we present, be they of a qualitative and quantitative nature. The qualitative findings allow to enhance three main elements : national culture, corporate culture and IHRM practices. They are enriched by the quantitative' which led to ethnocentrism characterisation in French MNCs.

2.1. Coordination mechanisms : corporate culture and IHRM practices

HRDs emphasise the pregnancy of cultural diversity and geographic dispersion in their organisation which are element of differentiation. This concern appears first in the national culture perception and the distinction between Europe and Asia. As a result, corporate culture and IHRM policies are coordination mechanisms.

2.1.1. National and corporate cultures

If national and corporate cultures are two significant elements of MNCs [7] they are not perceived in the same way. For the HRDs the corporate culture is "*integrative*" of the whole organisation, is influencing the "*role of managers who spread it*", is an element of the international managers training called "*training to the management techniques of the group*" and is also a training objective ("*to reinforce the corporate culture*").

The national culture is a "*source of diversity*", but also a source of "*individual enrichment*" and "*organisation enrichment*". One of the objectives of the international managers' training is to "*make them aware of the national cultures and cultural differences*". For the Human Resource Directors, the national culture influences "*the competencies of managers*" and the international managers training is different according to the countries' cultural distance where they will work in (Europe vs. Asia)[8].

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[7] The national and corporate cultures have been quoted the same number of time which means 22 times each.

[8] POIREY K. (1998) "IHRM specifities in Asia", Euro-Asia Conference, IAE de l'Université de Poitiers, 5-6 november.

Consequently, national culture expressed by cultural diversity, is both an individual and organisational parameter, source of diversity, enrichment and synergy. It is also a factor of contingence of the competencies and roles of the expatriates. But it scarcely is a constraint and/or an element of difficulties in the HRM system.

The corporate culture has an integrative function in the organisation, influences the role of the managers and is a component of the organisation.

The training of executives is a tool for acting on the cultural diversity and the corporate culture. The training objectives are mainly organisational ("*homogenise*"), and very little individual ("*to make aware of*"). On the contrary, aims are only at organisational level for the corporate culture.

2.1.2. IHRM practices

The factors of coordination have been determined through the purposes on the international and mobility policies, HRM practices and policies, skills and roles of managers, corporate culture and HRDs' networks.

In the 23 HRDs' discourses, the main tendencies concerning the integration mechanisms have been identified. Thus, European and international expatriation policies have respective objectives of "*homogenisation and integration*". Expatriation and European mobility policies are based on "*transferring competence and expertise*" to expatriated and international executives. Lastly, European and international mobility policies aim at developing the organisation and secondly the individuals.

The policies of international executive management, i.e. the recruitment and training of international executives, are centralised at headquarters. On the contrary, in the discourses, executives management practices are alternately centralised and decentralised but in this last case, they are based on HRDs' networks and/or subsidiaries.

The training of executives in the technical management of the corporation, present in a majority of quotations, includes local and international executives. Moreover, all the objectives of these trainings are to "*reinforce the corporate culture*" and "*homogenise the corporation and the cultures.*" The appraisal procedures are more often similar to those of national managers and for half of them common to the whole group.

Three categories of managers have been mentioned by HRDs : internationals, expatriates and high potentials. Every category has a specific role in the French MNCs : the high potentials are the "*vehicle of the organisation image*", the international managers are the "*vehicle of the strategy, are experts and they master the corporate culture*" and the expatriate managers are the "*vehicle of the strategy and spreader of the practices and values*".

Lastly, the quantitative results show that the socialisation in the European subsidiaries and those located in Developed Countries is based on the transfer of cultural and technical competencies. The socialisation of the subsidiaries located in Developing Countries is founded on the transfer of the managerial practices and the corporate culture by expatriate executives.

Globally, MNCs use procedures of homogenisation of and integration in the corporation at the organisational and individual levels. The expatriation policy, the corporate culture and training help homogenise the corporation. Besides, mobility is used for enriching the group. In other words, all these mechanisms correspond to forms of control through "socialisation" and "the development of the organisation" (Edström and Galbraith, 1977, 1994). The three categories of managers, because of the selection and training procedures and consequently of their competencies, are the relays and the vehicles of the policies and the culture of the group.

2.2. Ethnocentrism : world-wide centralisation and regional variation

Ethnocentrism is measured through three dimensions : IHRM policies, socialisation and reasons for filling the posts.

2.2.1. IHRM policies

The reliability analysis has revealed an internal consistency for the IHRM policies scale with Cronbach's alphas varying from 0,80 (Developed Countries) to 0,87 (Developing Countries) with a 0,82 intermediary alpha (Europe). Table 3. shows that the multi-items scale for IHRM policies composed of training, standardised evaluation and recruitment at headquarters are identical for the three geographical zones.

Furthermore it also shows IHRM policies' centralisation high degree at headquarters and that they are more centralised at headquarters for Developing Countries.

Table 3. - Means, Standard Deviation and t-tests of the IHRM Policies multiple-items scale

	Europe		Developed Countries		Developing Countries	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
International executives training before expatriation	4,43	1,58	4,51	1,54	4,94[**]	1,33
Standardisation international executives evaluation	4,29	1,82	4,17	1,81	4,63[**]	1,73
International executives recruitment at headquarters	4,26	1,63	4,43	1,56	4,74[**]	1,65

[**] **Significant means difference (p<0,05) from Europe and Developed Countries**

2.2.2. Subsidiaries Socialisation

The Cronbach's alphas are varying from 0,81 (Europe) to 0,89 (Developed Countries) (0,89) with a 0,87 median alpha (Developing Countries). Table 4. shows that the subsidiaries socialisation multiple-items scales for Europe and Developed Countries are common but different from the Developing Countries'.

The three common items and the means' homogeneity indicate same modes of socialisation by expatriate executives in Europe and Developed Countries. On the contrary, the Developing Countries scale has 2 different items and the item it shares with the two other regions has a significant higher mean. Consequently, the socialisation modes are specific to Developing countries and the socialisation is stronger. The socialisation is indeed prominently made through the transfer of corporate culture then with managerial practices in Developing Countries. In Europe and Developed Countries the subsidiaries are mainly and conjointly socialised through the transfer of technical practices and corporate culture.

Table 4. - Means, Standard Deviation and t-tests of the Subsidiaries Socialisation by expatriate executives multiple-items scale

	Europe		Developed Countries		Developing Countries	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Subsidiary national culture knowledge	3,31	1,79	3,29	1,72	- -	- -
Transfer of technical practices from Headquarters	4,00	1,85	3,83	1,84	- -	- -
Corporate culture transfer	3,71	1,84	3,83	1,83	4,57[**]	1,79
Transfer of managerial practices from headquarter	- -	- -	- -	- -	3,91	1,96
Presence of more than two nationalities in subsidiaries	- -	- -	- -	- -	2,14	1,77

[**] **Significant means difference (p<0,05) from Europe and Developed Countries**

2.2.3. Reasons for filling the posts

The reasons for filling the posts scale is not reliable for Developing Countries (-0,81). By reverse, the Cronbach's alphas for Europe (0,82) and Developed Countries (0,73) reveal a good reliability. The latest is less good than the Europe's, but is rather close to the 0,75 theoretical value. The reasons for filling the posts by expatriate executives in Europe and in Developed Countries are moderately due to their technical competencies and very little on their managerial talents. (table 5.).

The most interesting result is the recruitment of any kind of international executives without nationality discrimination in Europe. Another finding concern the average number of expatriates in Developing Countries which is four fold more important than in Europe and three fold higher than in Developed Countries. Lastly, the number of expatriates is higher in Developed Countries than in Europe.

Table 5. - Means, Standard Deviation and t-tests of the Filling the posts multiple-items scale

	Europe		Developed Countries		Developing Countries	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Expatriates' technical competencies	3,23	1,75	3,37	1,65	- -	- -
Expatriates' managerial talents	2,74	1,50	2,89	2,39	- -	- -
Any kind of executives only on competencies	4,77	1,83	- -	- -	- -	- -
Number of expatriates	59	37	70[*]	43	217[**]	141

[*] **Significant means difference (p<0,05) from Europe and Developing Countries**
[**] **Significant means difference (p<0,05) from Europe and Developed Countries**

All in all ethnocentrism in subsidiaries of Developing Countries is expressed by very centralised International Executives Management policies (recruitment, training), a strong socialisation through corporate culture, the transfer of managerial practices, and a high rate of expatriates.

Ethnocentrism in subsidiaries in European and Developed Countries corresponds to centralised IHRM policies, to a socialisation moderated by the corporate culture and the transfer of managerial practices, recruitment according to technical competence and managerial talent, a relatively low rate of expatriates and a high number of third country executives.

So the degree of ethnocentrism varies according to IHRM policies. The modes of socialisation and the reasons for filling the posts vary according to geographic zones. Ethnocentrism is strongly differentiated between Developing Countries and Europe/Developed Countries. Moreover, it is moderately differentiated between Europe and Developed Countries. The nature of ethnocentrism is also mixed and spatially differentiated and its intensity varies spatially.

Firstly, these results show an identical multidimensional ethnocentric orientation in Europe and Developed Countries. Nonetheless, if the intensity of socialisation is moderate, the IHRM policies are centralised (recruitment, training). Consequently, ethnocentrism is moderate in Europe and Developed Countries whereas it is high in Developing Countries.

The strong ethnocentric orientation in Developing Countries shows the important role of control played by expatriates and the importance of coordination through the corporate culture and the transfer of managerial competence of expatriates. In this regard, the behaviour of French MNCs towards their subsidiaries in Developing Countries is very distinct from that towards those in Developed Countries. Two explanations can be given for this tendency. Firstly, France's relationships with Developing Countries is marked by colonisation (Africa). Thus, it seems important to note that French MNCs may be tempted to think that locals lack the technical competence required to be as effective as the expatriates. The second explanation may concern the local labour market which may not offer executives with quality technical competence. This second explanation may indeed be valid but cannot justify such a strong socialisation through the corporate culture and transfer of managerial practices.

In this perspective, the question of the confidence of MNCs, relayed by expatriates, in the abilities and integrity of locals in Developing Countries' subsidiaries arises. This question obviously verges on ethics and therefore contains a risk of crisis greatly overlapping the frame of management. Furthermore, it can be propped up by a study on 96 expatriates[9] which shows that corporations tend to send aged executives who are strongly experienced in the corporate culture to Developing Countries. They are called "*professional expatriates*" and benefit from expatriation as "*the goose that lays the golden eggs*". They maintain a sedimented historical control and culture which can impend on the capacity of flexibility and adaptability of the subsidiaries and therefore induce bad performances.

Moreover, these results show that in spite of the proximity of results of Developed Countries and Europe, MNCs recruit expatriates in the latter zone according to their competence, not their nationality. This conclusion can be supported by elements of the discourse of the 23 HRDs. "We *recommend an increase in European executive exchanges because of the firmly European orientation of the work teams and consequently, of the creativity and richness of projects which any European or even international organisation can integrate*". "*Work teams made up of European executives are also recent. The idea is to*

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[9] **POIREY K** (1997) "Management of Expatriates in French Multinational Corporations : Element of International Human Resource Management", unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, IAE de l'Université de Poitiers, pp. 267-269.

use the resources optimally and create a homogeneous European corporation". *"We only make European exchanges. At the moment, 40 French are expatriated in Europe."*.

Thus, multinational organisations make functional exchanges of executives which fill the same posts as the ones they occupied in France. These European executives can form teams that will increase the synergy within the frame of management of projects. Nonetheless, the HRDs note that these expatriations are temporary (less than one year) and that the ultimate aim is to provide them with a European culture and open-mindedness. What is more, the study on the 96 expatriates show that these executives have a lesser knowledge of the organisation and are rather young. Europe appears to be a training field for preparing executives for future international expatriations. In any case, this last zone seems to be distinct from the two others, where the orientation is more regiocentric than ethnocentric.

CONCLUSION

Empirical findings at large highlight that the theoretical model empirically fit the realm of IHRM in large French MNCs. Indeed the main results are :

1   Cultural diversity is an important concern (Adler, 1983) ;

2   Mobility and expatriation policies, corporate culture, training and HRDs' networks are informal coordination mechanisms (Adler & Jelinek, 1986, Laurent, 1986, Schneider, 1988, Horowitz, 1990, Peretti, Cazal, Quiquandon, 1991, Peretti, 1993, Meschi, 1994) ;

3   Executives (international executives, expatriates and High-Potentials) are the relay of the informal coordination mechanisms (Edström & Galbraith, 1977, 1994) but are the common executives found in the literature (Morgan, 1986, Dowling & al., 1994) ;

4   IHRM in Europe is different from this in Asia and in other countries (Poirey, 1997, 1998) ;

5   Ethnocentrism is world-wide centralised and is differentiated regionally (Perlmutter, 1969, 1974).

Consequently, all the results may be replaced on the IHRM congruent theoretical model (figure 2).
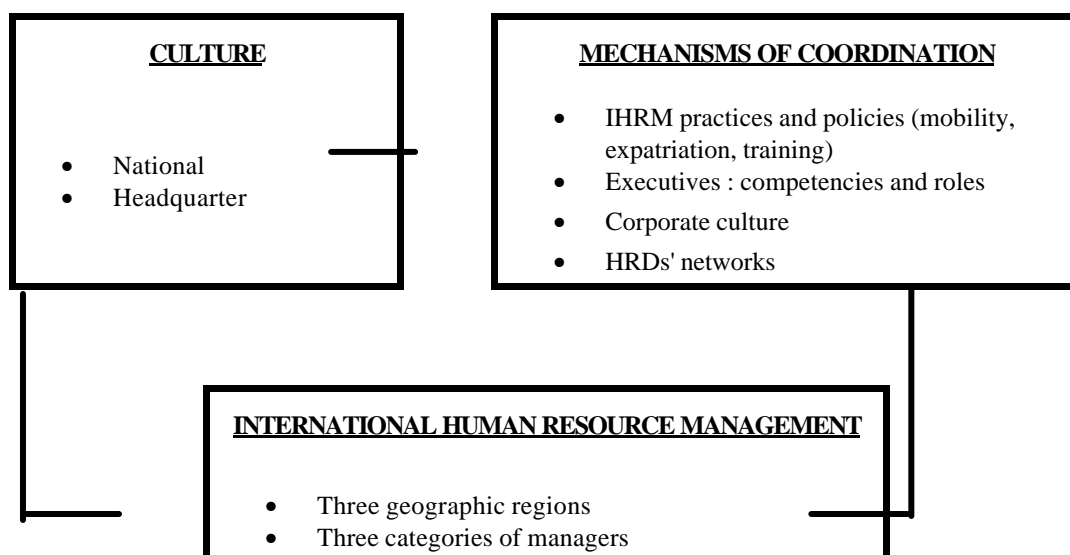
Figure 2 : IHRM in French MNCs

The HRDs' discourses show that the IHRM policies (mobility and expatriation), the diffusion of corporate culture (values and management techniques) are informal coordination mechanisms. In this sense, the results point out that the type of control in French MNCs is a control by socialisation and through a "individual and organisational development" (Edström & Galbraith, 1977, 1994). But ethnocentrism consists for ethnologist in "considering his own civilisation and own social norms (constructed then acquired) superior than these of other people" (Laburthe-Tolra & Warnier, 1994). By extent, in the French MNCs the acquisition then the diffusion of corporate culture by expatriates correspond to an ethnocentric orientation. Consequently, the concept of ethnocentrism is, on the one hand a multidimensional one and on the other hand does not exist in a plain form in French MNCs.

Corporate culture is without doubt an informal coordination mechanisms which favours the national cultures homogenisation in French MNCs. But, if for some authors (Adler & Jelinek, 1986, Peretti & al., 1990) it is possible to homogenise the national cultures through corporate cultures, others disagree (Laurent, 1986, Schneider, 1988).

All our empirical findings must be interpreted cautiously because of the methodological characteristics. Indeed, the sample of MNCs is rather weak and the research itself must be considered as ethnocentric because data were collected at MNCs headquarters'.

Based on the results of the plural empirical investigation, it is quite clear that the understanding of ethnocentrism, informal coordination mechanisms, the roles of national and corporate cultures and the definition of IHRM in French MNCs has been improved. Therefore, the major contribution of this paper is on its empirical relevance even though it ought to be that the concepts of the model of synthesis which have been developed might also provide a theoretical basis for new investigations.

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